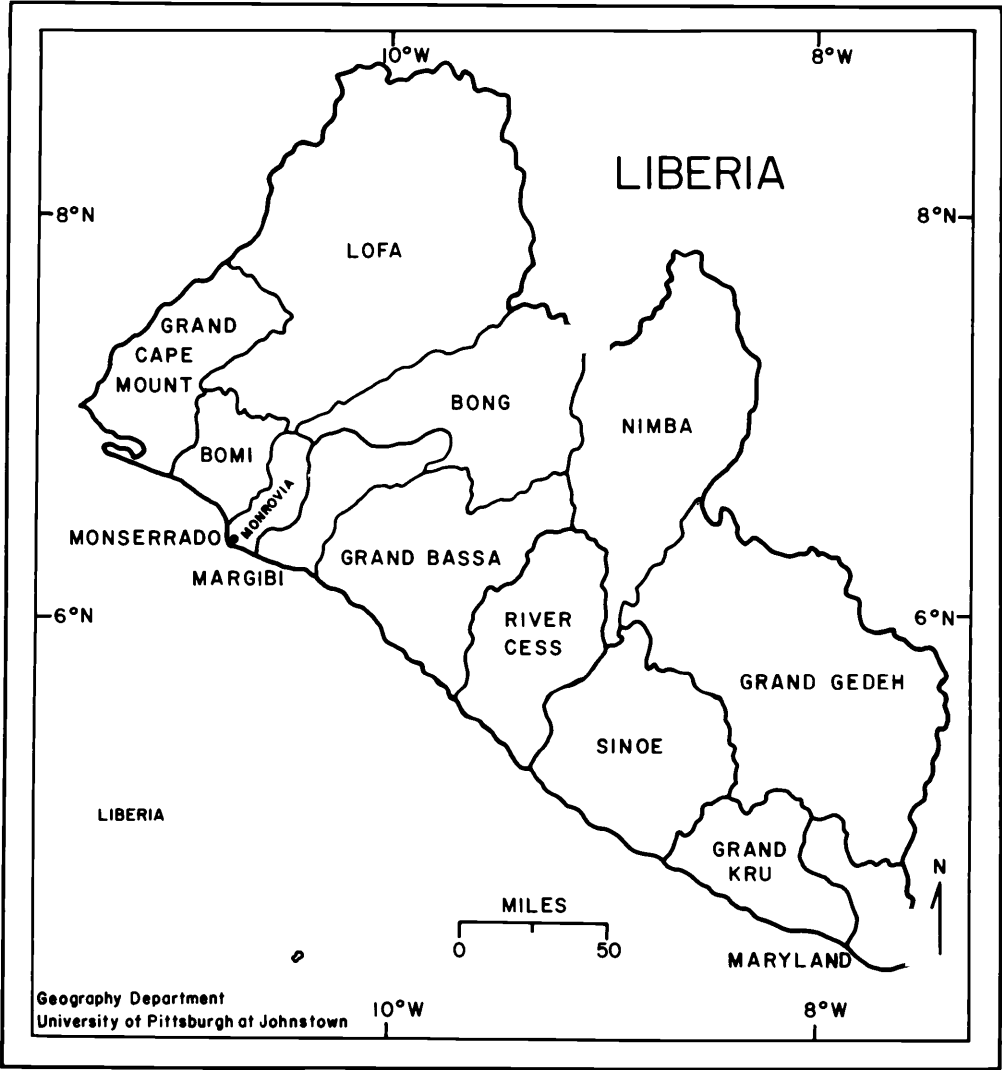


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Cuttington University College, Liberia Years at Cape Palmas, 1889-1901

Richard A. Corby

In the 1990s there are two universities on the African continent which are general degree-granting institutions not controlled by an African government—the American University in Cairo in Egypt and Cuttington University College in Liberia. The latter had just celebrated its centennial anniversary in 1989 before the civil war now raging in Liberia forced it to close in mid-1990. Once before in its history Cuttington University College closed so for twenty years, reopening in 1949 at its current location, about seven miles west of Gbarnga. When it shut its doors in 1990, it was in Maryland near Harper's Point. This article discusses the origins and development of Cuttington University College and its founding in 1889 to 1901, the crucial first dozen years of its existence.

Cuttington University College is affiliated with the Episcopal church of Liberia and the United States. American Episcopalians began their religious and educational efforts in Liberia in the 1830s and for many decades concentrated their work at Cape Mount on the northern Liberian coast and Cape Palmas in the south.¹ It was in the Cape Palmas area that schools which were the forerunners of Cuttington were established.

The Reverend J. C. Duerr founded the Training School at Cavalla (see map) in 1865,² a school which offered Latin, Greek, and Bible history along with the more general subjects in mathematics, science, English, and history. The Reverend John G. Auer (later bishop) renamed the school the Hoffman Institute in 1867. The purpose was to produce teachers, catechists, and candidates for holy orders. By the late 1870s the Reverend M. P. Keda Valentine, an alumnus, was the principal of the school.³ He was a Grebo man, the largest ethnic group in the Cape Palmas region of Maryland County.

At Mt. Vaughan (see map) James M. Thomson and his wife, Elizabeth, African-American missionaries, took charge of a mission school in 1835 which eventually became the High School, also "an institution for preparing Teachers and Ministers for the great work around them."⁴

The Reverend Samuel David Ferguson, born in South Carolina, who emigrated to Liberia with his family at six years of age, in 1884 was selected by the Protestant Episcopal church (now Episcopal church) to become the first African bishop of the church in Liberia and he served until 1916.⁵ Desiring to systematize the mission schools and fearing the periodic conflicts between factions of the

Grebo people of this southern part of Liberia, he withdrew the faculty and students of the Hoffman Institute at Cavalla and the High School at Mt. Vaughan to Harper and safety. The institute under the Reverend M. P. Keda Valentine and the High School in care of T. Gyibli Collins and P. B. Keda Neufville, occupied rented houses in Harper and continued to function as well as possible given the crowded conditions and inadequate supplies and equipment.⁶

Hoping to permanently reestablish the schools Bishop Ferguson in 1888 sought to buy about one hundred acres of land just four miles east of the city of Harper.⁷ R. Fulton Cutting, treasurer of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS) in New York City, donated \$5,000. As the bishop himself described the site for the school:

The foundation of the building for the Hoffman Institute and High School was laid at Cuttington station last month. It is to be 3 houses in one for both divisions of the school and the teachers; total length 103 feet, width fifty-four feet. . . . All the stones for the walls are being quarried a short distance from the building site. Some of the lumber is likewise being sawn near by. The iron roofing and lime are coming from Hamburg; and we should have to get some material from America.

As to the site of the building, it is a beautiful elevation, from which we have a commanding view all around. Looking westward, from the front, the Cape and Harper are to be seen, about 4 miles off, in a direct line; beyond which is the ocean, taking an arc of about 120° of the great circle of vision, from Rocktown on the right to Whole Graway on the left. . . . Looking northward and eastward the eyes fall with fascinating delight on beautiful green hills and forests, with here and there a cultivated tract. In the southward gaze the the Church of the Epiphany and Mission-house at Cavalla station are to be seen. . . . It is altogether a most charming location.⁸

And so it was. The challenges were formidable, to clear the land of the many trees and underbrush and to construct the building. That such a substantial structure could be built using only local architects, builders, carpenters, masons, and laborers testifies to the sophisticated level which construction had developed here in Maryland County.

Ferguson also wrote that the students had built temporary mud houses to use until the school could move into the permanent building.⁹ This new building was to be called Epiphany Hall and would house the Hoffman Institute and High School at Cuttington Station (see picture).

The laying of the cornerstone on February 22, 1889, was a gala occasion. This day was chosen because it was the anniversary of the 1833 founding of the colony of Maryland, later to become a county in the Republic of Liberia. Many "distinguished citizens—church folk and others" attended. Deposited in the cornerstone were a Bible, Episcopal prayerbook, annual report of the board of managers of the DFMS, the 1888 issue of the *Spirit of Missions* (the monthly magazine of the DFMS), Bishop Ferguson's pastoral letter, Liberian President Hillary R. W. Johnson's message, Liberian paper currency and coins, American and British coins, Liberian postage stamps, and a statement about the entire ceremony.¹⁰

It is readily apparent from the pertinent documents that the Liberians thought of the institution as being a continuation of the Hoffman Institute and High School, as these names remained in use as parts of Epiphany Hall, Cuttington Station. Continuity was also maintained as the Reverend M. P. Keda Valentine, principal at the Hoffman Institute, remained as the principal for Epiphany Hall.¹¹ In 1897 the name became the Cuttington Collegiate and Divinity School. The Reverend Samuel J. Taylor, the second principal, wrote that the "old historic names of the Hoffman Institute and the High School will be still retained as a subtitle with the general explanatory title now to be adopted so as to reassure our friends and supporters [in the United States] that The Cuttington Collegiate and Divinity School embracing The Hoffman Institute and the High School is no new school in which they have no vested interest but the same old work christened for the new Century. . . . Cuttington preserves an historic continuity linked with the past Sixty-Four Years of the Christian educational movements in Liberia."¹²

The level of instruction in the first few years was primarily at the elementary and middle school levels with efforts in the higher department of the Hoffman Institute to approach the secondary level of achievement. It is remarkable that any learning took place at all during the first several years at Cuttington Station given the many problems. One difficulty was the lack of a completed physical facility. It was years before Epiphany Hall was finished and reasonably well equipped. Students did much of the work on the building. Valentine, the first principal, reported that "(t)he youngmen and boys work morning and evening with hoes, cutlasses, etc., or at carrying or lifting stones. Now they act as haulers of stones and sand, now as hands for the carpenter or masons, now helping the sawyers to fit. They do all this with pleasure."¹³

By 1892 the building was mostly completed and in use. It was, however, sparsely furnished, there was no chapel, and Bishop Ferguson noted that appropriations from the board of managers of the DFMS were not adequate. There was money enough for just twelve students in the higher department of the Hoffman Institute at \$75 each per year and for thirty in the lower department at \$40 each. Ferguson wanted money for at least twenty-five in the advanced

de t and for seventy-five in the lower.¹⁴ These sorts of problems hounded clergy and faculty for the entire forty years of Cuttington's existence at Cape Palmas. Ferguson and others tried to raise the required money from scholarship pledges from American Episcopalians to cover the fees, room, and board for the students. These efforts always fell short of maintaining the number of boarders which the Liberians wanted.

In 1889, the year of the school's founding, there were two students in the second year course of the institute, which meant that these students had had previous schooling of from five to seven years. Both of them planned to become priests. Their course of study included elementary algebra, "mental exercises," Latin including Caesar's *Commentaries*, Greek and parts of the New Testament in Greek, Vibbert's *Aid to Reading Hebrew*; a Hebrew and readings from the Bible in Hebrew, and Bible lessons. Other classes in the institute studied Greek and Latin r, Barnes' *General History* and Greek history, Steele's *Physiology*, zoology, botany, moral philosophy, arithmetic, "intellectual elements of written arithmetic," Wayland's *Political Economy* (abridged), English , Quackenbos' *Composition*, "scholars' companion," physical geography, written composition, vocal music, Pinnock's *Old and New Testament Analyses*, and reading exercises. The progress, reported Valentine, was satisfactory.¹⁵ One must not get the impression that the students actually had copies of these texts and materials. Only faculty members did. Students had virtually no textbooks of any sort.

At the High School (lower level) the subjects taught were Bible history, reading, writing, arithmetic (with "fractions being the highest in arithmetic for the first class at present"), geography, history of Rome, physiology, vocal music, and Quackenbos' *Composition*. Teaching in the High School were P. K. Neufville and Horatio Jones, both student teachers. The students' "recitations" for the teachers in the institute were conducted from 8:00 AM to 9:00 and again from 9:00 to 10:00 PM, as there was scarcely enough time in the day for the activities of the two student teachers. The faculty at the institute consisted of Principal Valentine and Michaiah Muhlenberg, another student teacher.¹⁶ In this first year of operation there were approximately twelve students attending in the institute.

The daily routine in the first year during week days began with the students getting up at 5:00 AM. By 6:00 they were performing such tasks as working in the cassava or potato garden or with other vegetables and helping the builders of Epiphany Hall by preparing stones and sand among other duties. Two monitors oversaw the students' work.

At 7:00 prayers were conducted by students and teachers on alternate days and breakfast came at 8:00. Hours of classes for the institute were from 9:00 to 3:00 and from 9:00 to 2:00 for the High School. After school was out the High

School students performed manual labor tasks from 2:00 to 4:00 in a similar manner to their work in the morning. The institute students did the same from 3:00 to 4:00. Supper was at 5:00 and prayers at 6:00. From 7:00 to 10:00 came study hours and from 10:00 to 10:30 was storytelling time, a popular activity in West African life. Stories would be from the Bible, from "history" (subjects not specified), or from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. It would be fascinating to discover whether any of these stories dealt with West African subjects, perhaps from the rich tradition of tales and folklore. At 10:30 everyone went to bed.¹⁷

Sundays were somewhat different. At 5:00 AM everyone got up and washed, read, and prepared for the prayers at 6:00. Student teachers and teachers alternately conducted the prayers. Breakfast was at 8:00. At 9:00 the students began to walk to Harper, about four miles away, for 10:30 services at St. Mark's church. At 1:30 everyone walked back to Cuttington Station. In the afternoon P. K. Neufville, a teacher at the High School, was the superintendent for Sunday School which lasted from 3:00 to 5:00. Supper was at 5:00, prayers at 6:00, and study from 7:00 to 10:00. Then everyone retired.¹⁸

Students and faculty were to remain in their temporary quarters until the middle of 1890 and even then Epiphany Hall was unfinished. Valentine kept requesting the DFMS headquarters in New York to send materials and supplies both for classes and for the dormitory facilities. Among the items in short supply were Bibles, Episcopal prayerbooks, hymnals, and blankets for the students. As Valentine explained in one letter to the authorities at the Church Missions House in New York, blankets were needed "for the children who have been used to sleeping by their fires in the homes but can't do that at school."¹⁹

Six years later in 1895 Cuttington was still operated as the Hoffman Institute, including the theology department, and the High School. There were four candidates for holy orders in the theology department. The four were Nathaniel Y. Valentine, Nathaniel Cassell, Joseph F. Dunbar, and Samuel D. Ferguson, Jr., the bishop's son. Among the courses studied in the theology department were the New Testament in Greek, Greek grammar, and logic.²⁰

In the higher department of the Hoffman Institute Samuel J. Taylor taught the second and third year classes. Subjects studied were Bible history, the 39 Articles of faith of the Episcopal church, English grammar, Latin grammar and readings, Greek grammar and readings, geography, elementary science, Euclidian geometry, algebra, arithmetic, spelling, history of Europe, and history of the United States. John Payne Gibson, the "first assistant," taught the fourth year class in these subjects: Bible history, catechism, English grammar, history of Rome, history of Greece, "guide to knowledge," geography, mensuration (mathematics which deals with finding area of surfaces and volumes of solids), spelling, dictation, algebra, and Euclidian geometry.²¹

The High School, the lower department, was in charge of Samuel D. Ferguson, Jr. who was having health problems in 1895. Courses studied were Bible history, reading, spelling, dictation, writing, English grammar, "word-builder," arithmetic, and world history.²²

In the exams held at the end of the year the first place winner was J. J. Dossen, who got \$5 from Bishop Ferguson, and Joshua Davies, second place, who received \$4. At Cuttington Station there were 145 people altogether of which 85 were communicants of the Episcopal church.²³ Of the total number of people 115 were boarding students and 16 were nonboarders. There were 113 indigenous Liberians, mostly Grebo, and 18 settler Liberians.²⁴

Agriculture was an important feature of life at Cuttington Station. The original intent was to grow cash crops as a means of providing a steady income for the school. To this end a white American missionary, T. D. Hillman, and his family arrived with Hillman to be in charge of agriculture. Although there are hints that Hillman did not adjust well to conditions at Cuttington, the official reason given for his early departure was that "he and his family lost health, which it seemed, they could not regain here."²⁵ A Mr. Ashley also left at about the same time as did a Dr. Tucker from Cape Mount on the northern Liberian coast. All of these departures led Ferguson to comment that "it will be difficult hereafter for me to place any confidence in white laborers, so far as their remaining in the country is concerned."²⁶

The school farm was then put in the care of R. A. Massey, a recently arrived settler from the United States.²⁷ This latter move appeared to be productive as the farm harvested 350 bushels of sweet potatoes, eddoes (an edible root), and cassava for the cooks of Cuttington and for other Episcopal institutions in the area. In addition to the farm, students had their own individual plots on which they grew the same foodstuffs.

Coffee remained the principal hope for a cash crop, "the land being better adapted to it than to anything else."²⁸ It would be several years, however, before the trees would become productive but by the end of the century Brazilian coffee had replaced Liberian coffee as the preferred product; consequently, Liberian coffee lost its preeminence on the world markets. Cuttington, then, never realized the income from coffee that had been so confidently expected when the school opened in 1889.²⁹

Valentine's goal was not just to grow coffee at Cuttington Station, but to promote this cash crop in the Cape Palmas area. According to him:

Poverty is one of the reasons why our work here does not advance as we would have it, but this will not ever be the case. The people generally, in Cape Palmas especially. . . are turning their attention to the cultivation of coffee, etc. The contagion

will go from tribe to tribe, the beautiful hills around us and in the far distance will sooner or later be covered with beautiful farms and here the people will reap sufficient to support themselves and have enough to extend a helping hand in other directions. They support their demonmen, the whole town has to do it, and when they are converted they will support their preachers and teachers and do other mission work besides.³⁰

And so many people in Cape Palmas were to do in the coming decades.

Principal Valentine attempted to remain current on church and ecclesiastical matters as well as in secular affairs. He requested Joshua Kimber at the Church Missions House in New York to gather books on various subjects to send to him in order to replenish his library which had been destroyed when he permanently left Cavalla during one of the conflicts between Grebo factions. He took out new subscriptions to the *Pulpit To-Day* and *Church Thought* and renewed his subscriptions to the *Churchman* and *Harper's Weekly*.³¹

By 1894 one big theme was the negative effect on the school of the conflicts between various Grebo groups with the Liberian government becoming involved periodically. When firing broke out most of the students would leave the campus to return home thus interfering with the educational process.³² Then, too, there was the added problem that the students themselves represented all Grebo factions and the faculty was concerned that the students might replicate on campus the problems of the outside world.

Epiphany Hall was still unfinished in the mid-90s although classes were held and the students occupied the boarding home section of it. Even worse, the building remained largely unfurnished. The daily routine had changed little since the school's opening. Religious services continued to play a major role in the lives of the students. Services were conducted on all Sundays and holy days of course and on the second Sunday of the month everyone walked to the chapel at Mt. Vaughan for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. There was no chapel at Cuttington Station nor would one ever be built on this campus. On Wednesdays and Fridays a faculty member conducted morning and evening prayer and gave short lectures on aspects of the prayerbook, the latter at Wednesday morning prayer. On the first Saturday of the month the focus was on missionary work and "the claims of our heathen countrymen." On the first and second Friday evening communicants met for Bible study and candidates for confirmation studied the catechism on the remaining Fridays. John Payne Gibson was the superintendent for Sunday School where the book of Matthew and the catechism with the collect for the day were being taught in 1894.³³

Teachers always seemed to be in short supply. With Valentine in Germany in 1894 to tend to his foot, only two teachers remained, Samuel J. Taylor, the acting principal, and John Payne Gibson. Subjects taught were virtually identi-

cal to the offerings in the first few years of the school's existence. Taylor, a Sierra Leonean, and therefore oriented toward the British type of all-important exams at the end of the year, introduced a compulsory written exam in 1894 but the results were disappointing. Notwithstanding the low scores, Valentine thought that the exams "will certainly make them the exact and proficient men they need and desire to be, if they apply themselves to their studies." He also regretted that

the boys have not advanced as rapidly as one would desire, yet what little they have gained has been well drilled into them. There are those among the students and pupils whose dullness or neglect of their studies has kept the others back. I have taken notice of this, and all the teachers agree with me that while attention should be paid to dull boys, the brighter ones should be driven ahead.³⁴

In the Hoffman Institute Joshua R. Davies scored 487 out of 880, or 55 percent, the highest of any student. John W. Logan of the High School scored best in that division getting 254 of 380 points, 67 percent. Taylor was sure that the results would improve in future years, and they did.³⁵

As Taylor explained, "(e)ach boy is required to satisfy the Examiner as to his competency before he is permitted to pass into a higher class and more particularly before he can pass from the Lower to the Higher Department. The idle and ungifted will thus remain in the lower classes."³⁶

Ferguson and Valentine had often expressed their desire to establish an industrial department for vocational subjects. Taylor not only agreed but stated his ideas most vividly:

Boys whose turn of mind points to the mechanical arts, or whose school careers are being ended, may profitably spend some years still in learning printing, tailoring, carpentry, shoemaking. . . . While at the same time securing for the pupils a future means of livelihood, it will open a channel of usefulness other than that of farming and huckstering. The native boys can by such callings remain within the area of civilization and so be able to avoid the degrading influences of heathenism and the baneful effects of an idle life—the *fons malorum* to this infant Republic.³⁷

More is revealed in this quotation than the supercilious attitude of a Sierra Leonean Krio man. Some of the social Darwinian ideas of the superiority of Western culture, even to the point of equating "Western civilization" with civilization itself are evident. There is even a suggestion that Africans are best at farm labor or artisan type jobs, not positions which require real intellectual ability. But yet, one must remember, Taylor, a graduate of Durham University

in England through studying at Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Ferguson, Valentine, and others all realized that an academic education was a necessity if Africans were going to challenge the European and American presence by developing their own economies and playing a major role in African affairs. It is Ferguson, Valentine, Taylor, and thousands of men and women like them who were to lead the way by producing an indigenous African leadership which only a few short decades in the future was to displace Europeans throughout most of Africa and in Liberia to enable local people in the church and other organizations to gain much greater control of their own institutions and lives.

Bishop Ferguson himself formulated the regulations for the school in 1891. The staff of a principal and two assistant teachers seems too few for the 100 to 120 students in attendance in the early 1890s. This force was to be supplemented with student teachers and monitors. Among the principal's main duties were to be responsible for everything at Cuttington Station, to teach in the higher department, to give instruction to candidates for holy orders, direct the studies and the manual labor of all students, to supervise the faculty, to insure that the students grew spiritually, and to maintain strict discipline.

The first assistant teacher should assist the principal in all ways, teach in the higher department, have charge of the students' food and clothing, in part by working with the business agent of the mission to insure the high quality of these items, keep up the physical appearance of the wing in Epiphany Hall occupied by the higher department, see that all students were neat and clean, make sure that students performed the requisite manual labor, and supervise the monitors (those students who assisted the faculty in the classroom and in the boarding area).

The second assistant teacher was the head teacher in the preparatory department of the Hoffman Institute, had charge of the wing in Epiphany Hall occupied by the preparatory department, and in general looked after the welfare of the students in this department.³⁸

Most of the African faculty were candidates for holy orders. On October 18, 1898, the Right Reverend Samuel D. Ferguson, bishop, ordained as deacons Samuel J. Taylor, Joseph F. Dunbar, and Samuel D. Ferguson, Jr., the bishop's son, at St. Mark's church in Harper. Taylor and Dunbar continued their work at Cuttington and Ferguson became the assistant at St. Mark's, although he eventually came to join the faculty at Cuttington too. A year and a half later, on February 18, 1900, Bishop Ferguson ordained Taylor, Dunbar, and Ferguson, Jr., into the priesthood. Dunbar was then assigned to the church of the Epiphany in Cavalla although he would later return to Cuttington to become first a teacher and then the fourth principal. Ferguson became a teacher in the Hoffman Institute and Taylor had become superintendent of Cuttington Station in 1896.³⁹

Valentine's principalship ended abruptly and tragically. The strife in Maryland County where Cuttington Station was located between Greboes or between them and the Liberian government often interfered in the operation of the school. At times Cuttington students left the campus to join their home villages to actively participate in armed insurrection. The faculty worked diligently to keep these disagreements from being replicated on campus. After some weeks had passed, most of the students would return to Cuttington to continue with their classes. In 1893 "our political atmosphere was once more darkened, and the schools had been drained to fill the ranks of the [Liberian] army,"⁴⁰ which again disrupted normal school life.

After another flare up in 1896 in the seemingly interminable conflicts among Grebo factions, the Liberian government requested that those forces loyal to it attempt to dislodge the entrenched Grebo at Cavalla. Many Cuttington students among others at Cape Palmas volunteered. On July 11, 1896, Valentine was killed at Cavalla during this mission.⁴¹ Everyone felt his loss at Cuttington Station where he had been superintendent since the opening of the school in 1889. Two students, Mark Howe and Thomas Leacock, also were killed.

The corpse [of Valentine] was accordingly possessed and conveyed to his town residence at Harper amid the wailings of relatives and friends. The Bishop had it exposed all the night in the nave of the church where only on Easter Day [he] had preached an ordination sermon. . . His remains were accompanied by his mourning relatives and a large crowd of sorrowing friends to Mount Vaughan Cemetery. . .⁴²

The Right Reverend Charles C. Penick, retired missionary bishop at Cape Palmas, an American white man, who had also ordained Valentine into the priesthood in 1878, wrote of him:

He was one of the foremost spirits who ended the forty years' war between two factions of the Grebo tribe. He was foremost in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, music, athletics, courage, marksmanship, statesmanship, a Christian character amongst his fellows. Deeds of doing, self-sacrifice, patient endurance, forgiveness, and justness cluster about this man's life as about few I have ever seen or read of.⁴³

Even allowing for some hyperbole one easily sees that the Reverend Martin Park Keda Valentine was a most remarkable person. As a Grebo man himself he was able to reach out most effectively to the people of Cape Palmas to promote Episcopalianism and Western style education but, at the same time, to mesh these foreign ideas and practices as smoothly as possible into the indigenous African way of life.

Part of Bishop Penick's eulogy of Valentine also revealed almost as much about the attitudes held by most Westerners at the end of the nineteenth century as about the late priest. Penick noted:

For six years I was in touch with Keda Valentine as his Bishop; I coming from the centre of Christian culture and light, he from the depths of heathen corruption and superstition; yet I cannot recall one solitary instance when this man by word or deed, fell below the mark of lofty Christian manhood as we know it. . . . I saw him sit amongst the kings and sages of his people, where no other young man had ever sat, and when I asked them why he was there, they answered: "True, he is very young, but God has put plenty of His Book in him, and he is fit to sit with us and make laws."⁴⁴

Penick concluded by proclaiming that Valentine had gone to join "other brave, cultural, true spirits . . . bright stars in that dark land's firmament."⁴⁵

Valentine's dedication, hardwork, idealism, and abilities are clearly apparent during his too short tenure as superintendent of Cuttington Station and principal of Epiphany Hall. During the first few years when he lived in Harper to get to the campus before the young students arose, he often started his four-mile trek by 3:00 in the morning. After teaching his classes and directing the students' labor in the gardens and on the school farm, he usually did not arrive back home until 5:00 PM.⁴⁶

In one of the last official accounts of his work at Cuttington Station which he was to write in 1895, Valentine noted, correctly, that the "work here is greater by far and more difficult than those can know who are not directly connected with it."⁴⁷ The continuous problems with lack of school supplies, materials, books, unfinished and poorly furnished physical plant, and inevitable involvement both with the Grebo intraethnic struggles and the Liberian government's periodic attempts to reassert complete control over the entire area made the work at Cuttington Station most difficult. Then there were always the Americans at the Episcopal Missions House in New York with which to contend. Always present, rather obviously or lurking just beneath the surface were the paternal ideas of the Episcopal church officials that the Liberians, settler and indigenous, were child-like inferiors who had to be firmly guided in order to prevent them from making wrong choices and generally going astray.

Valentine's work as superintendent of Cuttington Station involved acting as "pastor, evangelist, judge, catechist, interpreter, superintendent, father and mother, and advocate," as he himself viewed his duties. Valentine also showed that he saw himself, a priest within a Christian denomination, bringing new and better ideas to his own Grebo people and to all other people in Liberia, as he wrote that "there are the evils of heathenism, brutality, and superstition [to

combat].” These sentiments accorded nicely with Western notions. But then Valentine continued, “(t)o be able to *blend these different elements into one*, after purifying them of their native evils, is a work that tells on the constitution of the teacher and pastor.”⁴⁸ (emphasis added) Here Valentine clearly has as his primary goal a blending of cultures, Western and West African, to achieve a syncretism of the two but with the West African retaining its place of primacy. White Americans rejected such thinking as most of them saw nothing worthwhile in West African practices—all that was African was sunk in “fathomless darkness.”

Bishop Ferguson appointed Samuel J. Taylor, the vice principal at Epiphany Hall, to replace Valentine as principal of the school and superintendent of Cuttington Station. As Taylor viewed matters, the main purpose of the preparatory department (the High School) was to give a Christian education to the students who would then go forth to spread the “knowledge of the truth of Jesus.” In the collegiate and theology departments (the Hoffman Institute) the goal was to produce teachers, catechists, and clergymen, or ordinary laymen “according to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the One Holy Catholic Church, as they are maintained in one of her true branches—the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Men for the various departments of the state, and the ordinary professions of life, can be trained here to supply the demand.”⁴⁹

Another activity which added to the academic life on campus was the establishment of organizations to promote debate and literary pursuits. Most noteworthy was the Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden Literary Union which encouraged writing essays, giving debates, and making speeches.⁵⁰

Ferguson and faculty members often expressed the need to establish a “technical department” at Cuttington. In 1898 the bishop announced to the authorities at the Church Missions House in New York that he intended to start one. The people in New York had sympathized with this desire but never appropriated money to make it possible. As one reads the records and documents one is often reminded that virtually all the initiatives came from the West African side of the Atlantic, few from the United States. The West Africans were, however, inhibited by lack of financial resources in fulfilling their plans.

This time, in 1898, Bishop Ferguson decided to proceed on his own, if only in a limited fashion, to begin a vocational department at Cuttington. But he had only \$300 with which to establish a printing division and needed more money. Nevertheless he stated that four pupils would start taking lessons from his son, Samuel D. Ferguson, Jr., then a faculty member, on the small printing press which the bishop had in his home. Already a few men had started the *Cape Palmas Reporter*, published sporadically, and he wanted to begin a missionary

periodical concerning the work at Cuttington and in the missionary district and to use the printing press for the occasional jobs which came up.⁵¹

Superintendent Taylor also campaigned for a vocational department with the officials in New York. In 1898 he reported that the school farm was prospering as the last coffee harvest was about 1,000 pounds, and that the farm had even been increased in size by fifty acres due to a gift by the national legislature in Monrovia. Alumnus Samuel J. Dossen had already surveyed thirty-five acres of this land and students had cleared and planted some of it with vegetables.

It would be greatly beneficial, Taylor maintained, if, in addition to the farm, the school could also offer the trades "of printing, tailoring, smithing, boot-making, carpentry, turning and joining, etc. Technical education is a needed complement of our scholastic education. It will create an epoch in the development of our race. . . . We should be glad if the friends of the mission would help the establishment of some of these trades at once."⁵² As was usually the case, Taylor's eloquent pleas produced few concrete results.

After ten years of the school's existence the organization was in three departments of four years each. In the High School the students studied at the elementary level while in the collegiate department of the Hoffman Institute the level, or at least the aim, was a secondary school education. The preparatory class was the starting point and the subjects studied were religious knowledge, English, geography, "elements of mental and moral science," ancient and modern history, Greek and Latin classics, and the elements of Hebrew grammar. In the collegiate department subjects studied were holy scripture, English grammar and composition, arithmetic, Euclidian geometry or "elementary deductive logic," one of the gospels in Greek, and one book of either Caesar's *Galic War* or Virgil's *Aeneid*.⁵³

The third division was the theology department, a four-year course. The subjects studied were Bible history, exegetical theology, ecclesiastical history, systematic theology, pastoral theology, ecclesiastical polity and law, ecclesiastical music, and English language and history. This course of study led to the "Testamur in Theology." The first two students to receive this distinction in the late 1890s were N. H. B. Cassell and John Payne Gibson.⁵⁴

The school routine was sometimes disrupted by disease. One such instance occurred in 1899 near the beginning of the school year which started in late February or early March. By the latter time 125 students had enrolled but on March 6th a student from Grand Bassa County contracted smallpox. After six more fell sick with the infectious disease, classes were suspended on March 24th. All of the students recovered, "with the blessing of God and the care of the nurses," reported Taylor.⁵⁵

One student, Richard Ten Jackson, however, of the High School died on April 10th

after a short but painful illness of ten days. His corpse was exposed in the chapel room and interred by those of us who remained on the station, at Mt. Vaughan Cemetery, on the following day. He had been diligent in his studies, quiet and unobtrusive in his deportment, and a good and obedient scholar. He was confirmed on the 19th of March when he took his first and last Communion. He was lovingly nursed by all of his schoolmates during the period of his illness .⁵⁶

Classwork resumed on May 13th in an Epiphany Hall which was still unfinished, more than ten years after it was started. Work remained to be done in the dormitories, in the teachers' quarters, and the classrooms, still containing no desks, were virtually bare. Bishop Ferguson did order an infirmary to be built and in May of 1899 work started on the thirty feet by ten feet long building. It stood to the east of Epiphany Hall and was soon completed with a corrugated roof so as to present "a pretty show."⁵⁷

As Principal Taylor saw the situation in 1899 Cuttington most needed:

- (1) the completion and furnishing of Epiphany Hall;
- (2) the erection of a chapel;
- (3) the development of "an industrial education in the mechanical arts;"
- (4) more scholarships—four at \$100 each in the theology department, twenty at \$75 each in the collegiate division, and 23 at \$40 each in the High School; and
- (5) additional books, newspapers, and magazines to start a library for both the collegiate and the theology departments.⁵⁸

In 1899 the faculty for 125 students consisted of Samuel J. Taylor, principal; Perry Osborne Gray, the vice principal, graduate of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and the Chicago College of Law, an African-American missionary who would become the third principal in 1901; Joseph Theodore Daynell, instructor, a Sierra Leonean who taught drawing as his specialty; Edward Wea Shannon, instructor, a Liberian who had graduated from the Sierra Leonean Grammar School (as had Taylor), the oldest secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa, established in 1845; and Theophilus Momolu Gardiner, instructor, who previously had been at the Episcopal mission school in Cape Mount, and had taught at Epiphany Hall since 1893, who would later become the suffragan bishop of the missionary district.⁵⁹ The ratio of teachers to students was 1:25, lower than in the first few years. The faculty also was more qualified academically in 1900 as the advanced students were no longer used as teachers. The final

name change while the institution remained at Cape Palmas occurred at this time. In 1897 the designation became the Cuttington Collegiate and Divinity School, but the old subnames still were used.⁶⁰

Principal Taylor's tenure as head of the school ended in acrimony and disgrace for him. He and his wife (name unknown) had a stormy domestic life which often degenerated into name calling and loud public quarrels. Bishop Ferguson commented to Taylor quite indignantly, "I fail to conceive how you can act in a manner so detrimental to your own interest as well as that of the cause which you have espoused. And now in the name of all that is sacred I again beseech you to desist from such disgraceful conduct."⁶¹ Ferguson threatened Taylor with dismissal if the fighting did not stop.

Bishop Ferguson then received another letter from Cape Palmas from the Standing Committee, sitting as a Board of Trustees at Cuttington Station, which maintained that

(t)here are certain irregularities carried on at Cuttington to which as Trustees, we beg to call your attention. 1st, the continual fighting, quarreling and brawls between the Principal, Reverend Samuel J. Taylor, and his wife are of such a nature as to break the peace and harmony of the station and will ultimately succeed in lowering the standard of morality of the station and reflects a great deal of public scandal upon not only the station but the entire work here. . . . On Tuesday, the 10th of July, a fight occurred between Rev. Mr. Taylor and Mrs. Taylor which is now the public scandal of the city . . .⁶²

Although Ferguson alluded to "other irregularities," these were never explicitly mentioned.

Ferguson then suspended Taylor for four months. The latter vowed to resume his duties when the suspension ended in December 1900, but he complained that there was much animosity against Sierra Leoneans by the people in Cape Palmas. Taylor's administration did not last much longer, however, as he resigned in June 1901. He had become nervous and afraid to remain at Cuttington, even alleging that "the Lord has revealed to me the plot laid against my life."⁶³

Taylor and his family returned to their hometown of Freetown, Sierra Leone, but the strife did not end. Ferguson informed Taylor that he had not officially turned over the property of Epiphany Hall to Perry Osborne Gray, who was to become the next principal. The bishop also charged Taylor with taking some property (items not specified) belonging to the mission with him to Freetown. Ferguson reminded Taylor that by going to Freetown originally on a six-week leave and then resigning from there, "you were thus laying yourself

liable to be charged with dishonesty." Taylor owed some money to the mission, according to Ferguson, and also to merchants in the United States. Later Taylor returned eight books to Cuttington, sent £4, and promised to pay his creditors in the United States and in Cape Palmas. Even so, Ferguson refused to issue Taylor a letter of dimissory as the latter had requested.⁶⁴

In twelve years, 1889 to 1901, much had been accomplished. Students came to Cuttington from all four Liberian counties, although the numbers of those from Maryland County always dominated. Bishop Ferguson wrote, "(t)he fruit which it has already borne, by the blessing of God, in the number of youngmen who are now filling important positions in Church and State is an earnest of a great harvest, when our plans are all fully developed."⁶⁵

Instruction had developed to the secondary level with a theology department to prepare students for holy orders within the Episcopal church. Throughout these dozen years the faculty and administration at Cuttington had been comprised of virtually all West Africans, principally settler Liberian, indigenous Liberian, and Sierra Leonean, and of African-American missionaries from the United States. The bishop, Samuel D. Ferguson, also was a settler Liberian who had been born in the United States. Episcopal church officials piously proclaimed the need for additional human and financial resources for Cuttington but were unwilling, or unable, to support the institution at the required level for maximum development and progress. Indeed, at times the support from New York and the church throughout the United States was nothing less than parsimonious.

Yet the American Episcopalians encouraged and supported (inadequate as it was) an institution founded and developed by West Africans and African-Americans at a time when the notion of the superiority of Western culture and the racist ideas of African inferiority were reaching a peak.⁶⁶ The United Brethren in Christ missions in neighboring Sierra Leone which alone in that country featured African-Americans and Sierra Leoneans in prominent positions at this time did not approach the West African and African-American Episcopalians at Cape Palmas in this regard. Neither did other churches in Liberia.

The Episcopal church would, however, revert to assigning white American bishops for Liberia upon Ferguson's death in 1916. Not until 1945 when Bravid W. Harris became bishop would the next black person (first African-American) lead the Episcopal church in Liberia. And when the white American bishop, Robert E. Campbell, appointed the first white American president at Cuttington, the Reverend John Kuhns in 1928, the results were so disastrous that the bishop closed Cuttington in 1929. When the institution reopened in 1949 it would not be in Cape Palmas but in Suacoco, near Gbarnga, in Bong County. The legacy of Cuttington University College at Cape Palmas remains, however, an important story in the development of Western-style education in Liberia.

Endnotes

¹Initially the designation for the mission was Cape Palmas and Parts Adjacent. This name was changed in 1913 to the Missionary District of Liberia. For the early history of the Episcopal church see John Walter Cason, "The Growth of Christianity in the Liberian Environment," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation Columbia University, 1962); E.F. Henning, *History of the African Mission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States* (New York: Standard and Swords 1850); Dean Arthur Holt, "Changing Strategies Initiated by the Protestant Episcopal Church in Liberia from 1836 to 1950 and Their Differential Effects," (unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1970; and Samuel D. Ferguson, "Seventy Years on the African West Coast," *Spirit of Missions*, December 1907, 989-94. *Spirit of Missions* was the publication of the Foreign and Domestic Missionary Society of the Episcopal church. For an excellent study of the Episcopal church in Liberia in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, see D. Elwood Dunn, "The Episcopal Church in Liberia under Experimental Liberian Leadership, 1884-1916," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, LVIII, 1 (March 1989), 3-36. I am grateful to Dr. Dunn for his generous sharing with me of some of his materials on the life of the Liberian church in general and of Cuttington University College

²Samuel J. Taylor, "Eleventh Annual Report on the Hoffman Institute and the High School, Epiphany Hall, Cuttington near Cape Palmas, Liberia, 1899-1900," Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church (hereafter DFMS) papers. RG72-109. Archives of the Episcopal Church, Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Texas. All subsequent references come from the Episcopal archives in Austin unless otherwise designated.

³Samuel J. Taylor, "Annual Report on The Hoffman Institute and The High School, Epiphany Hall, Cuttington, Near Cape Palmas, Liberia, 1898-1899." RG72-109.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Dunn, "Episcopal Church in Liberia," 5.

⁶An Historical Sketch of the African Mission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. (2nd edition, New York: DFMS of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1889), 70.

⁷Letter, The Right Reverend Samuel D. Ferguson to the Reverend Joshua Kimber, General Secretary of the DFMS, New York, August 5, 1885. RG72-41.

⁸Bishop Samuel D. Ferguson, "Progress and Encouragement in the African Mission," *Spirit of Missions*, March 1889, 97.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Samuel David Ferguson, "Report of an Official Visit to Other Parts of the Jurisdiction," April 30, 1889. RG72-41.

¹¹Samuel J. Taylor, "Report No. 12 from Cuttington Station," in *Journal of the Fifth General Convocation of the Missionary Jurisdiction of Cape Palmas and Parts Adjacent*, February 1899. DFMS papers.

¹²Taylor, "Eleventh Annual Report, 1899-1900."

¹³Taylor, "Annual Report, 1898-1899."

¹⁴Samuel D. Ferguson, "Report to the General Convention Hall in the City of Baltimore, Md., U.S.A., 1892." RG72-44.

¹⁵Letter, The Reverend M.P. Keda Valentine to the Reverend Dr. William S. Langford, General Secretary of the DFMS, New York, July 11, 1889. RG72-67.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Letter, Valentine to Langford, January 17, 1890. RG72-67.

²⁰Letter, Valentine to Kimber, July 9, 1895. RG72-67.

²¹Ibid .

²²Ibid .

²³Ibid .

²⁴Letter, Valentine to Kimber, June 30, 1890. RG72-67.

²⁵Bishop David S. Ferguson, "Fourth Annual Report of the Missionary Bishop of Cape Palmas and Parts Adjacent, For the Year Ending June 30th, 1889." RG72-43.

²⁶Letter, Ferguson to Langford, May 25, 1889. RG72-43.

²⁷Ferguson, "Fourth Annual Report, June 30th, 1889."

²⁸Ibid .

²⁹Melvin J. Mason, "The Role of Cuttington College in the Development of Liberia," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1965), 89. Dr. Mason is now the president of Cuttington University College.

³⁰Valentine to Kimber, July 9, 1895.

³¹Letter, Valentine to Kimber, January 8, 1889. RG72-67.

