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LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

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Some Problems of Writing in Liberia and Prospects for Liberian Writers

Robert H. Brown

Introduction

Literature is a body of writings in prose or poetry. In essence, it is an imaginative or creative writing, especially of recognized artistic merit or value. Just as history reveals a nation in action, so too, literature shows a nation feeling or undergoing an emotional experience. The paucity of creative fiction¹ in Liberia seems to indicate that Liberians as a people lack emotional experience of any kind.

However, a careful scrutiny of the Liberian *Weltanschauung* or comprehensive worldview discloses that Liberians do, in fact, **feel** intensely and, consequently, respond to challenges that confront them in their struggle to improve their existence in an otherwise "restless universe." In other words, every Liberian—either consciously or unconsciously—is concerned with the three fundamental questions of man's existence: (1) Who am I? (2) Why am I here? and (3) Where am I going? Thus, the paucity of creative fiction in Liberia can be attributed to other factors. Essentially, the dilemma of a Liberian writer can be reduced to one terrifyingly clear principle: Is the principle of freedom of thought and utterance to be abolished by leaders and other government officials who claim to be offended by the words of a Liberian writer simply because he/she depicts the "Liberian experience" or authentic Liberian sensibilities, or will the intelligentsia of Liberia and other concerned Liberians institute a firm action to defend this most fundamental tenet of democracy?

The discussion that follows will examine some of the problems of writing in Liberia and Liberian government's notion of what constituted good national literature before the *coup d'état* of April 12, 1980. It will also examine some of the problems that writers—including journalists—encountered in post-coup Liberia, especially those created by the Doe débâcle. Then it will list in chronological order the works that have been published by Liberian writers as evidential proof that the restriction of freedom of thought and utterance by Liberian governments in the past accounts for the paucity of "creative fiction" in Liberia.

Some Problems of Writing in Liberia

In the past, Liberian writers began writing with the fear that if their writings were critical of the government either in tone or content, sooner or later, they would provoke the government and, consequently, go to prison. For example, during the Tubman era, the late Professor Tuan Wreh, a former dean of the *Louis Liberian Studies Journal*, XX, 1 (1995)

Arthur Grimes School of Law of the University of Liberia, was imprisoned for an article he published in the *Liberian Age*, the precursor of *The New Liberian*. His book, *The Love of Liberty . . . The Rule of President William V. S. Tubman of Liberia 1944-1971* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1976) gives a potent and unforgettable expression of his imprisonment and the indignities he suffered languishing in prison. This is just one example of numerous cases in which journalists, writers, and opposition politicians dared to speak out in their writings whenever there was a case in which Liberians' human rights were abused and their civil liberties were violated.

Although there was clearly a greater freedom of expression and of the press in the initial stages of the Tolbert era than in the Tubman government, however, in the latter stages of the Tolbert regime, he too, began restricting freedom of thought and expression. An example of the restriction of freedom of expression and of the press was exemplified in the Porte-Tolbert case of 1974. The late Albert Porte was sued for libel by the late Stephen Tolbert for Porte's pamphlet entitled *Liberianization and Gobbling Business* (Monrovia, 1974), a candid exposé of the current dealings that brought into being the Mesurado Groups of Companies. The pamphlet remains today as the major documentation in literature of Liberian business culture in general. The American linguist and scholar, Dr. John Victor Singler, has noted that:

. . . the late pamphleteer, Albert Porte's attack in 1974 on the minister of finance (the brother of the president) resulted in a \$250,000 libel suit against Porte. Four student journalists whose newspaper, *Revelation*, did the Porte-Tolbert case while it was *sub judice* were fined \$17,000 for contempt of court and spent time in jail.²

Thus, to avoid going to prison, Liberian writers had to accede to the demands of the government with regard to the proper character of Liberian literature, or what was publishable and, therefore, fell within the province of what constituted freedom of expression and the press.

In view of the paucity of creative fiction in the country, a primary criticism which is often levelled against Liberia in literary and scholarly circles is that, as the oldest black African Republic South of the Sahara, it has produced virtually no body of literature of note. Although critics may be justified on the one hand in asserting that there exists a paucity of creative fiction in Liberia, on the other, they should remember that Liberia was not colonized in the orthodox sense of the word.

One might ask: "What has colonialism got to do with the development and production of literature?" Although colonialism with its attendant evils did much in emasculating the African intelligentsia and eroding their self-confidence, ironically enough, it produced many positive material benefits in erst-

while colonial countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, and other countries which did attain autonomy. These positive material benefits are exemplified, among others, in colonial legacies such as the introduction of a Western-style education, the adoption of European languages as *lingua francas*, and the provision of avenues for publication of the works of writers of those countries which those European countries colonized. In other words, the "Colonial Master" contributed much to the advancement of scholarship and literature by providing an incentive for the newly-emerged African intelligentsia. English and French, for example, did open the floodgates, as it were, to a deluge of artistic and utilitarian prose, thus enabling African writers to be heard worldwide through the written word. The South African critic and writer, Lewis Nkosi, in his book, *Home and Exile* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1965), pointed out that:

... it seemed to me ultimately, what linked various African peoples was the nature of the colonial experience. Colonialism had not only delivered them unto themselves, but had delivered them unto each other, had provided them, so to speak, with a common language and an African consciousness; for out of rejection had come affirmation.³

Although in Liberia, the English language was arguably imposed on the majority of the population by the minority ruling settler-group, Liberia's historical, political, socio-economic and educational circumstances were so different that they did not provide the incentives which the import and implantation of European languages and cultures had provided in other Anglophone and Francophone African countries. In other words, the energies of Liberians were channelled initially in other directions rather than in the development and production of literature. As Professor John Victor Singler once put it, "... most of the settlers' energy was consumed in the struggle for their own and their nations' survival."⁴ In spite of this, some creative fiction was produced during the difficult period of Liberia's inception in the nineteenth century. Singler concedes this in: "Thus, that any nineteenth century Liberian literature exists at all is noteworthy."⁵

Discussing the importance of a body of national literature, the late Dr. Doris Banks-Henries stated that:

Both the individual and society are enriched by good literature. Individuals read to gain additional knowledge, emotional enjoyment and inspiration. Society is benefitted by having the cultural and national heritage preserved and improved by laying and strengthening the basis for loyalty and patriotism, by perpetuation of the ideals and aspirations of the people, by making available facts for the spiritual, social, economic, scientific and technological progress.⁶

What Dr. Doris Banks-Henries is essentially saying is that Liberians should give moral support to Liberian writers who have come to realize the relevance of their craft as most importantly defined by its ability to contribute to an understanding of Liberian society.

Singler notes that:

The "laying and strengthening" of the "the basis for loyalty and patriotism" was assumed to preclude writing that was anti-government. . . . Also unacceptable during the Tubman and Tolbert eras would be literature at variance with the government's Unification and Integration Policy.⁷

What this essentially means is that:

Literature that perpetuated the division between settlers and indigenous ethnic groups was seen as violating the spirit of the Unification and Integration Policy. The practical thrust of the Unification and Integration Policy with regard to the production of literature was that writers should not criticize the settlers. Literature that dwelt upon past abuses of privileges by the settlers and their government in their treatment of indigenous people was not welcome.⁸

In discussing the role of the state in the development and production of literature, Singler asserts:

Certainly in the nineteenth century, particularly during the prime of Edward Wilmot Blyden, Liberians did enjoy some prominence within African society with regard to literature. To the consternation of modern Westernized Liberians, however, the prominence the country achieved in the nineteenth century has not endured. No Liberian author since Blyden has received either critical acclaim or an extensive audience outside Liberia.⁹

The foregoing assertion is encouraging as well as disquieting: encouraging in the sense that Liberia did enjoy some literary pre-eminence; disquieting because the intelligentsia of Liberia seemed to have relinquished their hold on the literary pre-eminence which was once theirs in Africa. Singler attributes Liberia's "reduced stature in the world of African literature"¹⁰ to the didacticism and propaganda manifested in the creative fiction of the country. As he puts it, "Liberian authors remain unacknowledged outside Liberia. One part of the explanation is surely the overt and often heavy-handed didacticism that pervades Liberian fiction."¹¹ Although Dr. Singler is entitled to a well-considered, critical opinion with regard to the problems of writing in Liberia, his assertion that Liberian writers have not achieved universal "critical acclaim" because Liberian literature is didactic and propagandistic doesn't seem to be

valid. In that same article, Dr. Singler concedes that nineteenth-century American and European literature, too, was of a didactic nature.¹²

To take this argument a step further, one can cite long lists of European literature which merit the rubric of didacticism and propaganda. For instance, eminent works of fiction such as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, among others, are intended as highly edifying works of literature. Even Dante's *Divine Comedy* is, to some extent, propaganda for Catholicism. Nevertheless, these literary works have been widely acclaimed as works of art. In any historical discussion of European literature, these works cannot be given a cavalier dismissal.

Moreover, even in European literature, the "tale" is much older than the "short story" or the "novel." And the primary aim of the tale is to provide some moral lesson for the reader. Thus, the reason for the prevalence of didactic themes in Liberian creative fiction lies elsewhere: in the very history of the African continent. Africa has had her own fictive tradition exemplified in the folktale. It is through this medium that Africa has had her own fictive tradition exemplified in the folktale. It is through this medium that Africa has taught her sons and daughters her *Weltanschauung*, her comprehensive worldview throughout the centuries.