³²Samuel J. Taylor, "Foreign Missions, Protestant Episcopal Church for the Supporters of Scholarships, 1894." RG72-67. Taylor, a Sierra Leonean and the vice principal, was the acting principal for much of 1894 as Valentine had gone to Hamburg, Germany for surgery on his foot.

³³Ibid.

³⁴M.P. Keda Valentine, "Cuttington Station," in *Journal of the Third General Convocation of the Missionary Jurisdiction of Cape Palmas and Parts Adjacent*, St. Mark's Church, Harper, Cape Palmas, February 20-23, 25, 1895 (New York: A.G. Sherwood, 1896), 38.

³⁵Taylor, "Foreign Missions, 1894."

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Samuel D. Ferguson, "Regulations for the Hoffman Institute, Epiphany Hall, Cuttington Station, September 17, 1891." RG72-44.

³⁹Edwin B. Rice, "Historical Sketch of the African Mission," 1903, 184.

⁴⁰Valentine, "Cuttington Station, 1895," 36.

⁴¹Taylor, "Annual Report, 1898-1899."

⁴²Samuel J. Taylor, "Annual Report to the Board in New York for the Year Ending June 30, 1896." RG72-67. Taylor's report, although supposedly ending on June 30, 1896, contains the information of Valentine's death, which occurred on July 11, 1896. Valentine owned a house in Harper as he had had to live there for sometime while waiting for his quarters in Epiphany Hall to be completed.

⁴³Rice, "African Missions," 176-77.

⁴⁴Ibid., 177.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Valentine, "Cuttington Station, 1895," 36.

⁴⁷Ibid., 38.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹"Hoffman Institute and the High School," *Spirit of Missions*, April 1898, 172. The information came from a letter which Samuel J. Taylor wrote to the DFMS in New York.

⁵⁰Dunn, "Episcopal Church in Liberia," 16.

⁵¹Ferguson to Secretary, Board of Managers, Church Missions House, New York, September 28, 1898. RG72-88.

⁵²Samuel J. Taylor, "Epiphany Hall, Cuttington, Liberia," *Spirit of Missions*, June 1899, 281.

⁵³Taylor, "Annual Report, 1898-1899."

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Taylor, "Epiphany Hall," 282-83.

⁵⁹Taylor, "Eleventh Annual Report, 1899-1900."

⁶⁰Letter, Taylor to the Reverend Dr. A.S. Lloyd, General Secretary, DFMS, New York, April 10, 1900. RG72-109. Ferguson to Secretary, Board of Managers, New York, June 21, 1900. RG72-109.

⁶¹Letter, Ferguson to Taylor, July 24, 1900. RG72-90. Since Ferguson had recently moved his See from Harper to Monrovia, he now had to communicate with the people in Cape Palmas by letter.

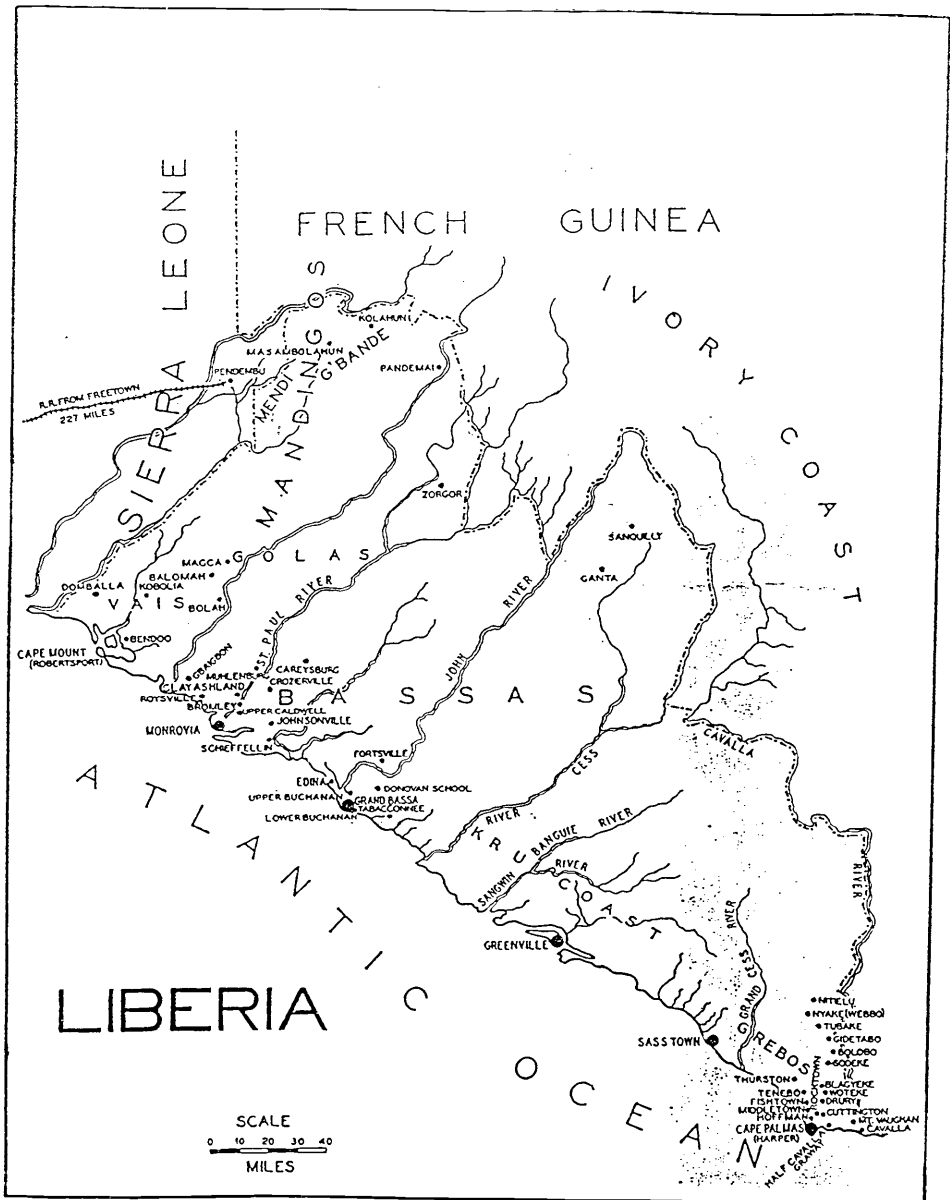
⁶²*Ibid.* The bishop quotes to Taylor from the letter he received from the Board of Trustees.

⁶³Letter, Taylor to Kimber, December 11, 1900. RG72-109. Letter, Taylor to Ferguson, June 17, 1901. RG72-109.

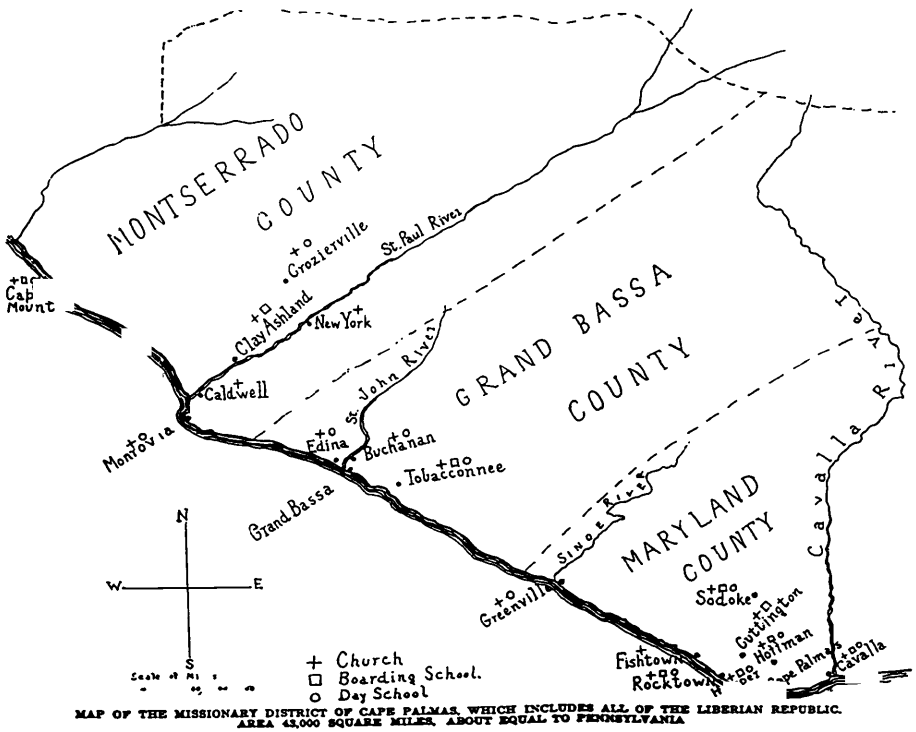
⁶⁴Letter, Ferguson to Taylor in Freetown, July 12, 1901. RG72-90. Letter, Ferguson at sea on board the *Fantee* to Secretary, Board of Managers, New York, August 12, 1901. RG72-90.

⁶⁵Taylor, "Annual Report, 1898-1899."

⁶⁶For Western racist ideas pertaining to West Africa, particularly for Europeans' disdain for Western-educated Africans, see Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 614-20; and also Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964). For similar racist ideas placed in a larger context see Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1982); and Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).



Source: NC Publication Files, Archives of the Episcopal Church, Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Texas



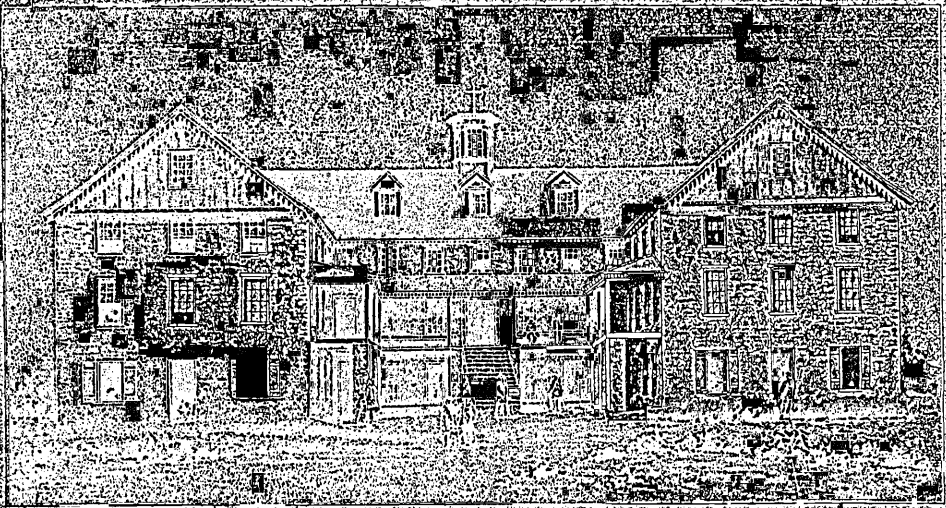
Source: Spirit of Missions, December 1907, page 990

No. 572.

FOREIGN MISSIONS, PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

FOR THE SUPPORT OF SCHOLARSHIPS

REPORT ON THE HOFFMAN INSTITUTE AND THE HIGH SCHOOL IN
EPHRAIM HALL, CUTTINGTON, NEAR CAPE PALMAS, LIBERIA



EPHRAIM HALL, CUTTINGTON, LIBERIA

Source: M-F Publications Files (Africa), Archives of the Episcopal Church,
Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Texas



EPIPHANY HALL, CUTTINGTON INSTITUTE

Source: Spirit of Missions, October 1914, page 697

The Formation of Liberia's Boundaries

Part I: Agreements*

Yekutieli Gershoni

The establishment of the colony of Liberia in West Africa created a precedent in international law. Liberia was founded and governed by a philanthropic society, not a state. Its neighbor to the northwest, Sierra Leone, preceded Liberia as a philanthropic enterprise. However, when the American Society for the Colonizing of The Free People of Color (ACS) founded its own colony in 1822, Sierra Leone had been a British Crown colony and center for the royal navy for fifteen years.

As long as Liberia remained a cluster of settlements along the coast, its legal status as a sovereign entity was not an issue. But as soon as a government and political machinery began to take shape and a constitution was drawn up, laws concerning foreigners began to be enforced.

Britain's position on Liberia's rights to collect customs duties was summed up in a letter dated September 9, 1844 sent by Commodore Jones of the H. M. S. Penelope to Joseph Jenkins Roberts, governor of the Liberian commonwealth:

For the rights in question, those of imposing custom duties and limiting the trade of foreigners by restrictions, are sovereign rights, which can only be lawfully exercised by sovereign and independent states, within their own recognized borders and dominions. I need not remind your excellency that this description does not apply to 'Liberia' which is not recognized as a subsisting state, even by the government of the country from which its settlers have immigrated.¹

For the British authorities in Sierra Leone, Liberia simply did not exist as a separate legal entity. British merchants took that stand in refusing to pay customs duties to the commonwealth. This refusal led to open clashes between the British navy and the Liberian authorities.²

To resolve the colony's legal status, in 1844 the leader of the settlers and the ACS heads asked the U.S. government to declare Liberia an American colony or protectorate. This appeal was rejected.³ The American refusal on the one hand, and the constant danger of clashes with the British navy on the other, affected the decision to declare Liberia an independent and sovereign state on July 26, 1847.⁴

Britain recognized the new republic on November 21, 1848, France on April 27, 1862, but the declaration of independence and recognition by the two major European powers on the West African coast did not resolve the issue of Liberian sovereignty and borders.⁵ This article will address the process of establishing the borders of the black republic. Part One will deal with the border agreements signed between Liberia and its colonial neighbors. Part Two will trace the process of demarcating the boundaries agreed upon and the changes introduced during this process.

1. The Border Convention of 1885

The boundaries of the colony and later the state of Liberia received little attention from those who conceived the idea of an Afro-American settlement in West Africa. Their vision of bringing civilization to the black continent through black settlers from the New World seemed all-embracing; they envisioned no boundaries to limit their civilizing mission of spreading Christianity and Western culture throughout the continent. The Liberian constitutions of 1824, 1841, and 1847 also ignored the question of political boundaries. In the early stages of the state, the European powers, Britain and France, encouraged the expansion of the black republic. The British Prime Minister supported its territorial expansion on the grounds that as a civilizing power Liberia could be an active partner in suppressing the slave trade along the West African coast.⁶ His attitude was shared by British philanthropists and abolitionists, who made generous contributions to Liberia's first President, J. J. Roberts, during his visit to London in 1848. The funds were used to purchase territories between Monrovia and the Mano river, with the support of the British government and the recognition of British naval authorities.⁷

Liberia's efforts to suppress the slave trade and its mission to spread Western civilization also affected France. Early in 1849, and again in 1859, a joint force of Liberian militia and the French navy attacked and destroyed slave "factories" in the New Sesters and Tradetown areas.⁸ Regarding Liberia's role in Africa, France declared: "The Liberian government is fulfilling a civilizing mission on the African coast which deserves the support of the French Republic."⁹

However, moral considerations were ignored when the European powers began to show interest in the territories adjoining Liberia. In 1858, the question of Liberia's right to impose customs duties on foreign traders resurfaced. This time the issue was not the legal status of the black republic, but the question of its boundaries as they affected the French, Spanish and British merchants trading along the coast. These traders denied the republic's right to impose levies and taxes on them, claiming that they were beyond its borders and thus its jurisdiction. At the end of 1858 the ship "Phoenix," owned by a French merchant named Chevalier, was seized on order of the Liberian authorities for

recruiting laborers on the shore, at Mana Rock, without government permission.¹⁰ In November, 1860, Liberia's only gunboat, the "Quail," seized and towed to Monrovia harbor two vessels belonging to British trader John Myers, who was accused of ignoring Liberian customs regulations.¹¹ Six months later, the same gunboat seized a ship flying the Spanish flag anchored offshore near The Gallinas, on suspicion that it was being used for the slave trade.¹² In all these cases, the merchants involved asked their governments for protection. Only one of these incidents received diplomatic treatment, when French Foreign minister Comte A. J. Walewski accepted Liberia's claim that Chevalier was operating on its territory.¹³ Britain and Spain used other means to deal with incidents involving their nationals. On December 17, 1860, Commander Smith of the British Navy stormed Monrovia harbor, released Myers' two vessels and demanded 385 pounds in compensation from the Liberian government in his behalf.¹⁴ Ten months later, a Spanish battleship shelled Monrovia harbor and sank the "Quail."¹⁵ Within a year Liberia had faced two challenges to its sovereignty. The interference of European powers in disputes with their citizens elevated these events to international incidents. Since Spain did not control territories adjacent to Liberia, the main actors were Britain and France.

Liberia, hoping to prove sovereignty over the disputed areas, presented the British government with several treaties and deeds its representatives had signed with local rulers of Gallinas and Sulima, where the British trader was operating. At the time, agreements with local leaders proving acquisition of territory were the sole proof required for sovereignty over a particular area. This was the customary method for proving and one which Britain itself used. Thus in 1876 Sierra Leone's Governor, Samuel Rowe, proclaimed British rule over the island of Matacong, near the present Sierra Leone-Guinea border, basing his claim on a treaty from 1826 which was never ratified.¹⁶ The British Foreign Office was satisfied by the proof presented by Liberia and in 1862, after verifying the documents, Foreign Minister John Russel accepted the Liberian arguments in principle.¹⁷

Eight years later Liberia had to repeat this procedure, this time with France. In 1870 Liberia presented to the French authorities deeds and agreements with chiefs proving sovereignty over part of the Kru coast. The question of Liberian sovereignty over the region was raised in early 1868, when French naval officers signed a treaty with the ruler of the Kru people in Settra Kru, where French and other ships recruited sailors. The Kru accepted French authority in this area and hoisted the French flag.¹⁸ The Liberian protest and the documents sent to Paris persuaded the French government to withdraw from its agreements with the Kru.¹⁹ France was willing to accept the Liberian claims because it had no vested interest in the Kru coast, and the Liberian authorities did not prevent French or other traders from recruiting Kru men for their ships there.²⁰

The British case was more complex, as British local interests overrode the views of the Foreign Office. The Sierra Leone authorities considered Sulima and Gallinas important to the colony's trade and pressured the Colonial Office to withhold recognition of Liberian sovereignty over these areas. However, the British could not deny outright the validity of Liberia's claims and a long series of talks ensued. Between 1862 and 1883 three different delegations the border demarcation. Two Liberian presidents, Stephen A. Benson in 1862 and Edward James Roye in 1870, as well as special envoy Edward Wilmot Blyden in 1879, visited London to discuss the issue. The problem remained unresolved until 1882, when the British unilaterally annexed both territories to the Sierra Leone protectorate.²¹

In annexing these territories, Britain ignored the main guiding principle of boundary determination in Africa, the acceptance of agreements and treaties with local rulers. This deviation from international custom was the result of a change in Britain's attitude toward Africa. It marked the end of the "informal empire" era and the beginning of a trend toward direct British intervention in African affairs. The deviation resulted from events in the northern part of Sierra Leone. In 1881 British and French representatives agreed on the border between Sierra Leone and the French territory that is now Guinea. The agreement was reached only after prolonged talks and considerable friction, including the landing of a French detachment in territory claimed by the British in Mellacourie in 1877 and a British threat of military retaliation. It placed most of the area known as the Northern Rivers under French control. The rivers provided access to the Niger valley, while the surrounding areas were suitable for groundnut cultivation. The loss of this territory, considered an important revenue source by the Sierra Leone authorities, shifted the focus to the southern part of the protectorate, the border with Liberia. The commercial opportunities offered by the areas of Sulima and Gallinas became vital for the Sierra Leone government following the loss of the Northern Rivers. The loss also ended Britain's indecision and sealed the fate of the territories, Britain's unilateral annexation of which left Liberia no choice but to sign a border convention on November 11, 1885 which placed the Sierra Leone-Liberia boundary on the left bank of the Mano river.

The shift from an informal empire to a policy of establishing a formal empire, culminating in the scramble for Africa, highlighted the need to divide African territories into spheres of influence and control. Britain and France held negotiations between 1861-76 on exchanging the Gambia for French-controlled territories on the West African coast. Although these negotiations bore no fruit, they hastened the border demarcation process, the first expression of which was the border agreement between Sierra Leone and Guinea. The process which led to the Anglo-Liberian convention may be evaluated against this background. As mentioned earlier, the 1881 agreement process was not without tension. This

tension threatened to erupt into open military confrontation in Sierra Leone's Northern Rivers area, but this tension remained on the local level. Actual military steps or unilateral annexation never took place during the long and complicated negotiations over the exchange of The Gambia. The European states acted through diplomatic channels to reach an agreement. Such was not the case in the Anglo-Liberian situation. Although the Black Republic was recognized as a sovereign state by Britain, this was not always honored. Great Britain seemed to have no scruples in using its navy and its political weight to wrest the Gallinas region from Liberian control, and treated the Black Republic as a second-class state. Liberia's Foreign Secretary, F. E. R. Johnson, succinctly expressed his country's position: "It was a clear case of might against right and the weaker had to yield."²²

2. The Agreement of 1892

The process by which a dispute between British merchants and trading companies and Liberian customs authorities turned into a border dispute and resulted in the loss of territory seemed to repeat itself during 1884 and 1885. The representative of *Compagnie Commerciale Française*, an American citizen named Julio who operated in the coastal region between the Cavalla and San Pedro rivers, refused to comply with Liberian customs regulations, claiming that the area was not part of the black Republic.²³ Another French company, *Compagnie du Sénégal et de la Côte Occidentale de l'Afrique*, had leased from the local ruler territory at the mouth of the Mano river, the border line between Liberia and Sierra Leone, without obtaining permission from Liberian authorities.²⁴

With the loss of the northwestern territories fresh in their minds, the Liberian leaders feared losing more territory, this time to the French. Their apprehension increased in the beginning of 1886, when they discovered that French naval officers had signed treaties with local Grebo rulers in the area between the Cavalla and San Pedro rivers later to be known as the Southeastern Territory. When Liberia protested the French encroachment on its territory, France denied all intention of controlling Liberian territories. However, Foreign Minister Charles L. Freycinet stated in a letter that the disputed region was marked on French maps as French territory.²⁵ Freycinet's letter meant that France did not back the trade companies operating along Liberia's coast, but neither did it accept Liberia's claims to the southeastern territory. Alarmed, Liberian leaders sought British and American support, presenting agreements and deeds of cession signed with local rulers as proof for their claim. In the negotiations for the 1885 boundary convention, they tried to persuade Britain to include a clause stating that Liberia's territory along the coast extended from the center of the Mano river in the northwest to the left bank of the San Pedro in the southeast.²⁶ This would mean that the area between the Cavalla and San Pedro

rivers was an integral part of the Republic. Again in 1887 Liberia asked twice that Britain acknowledge the San Pedro river as its southeastern boundary.²⁷ In the same year Liberia asked the U.S. to support its claim, based on documents, that the area up to the San Pedro was Liberian.²⁸ As further proof of sovereignty, Liberia planned to establish a port at the mouth of the San Pedro river as well as settlements along the shore between the Cavalla and the San Pedro.²⁹ None of these initiatives yielded positive results. The plans to establish a harbor and new settlements were never realized, and Britain repeatedly turned down Liberia's requests to acknowledge the San Pedro as its southeastern border on the grounds that effective occupation should be proven in the area between the rivers. Moreover, Britain stated in August 1887 that it considered Liberia's request as a demand to extend its frontiers up to the river, which had to be approved by the Berlin Conference participants.³⁰

This marked Liberia's first experience with the Berlin Conference resolutions of February 1885. These provided that any power acquiring territory or establishing protectorates on the African coasts should at once notify all other signatories, and declared that "possession of territory on these coasts implied a responsibility for the establishment of authority . . . sufficient to protect existing rights, and as the case may be, freedom of trade and of transit under the conditions agreed upon."³¹ The Republic found itself in an absurd situation, as its leaders had attempted to establish effective occupation long before the Berlin Conference. As early as 1857 and again in 1869, the Liberian government tried to establish "civilized settlements" in the hinterland as a means to civilize the indigenous Africans.³² In 1864 the Liberian Legislature decided to appoint a commissioner for native affairs in each county to represent the government and deal with the problems of the native Africans in the coastal area. Nine years later their powers were extended and included the authority to conclude trade agreements.³³ In 1868 and in 1874 the Black Republic sent delegations headed by Treasury Official Benjamin J. K. Anderson to the hinterland. The delegations had two goals—to establish Liberian control over the ethnic groups in the interior and to develop trade relations with the African kingdoms in the Savannah in order to attract their trade to the Liberian coast.³⁴ In 1869 the government established an Interior Department authorized to deal with all problems of the indigenous Africans. Unlike the commissioners for native affairs, who were restricted to dealing with the African communities in the coastal counties, the new department was to deal with the Africans in the hinterland as well.³⁵

The Black Republic's attempts to control the hinterland were part of the settler Liberian ideology defining a mission in Africa. One of the goals the black immigrants had set for themselves from the beginning was to spread Christianity and Western civilization among the indigenous Africans, the final aim being the "regeneration of the whole African continent." Extending Liberian presence

and rule in the hinterland conformed with the ideology guiding the state from its establishment. In fact, the principle of effective control used by Britain and France to justify their encroachments on Liberian territory was already familiar in Liberia, even if the term, coined at the Berlin Conference, was not yet in use. However, none of the actions to extend Liberian control to the hinterland yielded results. Anderson's mission was never completed, the Department of the Interior remained inactive, and the settlement project was not extended beyond parts of the coastal area. The British response placed Liberia in a difficult position; the Republic saw it as an attempt to force it to accept the resolutions of a conference to which it was not invited and which it in fact rejected. One of Liberia's reasons for refusing to be dragged into compliance with the Conference resolutions was expressed by Secretary of State Ernest J. Barclay:

My government declines on these grounds to commit suicide, as it would do by adopting the course suggested by the British Foreign Office in Enclosure C, or even for the present to enter into such correspondence with Great Britain as may occasion the opening of a South Eastern Boundary Question which seems to be desired by the gentlemen of the Foreign Office.³⁶

Ernest Barclay was not exaggerating in calling acquiescence to the British demands an invitation to commit suicide. Liberia was indeed incapable of providing effective control in most of its territory. As the American Minister Resident wrote to his government: "... practically Liberians have neither coast nor interior; except in spots on the 'surface' here and there where you may find a civilized settlement in the territory...."³⁷

Consenting to play the game by the rules set by the conference and enter the scramble for Africa would have meant certain loss of the Southeastern Territory and threaten Liberia's existence as an independent state. Liberia's request for diplomatic support from the U.S. met a more favorable response. The American Minister in Paris, MacLane, presented a letter to the Quai d'Orsay on April 16, 1887 in which he attempted to prove that Liberia possessed legal agreements and deeds of cession with the local rulers for the area in dispute. He added that the U.S. believed the French claims threatened Liberia's sovereignty and recommended direct talks between the two parties.³⁸ The strong U.S. support for Liberia's claims was in vain, as documents were no longer the only valid proof of possession of territory in Africa. Thus the French Foreign Office accepted only the recommendation for direct talks.³⁹

While Liberia was confined to acting through diplomatic channels, French colonial authorities launched a large-scale operation to establish their authority over the territories adjacent to Liberia. On August 1, 1884, a resident governor was appointed for the territories of Assinie and Grand Bassam, which was declared financially autonomous under the administrative responsibility of the

French authorities in Conakry. The establishment of French administration in the Ivory Coast was accompanied by the enforcement of French rule over the ethnic groups along the coast and in the interior. A unit of forty soldiers from Dahomey operated in the area and when more force was needed, the governor could call in Senegalese troops. Attempts by locals to reject French authority were dealt with severely.⁴⁰ In addition to the occupation of the coastal area, French delegations were sent to the interior to sign agreements with local rulers and establish military posts. Noel Ballay, the governor of the Southern Rivers region in Senegal, headed a mission early in 1891 to the territories south of the Cavalla river.⁴¹ A year later Lieutenant Merchand of the French Engineer Corps explored the Cavalla from the mouth inland.⁴² France secured its position in the Southeastern Territories between the Cavalla and San Pedro and imposed a protectorate over the region in 1891.⁴³

Liberia's inactivity, which contrasted sharply with France's initiative, derived from the unfair competition in which the Black Republic found itself. Liberia lacked the resources of a world power like France. Its economy was based on agriculture and commerce and it lacked completely an industrial base to support government investment in new territories. Liberia's exports were heavily dependent on market forces which it could not manipulate. The government was unable to mobilize citizens to establish new settlements and there was no standing army, much less a navy to enforce its authority in the southeast. This was a race between unequal contestants, whose winner was known even before the starting gun was fired. France did not use gunboat diplomacy, as Britain had, but its tools against Liberia were no less effective. Against the Liberian claims based on agreements with local rulers, France placed the principle of effective occupation. This principle applied only to new territory acquired by the European powers in Africa, and therefore should have excluded the southeastern area. Liberia's assertion of being a recognized sovereign state and thus exempt from the Berlin Conference resolutions was brushed aside. While the Black Republic's request for British diplomatic support was denied, this support was easily extended to the French cause in its dispute with Liberia. When the French occupation of the southeast territory became inevitable, Liberia, in a last desperate effort, sent letters to the U.S. and to European powers asking for support.⁴⁴ These requests were not answered and in December 1892 it was forced to sign an agreement with France recognizing the thalweg of the Cavalla river as the border between Liberia and the Ivory Coast.⁴⁵

3. The Agreement of 1907

The border agreements with Britain in 1885 and with France in 1892 established the Mano and Cavalla rivers as Liberia's borders with Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast. The border line represented by the waterways was clear and obvious in the coastal area, but little was known about the course of these

rivers inland. The demarcation of the border in the hinterland was based mainly on longitude and latitude lines as well as geographical objects such as rivers or towns. For instance, according to the Franco-Liberian agreement of 1892 the border line began 20 miles south of the junction of the Cavalla and Fodedougou-Ba rivers, crossing latitude 6°30' north and longitude 9°30' west of Paris. The border continued at 10° longitude until latitude 7° north, from there in a straight line to the meeting of longitude 11° with the latitude crossing the village of Tembi-Cunda.⁴⁶

The French were the first to discover the discrepancy between the border line and geographical reality. The war against African leader Samori-Touré brought French troops to the Liberian hinterland. In September 1893, French officer Etienne Bonnier was ordered to establish a fort in the Bagoé area and occupy Yende in order to cut Samori's arms supply route from the south, even if this entailed a temporary incursion into Liberian territory.⁴⁷ The territory was explored and maps drawn. It was discovered that the village of Tembi-Cunda was not located in the place indicated by the map attached to the 1892 border agreement. The new findings implied that the Liberian border as drawn according to that agreement was to be extended northward.⁴⁸ In 1895 a French mission explored the upper part of the Cavalla and discovered that the Fodedougou-Ba was not a tributary of the Cavalla, as indicated in the border agreement.⁴⁹ In August 1899 a second French mission led by Administrator Hostain was sent to establish French rule in the Ivory Coast hinterland and find the exact location of the border.⁵⁰ The French discoveries in the border zone, once revealed, raised Liberian apprehensions. Liberian leaders, mindful of past experience, feared that another portion of their territory would be lost to the French, this time in the hinterland. Liberia turned to Britain for help.

Britain had not always been a friendly neighbor; there had been disputes over the Northwestern territories bordering the British colony of Sierra Leone, and Britain had declined to support Liberian claims in the southeastern area. However, at the turn of the century Britain seemed the lesser evil of the two powers occupying territories adjacent to Liberia. It respected its obligations as set out in the 1885 convention and made no attempt to take possession of territories on the coast across the Mano river. Britain's attitude was rooted in its policy of opposing large-scale territorial expansion. British officers from Sierra Leone, unlike their French counterparts, were not engaged in wars of occupation against African empires. London was very cautious in any engagement with African leaders implying military responsibility. Samori-Touré's requests to establish official political and commercial relations with Freetown were ignored.⁵¹

Compared with the French encroachment, the British inactivity led several Liberian leaders to believe that Britain had no interest in occupying territories in the interior. Furthermore, the French presence was not limited to the Liberian

hinterland, but extended to the Sierra Leone interior, making Britain a potential Liberian ally. Arthur Barclay, then Treasury Secretary, believed that Liberia and Britain had a mutual interest in preventing further French encroachment. In August 1901 he headed an official delegation to talks in London, where a joint policy regarding France was agreed. The Foreign Office suggested that Liberia lodge a complaint with France about its incursions into Liberian territory and express willingness to demarcate their borders. The two countries decided that Britain would establish a direct diplomatic channel with Liberia by appointing a consul in Monrovia. In addition, a British surveyor was to demarcate the Liberia-Sierra Leone border at his country's expense.⁵²

Liberia was to announce that the demarcation of the border with Sierra Leone would take place shortly and it would be convenient to continue the process with the French territories. Barclay suggested that the British surveyor represent Liberia and that Britain finance the entire operation.⁵³ Britain was willing to allow its surveyor to continue the demarcation work on the border between Liberia and the French territories, but refused to finance the process. To enact the joint policy, Liberia's Secretary of State, Hillary Travis, wrote to his French counterpart Delcasse and asked that the demarcation of the border with French territories commence immediately after the Sierra-Leone-Liberia demarcation was completed.⁵⁴ The Liberian government, always short of funds, was forced to divert money earmarked for other purposes to finance the demarcation process. President Garretson W. Gibson asked the legislature "... to curtail the usual appropriations for roads, bridges, public buildings, etc. so that the Government may not be embarrassed for means to finance this important operation."⁵⁵

The French colonial office considering the Liberian initiative consulted the Governor General of French West Africa, Ernest Roume. In many respects, Roume represented the spirit of the West African French officer corps, which saw as its supreme duty the raising of the tricolor over as many territories as possible. Like his great predecessors, Gallieni and Archinard, Roume opposed the very existence of the independent African states. Existing agreements with African authorities could easily be ignored when French interests were at stake. In two long reports, from February 3, 1903 and March 29, 1904, Roume elaborated his arguments. Liberia, he claimed, did not have the means and ability for effective occupation of the hinterland. The geographical survey revealed that French Guinea should cede some of its territory, at present effectively occupied by France, to Liberia. On the Ivory Coast border, France would gain some territory, but the Ivory Coast administration had no means to effectively occupy that region. If the demarcation following the 1892 line were to take place, an impossible situation could be created: France would give up relatively well-controlled territories and gain territories which it could not control. Ethnic groups might take advantage of the situation and attack the French territories,

since Liberia was unable to restrain them. Roume's belief that independent African political entities had no rights found its way into his official documents. He predicted that Liberia would in any case be partitioned among Britain, Germany, and the U.S. France, he warned, should be ready to protect its interests in Liberia, and any formal recognition of the demarcated border would hamper its freedom of action.⁵⁶

Adhering to the policy of "patriotic refusal" created by the great conquerors of French West Africa, Roume did not wait for a reply from his superiors. He decided to fortify French occupation in the Liberian hinterland. In 1904, French troops stationed in Kissidougou and Baoule in French Guinea advanced toward the Makona river.⁵⁷ Roume's operation was accompanied by a public campaign by the pro-colonial movement in France to justify the presence of French troops in Liberian territory. Newspapers in Paris and West Africa publicized the French position, which was that France had a right to the area surrounding Tembi Kunda since the new geographical findings refuted Liberia's claims to these territories. The colonialists claimed that in any event Liberia did not effectively control its hinterland and the ethnic groups there had asked for French protection.⁵⁸ Consternation grew in Liberia when the French Minister of Colonies, Gaston Doumergue, accepted Roume's claims and insisted that France would retain its military posts along the Guinean coast, including recently built ones (meaning the stations along the Makona river). Doumergue also suggested that the Ivory Coast border leave the upper Cavalla basin in French hands.⁵⁹ The French claims and active encroachments into Liberian territory were followed by disturbances on the already demarcated Liberia-Sierra Leone border. This time the source of unrest was a local ethnic group, the Kissi. Several clans, headed by Chief Kafura, crossed the border and raided villages in the British Protectorate. The borderline meant very little to the local inhabitants, who continued in many cases to act as if it was nonexistent, and cross-border raids continued. Nevertheless, this time the British authorities in Sierra Leone made an effort to stop the actions. The territory in question had economic value, being rich in palm oil which had become a major export commodity. A light railway line was built in 1896 to carry the oil to the Freetown harbor.⁶⁰ The British authorities in Sierra Leone demanded a punitive expedition which would cross the border into the Liberian region of Kanre Lahun to end Kafura's forays. The Colonial and Foreign Ministers insisted that Liberia give informed consent to the operation. Sierra Leone Governor Leslie Probyn met Liberia's President Arthur Barclay in 1905 and received his permission for a single limited military operation in Kanre Lahun.⁶¹ The Sierra Leone authorities realized such an operation could not stop the Kissi raids. There were no Liberian troops or administration in the area and the Sierra Leone frontier force was ordered to position permanent military posts in Kanre Lahun to impose law and order. Kanre Lahun's palm tree wealth probably contributed to the decision

to keep the region under British control. What was planned as a single retaliatory operation turned into a continuing occupation of the area.⁶²

The Black Republic found itself in an alarming situation. History seemed to be repeating itself, with British and French troops encroaching once more on its territory. Arthur Barclay, who became president in January 1904, decided on firm action. He lodged a protest with Britain about the continuing occupation of Kanre Lahun and demanded that Sierra Leone troops withdraw from the area.⁶³ Two delegations were sent to Paris. The first was led by Attorney General F. E. R. Johnson and a senior politician from the southeastern county of Maryland, J. J. Dossen, and arrived in July 1904. The second, headed by Edward Wilmot Blyden, former Secretary of State, arrived in July 1905.⁶⁴ The two delegations were charged with presenting Liberia's position to the Quai d'Orsay and conducting talks with the French concerning border demarcation.

The moves on the diplomatic front did not put an end to French and British encroachments. The lack of troops and administration along the borders represented an Achilles heel for Liberia. President Barclay realized that diplomacy alone would not solve the problem and that effective occupation was needed. There was an all-out effort in 1904 to establish military posts and a skeleton administrative machinery. The absence of a regular army forced the government to mobilize the militia. In early March, units of the militia's Fourth Battalion were dispatched to set up three posts on the upper Cavalla in Grawroh, Kitenbo, and Toobo.⁶⁵ At the end of the year Lieutenant William Lomax was appointed commissioner to the hinterland and the border zone. Lomax and a military unit were instructed to locate the border according to the 1892 agreement and establish two military posts, one at the junction of the Melli and Makona rivers along the Guinea border and the other in Kanre Lahun.⁶⁶ Commissioners of African Affairs were appointed in every county along the coast and roving commissioners were appointed for the hinterland.⁶⁷

Governing the hinterland required money, always scarce in Liberia. Even the relatively simple operation of demarcating the border with Sierra Leone had to be financed by Britain. The Liberian government sought a development scheme to place its shaky economy on a sound footing. Foreign investors were sought. Under the guidance of President Barclay, the government held talks with a British company, the Liberian Development Company headed by Sir Harry Johnston. An agreement was reached in July 1904 granting the company exclusive mineral search rights in Montserrado and Maryland counties, and two roads from the coastal area to the hinterland were to be built.⁶⁸ Later, the Company loaned the government 100,000 pounds sterling.⁶⁹ The agreement with the company had political implications as well. Both parties had a mutual interest in a secure and clearly demarcated border encompassing as large a territory as possible in the hinterland, in which the company would exercise its monopoly. Commercial activity in the interior was additional proof of effective

occupation and the operation of company representatives under Liberian authority would prevent foreign aggression. Harry Johnston, a former British colonial official, emphasized this point in a letter to the British Foreign Office.⁷⁰ The unavoidable consequence of the understanding between the Liberian government and the Company was Johnston's active participation in the protracted border demarcation discussions between Liberia and France. In November 1905 Johnston traveled to Paris to meet with Louis Gustave Binger, the head of the African Affairs Section of the French Foreign Ministry. Binger made it clear that France was unwilling to withdraw from its posts along the Makona, but showed more flexibility regarding the upper Cavalla region. Since Johnston's company had exclusive rights in Maryland County, which included the upper Cavalla, and cared less about the Makona border region, this attitude suited him. According to the agreement reached between the two officials, the Makona would mark Liberia's northeastern boundary and France would withdraw from Diorodougu, Danane, and Kwonkan in the upper Cavalla area. In December 1905, Johnston returned to Monrovia and convinced President Barclay to accept the proposal.⁷¹ The agreement was never signed. Roume, the Governor-General of French West Africa and "the man on the spot," objected strongly to defining the northeastern border and dismissed the possibility of transferring Ivory Coast territory to Liberia on the grounds that Liberia would be unable to control the border zone. He persuaded his superiors to appoint him to head the French delegation to the negotiations and on October 18, 1906 he presented his uncompromising view to Johnston, stressing that French troops would continue crossing the border into the Liberian interior.⁷²

Roume's enthusiasm to gain territory for French Guinea made both the Liberians and the British nervous. The advance of French troops along the Mafessa river brought them very close to the Sierra Leone outpost in Wulade. The Sierra Leone authorities, with the memory of the bloody incident in Waima in 1894 fresh in their minds, wished to prevent further clashes with French troops.⁷³ The head of the African Department in the British Foreign Office, Clarke, met his French counterpart, Binger, in May 1907 to discuss the Liberia-Guinea border issue. Binger believed that the main obstacle to an agreement was Liberia's inability to control its own hinterland, and that the presence of French troops there guaranteed quiet. Clarke agreed, but suggested another solution. Instead of deploying French forces in dangerously close proximity to British troops, the two governments would cooperate in instituting broad reforms to stabilize Liberia's economy. In addition, a standing army would be established under British and French command and deployed in the border region. Binger accepted the proposal and it was agreed that Clarke's plan, together with the border line defined by Johnston and Binger in 1905, would be the main elements for a new border agreement.⁷⁴ Binger and Clarke's proposal evoked Roume's usual objections. The Foreign Ministry succumbed to his pressure and announced its withdrawal from the proposal on July 22, 1907.⁷⁵ Roume hoped that

this would put an end to Clarke's scheme, but the British Foreign Office adhered to the plan for economic reform and a standing army. On August 27, 1907, President Arthur Barclay accepted the British proposal. Britain's decision to carry out the scheme without France voided Roume's claims, since with British help Liberia would be able to control the border zone. The road to a Franco-Liberian border agreement was reopened, and in September 1907 President Barclay arrived in Paris for talks with French officials. It was agreed that the border line would follow the existing French and Liberian posts in Guinea and the Ivory Coast.⁷⁶ This enabled the second border agreement between Liberia and France, signed on September 18, 1907.⁷⁷ Three years later, on January 27, 1911, a convention was signed between Liberia and Britain settling the dispute over Kanre Lahun. The region, which remained under British control, was exchanged for Sierra Leone territory and Liberia received 6000 pounds sterling in compensation.⁷⁸

Between 1885 and 1911 Liberia signed four agreements defining its borders, each preceded by long negotiations and disputes with its colonial neighbors. Liberia fought a losing war; it had to cede territories in the coastal area and the hinterland which it believed to be its own. Its main weakness in the disputes with France and with Britain was its inability to prove effective occupation. In 1870 Liberia was able to persuade France to withdraw from Settra Kru using only agreements and deeds of cession signed with local rulers to prove control over territory. As long as this remained the internationally accepted criterion for sovereignty, Liberia could defend its interests on equal terms with the European powers. However, the acceptance of the principle of effective occupation introduced at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 disturbed the balance between the Black Republic and the European powers in West Africa. Liberia had to share the fate reserved for politically weak and economically backward countries. Its position was similar to that of Portugal. That country, the first to establish an African empire, became a powerless state which fell behind the European industrial powers and was excluded from the European inner circle. Portugal, unlike Liberia, was invited to the Berlin Conference, but like the Black Republic it was a victim of the changes introduced after the conference. Portugal found itself isolated in the Berlin Conference. Its main ally, Britain, abandoned it, withdrawing its support for Portugal's claim on both sides of the Congo river. The decision to recognize the Congo Free State along the river and the establishment of French protectorate over the Lower Congo came at the expense of Portuguese claims. By the end of the conference, Portugal had lost half of the territories it claimed in Africa. Portugal, like Liberia, was no match for the principle of effective occupation. France, Germany, and Britain, its neighbors in Africa, exploited this principle when they encroached upon territories claimed by Portugal. Between May 1886 and July 1887 several border agreements were signed among Portugal, Germany, and France, under which Portugal had to cede territories on Africa's western and eastern coasts. The recognition of

Portuguese rule over Angola and Mozambique, like the recognition of Liberian rule over its territory, derived not from its ability to exercise effective occupation, but from rivalries between colonial neighbors.⁷⁹ The European powers did not refrain from using gunboat diplomacy and secret agreements against Portugal. In 1890 Britain pressured Portugal to give up the territory connecting Angola and Mozambique between the 12th and 18th parallels. When Portugal refused, Britain sent a man-of-war to Mozambique harbor and Portugal was forced to accede. In 1898 a secret agreement was signed between Germany and Britain to divide Portuguese territories should "it not be possible to maintain their integrity."⁸⁰

The parallel between Liberia and Portugal is not complete. Portugal was a European country which sought to keep territories in Africa. During the scramble for Africa, European troops never encroached on Portuguese territory and its borders in Europe were never in doubt. Liberia was an African country, the very existence of which as a sovereign state was endangered at times by its European neighbors. Despite these significant differences, comparison of the two countries helps to illuminate the methods used by the European states during the scramble for Africa. These methods opened up the African hinterland for the powerful nations or those which could translate inter-European rivalries into territorial gain in Africa. Liberia and Portugal were excluded from this category. Their vulnerability derived from a lack of military and political clout which compelled them to rely on deeds, agreements, and historical claims when other powers were making new rules for the game.