Indeed, many Liberian writers believed that their standing in Liberian society would improve when the settler oligarchy was toppled and indigenous leaders were installed. Thus, when seventeen enlisted men of the Armed Forces of Liberia seized power on April 12, 1980, tens of thousands of Liberians were jubilant in Monrovia. However, no sooner had Master Sergeant Samuel Doe been installed as Chairman of the People's Redemption Council than he began restricting freedom of expression and the press. His military regime and eventual civilian presidency in the Second Republic was characterized by rampant corruption, unprecedented violation of human rights and the civil liberties of Liberians, closure of newspapers and radio stations, harassment of journalists, writers, opposition politicians, and attacks on students. The dreaded Decree 88A exemplified the blatant lack of freedom of expression and the press during the regime of Samuel Doe. The Liberian writer, Similih M. Cordon (formerly S. Henry Cordon), is a case in point. Cordon was a lecturer at the University of Liberia when the army seized power on April 12, 1980. When the military government began abusing human rights and violating the civil liberties of Liberians, Cordon spoke out against this in his writing. He was, therefore, arrested and his manuscripts were seized. He was subsequently released upon the intervention of Dr. Mary Antoinette Brown Sherman, former President of the University of Liberia.

Professor Singler's observations regarding Doe's restriction of freedom of expression and the press is worth quoting *in extenso*:

... The government of Samuel Doe was initially ambivalent in its relations with the press; then the initial commitment to freedom of the press gave way to tighter and tighter restriction. Confrontations between the press and the government occurred in August, 1980, and then on several occasions in 1981. In the first case, the paper involved was one published by students of the University of Liberia. Other clashes involved the government's own newspaper, *The New Liberian* (under the short-lived editorship of Tom Kamara), and—more frequently—a privately owned newspaper, the *Daily Observer*. At one point, seven employees of the *Daily Observer* were imprisoned. At another, the government suspended publication of the paper. ... The freedom of public speakers was severely curtailed. In late 1982, for example, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. H. Boima Fahnbulleh, was publicly reprimanded and Assistant Minister of Information for Public Affairs, J. N. Warner, was dismissed from office for remarks he had made during high school commencement addresses. An environment where other aspects of freedom of expression have been abrogated must surely constrain the production of literature.¹³

Professor Singler goes on to say that "... what befalls writers of non-fiction surely influences writers of fiction."¹⁴

In essence, the problems of writing in Liberia enunciated in the foregoing pages can be s as follows:

- (1) The first problem of writing in Liberia is that for most Liberian writers, including those who have acquired the so-called "native illusion", English is a second or foreign language. Standard, educated usage poses no major problem for native speakers of English. There is always that "native intuition" to guide them. But for those Liberian writers who have learned English as a second or foreign language, it raises many problems and controversies. For instance, grappling with the nuances of the English language such as sounds, spellings, lexical usage, idioms, and idiomatic expressions is a painstaking task.
- (2) Second, indirect censorship of the past together with self-censorship did contribute much to the problems that writers encountered in Liberia. As Professor Singler puts it, "Writers' fear of the government control of livelihood has the power to induce self-censorship."¹⁵
- (3) The third problem is societal ignorance exemplified in the hypersensitivity of the Liberian reading public. This has done much to stifle Liberian writers from attempting to receive their fair share of rejec-

tion slips. In other words, Liberians spend too much of time reading between the lines or over-reading than they do in enjoying a work of creative fiction *per se*. The reading public is often offended when a work of creative fiction portrays and depicts the "Liberian experience" or sensibilities. Consequently, Liberian writers are afraid to publish their works for fear of offending the Liberian reading public.

- (4) The fourth problem that Liberian writers encounter lies in their slavish imitation of external models. Of course, they are not to blame entirely for such a creative tendency. Many a Western critic believes that African writers writing in European languages are not *sui generis*. In other words, they are writing essentially within "a generic linguistic tradition which the reading public is conscious of,"¹⁶ as T. O. McLoughlin, writing in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1973, once declared. Although Liberian writers neither dispute the unassailable position of European languages in Liberia nor advocate critical separatism, they should not, *ipso facto* they are Liberians, slavishly imitate European and American models to gain international critical acclaim. Rather, they should strive to unearth a peculiar non-ambiguous idiom which will convey their *Weltanschauung*. It is through a creative self-affirmation of this sort that Liberian literature will be manifestly unique and, ironically enough, universally appreciated.
- (5) The fifth and final problem that has contributed to the paucity of creative fiction in Liberia is the lack of publishing facilities in the country and the Oriental indifference of European and American publishers towards Liberian creative fiction and writers. The odd logic of such publishers is that Liberia is not known in international literary circles and, therefore, it is a financial risk to consider for publication any work by a Liberian writer. But one is led to ask: "How can the dissemination of Liberian literature be enhanced beyond the limits of Liberia and Africa when such publishers refuse to read any manuscript by a Liberian writer?"

The problem listed in item five has serious consequences with regard to the paucity of creative fiction in Liberia. The refusal of European and American publishers to publish works by Liberian writers is a persistent problem. The following works of creative fiction are eloquent testimony to the fact that there is a paucity of creative fiction in the country. The chronological listing excludes the corpus of works which, for fear of imprisonment or rejection by publishers, their authors have not been able to publish.

Novels and Novellas

1891—the year marked the publication of Joseph Walter's novel, *Guanya Pau: A Story of an African Princess*, Liberia's first novel, by Lauer Matill in Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Singler notes that "Walters's novel must be considered the first novel written in English by an African."¹⁷

1932—in 1932, Varfelli Karlee's (*nom de plume* of Charles Cooper) *Love in Ebony*, Liberia's second full-length novel, was published in London by John Murray.

1953—Roland Tombekai Dempster's novella, *The Mystic Reformation of Gondolia*, was published in London by Dragon Press.

1967—Bai T. Moore's novella, *Murder in the Cassava Patch*, was published by Ducor Publishing House in Monrovia.

1976—Bai T. Moore's second novella, *The Money Doubler*, was published in Nigeria by Vantage Press, Inc.

1977—E. Toimu Reeves's novella, *Monkey Storm*, was published in New York by Vantage Press, Inc.

1979—Wilton Sankawulo's novel, *The Rain and the Night*, Liberia's third full-length novel, was published by Macmillan of London.

1983—C. William Allen's short novel, *An Obituary for Hawa Barchue*, was published in Monrovia, Liberia.

1992—C. William Allen's *The African Interior Mission High School*, Liberia's fourth full-length novel, was published by SCP, Third World Literature Publishing House, in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

Short Stories

1977—Similih M. Cordon's (formerly S. Henry Cordon) *So Say One, So Say All* was published by the Liberian Literary and Educational Publications in Monrovia, Liberia. In the same year, Cordon edited an anthology of Liberian short stories entitled *Modern West African Stories from Liberia*. Cordon's short stories have also appeared in *Short Story International*, *Classic*, *Confrontation*, and several anthologies in the United States and Europe. In the same year, Cordon's *Africa, From People to People*, was published in Washington, D.C. by International Africana Press.

1979—Robert H. Brown's book, *After Long Silence and Other Liberian Stories*, was published in New York by Vantage Press, Inc. Brown's stories have also appeared in *African Arts* (published by the African Studies Center of the University of California, Los Angeles), an anthology in the United States, and

several volumes of *Short Story International* in the United States. The BBC World Service has also broadcast his work.

Regrettably, this list seems to exhaust the corpus of creative fiction published so far by Liberian writers. Scan the list of over 200 titles in the African Writers Series and you will discover that Liberia, Africa's oldest Republic South of the Sahara, is conspicuous by its absence. This bit of chronology is important because it will make all concerned up-and-coming Liberian writers aware of the paucity of creative fiction in the country. Of course, one must admit that quantity isn't nearly as dreadfully important as quality of creative output. But for a country that claims to be in the vanguard of African independence, the list is indeed disgracefully shameful.

Prospects for Liberian Writers

In view of the paucity of creative fiction in Liberia and the problems of writing articulated in the foregoing pages, it would seem that the prospects for Liberian writers are not so bright after all. But it is not a forlorn hope that Liberia will eventually be on the literary map of Africa in that behind this paucity of creative fiction lies a sober intent on the part of up-and-coming Liberian writers to work towards the development and production of a national literature. It is only a matter of time. The prospects for Liberian writers are, therefore, relatively good in that the founding of the Liberian Association of Writers (LAW) in 1982 is a good sign. The Association held its first public readings of works by Liberian writers in July, 1986. The aims and objectives of the Liberian Association of Writers remain essentially the same as those of the Society of Liberian Authors, the precursor, on which it is modelled.

Like its precursor, the aims and objectives of the Liberian Association of Writers are as follows:

- 1) To stimulate general interest in writing by:
 - a. Seeking support for Liberian writers to have their works published
 - b. Holding annual literary contests in prose and poetry and offering prizes and awards to winners
- 2) To help the schools of Liberia in the development of writing techniques—prose and poetry, e.g. drama, novel, short stories, history, essays. . . .
- 3) To help in every way possible to present Liberia to the world in general through writing.¹⁸

In the first issue of *Kaafa* (the Society of Liberian Authors' bulletin) published in 1971, an editorial stated the Society's reason for coming into being in the following extract:

The aim of the Society of Liberian Authors is to create for Liberia a body of national literature and textbooks for our schools, a striking need in our country at the present. The urgency of this problem is rather alarming. Many other African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana have developed, over a short period of time, legitimate scholars and writers whose works are widely circulated, read, and respected not only in their own countries, but also all over the world. In Liberia . . . there is a dearth of . . . general literature such as the novel, the short story, and traditional literature.¹⁹

After several years of being in existence, the Society of Liberian Authors achieved a certain degree of satisfaction in the following objectives:

1. Holding annual writing contests, awarding prizes and publishing submissions
2. Observing annually National Book Week
3. Participating in literary programmes on radio and TV
4. Having literary programmes for public benefit
5. Publishing the literary journal *Kaafa*, twice yearly
6. Developing a headquarters
7. Organizing writers in all the counties
8. Having writers clubs organized in high schools
9. Holding seminars and writers workshops
10. Establishing contacts with writers in other countries.²⁰

Furthermore, the literary and cultural renaissance exemplified in the recent upsurge of interest in portraying the comprehensive worldview of Liberians has given birth to a new breed of writers whose creative works to date include a large corpus of unpublished short stories, novels, novellas, drama, and poetry. It seems that Liberia is witnessing the birth of a new literary order. Today's Liberia provides a rich minefield of ideas and material for Liberian writers.