During the long border dispute Liberia developed different attitudes toward its European neighbors. Britain was generally viewed as an ally which could provide diplomatic and material support, while France seemed a dangerous rival which coveted Liberian territory. British officials in London and in Sierra Leone basically accepted Liberia as an independent sovereign state and never challenged its right to exist. French officials, in contrast, were not convinced of this right. This difference was a major factor in determining policy, as was the timing of the border disputes with both countries. The border dispute between Liberia and Sierra Leone ended in 1885, and Britain respected the agreement most of the time. The Kanre Lahun incident was an exception to the rule. It concerned a small area and was solved in 1911. The disputes with France were different; they occurred when the scramble for Africa was at its peak and Liberia felt constantly threatened by France's eagerness to annex additional territories to its colonies. French colonial officers and administrators often annexed territories which showed no visible signs of effective Liberian control while ignoring agreements signed by their own government.

While the border convention with Sierra Leone was signed in 1885 and the border line demarcated in 1903, Liberia had to sign two agreements with France in 1892 and 1907 which did not put an end to the disputes. The vague border

drawn according to the agreement of 1892 was replaced by a more defined line in 1907. The Makona river was the starting point and the line was to follow the military posts mentioned in the agreement, up to the Cavalla river. Two principles were established to facilitate the demarcation: first, that the border line should follow geographical features, and second, that it should not divide ethnic groups.⁸¹ These seemingly clear guidelines made the demarcation process a source of more dispute between Liberia and France, and more commissions had to be sent to the area. This process of demarcation will be the subject of Part II of this article;

Endnotes

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¹⁵Commodore Edmonstone to Admiralty, 10 October 1861, F.O. 84/1301, P.R.O.

¹⁶John Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa* (London: Macmillan Co., 1963), p. 217.

¹⁷Message of the President of Liberia, December 5, 1862, Vol. 39, No. 3., March 1863, p. 79.

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²⁰Dauriac au Minstre de la Marine et des Colonies, 22 Septembre 1869, Afrique VI, Dossier 14B, BAN.

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*Part II will follow in a subsequent issue.

The Editor.

Nathaniel Varney Massaquoi (1905-1962)
A Biographical Essay

Raymond J. Smyke

Introduction

A little remembered name among Liberians today is Nathaniel Massaquoi. A member of a distinguished Vai family,¹ he was known among friends and colleagues as "Nat" Massaquoi. Educated in Germany during the eventful 1920's, he became a teacher and public servant with a number of firsts to his name. The first Liberian to do his secondary and possibly higher education in Germany. Among the first Vai-Liberians to teach at Liberia College. The first African to be elected to the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO). Above all, he was perhaps Liberia's first real revolutionary.

Implicated in a plot to assassinate President Edwin Barclay he served four years before being rehabilitated by President W. V. S. Tubman, eventually achieving cabinet rank as Secretary of Public Instruction. Shortly before he died, Nathaniel fell from grace again, suspected of working to overthrow the government. A brilliant, eccentric, hyperactive person; a loyal friend and confidant, he believed passionately that education would liberate Africa from alien bondage. For a decade, beginning in 1950, he worked hard at UNESCO and other international fora to promote a continental education policy—at a time when Black people were not taken seriously by the Western World.

The research for this paper stems from a longitudinal study of the Massaquoi family which began in 1959 when I first met Nathaniel.² In Monrovia I often stayed at his home in Congotown. We were involved in helping to formulate African educational policy. As will be shown, he already had an international reputation due partly to his unique character, his language skills and to the political environment of the day. The latter is important in understanding both the man and the era.

Seventeen African countries became independent in 1960. Nat had already been the Liberian delegate to UNESCO and other international education agencies for ten years. It was a period when Englishmen represented their colonies and Frenchmen theirs. His was a lone indigenous African voice speaking on behalf of education. True, there were other independent countries in Africa. Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and the Union of South Africa, enjoyed this status for many years. Libya joined the club of independent states in 1951,

Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia in 1956, and Ghana in 1957. Thus shortly after the formation of the United Nations and its specialized agencies between 1945 and 1950, only Ethiopia and Liberia were independent Black African states. The Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie personally held the education portfolio, and Ethiopian representatives, when they attended UNESCO meetings were not vocal. Nat's effectiveness, however, is a matter of public record. His first time chairing the Liberian delegation was 1951; two years later, in 1953, he was elected to the 33-member Executive Board.³

It would be wrong, however, to look at the subject uniquely as an educator. Biography and, indeed history, better informs the reader if set in a context.⁴ Nathaniel and his brothers and sister were born into a remarkable family. The father, Momolu Massaquoi, (1870-1938) was a key indigenous figure in early 20th Century Liberian affairs—in administration, education, government, party politics, and trading. Among the first Africans from the continent to be educated in the United States in the 1890's, the elder Massaquoi strongly influenced his family throughout his whole life and indeed even after he died.⁵ Of the 12 children, Nat and his sister Fatima⁶ were closest to the father having spent the most time with him during his prime years (1922 to 1929) when he was the first Liberian Consul General in Germany and the only accredited Black diplomat in continental Europe. Without delving into psychobiography, he put great pressure on these two to excel on behalf of the family, the race and themselves. Nathaniel's life gradually emerged from his fathers shadow, but it was a painful trip. Four stages will be examined in an effort to understand him fully. The early years, education in Germany, his return to Liberia and his contribution to education policy and practice.

Early Years

The Harris family was a well-known trading enterprise on the West Coast of Africa beginning in the mid 19th Century.⁷ John Myer Harris and his brother Nathaniel started the business and were later joined by the latter's son, also called Nathaniel. In the family these people had nicknames to avoid confusion. John was 'old man Harris,' his brother, Nat I and his son Nat II. Nathaniel Massaquoi is named after Nat I who was married to a Tucker from an African clan in the Sherbro. It was the custom for traders on the coast to have African wives, even though many maintained a marriage in England. Old man Harris, for example, was married to the daughter of a Chief from Juring which brought him into the Massaquoi clan and he had a wife in England who never visited the coast. In the telling and retelling of family history, for which Fatima and Abraham became custodians, the following facts emerge.

Nat I and his wife had two children, Joseph and Julia Cecilia Harris (c1880-1956). Joseph was a trader in and around Conakry. He was able to enter trading with the help of Emmanuel Lyons, the Freetown agent of old man Harris's

friend, Nathan Isaacs (1808-1872). Emmanuel's daughter, Anna Lyons, married a Jewish merchant from Hamburg known in the family as Grand'pa Rudolph Hamelberg. He came to the Sierra Leone coast in the 1850's. The marriage register has his occupation as 'Civil Servant.' They begot Theodore Hamelberg. He and Julia are part of the story.

Julia Cecilia Harris—his mother.

She was born about 1880 in Bendu where her father was operating the Sherbro factories for his brother John. Her father died in Bendu when she was quite young, so she was raised by two 'Aunties' in Freetown who were actually cousins, Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Kerwin. The latter was the sister of Nat II who took over the business in Sulima and died in 1934. Julia attended St. Joseph's school in Freetown and though her father was Jewish she became a Roman Catholic and was known as a strict Catholic until she died at age 76.

Julia was Nat Massaquoi's mother. She met his father Momolu just after the turn of the Century while he was serving as a Paramount Chief in Ghandema, the Galinhas a traditional Massaquoi area near the disputed Sierra Leone-Liberian border. Momolu's niece Agnes, then a student at Annie Walsh School, Freetown, had the habit of spending her vacations with relatives in the Galinhas,⁸ while Julia usually went to stay with her cousin Nat II and his family at their beautiful home in Sulima on the ocean.⁹

In 1904 Agnes and Julia decided to go together and spend some time at both places. While in the Galinhas Julia met Momolu. They fell in love that summer and planned to be married the following year. In the meantime Julia had Momolu's child, Nathaniel who was born on 13 June 1905 at Ghandema. She stayed in the Galinhas until the baby could walk. They planned to build a stone house and made all of the local arrangements. Julia then went to Freetown to prepare for the wedding. The aunties were very upset. They did not want her to marry, particularly one "who had all those country women." They sought the moral suasion of the Catholic Bishop, The Right Rev. John A. O'Gorman of the Irish province of Holy Ghost Fathers who held forth in Freetown from 1903 until 1931. As a Catholic, a dispensation had to be obtained for a mixed marriage. Thus, to the emotional appeal of the aunties was added the proscription of the Church. Her Uncle, old man Harris was married to a Massaquoi, her mother was a Tucker. These two families were inter-related, and now she wanted to marry Momolu, quite probably, at least, a second cousin. The proscription was quite clear, indeed, explicit in Canon Law. In those days the Church had even less flexibility than today. Julia never married Momolu.

A few years later, in 1908, she wed Theodore Hamelberg, who worked for Cable and Wireless, Ltd. in Angola and along the coast for much of his life. To this union was born Edward, mentioned earlier and a daughter Hanna. "Ma Julia" spent the last decade of her life in Monrovia working as an expert

seamstress. She died in 1956. During this period she was often with her son Nathaniel but had a particularly close relationship with Fatima, with whom she shared her reminiscences and stories of Momolu and their great love. It was Fatima who shared these with me.

After Julia's marriage it is quite likely that Momolu took Nat to be reared by his sister Mama Jassa, the oldest member of the Massaquoi clan, in Njagbacca. He did this for Fatima several years later. It was customary to place a child with a mature person for early formation.

Momolu Massaquoi—his father.

Born about 1870 into a notable family, he studied in the United States before the turn of the Century. Then, "for six years, from 1894 to 1900, he taught and later served as principal of St. John's (Robertsport). He left the school to become Paramount Chief and the traditional ruler of his people, thus being entitled to wear the Massaquoi Crown." In April 1906, at the age of 35, he was deposed.¹⁰

After this he began trading throughout Sierra Leone giving it up in 1911 to return to Monrovia. He had friends in high places and was quickly integrated into Liberian society. "The two men responsible for his return to Liberia and who became his closest, life-long friends were former Presidents Arthur Barclay and Daniel Howard. They arranged employment for him which shortly led to the job of Chief Clerk in the Department of Interior. After making suitable arrangements for his traditional wives, he was married in 1915 to Rachel Johnson, the granddaughter of former President Hilary Johnson. She was given the Vai name of honor—Ma Sedia. His equal in many ways, Ma Sedia was a great stabilising influence on his life."¹¹ To understanding the environment in which Nat grew up one must look at Momolu's position in Liberian affairs after the marriage. Had Momolu continued to trade in Sierra Leone and eventually retire there, Nat's life path would have taken a totally different turn. Thus, a child's early life is determined by family status—particularly so in Liberia.

Nat was a ten year old lad in the extended family that attended his fathers wedding. We have an interesting account of this moment from Fatima's "Autobiography." Nathaniel Vaali or Varney (Varney is the African version of the Islamic Vaali) came to the 1915 wedding from Freetown. He had light skin, curly hair and soon acquired a nick name of Ali—a version of Vaali. This was the first time that Fatima met him and she was surprised that he spoke no Vai, Mende or Creole but he did know some English while she did not (243). Indeed, when the family was together in Monrovia, Nat taught what he knew to Abraham and to Fatima. After the wedding the family lived on Ashmun Street in a house described in great detail inside and out. Their father was then working as Commissioner-at-Large in the hinterland and there was a constant stream of people visiting him at home. Notables from the interior slept under the house which was built on concrete pillars. He took a large number of children into his

home, sons of hinterland chiefs as well as girls, usually the children of deceased relatives. There were often 26 children at one time and they ate at a long table. "Eight languages were spoken in the house at dinner: Vai, Mende, Kru, Gbandi, Gizi [Kisi], Gola, Buzi [Loma], Dai. Woe unto him who did not try to understand the language of others" (243). On one memorable occasion the Frontier Force revolted; frightened people streamed to the Massaquoi house. Momolu talked to the soldiers in their own language and they laid down their arms—the children, including Nat, watched all of this from an upstairs piazza (259). Abraham later recalled, "they were paying those boys all night." Momolu supervised everyone's studying and gave prizes for good recitals. An incident involving Nat is related in some detail. When he was 12 or 13 he had written to a beautiful girl asking to marry her. Misfortune struck after a sibling discovered the note in a coat pocket. It was noised about and Momolu, deciding to teach his son a lesson, arranged a mock wedding with all of the children dressed up in appropriate garments. Nat got nervous and exclaimed, "Oh papa make I no marry!" Across the street from their home lived Joanna Coleman, the widow of President William David Coleman known to the children as Ma Jo. She came, by prearrangement, to beg Momolu not to marry his son off at such a tender age, then taking Nat aside she extracted a pledge that he would never make false promises to girls (345).

A few of the younger children settled in Monrovia with Momolu and Ma Sedia among them Bei James born in 1903, Nat and Abraham both born in 1905, Ciaka Sam born in 1910, and Fatima in 1912. Ma Sedia bore three children who survived—Arthur in 1921, Fritz in 1926 and Fasia in 1928.¹² It was a heady period for the family. The marriage conferred status and prominence in the society, with Momolu's star rising in President Howard's administration. In addition to Commission-at-Large of the Interior, he served as Secretary to the President, Acting Secretary of War, and Secretary of the Interior. He began work in the Native Affairs Section under Chief Clerk Rose and Secretary of Interior James J. Morris. He soon replaced Rose and later became Secretary of the combined Departments of Interior and War. Nathaniel traveled with his father during official treks to the hinterland. Nat, Abraham and Fatima often made these trips together, recalling not only the hammock rides but watching their father function with the chiefs and people along the many stops. Although Momolu had numerous children by different indigenous marriages, he apparently saw some promise in Nathaniel and was keen to have him along.

Nat and Abraham attended elementary and secondary school at the College of West Africa, described in 1911 as "... beautifully situated on one of the highest ridges in the city and commanded a panoramic view of the entire surroundings as far as the Atlantic Ocean."¹³ Nat seldom spoke of this period, however, we have a notion of Monrovia at the time and what it was like to be a student at CWA, from a contemporary, Clarence L. Simpson. Students ranged

from ages 12 to 20 with grammar school lasting eight years. Departments of teacher training and Biblical studies were for the older students, and the school as a whole was run by President Dr. J. H. Reed, an expatriate. Tuition, full room and board was \$60 per month. It was in a difficult economic period due to Liberia's neutrality during the War and consequent isolation by all combatants. These and many more details of the life and interests of a young boy in Monrovia during World War I are provided by Simpson.

Yet, by the time that the family sailed to Germany in June 1922—Nat's seventeenth birthday—one suspects that the change was a welcome one because, in my view, his adolescent years were not particularly happy. While there is little documentary evidence for this statement, hints appear in the recorded conversations with family members, permitting a biographer to sense from all that has gone before and from what came after, that these formative years were confusing. The evidence is this. He spent perhaps two years with his natural mother 'until he could walk.' She then went out of his life when she married Hammelberg and moved to Angola. He was reared by a loving relative Mama Jassa occasionally seeing his itinerant father—who had many children to look after. In addition Nat was light skinned, and only partly Vai, unlike his brothers who were "pure Vai." Momolu and those in the family he influenced belonged to and worshiped in the Protestant Episcopal Church where their relative—The Rev. Theophilus Momolu Gardiner, became the first Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, serving 1919 to his death in 1941. But Nat, due to his mother's influence, was a baptised Roman Catholic.

Then too, following the Monrovia marriage Nathaniel had to move into an entirely new family situation at the age of ten, a traumatic situation for any child. As noted in the beginning of this paper he was "brilliant, eccentric, hyper-active", life-long character traits. He was probably a lot for Ma Sedia to handle. In the reminiscences of the rides in the hammock, both Abraham and Fatima mentioned that Nat would often pinch Fatima to make her cry so that Momolu would come to investigate. Once, he pushed another boy out of the hammock and said nothing. The column or Porters had to stop and go back to look for the lad. He was also fond of "humbugging" the porters. His Brother Abraham, to whom he was the closest, said that these were signs of affection showing that he loved Fatima and cared for the other boy. But, other interpretations are possible.

Germany

In early 1922 when Momolu was appointed Liberian Consul General stationed in Hamburg, his was the third appointment in the new diplomatic service begun in 1920. C. E. Cooper was made Consul-General in Liverpool, while Gabriel Moore Johnson, the son-in-law of President King and Momolu's father-in-law, was assigned to Fernando Po. The elder Massaquoi held the post for eight interesting years.¹⁴

Recounting the father's job as a preface to the German experience aims to set the stage for a formative period of Nathaniel's life. As noted he was seventeen years old when the family boarded the Woreman Lines *S. S. Wigbert* on 21 May 1922 and sailed for Germany.¹⁵ Living in that rare diplomatic environment and shaped by a strictly regimented educational system, would be an important influence on any teenage boy. But it was not just that. Being a member of a lone Black diplomatic family in continental Europe and watching his father function as an equal in a sea of white people had, in my view, a life-long influence on him in several ways. It gave him comfortable self-assurance in dealing with foreigners in the three European languages that he mastered—German, English and French. But this also had a negative side. His brilliant mind and short temper made him quickly lose patience with others. He often took matters into his own hands and thus became overburdened and overconfident causing much personal suffering in later life. Examples of this will be shown.

Reading "Fatima's Autobiography" gives a flavor of what life was like. Though younger than Nat at the time, she records family and school life in Hamburg and in later conversations mentioned how quickly Nat learned German. They found a flat at Schluterstrasse 53 which was too small. After much searching, a Consul General's residence and office was secured, a 14 room villa at 22 Johnsallee, with the University at one end of the street and the Alster at the other. The Consulate had an interesting array of guests. "Fatima recalled W.E.B. DuBois, on the sofa, relaxed, cigar in hand, sharing his thoughts on Pan-Africanism and the future of the race, with visitors."¹⁶ This period before the great depression was relatively relaxed with many people travelling between Monrovia and Hamburg. In addition to the numerous visits of W.E. B. DuBois there were others, among them the Black singer Roland Hayes, Associate Justice and Uncle Thomas E. Besolow, Senator William V.S. Tubman, as well as missionaries and persons coming for medical attention at the city's famous Institute of Tropical Medicine. It was Nat who met Marcus Garvey's lieutenants James H. O'Meally and William Strange during their June 1924 visit to Hamburg. They stayed for ten days, Momolu issued the visa's to enable them to proceed to Liberia where they were to begin preparations for their 'back to Africa' movement. This was no casual visit since his father-in-law Gabriel Moore Johnson was the 'Potentate of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and Leader of the Negro Peoples of the World'.¹⁷

One is aware from family correspondence that a large number of young people were brought to Germany for education and were financially supported by Momolu. They all began school in Hamburg, some lived in the consulate, others boarded in German homes. Later when they went to different schools in Europe, the consulate remained their 'home'.¹⁸ Nat was a part of this new world. Since he could type he helped his father with office tasks until Fraulein Gertrude von Bobers was engaged as secretary. It was she who kept the consulate and the

family going during the whole time in Germany, even corresponding with the children after they returned. Nat also saw that in addition to regular consular, diplomatic and trade activities the villa served as an unofficial "open house for almost all Africans who were coming through." Some wanting to see 'the black diplomat from Liberia,' others with consular problems but no government to turn to.

In a 12 September 1925 letter cousin Victoria Johnson wrote to Fatima from Monrovia pleading with her to convince Nat that she still loves him. "Try all you know how to keep him from grieving so much about me, I do not want him to talk about blowing his brains out or going crazy . . . it will only mean an early death." It was absolutely typical of him to make exaggerated and dramatic gestures like this. In November 1926 Momolu returned to Monrovia on regular leave. While there, on 27 January 1927 a fire destroyed the Gabriel Johnson house where he was staying. This delayed his return until May. Nat and his brother Abraham had returned home in late 1927 and were already employed. Brother Jaiah, an army lieutenant assigned to the Liberian Delimitation Commission—boundary survey 'on the French border,' wrote on 17 August 1928 from Harper, Cape Palmas describing the Presidential Inauguration, head wounds he received at a disturbance at Belleh-Yella Prison and news of his brothers. Abraham was a sub-collector of customs at Sakonnimai, George a carpenter in his town Gbawu-zu, while Jawa and Nat was in Firestone. All were reportedly doing well "except Nat who has a little trouble of debt; but I think it will be amicably settled." Ten months later, on 23 May 1929 Mrs. Euphemia Barclay wrote to Fatima about a number of things including spending two months with President and Mrs. King in Kakata at the April General Council of Chiefs, seeing her father who was on furlough at home, meeting Jahia and others. Then she wrote this about Nat. "Mary Pauline and Nat [have] broken up as soon as he got in some trouble, she turned her back on him; it is better for her to have shown herself now than for them to get married and then she prove unfaithfull." Three months later on 31 August, Jaiah wrote at length and mentioned that Nat had left Firestone and was working at the Interior Department. Nat was a desk man and unlike his brothers, who lived and worked in the interior, preferred the city. In any event he did not stay too long at the Department but returned to Germany.

Momolu was preparing to conclude his service in Hamburg and return permanently to Liberia.¹⁹ He sailed to Monrovia on the Hamburg-American ship *Livadia* arriving on 8 December 1929. Two of the persons he had been supporting in Germany, Victoria Johnson and Mary McCritty, returned with him. In January 1930, he sent a five-page-hand-written letter to Fatima reporting, *inter alia*, that many people were asking him to be the presidential candidate in the 1931 elections. However, most of the letter was given over to Nat. "On New Year however, I was very sad over the news of your going out

with "Nat" to Boccacio. Until I received your letter I was dumbfounded as to the reason for going with him. "Nat" has proven himself unworthy of our sympathy and love. He is a disgrace to the family. His bright intellect has won no honor for his family: but on the contrary, a disgrace. You know all I have done to help him make a man of himself. You know all he has done to pull himself and the family pride backward. How could you go with a creature like that especially when he and his friends are being hunted by the police? . . . I have written your mother that "Nat" come never in the house nor ever speak with you two girls nor take Arthur out . . . "Nat" will be sent to me in second class passage. Abraham will room with Mr. James and his food sent to the office each day by the cook. He too must not sit at my table until I return although he may call and see the family on *Sundays only* if he likes." (the quotation marks around "Nat" are in the text of the letter.) Six months later, on 11 July 1930, in a typewritten letter to his daughter, one reads "Your poor father has too much to do, but for Nat to whom I am dictating the letters by this mail, it would have been impossible for me to write any letters by this post." He went on to lament the hard times in Monrovia. The Boccacio was a restaurant-tearoom in the afternoon, with live music and dancing in the evening—a favorite of university students.

And so it went with father and son during the German period. Heaps of opprobrium from the old man, contrite reconciliation from the son. Part of the explanation lies in Momolu's educational expectations for his favorites Fatima and Nat. The father was a strong, intimidating and at times oppressive task master. Fatima conformed to the letter, obsequious to please for fear that his love would be withheld from her. Nat rebelled at every opportunity.

The criteria or measuring stick for pleasing or displeasing the old man was education, how his children performed in school, particularly in the foreign environment of Germany. To try to understand this it is necessary to the educational program followed by Nat in Germany. *The Liberia Official Gazette* announcing his passing (Vol. XLVIII Wednesday, October 10, 1962. No.10xxx) credited him with having attended Oberreal School in Eimsbüttle, Hamburg until univeristy matriculation at Hamburg University, the Technical University in Berlin-Charlottenburg and the Fredrich Wilhelm University, Berlin where he had read physics, mathematics and philosophy. Knowing that much archival material was destroyed by the allied bombing of Germany during World War II, I first carried out a telephone survey to find the exact location of archives since some institutional names had changed in the intervening 65 to 70 years. Writing in German, information on the subject was requested from each archive. The Oberreal School in Eimsbüttle replied that they no longer had archives. The University of Hamburg produced a photocopy of the application made by Fatima Massaquoi dated 14 November 1930 indicating her attendance through October 1932. However, they could find nothing on Nathaniel Varney Massaquoi. The Humbolt University in Berlin had examined the list of students for 1922 to

1928 but no Massaquoi is shown. The Technical University in Berlin confirmed that the Archives were severely damaged, but they found a copy book that showed a 1926 immatriculation in the name Wa-Ali Massaquoi. The reply went on to say, "one can in good conscience conclude that student W.A. Massaquoi had the intention to study at the Technical University Berlin, but did not realize his intention." The application was for Electrical Engineering (Elektrotechnik). What does one make of this? A 1959 reference to his educational background, undoubtedly approved by Nathaniel himself,²⁰ mentions the Eimsbüttel College and University of Hamburg as his only foreign school attendance. As an international public figure it is unlikely that he would lie about academic qualifications. Despite the inconclusive archival search, which I am pursuing further, my assessment is that he earned the German secondary school leaving certificate, the Abitur in science, at the Eimsbüttel. It would be impossible to apply to a German university much less to gain entry, without an Abitur. He undoubtedly attended lectures at Hamburg University in the faculty of science and mathematics, but never sat the required examinations to earn a degree. This annoyed Momolu very much.²¹

Another thing that I believe concerned him was the friendship that the boys had with agents recruiting Africans and others to study in Russia. International communism and the work of the Comintern was perceived as a serious threat by all European countries at the time. It would not do for a Liberian diplomat to ignore this, but the younger generation saw things differently. We know from the 29 May 1929 Euphemia Barclay letter and his father's January 1930 letter cited above that Nat was in Hamburg in the second half of 1929, "he and his friends . . . being hunted by the police." I believe that Nat's trouble with the German police stemmed from his activities in connection with the three day conference of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW) which opened in Hamburg on 7 July 1929. This was preparatory to the Fifth Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU) convening in Moscow on 15 August the following year—1930.

Some of this is circumstantial. But, in a longitudinal study one proceeds by fleshing out reasoned assumptions with bits and pieces of information gathered over a continuum of time until a case is made. In this instance, in addition to placing him in Hamburg at the time, recorded interviews with Fatima and Abraham show that James Ford and the Pan-Africanist George Padmore were close friends of the family. Published data confirm that Ford was the RILU executive committee member who organized the Hamburg event, assisted by George Padmore, who was then a trade union organizer in the United States. Family informants in the current generation, that is Momolu's grand children, may be correct in saying that Nat covertly visited Russia. Some speculate that Momolu had done so. While it is within the character of father and son to take this exciting step, I doubt very much that Momolu did and have no firm

information, as yet, that Nat did. However, working with newly available Russian archives this aspect of the family study is being investigated.²²

Putting what we know together we come up with the following based on a number of interviews with Abraham and Fatima between 1971 and 1975. When Momolu was in Germany, one of Tamba's cousins went there to live with him. His name was Varney Tammuzuu but went under his mission name Nathan Varney Gray. Wiles, as Consul-General, did not look after Gray, so he remained in Hamburg floating about. He frequented the harbor area and a public bar run by a friend of Momolu's, a Kruman named Ernest Bower. In the course of time he met James W. Ford who also lived in Hamburg. A graduate of Fisk University, Ford was the American Communist Party's leading Negro member and as such ran on the Party Ticket for Vice President of the United States in the 1930's. George Padmore, the West Indian nationalist was also a friend of the family. Both Ford and Padmore would distribute copies of *The Negro Worker* among the ship crews that docked in Hamburg. They both knew Fatima and would visit her from time to time to discuss politics, in this way they came to know Nat and Abraham. It was not unusual therefore for Nat's brother Alhaj, down on his luck at University College, Dublin in November 1931, to write Fatima asking her to forward a letter to Mr. Ford in Russia with an introductory note from herself. Before Padmore went to Russia he gave Nathan Gray the job of going on the ships to distribute the publications, for which he would be paid a few deutsche-marks. He had to be careful so that neither the guard nor the immigration officers found him. This essentially Communist propaganda was not popular with the Germans. The Russian agents who also frequented Mr. Bower's bar, arranged for some of the Africans they met to go to school in the Soviet Union, including Nathan. In those days, as Fatima observed, the young men were anxious for education and they went where ever it was free. So Gray wrote to Tamba and another relative, Samuel Moru Freeman, *plus one other* to come ahead, which they did. Gray met Tamba in Russia. We know from a 10 November 1932 letter from Momolu to Fatima that Tamba left three days later on the *S. S. Wahehe*. He warmly praised him for "following up my life work" and being of more help to him than his sons, "Mr. Padmore made an arrangement for Tamba to study." It is apparent from the contents of the letter that Tamba did not tell the old man he was going to Russia, because Momolu believed he would be studying in England. Hints that Nat was declared an undesirable alien by the German government are contained in a 5 April 1933 letter. Concerned by Fatima's staying on in Germany, the father wrote, that he did not want to be taken by surprise and have her return without finishing her education "... don't let any one ship you out as "Nat" and others. You are not undesirable." Three months later on 29 June, he was worried that the Hitler government would make trouble for her, since "he heard Mr. G. Padmore and his group have been sent out of Germany by the Hitler Group." He closed the letter with news of the family. Nat was then doing Electrical and Scientific Engineering in Sierra Leone.

In relating her own experiences in Germany Fatima said that although students went to Russia from all over the world, "the Party could not use everyone. Intellectually, it doesn't work that way. They did not use Tamba, for example, he was very quick to catch on and even use them. They took the education but left the propaganda." Some of these same names will appear later in the story in connection with a treason trial in Liberia.²³

Return to Liberia

The 1930's was a time of transition for Nat as already noted. The odd jobs that he did, the difficulties he encountered with the police and with women, were symptomatic, I believe, of experiencing difficulty finding his place under the sun. His brother taught at the Albert Academy in Freetown and arranged for Nat to get short term teaching in Freetown. He later worked for his Uncle Nat who had a trading establishment in the rural areas, but was not inclined towards business. Before the Uncle died in early 1934 the family frequently gathered at the beautiful house on the ocean at Sulima described earlier. It was one of Nat's favorite places. Many years later he built a similar house in Congotown close to the sea. Part of the problem was that he was arrogant and strangers took a dislike to him. He flaunted his intellectual and linguistic skills to his own detriment. Father Hammelberg recounted an incident when the two of them were in Sierra Leone about this time.

Nat was studying Electrical and Scientific Engineering in Freetown. It was practical work to compliment the theoretical lectures at Hamburg University. Desperate for a job he found one up in Kenama, operating a simple diesel-powered generator for an English firm, offering little challenge to his skills. He had an interview but was found wanting, without 'English' credentials. Nevertheless they needed someone and asked him to fill out the application for employment which he promptly did in German! He never got the job.

He returned to Libera shortly after his Uncle died and decided to privately read law as was the custom. He and Tamba passed their first law examination in 1936. He was helping his father at this time. All of the typewritten correspondence from the old man shows either NVM or KT as the typist. In 1936 Nat was 31 years old and well aware that his father was in deep trouble, politically harassed by President Edwin Barclay, who never let up bringing one law suit after another—trying to break Momolu's spirit. This began immediately after the 1931 election and continued until he died on 15 June 1938. *"Even after Momolu's death, President Barclay would not relent. John Henry Cooper, a relative by marriage, went to the mansion to ask the President what he should do. Barclay asked "What do you mean?" Cooper suggested that the army turn out for the normal courtesies extended to a former Cabinet officer. The reply burned into the hearts of the family: "Get out of here or I'll kick you out!" He did not want offices to close and people to go to the funeral. Next, Coopoe went to hire the Frontier Force Band, a common practice. An*

*arrangement was reached but later had to be cleared with the President of the Republic. When the small delegation went to the mansion, the reply this time was, "If you pay me in diamonds they are not going anywhere." With that, Momolu was buried in a simple ceremony in his beloved country; his name and deeds were buried with him."*²⁴

Here then was what governed the remainder of Nat's life. Though father and son had their differences, he and Tamba alone, more than any of the other children, rallied around the old man. His marriage with Ma Sedia was estranged, so they witnessed their stepmother testify against her husband, then when he was destined for prison—a blow that would have killed him—they saw her carry a message of leniency to the President. It is my belief, buttressed by evidence provided in the conclusion to this Biographical Essay, that Nathaniel and Tamba trained in the law for the sole purpose of avenging what Barclay had done to Momolu, for in their mind and the minds of many—he was among the greatest indigenous public servants the nation had ever produced.

A Note on Sources

A notion of Nat's early years comes from several interesting sources. These have been used to write a family biography focused on the father Momolu Massaquoi. This 600 page manuscript is used as the "mother lode" for writing about other family members. Sources include the following. (a) Over two hundred original family letters written by his father, his sister Fatima, his stepmother 'Ma Sedia,' other kith and kin and friends. The correspondence begins in 1922, tapers off in 1938, three months before his father died and ends in 1941. (b) Thirteen hours of family interviews registered on tapes, recorded over a period of ten years from 1963 to 1975, largely with his brother Prince Abraham and his sister Fatima but also other relatives. (c) My own diary and notes on our personal conversations plus correspondence with Nathaniel from the time we first met in April 1959. (d) His extant personal papers from his widow Winifred; several articles that he wrote and published, and family memorabilia. (e) Correspondence, notes and interviews with his half-brother Rev. Edward Hammelberg CSSP carried on over a twenty year period from 1962 until 1988. (f) Research and notes from the UNESCO Archives in Paris for the period that he served on that executive board. (g) A personal memoir written in 1966, at my request, by Dr. Earnest E. Neal, Deputy Director of the USOM who worked with Nathaniel on the development of teacher training institution in Liberia while Massaquoi was Director of Public Instruction. Neal's memoir is ten single spaced pages, an evaluation and photographs. (h) From the National Archives in Washington, D.C., diplomatic dispatches from the United States Embassy in Monrovia to the Department of State in Washington during the time of Nathaniel's treason trial. (i) The 721 page life story of Fatima Massaquoi, Nathaniel's sister, entitled "Bush to Boulevards: The Autobiography of a Vai Noblewoman," began while she was at Fisk University in 1939. She stopped working on it in

1944 while at Boston University. It remained in unpublished typescript form. I read her personal copy and made extensive notes. Later, in October 1973, the African Imprint Library Services put it on 35mm film along with some of her other personal papers. Fatima received two copies of the film and gave me one shortly before she died in 1978. The Autobiography is extremely informative on things Massaquoi. I used it to reconstruct the time that she, Nat and the other children spent in Monrovia before the family left for Germany in 1922. (j) The German period, his schools in Hamburg and the three universities that he attended were the subject of archival inquiries. Hamburg University, the Technical University in Berlin-Charlottenburg and Fredrich Wilhelm University, Berlin all reported extensive archival damage during the American bombing of World War II and an inability to locate appropriate student records. (k) Other sources are mentioned in the text.

Endnotes

¹"Massaquoi of Liberia 1870-1938" by Raymond J. Smyke: in *Genève Afrique* Volume XXI-Number 1 (Journal of the Swiss Society of African Studies) is about his father Momolu. It examines the 1931 Presidential election which he contested.

²In 1959, 1960 and 1961 Nathaniel was a member of the Commission on Educational Policy for Africa (CEPA) of which I was the Secretary. The Commission was established by the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP). We met frequently, traveled together in Africa and in this way became friends. I was introduced to the Massaquoi Clan by him. It seemed to me at the time that there must have been a mighty progenitor to sire all of these people. Thus began a 20 year research odyssey (1960 to 1980) which became, with time, a longitudinal family study. The first step was to reconstruct, the life and times of Momolu Massaquoi (1870-1938) whose name seemed expunged from Liberian historiography. To achieve this, in the twenty year period noted above, with the exception of four years 1966, 1968, 1971 and 1974, I had visited and lived with members of the family, mostly with Nathaniel's sister Fatima and brother Abraham, affectionately called Prince or Uncle Abe.

³I had carried out extensive research at the UNESCO Archives in Paris and had interviewed a number of people directly and by correspondence who knew of his work at the organization. These included (directly) Dr. Sarah Caldwell and Dr. William G. Carr of the U.S.A.; Herr Dr. Wilhelm Ebert, FRG; Sir Ronald Gould and through him, Sir Ben Bowen Thomas, Chairman of the UNESCO Executive Board when Massaquoi served on it. The latter two were both from the U.K. The Archival work confirmed that he was the first African on the Exco, while the interviews gave a full and rounded picture of the man in international action.

⁴*Massaquoi of Liberia* by Raymond J. Smyke is a 600 page manuscript dealing with the whole family but centering around the father. Keith Irvine, President of Reference Publications in Algonac, Michigan felt that it had merit and submitted the manuscript to the National Endowment for the Humanities. Between 1981 and 1983 the Endowment had considered early versions and requested them to be resubmitted with changes. One of the readers, Prof. J. Gus Liebenow wrote on 6 April 1983, . . . "I am impressed, moreover, with the manner in which the author went about his research. Not only did he take into account developments on three continents, but he does an exhaustive study of archival and other extant written documents and combines, reinforces, and extends his data-base with oral history collected over a considerable period of time. Although the purist might be troubled by the absence of specific citations on the time, place etc. of oral data, I am reasonably convinced regarding its authenticity." Alas, a 7 November 1983 letter from the NEH concerning the submissions stated, "In the final vote of the panel, two voted to fund the project, and two to reject. . . . Given the fierce competition in the Publications Program, it would be most unusual for projects which have received such mixed review to be successful." The project was not funded by NEH and to date not published. I have been using the material therein as a mother lode to publish individual aspects of family history and biography.

⁵Nathaniel carried a life-long resentment against President Edwin Barclay who persecuted his father for opposing him in the 1931 presidential election which Barclay won. This is covered in Part Two of this paper. A detailed examination of this period in Liberian politics and the role that Momolu and the family played in it is published in the article cited under footnote 1. The Barclay vendetta against the elder Massaquoi, once boyhood friends, is *the main reason that Momolu Massaquoi's name was expunged from Liberian historiography until my research and writing salvaged it from national oblivion.*

⁶"Fatima Massaquoi Fahnbulleh (1912-1978) Pioneer Woman Educator" by Raymond J. Smyke, *Liberian Studies Journal*, XV 1990 No.1.

⁷The Harris family is mentioned in the two studies by: Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1962 and *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, London, OUP, 1964. The intimate details herein are from my own research based on family information. Nathaniel Massaquoi and his half-brother the Rev. Fr. Edward P. Hammelberg, C.S.Sp. (1915-1988) were born into the clan. I had a life-long relationship with both. Nat was extremely well informed on his father, Fr. Hammelberg equally so on their mother and on the Harris side of the clan. It is important to note that the ordination of a nation's first Catholic priest is a momentous event, carefully researched by the hierarchy of the church to insure the candidates soundness. Nat and Fr. Hammelberg's mother—Julia Cecilia Harris or "Ma Julia"—was a Catholic convert from Judaism with both black and white relatives. This made the inquiry long,

detailed and interesting. I have never read the detailed report, but Fr. Hammelberg shared aspects of it with me. He was born in Mossamodes, Portuguese West Africa on 11 August 1915, ten years after Nathaniel, he returned with his family to Freetown in 1922 where he grew up. In August 1933 he left for priestly studies in Paris where he was ordained in 1939, returning home to Sierra Leone the following year. He chose an order of priests, the Congregation du St. Esprit—C.S.Sp., known in English as the Holy Ghost Fathers, whose modern founder, the Ven. Francis Libermann was also Jewish. Another family informant was Nat's sister Fatima. She and "Ma Julia" lived together in Monrovia for some years and Julia had a strong and positive influence on Fatima. Biographical entries on J.M. Harris and Fr. Hammelberg may be found in: *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* by Cyril P. Foray, African Historical Dictionaries No. 12; The Scarecrow Press, New Jersey, 1977. I have correspondence with J.M. Harris' grandson Bernard who, along with other members of the family, took strong exception to what Fyfe had written about J.M. Harris.

⁸See: Jones, Adam, *From Slaves to Palm Kemels* (Wiesbaden; Franz Steiner Verlag), 1983. This is a detailed and informative study about the Galinhas country between 1730 and 1890 when the area was in transition from slaving to legitimate trade. The Massaquoi clan, going back several generations, was involved in slaving, while the Harris clan came to the coast to do legitimate trade. The Fyfe and Jones studies' provide *macro* survey's of the region and the people. My longitudinal study uses a model developed by Fernand Braudel and concentrates on one single extended family unit at the *micro* level. Understandably, the family version of events at times differs from official versions found in the Public Records Office and reported by scholars like Fyfe, Jones and others.