However, Liberian writers themselves should take the initiative in publishing and marketing their own works. If need be, they should create a "Liberian Onitsha market." They must also confront the realities of the times. They must be willing to work diligently at their craft and art. They must continue to explore and seek answers to the three fundamental questions of man's existence. They must look in their society and write despite the risk of political reprisals. In other

words, they must be fearless. Writing in *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa* in 1986, Professor Femi Ojo-Ade, a Nigerian writer of some note, had this to say:

... The paucity of Liberian writing to date can be ascribed to lack of bravery and of the spirit of sacrifice. Other reasons are: Liberians are afraid to use their society as a literary subject for fear of imprisonment; there is no incentive for intellectuals; the country is not on the literary map of Africa, with the result that publishers often reject manuscripts by Liberian authors.²¹

Although the accents and premises are slightly different, Davidson Nicol, an eminent Sierra Leonean critic, in an article in which he discussed the role of the black writer, asserted that the writer "must be brave and sacrificial."²² Thus, the key words here are "bravery" and "sacrifice." In other words, the prospects for Liberian writers will be bright if they cultivate a spirit of bravery and sacrifice. Only then will they produce a body of national literature of any significance and lasting value. Only then will the future augur well for the development and production of a body of national literature.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to delineate some of the problems of writing in Liberia. It has noted that the paucity of creative fiction in Liberia can be ascribed to the recessive nature of censorship of the past and the lack of a spirit of sacrifice and bravery on the part of Liberian writers. To do away with the paucity of creative fiction in Liberia, Liberian writers must be fearless. They must use their society as a literary subject to explore the three fundamental questions of man's existence. Only then will Liberian creative fiction be placed on the literary map of Africa. Going into self-imposed exile will continue to contribute to the paucity of creative fiction in Liberia because such a novel will alienate Liberian writers from their homeland in that they will lose touch with their society, which should serve as a literary subject for their works. Writing in *The Guardian Third World Review Column* on November 20, 1981, Andrew Graham Yooll, in an article entitled "Literary Lives That Reach a Point of No Return," pointed out in a most telling paragraph that:

Then there is the African experience. Andrew Gurr, in *Writers in Exile* (Harvester Press), describes most modern African writers as exiles in some sense, either because they have left their homeland, their native community (by way of education), or withdraw into themselves from local society.²³

Professor Femi Ojo-Ade puts it well when he asserts that "As creative artists, we have to feed the hope of a return and fill the void of absence."²⁴

Endnotes

¹ Following the example of Dr. John Victor Singler, *creative fiction* is the term employed in this article in order to exclude scholarly activities such as the recording and writing of folktales and other oral traditions from consideration. See John Victor Singler, "The Role of the State in the Development of Literature: The Liberian Government and Creative Fiction," *Research in African Literatures* (Winter 1980), Volume 11, Number 4, pp. 511-528.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528. "The Politics of Creative in Fiction in Liberia" is a revised and updated version of the original article. The revised and updated version of the article appears in Chapter 1 of *Perspectives on Liberian Literature*, a forthcoming book edited by Robert H. Brown. Hereafter, all quotations in this paper will be taken from the original article.

³ Lewis Nkosi, *Home and Exile* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1965), p. 117.

⁴ John Victor Singler, *op. cit.*, pp. 511-528.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528.

⁶ S. H. Cordor, *Towards the Study of Liberian Literature* (Monrovia, Liberia: The Liberian Literary and Educational Publications, 1973), p. 135.

⁷ John Victor Singler, *op. cit.*, pp. 511-528.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 511-528.

- ¹⁶ T. O. McLoughlin, *The Times Literary Supplement* (London, 1973), p. 10.
- ¹⁷ John Victor Singler, *op. cit.*, pp. 511-528.
- ¹⁸ *Brochure of the Society of Liberian Authors* (Monrovia, 1974), p. 1.
- ¹⁹ "Editorial," *Kaafa*, 1, 1 (1971), p. 1.
- ²⁰ A. Doris Banks Henries, "Introduction," *Kaafa*, 6, 2 (176), i.
- ²¹ Femi Ojo-Ade, "Creative Writing in English: Emergence and Stagnation," in Albert S. Gerard, ed., *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Volume I (Budapest: Akademiai Kaidó, 1986), p. 107.
- ²² Davidson Nicol, "The Soft Pink Palms," *Présence Africaine*, 8/10 (June-November 1956), 116.
- ²³ Andrew Graham Yooll, "Literary Lives That Reach a Point of No Return," *The Guardian: Third World Review Column* (London: November 20, 1981), p. 15.
- ²⁴ Femi Ojo-Ade, "Liberian Literature and the African Dilemma," (St. Mary's City, Maryland: St. Mary's College of Maryland, 1994), p. 50. Harassment, imprisonment, or persecution of writers is not restricted to Third World countries; this tendency is prevalent in developed countries as well. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the great Russian writer, whose book, *Gulag Archipelago*, precipitated his expulsion from his homeland, returned to Russian in May 1994 to live as a private citizen after several years of being in exile in the West. Then too, in February 1989, the late Ayotollah Khomeini of Iran, issued a *fatwa* sentencing the British writer, Salman Rushdie, to death for publishing *The Satanic Verses*, a novel which members of the Islamic religion consider blasphemous and highly offensive. Salman Rushdie, whose life continues to be in danger, is still living in Britain and writing while he is in Police protection.

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Evidence in Nimba

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Introduction¹

This article examines the rules of the law of evidence as they have been used in the rural Government and traditional courts of Nimba County. Received Common Law principles are compared to the continuing prevalence of customary norms and specific case examples are given.

I first went to Liberia because it was the one country in Africa that used American Common Law. I had lived and taught law in Kenya and had spent time in Ghana. Kenya and Ghana are countries that have “received” English Common Law. Like the United States, these countries use English Common Law cases and statutes as the basis of their national legal systems. The reception of these laws took place when they were colonies. (Allott:9-27) Liberia received “the Common Law as in force and modified in the United States, and applicable to the situation of the people” as its law. (The Constitution of 1825, Art. VI) Having seen how English Common Law and English judicial traditions were adapted to African life in Kenya and Ghana, I was interested in learning what variations might be the result of American influence in Liberia.

During my first visit to Liberia in 1978, I was intrigued to find that the country still maintained a “dual” system of courts. It was common practice during the colonial period in Anglophone Africa to have a separate system of courts, one for Africans and another for Europeans. The former applied traditional law and the latter the received Common Law and general statutes from England. (Allott:107-297) The existence of separate court systems had been a source of contention before independence in colonial English Africa. Dual court systems were usually “unified” shortly after independence and separate traditional law courts were formally abolished.

But from previous work I had done I knew that, while separate courts had been abolished in theory, they continued to exist in practice. In Ghana and Kenya—the African countries I knew best at the time—traditional dispute settlement systems continued to operate either as “arbitrations” (Ghana) or without official recognition (Kenya). (Severeid 1976) They continued because the lower level official courts had become increasingly punitive, operating primarily to enforce central government laws and regulations. Less wealthy litigants—the vast majority in Ghana and Kenya—understandably turned to the remnants of the traditional systems for dispute settlement.

Liberia in 1978 was unique because it still had one set of courts for "natives" and another for "civilized" persons (Barnard).^{*} The "natives" were the indigenous "tribal" peoples who made up 95% of the population. "Civilized" persons meant the ruling Americo-Liberians together with a handful of Lebanese traders and White missionaries.

The dual system of Government-created courts in the rural counties in 1978 was as follows: There were judicial courts ranging from the Justices of the Peace and the Magistrates, to the Circuit Courts, and finally to the Supreme Court in Monrovia. These were the courts for "civilized" persons. They administered American Common Law unless superseded by Liberian statutes or cases from the Liberian Supreme Court.

Then there were the traditional courts for the "natives" or "tribal" peoples. These too were Government-created courts and ranged from the Quarter and Town Chiefs' Courts to those of the Clan Chiefs and the Paramount Chiefs. Then either original cases or appeals from the Paramount Chiefs could go through the administrative co upper level on the traditional side of the dual Liberian court system. From the administrative courts of the County Commissioners, cases could be appealed to the County Superintendents, to the Minister in charge of local government — ultimately to the President himself. (Konvitz and Rosenzweig:122-125 & 304) William V.S. Tubman, Americo-Liberian lawyer and President from 1944 to 1971, was famous for touring upcountry to hear traditional cases.

In theory there were limitations on the subject matter jurisdiction of particular courts. (Konvitz and Rosenzweig) There were supposed to be precise distinctions between original and appellate jurisdiction. In practice, however, the courts of Nimba County openly competed with each other for cases. Rarely was a case 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.

The only form of dispute settlement in Liberia at this time that was not created by the Government and was indigenous to different ethnic groups was the house palaver. "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." (Gay:240) It is a "discussion; argument; trouble (e.g., 'money palaver,' or 'Woman palaver'). Derived from the Spanish word 'palabra.'" (d' Azevedo:43; See also Singler:144 & 143) English is the *lingua franca* of Liberia. (Though Liberian English differs from standard English, it is not so different as, for example, Creole in Louisiana is from French.) In Liberian English in northern Nimba County at this time, 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 county, 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.

Gibbs, speaking of the Kpelle, refers to "house palaver" as an "institution for the informal settlement of disputes ... the moot, the *berai mu mensi saa...*" (Gibbs:368) House palavers operated as a separate "court" or dispute settlement system in Liberian towns. They were the one forum not chartered by the Government. They were the embodiment of traditional legal proceedings that had existed prior to the pacification of the Hinterland by the Americo-Liberian Government based in Monrovia. Operated by and for members of extended families, house palavers were non-adversarial and usually ended without a clear winner or loser. They were informal in procedure and rarely required the parties to pay court costs. The outcomes of house palavers were not decided in terms of the "rights" of the parties but were primarily concerned with relationships and with the good will of members of extended families towards one another. Such outcomes were analogous to "feminine" as opposed to "masculine" responses to ethical choice. (Gilligan) House palavers were also characterized by an overall concern for community needs as opposed to individual rights. In this respect, they were "communitarian." (Sandel 1982 & 1984)

House palavers were completely outside the dual court system created by the Government. An appeal from a house palaver had to be initiated as an original action in a Government court and the case retried *de novo*. Both the house palavers and the traditional half of the Government-created dual system of courts applied "tribal law and custom":

It is the announced policy of the government to administer tribal affairs according to tribal law and custom to the extent that they do not conflict with statutes or administrative regulations (Liberian Code of Laws of 1956, tit. 1, s. 350). Accordingly, in suits to which tribal persons are parties, the native laws, some based on enactment by tribal governing bodies and some only on established custom, may be the controlling authority. [Konvitz and Rosenzweig:124]

("Tribal law and custom" is also known as "traditional," "customary" or "folk" law. (van den Bergh))

I decided to return to Liberia in 1979 to study the dual court system. The more I studied law in Liberia, the more interested I became in traditional law. I also discovered that most of the important work on traditional law, in Liberia

and elsewhere, had been done not by lawyers but by anthropologists. Oliver Wendell Holmes said: "[I]f your subject is law, the roads are plain to anthropology." It is "perfectly proper to regard and study the law simply as a great anthropological document." (873) Thus my early interest in the use of American Common Law in Liberia gradually extended to include the conflict between Common Law rules and legal procedures and the norms of traditional law.

The Setting

I lived in a Mano town in Sehysi clan to the west of Sanniquellie, the seat of Nimba County. It was not far from the St. John's river, the border with Guinea. The town and Sanniquellie are near the top of the single camel's hump which forms the center of Liberia.

This area of northern Nimba County is made up of hills broken off from the plateau that begins at Mt. Nimba. A 5,748 foot mountain, Nimba can be seen from behind Sanniquellie on a clear day in the rainy season (April to October)—the dry season brings an impenetrable haze from burning bush, road dust and the parching red fog of the Harmattan land-winds off the Sahara. Mt. Nimba is the site of a large iron mine then run by an American-Swedish consortium. Though there were a few large rubber plantations in the flatter land south of Sanniquellie, there was little industry in Nimba, save for the mine. There was some timbering and small scale diamond panning in the river valleys.

Most of the inhabitants were subsistence rice farmers who practiced Africa's common "slash and burn" shifting cultivation in the heavy rain forest. The annual rainfall, as measured by Brother Joseph of St. Mary's Catholic Mission, Sanniquellie, was ninety inches. The main crop was unirrigated "mountain" rice supplemented by cassava (Manioc) and vegetables. The main meal consisted of a mound of rice topped by a few small pieces of meat and vegetable cooked in palm oil and chopped hot peppers. The meat each day consisted of anything that moved: fish, squirrel, porcupine, lizard or on special occasions chicken or pig.

Besides the Mano, the other main group in Nimba were the Gio. "The Mano and Gio are linguistically very similar and are members of the eastern branch of southern Mande. Both groups extend beyond Liberian borders, the Mano into Guinea and the Gio into the Ivory Coast. The Mano have a fairly consistent self-referent, *Ma-mia* (Ma people). The Gio, on the other hand, refer to themselves as ... Da or Sa in the north." (Riddle, *et al*:157, n.2) They are both patrilineal.

Another group, who acted as small traders and transport owners in Sanniquellie and elsewhere in Nimba, were the Mandingo, the common name for the Manding. "They are a population which has immigrated into Liberia over the past two to three hundred years and are today widely scattered over the country. They speak several forms of northern Mande, including Konianka and

Maninka. ... [They are] scattered across the whole of Liberia, with particularly large concentrations in the urban areas..." (Dunn and Holsoe:121) "The Mandingo are referred to by the Mano as *Mia yi mia*—people among people." (Zetterstrom 1976:10, n.1) The Mandingo in Sanniquellie were predominately Moslem. (The Mano and Gio were animists, though as a result of a long history of missionary activity many professed Christianity.)

There were also Kpelle and Bassa peoples scattered in Nimba. Lebanese merchants, Mauritanian diamond dealers, Americo-Liberian administrators, Irish, Dutch, American and Canadian missionaries, German and American aid officers, and assorted Peace Corps volunteers made up the remainder of the population. In 1974 the number of people in Nimba County was figured at 249,692, a dramatic increase from 162,443 in 1962. Nimba, 4,741 square miles, had the second highest population density of any county in Liberia in 1974. (Hasselmann:5 & 16-18)

Sanniquellie, where most of the judicial and administrative courts were located, had about 10,000 permanent inhabitants at the time. It was the county seat and the Central Government administrative offices, under the overall direction of the County Superintendent, were located there. Saturday was the main market day, though some produce stalls as well as Mandingo and Lebanese shops were open daily. Sanniquellie also had a large student population who came from throughout the county to attend high school. (Sevareid 1980/1) This, then, was the location for my research.

The Thesis

One purpose for my stay in Nimba in 1979 was to test a number of propositions about the use of evidence in different courts. In the simplest terms, the idea was that different courts, different systems of dispute settlement, would use evidence in different ways. If you could learn how evidence was used—how evidence was received and how participants reacted in matters of evidence—then you might be able to predict the type of court that you were witnessing. To put it another way, the behavior within a particular dispute settling institution could tell you something about its structure.

The behavior of the participants with regard to evidence would differ depending on whether the dispute settling institution had a simple or a more formal structure. The notion behind this was that the Law of Evidence would change dramatically in different types of courts, even though those courts were located within the same national legal system and even within the same geographic area. For my purposes, the assumption was that the Law of Evidence in the rural courts of Liberia would be different in the traditional courts than in the judicial courts governed by received American Common Law and staffed by the judicial branch of the Central Government in Monrovia.

The propositions about how different dispute settlers use evidence that I proposed to test were formulated by Richard Abel. He was the author of a grand scheme to explain court behavior throughout the world. (Abel) His theorizing, as he freely acknowledged, owed much to the work of Max Weber and Lloyd Fallers. (Abel:252)

Abel set out to explain the characteristics of dispute process in terms of the role of the intervener. The intervener could be a judge, an arbitrator or simply a go-between. He could be either a single person or a group.

The structure of a dispute settling institution could be characterized, according to Abel, by how specialized, how differentiated and how bureaucratized was the role of the intervener. (Abel:Part V) Specialization involved, for example, the amount of time devoted to dispute settling. Among the Mano, a Chief decided cases but also had other official duties as well as private occupations. One of the Quarter Chiefs in the Sehyi town I lived in was an active subsistence farmer (he had two wives and seven children to support) and was also an accomplished hunter. His role as a dispute settler was not very specialized. The Chief Justice of Liberia, on the other hand, was highly specialized and devoted full-time to his court job. (Perhaps it would have been better if he hadn't been. James A.A. Pierre, the Chief Justice at the time, was one of those shot to death on the Monrovia beach following the April, 1980 coup. Had the popular mind identified his job as a mere part-time activity, he might not have been singled out for execution.)

By differentiation Abel referred to such things as the social distance of the intervener (his remoteness from the disputants) and the cultural differentiation of the intervener (stratification). Judges sitting in the Circuit Court in Sanniquellie, for example, lived a *kwii* (Western, modern) style of life. They were educated and many—particularly those who were Americo-Liberian—were not ethnically related to the “country” litigants before whom they sat.

Finally, the dispute process could change as its structure, in particular the role of the intervener, became increasingly bureaucratized. The Quarter Chief I mentioned above could not read or write and no records were kept of his cases. The Clan Chief, whose headquarters was also in the same town, could not read or write either, but the Government provided him with a clerk who kept records of some cases. The Circuit Court for Nimba County, on the other hand, had a large staff of functionaries. One man had the sole job of entering the typed transcripts of cases into large record books which were to be kept permanently at Sanniquellie. (Unfortunately, the last ledger book was filled in 1977 and though new ones were ordered from Monrovia they had not arrived by November, 1979. Nonetheless, the transcriber attended court faithfully.)

Having defined these three characteristics, Abel put forth a number of structural variables which follow from them. When combined with other,

processual variables, these structural variables lead to testable hypotheses. I was interested in testing in Nimba some of Abel's hypotheses about evidence.

Abel also separated his processual variables into three categories. He labeled these rationalization, functional adaptation and (again) bureaucratization.

Abel explained rationalization by drawing on Weber's concept of rationality:

My expectation is that, as structural differentiation increases, the logic, the aesthetic of behavior within the dispute process will become more autonomous, internally coherent, and independent of patterns in the larger society. ...

Process can become internally coherent only at the cost of turning away from the outside world. The institution develops a carapace [shell], impermeable to external information, prescription or influence. Behavior grows introverted, preoccupied with its own norms and activities. The problems it handles are problems defined by the institution, not the society; the solutions it generates are solutions for the institution, not the society. If carried to an extreme, the dispute process becomes wholly involuted, hermetical, the exclusive domain of specialists, and comprehensible to them alone. [Abel:264-5]

In Nimba lawyers appeared for clients in the traditional courts. But they were not welcome. They often tried to interrupt the proceedings with technical objections which were not understood by the chiefs trying the cases. Most of those objections were based on the received Common Law rules of the Law of Evidence. Most that I saw were objections to the introduction of particular kinds of evidence or objections to the types of questions being asked of witnesses. In Abel's terms, the objections of the lawyers, though rational if made in a judicial court before a judge who had a good grasp of the law, were incompatible with the way evidence was treated in the traditional courts.