⁹During Easter 1973 I visited the Galinhas with Nathaniel's brother, Prince Abraham, Fatima, her daughter Vivian and a Cousin Ellis. We went to Njagbacca where Nat's grandmother Queen Sandimani ruled and where she is buried. From there, we went to Kpasalo where Momolu was born. As guests of the Chief we were taken around the place to see the sights I had already researched, including a visit to the kola tree where Momolu's umbilical cord was buried. We then went on by road to the Mano River, crossed overside by canoe near Sulima and all, except Fatima, walked the kilometer and a half towards the ocean and the lone, green clapboard, palm shaded house mentioned herein. No other building was in view. Its many rooms and large screened porch must have made it a very restful place, particularly because of its location just five hundred meters from the open Atlantic Ocean with the hypnotic, timeless sound of the pounding surf. I kept a tape recorder open to record these sounds. At the time the house was unused and in need of repair. It was here that Julia came for vacation and where she first met Momolu. Nathaniel live here as an infant and later when he returned from Germany.

¹⁰Ibid. "Massaquoi of Liberia 1870-1938," by Raymond J. Smyke.; p 82. In his excellent Ph.D. thesis "Mende Government and Politics Under Colonial Rule 1890-1937" (University of Birmingham Ph.D. 1974), Dr. Arthur Abraham's describes in some detail (pp.383-392) how Momolu was a threat to the British interests in the Galinhas because of his American education and wish to consolidate Chieftancy claims for the benefit of his people. Dr. Maxwell, the District Commissioner who investigated the case, "himself was biased when ruled against Massaquoi for attempting to maintain his chiefship rights by asserting them," (p. 389). "It is clear that he (Maxwell) was interested in maintaining the divisions to allow the colonial administration ample elbow room for political manoeuvre and intrigue in order to maintain colonial dominance." (p.390). Abraham's concludes that the colonial administration conspired with the people to get rid of Momolu.

¹¹Ibid. p. 82. Also see entry (i) in "A Note on Sources." The page numbers refer to the "Autobiography."

¹²For a listing of those children considered family who survived to adulthood see Endnote number 9 in, op. cit. "Fatima Massaquoi Fahnbulleh (1912-1978) Pioneer Women Educator." It should be noted that Momolu had five traditional wives before Ma Sedia and he was quite productive by all of them, this in addition to the children he sired by women to whom he was not married such as Nat's mother and others noted in the main manuscript.

¹³C. L. Simpson, *The Memoirs of S.L. Simpson—The Symbol of Liberia*, London, Diplomatic Press, 1961, pp. 90-108.

¹⁴Op. cit. "Massaquoi of Liberia," *Genève-Afrique*. A detailed background is in the manuscript mentioned in footnote 4, Chapter XVIII—"Appointment to the Diplomatic Service."

¹⁵Traveling with Consul General and Mrs. Massaquoi were baby Arthur (Arthur Massaquoi 1921-1984), Fatima, Nat-Va-Ali, brother George Fromoya, Mrs. Payne, wife of Secretary of Education Dr. B.W. Payne. Sarah Haynes Barclay wife of a member of the House of Representatives, Major Anderson the Black American Advisor to the Liberian Army. The Wigbert's ports of call included Rotterdam where they were entertained by Johann Buttikofer, curator of the Royal Zoological Museum in Leiden who knew both Momolu and his mother Queen Sandimanie having stayed with her during two trips to Liberia: 1879 to 1882 and 1886 to 1887. He published the famous *Reisebilder aus Liberia*. (p. 387 "Fatima Autobiography.")

¹⁶Op.cit., "Fatima Massaquoi Fahnbulleh (1912-1978) Pioneer Woman Educator." See Endnote 15 and *Family Life in Germany*. pp. 52 to 56. "Momolu was open, gregarious and a keen listener. He was an excellent host even when the Republic had little money for entertainment." p. 53. The father insisted that the

children take part in the dinners when guests were present. See also pp. 428ff "Fatima Autobiography."

¹⁷Gabriel Moore Johnson, born in 1871, was the grandson of Elijah Johnson (1787-1849) who was instrumental in the founding of the nation, and the son of the first Liberian-born President, Hilary R. W. Johnson who served from 1883-1892. See also Amy Jacque Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, (New York: Frank Cass Ltd. 1967), photo page 281. Jamaican born Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) was well known to Momolu. In 1916 he immigrated to the United States. Then 28 years old, and a gifted orator, he traveled throughout the United States championing black pride and a 'back to Africa movement' aiming to redeem Africa from the Europeans and settle black Americans there. He founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Based in Harlem he capitalized on black disgust with America, following the string of broken promises to the race such as improved social mobility in exchange for military service in World War I. Between 1917 and 1925 the UNIA grew to 6 million members with a well-financed, wide spread infrastructure supported by many small contributions from the black poor. He founded a church, a shipping line and many business ventures. In 1923 he was tried for mail fraud, convicted and sentenced to a maximum five years in federal prison with a fine of \$1,000. Two years later, in 1927, his term was commuted by the President of the United States and Garvey was deported to Jamiaca. In 1935 he resettled in London where he died on 10 June 1940. A perceived threat to both black American intellectuals (Garvey and Dubois were bitter enemies) as well as the white American establishment, Garveyism was eventually eliminated. During its peak period Momolu's father-in-law headed the UNIA with the title indicated in the text. The 'back to Africa movement' was to bring large number of black American immigrants to Liberia, initially to Maryland county, but the project was thwarted in Liberia. An enterprising scholar would do well to reexamine the linkage between the UNIA initiative in Liberia and the move to have Momolu Massaquoi contest the 1931 presidential elections. Many, if not all of the same Liberians were involved in both efforts.

¹⁸Op.cit., "Fatima Massaquoi Fahnbulleh (1912-1978) Pioneer Woman Educator," p.53. "Autobiography" p.455, "often there were 18 for dinner." Interview with Fatima M. Fahnbulleh April 1973.

¹⁹The Consular post was eventually filled by Momolu's cousin James S. Wiles. The economic situation at home and the increasing pressure being put on Liberia at the League of Nations over the slavery issue was fraying everyone's nerves. Though not directly involved in the League, "It was Momolu who recruited that incredible Sicilian lawyer-diplomat, Antoine Sottile, who eventually became Liberia's chief representative to the League after the death in 1928 of Baron Rudolph A. Lehmann, Liberia's Ambassador to France and to the League." Op. cit., "Massaquoi of Liberia 1870-1938," p. 84. Fatima lived in the

Sottile home where Madam was her French teacher. In 1972 I spoke with Dr. Sottile on the telephone hoping to interview him on his work for Liberia at the League and on Momolu. Alas, he was very resentful, shouting on the phone that he had worked hard at the League, but was never fully compensated. He flat out refused to meet me. In 1982, I met Madam Sottile in Geneva when she gave me some of her husbands papers. An enterprising scholar would do well to examine this period at the League from the point of view of *the individuals involved*. My research indicates that it was Sottile, the master diplomat, prompted by Edwin Barclay, that deflected the worse case scenario for Liberia over the slavery issue, that is, the move to suspend Liberia from the community of nations's, thus following the precedent established with Haiti. (op. cit., p. 87). All this was going on several years before the appearance of Secretary of State Louis Arthur Grimes (1883-1948) on the scene. See also footnote 8 in the above citation.

²⁰Nathaniel R. Richardson, *Liberia's Past and Present* (London, Diplomatic Press, 1959), p.289. The photo in this biographical entry is an extremely good likeness of Nathaniel Massaquoi three or four years before he died. At this stage in his public career he would not have let anything be published about himself that was not absolutely true, thus this entry is more accurate than *The Official Gazette*. One of his strength's was blunt honesty, however, he was also vein. Had he earned a German university degree he surely would have let everyone know it and, as an educator, let it be used in discriptions of himself.

²¹Nat may have gone to a technical school in Berlin, but again, the destruction of archives preclude indepth research. A 21 December 1928 letter addressed to Momolu as Consul General from the Brennabor-Handelsgesellschaft M.B.H. in Brandenburg (Havel) says "send your boys off, please, so that they might arrive here on January 2nd." It went on to offer help in finding room and board. There are no names indicated but one might suppose that Nat was pleading with his father to be given a chance to complete technical training and Momolu wished to arrange it before he left permanently for Liberia.

²²Russian colleagues in the Academy of Sciences—Institute of the USA, are working to locate the archives of the Comintern in order to investigate the Russian sources on the recruitment, for education and training, of young persons from the colonies as well as disaffected American Blacks. General background is not lacking. Training took place at the Lenin School founded in Moscow in 1926. "A select training school for the development of leading cadres of the parties in the Communist International." p. 189 in Harry Haywood's *BLACK BOLSHEVICK* (Liberator Press, Chicago, 1978). A heavily biographical study from which the above trade union information comes. Allison Blakely's *RUSSIA AND THE NEGRO: Blacks in Russian History and Thought*, (Howard University Press, 1987) is also good. However, among the early and most interesting studies in this field is George Padmore's *PAN AFRICANISM OR COMMUNISM*, (Dobson, London, 1956). Padmore, not to be confused with the

former Liberian Ambassador to the United States by the same name, was an interesting person well known by the Massaquoi's. A West Indian, named at birth Malcolm Nurse, he joined the Communist Party and according to Harvard Political Scientist A. Nwafor, "rose to become the foremost black figure in the Communist International—the Comintern." Commissioned a Colonel in the Red Army he traveled throughout Africa to create the nucleus of a Comintern-directed African leadership. He later headed the Africa Bureau of the Comintern in Hamburg where he organized the International Conference of Black Workers. After breaking with the Kremlin he became Kwame Nkrumah's Advisor on African Affairs. He died in 1959. The sources of the family information on the Russian contacts are recorded oral interviews with Prince Abraham Massaquoi and Fatima.

²³In the above text, *plus one other*, is highlighted because I suspect that this was Nat. In recording this period on tape with Abe and Fatima, her recall of names, dates and events was crystal clear, after all she lived the period and knew all of these persons well. I believe that she did not wish me to know that Nat was briefly in Russia, feeling that since this was not public information it would serve no useful purpose for it to be known. The Cold War was on and she may have wanted to protect the memory of her brother. Another interesting point is that it would have had to be a serious contravention of state as opposed to civil law for Nat to be 'hounded by the police' and expelled.

²⁴Op. Cit. "Massaquoi of Liberia 1870-1938", p.120.

The Bong Mine Venture

Eugen P. Plotzki

The scourge of this inconceivable civil war of 1989/90 has brought untold sufferings on Liberian families. It has destroyed most of the infrastructure of the country. In this period of a war torn nation, that is now in search for a lasting peace and restoration of security and the return of more or less normal economic conditions, it might be justified to have a glance backward at the Bong Mine (BMC).

When this third iron ore mine in Liberia—after Bomi Hills and LAMCO—got cut off in May 1990, it seemed inexplicable that the warring parties had found no means to preserve this last significant source of income for the country. An idea of the importance of BMC to Liberia may be indicated in the following operational figures for 1988, which was a deficit year with a big loss and a corresponding low revenue for the government. (Even the last operational year 1989 was much better).

Table I

The value of BMC iron ore exports totaled \$129 million. From this source the following was paid:

Government Rev. (royalty, taxes etc.)	\$ 11.3 mill.
Payments to public corporations	5.1 mill.
Salaries & wages to Liberian employees	12.0 mill.
Expenditures on social services	11.1 mill.
Local purchases	13.0 mill.
Total	\$52.5 mill.

During 24 years of operation the accumulated loss reached \$260 million.*

When the German mining engineer visited the ore-bearing hills in the western part of the Bong Range in May 1957 he noted no. 113 in his field book, meaning the 113th mineral deposit examined and investigated since 1952, mostly by himself. He was the managing director of "Gewerkschaft Exploration" in Duesseldorf. A "Gewerkschaft" means in this case one of the legal forms of a mining company. It managed the mines abroad owned by a group of steel companies such as Thyssen in the Ruhr district and it searched for new deposits such as iron ore, manganese and other minerals necessary for steel making.

During the first years of the expedition the engineer was his own geologist, surveyor, economist, expert in mining law, and cook, with only a small crew behind in the office. One man worked exclusively preparing these travels of the "Flying Dutchman," as the mining engineer regarded himself.

Emmett Harmon, Liberian entrepreneur and public official, conceived of the potentiality of the Bong Range in connection with a timber concession to Germany. He arranged for a meeting with President William V. S. Tubman, other officials of the government, and for a visit to Bomi Hills. With his energetic support all provisions had been made for the initiation of the enterprise. It took a jeep ride along the Kakata-Dobly Island "Highway" to Nyen, then three hours walk to Bargoleta, before reaching the first outcrop of ore.

The equipment of the mining engineer consisted of hammer, pocket-lens, compass, altimeter, two small magnets, tape measure, bags for samples, and twenty-five years of experience. Two days work on the steep slopes in the bush, assisted by the government's Bureau of Mines engineer, Intsiful, and three intelligent villagers resulted in sufficient data and samples. One could only hope to find parts in the lode with high grade ore or at least a huge deposit with hundreds of millions tons of ore in a stratification, sufficient for long-term appreciation and depreciation. There had to be enough ore for exploitation, to reach the lowest cost-price per unit.

Before flying back to Germany the mining engineer had his second discussion with President Tubman. The President declared his government's readiness to conclude a concession agreement with the Germans based on the LAMCO agreement.

The mining engineer thanked President Tubman. He also noted the difference in ore types: in the LAMCO area a rich ore; at Bong a very hard low-grade ore, expensive to exploit and costly to refine in the steel plant. Bong became known as the "poor bone."

One difficulty came from an unexpected source. The mining engineer's diary of 20 May, 1957 records: "Call on Johnston Avery. He asked why are we trying to get iron ore deposits in Liberia as LAMCO has. Through aerial survey LAMCO had acquired information about the deposits of Nimba, Bassa and Bong Range! He intends to ask Sohl at the next General meeting on May 29, 1957."

The German steel works had at that time discussions with the Swedes about a long-term delivery of LAMCO ore.

Really ask Sohl, the mining engineer, whether there existed perhaps something of a concession border dispute. Both Arthur Sherman and Momolu Massaquoi, then directors of the government's Bureau of Mines responded with a blank "no."

The negotiations for the concession agreement persisted in a friendly atmosphere, albeit slowly. The different operations for the exploration of the ore mountain, Zaweah, continued. They started with a few dozen workmen (farmers with their usual tools) headed by the young German engineer, Dr. Moritz, and his assistant, Intsiful. Moritz and Klaus Muhle were among the pioneers of Bong Mine. They lived and worked under trying circumstances during the establishment period making the crucial decisions in the first years in the first camp at the foot of the dark hills of the Zaweah. The mining engineer discussed with his assistants the program for the next two months after a stopover at his Duesseldorf office. He was grateful to Emmett Harmon for taking care of matters such as an appointment at the presidential mansion. The President instructed Emmett Harmon to complete the final draft of the Concession Agreement. It was signed on Sept. 16, 1958 in the President's private office in the presence of the German ambassador to Liberia. Following the signing the participants drank a toast of Jack Daniels' black label. That was how President Tubman acted. It's a pity that Dr. Wecker, the internationally experienced Thyssen lawyer with his sense of humor, did not participate in this often delicate and tedious project in which he otherwise frequently played a competent role.

In 1959 intensified exploration necessitated considerable new investment. The "big boss" (Sohl) came to inspect the work. Among other preparations for this visit a bigger clearing had to be cut on top of Mount Zaweah. This was the first one in the still undestroyed natural forest. It was necessary to observe and to survey the future operating area and to establish the trace.

"Monrovia must be over there, beyond the horizon, to the southwest," said the mining engineer. "Our railway will reach the new port after having crossed or rounded all these hills. Down here on the long wooded hill not a single tree may be felled! Behind this hill we'll have the residential section, protected from the dust and noise up here on the ore mountain."

For nearly two years two German and one Liberian mining engineers had been living and working in the stifling, humid twilight of the tropical forest on the ore mountain, rarely able to see more than a few steps ahead. Now for the first time they were standing in something approaching a fresh breeze, high above the lowlands of the oppressive jungle, and able at last to breathe deeply. For the first time they had unobstructed vision from this first big clearing cut into the jungle along the side of the ridge on the mountain. Like men reprieved, they found that now they were able to take their bearings from the sun instead of from the compass. In addition, timber for the new sawmill abounded. They needed a great deal of trimmed timber for temporary constructions and for boxes to send hundreds of tons of ore samples to Germany for testing.

It was a cheerful descent to the camp, plunging back into the undergrowth which swallowed up all light between the trunks of the jungle giants whose tops

could barely be discerned aloft. We were surrounded once again by the warm and musty smell of the dark decay underfoot, so familiar, but no longer oppressive, now that one knew that fresh air might one day blow through here as it did up there in the clearing. The camp was placed 900 feet below at the foot of Mount Zaweah, as this mountain was called in Kpelle. The steep slopes were all but inaccessible, unfit for tilling, and untrodden by all but an infrequent huntsman. They thus seemed sinister, the mountains name was spoken with a slight shudder. It was impossible to find out if this secret quality lurking in the mountain could conceivably bring luck as well as misfortune.

That was the main subject of an evening's talk by the light of a smoking paraffin lamp in front of the two palm-thatched huts in the small clearing; this became our headquarters for the first few years. There was rice for supper, brought from the workers camp several hundred yards away, and sardines too. Later on the voices, instinctively lowered beneath the night darkened sound of the crickets chirping, grew animated over the gin and nearly cool tonic water from the kerosine powered refrigerator. What would this iron-ore deposit far inland in the country of Liberia on the west coast of Africa become some day? Would there be sufficient ore? And, if so, could the steelworks be convinced to invest hundreds of millions in the place for the operation of a mine? The men were able to accept the mining engineer's daydreams of living quarters beyond the wooded hill off the site of the open-cast mine only with a nervous smile. Anyway, it was a goal worth working for, a stimulus to resume the daily hardships and privations of life in this alien environment, in the heat and rain.

Much had been achieved since the first ascent up this mountain in May 1957, whose iron ore potential had then been known to just a handful of specialists. The mining engineer had been able to find no more than was known before, a deposit of inferior iron ore, useless to the steelworks in its existing form. With an iron content of less than 40 per cent, this ore body had been judged uneconomic by geologists and mining experts. However, if the ore could be enriched, which seemed possible in accordance with simple tests on the spot, the first question would be the size of the ore deposit to justify a large investment. One would need complex treatment installations to enrich the crude ore extracted in open pit mining, railways down to the coast, construction of a harbor to ship the concentrate to Europe, power stations to drive the machinery, huge water supplies to be pumped from the St. Paul river over a long distance mainly for the ore treatment and, most of all, thousands of people to run all these installations and machines.

Manpower was the greatest problem of all. It could not consist of only Liberians, nor of Europeans. A totally new living and working community would have to be created of races differing as a consequence of their respective conditions of civilization. Compared to the labor problem, the purely technical matters would be almost simple, though this seemed unlikely that night too—

the building of a town for some ten or twenty thousand people in a thinly populated region, along with every supply and service facility that has come to be accepted by city dwellers.

Was this a pipe dream? Ah, how much has been achieved already, and with quite moderate means, by a very few! It began with the first climbings up the steep slopes among the thorny undergrowth, exploring for ore outcrops, beating paths to spots where prospecting trenches were to be dug across the ridge at regular intervals. These were to follow the ore covered by the uniform top soil and rubble, steep up the southern slope, steep down the northern slope, often interrupted by vertical or overhanging rock faces which could be inspected only by men suspended on ropes. The cutting of the first long aisles through the forest in order to establish a simple provisional surveying system was difficult. The construction of the first "road" occurred to hoist up by block and tackle a small diesel compressor needed to drive a tunnel into the steep side of the mountain halfway up the slope. All this had been achieved with the help of "backwoods" people who seldom had used their simple tools for anything but farming, hollowing out a log for a dugout, building huts, or for making simple hunting weapons. Moreover they spoke a language none of the three men understood, not even the coastal Liberian. It was not enough to engage interpreters. To do the thing properly, we had picked out ten of the first fifty laborers, all of them Kpelle to make it easier. We got a young teacher to teach the reading and writing of basic English during working hours. The ten were subsequently made foremen, a source of considerable pride to them. After this success the system was extended to a growing number of workers.

Oh, yes, quite a bit had been done. As the level of gin sank in the bottle, the future became increasingly brighter to the four men in the dark African night. Why had not the mining engineer reported that another few hundred thousand dollars had been obtained from the steel bosses in the Ruhr? This would have been enough for another year's work with a hundred additional workers and some technicians as well. After that there would surely be a way of persuading even the most skeptical bosses to risk a couple of million dollars and go the whole way. The thing to do now was to explore the depth of the ore lode and to ship a few thousand tons of ore to Germany for testing in order to establish appropriate treatment procedures. Considerably more money would be needed to get a complete aerial survey to draft plans for the building work, for the use of mining machinery, workshops, power stations, and residential areas.

"Well then, a lot's been done already, so let's be confident about the future. Good night." The sound of drums from the camp accompanied their sleep; they continued well into the night.

The next morning after the foremen and their crews had been given their jobs for the day and were scrambling up the slope to their places of work, the

four men discussed the working schedule for the following weeks. A rough estimate of the production costs needed to be worked out soon for headquarters in Dusseldorf so that the managers might allocate further funds. Much data for the calculations was still missing. It was a most complex equation with a large number of unknown factors. The four had enough experience to do many of the calculations themselves; they knew the capacity of the different bucket excavators in open-pit mining and the approximate costs of ore transportation from the bucket to the treatment plant. They were familiar with the rates for shipping the concentrate to various European ports. Who would say, however, how much the construction of a mine railway in this region could cost? How much would the dredging of a port on this coast cost, or how much would be needed for the operation of a school, church, hospital, or a department store? All these facilities are assumed to exist in many countries; one did not have to establish them before opening a mine.

The mining engineer had planned to stay in Monrovia for the following weeks to clarify legal and economic questions with the authorities. He was in steady contact with Emmett Harmon or his secretary Mary Marshall. Upon his arrival they had arranged an appointment with the President who had been receptive to his problems and questions which were not only of a political but also of an economic nature. Soon a human contact developed; later it became frank and even cordial.

President Tubman's delight in mutual argument in an expressive style, in which he managed to be both businesslike and informal, and his keen sense of humor which often challenged his partner, made plain speaking easy. Since the President always seemed to have time to listen and he never gave a hint of the almost intolerable demands made on his time, the conversations proceeded amicably.

The mining engineer was quickly called into the president's office from the waiting room, from the midst of a conversation such as one rarely had the chance of engaging in except here. In what country, except for ceremonial occasions, can one meet several ministers simultaneously to settle questions concerning various departments. None of these ministerial conversations could be as important as a talk with "the old man," as President Tubman was respectfully and even reverently called.

There exist many gratifying instances of selfless assistance to the German newcomers, especially from the men of the first mining company in the country, Bomi Hills. These people, on whom the mining engineer had called as soon he arrived in Liberia to inform them of his company's intention to try to open up a mine of it's own, had readily offered their help. Initially consisting of information and advice, help soon included the use of tools and machinery, as well as the loan of specialists. It was an astonishing degree of support to the

European mind. To those who knew Americans they would say it was typical. In their characteristic generosity the Americans may have decided that if they could not prevent competition, they might as well support the newcomers in the best interests of Liberia. After all were we not sitting in the same boat? Besides, the Germans had been good customers since the company's early days and might remain business partners even after their own mine went into operation.

It was equally so with Firestone. The companies began at the top and went down the line to the last employee, whether Liberian, European or American. With Landsdell K. Christie, whom the mining engineer affectionately called "Liberia's Miners' King," he enjoyed a special relationship, a kind of nonsense good fellowship intensified by mutual appreciation. This gentle American, successful in business and a personal friend of President Tubman, never showed the slightest trace of condescension toward his younger colleague, although he might have been forgiven had he done so. And there was yet another subtle quality to this relationship; it was of the kind that might arise between two men who happened to court the same girl without the other's knowledge and who only meet years later when one of them is happily married to the girl. That roughly was the story of Bomi Hills, or at least a part of it.

In the early 1930s a Dutch diamond firm prospecting in Liberia, located several deposits of iron ore, almost as an after-thought to its main enterprise. Among other iron ores the report mentioned those of the Bong Range as "too poor to be profitable." The richest of these deposits, Bomi Hills, was offered to interested circles in Germany. The mining engineer's company, and other German steel companies in common, tried to gain the concession for Bomi Hills. But in Hitler's Germany a permit was required by a foreign exchange board for the transfer of the purchasing price of 50,000, Dutch Guilders into Reichsmarks. The well-substantiated application pointed out that the project was positively in the interest of the German economy provided however that long-term peace could be preserved. The National Socialist government curtly rejected the proposal. Instead the government called on the applicants to start working the large iron ore deposits in the Salzgitter region in northern Germany. To this the applicants countered that these deposits had been extensively explored at great expense and had been found to be of such poor quality as to make them totally uneconomic for decades. At the most, they might be a reserve in the future. Soon after parts of the Salzgitter deposits were apportioned to the newly formed Reichswerke Hermann Göring as raw material reserves. In this way Liberia was part of the casual sequence in starting this uneconomic state-owned German concern.

The Bomi Hills concession was soon purchased by an ore company (NEEP) in Amsterdam which was founded by members of German Jewish families who had escaped from Nazi Germany and who tried to build a new living in Holland. By a series of tragic errors NEEP lost the concession. Thus these unfortunate

people lost the means to build a new life in some safe place before the Germans occupied Holland. After the war there occurred flights across North and South America and other continents to help the last few survivors of once great Jewish families to build up an ore company in Amsterdam. Business friends in Germany extended help and support. Yet, how little could be done to compensate for such injustice and suffering.

In the meantime nothing much happened in Bomi Hills until Christie purchased the concession after the war. Then the site took on a new lease on life! This dramatic development of the mine is well known; Christie's superior efforts had paid off.

It was always a special delight listening to the conversational fireworks between President Tubman and Christie. The dialogue was amusing and brilliant but never domineering. Both had a sense of humor and a flair for understatement. Once when the talk turned to various mines, President Tubman asked the mining engineer: "Which mine would you like best?" It was a typical loaded question which provoked a matching and somewhat insolent answer. Mindful of his special relationship with Christie, the mining engineer winked at his friend and replied: "Mister President, if a man were asked that question about a women, he might answer if he were totally honest, 'the other fellow's.' But I am very happy with my wife."

Often our talk turned to the "poor bone." During the course of complicated negotiations with the government about the terms of the concession agreement (conducted with toughness on either side), the mining engineer made the point that BMC—unlike Liberia's first two mines which extracted direct shipping ore—was a deposit of low grade ore. It was of no use in its natural state. While those who came last would have to take what was left—the "poor bone" BMC—the concession terms should take this fact into account. In reply President Tubman remarked that on the basis of what he knew of the Germans, they would turn the mine into excellent use. What an argument!

On another occasion President Tubman told a little story to drive home his point. A great chieftain would share his meat at official meals in such a way as to let his oldest and favorite son have the portions with the bones. The son observed this practice with growing consternation. Finally, seeing his father alone, he asked what it meant. "Well, son" said the chief, "you know, while the others quickly finish the soft, fat meat, growing lazy in the process, you exercise your teeth and jaw on the firm bones which, moreover, contain the best nourishment, the marrow, which gives you additional strength. By the time the others grow hungry again you will still have some bones left, and they will come to you and ask if you could spare any. In that way you will have the upper hand. You can then name your own terms."

The President had an inexhaustible store of similar stories appropriate to any occasion. He has also never been known to repeat himself. He closed almost any audience or conference, however hard and businesslike the proceedings, on such a personal and conciliatory note.

The talks with Christie and with his close friend Garland R. Farmer, who played a significant part in the history of LMC, continued quite often in New York. During the negotiations about the extension of the port in Monrovia for BMC with the Port Management Co., it was a great pleasure for the mining engineer to be the guest of his two friends. They were sympathetic and even solicitous for this "flying dutchman" and for his mostly fatherless family back in Germany. He received much good advice from these seasoned pioneers, spiced with humor. There were many questions of common interest such as salaries. LMC's were more generous than BMC's. They even donated a remarkable packet of LMC shares to the mine manager though he never had part in the exploration or planning of Bomi Hills. Christie and Farmer could not understand that in the German system no room existed for such gifts. Their final comment was: "For heaven's sake, think how far you would come with the American system in addition to the German."

Whenever there was a pause in the negotiations in Monrovia the mining engineer would drive up to the Zaweah camp. It was as primitive as in the first years. It was at the front. The men told about the latest happenings. How much happened within a few days! First of all, last night one of the engineers had a narrow escape. His life was saved by a tame mungo in his room. Roused by its excited chatter and scratching, he noticed that driver ants were marching towards his bed! This event was celebrated over drinks that night. Next, an accident occurred in one of those deep trenches. Fortunately help was available in the not-too-distant Firestone hospital from people who knew their job. Praise is due to them all, be they Liberian, European, or American. Scarcely a day went by without the sighting of a snake. This is to be expected in the rain forest. The engineers always had sterile ampuls and some special serum.

Discussions had been going on about ways and means of improving the adult education program. While the workers' children's morning lessons were proceeding without a hitch in the open palaver hut, the teaching of the men in the evening was a different matter. There was no way of preventing women and children from hanging over the railing, commenting upon the goings-on with shouts and laughter.

The principal person at these meetings was Moses, the young teacher who had been lent to us by Grandma Miller of the Lutheran Mission station near St. Paul's River. Eventually it was decided that classes would be given in a separate building. That meant that a school would have to be constructed outside the camp. The plan was grander than its realization for the new school would be just

a roof on supports, at least to start with. Further, lessons should no longer take place in the evening, when the men were tired. The result was a "bush school" in the forest, on the slope near the core of the prospecting work, where the new camp was to go up. Classes were held every morning for the first hour of the paid shift. This was an innovation, marking a step towards a new social policy which did not immediately meet with approval in the country.

The foundation had thereby been laid for BMS' (Bong Mines School) comprehensive education system. Within a few years it comprised normal primary and secondary classes for more than a thousand youngsters along with tuition-free training in practically every skilled job for many hundreds of adolescents and adults in the vocational training center. Adult classes had on-the job training. With the maturation of the educational program the palm-thatched huts had gone, replaced by modern concrete buildings, several of which had upper stories and air-conditioning.

As the sun rose the next morning, the men were once more tramping through the undergrowth, this time to a small waterfall half-way to the concentrator installation which stretched across valleys and hills in an expanse that will some day rival equivalent dam lakes in Europe. A new camp would rise here to house the Swedish drilling crew and their assistants when they started the scheduled ore drilling operations on the mountain. The waterfall would yield drinking water from its source higher up the slope and would furnish a swimming pool. After the Swedish had left the engineers' camp would be moved here where it would be closer to the center of the planned operations and could be reached by road.

Near-by a second workers' camp would be erected as Camp I. It was limited in habitation by its supply of drinking water. In general workers live with their families wherever possible, if only to cut down on the number of "woman palavers." The new camp would house some sixty men and their families.

The third task of the day was the choice of the site for the new adult school in the forest near the camp. When evening came all three sites had been staked out and measured. Once the plans were drawn, construction could start at once.

It had been a good day's work. The evening passed in preparation for the mining engineer's discussions next day in the Mine Office. He was interested in the possible investigations of an iron ore deposit at Kpo Range, near the Putu Mount Gedeh, officially a part of the government's Bureau of Natural Resources and Surveys. This agency was headed by Arthur Sherman, an elder brother of Secretary of the Treasury, Charles Sherman who was in charge of the concession negotiations. He was a formidable opponent of commanding stature. He was also a man of profound education which he effectively brought to bear in driving a very hard bargain for Liberia against the new group of German industrialists. The German side was represented by the mining engineer, a

person often obliged to dicker about dollars and cents, if the project were to be realized at all. Unlike a promoter who is a person able to be generous with money supplied by others the mining engineer was accountable to his company and thus relatively inflexible. No wonder that the negotiations were difficult and tough. The final fair settlement could only be achieved with Emmett Harmon's outstanding assistance. There could be few meetings without him.

Arthur Sherman was a man of a different nature, unassuming and quiet yet business-like, professional and every inch a patriot. Among friends, or in the company of his very feminine wife and children, whom he guided as adviser and friend, Sherman bubbled over with good fun and jokes. He had countless amusing stories to tell of the life of his family which had furnished several of the country's presidents and high officials. For a long time he was the government's only engineer; he also represented Liberia during the construction of the port of Monrovia under the auspices of the American Lend-Lease program. As life and soul of the Concessions Bureau he knew his country as well as anyone; there was scarcely a village where he had not conducted geological fieldwork. It was a delight to discuss with him the scenic beauties of Liberia's remote regions which might easily rank among the world's famous tourist attractions, if they were only more easily accessible.

Liberia has waterfalls which cascade many hundreds of feet down forest gorges. There exist jet-black, tree-bounded little lakes which are sacred to the people of the scattered villages on their perimeter. Indeed, the upper reaches of a stream above a village are often regarded as protected, along with the colony of catfish that live in them. Liberia's villages may appear as picturesque terraces of round huts atop a cone-shaped hill, or they consist of fort-like tightly packed cubes in a river's loop. Here the palaver hut is always in the center. Those villages which have escaped disfigurement by corrugated tin roofs and prefabricated barns can only be reached by slogging single file for hours along dark, tree-lined paths. They are therefore unknown even to many Liberians.

The Deputy Director of the Bureau was Momolu Massaquoi, a personal friend. His father, a Vai King, lived for years as Liberia's Consul-General in Hamburg. Thus "His Royal Highness" spoke excellent German.

A further step toward internationalizing the BMC was achieved when FINSIDER, a large Italian steel group joined BMC. The mining company had earlier entered into a partnership with the Liberian government which came to over 50% of the shares. Since 1955 FINSIDER and the German partner in BMC had a joint mining enterprise in Goa (then Portuguese India) where several iron ore concessions had been bought by the German mining engineer. On the practical side the introduction of this new partner, who until then had not been connected with the primary concessionaire—the Liberian-German DELIMCO whose German portion was the sole property of the Ruhr steelworks backing the

"Gewerkschaft EXPLORATION"—raised quite a few questions of company law and finance. However, the Liberian partner was most understanding so that the rather complicated establishment of the financing and management company, the Bong Mining Company was concluded to the satisfaction of all parties.

Both Emmett Harmon and Dr. Wecker (on the German side) deserve much of the credit for the successful cooperation which led to these agreements. This mine venture would show the way for collaboration between the African States and the industrial countries. A genuine co-operation between equals, and that not limited to the economic sphere but displayed in a mutual respect for national peculiarities and cultural backgrounds existed. We achieved a mutual understanding of the legacies of the past which helped to form the ways of life of the present, in this case in Germany and in Liberia.

We Germans must recognize our misconception of a black Africa lacking in culture. Ever since Frobenius, if not before him, we should have known better and should also have known the purpose of the more or less deliberate misrepresentation which was used to justify colonial rule and the slave trade. Only a philosophy reducing some to the status of being less than human could reconcile Christian consciences to the mass sale of one's fellow creatures, as well as to the amassing of fortunes from that sale. If we Christians found numerous willing accomplices among Africans, this does not absolve us of our guilt.

Frobenius' views are increasingly confirmed by new finds in black Africa. These enable modern archeologists to prove the high culture and civilization enjoyed by the African states over many centuries before any standards even remotely equalling theirs' were attained in central Europe. These recent findings have been evaluated by Basil Davidson; indeed, the sculpture of several ethnic groups, some of them Liberian, furnishes continued evidence of the quality of civilization that once flourished on the African continent.

What matters now is to relieve the African people of the outside pressure arresting their development in civilization and in technology alike. This pressure has only been partially removed in recent times, and not yet in all regions. It is up to us to help Africa financially in a new development phase, and to bring the continent up to the standards of the industrial countries.

Here lies a tremendous opportunity for turning an old handicap, the relative African "backwardness," into an advantageous antidote for the dehumanized mass society of the West. For, unlike the soulless nature of society in the "advanced" countries—and that includes the socialist countries—a healthy individualism serving the needs of humanity may be the very factor preventing, in the last moment, the complete loss of individual dignity in western society.

In traditional Africa society still means, to a large degree, the ties of the individual to other individuals, a fulfillment of life by the exercise of compas-

sion, consideration and even love. It means human pleasures like music and dance, which make life worth living.

A further step toward internationalization of the Bong project occurred in the 1960s when the Tropical Institute in Hamburg was in search of an African country to host a planned research station. Following termination of ore production, the mining engineer suggested the Bong mine area instead of the Sudan with whom previous negotiations had taken place. On July 25, 1966 President Tubman signed a letter to the Institute expressing his agreement. In May 1968 the Liberia Research Unit began its operations. Besides many other activities which yielded exciting results, priority during the last years was placed on onchocerciasis (river blindness) programs, for which the station became well-known and indispensable internationally.

As a result of the civil war NFPL forces seized Bong Town. The station had to suspend its activities on June 6, 1990.

It has to be emphasized that during more than thirty years of cooperation under different governments a distinct partnership between the European shareholders and the Liberian government prevailed. Every important decision was made with the full understanding of all parties and in a friendly atmosphere. Not surprisingly Liberia became known as a country where the conditions and environment for mining investments were exemplary.

* These figures might be compared with the national budget.

The Voice of America in Liberia: The End of the Road

Patricia A. Holmes

Introduction

When Liberia is again able to set itself on course for the reconstruction of its battered structures and the healing of the deep wounds that have plagued the West African country since the April, 1980 coup, the Voice of America (VOA) of the United States will probably not be a part of that process. Since 1980, a bloody coup, numerous aborted incidents, as well as a civil war have torn the country apart and snuffed out the lives of thousands of its inhabitants. The VOA relay station and all its infrastructures which were constructed in 1962, were dismantled and destroyed when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, a former Liberian government official, marched down the main highway towards Careysburg, a city located one mile from the site of the VOA relay station in June, 1990. As the troops passed the station, heading towards their ultimate goal of toppling the Doe government in Monrovia, approximately 20 miles away, some members of the group stayed in Careysburg while 12,000 Liberians sought safety at the VOA compound. Three months later, the NPFL soldiers still in the Careysburg area shut down the station and confiscated computers, typewriters, radios, transmitters, and other communication equipment from the VOA. When the relay station was closed down, the VOA lost one of its primary means for broadcasting to its African audience; it is unlikely that it will rebuild once peace returns to Liberia. This paper will trace the establishment and evolution of the VOA and its communication developments in Liberia up to and including the shut down of the facility in 1990.

On September 17, 1990 at 6:30 p. m., the Liberia Relay Station of the Voice of America (VOA), an operation of the United States international relay facilities was forced shut by forces of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The shutdown ended 26 years and four months of radio communications in the West African country (Seeley, 1991, p. 4). The shutdown of the VOA was but one of the many dramas unfolding in an embattled country that for the past decade has experienced a coup, numerous aborted incidents and a civil war that left thousands dead, many more threatened by homelessness and disease, even more uprooted, seeking refuge in neighboring states and a bloody legacy of ethnic friction that could take a long time to ease (Butty, 1990-91, p. 39). Whenever the healing processes begin in Liberia, it is highly unlikely that the VOA will play a part in that reconstruction. It is even more ironic that just before

civil war broke out in 1989, the Liberia Relay Station was on the verge of receiving \$100 million for modernization efforts at the site (Seeley, p. 14). According to Hal Seeley, Deputy Manager of the VOA Relay Station in Liberia during that time:

The site utilities were crumbling, the buildings were in need of refurbishment. The staff houses needed repairs, the roads needed repaving, and the vintage 1960 transmitters were inefficient when compared to the state-of-art equipment on the market, and replacement parts were becoming harder to find.

Another refurbishment program was begun, a group of engineers arrived. . . . The engineers formalized the plan that had been prepared by VOA's Operation's personnel, and a contract was awarded for the most critical projects. Other longer-term projects were analyzed to determine how to handle them most effectively (p. 14).

It is unfortunate that these plans will never materialize, at least not in Liberia. With the closing of the Relay Station in Liberia, the VOA lost one of its primary means for broadcasting to its African audience, nonetheless, it has already gone elsewhere on the continent to fill the void.

The U.S. has held important communication holdings in Liberia since World War II when the country provided land for a military base to over 500 American troops stationed there (Liebenow, 1987, pp. 68, 137). Since the 1950s, Liberia ranked among the seven largest maritime powers, along with the U. S., Britain, Norway, Japan, the Soviet Union, and Greece. However, the system of a Liberian Registry was actually created at the urging of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to encourage the building of ships which might be needed by the U.S. during wartime (Liebenow, pp. 75-6). In addition to the VOA radio transmitter installed in 1962, other broadcast and satellite communications equipment have been in place to relay diplomatic cablegrams between Washington and American posts throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as American military communications sites (*New York Times*, J 1987, p. 5:1).

The American linkage was further reinforced through the opening in 1976 of an OMEGA navigational station, a system which provided worldwide assistance to shipping in all weather conditions, 24 hours a day (Liebenow, p. 137). In addition, Liberia was the only country in West Africa that had a rapid deployment agreement to allow the U.S. to refuel military aircraft on a 24 hours' notice. Thus telecommunications link-ups between the U.S. and Liberia have always been of paramount importance. (*New York Times*, F 1987, p. 8:L).

Recent studies on the Liberian crisis have said little about the U.S. telecommunications systems in the country, their status as the civil war raged, and the

historical ties which have linked the U.S. and Liberia in communications. This paper will examine these issues from an historical and contemporary perspective. While it is too soon to predict the outcome of the current struggle for power in Liberia, it is certainly not unrealistic to speculate that the VOA has come to the end of the road in Liberia.

That the U.S. chose Liberia as its strategic communication stronghold in Africa is no accident given the long historic ties that have been a hallmark of Liberian-American relations. The choice was geographically, politically, diplomatically and economically feasible. Yet a bloody civil war which coincided with the formal demise of the Cold War was to alter the relationship, leaving the VOA facility an important casualty.

The Voice of America in Liberia

The establishment of the VOA in Liberia is largely accredited to U.S. President John F. Kennedy who, on January 29, 1961 named former CBS News Director Edward R. Murrow to the position of Director of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) which then supervised VOA operations (Browne, 1981, p. 102). According to James Tyson (1983), Kennedy probably had a greater interest in, and became more closely involved with the U.S. information effort than any other American president up until that time. The Kennedy team was confident that such conflicts as "Wars of national liberation," with their emphasis on winning hearts and minds, would offer the U.S. a good shot at using its information and psychological resources to great advantages (p. 47). Consequently, during Morrow's tenure, a 4,800 kW transmitter base was dedicated in Greenville, North Carolina in 1963, coupled with the development and later permanent transmitter base in Liberia in 1964 (Browne, 1982, p. 102). The Liberia Relay Station increased the strength and clarity of the VOA signal to Africa and Latin America, both areas being major targets of influence for the Kennedy administration (Browne, p. 102).

In actuality, the VOA Relay Station in Liberia was conceived under the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower shortly after he took office in 1953. VOA engineers had long pressed for broadcasting improvements in developing areas and had argued the futility of spending time and money on broadcasts in areas that were sometimes inaudible (Browne, p. 102). Before the relay operations in Liberia was constructed, the VOA had depended for its African coverage on relay transmitters in the Mediterranean area, but as the U.S. interests in Africa South of the Sahara developed, it became evident that the Mediterranean-based stations could not lay down an adequate signal in the central and southern sectors of the continent (Reed, 1970, p. 98; Head, p. 103).

According to *Broadcasting in Africa*:

Monrovia provided the solution, located as it is about a third of the way down the west coast, in a good position to receive short-wave transmissions across the Atlantic from VOA transmitters on the American mainland (Greenville, North Carolina), and with an unimpeded propagation path over water for rebroadcasting to the southern third of the African continent (Head, p. 103).

With the establishment of the VOA relay facilities, Liberia housed the largest concentration of radio-transmitter power relative to its size of any country in Africa (Head, p. 102). The agreement to establish the "Telecommunications: Voice of America Radio Relay Facilities" was signed and entered into force at Monrovia on August 13, 1959 (U.S. Doc. 4293, 1959). Under the agreement, Liberia granted and extended to the U.S. the right to "construct, operate and maintain radio facilities for the purpose of relaying programs and information in various languages to areas throughout the world" (4293, p. 1).

According to Article II of the document, those facilities would consist of the following:

- a) A receiving station comprised of receivers, recording and play-back equipment, a power generating plant, antennas, communications and link equipment and other ancillary buildings, installations and equipment.
- b) A transmitting station comprised of several transmitters of up to 500 kW power each, a power generating plant, antennas, communications and link equipment and other ancillary buildings, installations and equipment.
- c) Such housing, recreation and other facilities as may be necessary to accommodate the personnel employed and their dependents (4293, p. 1).

Liberia was to assist the U.S. in the acquisition of the necessary land rights for the facilities, approve all radio frequencies used for transmission, and provide duty-free custom privileges and exemptions for all materials, equipment, parts and supplies, including motor vehicles, imported or exported for the facilities (4293, p. 2). In addition, the Liberian government was to provide tax exemptions for U.S. personnel employed to construct, operate, maintain and supervise the facilities (4293, p. 2).

This original agreement for operations of VOA facilities in Liberia was for forty years, and there was no provision made for cancellation (VOA, 1982). The most outstanding quality of the document was the reference to "utilizing

Liberian nationals to the greatest extent possible in connection with the construction, operation and maintenance of these facilities. In furtherance thereof, an employee training program shall be conducted"¹ (4293, p. 2).

Early Years of the Liberia Relay Facilities

The Liberia Relay Station, opened in 1964 at a cost of \$14 million, was located on two sites near the Liberian capital. The transmitting facilities, power plant and station offices were located near Careysburg, 18.5 miles northeast of Monrovia on 1,383 acres of land (VOA, 1982) and 17 more acres acquired by 1987 (VOA, 1987, p. 70). Shortwave transmitting equipment consisted of six 250 kW and two 50 kW broadcast transmitters, one 40 kW and 15 kW communications transmitters. Antenna systems included 12 curtain, 21 rhombic, and three dipole antennas. There was also a microwave system for program and traffic feeds between plants. Power was supplied by a diesel generating plant with a capacity of 6,300 kilowatts (VOA, 1982).

The receiver site was located on 350-356 acres eight miles northwest of Monrovia near the city of Brewerville (VOA, 1982; 1987). By 1984, program feeds were received via HF relay with satellite feed and the station was linked by radio teletype with other VOA relay stations and Washington via the Greenville Relay Station in North Carolina (VOA, 1987). Power at this site was generated by a 700 kW automated diesel power plant. The government-built housing for the American staff and third country technicians was located on a Compound based at the Careysburg site (VOA, 1982).

During its early years, the primary mission of the station was to "relay VOA programs to the African continent. Other transmissions provided service to the Near and Middle East, Brazil, India and Southern Europe" (VOA, 1982). By 1987, the primary targets became just "Sub-Sahara Africa" (VOA, 1987, p. 70). In the beginning, the staff consisted of 13 Americans, 11 third country nationals, and 90 Liberians plus four temporary positions (VOA, 1982); by 1987, the American personnel totalled 12, the foreign service nationals increased by seven, but no mention was made of Liberians employed at the site (VOA, 1987, p. 70).

Technical and Maintenance Work at the Facilities

According to U.S. VOA personnel, from 1964 to 1979, faulty vibration dampers on the two largest generator sets virtually shook the transmitter site buildings apart. The relentless beating of the diesel engines not only damaged the building, but also the engines themselves. Broken crankshafts and premature failures of connecting rods and main bearings were all attributed to the faulty vibration dampers (Seeley, p. 13). The problems were finally traced to the vibration dampers in 1979. Following their repair, the operation of the power

plant improved remarkably. According to Seeley, "the ravages of the tropics had taken their toll," but fortunately, much of the maintenance procedure that had previously been required was no longer necessary, and from 1979 to 1983, the station operated in relative calm (p. 13). Seeley also discussed another major dilemma in 1984:

VOA engineers discovered that the majority of transmission line poles were near collapse. In a monumental effort, VOA began to replace all of the poles. After numerous visits by managers, engineers and technicians and a constant cycle of inspections and estimates, not to mention a variety of other 'headaches,' the project was completed two and a half years later. The year was now 1987 (p. 14).

Programming and Liberian Staffing

At first, the station originated part of VOA's African programming from its own studios, as well as rebroadcasting material relayed from Washington (Head, p. 103). These local programs were discontinued in 1968 as an economy measure. Consequently, the Monrovia complex became strictly a rebroadcast facility for programs originated in VOA's Washington's studios. By 1970, the VOA had invested more than \$15 million on the facilities (Head, p. 103).

Head also noted in the early years that, "... an international service must consider the element of psychological relevance in its programming. Audiences naturally tend to be most interested in programs related to their own affairs" (p. 197; USIA, 1960b, p. 20). He pointed out that most of the world's daily hard news during that period, like much of the world's culture assimilable into broadcast programming was distinctly not related to African interests; Africans did "enjoy hearing African voices on programs directed toward them—in fact might even resent the 'lily-white' complexion of newsreading, announcing, and program hosting" (p. 197-8).

In 1968, VOA employed Yvonne Barclay, a Liberian lady disc jockey in the Washington, D.C. office. According to Head, "her warm, throaty voice and charmingly accented American slang on 'Request Time' made her a celebrity in many Anglophone African cities. In fact the VOA even sent her back to Africa on personal-appearance tours (p. 198).

Ms. Barclay was still at the VOA office in 1977, broadcasting her "Request Time." Her theme was much of the "soft" programming, written and delivered in an informal manner with a good deal of ad-libbing (Tyson, p. 114), as in the following excerpt, where she picked up on the final line of the song "Mexican Divorce":

One day married, the next day free. Ya know, it's really kinda strange that a lot of people look at marriage as sort of imprisonment, right? I should imagine that, if people get married, that they should be free, right? You don't change. I mean, you're still the same individual, you're a human being, you're a person, right? And because you get married doesn't mean that you're a prisoner. . . . (Tyson, p. 114).

About a third of the VOA's English programs reaching Africa was designed for audiences that were not exclusively African. According to Head, the most significant of these programs, ideal for those who were just beginning to learn English, was a daily half-hour in "Special English," which limited the announcer to a reading rate of 90 words a minute and to a basic vocabulary of 1,200 words (p. 187).

By 1972, the VOA broadcast about 130 hours a week directly to Africa, broken down by VOA language services, in percentages as illustrated in Table I. Seven hours a week of "feed" (delivered via broadcast transmitters, but intended for recording in Africa and subsequent local broadcast by African stations) included English, French, (Kis)swahili, and Hausa for East, Southern, West, and Central Africa (Head, p. 186).

TABLE I: VOA LANGUAGE SERVICES TO AFRICA IN 1972: PERCENTAGES*

Regionalized English	35%
English Division to Africa Only	32%
French	21%
Arabic to North Africa	6%
(Kis)swahili to East Africa	6%

*Adapted from Head ed., *Broadcasting in Africa: A Continental Survey of Radio and Television* (Temple University Press, 1974), p. 186.

Table II illustrates the chief daily programs in the major categories:

TABLE II: CHIEF DAILY PROGRAMS IN MAJOR CATEGORIES IN 1972: PERCENTAGES*						
	Program	Language	Music	News		Feature
Regionalized English	"African Safari"	English	25%	25%	25%	25%
	"African Panorama"	English	50%	50%		
	"Africana"	English	25%	50%		25%
French	"Breakfast Show"	French	65%	35%		
	"Radio Journal"	French		100%		
	"Antenne"	French	35%	25%		40%
	"Radio Journal to North Africa"	French		100%		

*Adapted from Head ed., *Broadcasting in Africa: A Continental Survey of Radio and Television* .

Language Services Rebroadcast from the Relay Station

Although there are many parts of Africa where listeners could not receive VOA broadcasts in their own language, it is highly unlikely that those odds will change, even at the VOA's other permanent Relay Station in Botswana (VOA, 1990, p. 14; Tyson, p. 119). English has always been the largest of the VOA language services, 24 hours a day for worldwide English, plus daily special services to Africa 5 1/2 hours (Tyson, p. 111). By 1980, the African Service in English also provided at least an hour a day of African, U.S. and Caribbean popular music, plus numerous short feature reports about developments in African, Caribbean and Afro-American culture, sports, and political life (Tyson, p. 114).

It has been difficult for scholars and others to estimate the size of the VOA audience in Africa and even more arduous to secure specific day-to-day activities on the Relay Station in Liberia, primarily because world interest was not focused on the sites until 1980 and the rise of the Second Republic.²

The bloody reign of President Samuel K. Doe also inflamed ethnic tensions that had been simmering beneath the surface of Liberia's society for many years (Lawyers, p. 21). Many of these ethnic frictions came to a head in December, 1989 when a group of Liberian dissidents invaded the country. The attack was launched by a group called the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. The NPFL, led by Charles Taylor, a former government official, struck from Nimba County

with the determination to dethrone the regime of President Doe. The NPFL seemed to have targeted elements of Doe's ethnic group, the Krahn, and their perceived allies, the Mandingo. The fray escalated when Prince Johnson broke away from Taylor's group to lead a separate independent campaign of the National Patriotic Front to oust Doe (Butty, p. 38). The various warring factions ignited a civil war which led to thousands of deaths and the torture-killing of Doe by Prince Johnson in September, 1990 (Post-Dispatch, 1990, p. 7A).

The Liberia Relay Station in Crisis

When the civil war erupted on December 2, 1989, the VOA staff in Careysburg was fighting its own battle to keep the station broadcasting in the midst of the turmoil erupting around the Compound. When the NPFL marched toward Monrovia, it passed the VOA site though many of its troops remained in the area.

On April 28, 1990, the U.S. evacuated most of the VOA government employees and their dependents from Liberia. According to Seeley, Deputy Manager at the time, the remaining staff made preparations to evacuate the station. He recounted the activities over the next six weeks:

As a contingency, a make-shift radio-telephone connection was put together to allow communications between the Greenville Relay Station and Liberia in the event the country's telecommunications were damaged. Windows in the technical buildings were replaced with cinder blocks. Doors were barred. Twenty foot steel shipping containers were brought to the station and government and privately owned automobiles were loaded into them—along with anything else of value. The containers were placed door against door and stacked two high to prevent entry. Staff housing was secured by welding steel plates over door glass. It was the best the staff could do considering how rapidly the war was approaching the station (p. 2).

On June 20th, the two remaining U.S. VOA employees departed the station just 45 minutes before Taylor's troops attacked Careysburg. These two employees moved to the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia to continue telephone and radio contact with the Liberian staff at the VOA Compound. With telephone communications still operating within Liberia, the Washington, D.C. engineering office was also able to contact the Careysburg station (p. 2).

When the satellite earth station near Monrovia was shut down, one of the VOA employees based at the U.S. Embassy established hand-held radio communications with the Careysburg station. At this point, the emergency shortwave radio telephone link to Greenville (set up in early May) was activated. Through

telephone patching techniques, the station was still able to communicate with VOA facilities in the U.S. on a 24-hour-a-day basis (p. 2). During the next three months, the Liberian staff in Careysburg operated the station; their only connection to the outside world was the radio link (p. 3).

As the NPFL troops passed the VOA station, more than 12,000 Liberians sought refuge at the Compound. Because the site was not equipped to handle such a large influx of people, many died from lack of water, food and poor sanitary conditions (Seeley, p. 3). About 18 Liberian employees were still at the Compound when it was taken over by the NPFL. They worked on operations and maintenance at the site for more than 16 hours a day, since they could not return to Monrovia.

On September 17th at 6:30 p.m., the Liberia Relay Station was shut down by the NPFL forces. The fate of the Liberian employees who had remained at the site was uncertain until word came that many had arrived in Abidjan, Ivory Coast in early November. Seeley was sent from Washington to assist them in obtaining back pay and to help them settle in the neighboring countries (p. 5).

The employees recounted the events leading up to the forces' invasion of the site after the U.S. staff was evacuated:

Pressure from rebel troops occupying the Careysburg area began a month after (the two U.S. VOA employees) were prevented from returning to the station. . . . The Rebels wanted fuel, vehicles, and maintenance support. The Acting Station Manager (a Liberian) explained that he had no authority to dispense U.S. Government property to anybody. As the days passed, the rebels' visits became more frequent. After each visit, the rebel soldiers seemed to gain more confidence and gradually began to infiltrate the station's boundaries. Because the soldiers were heavily armed, the Acting Station Manager could not prevent them from entering. When they first started coming on the compound, the soldiers left their weapons at the gate. After a time, they started bringing their weapons inside. By the end of August, they renewed their demands for fuel. A rebel commanding officer led the charge. Facing the threat of armed force, the Acting Station Manager authorized 5 gallons of gasoline. The next day 12 cars arrived at the station for more. The flood gates had opened (Seeley, p. 6).

Even though a memo arrived from the NPFL commanding officer on September 17th, instructing all rebel forces that VOA was to be protected and that its boundaries would be respected, forces still came over the fences and closed the station down (Seeley, p. 6). The Liberian staff was removed from the Compound at gunpoint and one was severely beaten (Seeley, p. 7). The senior

Acting Manager was placed under arrest, but released five days later, never to return to the station.

On the following day, soldiers entered the Control Room of the VOA, stealing computers, typewriters, radios and other equipment. They then demanded keys to everything that was locked, including all vehicles. Over the next few days, they stole vehicles, gas and kerosene (Seeley, p. 7).

Since the soldiers needed electricity to pump the fuel and gasoline, they brought back the Liberian power plant technical staff to the station to get the generator going. They also ransacked the power and transmitter buildings; they carried everything out of the stockrooms and threw items they could not identify away, i. e. specialized spare parts for the transmitters and engines (Seeley, p. 8).

From accounts reconstructed by the Liberian employees in Abidjan, the soldiers looted the containers of personal goods and vehicles at the site. When they could not open two containers that were not stacked, the following day they brought in a forklift from the Firestone Rubber Plantation to haul the containers away; but they started to fight over the clothes in the containers (Seeley, p. 8). Then they began looting materials from the staff homes on the Compound. The trucks which hauled the furniture and appliances headed north to Kakata and Gbarnga; the stolen VOA vehicles were later seen operating in the Ivory Coast (Seeley, p. 8).

Shortly after the soldiers shut down the station, they moved every vehicle and tractor that did not run to the VOA airstrip because "they thought the U.S. marines would be coming to protect the station and they were going to prevent them from landing" (Seeley, p. 9).

According to the Liberian staff's accounts of the incidents at the VOA Compound, the soldiers gave them the following two reasons for closing down the station:

- (1) They were concerned for the safety of the VOA staff and the station. They said they had heard that the West African states' peace keeping force was going to bomb the station.
- (2) The VOA staff was able to observe and report on rebel activity by way of their 'secret' listening and viewing equipment located in the 'sky' and on the antenna towers (p. 9).

Though the reasons are unclear why the NPFL decided to shut down the VOA facilities in Careysburg, what is clear is that the VOA lost one of its primary means for broadcasting effectively to its African audience and it will not wait until peace returns to Liberia to reconstruct its facilities. The \$100 million

modernization efforts targeted for the shattered VOA sites in Liberia will be channelled elsewhere, and the close ties between the U.S. and Liberia which accounted for the installation of this American facility on Liberian soil, may remain but a memory in the history of this West African nation.

Conclusion

The closing of the VOA Relay Station brought the curtains down on the communications hook-ups between the U.S. and the bloody embattled nation of Liberia. Wasting no time to fill the void, the VOA looked elsewhere on the Continent. It increased its broadcasts from the U.S. and contracted "Africa Number One" in Gabon to use two commercial transmitters for one hour early in the morning. Seeley explained however, that the VOA engineers soon realized that programs transmitted from the U.S. VOA relay station in Greenville and Bethany, Ohio would, in fact reach the African continent at that early time of the day. Because the time factor was not conducive, the expensive contract with "Number One" was discontinued, albeit the efforts did maintain some programming that was far from perfect; nevertheless it was the first endeavor attempted after the fall of the Liberia Relay Station.

The VOA realized that it needed a shortwave relay station in Africa and to help make up for the loss of the Liberia site, it revived a former plan to build a facility in Botswana. The eight-year-old site was primarily serving Southern Africa, but with the loss of the Liberian site, work was undertaken to rejuvenate interest in Botswana.

The VOA, under an earlier modernization program, purchased land near Selibi Phikwi, Botswana to build a new relay station. Before the collapse of the Liberian site, the VOA had planned to close the existing Botswana transmitter site and use the new facility to broadcast both on shortwave and medium wave. Budget cuts brought the shortwave element of the project to a halt. According to Seeley, now with the immediate need for shortwave coverage of Africa, VOA revived the plan, but on a smaller scale. Reopening the existing 50 kW transmitting site and accelerating the project for the installation of four 100 kW shortwave transmitters and a series of antennas, VOA went on the air in Botswana in 1991.

Almost a year to the date that the VOA site in Liberia fell to the hands of NPFL soldiers, VOA communications in Africa continued in Botswana. Botswana may not be as geographically, politically, diplomatically or economically feasible as Liberia; nevertheless, it is practical in terms of the stability of its regime. Botswana may not be the African country Americans conceived, and nurtured over the years; but it is receptive to the VOA prospects for modernization and communication development in Africa.

As the communications 'guard' is changed to Botswana and the close ties between the U.S. and Liberia are transformed we witness a new American

communication order beginning on the continent. As the fate of Liberia hangs in the balance, the future of U.S. broadcasting in Africa continues. Future studies on the VOA and its activities in Botswana are essential to international communication research in Africa. But if nothing else is learned from the unfortunate and tragic ordeals of Liberia, this much must be clear: that a country divided seems lost and alone in the global scheme of international communication development in Africa. But there are no permanent alliances. The VOA's long-range interests in broadcasting will be advanced in accordance with its charter; and it will continue to communicate directly with the peoples of Africa and the world—through radio—wherever that may be on the continent.

Endnotes

¹Although the concept of a "Training Program" was provided for in the Agreement, the VOA's brief does not include such programs to developing nations. However, the VOA was prepared to open such a Center in Liberia. Thought was also given to the possibility of using it also as the base for a major regional broadcast training center, but approval for such a program or addition to the VOA's primary functions could not be obtained from the U.S. Government (Head, p. 226). Thus the Training Program in Liberia never materialized.

²On April 12, 1980 enlisted men of the Armed Forces of Liberia overthrew and kill President William R. Tolbert, Jr., and Samuel K. Doe, dismantled the First Republic. Following an interregnum, the military leader was declared President in elections in 1985 which were widely reported as being fraudulent. He thus became President of the Second Republic, and ruled autocratically and brutally until he was deposed in 1990.

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A Short Analysis of Bai T. Moore's Poetry and Prose Writings

Robert H. Brown

Introduction

The death of Bai Tamia Moore in 1988 was indeed a great loss to Liberia. It would not be an overstatement to say that Bai T. Moore can be considered the "Father" of contemporary Liberian literature in English. A prolific and versatile writer, the late Bai T. Moore wrote a spate of manuscripts—poems, folktales, short stories, novellas and novels over a period of three decades. Some of the manuscripts have been published. Others have yet to be published. Indeed, Moore was an open sesame to Liberia's cultural heritage. Besides writing poetry and prose-fiction, Moore also catalogued and recorded indigenous songs.

The late Professor Roland T. Dempster once characterized Moore as one of West Africa's most prominent "jungle poets."¹

That is, however, a false impression, for Moore's poetic mind is by no means confined to the rural or suburban scene in Liberia. It is true that he loves it, and has a deeply sympathetic insight into the minds of those who dwell there. But there is a great variety of landscape and people in Moore's poetry. He likes the Liberian urban and suburban or rural scenes as much as he likes the American or British or Indian scene. In short, Moore seems to be at home in the most diverse surroundings.

It is Moore's multi-faceted, artistic temperament that prompted Kona Khasu to assert that:

. . . Many readers prefer Bai T. Moore's poetry about the common people- their loves, romantic dreams, struggles for survival, failures and successes. . . .²

The importance of Moore as a significant Liberian poet of world renown cannot be over-emphasized. Some of Moore's poetry have appeared in leading national and international publications. "Jungle Melody," for example, was included in a German anthology of West African Literature in 1954. Then too, "Ebony Dust," which Moore used as the preface and title for his major collection of poems, *Ebony Dust*, was included in the Italian edition of *Liberia Today* in 1958. The fact that Moore's poetry has been translated into several languages is eloquent testimony to his importance as a significant Liberian poet.

Ebony Dust

It is nearly thirty years since Bai T. Moore's *Ebony Dust* was first published. *Ebony Dust* is divided into three sections: (1) the "African Scene"; (2) the "American Scene"; and (3) "Various Scenes" to illustrate the various backgrounds and topics which provided the inspiration for the collection. Moore emerged onto the literary scene during the Tubman administration. It seems appropriate, therefore, that the "The Legend of Shad Tubman" should head the first section of *Ebony Dust*. The poem is essentially a paean to the late President Tubman as a great leader and as "the poor man's friend and lawyer." "A Wingless Bird" shows the sarcastic nature of the poet. The poem is written in honour of Buster Clinton, a one-time, promising young Liberian musician whose musical talent did not come to fruition. Buster Clinton was about to go to the United States to study music formally when, for no apparent reason, he disappeared from the musical scene in the 1940s. The poet did not see Buster Clinton until 1960 when he met him in the Firestone Rubber Plantation in Harbel. In essence, "A Wingless Bird" is a reflection on life and the hopes attendant on human endeavour. "The Halleluyah Stuff" pokes fun at a self-styled evangelist and preacher of the word of God. The poem, written in Vernacular Liberian English, depicts an urban scene in which a minister of the gospel proclaims doom and gloom for Liberians living in a whirlpool of sin. But beneath this religious fervor the poet discerns hypocrisy. Consequently, he admonishes the preacher to return to the traditional African religion of animism. The poem abounds with images which find a mirror in the mind of every Liberian who reads it. The rest of the poems in the "African Scene" section are written in honour of various personalities, and depict Moore as an ironic poet who sees Africa, the dark continent, as being exploited by Westerners.

The second section of *Ebony Dust* shows Moore as a mature poet. "To Inez M." demonstrates that there is also tragic, elegiac solemnity in Moore's natures

When I think of those bygone years
 When first we met in Dixieland
 I feel the kiss we shared in tears
 How young we were and foolish too.
 We built our castles in the air
 And pledged to make our dreams come true.
 We played and danced and knelt in prayer
 And hoped that fate would never close
 The gate to all our happiness
 The years rolled on — a timber fell
 And made us think what tragedy
 That fate could bring to us.
 It knitted all our lingering scenes
 And gave us ever impetus

To face a cold and heartless world.
 Famata came with joy and cheer
 To share our little paradise
 And gave us hope to have no fear
 That all these years were not in vain.

The poem is about the poet's high-school sweetheart whom he married, the death of his mother-in-law, and the birth of his daughter, Famata. "Reminiscent" is also a tragic poem. The poem reveals the romantic nature of the poet whose unrequited love for another high-school sweetheart is made more intense by her sudden death. "Thoughts of Love," "My Autograph," "Union Revisited" and "I See America" show the poet's views less magisterial and less moral and a good deal more personal than the poems in the "African Scene" section. The fragment of autobiography supplied in some of the poems in the "American Scene" section depicts the poet as rather introspective as well as retrospective.

The third section in *Ebony Dust*, "Various Scenes," finds Moore turning away from a more personal view to a vision of the world and of man. Most of the poems in this section show the poet reflecting on life and death. For instance, "Triumph and Tragedy in Jerusalem" is about hatred and prejudice among the various religious sects, factions and races in Jerusalem and the condemnation of Jesus Christ to death. The poem ascribes foolishness and hate to those who condemned Jesus Christ to death and then proceeds to demonstrate, with brilliant images, the extent of their hatred and folly. "Eternity So Soon" and "Back to Cave Man" are redolent of W. B. Yeats's and T. S. Eliot's sibylline poetry. The two poems show Moore at his prophetic best. "Eternity So Soon," for instance, describes the inevitable doom of man as a result of scientific and technological progress. The poem depicts in startling imagery, the destruction of all the good things that man has created—peace, love and harmony among the various races—as a result of the bomb. In essence, the poem is a frightening, universal metaphor for the human condition. "Back to Cave Man" ascribes folly and confusion among the peoples of the world because of the imminent threat of nuclear war. The poet seems to suggest that man wants to take a retrograde step to the days of the cave man when there was no threat of a nuclear holocaust. "Empty Shadows," "Some Friends," "What Counts," "The Human Side" and "Shed No Tears" once more show Moore reflecting on the meanings of life and death.

Grassroots

Bai T. Moore's *Grassroots*, a collection of poems published locally a few years before his death, finds the poet turning to Liberian topics and the Liberian experience. The apparently effortless manner in which Moore writes about the suburban as well as the urban scene is eloquent testimony that as a Poet, he

touches and illuminates life at many different points. The following poem, "Monrovia Market Women," from *Grassroots*, written in Vernacular Liberian English, depicts an urban scene:

the Monrovia
 market women
 they are something-o
 foreday in the morning
 the pepperbirds
 dogs
 chickens
 chase them
 out of bed and
 send them running
 like red ants
 on nettles
 they grab old
 squeaking buckets
 run to hydrants
 ch -u—u- u-u
 and duck in foul enclosures
 smelling with pee
 throw cold water
 on they back
 belly and
 between they legs
 and all
 they snatch
 young crying babies
 tie them snugly
 on they back, shove fat tetes
 in they mouth
 to hush them up
 then rush by
 foot
 bus or
 taxi
 to the arteries
 pumping life
 into the markets
 on Monrovia
 they rush to buying depots
 Tubman Bridge
 Doola

Balema (for Mesu fish)
 Juakpebli (near USAID/RL)
 and Oldest Kongotown
 to stop the
 trucks and pickups
 full of zoba bagsssss of
 cassadas
 potatoes
 plawa sauce leaves and
 dry meat like:
 wild bushgoat
 boa-constrictor
 elephant skin
 nyangaboy
 and other fuyu fuyu
 these women must have strong backs
 and legs and hands to push and fight
 and hold on to their market money
 wrapped in a belt of country cloth
 which they tie around the waist
 but wait now the fun begins in
 market stalls where chattering
 and palavering (like a colony of rice birds)
 and dollar notes and coins commence
 passing like confusion through
 a hundred thousand fingers
 come good friend
 buy my part me
 I go dash you
 goes on endlessly till dusk.

The poem would seem to characterize Moore as a supremely “funny poet.” But here a warning needs to be issued at once. Bai T. Moore is not a “funny poet,” though some of the poems in *Grassroots* and *Ebony Dust* show that he frequently writes “funny” poems. His interest in the urban scene should not lead the reader to think that Moore is horrified at the materialism and vulgarity of modern life in Liberia. Moore’s interest in the urban scene seems to suggest that his searching visual powers paint the ugly and the beautiful as well as the ridiculous and the sublime.

Murder in the Cassava Patch

Although Moore was primarily a poet, he also wrote some creative fiction. *Murder in the Cassava Patch*, his first work of creative fiction, was published in the

Netherlands in 1968. *Murder in the Cassava Patch* is essentially a love-story gone wrong. It tells a story about the humiliations, the frustrations and abysmal despair, the amorous and often crucial relationship between a young man and his unrequited love for a beautiful and unfaithful young lady, and the blood-curdling act of murder. The protagonist, Gortokai, is a kind, generous and sensitive young man who is very much in love with Tene, daughter of Old Man Jomo and his wife, Sombo Karn. All begins with the frankness, innocence and naiveté of Tene. Left alone, Gortokai (or Kai for short) and Tene begin to play "Mama" and "Papa". Gortokai, however, looks at Tene with fear and trembling. Tene says: "Gortokai, can't you see that we are not brother and sister? It's a secret Mama told me." That, to borrow a term that James Joyce popularised, is the "moment of epiphany." In other words, the revelation of the truth together with the knowledge that Kai's father was a slave (a fact he learns eventually as the story unfolds) recruited as a contract labourer for the Spanish Island of Fernando Po, gives vent to the plot and foreshadows the eventual outcome of Tene's fate.

Having reached manhood, Gortokai focuses his attention on Tene. To accomplish his goal, he confides in Kema, Tene's older sister. Kema, a schemer, assures him that the family will have no objection to his marrying Tene, as he is the bread-winner of the household.

In any event, Gortokai has to provide a dowry and the traditional bride-price. These he provides by going through the travail of cleaning out a rubber-farm at Suehn. However, he learns incidentally from Buu, a friend, that Tene has rejected his proposal. Consequently, Buu advises him to visit Bleng, a diviner. This triggers the long atony of frustration and bitter recollection of the past that Gortokai suffers throughout the story. During the conversation between them, Buu philosophizes by narrating a story of a similar situation in which he was involved. This scene, though it almost drives Kai perilously to the edge of madness, serves as a surcease from anxiety and gives his present lovelorn state a semblance of balance, for the thought of losing Tene besmirches his mind.

The medicine-man's lot may appear to be trivial, but it isn't. In fact, it is an apparent, irresistible final recourse for Gortokai. Indeed, the medicine-man doesn't neglect him either. But to accomplish his mission, he asks Gortokai to obtain such items as (1) a braid of Tene's hair; (2) a piece of her garment; (3) three of Tene's toe-nails; (4) a piece of her otter-skin; and (5) some gunpowder and other odds and ends. Gortokai succeeds only in obtaining a few of the items. Bleng supplies the rest in a rather patronizing manner.

One wonders if Tene is an exception to the rule. Even after the diviner accomplishes his mission and Gortokai returns to Bendabli, the village where most of the action in the story takes place, things don't go quite to his liking. Tene becomes half-receptive, and shows an air of Oriental indifference when she meets Gortokai. From this moment on, the story moves with a narrative agility.

Gortokai learns that Tene has another lover, Boima Chachi of Bomi Hills. Tene goes to live with this man, but the match turns out to be an ill-starred one. She flees his home and goes to Monrovia. Tene's wretched condition elicits Gortokai's sympathy when he meets her in Monrovia, selling farina. He wins her back and returns to Bendabli with her. Upon his return to Bendabli, Gortokai renovates the house and performs other chores.

One of the most frustrating incidents occurs when Meme, Gortokai's old acquaintance, informs Gortokai of another of Kema's conniving schemes. This man sends Tene many gifts. But as one would suspect, Gortokai intercepts one parcel. Then Kema pays Tene and the family a visit at Bendabli. Gortokai goes out of his way to fetch drinks. When he returns from fetching the drinks, he eavesdrops and overhears Kema enumerating all of Gortokai's shortcomings. She even outlines his family history. From now on, one suspects Gortokai's sanity.

When Tene and Kema return from a diviner to learn of the evil omen underlying the destruction of Tene's gifts, they find Gortokai feigning stomach-ache. Gortokai asks Tene to prepare a "small piece of domboy with dry meat soup" the following day. Tene says: "Gortokai, people never plan that kind of domboy the day previous." To which Gortokai replies: "That is the difference between us. I like to plan everything I do ahead of time." This scene prefigures a preknowledge of the ghastly act he is to perpetrate. The next day he hides himself in the cassava patch where Tene goes to dig up the tubular root for the domboy. It is in this scene that Gortokai takes a sudden but calculated dramatic sprint, murdering Tene in cold blood.

There are other characters in *Murder in the Cassava Patch*, but they are peripheral. In the centre of the stage stand the two major characters: Tene, a flat character,³ who plays the role of a puppet-on-a-string, and Gortokai inflicted with the pangs of unrequited love. All of Moore's books revolve around, and probe, their interaction with each other.

The central theme of the book is the evocation of one's past, the bitterness it awakens in the individual and the painful realization that one cannot repudiate that past. All of Kai's abysmal despair is triggered by his recollection brought to the fore by his love for Tene, his past that discloses the blatant truth that he is the son of a slave.

The American philosopher, George Santayana, once wrote: "He who does not remember his past is doomed to repent it." Indeed, Gortokai does a fine job by narrating a very significant event of his life. And Moore has done a commendable job by getting under Gortokai's skin and expressing an experience. The story is a first-person narrative. Consequently, it gives the immediacy of the eye-witness account, thus committing the reader to a consistently biased view of the narrator, who is himself a major character in the story.

The Money Doubler

Like *Murder in the Cassava Patch*, which has a rural setting for the most part, Moore has set his second short novel, *The Money Doubler*, primarily in a rural region of Liberia. *The Money Doubler* reveals a humorous story about a confidence-trickster who lives by his wits, defrauding naive and unsuspecting victims by artfully winning their confidence and cheating them out of their money by promising to double it. And it is indeed amazing how often he succeeds by this "clever" trickery.

Moore uses the literary technique of *in medias res*. In other words, the book opens in the middle of the action and then supplies information about the beginning of the action through flashbacks and other devices.⁴ *The Money Doubler* traces the plight of Gaway, a petty revenue officer who falls victim to the wits of Dumblegai, the confidence-trickster. Gaway's desire to improve his lot finds him in a predicament from which he eventually extricates himself with the help of Zolu, a new-found friend, at a great loss.

Moore establishes suspense on the first page of *The Money Doubler*. As the story unfolds, we find a petty revenue agent, Gaway, pacing up and down in Water Street. His mental anguish as a result of his attempts to find Dumblegai in order to retrieve the three hundred and fifty dollars of government revenue, makes Gaway appear rather ludicrous and a little *non compos mentis*.

The agent is restless because his friend who had promised to help him find Dumblegai, seems to have forgotten his promise. Moreover, the agent's apparent discomfort stems from his desire to maintain his hitherto incorruptible honesty and unassailable reputation, for during the twelve years he had been a revenue agent, his integrity has remained unequivocally unquestionable. The fear of losing his job if the money isn't restituted is justified, for one cannot give his fear a cavalier dismissal. But as this thought rankles through his mind, his friend arrives.

Meanwhile, as both friends wait patiently to board the MV-Cora for the Liberia Mining Company labour camp at Mile-Post 16, they fritter away time by interspersing it with moments of a drinking spree. Before Gaway and Zolu journey to Mile-Post 16, Dumblegai's destination, the agent narrates the events that led to his friend being defrauded. Zolu consoles him by narrating a similar incident in which he was a victim. From this moment on, the reader becomes interested in the journey motif in the story. Upon their arrival at Mile-Post 16, Zolu demonstrates the Liberian characteristic display of hospitality.

The climatic incident in *The Money Doubler* occurs when Dumblegai is caught in a "bath-fence," raping another man's wife. It is at this moment that Dumblegai incurs the wrath of the woman's husband and the inhabitants of Mile-Post 16. Consequently, Dumblegai is severely beaten and subsequently

incarcerated. With the help of Zolu, the overseer and the campmaster, the money is retrieved from Madam Mbaa Diie, Dumblegai's main accomplice. Much to the chagrin of both Zolu and the campmaster, only three hundred dollars is recovered. Of this amount, forty dollars is to be given to the husband of the woman Dumblegai has raped in accordance with the government's Interior Regulations; the chiefs and elders who implore the irate husband to reduce the one hundred dollars requested initially, have to be given a certain amount (i.e. what is often referred to in Liberian parlance as "cold-water"). Then too, the overseer and the police have to receive fifteen dollars. And, as if to add insult to injury, Dumblegai has to receive fifteen dollars to enable him and his entourage to return to their place of origin. Later that night when Zolu discloses the news to Gaway, he almost faints.

One notes that everything seems to conspire against Gaway. His lofty plans to buy a pick-up or lorry from the Firestone Garage in Harbel and eventually reconstitute the three hundred and fifty dollars are dreams fit for nothing but Utopia.

It is indeed questionable how far Moore succeeds in making Dumblegai convincing as a character. Dumblegai's portrait isn't commanding enough to give the reader a character he will not forget. The reader only gets fleeting glimpses into Moore's characterization of Dumblegai and Gaway. Despite this flaw, *The Money Doubler* does deserve a place in the canon of Liberian literature. A cursory reading of passages attempting to portray Dumblegai seems to indicate that Moore's primary concern is not character-delineation. Rather, his main objective is the plot or storyline. Therefore, one can assert that the emphasis is on the storyline rather than on what happens in the story.

Stylistically, Moore uses the omniscient point of view. But it is reportorial for the most part. Moreover, some of Moore's dialogue which begin in Liberian Pidgin English, incongruously end up in fluent, standard English unlikely to portray the speech-patterns of functional illiterates. The following extracts provide eloquent testimony to the stylistic ineptitude in *The Money Doubler*:

"Hush you mouth," the fellow shot back, his fat jaws rising up and down. You mean a Liberian zowo played this trick on you?" (p. 3).

Gaway's chin receded into a broad smile. Look, here, Jack, I hear you got some fine ethnics in Po River." (p. 63).

"N-o-o, good friend," Zolu shook his head. We got a little knack-kneed Gola drummer in the camp, when he touches a deer skin drum, you will dance with your head. If I'm not mistaken, that's him beating the drum. (p. 65).

A functional illiterate cannot handle verb morphology such as *played* and *touches*, or a sophisticated register such as *ethnics*—let alone an attributive adjective such as *knack-kneed*, so efficiently. In his essay, "Brief Notes on Liberian Literature," Kona Khasu has this to say about Moore's language and styles

In his works, one begins to detect a full embrace of the concern, suffering, styles and even language of the masses around him. . . . But even Moore occasionally slips into the tendency of putting the language of the elite into the mouths of the workers and peasants, the masses who are the main characters in most of his works. A good example of this occasional relapse can be seen in his novels, *Murder in the Cassava Patch* and *The Money Doubler*. In these works, there are honest attempts by Moore to faithfully capture the language and sensibility of the masses against the background of our Western education and lifestyles.⁵

Conclusion

Bai T. Moore merits the sobriquet of "Father" of contemporary Liberian Literature in English because he was an inspiration to a number of up-and-coming Liberian writers. His poetry shows that he is a significant Liberian poet. There is a diversity of landscape and people in Moore's poetry. He likes the Liberian urban and rural scenes as well as he likes the scenes of other countries. Although Moore appears at times to be funny in some poems, he is not a "funny" poet in that his subject matter or theme is always serious. He often depicts city-dwellers and their preoccupation with capitalism and its attendant materialism and vulgarity. This seems to suggest that Moore's visual powers are interested in painting the ugly and beautiful as well as the ridiculous and the sublime. Indeed, Moore is at home in the most diverse surroundings.

Although Moore's two short novels contain some stylistic ineptitude and grammatical infelicities, they deserve a lasting place in the canon of Liberian literature. Both novellas score minor successes because their messages transcend their time and milieu. One can postulate—and this statement should not be considered a pronouncement *ex cathedra*—that hopefully with the posthumous publication of *Godchild*, *Monkey Work*, *Bamboon Draw* and other works of creative fiction, Moore may yet become the "Liberian Defoe."

Endnotes

¹ Bai T. Moore, *Ebony Dust* (Monrovia: Ducor Publishing Company, 1976); See the INTRODUCTION by Rosina Robinson. Although the INTRODUCTION doesn't provide critical analyses of Moore's poetry, it is worth reading because it seems to suggest that Bai T. Moore is a significant Liberian poet of some world renown.

²Kona Khasu, "Brief Notes on Liberian Literature" (Monrovia: University of Liberia, 1979), p. 8. This article appears in Chapter 7 of a forthcoming book, *Perspectives on Liberian Literature* edited by Robert H. Brown.

³E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1981), P. 71.

⁴C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1980), p. 26.

⁵Kona Khasu, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

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I Know Money, I Don't Know Human Beings: A Mano House Palaver¹

Peter Severeid

Introduction

In 1990 the Ethnographic Museum of Goteborgs, Sweden, published in its Abstracts "Traditional Law of the Yamein Mano" by Kjell Zetterstrom.²

Zetterstrom has published extensively on the Mano.³ His law article is based on interviews with informants,⁴ the ethnographic literature on the Mano⁵ and related groups in Liberia,⁶ as well as legal anthropological literature from Africa beyond Liberia.⁷ His article sets forth traditional⁸ law in a straightforward and ethnographically indispensable manner.⁹

The Yamein Mano live in Nimba County northwest of Yekepa. Zetterstrom describes their law primarily as it was "before domination by the Central Government."¹⁰ He sums up Mano legal proceedings as follows:

Judgment was based not only on evidence but also on preknowledge of certain relevant facts. The judicial process can be understood in terms of restoration of the social balance. It appears as if the object of law was not so much revenge and punishment as the restoring of peace and balance. The Mano very often in this context use expressions like "harmony" and to "harmonize matters" (cf. Zetterstrom, 1975, p. 19). It was very important for the survival of the community that the court managed to restore the upset balance. That it often succeeded is evident from statements saying that no hard feelings existed between the parties when the trial was over. The judgment of the court is important for the future relations of the parties involved, relations which have a great import on the life of the community itself.¹¹

Restoration of social balance as the dominant goal of intragroup dispute settlement is a major theme in legal anthropology.¹² Zetterstrom writes primarily about this theme as it appeared in Yamein Mano traditional law prior to the rise in Liberia of Central Government control of the hinterland. It was also the major theme in many disputes as late as the 1970s and among Mano groups besides the Yamein. What follows is an account of such a dispute.

**"I Know Money, I Don't Know Human Beings" :
A Case of Insult**

In November, 1979, a case of insult was heard in a Sehysi¹³ Mano¹⁴ town¹⁵ of eight hundred¹⁶ people located to the west of Sanniquellie,¹⁷ about twenty miles to the south of the Yamein described by Zetterstrom.¹⁸ The hearing took place in one of the quarters¹⁹ of the town and constituted what is often referred to as a "house palaver."^{20 21}

The palaver took place on a Sunday.²² The complainant,²³ Gono Tokpah,²⁴ was forty-five,²⁵ fat, a farmer,²⁶ one of the town's three blacksmiths,²⁷ and often made extra money, as did many in the town, by digging for diamonds.²⁸ He was the father of three children by one²⁹ wife.