Dispute settlement was a major activity in Nimba daily life. Disputes were, among other things, entertainment. They were a source of interest and gossip. As I mentioned, there were many forums for settling disputes—from the house palavers to the Court of the Paramount Chief—just considering the traditional courts in which the intervener (to use Abel's term) was a member of the locally dominant ethnic group. During my stay in 1979 I witnessed dispute settlement in eleven different forums. Some were house palavers and traditional courts, others were administrative courts and still others were judicial courts. There were two other forums to my knowledge that held regular proceedings and

which were not in session during the time I was there. There were also meetings of the Poro Society in my town which also decided disputes.² Poro was:

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 [Mano]. 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 arbiters of asocial actions which affect the society. The female counterpart of this organization is the Sande Society. [Dunn and Holsoe:140]

Including the Poro, there were at least fourteen structurally different forums for airing disputes in Nimba.

The public participated extensively in cases in the house palavers and the chiefs' courts. Members of the audience freely commented on the evidence as it was received. Elder men *and* women would be asked for their opinions at the conclusion of testimony before the chief made a final decision. I was even asked for an opinion in one case in my town towards the end of my stay in 1979. (However, though I was known to be both a lawyer and a law professor, the Quarter Chief ruled the other way.)

Disputes being common, many people were believed to be fair decision-makers, although some people were held to be better decision-makers than others. When asked, an informant who spoke Liberian English would often say that a chief or magistrate was "good." This meant that he was honest, fair and even wise in his decisions. A sophisticated knowledge of the rules of customary law, let alone knowledge of the received rules of the Common Law of Evidence, was not necessarily required for a chief or magistrate to be considered "good."

Since confusion and palaver occurred often and the ability to settle disputes was widespread, the presence of a lawyer in a chief's court was seen as unnecessary and was likely to be resented. The lawyer (in Weber's and Abel's view) came from a more "rational" system of dispute settling—one that had its own language. When the lawyer attempted to apply the "logic" of his system to a "less rational" one, there was conflict. Or, to use Abel's phrasing, if the rationalization of the dispute settling process is carried to an extreme, it becomes involuted, hermetical, the exclusive domain of specialists and comprehensible to them alone.

Of course, this illustration presupposes competence by the visiting lawyer in the received Common Law and its Rules of Evidence. This was not always the case. Prior to 1972, a first university degree (B.A. or B.S.) and a law degree (LL.B.

or J.D.) were not required before obtaining membership in the Bar. Some admitted before 1972 were high school graduates who took American correspondence courses in law (Blackstone and LaSalle). Some lawyers had less education than this. Others had no formal education at all. One prominent member of Nimba's legal community received all of his legal training during a one to two months' service as a clerk in a Monrovia law firm.

There were also lawyers in Nimba at the time who were known as "cold water lawyers." That is, they were allegedly voted into the profession by members of the Bar Association's admissions committee after members of that committee received "gifts" or "cold water" from the applicant. (A member of the Bar in Nimba was referred to as "attorney," a term of some honor. They were addressed on the street, for example, as "Attorney Suah." Of even more honor was "counsellor," given only to those admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of Liberia in Monrovia.)

Like first year law school students in the United States, many attorneys in Nimba whose performances I witnessed—even in the judicial courts—displayed little understanding of the received Rules of Evidence. For example, they would often object to testimony on the grounds of "hearsay" or "not the best evidence." (McCormick) There would then be arguments by the other counsel against the objection and then a ruling by the judge. Sometimes the opposing arguments of the two lawyers and the ruling by the judge showed three different understandings of the Rule of Evidence in question and how the Rule may or may not have applied to the testimony. Sometimes all three understandings were wrong.

Thus, when lawyers appeared before a chief's court and objected to the introduction of evidence or the questioning of a witness, often what they said was utter nonsense. But the chief didn't know that. The client, who may not have understood English, was impressed. (Trials before a chief were in Mano or Gio but the terms of objection and the explanation for their meaning given by the lawyer to the chief frequently were in English.) However, from my own experience and from what I learned from others, I doubt that this evidentiary game influenced the outcome of many cases in the chiefs' courts. If anything, a lawyer's presence hurt his client.

Another of Abel's generalizations about processual change was functional adaptation:

"Where the dispute institution is completely undifferentiated—where it is simply the whole society viewed from a particular perspective—it must respond to the demands of the society itself. But as the dispute institution is progressively differentiated, the constraints of the larger society are relaxed, allowing behavior within the institution to become internally

adaptive, to develop in such a way that its consequences contribute to the smooth operation of the institution." [Abel:265]

Finally, Abel speaks of bureaucratization. Here he is concerned with the efficiency and certainty of the dispute settlement forum. "The efficiency of a dispute institution can be measured in terms of the time, expense or effort extended in disposing of a dispute." (Abel:269) Certainty expresses such qualities as precision, unambiguity and finality of decision. Presumably, as one moved from an informal to a more formal dispute settling forum, overall efficiency by court staff would increase and decisions would be definite and final.

But if you compared the Circuit Court in Sanniquellie with the Quarter Chief's court in my town, you could not say that the former operated more efficiently or that its decisions were more certain. The Circuit Court certainly had a more bureaucratic structure. But if anything, the time, expense and effort expended in disposing of disputes were less in my town. And precision, absence of ambiguity and finality of decisions varied more with the individual case than with the particular court that heard the case.

I relabeled Abel's processual variables "propositions". As such, they were in themselves valuable statements about the legal process. They would be especially valuable, of course, if they could be proved to be true. Thus, I set out to find the truth of Abel's propositions on the use of evidence in structurally different courts.

The Interviews

To test the truth of Abel's propositions, I witnessed as many cases in as many different courts as I could. I made notes on other cases observed by my research assistant and I studied what written court records were available. In addition, I had lengthy interviews with six men—lawyers and judges—who practiced before or sat on the judicial and administrative courts, who belonged to the major ethnic groups in Nimba, and were conversant with the traditional courts.

The six men I interviewed were the judges and lawyers most active in the daily life of the received law courts in Nimba. (Fourteen others were periodically involved.) They ranged from one man, a former magistrate, who had no formal schooling (save Koran Studies), to three who were graduates of the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law of the University of Liberia in Monrovia. The other two were high school graduates who learned their law from American correspondence schools (Blackstone and LaSalle). Of the six men, one had rarely left Nimba County while another had served as an Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Justice. All were born in Nimba.

Prior Knowledge

Abel's first evidentiary proposition was as follows:

Evidence may affect a dispute without being formally admitted, *i.e.*, the intervener may act upon prior knowledge, or on information he obtains outside his role as intervener in the dispute institution. Indeed, the less differentiated the institution, the more information the intervener is likely to have. [Abel:274]

If applied to the Nimba courts—as you move from informal Quarter Chief's Courts to the Circuit Court in Sanniquellie—the theory suggests that judges will know progressively less about the facts of a case prior to trial as the level of formality of the court increases.

All the men I interviewed agreed that this was true as a general proposition. A chief in a traditional court would probably have heard about the dispute, the "confusion," prior to the trial. After all, towns were small; everyone, including the chief, was related to most everyone else, and disputes constituted a major portion of the day's news. But just because the chief knew that a dispute had taken place did not necessarily mean that he knew its details. A formal hearing with the presentation of evidence by testimony of witnesses was often necessary before the chief could make a decision.

And in some instances the chief might not even know that a dispute had taken place. In one case I witnessed a quarter chief in my town was asked to intervene in a running series of disputes between two unmarried teenage girls. On several occasions they had physically attacked each other in the bush. The important "differentiation" between the litigants and the intervener in this case was one of age rather than physical location or social class. The quarter chief, being a busy man, was not expected to follow every quarrel. After all, the town was home to over eight hundred people.

Of course, if the chief knew that a party had been in trouble before or had lied in a previous case, the chief would use this "prior knowledge" in reaching his decision. But the chief here would be impugning the credibility of the witness's testimony, rather than prejudging the facts of the case.

Ex Parte Contacts and Bias

Would a judge or chief try to find out about a case on his own before it was formally brought before him? (Would he make an *ex parte* contact—converse alone with only one of the parties?) This question was phrased to test another proposition from Abel:

The intervener may only receive evidence while occupying his role within the dispute institution, and may not consider evidence obtained in other capacities. This is insured by increasingly formal constraints upon the reception of evidence: by noting the names of witnesses, recording the content of testimony, and reading it back to them for ratification; by prohibiting one party from addressing the intervener in the absence of the other; by insuring that the intervener is ignorant of the dispute at the inception of the hearing and thereafter controlling the information he receives. [Abel:275]

As far as the higher courts in Nimba were concerned, this states an ideal. What often happened was quite different. The administrative and judicial courts—though not traditional courts—were, and were generally perceived to be, open to “cold water” payments. This varied with individual cases and judges and it was impossible to say what percentage of decisions resulted from “bias.” “Cold water” here meant outright corruption: anything from requests for “loans” or excessive “filing fees” to the procurement of sexual favors. Though I had lived elsewhere in Africa, I was surprised at the openness of attempts to improperly influence higher level judicial decisions.

Thus, though in theory the intervener in the more differentiated courts would have based his decisions on less outside information than would an intervener in the less differentiated courts, that was not necessarily the case in Nimba. If anything, my impression was that there were fewer *ex parte* contacts in the Quarter Chiefs’ and Town Chiefs’ Courts than in the higher courts.