The person complained against was Paye Zennegban, fifty-five, and a farmer who did not dig diamonds. He had one wife but no living children. Both Tokpah and Zennegban were born in and still lived in the town, though not in the same quarter. Zennegban's paternal grandmother came from the same quarter as complainant Tokpah and thus Tokpah was considered a relative of Zennegban.

The palaver was heard in the quarter of Zennegban, the person complained against. About 5 pm Tokpah approached Bonah Yeane, a farmer in his mid forties, who was sitting on a wooden plank bench at the back side of his house.³⁰ Yeane, who became the mediator in the case, was respected, had two wives and several children, but had no special role in the quarter. He was not the quarter chief.³¹ He mediated because he was well regarded and because he just happened to be present at the time.

Tokpah spoke to Yeane: "I come to tell you something that is really serious."³²

Tokpah said that Zennegban had given Tokpah's wife ten cents³³ to buy snuff³⁴ for him. That Sunday morning Tokpah's wife had gone early, around 6 am, to Sanniquellie to buy fish. Market women sold fish and other items behind the Paramount Chief's Court from 7 to 10am. The snuff was obtained and was now in Tokpah's possession.

"So he (Zennegban) should pay me twenty-five dollars,"

Tokpah said.

The disparity between the ten cents given and the twenty-five dollars demanded for delivery of the snuff made Yeane, the mediator, realize that something far more significant than ten cents worth of snuff was involved. He told Tokpah to come back after he (Yeane) had taken a bath.³⁵

There was nothing of special significance or improper in Zennegban's having asked another man's wife to buy something for him. (There would have been significance, for example, if she had served him food when not in the company of others, which would indicate that they were lovers.) But because Tokpah had been "vexed"³⁶ by the insult³⁷ in this case, because it had really hurt his feelings, the insignificant act of Zennegban asking Tokpah's wife to buy snuff was the pretext Tokpah needed to seek restitution for the injury caused by the insult.

When Tokpah brought the snuff to Yeaney, Tokpah again said that Zennegban should pay twenty-five dollars.

"There is a message behind this snuff," said Yeaney. He went on to say that he would have to get people in the quarter together and "talk it," meaning that they would have to hold a house palaver and discuss the matter. Tokpah left.

Later that evening Yeaney called for Zennegban, various others—including women—and my informant, to come and take part. They gathered near the wooden plank bench at the back of Yeaney's house. Most sat on the ground or on one large woven grass mat. After about half an hour Tokpah returned with two of his nephews, no doubt for moral support since Tokpah, though considered a relative, was from another quarter.

The two nephews and my informant sat on the bench. Usually important persons and older men would sit on the bench which would be vacated by those who were younger. The quarter chief would have sat on the bench, probably by himself, had he been presiding at an assembly on "quarter business." But this was "family business" and the chief of this quarter would not necessarily have presided, even if he had been there.

Yeaney opened directly.³⁸ He asked complainant Tokpah to tell what happened.

Tokpah: "Zennegban should pay my wife twenty-five dollars for buying snuff for him."

Yeaney: "Why do you say this?"

Tokpah: "No. It now reach you." As he said "you" he turned to Zennegban.

On one level, this was simply a statement that Zennegban should respond to what Tokpah had said. But "it now reach³⁹ you" was also another way of asking Zennegban if he wanted to contest the case or does he want to admit fault and seek a settlement at this point.

Zennegban apparently wanted to contest the case because he replied that he wanted to know why Tokpah was saying such things.

Tokpah then told his story. The previous June his daughter had been “in pain” (labor pains). The first day of her labor he had called in midwives. The second day she was still in pain so he decided to take his daughter to the “hospital” (government clinic) in Sanniquellie.

To take his daughter to the clinic he needed money. Like others in the town, he belonged to a “company,” a group that pooled their money as an informal credit union.⁴⁰ Tokpah asked the “master” of the company, a neighbor, to let him have twenty-five dollars as a loan. He wanted to borrow the money for two months. The going interest rate was twenty-five per cent, even for a short period of time. This explains why Tokpah had asked Zennegban for twenty-five dollars for ten cents worth of snuff.⁴¹

Tokpah got the money, his daughter was taken to the clinic, and she delivered a baby girl.

Two months later, when the loan was due, the company sent a man named Borbor Meanzo to Tokpah’s house to collect. The company picked Meanzo, in his early forties, probably because he was something of an outsider. He was not from that town but from another in the same Sehyi clan. For a number of years he had been living with and “making farm”⁴² for a local widow.

The day Meanzo came to collect, Tokpah’s three year old son was ill with measles. “Go and tell the company that my baby is sick,” Tokpah said to Meanzo.

Meanzo reported what Tokpah had said to several members of the company who were gathered together. Zennegban was one of this group. They told Meanzo to have Tokpah come to them.

When Tokpah arrived, one of the members of the company said: “If your baby was sick you should have informed us before now.”

At this point, Zennegban uttered the insult that was the subject of the dispute. He said to Tokpah: “I know money, I don’t know human beings.”

This was considered a bad insult. What it meant was that he, Zennegban, did not care about Tokpah’s child being sick; he didn’t care whether the child died or not; he wanted the money now. Given that Zennegban and Tokpah were thought of as being related, such an insult violates the strong extended family loyalties of the Mano,⁴³ not to mention all Africans.⁴⁴

This was not a common insult. It was unique to this case. Schwab writes of insults or “curse palavers.” Typical were:

“Who you tink⁴⁵ you be? You tink you be big man (or chief)?”
This is a “light” curse.

"You be dog!" or "You be old man!" is bad, and so is "You be *pe!*" [Goblin]

"You be chicken guts!" is very bad.⁴⁶

There were also more severe levels of curse palavers described by Schwab, such as wishing that a person's mother was dead or disparaging remarks about a person's genitalia.^{47 48} Zennegban's comment to Tokpah was thus not a traditional insult.

When Tokpah finished his story, Yeane, still acting as mediator, turned to Zennegban and asked him whether he had made such an insulting statement.

Zennegban denied doing so. "This man's child is my child.⁴⁹ I cannot make such a statement about his child." Then, after a pause, he added: "If I did [make such a statement], then I have forgotten."

Yeane then turned towards Tokpah's two nephews sitting on the wooden bench and asked what they had to say.

One nephew, addressing Zennegban: "What did the man you sent [Meanzo, who was dispatched to collect for the company] say when he came back [from seeing Tokpah]?"

Zennegban: "[The] man told us that Tokpah's child was sick and so we did not bother him that night."

The other nephew: "If Zennegban had admitted the matter [that he uttered the insult] then I would know what to say."

Whereupon Yeane said to Zennegban: "If you will admit the matter, we will beg⁵⁰ Tokpah."

(My informant and others knew that Zennegban was not telling the truth. They had heard him utter an identical insult once before.)

At this point not Yeane but the oldest man in the quarter addressed the gathering: "It is too difficult to judge such a case. The only thing to do is for Zennegban to bring kola nuts⁵¹ and give them to Tokpah."

All in the gathering murmured their agreement.

This was the "decision" in the case. Tensions had risen, the matter had been aired, and it was necessary now to restore harmony in the group. Whether Zennegban was telling the truth ceased to be important.⁵²

Zennegban went to his house and brought back five kola nuts—one was all white, two were half white, and another two were all red.⁵³ Usually a white kola nut was a sign that you had nothing against a person, that you had a "pure

heart." These mixed nuts were apparently the best that Zennegban could do. He also brought ten cents to pay for the snuff.

Zennegban gave the money and the kola nuts to mediator Yeane. He, in turn, gave them to my informant to hold. Yeane then formally asked my informant to give the nuts to Tokpah. My informant held the kola nuts out in his cupped hands.

Tokpah: "I don't accept kola nuts. When somebody does something to me I just say it [discuss the problem] and I am finished with it. I accept the decision."

Then everyone shook Tokpah's hand, including his own nephews.

Yeane then advised Zennegban: "You must always remember anything you say among a group."

At that point the ten cents which my informant had held with the kola nuts were taken back by Zennegban. (Why the money was not given to Tokpah is unclear. Perhaps Zennegban would pay Tokpah's wife directly.) The kola nuts were distributed to the group.⁵⁴

Defendant Zennegban's elder brother, a farmer of about sixty-five, now stood up and said: "*Ee le ee mo*." This is Mano for "it be good on you." The elder brother said this four times in a chant-like tone and each time Zennegban replied: "*Mah*," which means "yes."

Then Zennegban's wife chanted "*ee le ee mo*"⁵⁵ four times and complainant Tokpah responded each time with "*mah*."

These responses were a typical way of ending a dispute.

Conclusion

This Sehyi Mano house palaver followed the pattern of Yamein Mano legal proceedings summed up by Zetterstrom.⁵⁶

Zetterstrom writes that "[j]udgment was based not only on evidence but also on preknowledge of certain relevant facts."⁵⁷ This was true in the insult case. The most important fact that was known in advance was that Zennegban had used the same insult before and this was known to several persons at the gathering.

"The judicial process can be understood in terms of restoration of the social balance."⁵⁸ Harmony was clearly the underlying force that guided this case. It was essential that good relations in the extended family be restored.

Finally, restoration of harmony is manifested by "statements saying that no hard feelings existed between the parties when the trial was over."⁵⁹ Tokpah's

final statement, "[w]hen somebody does something to me I just say it [discuss the problem] and I am finished with it," follows the pattern noted by Zetterstrom.

Thus, at least in this example from Sehvi Clan, the nature of intragroup dispute settlement for the Mano was essentially the same in 1979 as before the rise of Central Government in Liberia.

Endnotes

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² 1987/1988 Goteborgs Etnografiska Museum Arstryck 52-64 (hereinafter "law article"). Zetterstrom is director of the museum and editor of the abstracts.

³ *Some Notes on Mano Beliefs*, XXVIII Paideuma 170-190 (1972, Frankfurt/M); *Report from Liberia*, 1975 Goteborgs Etnografiska Museum Arstryck 16-19; *The Yamein Mano of Northern Liberia* (1976, Uppsala); and *Poro of the Yamein Mano, Liberia*, 1 *Ethnologische Zeitschrift* 41-59 (1980, Zurich).

⁴ In 1966-70, 1974 and 1975. Zetterstrom, *supra* note 2, at "Notes From The Editor."

⁵ Such as G. W. Harley, *Notes on the Poro in Liberia* (1941) and *Masks as Agents of Social Control in Northeast Liberia* (1950); and G. Schwab, *Tribes of the Liberian Hinterland* (1947). The last named work was edited, and additional material supplied, by Harley.

⁶ B. G. Dennis, *The Gbandes* (1972); J. L. Gibbs, *Poro Values and Courtroom Procedures in a Kpelle Chiefdom*, 18 *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* (No. 4, 1962) and *The Kpelle Moot: A Therapeutic Model for the Informal Settlement of Disputes*, 33 *Africa* (No. 1, 1963). Later references to the last named article will be from its appearance as "Two Forms of Dispute Settlement Among the Kpelle of West Africa" in D. Black and M. Mileski, Eds, *The Social Organization of Law*, 368-378 (1973).

⁷ P. Bohannan, *Justice and Judgment Among the Tiv* [of Nigeria], (1957, London) and J. F. Holleman, *Issues in African Law* (1974, Leiden).

⁸ Also known as "customary" or "folk" law. See the superb article by G.C.J.J. van den Bergh, "The Concept of Folk Law in Historical Context" in K. von Benda-Beckmann and F. Strijbosch, Eds, *Anthropology of Law in the Netherlands* (1986, Dordrecht).

⁹In the style of G.S. Snell's classic, *Nandi Customary Law* (1954, London). The Nandi live in Kenya. Snell was a British colonial Administrative Officer.

¹⁰ *Supra* note 2 at 53.

¹¹ *Id.* at 62.

¹²The phrase "to make the balance" was made prominent in the literature of legal anthropology by Laura Nader. See her chapter "Styles of Court Procedure: To Make the Balance" in L. Nader, Ed., *Law in Culture and Society*, 69-91 (1969), about the Zapotec of Mexico. The restoration of intragroup social balance has long been a theme in descriptions of African legal disputes. For example, see the discussion of the well-known "Kadume's case" in P.H. Gulliver, *Social Control in an African Society: A Study of the Arusha: Agricultural Masai of Northern Tanganyika*, 255-258 (1963). This theme has appeared in much that has been written about legal procedures in Liberia as well. For example, it is the central theme of Kpelle house palaver as described by Gibbs (1973), *supra* note 6. In the form that at the end of a dispute settlement both parties must feel "satisfied," the theme of making a balance has been given at least lip-service in intergroup disputes held outside traditional settings. See my "The Case of the Improper Weaning" in *A Post-Coup Court in Nimba*, IX *Liberian Studies Journal* 93, at 96-99 (1980-81). That case involved a Mano complainant and a Gio defendant in a high school disciplinary committee hearing.

¹³This is the "official spelling." J.C. Riddell, K. Zetterstrom, P.G. Dorlaie and M.J. Hohl, *Clan and Chieftdom Maps for the Ma (Mano) and Da (Gio)*, IV *Liberian Studies Journal* 157, at 159 (1971-72). The "phonetic spelling" is "sei." *Id.* The Sehvi referred to here, as with Zetterstrom's Yamein, mean those in the "Sehvi Clan." The "clans" and "chieftdoms" are political administrative units which were imposed by the national government after pacification. The town was the largest traditional political unit. "Neither tribes nor towns were traditionally integrated at the chieftdom or state level politically. For example, people in Sanniquellie could not even venture as far as Sakimpa, 3 miles away, without the fear of being captured and killed." *Id.* at 157.

¹⁴Zetterstrom states: "According to some informants, their original name was Mana. This name, however, is known to few Mano today." *Supra* note 2, at fn. 1, p. 63. The Mano were traditionally not a hierarchically organized "tribe." They were primarily a linguistic grouping, part of the eastern branch of southern Mande. "The Mano have a fairly consistent self referent, *Ma-mia* (Ma people)." Riddell *et al*, *supra* note 13, at fn. 2, p. 157. The term is "Ma" in S.E. Holsoe, *A Standardization of Liberian Ethnic Nomenclature* 3 (1979). (There is an appendix on "The Mano Language" in Schwab, *supra* note 5, at 476-482. V.C. Neal, W.C. Sinclair, B.J. Finn and M. Compton wrote a mimeographed "Beginning Mano: A Course for Speakers of English" for the Liberian Language Research Project at San Francisco State College in 1967 under contract for the

Peace Corps. A mimeographed Mano language training primer was prepared by Mildred Black of the Ganta Mission about 1970. See also P. deZeeuw and T. Kruah, *A Learner Directed Approach to Mano* (1981, Peace Corps/ African Studies Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing).

¹⁵ In Liberia what would be considered "villages" elsewhere are referred to as "towns."

¹⁶ By my informal estimate.

¹⁷ There is rarely an agreed upon spelling for place names in Nimba. This spelling for Sanniquellie is the first official version given in Riddell *et al*, *supra* note 13, at 159. Sanniquellie is the seat of Nimba County.

¹⁸ The information which follows was given to me by my informant who was a member of the extended family involved and was present when the case was heard. All discussion at the hearing was in Mano. At several points I elaborate on the Liberian English phrasing picked by my informant to express the gist of what was said in Mano so that the significance of what was being said in Mano can be conveyed.

¹⁹ Towns are composed of areas known as "quarters," though there can be more than four in a single town. In Mano the term is *gbing*. "There are strong ties between the members of a quarter who are obliged to assist each other when in trouble . . ." Zetterstrom, *supra* note 2, at 53. The members of an extended family usually live together in one quarter. "[T]he quarters are patrilineal, minimal sibs. All the male members and all the women born in the quarter originally shared the same food taboos which are patrilineally inherited. . . . The quarters are exogamous within the towns only, a man from one town can thus marry a woman from another town although they share the same taboos. . . . The quarters are social as well as landholding units . . ." Zetterstrom (1976), *supra* note 3, at 74. "*Patrilineal* is used to describe a kinship system in which descent is traced only through males . . ." P. Rigby, *Vade Mecum for the Study of Kinship* 6 (n.d., Temple University Department of Anthropology). "Sib . . . 2. n. A brother or sister (disregarding sex). Hence—'LING n., one of two or more children having one or both parents in common . . ." H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* 1182 (5th ed. 1964). "Minimal" here means "the least possible" range of siblings. *Id.* at 770. "Exogamous" is the "custom compelling man to marry outside his own tribe." *Id.* at 424.

²⁰ "Palaver" is a "word which comes from the Portuguese meaning dispute or debate, and which refers to one of the most common forms of social interaction in Liberia." J. Gay, *Red Dust on the Green Leaves: A Kpelle Twins' Childhood* 240 (1973). It is a "discussion; argument; trouble (e. g. , 'money palaver,' or 'Women palaver'). Derived from the Spanish word 'palabra.'" W. L. d' Azevedo, *Some Terms From Liberian Speech* 43 (2nd Ed. 1970, Liberia). (See also

J.V. Singler, *An Introduction To Liberian English* 114 and 143 (1981, Peace Corps/African Studies Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing).) In Liberian English in northern Nimba in 1979, two terms were used in speaking of dispute settlement: "confusion" and "palaver." Confusion could be anything from a disagreement or argument to a fight. When a high school in Sanniquellie played a football (soccer) match with a rival team from outside the country, the game ended in "confusion," that is, a fistfight. Sometimes palaver was limited to the discussion of a dispute, to the process of talking it out. Confusion referred to the disagreement itself. A confusion occurred and then there was a palaver to settle it. Taken together, confusion and palaver encompassed the whole process of dispute settlement. Sometimes, however, palaver alone included both the trouble phase and the settlement of a dispute. (Zetterstrom relates a Mano spider tale to explain how palaver was brought into the world. (1976), *supra* note 3, at 123-124.)

²¹ "House palaver" was the term used by my informant. Gibbs, speaking of the Kpelle, refers to it as an "institution for the informal settlement of disputes . . . the moot, the *berai mu mensi saa* or 'house palaver.'" Gibbs (1973), *supra* note 6, at 368. The term "moot" has acquired a special meaning in legal anthropology. Philip Gulliver writes: "*Oxford Universal Dictionary* (3rd edition, Oxford, 1955:— 'Moot, 1. *gen.* Meeting, encounter—1470. 2. An assembly of people, esp. one forming a court of judicature; a meeting, also the place where a meeting is held. *Obs. exc. Hist. O.E.*' Though obsolete today, the word had a genuine significance in early English society and is used by writers on that period. Bohannan (1957) [*supra* note 7] found the term useful in his account of Tiv judicial process. Like Bohannan, I use the word because contemporary English contains no apt synonym. 'Meeting' or 'assembly' are too general while 'court' must be reserved for the official juridical bodies established in the local government system . . ." Gulliver, *supra* note 12, at fn. 1, p. 121. A "moot hill" was the "[h]ill of meeting (*gemot*), on which the Britons used to hold their courts, the judge sitting on the eminence; the parties, etc., on an elevated platform below." H.C. Black, *Black's Law Dictionary: Definitions of the Terms and Phrases of American and English Jurisprudence, Ancient and Modern* 1008 (6th Ed. 1990). Describing African dispute settlement and traditional law in Anglo-Saxon terminology was common in the 1950's and 1960's. For example, Snell, in discussing the classifications of wrongs in Nandi law, says: '[T]he principles underlying the Wer, Wite and Bote, and botleas offenses of Anglo-Saxon law all appear to find a parallel in Nandi customary law." Snell, *supra* note 9, at 78. However, the use of "moot" is, I think, pejorative and casts extended family dispute settlement in Africa as a throwback to an earlier "evolutionary" stage of legal development. Evolutionary theory has been out of date in cultural anthropology since the 1920s and in legal anthropology since Adamson Hoebel's *The Law of Primitive Man: A Study in Comparative Legal Dynamics* (1954). (A thoughtful account of "legal evolution" from the point of view of jurisprudence (legal philosophy), rather than anthro-

pology or legal anthropology, is Peter Stein's *Legal Evolution: The Story of an Idea* (1980, London.) Thus "house palaver," a common term in everyday Liberian speech, is a better term to use than "moot."

House palavers like the one involved in this case were common events. This was true in this town in Sehyi Clan as well as among other Mano. For the Yamein Mano, see Zetterstrom, *supra* n. 2, at 54. It was also true throughout Liberia. Schwab, *supra* n. 5, at 422-423.

²² Gibbs indicates that most house palavers occurred on Sundays in the Kpelle group in which he did his research. Gibbs (1973), *supra* note 6, at 370. In my time living in the Sehyi town where this palaver took place—six months in 1979 and six weeks in 1982—no particular day was preferred for house palavers.

²³ Gibbs uses "complainant" and "mediator" and "person held to be mainly at fault" to describe the players in a house palaver. (1973), *supra* note 6. Zetterstrom, speaking of traditional Mano law procedures, says: "Plaintiff is called *yo ya mi'* (= to sue, report; *yo* = something bad, *ya* = to set, place). It means that the plaintiff, by suing [*sic*], had placed something bad on another person. To sue somebody was regarded as something bad. There is no special term for defendant." *Supra* note 2, at 55. In Liberian English a plaintiff would threaten to "carry" a defendant to court. A case would be "carried," appealed, from one court to another. This use of the verb "to carry" was a general one and not limited to legal affairs. "'Carry me' (take me)" was a common expression. d'Azevedo, *supra* note 20, at 8. "To bring," for instance, was similarly used: "'Bring me to that place' (Take me there)." *Id.* at 5.

²⁴ To preserve anonymity, as is the custom in legal anthropological accounts, names have been changed to others in common usage among the Sehyi Mano.

²⁵ Ages are approximate.

²⁶ Mountain rice was the main subsistence crop.

²⁷ In this town blacksmiths often held the position of *zo* in the secret Poro society. For the Poro and other secret Mano societies, see generally Zetterstrom (1976), *supra* note 3, at 99-115 and Zetterstrom (1980), *supra* note 3. Dunn and Holsoe define Poro as:

A male sodality found among several groups in central and western Liberia, including the Vai, Gola, Dei, Mende, Bandi, Loma, Kpelle and part of Ma. The society serves two primary functions. It is the main institution to enculturate young males and to formally carry them through the rite of passage from child to adult. In addition, the elders of the Poro serve as the intermediaries between the ancestors and the living, and thus

act as the ultimate arbitors [*sic*] of asocial actions which affect the society. The female counterpart of this organization is the Sande society. — D.E. Dunn and S.E. Hosloe, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia* 140 (1985)

Sehyi is a Mano group with Poro. See map, Riddell *et al*, *supra* note 13, at 162.

In this town serious legal matters, such as major crimes, were decided by the Poro. My informant was of the opinion that Tokpah was considered important in the town's Poro. Whether he was the main Poro *zo* was unclear. "Not every *zo* was a *zo* of the Poro. There were *zo*'s in every one of the professions: warrior *zo*'s, blacksmith *zo*'s, diviner *zo*'s, witch catching *zo*'s, herbalist *zo*'s, midwife *zo*'s and others. A *zo* in any organization was the one who knew all the secrets with power to pass them on to others." Harley (1941), *supra* note 5, at 11.

²⁸ At this time many of the town's residents dug individual pits for diamonds with hand tools on land along the Guinea border to the west. (See Mineral Resources Map of Liberia, Dunn and Holsoe, *supra* note 27, at XXVI.) Though finds were rare, one small stone could bring the equivalent of several years' surplus from rice farming.

²⁹ Though polygny was practiced, the majority of married men in the town had only one wife. A very few had three.

³⁰ Hut.

³¹ *Gbing dami*. Zetterstrom, *supra* note 2, at 53. Yeane, though about the same age as complainant Tokpah, was a decade younger than the person complained against, Zennegban. Thus age was also not the source of his authority to mediate the matter. During my stay in this town there were other family matters mediated by persons whose only reason for being chosen as mediator, other than the general high regard in which they were held, was the happenstance of being present at the time things came to a head.

In theory there were limitations on the subject matter jurisdiction of particular "official" courts in Liberia. (Cf. M. R. Konvitz and M. L. Rosenzweig, "Liberia" in A. N. Allott, Ed., *Judicial and Legal Systems in Africa* 124 (2nd Ed., 1970).) There were also supposed to be precise distinctions between original and appellate jurisdiction. In practice, however, the official courts in Nimba County at this time openly competed with each other for cases. Rarely was one turned down. Depending on the willingness of the parties, the same case could be brought before the Town Chief, the County Superintendent, or the Circuit Court. Severeid, *supra* note 12, at 95.

In this town there was a distinction between "family business" and "quarter business." Cf. text before note 38. Generally the former would be handled by an elder or someone who happened to be available like Yeane in this case. But I

also witnessed cases in which "family business" would be tried in the first instance by the quarter chief or the clan chief.

If either party was not "satisfied" by the result, the case could be "appealed" to another dispute settler, such as an elder, the quarter chief, the clan chief, etc. In such a situation the case would be heard all over again. (In technical legal terms the second trial would be *de novo*, "anew.") There would be no limitations on what evidence could be introduced, etc., unlike most Common Law appeals in which the appellate court is limited to deciding only questions of law and cannot retry questions of fact.

³² The dialogue is constructed from the Liberian English of my informant recalling the discussion eight days later.

³³ U.S. currency was legal tender in Liberia at this time. Coins in circulation were Liberian but bills were American. At the end of this case Zennegban produces ten cents. See text following note 53. It is unclear why he did this if he had already paid Tokpah's wife the ten cents.

³⁴ Tobacco that is snuffed. In this case probably Mandingo snuff. Usually "eaten" rather than snuffed. See Schwab, *supra* note 5, at 105.

³⁵ Yeane's taking a bath at this point, shortly after 5 pm, rather than later after hearing the dispute, may have been in response to the Mano saying that if you take your bath at night they (your enemies) will put a witch in your water.

³⁶ "[A]ngry." d'Azevedo, *supra* note 20, at 58.

³⁷ Discussed below in text following note 42.

³⁸ House palavers often begin with the pronouncing of blessings by one of the oldest men of the group. This occurred in another house palaver I observed in this town. There were no blessings in this case, perhaps an indication of the extreme informality of the entire undertaking. Gibbs has described the blessings that commence a proceeding among Kpelle. (1973), *supra* note 6, at 371.

³⁹ "Reach" means "to arrive. 'I reached Monrovia yesterday.'" d'Azevedo, *supra* note 20, at 47. Like "carry" and "bring," *supra* note 23, "reach" has special legal connotations in Liberian English.

⁴⁰ Also referred to as a "*susu*." The nearest bank was twenty miles away at the Lamco (Liberian Swedish American Mining Company) iron mining headquarters at Yekepa. Lebanese traders in Sanniquellie also acted as informal bankers.

⁴¹ Tokpah actually received only \$20. When one borrowed from the company, one was expected to bring food as a present for the other members to get their agreement to the loan and to show proper respect. In this town a borrower usually brought a chicken and eight or nine cups of rice. (One cup was equal to

one "fish cup," the large empty can that had contained imported Japanese mackerel and was a commonly used measure.) Presumably because it was an emergency, Tokpah did not bring food. Five dollars was deducted for the absent food and he received only \$20. Interest, however, would be figured on \$25 as the amount of the loan. Thus he would have to pay back \$31.25. This was a significant amount. By my informal estimate, an average household was lucky if it had a cash flow of \$100 per year at this time. (Why Tokpah did not ask Zennegban for the full \$31.25 is unclear.)

⁴²The term "make farm" has been defined as "the entire process of preparing a plot of land for farming, and including the planting of potential crops." d'Azevedo, *supra* note 20, at 35.

⁴³See Zetterstrom (1976), *supra* note 3, at 70-79.

⁴⁴See "African Families" in P. Bohannan, *Africa and Africans* 158-173 (1964).

⁴⁵In Pidgin.

⁴⁶*Supra* note 5, at 438.

⁴⁷*Id.* None of the insults quoted here from Schwab are linked to a particular tribe.

⁴⁸There are also curses that do not involve insults but are an invocation of the supernatural for purposes of punishment. An East African example is Snell, *supra* note 9, at 85-86.

⁴⁹He considered it as his child because of the extended family relationship. Zetterstrom (1976), *supra* note 3, at 70.

⁵⁰"Beg" is to "solicit; plead; a request. 'I beg you' (please!). 'I begged him' (I pleaded with him). 'He came to me with beg' (He came to make a request of me.)" d'Azevedo, *supra* note 20, at 3.

⁵¹Sometimes spelled "cola." *Cola* is a large genus of African tree of the chocolate family. (*Sterculiaceae*). *Cola acuminata* is the tree bearing the nuts of commerce. "The gift of a cola nut, or even a portion of one, is regarded as a minor courtesy or social gesture. Similarly, these nuts are used as suitable offerings to ancestors and medicines. They also serve as oracles, and they pass as small currency." Schawb, *supra* note 5, at 106 (cross references omitted).

⁵²In formal, adversary, Common Law court proceedings the determination of facts and the determination of the truth of statements by parties and witnesses are almost always deemed important. Sometimes the determination of the truth of statements can be important in traditional Liberian proceedings. See Schwab, *id.* at 427-432, on "ordeals." But in this insult case, and in some of the other house palavers in this town that I observed or recorded, a relentless pursuit to determine the truth of statements was often not necessary.

⁵³ "There are two varieties of cola, one bearing red, the other white, nuts. The red are by far the more numerous." Schwab, *id.* ad 64.

⁵⁴ "The fines usually consisted of something edible and had to be paid on the spot. The food was then prepared and shared by those present." Zetterstrom, *supra* note 2, at 56. The distribution of the kola nuts and the chants which followed signified that the parties were "satisfied," accepted the decision and would not appeal. (I heard nothing further during my stay in the town, nor during my return in 1982, to indicate that the matter of this insult came up again.) That Tokpah refused the kola nuts for himself did not imply that he was not satisfied by the result.

⁵⁵ My improvised phonetic transcription.

⁵⁶ Zetterstrom, *supra* note 2, at 62.

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ *Id.*

C. William Allen, *The African Interior Mission High School*. Clinton, New York: Strugglers' Community Press, 1991, 327 pp.

Allen's second novel, *The African Interior Mission High School*, dramatizes significant events in the lives of typical secondary school students in Liberia. The novel is set initially in Nimbata—presumably a fictional town in Nimba County. Most of the plot takes place somewhere in Bong County on the campus and in the halls of a secondary school called The African Interior Mission High School, AIM for short. The story revolves around Jerry Gompa and his bosom friend, Obadiah Bathalomei Dixon, affectionately and popularly known as "OB".

At the outset of the novel, Jerry Gompa, a very ambitious student, hopes for a better future and, he, as well as his parents, believe that education is the answer. Jerry responds positively to this demand. His joy, excitement, and anxiety after passing an examination to enter a boarding school away from home arise from his realization that this very act will free him from the tweezer-grip of his father, a disciplinarian, who rules the roost at home despite the fact that he is a mere X-ray technician and a subsistence farmer. It is the expectations of this new independence that makes Jerry to look forward to leaving home. Jerry's mother is quite literally overcome with joy. The scene in which his mother tells him to leave his household chores and get ready for his departure brings this out clearly in Chapter 1:

"Hurry up and get ready," she cried. "You do not have to wash the dishes this morning. Just leave them in the kitchen and your sister will wash them after we are gone. Remember also that your father wants to talk to you as soon as you are dressed for the journey."

For the past two months, ever since he received the news that he had passed the entrance examination for the African Interior Mission High School, Jerry felt excitement and anxiety. Fantasies of what he would do with his new independence kept creeping into his head. But now that his departure was only hours away, he felt the desire to cling to that warm and close family atmosphere he had come to appreciate so dearly in his sixteen years of life. (p. 20).

Before his departure, Jerry's parents advised him to study conscientiously and be very selective in his choice of friends. They also warn him against having any

illicit affairs. His father makes this injunction the more poignant when he tells him that such a misbehavior will result in his being brought home, married off, and sent to the farm. This injunction sets the tone for the novel and creates the conflict. In essence, two kinds of conflict are inextricably bound up with one another: the struggle within Jerry to attain a good education and the injunction he receives from his father to work hard and excel in his studies.

In Chapter 2, he gains acceptance as a *bona fide* student of the African Interior Mission High School during an orientation program. Thereafter, the action of the narrative flows very fast. Jerry makes friends with OB, a member of the settler stock. OB delivers a moving lecture on the Integration and Unification Policy whereby members of the settler stock and the various ethnolinguistic groups are regarded as integral parts of the citizenry of Liberia. This lecture allays Jerry's fears concerning the issue of ethnicity, which seems to be the order of the day in this society. This chapter also describes the 1979 Rice Riots that culminated in the *coup d'état* of 1980. The aftermath of the coup and its effects on OB and Jerry are explained in the final chapter of the novel.

OB invites Jerry to Capital City where Jerry is impressed with OB's parents' home and their apparent wealth and opulence. OB tells Jerry that his father, Dr. Dixon, a history professor at the University, inherited property and money from his mother, a direct descendant of a former president of the country. The highlight of the visit is the wedding of OB's sister.

The narrative on the friendship between Jerry and OB allows the reader to appreciate the two sides of the Liberian society: OB's Western oriented world and Jerry's indigenous background. This friendship is undaunted by the 1980 *coup d'état* that shatters the *status quo* and installs indigenous leaders. But Jerry shows his firm loyalty to OB when he assures him that no matter what the odds may be, they will remain friends in the Order of the Ants.

The novel is suspenseful and the plot is constructed in such a way as to make interesting reading. The book shows originality and great creative ability. It shows that Allen has, for the most part, a complete mastery of technique. The amateur qualities that are often found in the works of up-and-coming writers are lacking in *The African Interior Mission High School*. The novel is fraught with all the humorous incidents, the bemused aspirations, campus repartees, harmless daydreaming, and first love often shown by young adults and their peer-group. Transitions in the novel are smooth rather than abrupt. For example, in Chapter 4, the author informs the reader of OB's sister's forthcoming wedding in Capital City. This creates suspense. In Chapter 6, the reader gets more interested in the impending wedding, and in Chapter 7, the wedding takes place with pomp and pageantry. The author introduces connective paragraphs in previous chapters to prepare the reader. A method such as this makes the idea of visiting Capital City the more alluring and attractive to Jerry.

Another incident which shows that Allen has a mastery of technique is exemplified in his explanation of a traditional marriage. His explanation of bride price, arranged marriages, and dowry is interesting and masterly. It is a pleasure to read. Allen makes the explanation the more relevant by incorporating it into the discussion of Jerry's uncle's traditional marriage. In other words, the scene in which a traditional marriage is discussed is not an extraneous detail. The author introduces this scene to suggest that despite Jerry's apparent Western orientation, he is not alienated from traditional life. Thus, Allen introduces this scene into the narrative to emphasize the need for sociological details and to create a sense of cohesiveness in his fictional society. This scene provides the threads for the novel's construction and organic structure. The theme of the novel lies in the whole process of identity-formation in which Jerry and OB are involved.

Stylistically, Allen uses the omniscient point of view. In the hands of the unskilled writer, this point of view often results in formlessness because the actions are frequently diffused. However, Allen seems to control this point of view rather adroitly. He synchronizes the two separate actions simultaneously without confusing the reader. Assuming the role of author as narrator, Allen exercises a great deal of freedom in shifting from his exterior fictional society to the inner selves of his characters, and he achieves this freedom of movement in both time and place rather skillfully. He is also able to comment, to a greater extent, upon the meaning of actions of the characters and to state the thematic intentions of the narrative without breaking the thread of the narrative. Here, Allen shows consummate skill in the use of the omniscient point of view.

However, there are a number of grammatical infelicities and stylistic ineptitude that could be profitably eliminated to enhance the author's style and make the novel to appear more professional. For example, he uses the phrase, "sacrament of marriage." "Sacrament" does not collocate with marriage (i.e., the two words do not normally go together syntactically); "marriage" collocates with "institution" (e.g. the "institution of marriage") and "sacrament" collocates with "matrimony" (e.g. the "sacrament of matrimony"); "roared with laughter" rather than "roared in laughter" (Chapter 7); "resolve a situation" rather than "diffuse a situation" (one diffuses tension) and so on. In Chapter 10 (pp. 275 and 285), the author uses the word, "tribe." The use of "ethnic group" or "ethnolinguistic group" or the like would seem more preferable to "tribe." Then too, the author violates parallel construction on page 198: e.g., "She was dressed in her best attire and looking as innocent as a flower . . ." His use of the word "broke," a slang word, is unacceptable in direct exposition. "Penniless" is a more preferable term. "Broke" as a slang word would have been acceptable in dialogue. Also, although the author provides chapter headings to guide the reader, he failed to provide a table of contents. This is an apparent stylistic flaw.

Despite these minor shortcomings, the novel has much to commend it. OB's induction of Jerry into the Order of the Ants (Chapter 8) is one of the most humorous and memorable scenes in the novel. It shows Allen at his creative best. The scene is very relevant. It is foreshadowed in Chapter 2 in which a civil disorder is described. Although ethnicity is the order of the day in this fictional society, both Jerry and Obadiah Bathalomei Dixon pledge their ramrod loyalty to each other. Both believe that they will remain friends in a spirit of hearty *bonhomie* in that the Order of the Ants is their steadfast bond. There is a weakness of characterization in the novel. Jerry and OB are the only two characters who come alive. They come alive rather well because it is through their eyes and largely from their vantage point that the whole narrative unfolds. This seems to account for the simplicity of the language of the novel, for simplicity is the mark of excellence. The Hemingwayesque qualities of Allen's prose are indeed commendable.

In the final analysis, one can assert that C. William Allen's novel, *The African Interior Mission High School*, has definite strengths. A careful attention to structure and a clear, lucid style help to maintain a quiet dignity of tone—and this is the more impressive given the tragedy and harshness of some of the novel's events. *The African Interior Mission High School* is, therefore, a successful work of art. It is indeed a prize-winning novel.

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BOOK REVIEW

Nya Kwiawon Taryor, Sr., *Liberia, Facing Mount Nimba: A Documentary History of the United Nimba Citizens' Council (UNICCO)*. Chicago: Strugglers' Community Press. 310 pp. ISBN 0-913491-12-8.

In 1964, Liberian President William V.S. Tubman merged Sanniquellie and Tappeta districts to form Nimba County. Nimba quickly took a place of pride within the national economy. LAMCO, the iron ore concession, earned much of Liberia's foreign exchange in the 1960s and 1970s. Nimba's farming population, the largest in the country, fed themselves and became leaders in coffee and cocoa production. When President William Tolbert proposed to build a highway that would connect Liberia and the Ivory coast at Gbutuo, a small border hamlet on the Cestos River, Nimba's future looked bright. Then came Samuel Doe. President Doe pursued a virtual vendetta against the county. Gbutuo is known today as the town from which Charles Taylor's forces made their march to Monrovia, and much of Nimba's population now lives in Guinea and the Ivory Coast.

In *Liberia: Facing Mount Nimba*, Nya Taryor estimates that there are 15,000 "Nimbaians" living the United States and Canada. His book is about this population, about their struggle to adapt to life in North America, while keeping their minds and hearts focused on their natal home. Despite its title, the book has considerably less to do with Liberia. Its subtitle is accurate, however; this is indeed a documentary history, replete with United Nimba Citizens' Council (UNICCO) membership rolls, lists of conference participants, correspondence, resolutions, and photographs of officers. Such organizational minutiae, while of interest to UNICCO members, may bore the general reader.

Large numbers of Liberians from the interior began to travel to the U.S. for work and study as early as the 1960s. Many had unrealistic expectations of life in America. Instead of finding ease, they met difficulties—culture shock, language problems, crime, unemployment, and debt. In adjusting to their new lives, they turned toward each other for support.

Thus, in the late-1970s, Nimbaians began to form student organizations and mutual aid societies. Two of the first were the Nimba Students' Association of Georgia and the Nimba Association for Advancement in New Jersey. These groups were the basis for UNICCO, a loose confederation of organizations with memberships of mostly Ma (Mano) and Dan (Gio) emigres.

Although mutual aid was an explicit part of UNICCO's mission, it also sought to enhance political and economic opportunities for the people of Nimba County. Not surprisingly, UNICCO grew rapidly during Doe's vendetta.

Author Taryor's purpose is to chronicle UNICCO's growth. After an introductory chapter that discusses Ma, Dan, and Mandingo history, he provides capsule accounts of how the various UNICCO units were formed and devotes most of the book's remaining sixteen chapters to the proceedings of the organization's annual general conferences, from 1979 to 1990.

That the book was written for the faithful is obvious from the lists of "Questions for Discussion" that follow every chapter. Who but a UNICCO member would wish to know "How many women are now serving as Local Chapter Chairpersons?" or "What was the outcome of the Rhode Island Meeting?" or "What do you know of Jeff Leaman and his involvement with the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota?" In short, *Liberia: Facing Mount Nimba* is not for a general audience, not even a general Liberianist audience. Like a school yearbook or organizational "annual," it should most interest those whose names are mentioned between its covers.

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Enoanyi, Bill Frank, *Behold Uncle Sam's Step Child*, SanMar Publications, P.O. Box 13275, Sacramento, CA 95813 (\$16.50).

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Korto, Joseph D. Zeakedoe, *Analysis of a Policy Formulation Process for External Aid to Education: The Case of the World Bank and Liberia*. Ph.D. thesis, The Catholic U. of America, 1991. 199pp.

Liberia Working Group, a newsletter of current information about the needs of the Liberian people. This publication is a Jesuit Refugee Service initiative in Rome, Italy. The Working Group "brings together members of religious congregations, the network of Caritas agencies and other persons ready to assist the victims of the current crisis in Liberia.." For further information contact: Jesuit Refugee Service, C.P. 6139, 00195 Roma, ITALY.

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DOCUMENT

Liberia The Cycle of Abuse Human Rights Violations Since the November Cease-Fire

An Africa Watch Report, October 1991*

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(The Editor)**

Introduction

On November 28, 1990, Liberia's warring factions signed a cease-fire agreement, theoretically ending 11 months of fighting that had ravaged the country.¹ Although the widespread killing and brutality associated with the civil war have largely subsided,² an Africa Watch investigative mission³ found that human rights violations against the civilian population persist, ranging from extrajudicial executions and torture to tight restrictions on freedom of movement and intolerance of dissent. Most of the abuses occur in the 90 percent of the country controlled by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), but civilians are also victimized by the two other armed factions: Prince Johnson's break-away rebel group, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL); and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), former President Doe's army. The country remains divided among these three armed factions and the ECOMOG peacekeeping force.⁴ Only the interim government led by Amos Sawyer, which governs Monrovia but has no army, has not been responsible for human rights abuses.⁵

Africa Watch's findings include the following:

- Civilians in NPFL territory, which covers the entire interior of Liberia, minus the capital, no longer face the atrocities of all-out war; nevertheless, they suffer the capricious actions associated with a military occupation—arbitrary arrest, physical abuse, confiscation and destruction of property and restrictions on freedom of movement and freedom of expression. Underlying these problems is the perception that the NPFL "fighters" are a law unto themselves, and many of these fighters are young,⁶ undisciplined and unpaid. While security in a given area depends largely on the discipline exercised by the local commander, individual fighters have considerable latitude to arrest, detain, extort, threaten and sometimes injure civilians.