Quarter, Town, Clan and Paramount Chiefs were elected by their constituents. (Elections were conducted in open spaces, often a school football (soccer) field. Voters lined up behind their candidate and then election officials from the County Superintendent’s office would walk down the rows counting heads. Elections frequently resulted in protests in Nimba as voters at the head of the line often went to the rear after they were counted, to be counted again. In the general confusion and milling about, their movements often went unnoticed by the officials.)

The judges in the administrative and judicial courts were appointed by the President who lived in far off Monrovia. Unlike the other judges, the chiefs’ tenure depended on the goodwill of their local communities. They were also from the same ethnic group as the litigants who appeared before them. Disappointed litigants would continue to be their immediate neighbors. So the local chiefs went to some lengths to avoid even the appearance of bias. And *ex parte* contacts were hard to keep secret. In towns it was difficult to be alone for even a short period of time. There was always someone who knew who had been talking to whom.

The prohibition against bias on the part of the dispute settler was a rule of ideal behavior among the Mano, the Gio and the Mandingo of Nimba as well as being part of the received Common Law of Liberia. However, once people were out of their immediate community, the rule ceased to be *mala in se* and became *mala prohibita*. What was “[i]nherently wicked, naturally evil...[a]wrong involving moral turpitude” became a “[w]rong only as forbidden by positive law. ...A crime not involving moral turpitude.” (Anderson:766-7) While many bemoaned the corruption of government officials, this was often because their opponents had gotten to an official first or with more. And there was no popular stigma attached to one who was sacked from government office for misbehavior. For example, one man from Nimba had served time in prison for embezzlement while in Central Government service. When he got out he became a successful businessman. He was held in high esteem by members of his ethnic group though they were fully aware of his past. He was considered by most in the county to be a “big man.” (“[A]n important man.” (d’Azevedo:3))

Admissibility

In another proposition Abel stated that “[t]he standard of what is admissible also becomes increasingly stringent” as you move from the less to the more differentiated dispute institution. “Certain evidence may be excluded upon the rationale that, by doing so, the dispute institution advances other substantive goals.” (Abel:275) One such goal would be the preservation of the husband-wife relationship. This relationship would be advanced, for example, by not allowing a wife to testify to what her husband may have said to her in private. Though the evidence may be relevant, a consideration greater than the immediate case—protecting marriage—prevents its being admitted. Evidence is thus excluded under the Common Law Rule of Evidence known as the husband-wife privilege.

I asked my six interviewees whether it was the practice in Nimba to prevent a wife from testifying about her husband’s confidences to her. There was apparently no such rule in traditional law. As one of these men said: “If a wife testifies against her husband, that fact means much in the Chiefs’ Courts. Usually she wouldn’t be asked since she would probably lie for her husband. But [people believe that] if a wife testifies against her husband, he must be guilty.” If there were a lawyer present in a traditional trial and he objected to the wife’s testifying, he would be overruled. “A chief would say: ‘what you say for civilized people and we will take testimony for what it is worth.’”

That same testimony would also be allowed in “for what it is worth” in the administrative courts and in the lower level judicial courts—the Justice of the Peace Courts and the Magistrates Courts. In the Circuit Court in Sanniquellie, the testimony would be excluded if the judge feared that the attorney who made

the objection might lose the case and file an appeal. But even there the Circuit Judge might try to persuade the attorney to withdraw his objection.

Redundancy

Abel also stated that: "Limits are placed on the quantity of evidence which will be received; repetition is discouraged." (Abel:275) These limits become more severe as the court becomes more differentiated. For example, Rule 12(f) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure for the United States District Courts permits motions to strike "redundant" or "immaterial" matter.

In the traditional courts of Nimba, all six of those interviewed agreed that repetitive testimony was allowed. In fact it was encouraged. "The chief likes to listen to people because people make up the court." Cases were major events in towns and even members of the general public, besides the chief and the elders, asked questions of the witnesses. Repetition of testimony—even by the same witness—was encouraged because "each elder may want to listen to different versions of the same story—he may ask the witness to repeat because that is the way to break down a witness. If he [the witness] has memorized a statement then [on repetition] he will make a mistake. Because they [the chiefs' courts] don't [usually] have lawyers [to cross-examine witnesses] this technique is used."

In the traditional courts a chief "may let the whole town talk." A chief "must end the matter" and to do so he must let both the parties and the public say their fill. If the palaver is not allowed to run itself out, confusion will persist. Since he also has administrative functions and is generally a leader of the town and responsible for peace and order, a chief wants matters settled and harmony restored.

Harmony was essential in traditional dispute settlement:

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. [Zetterstrom 1987/8:62]

Furthermore, jurisdiction was rarely limited in practice and courts competed with each other to hear cases and thereby earn fees. Thus, a chief had a pecuniary interest in a plaintiff's satisfaction: a claimant who felt that the chief had cut him short would take his next case elsewhere. This did not mean that the plaintiff would always win, but it was important that he believe the result to be fair. (Generally, being "satisfied" was important in personal encounters in Liberia. d'Azevedo described it as "'I am not satisfy.' (...I have not been treated properly.)" (50) "Satisfy" was also a term used in many forms of dispute settlement. Since in practice—as I mentioned—there were few limits on jurisdiction, and since courts competed with each other to hear cases and thereby earn fees, courts were careful to see that complainants were "satisfied.")

All of this is not to say, however, that there were never limits to testimony in the traditional courts or that there was unlimited repetition. "Sometimes a witness who keeps repeating himself will obviously be lying." He would be stopped and asked to "take back" what he said or "swear on *kafu*." (To "swear" someone was a serious matter. There was a cause of action, in Mano traditional law, for "swearing" another without justification. d'Azevedo defined "swear" in Liberian English as "an oath. 'He made a swear' (He swore an oath). 'He swear me' (He put me to an oath)." (53). "Swear on *kafu*" was the all purpose term for taking an oath. It involved anything from swearing on a fetish ("medicine") to eating specially cooked cassava mixed with the meat from the head of a sacrificed chicken or cat. "[K]afu ... something upon which an oath is sworn, usually a 'medicine' prepared by an herbalist or diviner, and used to elicit truthfulness in litigation. 'Kafu' is usually placed on the tongue of a witness before testimony is given. It is supposed to harm him should he lie. In some interior courts, the Koran and the Bible are referred to as 'kafu' and the witness may choose which he can make his oath on, in keeping with his faith." (d'Azevedo:29))

Among the Mano and Gio, it was not unusual for the parties to agree ahead of time to limit testimony. Typically, the parties agreed that the case would end if and when the testimony of a mutually selected witness supported one of the parties. During my stay in my town there was a case in which a young man was accused of causing the knife of a girl who was peeling oranges to cut her hand. (Oranges ripened at the beginning of the dry season. Women sold them in the town at two for five cents. The skin was all but peeled off to make the orange easy to squeeze and a hole was cut in the top. When all the juice was wrung out, the buyer threw the remains on the ground for the town pigs who would usually be waiting nearby.)

In this case the boy had apparently been flirting with the girl and grabbing for her knife. He maintained that he hadn't touched her and the case went to one of the quarter chiefs in the town. (The case was tried in the open before a large crowd, it being a cloudless Saturday and market day for that town.) It was

agreed by the boy, the girl and the quarter chief that if another girl (who was a witness) contradicted the boy's statement, he "would be guilty." She did and he was. The case, however, lasted more than three hours from beginning to end. Most of the time was spent rounding up the required court fees from the relatives of the parties. At the end of the case the fees were used to provide palm wine to all the older men of the village who were present. Thus the agreed limit on testimony was not necessarily used to save time.

All six of the men I interviewed also agreed that attempts to stop a witness from unnecessarily repeating himself were rare—even in the Circuit Court in Sanniquellie. "After all," said one attorney, "we tell each new witness at the beginning of the direct examination to 'say all you know within your certain knowledge' about what happened. That's the way we say it. These witnesses are country people. They repeat themselves a lot. But no one tries to shut them up. It wouldn't do any good."

Sometimes the Circuit Judge or a magistrate would be in a hurry to go somewhere and then he would put a stop to repetitive testimony. But in the Magistrates' Courts, and even in the Circuit Court, cases were a form of entertainment and most people were in no hurry to see them end.

This was not true in cases tried before the County Commissioners or the County Superintendent. Said one attorney: the Superintendent was "presumed to be a busy man," or at least he "likes to give that impression." He would tell a witness: "Now old man, all I want to hear is what really happened. Don't tell me anything else. I don't want to hear it. Tell me quick." And the testimony really did not matter. The Commissioners or the Superintendent "always arrive at the conclusion [decision] before the evidence is brought in."

But even in the courts of the County Commissioners or the County Superintendent, a witness would not always be rushed or told to be brief. This was the case when the Commissioner or Superintendent was not personally hearing the evidence. Evidence (which was taken down by a typist—a slow process) was given before an assistant specially appointed to conduct cases. Witnesses could take their time.

Truthfulness

Finally, I want to discuss two more propositions formulated by Abel. They concern the means of insuring veracity:

Primary reliance is upon norms of truthfulness, internalized during socialization and later reinforced by diffuse social sanctions. With increasing differentiation, supernatural sanctions may be superimposed, though only infrequently, in important and difficult cases where the evidence is inconclu-

sive; they are invoked by oath or actually inflicted by ordeal... Though they may be administered by the intervener, the outcome is frequently beyond his control....

[When a dispute settling institution is highly differentiated, it] develops its own distinctive mechanisms for insuring veracity. Every participant—witnesses as well as parties—takes an oath to tell the truth... Breach of that oath is no longer left to supernatural punishment. Rather, perjury is deterred by the same sanctions which the dispute process imposes for substantive offenses. [Abel:277-8]

It was certainly true that traditional courts in Nimba resorted to supernatural sanctions in cases in which the evidence was inconclusive. Liberia was famous for its "trial by sasswood." ("*It is the badness inside a man that burns him.*" Trial by sasswood is an ordeal in which an accused person drinks an infusion made from the poisonous bark of the sasswood tree. If he is guilty, the poison will "catch" him, he will die. If he is not guilty, his stomach will acquit him. Vomiting establishes innocence. In common speech, *sasswood* has come to apply to any form of trial by ordeal, and there are many. Plucking a brass anklet from the bottom of a potful of (apparently) boiling palm oil is a popular variety in general use." (Warner:50))³ Sasswood poison was used in Nimba, though it was officially banned.

One form of ordeal recounted by one of the attorneys I interviewed relied on supernatural forces.⁴ His own father believed that he had the power to tell the truth in inconclusive cases. His father, who lived in the southern part of the county, would tie three or four "medicines" (stones, feathers) together. Another man would then hold the medicine while his father would say certain words. This would take place in front of a witness in a chief's court who would be sitting in a chair. If the attorney's father's helper—who was carrying the medicine—went around the witness one way, the witness was telling the truth. If he went around the other way, he was lying. (The Mano word for ordeal was *glee*, a poisonous bark. *Glee* applied to this form of invoking the supernatural as well as to traditional sasswood trials.)

Among the Mano who lived near Sanniquellie there was also another device used in inconclusive cases. The existence of this device was testified to by two of the attorneys interviewed who each had seen it take place. It was more a contest than an ordeal. Each party in a dispute was assigned a group of hunters who would go out with their dogs into the bush to look for a designated animal, usually a female black deer. (Probably a black duiker, *cephalophus niger*. (Happold:59)) The litigant whose hunting party killed the prey first won. It was felt that that party was telling the truth and that supernatural forces directed his hunting party to the deer.

For the higher courts in Nimba, I heard of no case in which an accused was tried for perjury. None of the attorneys I interviewed could remember one ever having taken place in the Circuit Court in Sanniquellie. Obvious or suspected lying by witnesses was treated by use of the court's contempt powers. Those in contempt were jailed. Jailing was also used frequently by the Magistrate and the County Superintendent in Sanniquellie. (It was debatable how effective this punishment was. The jail in Sanniquellie was made of mud and sticks. Often the jailor could be induced to look the other way as a prisoner poured his drinking water on the cell wall and squeezed out through the muck.)

But at least one of the men I interviewed felt that the need for the contempt power by the higher courts was not great. "These people really believe in the Bible and the Koran or the medicines." (The other five I interviewed were more skeptical.)

Conclusion

The examples that I have given in this paper obviously do not establish one way or the other the truth of Abel's evidentiary propositions. From the lower to the higher, the courts of Nimba did not conform to these generalizations about the Law of Evidence. This is a setback for those sociologists who believe that, with enough empirical evidence, universal laws of legal behavior can be described. ("[It is possible to have] a scientific analysis of legal life *as a system of behavior*. The ultimate contribution of this enterprise would be a general theory of law, a theory that would predict and explain every instance of legal behavior." (Black:42)⁵

Perhaps it is useless to search for predictable rules that govern legal behavior. Anthropologist Franz Boas, towards the end of his long career, wrote: "The phenomena of our science are so individualized, so exposed to outer accident, that no set of laws could explain them... I[t] seems to be doubtful whether valid cultural laws can be found." (Boaz:257)

My experience in Nimba showed me how difficult it is to generalize about the legal process. So many independent variables keep getting in the way. Though there are indeed differences in dispute handling that can be attributed to the structural differences that exist among different legal institutions, much more depends on the personalities of the intervener and the parties, on the facts of each case and the underlying substantive law. Once a few external differences are accounted for, dispute settlement in the Quarter Chief's Court in my town displayed the same range of variation as did dispute settlement in the Circuit Court in Sanniquellie.

Endnotes

*The "Native"/ "Civilized" divide in 1978 was a bit more complex. First it did not follow a costal/hinterland line, for natives and civilized lived in both traditional jurisdictions. Furthermore, in 1978 "Native"/ "Civilized" had largely come to mean non-literate and literate Liberians.

Editor's Note

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Though the bulk of the material used in this essay was gathered during a six months stay in Nimba in 1979, I have also made use of information learned during a visit to Nimba in 1978 and a six weeks return to my town in 1982. I was also in Monrovia in 1992.

I have published accounts of specific cases heard in Nimba. (Sevareid 1980-81, 1992 and 1993)

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²I was not permitted to witness Poro gatherings.

³Emphasis in original.

⁴There is a superb film, "The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye" by James Gibbs, which depicts a "hot knife" ordeal in a Kpelle town. It is available from the film center of the University of Indiana, Bloomington.

⁵Emphasis in original.

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Anti-intellectualism: A Virulent Impediment to Socioeconomic Development—Africa's Experience, Liberia's Lesson

Sakui W. G. Malakpa

In another work (Malakpa, 1988), I argue that socioeconomic development transcends "growth" which is an increase in the quantity of goods and services. On the other hand, "development" refers to a qualitative increase in the capacity of each individual member of society in order that together, they understand, contribute to, and deal aptly with environments that are social and cultural, economic and political, bureaucratic and technological. Hence, it is asserted that if a nation cannot develop its human resources, it cannot build anything else, be it a modern political system, a sense of national unity or a prosperous economy (Harbison & Myers, 1965).

In general, economic development continues to elude most African countries after more than three decades of political independence (Mbaku, 1992). To date, Africa's economic growth rate is 1.5%, the lowest in the world. The continent claims 32 of the bottom 40 countries in the UN Annual Development Index which is a measure of comparative economic and political progress (Michaels, 1993). Likewise, based on the Human Development Index, HDI, which includes indicators such as life expectancy, adult literacy rate and income—38 of the world's 50 countries considered to be at the lowest level of human resource development are in Africa. Additionally, 9 of the world's 10 least developed countries are in sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, with the exception of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Yemen, Laos, and Haiti, the world's least developed nations are located in Sub-Saharan Africa, SSA (Mbaku, 1992).

Parts of Africa also endure an extreme shortage of food. In 1991, the World Food Program declared that about 30 million Africans needed emergency food (George, 1992). This crisis continues as food production in the continent is 20% less than it was in 1970 when the population was significantly less than its present size. Yet, the population continues to grow at the rate of 3.2% compared to the rates of 2.1% in Latin America and 1.8% in Asia (Michael's, 1993). If this rate continues in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is already the world's fastest population growing region, it will have a population of 1.3 billion people by the year 2025 (Mbaku, 1992).

In addition to the preceding trend, Africa experiences a dearth of specialists in various areas of endeavor. This partly accounts for the continent's high infant mortality rate, low life expectancy, deteriorating infrastructure and poor communication links, among many others.

There are many reasons for Africa's slow pace and sometimes backward step in the development process. This work will therefore cover some of the major "external" and "internal" factors and pinpoint anti-intellectualism as a critical internal factor which impedes socioeconomic development. This issue will be related to the Liberian situation as we anticipate the long over due end to the civil war and a subsequent drive toward national unity, resettlement and reconstruction.

External Factors

Reasons for Africa's languid economic development can be traced to precolonial, colonial and post-colonial days when forces outside Africa converged on the continent, plundered and severed it, leading to myriad varied complications, interruptions and setbacks. For instance, the slave trade drained the continent of its invaluable human and material resources. Colonialism illegally severed Africa and unscrupulously exploited it further. Moreover, the colonialists assumed that the entities they established would lead to nation-states which simply needed to be fitted with democratic constitutions. This mistaken presumption had economic and political development implications as the colonial states were not nation-states; rather, they were colonial creatures invented with no regards for ethnicity or geographic boundaries and ruled by coercion and manipulation (Carew, 1993).

Post-colonial efforts to foster socioeconomic development in Africa were embodied in a development theory. Unfortunately, this theory exacerbated the problem as it was devised mainly to counter Marxism when, like Marxism, it was laden with drawbacks for Africa's development. For example, in a nutshell, Marxism argues that development proceeds from a feudal state (the lowest state) to communism, the highest state. On the other hand, the capitalist focus of development theory differs only in the path or course of development; that is, states start from the lowest level of socioeconomic and political development and move gradually not to a socialist goal but to a capitalist end (Carew, 1993). However, both of these teleological trends are faulty in that they concern themselves largely with the features of development which confirm their theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, development theory is faulty along several lines: (A) it unfairly trades democracy for development; (B) functional analysis, the interpretive model of development theory, overemphasizes the activities of the state at the expense of the citizens, and (C) development theory does not have a short term solution to the parochial ethnic tendencies which color African politics (Carew).

In contemporary times, it is alleged that Africa's development process is worsened, or at least not helped, by the United Nations, the World Bank and the international community in general. For instance, it is charged that the UN program for Africa's economic recovery and development, 1986-1990, has not

achieved its objectives because the international community has failed to provide the requisite resources (Staff, 1993). Partly because of this, Africa bears an external debt of more than 236.7 billion dollars; of this amount, Sub-Saharan Africa owes more than 178 billion dollars (Michaels, 1993; Staff, 1993). In addition, the continent faces tariff and customs barriers, and painful structural adjustment programs. Furthermore, protectionism affects the ability of African countries to earn badly needed foreign exchange leading to the loss of billions of dollars every year. As a result, the rich nations, which comprise 15% of the world's population, control more than 80% of the world's income, leaving three billion people with only 5% of this income (Staff, 1993).

The World Bank which provides 20% of Africa's multilateral funding has not significantly helped the continent's economic development. The bank writes 80% of the continent's development rules which include "conditionalities" and structural adjustment programs now adopted by thirty-three African countries. These economically painful programs have achieved little to nothing regarding economic growth and development (Staff, 1994; Lewis, 1994; Michaels, 1993). Nonetheless, if a country loses the bank's imprimatur, it also loses aid from most western donors. Hence, Michaels (1993) charges that the problem associated with structural adjustment programs is a powerful combination of arrogance, ignorance and absolute unchecked power. Many Africans therefore maintain that they are recolonized by structural adjustment programs.