- Prince Johnson and the INPFL remain armed on their base at Caldwell, on the outskirts of Monrovia. They have been responsible for summary executions, arbitrary arrest and physical abuse of civilians in the Caldwell area. Since late July 1991, Johnson has ordered summary executions of at least six and possibly up to nine fighters and civilians. The interim government, lacking any troops, is effectively powerless to exert control over Johnson, since he does not recognize its authority. ECOMOG has avoided using force against Johnson, since it would lead to renewed fighting.
- The AFL soldiers remain armed in their base at the Barclay Training Center and at Camp Schiefflin, and are themselves responsible for abuses against civilians in Monrovia, including looting, beating and general harassment of civilians. Civilians are particularly fearful of these soldiers, since the Army was closely associated with Doe's brutal reign.
- Ethnic conflict, one of the tragic legacies of the Doe regime,⁷ remains a very live issue, particularly in Grand Gedeh county which is populated largely by the Krahn ethnic group. As recently as late July, fighting continued between the NPFL and a Krahn resistance movement. Civilians were subjected to abuses by the NPFL reminiscent of last year's fighting, including indiscriminate killings, targeting of Krahn and Mandingo people, burning of villages and widespread looting. Although difficult to document, human rights violations can also be attributed to the Krahn resistance.
- The U.S. government has done a complete about-face regarding Liberia: after years of supporting the brutal and corrupt regime of former President Doe, making it the largest recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa, Liberia is now considered virtually irrelevant. The Bush Administration has a special responsibility to work to curtail human rights abuses in Liberia, given the country's long-standing historical ties with the United States and the role played by the U.S. in setting the stage for the current crisis.

Liberia's conflict threatens the stability of the entire West African region. It has already spilled over into neighboring countries in the form of some 750,000 refugees—a third of Liberia's pre-war population—who have fled to Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Ghana, among other countries. Combat has been waged recently on the Sierra Leone border between the NPFL and the Sierra Leone military, which is aided by a Krahn-based Liberian resistance group

called ULIMO (the United Liberation Movement of Liberia). Until recently, there was also fighting between the NPFL and Krahn fighters in Grand Gedeh, near the Ivory Coast, whose government is fearful of armed attacks extending to its territory. In several areas, the possibility of a new round of ethnic warfare and brutality remains quite real.

In September 1991, hopes were raised that peace may finally come to Liberia, and that free and fair elections would be allowed to take place. There is a danger, however, that if hopes for peace are allowed to overshadow concerns about human rights, the cycle of abuse will be doomed to repeat itself. Compliance with internationally recognized human rights standards must be an integral part of any eventual peace agreement.

Background to Political Developments

The November cease-fire, signed in Bamako, was an important step in the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) initiative to bring the warring factions to the negotiating table. In Bamako, the 15 African heads of state who make up ECOWAS met with the three sides to the conflict—the NPFL, the INPFL and the AFL.⁸ Prior to the Bamako meeting, Taylor had refused to participate in peace talks. The Bamako agreement was based on an ECOWAS peace plan that had been worked out by the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee.⁹ The peace plan called negotiating an immediate cease-fire; organizing a meeting of political parties, interest groups and the warring factions to establish a broad-based interim government; and holding of free and fair elections under international supervision. The leaders of the warring factions were excluded from heading the interim government, and the interim president would be ineligible to run for president in the ensuing general elections.

The Bamako summit was followed on December 21 by a meeting in Banjul, the Gambia. At the conclusion of the talks, a joint statement was issued by the three warring parties announcing that an All Liberia Conference would be held within 60 days to form an interim government, at which point “said government take appropriate measures, with the assistance of ECOWAS, to begin disarming the warring parties.”

The conference was not organized in the 60-day period, but it was decided at a February 1991 meeting in Lomé, Togo, that the conference would begin in Monrovia on March 15. However, Taylor distanced himself from the Lomé agreement by stating that he did not agree with all aspects of the final communiqué—especially the decision to exclude the leaders of the warring groups from becoming interim president, despite the fact that this provision had been part of the November Bamako agreement.

Taylor also did not attend the All Liberia Conference in March 1991, citing fears for his security.¹⁰ An NPFL delegation went to the conference, but walked

out a week later. The subsequent election of Amos Sawyer¹¹ as president of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) at the conclusion of the conference in April was conducted without the participation of the NPFL, which refused to recognize the legitimacy of the IGNU.

A series of meetings have since been held in Yamoussoukro, in the Ivory Coast. The meetings have focused on the question of elections, not only election logistics but also the need to disarm all warring factions and to confine them to their bases. At this writing, three such meetings have taken place in 1991—in June, July and September.

On September 17, the most recent Yamoussoukro meeting, Taylor agreed to disarm his troops under the supervision of an expanded peacekeeping force and to confine his fighters (“encamp” them) as part of the ongoing peace process. Taylor made his commitment to ECOMOG,¹² provided that the composition of the contingent was changed to add troops from Senegal and reduce the Nigerian contingency. Until then, Nigerians had made up approximately 80 percent of the ECOMOG force, and Taylor has always considered them to be particularly hostile to the NPFL. The entry of Senegal¹³ is also important because the Francophone countries have been more supportive of Taylor. Meanwhile, a committee of West African states has been formed to help organize elections, which are due to take place in six to nine months.

The National Patriotic Front of Liberia

The Fighting in Grand Gedeh

In Grand Gedeh county—the province of former President Doe and his ethnic group, the Krahn—fighting was continuing between the NPFL and a Krahn resistance movement at least as recently as late July. Although NPFL authorities deny that there has been any fighting, more than 10,000 refugees fled to the area around Tai in the Ivory Coast between mid-July and early August.¹⁴ This latest wave of refugees from Grand Gedeh joined the 24,980 refugees¹⁵ who had already sought refuge in villages around Tai.

By all accounts, Grand Gedeh has been devastated by the fighting. A relief worker who was able to visit Grand Gedeh was stunned by the evidence of destruction and killing.

It's the systematic destruction of Grand Gedeh. Every single town and farm village has been burned. There was no sign of life. Doe's town—Tuzon—was not burned, but it was looted. Zwedru was not burned, but there was a lot of looting. Anyone who wants to be president should see that—retribution for the abuse of power. And many of those people didn't benefit in any way from Doe's government.

I saw very frightened people. A lot of women, children and older men. And bones and skulls around Zwedru. There is no question but that there was a tremendous amount of killing.¹⁶

Testimonies given by the refugees indicate that the fighting in Grand Gedeh bore many of the hallmarks of last year's war, with the civilians terrorized by indiscriminate killings, house-to-house searches for Krahn and Mandingos (who are accused of having collaborated with the Doe regime), burning of villages and widespread looting.

Indiscriminate Killing of Civilians

The refugees, many still traumatized by their escape from Grand Gedeh just hours or days earlier, provided Africa Watch with details of the brutality of the offensive. The principal targets were the Krahn and Mandingo people. According to Obed, a Krahn student who fled on July 19:

The rebels were killing us. They killed my father; they killed three women; they killed my uncle. My father was killed on June 11. It was about 6:30 in the morning. Some rebels came from Harper to Putu, some came from Sino and from Zwedru. They went from village to village, killing whoever they could find. When they got to my village, Tumbo, they started firing and everyone began to run. They grabbed my father and asked if he was a Krahn; when he said 'yes, I'm a Krahn man,' they shot him.

A woman I knew, Betty Pine, ran when the rebels came, and the rebels took her baby. They called to her in the bush and told her to come and get her baby. They shot her as she was coming, then used a cutlass and cut the baby in half.

I was also shot, in my left leg, but hid in the grass.¹⁷

Gbala, a 30-year-old woman, left Grand Gedeh in late July because of the NPFL attack.

In July, we went to harvest the rice. When we got to the fields, we saw rebels with guns around the farm. They started shooting at us. Five people were killed: a woman, Manta Tweh; an old woman, Klay Zor; and three men—Palu Nyonbior, Josiah Beh and Bestman Sayde. The rest of us ran into the bush and fled to the Ivory Coast.¹⁸

A Krahn clan chief who arrived in Ivory Coast on June 10 explained why he left Liberia:

The war drove me from my country. The rebels shot my family—two uncles and a sister—in the bush. They had no burial; they were just left there.¹⁹

In June, a woman named Betty Kanah called the BBC in London to report on the fighting in Grand Gedeh.

They are killing us in Putu, killing us for nothing; killing innocent people, children, old people, crippled people, young, teachers—killing the people. And we are suffering down there. We do not know what we did to him [Taylor].²⁰

The NPFL practice of searching for Krahn and Mandingo was discussed by Jackson, a 30-year-old Mandingo who had been recruited by the NPFL after his capture in September 1990.

I was captured by the rebels last September in Kaweaken. I could speak Gola, so I told them I was Gola. If I had told them I was Mandingo, they would have killed me. I said I wanted to join them - it was the only way to rescue myself.

When we entered towns, we asked the townspeople for Mandingo, Krahn and remaining forces. We killed the ones we found. In July, we attacked Konobo, and killed about 175 people—women, children and soldiers.²¹

Arbitrary Detention

In general, the two sides fighting in Grand Gedeh have executed captured combatants rather than taking them as prisoners of war. However, numerous refugees reported that the NPFL has seized civilians, usually women and children.

The following cases were reported to Africa Watch:

- A 23-year-old Krahn man saw his wife captured on June 12 in John Davis Town. She was eight months pregnant and was unable to run away. She was taken by four armed NPFL fighters, along with several others without arms. A woman named Mamie Paye was also captured.²²
- An elderly Krahn woman hid in the bush and witnessed the capture of her family—her daughter, Sarah, and her two children, who were nine months and two years old. According to the woman, the fighters started shooting when they entered the town. Some people were killed as they scattered in an effort to escape.²³

- A farmer who fled with his family from Zia Town in July saw women and children being taken away. He said that the NPFL arrived at 4:30 a.m. and started shooting and forcing everyone to run for cover. In the confusion, children were left behind, including one of the farmer's sons whose whereabouts are unknown. The NPFL captured some 15 of the women and children, including a pregnant woman, Daganon, and Sarah Kwee with her three children.²⁴

Saye, a 21-year-old Krahn from Zia Town, arrived in Ivory Coast in late July. He explained what happened to him after his capture by the NPFL:

I was sleeping at home, it was about 6:00 a.m. Six rebels wearing the NPFL patch and carrying automatic weapons came: they beat me, tied my hands behind my back and tied my feet, and carried me to their camp. They took my clothes. About 30 minutes later, they loosened the ties and threw cold water on me. I was cold—I had no clothes on. They left me in a room and they went behind the hut to eat. At around 7:00 p.m., I escaped, because the door wasn't locked. But people aren't usually arrested; they are usually just killed.²⁵

Abuses By the Remaining Krahn Forces

Access to Grand Gedeh is virtually impossible, making it difficult to gather information about abuses being committed by the remaining Krahn forces. The composition of these forces is not known: many were formerly soldiers in the AFL, but others appear to be civilians who have formed ad hoc civil defense units. They, too, have been accused of serious abuses.

Thomas, 20 years old, fought with the Krahn forces in Grand Gedeh. He told Africa Watch that the Krahn forces rarely took prisoners:

When we caught rebels, they were asked 'why are you still fighting when there is supposed to be a cease-fire.' Then we killed them. We caught about 20 rebel soldiers and killed them. The Captain—Amos Collins—only freed those who begged and said that the rebels had forced them to join.²⁶

Betty, the Krahn woman who called the BBC to report on the fighting, also discussed the armed resistance to Taylor:

[The resistance] is not Doe's soldiers. We are Krahn people; we are Krahn people in the village, running away from Charles Taylor's people, and they still follow us in the bushes to kill us.²⁷

When asked whether the NPFL fighters found by the Krahn are killed, she said: "Of course! If you come to kill me, I can surely kill you, too."

Since members of other ethnic groups living in the area are often suspected of being Krahn or Mandingo, some of them have also reportedly taken up arms. A woman interviewed by *The Guardian* in June stated that:

The Sapphos are also victims because they are assumed to be Krahn. So the Sappho fled from their homeland in Sino county and have joined with the Krahn in one battalion based in Putu. They are depending on weapons they have captured from the rebels.

The majority of towns have been burned, even when the people are still inside the houses. Over 100 villages have been burned.²⁸

Arbitrary Arrest and Restrictions on Freedom of Movement

Incidences of arbitrary arrest and restrictions on civilians' movements are particularly evident at checkpoints when civilians attempt to travel to or from NPFL territory: to move between Monrovia and the interior of the country, a special pass must be obtained from the NPFL. Liberian civilians have a particularly difficult time obtaining these passes. Taylor's tight control over movement to or from his territory has led to accusations that he is holding the civilian population hostage.

The interim government in Monrovia does not require Liberians to have passes to enter or leave the capital, so anyone can theoretically come to the city. NPFL authorities permit their fighters to travel freely to Monrovia—which they often do, although they must come unarmed.

Many civilians attempting to travel to Monrovia complained of beatings, detention and harassment by fighters. Some have been forced to turn back. A 38-year-old man from Cape Mount described what happened the first time he tried to leave NPFL territory:

I was caught and flogged when I said I was going to Monrovia. Two fighters arrested me, beat me and sent me back home. They beat me with rattan [bamboo from the bush] on my back. They seized all my things—my money, my clothes. I decided to try again, because living conditions are so hard. This time, when the fighters asked me where I was going, I didn't say Monrovia. They charged me \$50 to bring me to another area. They told me to carry three bags of fufu for them—weighing about 150 lbs.

Anything you have, they say is for Taylor. They always say that your life is not important. They forced my 18-year-old son to join them. You, the father, cannot refuse.²⁹

M., a Liberian professional who had lived in Monrovia since 1956 but was caught behind Taylor lines in the war, managed to get himself and his family to Monrovia in July. He described the abuse that civilians face at the checkpoints and his own efforts to reach Monrovia.

We tried to come after the cease-fire. We paid for a pass in December 1990 from Buchanan. We saw others around Gate 15, between Careysberg and Robertsfield, and we heard all sorts of stories about those who tried to go to Monrovia. People were jailed, brutalized, the roads were not open as we had heard. So we took our things and went home. We didn't try again until March. This time, we got stuck in Kakata. When we got to Firestone, we were warned not to say that we were going to Monrovia, so we said we were going to Kakata. We found a place to stay, not knowing that it would take three-and-a-half months to get to Monrovia. There were 11 of us, all women but me, a small boy and a big boy. I advised the big boy to join others and go by the bush road. He was caught in Mt. Barclay and jailed for one or two nights. Our problem was all the women. In March, when ECOMOG came, many of the women yelled "no more CO" [commandos] and cheered "ECOMOG"—so fighters were not letting women go to Monrovia.

Finally, we got laissez-passers—we had to pay for them—and a police clearance to get to Danane. We had to pay \$140 per person, plus \$25 for the police clearance, plus \$15 for the laissez-passers. . . . [I]n the bus to the border, we had to pay \$150–\$200 at various checkpoints. For every time someone stamps your papers, you have to pay.

For the fighters, the cease-fire means that they are not at war with ECOMOG, the AFL or Johnson. It has no effect on civilians. Even while the cease-fire was in force, fighters would go to the beach when the Kru fishermen came in (the Fanti fishermen were gone). They would say that every fish in the ocean belonged to the CIC [Commander in Chief—Taylor]. They would say that if you catch three fish, one is for the government, two are for you; if you catch two fish, one is for the government; if you catch one, it's for the government.

For the past two-and-a-half months, things have gotten better. No armed people are supposed to go on the beaches anymore. But at the gates, the fighters still harass people.

When civilians try to go to Monrovia, everything is taken from them. The Gios and Manos are the main ones who can travel, and market women for business. The fighters are the only ones with access to vehicles, because they've commandeered all the cars, so they control all transportation. Sometimes you can pay them to take you, but sometimes they turn you in for "reconnaissance"³⁰ and you are jailed.

There is not much killing anymore, especially not in the urban areas. Mostly they beat people at the gates. Their primary aim is to milk the population. Many of them have realized the evil of what they've done, but still it's a group of people who are not fed, paid or clothed, so they must do it for themselves. People are scared for their lives because of the disorganization that they see. It is serious. One little fighter told my wife, 'we're the ones who let people go through or not.'³¹

Out of desperation, some Liberians attempt to make it to Monrovia on bush roads; others arrange to pay fighters significant sums of money to take them on these roads. Both options present serious risks: without a fighter "escort," civilians run the danger of being caught; with an "escort," there is always a chance that they will be turned in and accused of spying for the "enemy."

The following cases were reported to Africa Watch:

- In June, a 20-year-old man paid a fighter to take him from Kakata to Monrovia. The fighter turned him in at Mt. Barclay, claiming he had been engaged in "reconnaissance." The young man was jailed for approximately two days before being released because another fighter knew him. He was redetained almost immediately by the same fighter who had arrested him, but managed to escape with the assistance of a woman fighter.³²
- A 29-year-old Vai woman who was eight months pregnant left her home in Cape Mount for Monrovia on July 20. She traveled with about 15 people—two children, between 10 and 12 years old, and the rest adults, both men and women. They walked for three days, bypassing various checkpoints by hiding in the bush and then moving on between midnight and 2:00 a.m. when the fighters were asleep. Eventually, her pregnancy slowed her down and she was caught by fighters and held at a checkpoint for 30 minutes. They took her jewelry (three rings), some of her clothes and her money. She was freed through the intervention of an elder.³³

James, an economist who arrived in Monrovia on July 17, said he had managed to avoid the fighters while he lived in NPFL territory by staying on a small rice

farm. Otherwise, the local people were harassed by the fighters, who took their property and food, and made them carry loads. He went on:

In early '91, my uncle, a tailor, was beaten severely with his brother. They were tied—tabeyed³⁴ - and not released until the fighters were paid money.

I came to Monrovia on the bush road with 41 people. We walked for 13 hours. We left at 11 a.m., stopped at another village until dark, and then continued. We met two fighters along the way, and had to pay them some money. They sent us to the gates [the checkpoints], and we had to pay \$125.

We call Monrovia "America" because it's free. We say we're going to America.³⁵

Without any semblance of the rule of law, civilians often fall prey to arbitrary abuses by the fighters, many of whom are young, undisciplined and unpaid. Among the many cases witnessed by and reported to Africa Watch are the following:

- On August 22, a foreign priest who obtained a pass to travel from Monrovia to Gbarnga was arrested at a checkpoint just outside Monrovia after soldiers found a calculator they claimed was a communications device. The situation was aggravated when one fighter insisted that he had seen the priest at the VOA station in Monrovia, implying that he was a spy for the United States. In fact, the priest said he had never been to the VOA station. Ultimately, a relief worker learned of the priest's arrest and was able to locate a police official who could authorize the priest's release—six hours after his arrest.³⁶
- Mamedou, a former student in Monrovia who spent most of the war in Cape Mount, made it back to Monrovia on July 19. He described the harassment to which civilians are subjected in his village:

I left because there was constant harassment by the freedom fighters. I couldn't take it anymore. If you have things, they take them from you. They force you to work for them, to carry things to the next town.

One night in June, seven fighters came to my town. They woke everyone up and assembled us in the Town Hall. They told us to provide them with food, or no one would be allowed to sleep. We were forced to find cassava for them.³⁷

- In May, a group of wives and mothers invited Charles Taylor's wife, Agnes Taylor, to a meeting in Harbel. They asked her to facilitate their pleas to her husband to open the road so that they could be reunited with their husbands and families in Monrovia. Many of their husbands were at work in Monrovia when the fighting hit their area. According to one of the people who was at the meeting, Mrs. Taylor replied: "Liberia is your country. Everywhere in Liberia is your home." The women booed her and walked out.³⁸

Sulima Island

In late March, the NPFL began an incursion into Sierra Leone. Many Liberians who had crossed into Sierra Leone in July 1990 to escape the war in Liberia were again compelled to flee for safety. Several thousand—reports indicate at least 3,000—went to Dier island, at the mouth of a river leading to the ocean, and then on to Sulima Island, an island between Sierra Leone and Liberia. They were largely Fanti fishermen, originally from Ghana, who had lived in Cape Mount before seeking refuge in Sierra Leone.³⁹

Some Fanti in Monrovia approached the interim government about the refugees stranded on the island, pointing out that they were in need of medical care, food and water, and were exposed to the danger of attack by the NPFL. The interim government agreed to supply, gas for some fishing vessels - special Fanti canoes—which could go to the island and ferry the refugees out. The convoy went to the island, and two canoes were sent in—but never came back. The convoy saw people on the island setting up machine gun posts, and went back to Monrovia.

Two days later, one of the canoes was released with a ransom note to the interim government: the commandos wanted U.S. \$1,500 for each of the eight captured crew members; \$6,500 for each of the two canoes; 20 bags of rice; one carton of sugar; one carton of mackerel; one carton of sardines; six bottles of Gordon's gin; and 20 cartons of cigarettes.

Before a part of the ransom could be collected and sent to the island, the NPFL had shot three of the captured crew members and severely damaged one of the canoes. It was reported, although Africa Watch has been unable to confirm this independently, that some 20 other Fanti people were also killed at that time on the island. The Fanti who brought the ransom food and money were themselves arrested, subjected to "tabey" and beaten, but later released.

Intolerance of Dissent

Dissent is not tolerated in NPFL territory, creating fear and uncertainty among the civilian population. Open criticism of Charles Taylor or the NPFL

fighters is dangerous, and only one newspaper, *The Patriot*, is allowed to publish. According to Archbishop Michael K. Francis: "You are not allowed to speak freely. No one dares to speak up. The thing is, the gun is there, young fellows with guns."⁴⁰ Personal letters are also frequently confiscated by fighters at checkpoints.

Time and again, civilians expressed fear of the fighters. A man from Bong County who travels back and forth into Nimba County commented:

You don't know who is who, you have to be careful who you talk to and where you walk. All along I've been afraid. Anyone can see you and do anything. There is an atmosphere of fear.⁴¹

In Kakata, a Kpelle man discussed why people are afraid to criticize the NPFL:

It is extremely difficult to criticize Taylor, because of the armed men all around. The people here know that Taylor's boys are around and that you will be marked easily. If you complain, maybe they'll investigate. But then you'll be marked. To criticize him where his boys are all around—it's difficult.⁴²

Civilians who have spoken out have suffered reprisals. Manny, who arrived in Monrovia in late July, described what happened to a friend of his who criticized Taylor.

In Lofa County in March, a friend of mine made a statement, saying he doesn't know why Taylor won't give in to a peace settlement. For this, four young men fighters tabeyed him, gave him 50 lashes and jailed him for two weeks. The fighters must have overheard him.⁴³

The following incidences were reported to Africa Watch:

- In August, a teacher wrote a letter to someone he knew in Monrovia detailing his experience during the war and explaining that he had been arrested and detained in Gbarnga. He sent the letter with a market woman, but the letter was confiscated at a checkpoint. The teacher was arrested, and the woman who carried the letter was also jailed for a night.⁴⁴
- A journalist in Taylor territory was beaten and jailed for three days in the spring of 1991 on the orders of the police director, Anthony Kormuhun. The arrest followed an article the journalist wrote about the illegal sale of electrical power, which implicated the police director in using the police generator to sell power to the public. The article also noted that some people had not even obtained power they had paid for. Subsequently,

Taylor ordered the police director himself to be detained. Both men were later reinstated to their jobs.⁴⁵

In March, ECOMOG conducted its first in a series of confidence visits into Taylor territory. The visits were seen as a first step toward opening the roads and ports throughout the country. Visits were conducted to Prince Johnson's base and AFL positions as well. In some areas of the interior, ECOMOG was greeted warmly by the local population. Afterwards, a number of people were accused of being overly enthusiastic and suffered reprisals.

- One case involved a woman named Mrs. Cooper, who danced during the visit. She was reportedly beaten and jailed for two days. She has told her friends that she is afraid that the NPFL will come back for her.⁴⁶
- Another woman reported that: "In March, during the confidence visits, most of us were on the road cheering, hoping things would be O.K. Some women—about six—were locked up for being so happy. Now women are searched more than men at checkpoints, because they expressed themselves more freely."⁴⁷

In July, about 16 Liberian journalists from Monrovia were invited by Taylor to visit the interior. The journalists were prevented from interviewing civilians along the way and were themselves harassed by NPFL fighters. Describing the experience in *The Inquirer*, a leading independent newspaper in Monrovia, T. Budu Kaisa wrote:

Newspapers from Monrovia are prevented from getting to the people because the top commandos feel they are government propaganda. So, the ordinary citizens and young fighters scrambled over the papers we distributed among them as though it was food or something strange in their lives. . . .

At SKT, a village which lies on the road to Gbarnga, the Pajero jeep carrying some ECOMOG representatives had one of the several breakdowns on the way. While waiting for repairs, the press strolled to a mini-market to interview some marketeers, but Musa [the NPFL's Battle Group Commander] ordered us back in the car saying that was a different territory we were in and shouldn't talk to anybody.⁴⁸

West African Nationals

After ECOMOG's arrival in Monrovia in late August 1990, nationals from the countries participating in the contingent—Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone,

Guinea and Gambia—were targeted by the NPFL. Taylor publicly threatened to kill civilians from countries participating in ECOMOG.

Many of these foreign nationals had lived in Liberia for years, and sometimes decades. Hundreds—if not thousands—were rounded in late August and early September 1990 and sent to detention camps in the interior, allegedly for their own protection. An unknown number of the men—at least scores and possibly hundreds—were killed by the NPFL in August and September.

In March 1991, Taylor announced that the foreign nationals were to be freed. Efforts are currently underway to repatriate them to their countries of origin. Many, however, want to go back “home” to Monrovia, not Lagos or Accra. Like Liberian civilians, they are finding it very difficult to get a pass to Monrovia. Since most of their money and belongings were taken during their detention, they do not have the means either to pay fighters to take them on the bush roads, or to pay the inevitable bribes at the checkpoints.

There were three principal detention centers: the Slokum Mission and the Saa Philip Joe Mission, both on the outskirts of Kakata; and the Flamingo Logging Camp, in Grand Bassa county.

In interviews with Africa Watch, West Africans who remain at Saa Philip Joe Mission⁴⁹ stated that there had been close to 400 detainees, and about 76 remain. Of those who left, some were repatriated, but most either went to Kakata or Monrovia, via the bush roads. During their detention, they were not permitted to leave the camp, and were severely flogged and sometimes jailed for short periods if they tried to do so. Overcrowding was also a serious problem. The male detainees were forced to work for their guards, doing such tasks as cutting the grass and cleaning. Children were also forced to cook, make the fires, do the washing and fetch water.

G., a Ghanaian who had lived in Liberia for 10 years, explained why he and the others remained at Saa Philip Joe Mission:

On March 18, the CIC [commander in chief] and his wife came here and told us that he was going to prepare a clearance for us as a way to ensure our evacuation. But it never came—he just lied. We’re still here because we’re still waiting for the clearance.⁵⁰

Similar conditions prevailed at Slokum mission. There had been over 1,000 held there—some 700 Nigerians, 200 Ghanaians, about 25 Sierra Leoneans, and some Guineans. While most have relocated, almost 40 remain. They reported that many of them had tried to escape, but none had been successful. Before the releases, overcrowding had been a serious problem, with some 108 people sleeping on the floor of a church. “In some places, more than 200 people had to sleep,” a Ghanaian woman commented. “You could barely open the door.”⁵¹ A

Nigerian journalist who was brought to Slokum in September 1990 explained: "We have been kept here. They took all our clothes, everything we had. Except our lives."⁵²

J., a Ghanaian student whose father and three brothers were taken in August 1990 by Taylor's forces and never heard from again, explained:

We used to have roll call at 6 a.m. to find if the prisoners were here. We were guarded by about 10 soldiers with guns. If we wanted to go for water, we had to get in line. We slept on the ground.

Hostages, POWs—that's what they called us. Later on, they called us refugees. If anyone tried to go to the bush, they would tabey you and whip you.⁵³

T., formerly a teacher's assistant in Monrovia, described the punishment which many of the detainees suffered:

They would shave your head—whether you were male or female. In early 1991, about 30 Fula people from Guinea all had their hair shaved as punishment. They would whip you and strip you, just because you had taken some food.

You were not allowed to leave without a pass, and they refused to give me a pass. Maybe they saw me as a little bit too smart. They wouldn't even let me go to see a doctor in Kakata in January or February.

At least a prisoner is told how long he'll be held. In this place, there was no limit.⁵⁴

Mike, a Nigerian who had lived in Liberia for 18 years, was taken from the Nigerian Embassy in Monrovia on August 26, along with 1,800 other foreign nationals.

Slokum Mission was an ordeal, worth writing a book about. It was an African concentration camp. Groups of soldiers would come from Kakata and make us give them money. One man was called Gio Devil. If you refused, you were flogged. The big offense was to go out of the camp. Many people were tabeyed for this, then they'd put you in jail, in a small room. Then your family had to pay the soldiers to free you. The people had to sell all their things to get money. Sometimes the soldiers would say you can't sell without a registration, so you had to pay again. And you couldn't complain.⁵⁵

In late August 1991, it was reported that a spokesman for the Liberian Red Cross announced that Taylor had agreed to free 800 West African nationals, and that arrangements were being made for them to be repatriated. Taylor has refused to allow them to leave via Monrovia; instead, they are to leave by road to the Ivory Coast or out of the port of Buchanan.⁵⁶

Other Targeted Groups

Other groups mistaken for Krahn or Mandingo have also been targeted in NPFL territory, particularly the Grebo and the Vai. Anyone who served or cooperated with the Doe government is also liable to suffer abuse.

The Grebos are in a particularly difficult situation. Since many are from Grand Gedeh, the NPFL assumes they are Krahn. The Krahn, on the other hand, believing that the Grebo collaborated with the NPFL, view them with hostility. John, a Grebo who left Liberia for the Ivory Coast in April 1991, explained: "Once the Taylor groups sees on your card that you're from Grand Gedeh, they assume that you are Krahn." He continued:

There's no way I'd go to my home in Grand Gedeh, because you have to pass through Krahn lines - their section of the country, especially Zwedru. I'm afraid of both Krahn and Taylor people. In early 1991, Krahn soldiers killed about 19 Grebo people in Grand Gedeh. The Krahn feel that the Grebo are against them. There are historical tensions. If you come across rebel fighters who don't know the difference between Krahn and Grebo, you're in trouble.⁵⁷

Frederick, a 27-year-old Grebo, told Africa Watch that he had tried to travel to Monrovia on two different occasions and was sent back both times:

Several times, they [the fighters] would say that I was a Krahn man. I would tell them that I am a Grebo man. In my case, one of them [the fighters] said he would see if I could speak Grebo, and he brought over a Grebo boy who was a freedom fighter. Then they let me go. This was in July 1991.⁵⁸

The majority of the Vai people are Muslim, like the Mandingos, and are sometimes mistaken for Mandingo. During the war, the Mandingos, who were accused of having collaborated with the Doe regime, were hunted down and killed by the NPFL. Hundreds died and thousands fled the country.

Although Charles Taylor is reported to have given assurances to the Muslim community in February, many Muslims continue to fear reprisals from the NPFL. A Vai woman told Africa Watch:

If they [the NPFL] find you praying, they can kill you as a Mandingo. One of my uncles in Bong Mines was killed in May because he was praying. He is a Vai man but they considered him to be Mandingo because he was praying on a mat. This is why most people are risking their lives to come to Monrovia.⁵⁹

Another Vai man interviewed by Africa Watch stated:

The fighters told us that we are not allowed to pray in mosques. We are under their control, so we stopped. We began to pray in our rooms—secretly.⁶⁰

According to a man who travels frequently in Taylor territory:

People are arrested—there's no court, no process of law. They accuse you of being Mandingo or Krahn, there's nothing you can do. One fellow named Dedon was accused of being Mandingo, though he was really Sosoe. He was killed in February in Bomi County. He was in his early 40s. Another man, Rufus Wilson, was considered to be a Krahn. He was killed in Bomi, also in February. I don't know if he was Krahn or not.⁶¹

The simple fact of being related to a former official of the Doe regime has been used as a pretext to threaten, arrest or mistreat civilians. A relief worker noted:

All the willing or unwilling members of Doe's government are at risk. Their children are afraid now; they fear they will suffer the same fate as their fathers.⁶²

There are also concerns for the families of those with positions in the interim government. The family of at least one official has been threatened by NPFL fighters, including threats to burn their town. In March, the official received a letter from his family that stated: "we are living in the shadow of death because of you."⁶³ Some relatives of interim government officials have changed their names to hide their identity.

Various sources pointed to the case of Yarsuo Weh-Dorliae, National Chairman for United Nimba Citizens in America, as a reason for fearing such repercussions. In September and October 1990, Weh-Dorliae was interviewed on foreign radio programs, including the BBC, and expressed support for the interim government and criticized Taylor. Later in October, his home village in Nimba County, Mehnla, was partially burned down by the NPFL. In March 1991, when Weh-Dorliae returned to Monrovia for the All Liberia Conference, his village was attacked again. His brother, John, who had been detained by the NPFL from approximately October 1990 until April 1991, has been threatened

with reprisals if his brother continues to speak out. As a result, Weh-Dorliae has decided not to make further public statements.⁶⁴

An educator from Nimba County, a Mano, who left Liberia in May 1991 out of fear for his security, commented on the situation faced by former officials.

When I first returned behind rebel lines, I was afraid of the fighters, because of my former position. But they were only friendly—no one troubled me or my family.

But after the Banjul meeting in March, when Liberians abroad began saying that Taylor shouldn't be President, he began to feel skeptical about educated people. I was informed secretly that educated former officials were being looked for, that those who served or cooperated with the Doe government would be dealt with accordingly.⁶⁵

Efforts to Lodge Complaints

There is no adequate system in place for civilians to lodge complaints against NPFL fighters. Despite recent statements by NPFL officials promising to discipline fighters, most people continue to be afraid of repercussions if they complain. In addition, there is a general sense that complaints are futile, since those responsible for investigating the complaints are themselves often implicated in the problem.

However, there are some signs that NPFL authorities are sometimes willing to listen to complaints.

- On August 2, Harry, an economist, woke up in the morning to find Saye, a fighter, at his house. The fighter told Harry and his family to leave the house, claiming it was his because he had left some looted goods there. The neighbors confirmed that the house belonged to Harry's family. Harry decided to proceed with a complaint: "I decided it was do or die," he said in an interview with Africa Watch. He went to the NPFL deputy commander for Grand Bassa County, who ordered the fighter to be detained for a short period. According to Harry, the deputy commander said that he received too many complaints about fighters, and that this time he was going to take some action. Harry told Africa Watch: "I was very surprised. But I think it was a one-shot deal."⁶⁶
- On July 29, the County Administrator for Grand Bassa—Ammen Soloman—was jailed after he complained about harassment. He had gone to represent the grievances of the citizens of #2 district who accused fighters of regularly confis-

cating their belongings. If the citizens tried to resist, the fighters often subjected them to "tabey" and beatings. Solomon took the complaint to the 4th battalion commander—Johnson Leaman—who had him stripped naked and detained for about 12 hours. Then he was under house arrest for another 12 hours, after which he was taken to Gbarnga to meet with Taylor. Following the meeting, Taylor apologized and he was released. He is still the country administrator.⁶⁷

There have been some instances in which notoriously abusive commanders have been replaced. In the first few months of 1991, for example, the commander of Harper was replaced.⁶⁸ Similarly, a middle-level commander in Bomni named Kuttor was replaced in July after international nongovernmental organizations complained to Taylor about the commander's repeated harassment of their relief convoys.⁶⁹ On the whole, however, civilians behind Taylor lines do not feel confident that abusive officials are being sufficiently disciplined. On the occasions when action is taken, it is usually against a middle-level fighter, not the senior commanders.

A Kpelle man who travels between Ivory Coast and Nimba County explained that the lack of a chain of command contributed to the confusion. If a civilian decides to lodge a complaint, it is often difficult to know who to approach.

If someone did something to you and you want to follow up on it, there are many stumbling blocks. You have to be part of the cliques—the tribe, the soldiers.⁷⁰

Abuses Against Women

Africa Watch has heard many reports about special problems faced by women, particularly rape. Information about specific cases is difficult to obtain, because the shame associated with rape makes it difficult for women to talk about their experiences. Even their relatives have trouble finding out what happened. One man interviewed by Africa Watch said that his cousin, a woman named Della, was picked up by NPFL fighters in late July on her way from the market, and was forced to spend three days with a fighter before she finally escaped. "When I asked her what happened, she would just cry and wouldn't want to discuss it."⁷¹

In some areas of the interior, reports indicate that young women ask doctors to admit them to the hospital to get them out of situations where they are being forced to have sexual relations with fighters. Fighters also often harass women to extort sexual favors, according to a number of relief workers interviewed by Africa Watch.

VIOLATIONS BY PRINCE JOHNSON AND THE INPFL

Prince Johnson's INPFL, which controls only its base in Caldwell, is responsible for cases of killings, arbitrary arrest and physical abuse of civilians, including women in the vicinity. Prince Johnson is not accountable to any other authority; there are no procedures in place for bringing him to justice. The interim government, lacking any troops, is effectively powerless to intervene since its authority is not recognized by Johnson. Johnson himself has been variously described as erratic, mentally unstable and psychotic. He has set up his own checkpoints to guard his base and often institutes a curfew in Caldwell. It was Johnson who first broke the cease-fire: within days of the agreement, Johnson sent his fighters to attack the AFL at the Ministry of Defense, killing five soldiers and capturing a lieutenant. Johnson was quoted as saying:

We will continue to fight until the interim government makes a decision on whether it will use my army or the AFL. Doe did not go to Banjul to elect an interim government. We elected Sawyer. ECOMOG has failed.⁷²

Summary Executions

Johnson is responsible for a number of cases of summary executions at his base in Caldwell, including the following:

- In early October, INPFL fighters executed Zogon G. Korto, a businessman living in Caldwell, and his girlfriend, Jenneh Samor. According to a statement issued by Johnson, his fighters had been sent to Korto's home to arrest him on suspicion of working with ULIMO, the Krahn-based resistance movement fighting the NPFL in Sierra Leone. Korto was said to have resisted arrest and fired on the INPFL, and Korto and Sarnor were seriously injured in the fighting and died shortly afterwards in a hospital. However, other reports suggest that Johnson had a disagreement with Korto and simply ordered his execution and that of his girlfriend.⁷³
- On October 1, George Myeis was reportedly shot by Prince Johnson or his fighters. Myeis, who was a former AFL soldier and also worked with the Liberian Petroleum Refining Company (LPRC), was apparently accused of spying.⁷⁴

In an emergency meeting on October 3 the cabinet of the interim government condemned these killings. On October 7, Johnson declared that any attempt to arrest him would be a "declaration of another war."⁷⁵

- In late July, Prince Johnson summarily executed at least four and possibly up to six fighters and civilians in Caldwell. The execution of four commandos was confirmed by *The Scorpion* newspaper, the official voice of the INPFL. The paper quoted Johnson as saying: "Betraying the interests of the Independent Patriotic Front amounts to a soldier digging his own grave."⁷⁶ Of those executed, Moses Varney, former deputy battle group commander, was charged with espionage; Sylvester David, David White and Boimah Camara were charged with armed robbery and intimidation of citizens.⁷⁷ In addition, Varney's wife was reportedly executed because Johnson believed that she knew about her husband's plan. Reports indicate that a male teacher in Caldwell was also executed.⁷⁸

The executions were condemned by ECOMOG and the interim government. ECOMOG issued a statement saying that the killings were "uncalled for when every effort is geared toward an urgent and peaceful end to the Liberian crisis." For its part, the interim government ordered an investigation⁷⁹—it was the first time that the interim government had openly criticized Johnson. After the interim government condemned the executions, Prince Johnson withdrew from the government. Vice President Peter Naigow's resignation was accepted on August 13.⁸⁰

It is difficult to confirm reports of other recent executions in Caldwell, but Africa Watch has been told of the following cases:

- In May, Johnson reportedly shot four of his commandos whom he suspected of collaborating with foreign mercenaries to have him killed. There was no formal investigation of the charges; the executions followed shortly after Johnson made the accusation. Johnson himself killed one of the four; the others were killed by a fighter known as "I Meant it."⁸¹
- In early 1991, *West Africa* magazine reported that Johnson ordered the killing of Emma Oboke, a Nigerian living in Caldwell. Oboke was killed at his home together with his six-year-old son. The killing was apparently in retaliation for ECOMOG's confining Johnson to his base.⁸²

Arbitrary Arrest, Detention and Harassment of Civilians

In February 1991, a five-man committee, known as the Wise Men, was established to mediate between the interim government and Johnson, who they believed had to be brought into the peace process. All were members of the

Interim Assembly of the Interim Government. The chair of the committee was A.T. Nah, and the other members were Johnson Gwaikolo, Ishmael Campbell, 1. Khankon Toe and Henry K. Marvie.

A meeting finally took place in February at the Ducor Hotel between Johnson and his lieutenants, and members of the interim government, including President Sawyer. When Johnson was ready to leave, as a goodwill gesture, he suggested that the Wise Men escort him back to his base, rather than the usual ECOMOG escort. They agreed and, soon after arriving at the base, the five men were taken hostage and subjected to abusive and humiliating treatment. Henry Marvie told Africa Watch what happened:

We bade him [Johnson] farewell and started to go, when we met a group of religious people outside his house. Johnson came out and said [to] join [them] in prayer. So we joined them. Then Johnson's deputy, Varney, came in and said that these people are not friends but enemies, that he saw four trucks of ECOMOG soldiers at the gate, and that ECOMOG was going to attack the base. He said 'these men will stay here; you are all my prisoners.' Johnson rushed to the room and got guns for his men, saying 'Varney, you're right.'

We were taken to the MP quarters to sleep, then taken to the warehouse next to his house. There was no room to lie down. The soldiers outside the door made threatening remarks.

The next day, Saturday, we were carried to an isolated area in Caldwell but off the base. We were all stripped to our underwear except Johnson Gwaikolo, who was allowed to keep his clothes on because he was from Nimba. Ishmael was made to sit on a hill of driver ants—big ants that bite—for a few minutes, until Prince Johnson said it was enough. Then we were all put in a room and locked up. Johnson always took the key. He said 'you'll stay until the government does what I ask.'

On Sunday, they filled glasses with Bacardi rum and we were forced to drink it—everyone except Gwaikolo. I thought they had poisoned the liquor and that we would die. I refused to drink it, but they held my nose and opened my mouth and forced me to drink. We were forced to drink three glasses. We all vomited all night. Gwaikolo took care of us.

On Monday, Dr. Carlon, the acting minister of sports, came to the base and by chance met Prince. Johnson told him 'I have your boys inside and won't release them until all the ECOMOG guns pointed at the base are removed.' Carlon talked to

ECOMOG, who promised that when Dogonyaro [Ecomog commander] returned (he was out of the country), the guns would be removed. So Carlon told Prince, [but] Carlon was arrested. He was undressed, made to lie down, tied up and pushed into our room. They forced him to drink the other prisoner's urine. We slept there that night.

The next day, a bus came. We were told to bathe and put our clothes on. All of our money was stolen, but we finally went home.⁸³

No investigation or prosecution was ever launched.

Civilians living in Caldwell are also subject to Johnson's erratic and abusive behavior. One man who had lived in Caldwell from October 1990 until late July 1991 told Africa Watch that he had fled because the tension was too great.

Sometimes, I couldn't get home because Johnson would close the gate at 6:00 p.m. No one could go in, no one could come out. Some days, no one is allowed out at all, although if you know someone at the gate they might let you go. There are times that you are actually scared walking on the road at 5:30 or 6:00 in the evening. People stay inside; the roads are clear. Some days, I wonder what is going on. I'm afraid of that place. Even his fighters are afraid of being around when he's drunk.⁸⁴

Abuses Against Children: The Orphanage

Many observers have expressed concern about the orphanage on Johnson's base, which houses about 172 children. Visitors to the orphanage have reported that the children were recently moved to a smaller building which is overcrowded and surrounded by barbed wire and guards. According to a visitor: "The children are very withdrawn, they don't react like normal children—they're not inquisitive, open or cooperative."⁸⁵ Johnson does not allow the orphans to go to school in Monrovia, claiming that they would be kidnapped.

According to both Liberian and foreign relief workers, Johnson is using the children as human shields. "As long as they're there, nobody will attack his camp," one relief worker noted.⁸⁶

In many respects, Johnson's orphanage is a military operation. Credible reports indicate that Johnson conducts periodic recruitment campaigns in the orphanage, and that all the children over 14 years old enlist.

Until early 1991, Johnson repeatedly showed the children a video made by the INPFL of the interrogation, torture and murder of former President Doe. The video was widely described as horrific.

ABUSES BY THE FORCES OF LIBERIA

The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) remains on its base at the Barclay Training Center in Monrovia and at Camp Schiefflin, just outside the city. The Army, which is dominated by Krahn, was closely associated with Doe's reign of terror. Civilians in Monrovia and Taylor territory are particularly fearful of these soldiers, and rumors are rife in both areas of Krahn soldiers conducting secret executions and terrorizing the population.

Because of the AFL's past conduct, the general population is extremely mistrustful of its soldiers. Most Liberians agree that the composition of the army must be changed to reflect the national character and its range of ethnic groups. However, the question then arises as to what will happen to the current Krahn soldiers. One observer noted:

What are you going to do with the AFL? They can't go back to Grand Gedeh—there's nothing there and they would be killed. No one wants them. They are not going to leave people alone until they feel secure—and how are you going to make them feel secure under these circumstances?⁸⁷

Beatings and Harassment of Civilians

Although many accounts are difficult to confirm, soldiers are alleged to have been involved in looting, beatings and general harassment of civilians. Among the incidents documented by Africa Watch are the following:

- On June 5, Krahn soldiers attacked Sando Wayne, an assistant minister of the interim government—beating him, breaking his arm and knocking him unconscious—apparently because he was driving one of Doe's old cars.
- On July 12, two people living in the Sinkor area of Monrovia were reportedly beaten by 10 men believed to belong to the AFL.⁸⁸
- In February, a 23-year-old man had gone to visit some elders, when a Krahn soldier grabbed him, took off his shirt, accused him of working with Prince Johnson and threatened to kill him. A witness to the incident interceded to save him.⁸⁹

Soldiers are also illegally occupying homes in Monrovia, particularly in the Sinkor area. The AFL presence in Sinkor, and the absence of electricity, makes it particularly dangerous at night.

Investigations of Harassment

On July 21, 1991, the AFL established a board of inquiry to investigate allegations that AFL soldiers were harassing of civilians. According to General Hezekiah Bowen, commander-in-chief of the AFL, the board will be led by AFL Inspector-General Willie Dennis and will include two members of the ECOMOG peacekeeping force.⁹⁰

Recently, it was reported that Lt. Henry Shar, an army officer, had been "dishonorably discharged" from the AFL for alleged looting, and that the Justice Ministry will prosecute him.⁹¹

THE REFUGEES

The civil war forced more than 750,000 Liberians to flee the country; most have sought refuge in neighboring countries.⁹² According to the U.S. State Department's Refugee Bureau,⁹³ as of July 1991 there were an estimated 227,500 Liberians in the Ivory Coast, 342,000 in Guinea,⁹⁴ 6,000 in Ghana, and smaller numbers in Nigeria, Gambia and Mali. There had been some 125,000 Liberians in Sierra Leone, but the recent incursion reduced that number to 10,000. Liberians continue to leave their country because of continuing insecurity, though in much smaller numbers.

Until recently, Liberian refugees were not turned back from neighboring countries and in most cases, they were welcomed by the local population. There are no refugee camps in Guinea or the Ivory Coast, and the refugees often live in local villages, (in some cases Liberians now outnumber the original inhabitants of the village). However, the Ivory Coast government is becoming stricter about new arrivals: most Liberians who come to the Ivory Coast now are considered "tourists," with the exception of those who are fleeing actual combat, such as those who escaped Grand Gedeh in July. This policy is linked to the government's efforts to reduce the number of refugees eligible for assistance, which they contend was inflated due to widespread fraud, while raising the level of rations offered to refugees.⁹⁵ The government is also trying to encourage as many refugees as possible to return home. Under the new policy, many of the recent arrivals are not eligible for assistance in the Ivory Coast. A relief worker in Danane explained the effect of this policy on the refugees:

A lot of people are going to have to make the hard choice to go back. The government policy is that there is no more war in Liberia, so the assistance should be tightened. But while the widespread killing has stopped, it is still a very abusive and tense situation in Liberia.⁹⁶

However, officials in the Ivory Coast are not using force to persuade the refugees to leave. An official in Danane expressed some of the government's ongoing concerns:

During the war, Taylor distributed many arms—he doesn't know who has them, and they are arms of war. This will be a problem for tomorrow, because without control of the arms, there will be a permanent danger to travel in Liberia. For now, there's no security. We're not going to send them [the refugees] back to get shot.⁹⁷

According to a number of people interviewed in Danane,⁹⁸ a disturbing incident took place in early July. The interim government sent representatives to Danane to collect names of those who wanted to be repatriated to Monrovia. The authorities in Danane asked for the list, which contained 1,500 names, and reportedly gave a copy to Taylor. All those on the list are now afraid to return to Liberia.

Some refugees cross back and forth across the border, particularly around the areas of Danane and Tabou in the Ivory Coast. A number of refugees interviewed by Africa Watch around Danane said they go back to their villages and farms in Nimba County, but leave their families in Ivory Coast. A young Gio woman who left her home in Nimba County in June explained the fear that keeps refugees from returning home:

With the rebel soldiers, we don't have much problem because we are from the same group. If you know how to live among them, you'll get along. Besides, they are careful with the refugees because they want them to return. I want to go back, if things can stay normal. But I'm not sure that another war won't break out. I'm afraid of what might happen because of my past experience.⁹⁹

Liberians continue to leave their country in search of security and food. A refugee worker in Danane discussed why Liberians continue to leave:

There is a general fear, and general insecurity. Many of these people left their original place of residence a year ago, and have been displaced since then. They are leaving a place that's destroyed; they are fed up with living in uncertainty. It is true that many people are moving back and forth, but we don't know how many.¹⁰⁰

The question of repatriating the hundreds of thousands of refugees who wish to return to Liberia will be an important issue in the pre-electoral period. However, any repatriation effort must take into account the security needs of the refugees, so they are able to resettle on their farms and villages and secure a productive life.

UNITED STATES POLICY: TESTING THE "SPECIAL" RELATIONSHIP

The U.S. does not recognize any government in Liberia, neither the interim government of Amos Sawyer, nor the administration of Charles Taylor. It maintains a policy of neutrality, and endeavors to maintain ties with all factions. The justification for this position is that the United States recognizes countries, not governments, and that the American Ambassador will present his credentials only to a unified government that has been chosen through free and fair elections.¹⁰¹ This position surprises many Liberians, who argue that the interim government was duly elected in the All Liberia Conference in March-April 1991.

Paralleling the U.S. policy of "neutrality" is the alarming U.S. silence in the face of continuing human rights abuses. In testimony on July 16, 1991, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, barely mentioned human rights violations in discussing Liberia. The only comment in his testimony that touched on the subject was the following: "Most tragically, horrific human rights abuses have been perpetrated by the combatants on the civilian population of all ages and ethnic groups."¹⁰² American Embassy representatives in Monrovia are taking a similar "hands-off" approach to human rights abuses.

The Bush Administration has been trying to dismiss Liberia as a mess, calling for "an African solution to an African problem." This contrasts markedly with the past U.S. policy of supporting the cruel and corrupt regime of President Doe, while minimizing his government's egregious human rights abuses. During most of the 1980s, the Reagan and Bush Administrations spent half a billion dollars in foreign aid for Liberia, making it the largest recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa. The massive infusion of American money served to prop up Doe's regime, despite the overwhelming evidence that Doe was vicious, unreliable and had no intention of keeping his promises about instituting democracy. Blaine Harden, a former *Washington Post* correspondent in Africa who covered Liberia in the mid-1980s, discussed the U.S. relations with Doe.

What the Americans ended up buying was neither stability nor democracy. They paid, instead, for Doe's legitimacy: weapons to coerce loyalty, money to rent it. The skinny backwoods sergeant was more cunning than he looked. Repeatedly, he outfoxed the State Department. He promised to return to his barracks, which he did not. He promised free and fair elections, which he rigged. He promised financial discipline, which he faked. For his every promise, the U.S. government rewarded him with aid. For his every betrayal, the U.S. government accepted another promise....

By propping up a widely hated, wildly corrupt, and laughably incompetent leader, the U.S. government prolonged human

suffering in Liberia, postponed economic development, and put off the inevitable collapse of the Doe regime.¹⁰³

This close association with the Doe regime should have dictated a close involvement with post-Doe Liberia. Instead, the United States has done a complete about-face, and Liberia is now considered virtually irrelevant to the U.S. This shift, and the accompanying silence about ongoing human rights abuses, is bewildering to many Liberians.

An editorial in *The Washington Post* pointed out this shift in U.S. policy:

The contrast between the direct and high-profile U.S. role in Ethiopia and southern Africa and the low-keyed, backseat position assumed by the State Department during Liberia's crisis couldn't be sharper. The geopolitical connotations of the first two situations account for one part of the difference. U.S. wariness—and weariness—toward Liberia may account for the second part....A great deal of American credibility as well as money was lost by backing a corrupt regime."¹⁰⁴

To its credit, the U.S. has been the largest donor to the Liberian relief effort, providing more than 60 percent of the international contribution. According to a State Department document published in July, U.S. assistance has totaled \$131.8 million, including: \$112.1 million in food for peace; \$12 million for refugee programs in the neighboring countries; \$4.8 million in A.I.D. grants to international organizations and private relief groups; and \$2.8 million in Economic Support Funds to assist ECOMOC's humanitarian assistance activities.¹⁰⁵

The U.S. has a special responsibility toward Liberia, given both the long-standing historical ties and the role played by the U.S. in setting the stage for the current crisis. Part of this responsibility involves increasing international attention to the human rights situation: European governments and international agencies have long regarded Liberia as a "U.S. problem," and look to the U.S. to take the lead in focusing world attention to Liberia's plight. Referring to U.S. policy on Liberia, President Amos Sawyer expressed the hope of many of his countrymen when he stated: "It's not often that one gets a second chance."¹⁰⁶

RECO ATIONS

Many Liberians are pinning their hopes on elections—under international supervision—as the only possible solution to the current political and military stalemate. However, meaningful elections cannot take place until citizens are free from fear of summary execution, arbitrary arrest, physical abuse and general harassment. A key step in this process is disarming and "encamping" the various armed forces. But none of the parties to the conflict will disarm while

they feel vulnerable. A process must be devised to ensure the security of the combatant forces, while guaranteeing the safety of the civilian population. The international community has a clear role to play in breaking this stalemate and paving the way for free and fair elections.

In addition, Africa Watch believes that accountability for past abuses of human rights should be a goal of the new government of Liberia if it seeks to promote respect for human rights. This should be pursued regardless of whether the perpetrators of such abuses are members of the current government, the armed forces, the Doe government or the insurgent factions.

Africa Watch calls on all combatant forces, particularly the NPFL and the INPFL, to:

- Put an immediate end to extrajudicial executions, torture and ill-treatment of detainees;
- Stop arbitrary arrest and detention of civilians, and release all those held who have not been formally charged;
- Investigate all cases of killing or severe mistreatment of civilians, and prosecute those believed to be responsible;
- Guarantee freedom of movement within the country by abolishing the requirement for passes, removing the checkpoints and opening the roads;
- Take immediate steps to disarm and "encamp" all combatants;
- Permit freedom of expression throughout the country, including distribution of independent newspapers.

In addition, Africa Watch calls on the international community, notably the United States, to:

- Publicly condemn serious human rights abuses by all sides to the conflict, regardless of perceptions that such condemnations could be an obstacle to the peace process;
- Urge the combatant forces to disarm all their troops and confine them to barracks;
- Assist in the international supervision of the forthcoming elections to ensure that they are conducted in accordance with international standards of free and fair elections;
- Ensure that the repatriation of refugees is pursued while providing for the physical security of the refugees;

- Engage in constructive intervention to promote human rights, including joining with African efforts currently underway and banning arms sales to abusive forces.

**Africa Watch is a nongovernmental organization created in May 1988 to monitor human rights practices in Africa and to promote respect for internationally recognized standards. Its Chair is William Carmichael; its Vice Chair is Alice Brown; its Executive Director is Rakiya Omaar; its Associate Director is Alex de Waal; its Research Associates are Janet Fleischman and Karen Sorensen; its Associates are Ben Penglase and Urmi Shah.*

Africa Watch is part of Human Rights Watch, an organization that comprises Americas Watch, Asia Watch, Helsinki Watch and Middle East Watch. The Chair of Human Rights Watch is Robert L. Bernstein and the Vice Chair is Adrian DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director of Human Rights Watch; Ken Roth is Deputy Director; Holly Burkhalter is Washington Director; Susan Osnos is Press Director.

Endnotes

¹The ceasefire was broken within days of the agreement, when Prince Johnson attacked the AFL. Nevertheless, the cease-fire largely held in Monrovia and most of the interior during 1991, except for NPFL military actions in Grand Gedeh and along the Sierra Leone border.

²See also: Africa Watch, *Liberia: Flight From Terror, Testimony of Abuses in Nimba County*, May 1990; and "Liberia: A Human Rights Disaster: Violations of the Laws of War by All Parties to the Conflict," October 26, 1990.

³The mission was conducted in August 1991 by Janet Fleischman, research associate of Africa Watch. She traveled to Liberia, visiting both Monrovia and NPFL-controlled territory, and to refugee areas in the Ivory Coast.

⁴ECOMOG, or the Economic Community Monitoring group, comprises five countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. They entered Liberia as a peacekeeping force on August 24, 1990, but soon took on an offensive role against Charles Taylor's NPFL. The purpose of ECOMOG was to neutralize Taylor's troops, install the interim government and organize free elections.

⁵Even the ECOMOG peacekeeping force was accused of abuses during the war. Concerns about ECOMOG centered on its bombing of heavily populated civilian areas and abuses by its soldiers, including looting and harassment of civilians.

⁶Young fighters are quite common in NPFL territory. Africa Watch saw armed fighters at checkpoints who were no more than 10-12 years old; relief workers who travel around the interior have reported seeing fighters as young as 6.

⁷President Doe, an ethnic Krahn, had surrounded himself with members of his own ethnic group, providing economic and educational opportunities for them at the expense of the rest of the population, and permitting Krahn military and police to commit egregious abuses against civilians. Doe's government was particularly hostile toward the Mano and Gio ethnic groups, because of an abortive coup attempt in 1985, led by Thomas Qwiwonkpa, a former general from Nimba county who was a Gio. In the aftermath of the coup attempt, Doe's soldiers engaged in bloody reprisals against real and suspected opponents, targeting mostly Gios and Manos. These events helped set the stage for Taylor's December 1989 attack in Nimba County, and the subsequent brutality of the Liberian army's counterinsurgency campaign, which targeted Gios and Manos.

⁸Amos Sawyer was also in Bamako, but the interim government was not a party to the agreement.

⁹In early August, a meeting was held in Banjul at which the peace plan was elaborated. A Standing Mediation committee had been formed earlier in 1991, composed of the heads of state of the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Togo and Mali.

¹⁰Taylor's security concerns were not wholly unjustified. In September 1990 when former President Doe left his heavily guarded mansion, he was captured and tortured to death by Prince Johnson. Representatives of both the Nigerian and Togolese governments made special trips to Taylor's headquarters in Gbarnga to assure him that they would guarantee his security in Monrovia, but to no avail.

¹¹Sawyer had been chosen to head the first interim government in late August 1990 at a meeting of Liberian groups in Banjul; Taylor did not participate in that meeting for reasons that remain unclear. The interim government was installed in Monrovia in mid-November, just before the Bamako summit.

¹²Press reports indicate that Prince Johnson has refused to disarm his fighters as long as he is excluded from the peace process.

¹³The Bush administration deserves credit for encouraging Senegal to join ECOMOG. President Bush met with Senegalese President Abdou Diouf in Washington in September and committed the United States to support the Senegalese troops.

¹⁴According to a census carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 10,077 new refugees arrived in Tai between July 15 and early August.

¹⁵Figure from Africa Watch interview with Fofana Braihima, Sous Préfet of Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

¹⁶Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

¹⁷Africa Watch interview in Daobly, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

¹⁸Africa Watch interview in Daobly, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

¹⁹Africa Watch interview in Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²⁰"Witness Views Taylor-Led Attacks, Libyan Role," BBC World Service, Focus on Africa Program, June 6, 1991. Reprinted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, June 11, 1991.

²¹Africa Watch interview in Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²²Africa Watch interview in Daobly, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²³Africa Watch interview in Ponan, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²⁴Africa Watch interview in Ponan, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²⁵Africa Watch interview in Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²⁶Africa Watch interview in Tai, Ivory Coast, August 15, 1991.

²⁷"Witness Views Taylor-Led Attacks, Libyan Role," BBC World Service, Focus on Africa Program, June 6, 1991. Reprinted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, June 11, 1991.

²⁸Mark Hubbard, "Bloodshed goes on for Liberians," *The Guardian*, June 6, 1991.

²⁹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, August 19, 1991.

³⁰It is fairly common for NPFL fighters to charge civilians with "reconnaissance," a blanket charge that means they are suspected of spying on the NPFL, usually in the service of ECOMOG.

³¹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 23, 1991.

³²Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 23, 1991.

³³Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

³⁴"Tabey" is a form of torture frequently used by the NPFL. It involves tying the hands and elbows of the victim behind his back in such a way as to force the

chest to protrude. It causes considerable pain and can result in nerve damage and paralysis of the hands.

³⁵Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 23, 1991.

³⁶Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

³⁷Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

³⁸Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

³⁹Africa Watch interview with James Holder, Minister of Commerce in the Interim Government, August 18, 1991; and interview with two Fanti fisherman involved in the rescue, Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

⁴⁰Africa Watch interview with Archbishop Michael Francis, Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

⁴¹Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

⁴²Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

⁴³Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

⁴⁴Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

⁴⁵Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

⁴⁶Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

⁴⁷Africa Watch interview in Kakata, Liberia, August 22, 1991.

⁴⁸T. Budu Kaisa, "Inside Taylor's Camp," *The Inquirer*, July 12, 1991.

⁴⁹Africa Watch interviews at Saa Philip Joe Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵⁰Africa Watch interview at Saa Philip Joe Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵¹Africa Watch interview at Slokum Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵²Africa Watch interview at Slokum Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵³Africa Watch interview at Slokum Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵⁴Africa Watch interview at Slokum Mission, August 22, 1991.

⁵⁵Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 21, 1991.

⁵⁶Klon Hinneh, "Taylor Says He'll Free 800 Foreign Nationals," *Associated Press*, August 29, 1991.

⁵⁷Africa Watch interview in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, August 16, 1991.

⁵⁸Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

⁵⁹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

⁶⁰Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

⁶¹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

⁶²Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 13, 1991.

⁶³Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

⁶⁴Africa Watch telephone interview with Yarsuo Weh-Dorliae, National Chairman for United Nimba Citizens in America, October 9, 1991.

⁶⁵Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

⁶⁶Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

⁶⁷Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

⁶⁸Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 17, 1991.

⁶⁹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 17, 1991.

⁷⁰Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

⁷¹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 20, 1991.

⁷²Cease-fire 'Short-Lived'; Johnson Attacks," *BBC World Service, Focus on Africa Program*, November 30, 1990, reprinted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, December 3, 1990.

⁷³Africa Watch telephone interview with Gabriel Williams, editor of *The Inquirer* newspaper in Monrovia, October 4, 1991.

⁷⁴Africa Watch telephone interview with Gabriel Williams, editor of *The Inquirer* newspaper in Monrovia, October 4, 1991.

⁷⁵Liberia: Johnson on Killings at Caldwell: Alleges 'Plot' By Minister and Others," AFP, October 8, 1991, reprinted in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, October 10, 1991.

⁷⁶Klon Hinneh, "Rebel Leader Executes Loyalists for 'Betrayal,' Robbery," *The Associated Press*, August 1, 1991.

⁷⁷"Liberia: INPFL Still in Peace Plan: Executions Confirmed," Radio ELBC, August 2, 1991, printed in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, August 5, 1991.

⁷⁸Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

⁷⁹"INPFL Executions," *West Africa*, 12-18 August, 1991, p. 1336.

⁸⁰"Interim Vice President's Resignation Accepted," Monrovia Radio ELBC, August 14, 1991. Reprinted in FBIS August 15, 1991.

⁸¹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

⁸²"Vengeance Killing," *West Africa*, 25 February-3 March, 1991, p. 275.

⁸⁵Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

⁸⁶Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 18, 1991.

⁸⁷Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 19, 1991.

⁸⁸"Liberia: paper reports cabinet minister flogged by armed men," AFP July 16, 1991. Reprinted in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 18, 1991.

⁸⁹Africa Watch interview in Monrovia, Liberia, August 23, 1991.

⁹⁰"Liberia: Army to Investigate Cases of Civilian Harassment," AFP, July 22, 1991, printed in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 24, 1991.

⁹¹"Civilian Harassment," *West Africa*, 5-11 August, 1991, p. 1295.

⁹²There are also hundreds of thousands of displaced persons within the country. Monrovia has swollen to almost double its pre-war size. Current estimates put the population of Monrovia at 800,000.

⁹³Testimony of Princeton N. Lyman, Director of the Bureau for Refugee Affairs, before the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, July 16, 1991.

⁹⁴The UNHCR estimates that an additional 100,000 refugees have entered Guinea from Sierra Leone, making the total number of refugees over 400,000.

⁹⁵In fact, the rations are being returned to their previous levels. The refugees are now entitled to 9.5 kilos of rice per person per month, up from 5 kilos. In May 1991, the rations had been decreased to 5 kilos.

⁹⁶Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 13, 1991.

⁹⁷Africa Watch interview with Dibonan Kone, secretaire general de la prefecture de Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

⁹⁸Africa Watch interviews in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 13, 1991.

⁹⁹Africa Watch interview in Gbaleu, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

¹⁰⁰Africa Watch interview in Danane, Ivory Coast, August 14, 1991.

¹⁰¹Africa Watch interview with Charles Gumey, U.S. State Department desk officer for Liberia, September 26, 1991.

¹⁰²Testimony of Herman Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, before the House Foreign Affairs

¹⁰³Blaine Harden, *Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990, pp. 238 and 247.

¹⁰⁴"Liberia: Back to Africa," *The Washington Post*, July 7, 1991.

¹⁰⁵*Liberia Refugee Crisis: Fact Sheet*, Department of State, Bureau for Refugee Affairs, July 1991.

¹⁰⁶Africa Watch interview with Amos Sawyer, President of the Interim Government of National Unity, New York, October 1, 1991.

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(The Editor)**

Human Rights Developments

The widespread killing and brutality associated with Liberia's civil war¹ have subsided since the November 1990 cease-fire. However, the human rights situation in Liberia continues to be marked by abuses ranging from extrajudicial killing and torture to restrictions on freedom of movement and intolerance of dissent. These violations are particularly evident in the ninety percent of the country controlled by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), but civilians are also victimized by Prince Johnson's Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) and by former President Samuel Doe's army, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). The country remains divided among these three armed factions and the ECOMOG peacekeeping force.² Only the interim government led by Amos Sawyer, which governs the capital of Monrovia but has no army, has not been responsible for human rights abuses.

Civilians in NPFL territory, which covers all of Liberia except the capital, no longer face the atrocities of all-out war. Nevertheless, they suffer the capricious actions associated with a military occupation—arbitrary arrest, physical abuse, confiscation and destruction of property, and restrictions of freedom of movement and expression. Underlying these problems is the perception among NPFL "fighters" that they are a law unto themselves. Many of them are young, undisciplined and unpaid. While security in a given area depends largely on the discipline exercised by the local commander, individual fighters have considerable latitude to arrest, detain, extort, threaten and sometimes injure civilians.

Incidents of arbitrary arrest and restrictions on civilians' movements are particularly evident at NPFL checkpoints when civilians attempt to travel to or from NPFL territory. To move between Monrovia and the interior of the country, a special pass must be obtained from the NPFL. Liberian civilians have a particularly difficult time obtaining these passes. Many civilians attempting to travel to Monrovia complain of beatings, detention and harassment by fighters, and some have been forced to turn back. Out of desperation, some Liberians attempt to make it to Monrovia on bush roads. Others arrange to pay fighters significant sums of money to take them on these roads. In June, for example, a twenty-year-old man paid a fighter to take him from Kakata to Monrovia. The

fighter turned him in to NPFL authorities at Mt. Barclay, in the buffer zone between NPFL territory and ECOMOG-controlled Monrovia, claiming that the man had been engaging in "reconnaissance."³ The young man was jailed for about two days before being released because another fighter happened to know him. He was detained again almost immediately by the same fighter who had arrested him, but managed to escape with the assistance of a woman fighter.

Ethnic conflict, one of the tragic legacies of the Doe regime, remains a live issue, particularly in Grand Gedeh county, which is populated largely by the Krahn ethnic group. As recently as late July, fighting continued between the NPFL and a Krahn resistance movement. Civilians were subjected to abuses by the NPFL reminiscent of the fighting in 1990, including indiscriminate killings, targeting of Krahn and Mandingo people, burning of villages and widespread looting. These violations were particularly evident in July during an NPFL offensive on Zia Town, on the eastern border of Grand Gedeh county. Although difficult to document, human rights violations have also been attributed to the Krahn resistance.⁴

Prince Johnson and the INPFL remain armed on their base at Caldwell, on the outskirts of Monrovia. They have been responsible for summary executions, arbitrary arrest and physical abuse of civilians in the Caldwell area. In late July and early October, Johnson ordered summary executions of at least six and possibly up to nine fighters and civilians. The interim government, lacking any troops, is effectively powerless to exert control over Johnson, since he does not recognize its authority. ECOMOG has avoided using force against Johnson, since it would lead to renewed fighting.

The AFL soldiers remain armed in their base at the Barclay Training Center and at Camp Schiefflin, and are themselves responsible for abuses against civilians in Monrovia, including looting, beating and harassment of civilians. Civilians are particularly fearful of these soldiers, who were closely associated with Doe's brutal reign. On June 5, for example, AFL soldiers attacked Sando Wayne, an assistant minister of the interim government—beating him, breaking his arm and knocking him unconscious—apparently because he was driving one of Doe's old cars.

Liberia's conflict has already spilled into neighboring countries in the form of some 750,000 refugees—a third of Liberia's pre-war population—who have fled to Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Ghana, among other countries. According to the U.S. State Department's Refugee Bureau,⁵ as of July 1991 there were an estimated 227,500 Liberians in the Ivory Coast, 342,000 in Guinea,⁶ 6,000 in Ghana, and smaller numbers in Nigeria, Gambia and Mali. There had been some 125,000 Liberians in Sierra Leone, but after a March incursion by the NPFL, the number of Liberian refugees there was reduced to 10,000. Liberians continue to leave their country because of ongoing insecurity, though in much smaller

numbers. There are also hundreds of thousands of displaced persons within the country. Monrovia has swollen to almost double its pre-war size, with an estimated population today of at least 800,000.

Combat has been waged recently on the Sierra Leone border between the NPFL and the Sierra Leone military, which is allied with a Krahn-based Liberian resistance group known as the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO). Until late July, there was also fighting between the NPFL and Krahn fighters in Grand Gedeh, near the Ivory Coast, whose government is fearful of armed attacks extending into its territory. In several areas, the possibility of a new round of ethnic warfare and brutality remains quite real.

Throughout the year, the Liberian factions took part in a series of meetings to discuss peace and elections. Much of the groundwork was laid in November 1990 with the cease-fire, signed in Bamako, which was based on an ECOWAS peace plan.⁷ The cease-fire was followed by a meeting of the warring factions in Banjul, Gambia, in December 1990, and then in Lomé, Togo, in February 1991. In Lomé, it was decided that the All Liberia Conference would begin in Monrovia on March 15.

Taylor did not attend the All Liberia Conference, citing fears for his security.⁸ An NPFL delegation went to conference, but walked out a week later. In April, at the conclusion of the conference, Amos Sawyer was elected president of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). The NPFL did not participate in the voting and refused to recognize the legitimacy of the IGNU.

A series of meetings have since been held in Yamoussoukro, in the Ivory Coast. The meetings have focused on the question of elections—not only logistics but also the need to disarm all warring factions and to confine them to their bases during the campaign and balloting. Four such meetings took place in 1991—in June, July, September and October. At the September 17 meeting, Taylor agreed to disarm his troops under the supervision of an expanded peacekeeping force and to confine his fighters (“encamp” them) as part of the ongoing peace process, provided that the composition of ECOMOG was changed by adding Senegalese troops and reducing the number of Nigerian troops. Until then, Nigerians had made up approximately eighty percent of the ECOMOG force, and Taylor has always considered them to be particularly hostile to the NPFL. Senegal and the other Francophone countries of West Africa have been perceived as more supportive of Taylor.

On October 30, a sixty-day timetable was agreed to for disarmament, beginning November 15, with elections to follow in six months. The agreement included a provision for opening roads, ports and airports so refugees and displaced persons will be able to register to vote. Meanwhile, a committee of West African states has been formed to help to organize elections.

A potential obstacle to peace is Prince Johnson's reported refusal to disarm his fighters so long as he is excluded from the formal peace process. Johnson has been kept out of the process since INPFL withdrew from the interim government in August after the government publicly condemned Johnson for executing at least four and possibly six fighters and civilians in Caldwell. Johnson now wants to participate in the peace talks as part of a separate entity.

The Right to Monitor

The human rights movement in Liberia is extremely weak. Two human rights groups formed in Monrovia during 1991: the Liberian Human Rights Chapter and the Association of Human Rights Promoters. Although neither group is obstructed by the authorities in Monrovia, their activities appear to be limited. In late November, the Catholic Church in Monrovia reportedly formed a Justice and Peace Commission which intends to monitor human rights. There are no known human rights groups operating in NPFL territory.

The frailty of the Liberian human rights movement is both a legacy of the severe repression of all independent activity under former President Doe and a reflection of the chaotic and devastated condition of the country today. The situation is aggravated by the tight restrictions on freedom of movement between Monrovia and the NPFL-controlled interior. It is extremely difficult for Liberians in Monrovia to obtain passes from NPFL authorities to travel to the interior to gather information, and it is equally difficult for civilians in the interior to visit Monrovia to report information.

In August, a representative of Africa Watch was able to obtain a pass from the NPFL to undertake fact-finding in the interior. However, NPFL authorities did not permit a delegation from the New York-based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights to travel to the interior in September. Accordingly, the attitude of the NPFL authorities toward international human rights monitoring remains inconsistent.

U.S. Policy

The United States does not recognize any government in Liberia—either the interim government of Amos Sawyer or the administration of Charles Taylor. The Bush Administration maintains a policy of neutrality, and endeavors to maintain ties with all factions. The justification for this position, according to the State Department, is that the United States recognizes countries, not governments, and that the U.S. ambassador will present his credentials only to a unified government that has been chosen through free and fair elections.

A troubling aspect of this policy of "neutrality" is that the Bush Administration has apparently interpreted it to justify U.S. silence in the face of continuing human rights abuses. In testimony on Liberia on July 16, before the

House Subcommittee on African Affairs, Herman Cohen, the assistant secretary of state for African affairs, barely mentioned human rights violations. His only comment touching on the subject was to say, "Most tragically, horrific human rights abuses have been perpetrated by the combatants on the civilian population of all ages and ethnic groups." He did not elaborate or attribute responsibility for particular abuses.

In September, Vice President Quayle used his visit to Nigeria and the Ivory Coast to send a strong signal of support to the ECOWAS peace process, stating "we believe that ECOMOG is the appropriate vehicle to resolve this conflict." However, none of the vice president's public statements mentioned human rights in Liberia.

By glossing over the tragic human rights situation in Liberia, the Bush Administration has squandered an opportunity to encourage improvements by specifically condemning particular abuses. For example, Charles Taylor's NPFL should have been criticized for ongoing indiscriminate killing of civilians, arbitrary arrest, and restrictions on freedom of movement and expression. The Administration should also have expressed concern over indiscriminate killings and other violent abuses during the fighting in Grand Gedeh county over the summer. Similarly, Prince Johnson and the INPFL should have been criticized for summary executions, arbitrary arrest and harassment of civilians.

U.S. Embassy representatives in Monrovia are taking a similar "hands-off" approach to human rights violations, refraining from investigating or publicly protesting abuses. Although Embassy representatives assert that their ability to monitor developments in Taylor territory is undermined because they are usually unable to obtain NPFL permission to travel in the interior, a considerable amount of information is available in Monrovia itself, and Embassy officials have on occasion been able to enter the interior. U.S. officials should use even this limited access to investigate and publicly condemn particular cases of abuse. Moreover, the very fact that U.S. officials are often prevented from traveling in the interior should be publicized, since it reflects the kind of controls that are exercised by the NPFL.

The United States has a special responsibility toward Liberia, given both the long-standing historical ties between the countries and the role played by U.S. support for the abusive Doe government in setting the stage for the current crisis. That responsibility is heightened by the tendency of European governments and international agencies to regard Liberia as a "U.S. problem" which the United States should take the lead in solving.

However, the Bush Administration has been trying to distance itself from the Liberian disaster, calling for "an African solution to an African problem." This contrasts markedly with the past close U.S. involvement in Liberia, particularly the policy of supporting the cruel and corrupt regime of President

Doe while minimizing its egregious human rights abuses. During most of the 1980s, the Reagan and Bush Administrations spent half a billion dollars in foreign aid for Liberia, making it the largest recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa. The massive infusion of money served to prop up the regime, despite overwhelming evidence that Doe was vicious, unreliable and had no intention of keeping his promises about instituting democracy.

To its credit, the United States has taken steps to help rebuild the nation that its abusive client destroyed by becoming the largest donor to the Liberian relief effort; the United States currently provides more than sixty percent of the international contribution. According to a State Department document published in July, U.S. assistance since the Liberian conflict erupted has totaled \$131.8 million, including \$112.1 million in food for peace, \$12 million for refugee programs in neighboring countries, \$4.8 million in Agency for International Development grants to international organizations and private relief groups, and \$2.8 million in Economic Support Funds to assist ECOMOG's humanitarian assistance activities.⁹

In a statement on September 25, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher expressed support for "regional efforts to bring about disarmament and free and fair elections in Liberia." Toward this end, he announced that the United States would immediately grant \$3.75 million in military aid for fiscal year 1991 to support the ECOMOG participants in the peace process who were "in the most dire financial circumstances,"¹⁰ as well as \$500,000 in peacekeeping funds to ECOWAS. On October 3, State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler reported that the United States was providing an additional grant of \$3.3 million to ECOWAS "to help defray expenses of the ECOMOG peacekeeping force in Liberia, in connection with Senegal's recent decision to contribute troops." The United States encouraged Senegal to join ECOMOG when President Bush met with Senegalese President Abdou Diouf in Washington in September and committed the United States to provide financial support to Senegalese troops.

We welcome the recent U.S. efforts to give momentum to the peace process as the mechanism most likely to curtail human rights abuses in Liberia. However, U.S. silence about ongoing human rights abuses suggests a danger that hopes for peace will be allowed to overshadow public concern about respect for human rights. To avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, human rights issues must figure prominently in U.S. policy toward Liberia, and compliance with internationally recognized human rights standards must be an integral part of any eventual peace agreement.

Endnotes

¹The war in Liberia began in late December 1989 and gathered momentum throughout most of 1990. The conflict began in Nimba County, in the northeast, where Charles Taylor's forces attacked. The Liberian army responded with a brutal counterinsurgency campaign, killing civilians indiscriminately, burning villages, looting and raping. The victims were primarily members of the Mano and Gio ethnic groups. Doe's government was particularly hostile toward these groups because Thomas Qwiwonkpa, a former general from Nimba country who led an abortive coup in 1985, was a Gio. In the aftermath of the coup attempt, Doe's soldiers engaged in bloody reprisals against real and suspected opponents, targeting mostly Gios and Manos, an ethnic group closely related to the Gios. As war resumed in 1989 and 1990, all sides to the conflict committed egregious human rights abuses.

²ECOMOG, or the Economic Community Monitoring Group, includes forces from five countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. ECOMOG entered Liberia as a peace-keeping force on August 24, 1990, but soon took on an offensive role against Taylor's NPFL. ECOMOG sought to neutralize Taylor's troops, install an interim government and organize free elections.

³It is fairly common for NPFL fighters to charge civilians with "reconnaissance," a blanket charge which means that they are suspected of spying on the NPFL, usually in the service of ECOMOG.

⁴The composition of these forces is not definitively known. Many are former soldiers of the AFL, but others appear to be recent recruits from the civilian population.

⁵Testimony of Princeton N. Lyman, director of the Bureau for Refugee Affairs, before the House Subcommittee on African Affairs, July 16, 1991.

⁶The UNHCR estimates that since July an additional 100,000 refugees have entered Guinea from Sierra Leone, making the total number of refugees in Guinea over 400,000.

⁷The plan called for organizing a meeting of political parties, interest groups and the warring factions to negotiate a cease-fire and to establish a broad-based interim government. The leaders of the warring factions were to be excluded from heading the interim government, and the interim president would be ineligible to run for president in the ensuing general elections.

⁸Taylor's security concerns were not wholly unjustified. In September 1990, when former President Doe left his heavily guarded mansion, he was captured and tortured to death by Prince Johnson. Representatives of both the Nigerian and Togolese governments made special trips to Taylor's headquarters in

Gbarnga to assure him that they would guarantee his security in Monrovia, but to no avail.

⁹ *Liberia Refugee Crisis: Fact Sheet*, Department of State, Bureau for Refugee Affairs, July 1991.

¹⁰ According to the announcement, the United States would provide \$1 million to Senegal, \$1 million to the Ivory Coast, \$500,00 to Ghana, \$500,00 to Guinea, \$500,000 to Sierra Leone and \$250,000 to Gambia.

DOCUMENT

Economic Community of West African States Informal Consultative Group Meeting of the ECOWAS Committee of Five on Liberia Geneva, 6-7, April 1992

Final Communiqué

An informal Consultative Group meeting of the ECOWAS Committee of Five on Liberia took place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 6 to 7 April 1992 at the invitation and under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Felix Houphouët-Boigny, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. Present at the meeting were the following Heads of State and Government or their duly accredited representatives:

- His Excellency Blaise Compaore, President of Faso, Head of Government, Burkina Faso
 - His Excellency Felix Houphouët-Boigny, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
 - His Excellency Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal
 - Honourable Admiral Augustus Aikhomn, Vice-President, representing the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
2. Also present at the consultations were:
- His Excellency Dr. Amos C. Sawyer, President of the Interim Government of Liberia
 - Mr. Charles Taylor, Head of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)

Outcome of Deliberations

Developments since the Last Meeting of the Committee of Five

3. The Consultative Group reviewed developments relating to the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Accord signed on 30 October 1991. The Group noted such positive developments as the appointment of the members of the Interim Elections Commission and the ad hoc Supreme Court, the completion of reconnaissance visits by ECOMOG to the areas held by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), and the opening of some of the trunk roads in Liberia. However, many other important aspects of the Yamoussoukro Accord had

remained unimplemented, particularly those relating to the establishment of a buffer zone along the Sierra Leone Liberia border, and the encampment and disarmament of all combatants.

Reaffirmation of the Yamoussoukro Accord

4. The Group's discussion was characterized by a new spirit of constructive dialogue. The Group reaffirmed the validity of the Yamoussoukro Accord of 30 October 1991, as offering the best possible framework for a peaceful resolution of the Liberian conflict, for creating the necessary conditions of peace and security and the proper atmosphere that would conduce free, fair and democratic elections in Liberia. It therefore called on all the parties concerned, in particular the NPFL, to repose trust and confidence in ECOMOG and to co-operate fully with ECOMOG to ensure, without any further delay, the speedy, uninterrupted and effective implementation of the Accord.

5. The Group requested the parties to refrain from any act of omission that might be prejudicial to the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Accord. In this connection, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Accord, the meeting agreed to make the following clarifications:

- (a) That the buffer zone on the Liberia-Sierra Leone border envisioned by the Accord should be established without further delay. ECOMOG alone shall secure the zone. NPFL may send unarmed observers to the zone.
- (b) That all entry and exit points into and out of Liberia, in particular the seaports and airports, shall be secured by ECOMOG. NPFL may maintain an unarmed administrative presence at these points through police, customs and immigration in the areas under its control.
- (c) That the encampment and disarmament of all combatants shall be carried out by ECOMOG as envisioned in the Yamoussoukro Accord.
- (d) That Mr. Charles Taylor may maintain a personal security of company strength equipped only with small arms but without RPGs.

6. In the light of the foregoing clarifications, the meeting directed the Field Commander of ECOMOG to implement the Yamoussoukro Accord without any further delay.

Vote of Thanks

7. The meeting expressed its appreciation to His Excellency Felix Houphouët-Boigny, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, for the reception and hospitality accorded to all delegations and for the facilities made available for the meeting.

Done at Geneva this seventh day of April 1992.

signed
His Excellency
Blaise Compaore
President of Faso
Head of Government
Burkina Faso

signed
His Excellency
Felix Houphouët-Boigny
President of the Republic
of Côte d'Ivoire

signed
His Excellency
Abdou Diouf
President of the Republic
of Senegal

signed
Honourable Admiral Augustus Aikhomu
Vice-President
Representing the President of
the Federal Republic of Nigeria

signed
His Excellency
Dr. Amos C. Sawyer
President of the Interim
Government of Liberia

signed
Mr. Charles Taylor
Head of the National Patriotic
Front of Liberia (NPFL)

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