To put a "human face" on its structural adjustment programs, the World Bank encourages and supports the activities of nongovernment organizations (NGOs), in areas such as education and community health. Since 1980, the number of these NGOs registered with the United Nations has jumped from 48 to 1,300 (Michaels). Ironically, the bank often accuses these organizations of destroying as much as they build. For instance, to remain in Africa, they often acquiesce to African governments' demands for inappropriate programs. Besides, they often do not concern themselves with appropriate programming as they operate with little or no connection to one another or to the development process of host countries (Michaels).

Like the bank, the international community has paid little attention to Africa's development problems. In this regard, Lewis (1994) arguably maintains that with the exception of Moslem North Africa and South Africa, African problems are of little interest to the international community.

The western world's handling of Africa's external debts worsens the continent's economic malaise. To illustrate, about 83% of the continent's debt is owed to public sources, including OECD countries, the World Bank and other multilateral corporations. To these sources, the total debt of Africa is peanuts; yet, they drain the continent dry of every penny. For example, although ten billion dollars was sent north by the end of 1990 to service debts, sub-Saharan

Africa's debt nonetheless doubled (George, 1992). This partly explained why the region's spending on social programs fell by two-thirds in the 1980s (Mbaku, 1992).

Like the rest of the western world, the United States, the most powerful country, has considerably lost interest in Africa's economic development. For instance, following the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. was left to pursue its interests in Africa but found that it had none (Michaels, 1993). With bodies and budget needed in eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the U.S. closed consulates in Kenya, Nigeria and Cameroon. Additionally, more than thirty staffers were lost at the Africa desk of US/AID while missions to five countries were phased out with three to follow suit. Similarly, U.S. exports to, and imports from, Africa have dropped precipitously (Michaels).

Clearly, the United Nations, the World Bank and the international community, especially the western world, have, at best, slowed Africa's economic development and at worst, exacerbated it. Along these lines, during the 1993 UN General Assembly Meeting, many African leaders the continent's development problems with fingers pointing to the north. Following is a sample of the views they expressed:

- (A) The promises of the north remain only promises (Burkina Faso);
- (B) Africa has been forgotten and marginalized regardless of its deepening economic crisis (Morocco);
- (C) The success of policies for Africa's economic recovery and development rests, in part, on the fairness of the international economic system and the transfer, to African states, of adequate resources to enhance their growth oriented policies (Nigeria);
- (D) Peace and security are precarious without the eradication of poverty and without the reduction of the gap separating the north and the south (Senegal);
- (E) Establishing a new world order must be based on fairness and a more generous humanistic vision of international cooperation (Togo);
- (F) While encouraging Africa to transform its political and economic systems, developed nations have a moral and historic duty to assist the continent in pursuing a sustainable development strategy that is people oriented (Tanzania) (Staff, 1993, p. 42-44).

Internal Factors

If the African leaders meeting in New York were unwilling to do their dirty laundry in public, the fact remains that alongside external factors, Africa's socioeconomic development is deterred by many internal factors, some less

obvious than others. For example, it is argued that an intractable deterrent of Africa's political and economic development is the continent's accelerating political instability (Lewis, 1994; McFerson, 1992; Michaels, 1993). To illustrate, since the early 1960s, Africa has experienced more than sixty coups (Mbaku, 1992).

Political instability can be defined from varied perspectives. Morrison and Stevenson (1971) see this phenomenon as a condition in the political system in which the institutionalized patterns of authority break down and the expected compliance to political authority gives way to political violence. Mbaku (1992) refers to political instability as a threatening challenge to the nation's political system or a drastic, often violent, change within the system. Challenge to an incumbent regime may include attempted coups, plots and motions of censure sponsored by the opposition. On the other hand, change may include overthrow of the cabinet and chief executive, a cabinet reshuffle or a major change in the composition of the ruling cabinet following elections.

Mbaku (1992) also identifies three types of political instability. Elite instability refers to a situation in which a society's leaders are forcibly and illegally removed from office, mainly through coups d'etat. Communal instability results from attempts from communal groups either to overthrow the regime or dissolve their political relationship with the state to annex with another country or form one of their own. Communal groups are characterized by ethnicity, language, territory or a combination of these. Mass instability, on the other hand, includes violent attacks on political leaders initiated by mass movements. Such movements are formed to maximize and effectuate a stated objective; accordingly, membership is opened to all who believe in and support the stated objective (Mbaku, 1992).

Research shows that the most frequent and significant types of political instability in Africa are elite and communal in nature (Mbaku). Elite instability, for one thing, often springs from the cupidity and power consciousness that drive people to retain or seek power at all cost.

Whatever its cause and type, instability, fueled by social hardships, spooks foreign investment and the repatriation of Africa's own flight capital. It nurtures predatory authoritarianism which is a major cause of the continent's economic underdevelopment (McFerson, 1992; Michaels, 1993).

Instability also increases defense spending which directly affects economic growth and development through increased manpower demand, technological spin-off and decreased investment (Gyimah-Brempong, 1989). Stated differently, military control of resource allocation often results in disproportionately large defense budgets, leaving little resources for investment in health, education and physical infrastructure (Mbaku, 1992). Moreover, with easy access to weapons left over from the Cold War or the fall of authoritarian regimes, defense

spending raises the specter of krypton-anarchy as in Liberia and Somalia (McFerson, 1992). Of course, when violence erupts, thousands of innocent lives are lost, infrastructure damaged, institutions destroyed and consequently, nations set back a hundred or more years.

Africa's development is also impeded by the ostentation, cupidity, and insensitivity of many political leaders. Some leaders, for instance, use the nation's meager resources in acquiring multiple mansions abroad. Others give priority to the construction of over-sized replicas of St. Peter's or four-story statues of themselves (George, 1992).

Economic development is also impeded by the mind-boggling corruption which fosters racketeering and the funneling of funds into northern banks. For example, OECD estimates (conservatively) a flight capital of some forty billion dollars out of Africa (George, 1992).

Corruption also cushions and enhances ineptitude, languidness, misappropriation, and insensitivity to important sectors such as education, health, transportation, communication, commerce and agriculture. To illustrate, in Nigeria, the equivalence of three billion dollars or 10% of the GDP disappeared out of public account in 1992; half of that amount also leaked out in the first half of 1993 (Staff, 1994).

Clearly, instability, corruption and gross mismanagement of public funds negatively affect a viable business climate, reduce the gross national product and inject skepticism in would-be foreign investors. Put succinctly, through numerous self-destructive internal activities, Africa significantly impedes its socioeconomic development.

Anti-intellectualism

It is argued that regarding impediments to Africa's socioeconomic development, a heavy emphasis on either external or internal factors leads to a dead end (McFerson, 1992). Simply, there are many interrelated and overlapping variables from both perspectives. Thus, to understand and effectively address impediments to development in Africa, the focus should be on a critical and incisive analysis of the interplay between external and internal factors (McFerson). If this assertion holds water, it renders anti-intellectualism as a major albeit seldom addressed factor undergirding both external and internal impediments to socioeconomic development in Africa.

In brief, anti-intellectualism is an aversion toward anyone or anything that is (or simply perceived as) intellectual, academic, technical, analytical, critically incisive, and/or ideologically different. Mazrui (1975) maintains that in Africa south of the Limpopo River, this phenomenon is manifested partly in the form

of racism. North of the Limpopo, intellectualism and academic freedom are suppressed by the elder, warrior and sage traditions of the African political leadership.

The elder tradition refers to the rule of founding fathers or long reigning presidents. They emphasize preference for reverence and consensus, and an unbending disdain for dissent, difference, critical analysis, and criticism. As the "old man" does not like many "book people", the country loses valuable analysts, technicians and other individuals with long term experience. This loss negatively affects political advancement and economic development.

The Warrior tradition refers to soldiers who shoot their way to power and thereafter depend on the gun to insist on action, to suppress academic freedom and to destroy academic institutions. With little or no expertise in politics, foreign relations and international exchange, they are skeptical, even intolerant, of people who know anything, especially if such people refuse to agree on all things. Hence, as in Liberia, they slap doctorate degree holders, close down newspapers, destroy academic institutions, suppress academic freedom, underfund the education sector, jail and brutally manhandle intellectuals, and expel experts of various fields and professions.

The sage tradition overlaps the first two in that it portrays the leader as a sage teacher who is not only all-powerful but particularly all-knowing. He monopolizes ideology and is very intolerant of dissent and difference. Rigidly insistent that he controls everything and that all achievements be attributed to him, he is opposed to ideas emanating from other people. Somewhat diffidently, he misconstrues suggestions as criticisms. Thus, he continuously lives on deceptive adulation and praises.

Doubtless, anti-intellectualism is a virulent impediment to socioeconomic development because it clobbers creativity, stifles scholarship, suppresses freedom of expression and mars the missions of academic institutions.

National development is derailed or diverted when the search for expertise ironically leads to the expelling of experts. Likewise, development will be delayed when scholarship is stultified, depriving the nation of rigorous and critical analysis of development plans and policies.

Anti-intellectualism is not only fostered by the foregoing delineated traditions of the African political leadership; it is also nurtured by a large segment of the population of African scholars. While their expertise are needed in national development, many engage in mundane things till they become anti-intellectual (Mboukou, 1982). Then, all they have are their degrees, and the only thing they sometimes read are the newspapers. They do not produce nor consume knowledge as they neither read, write nor teach.

Eschewing academic pursuits among African scholars leads to a lack of, or a reduction in, a functioning intellectual franchise. This means a loss of leadership in posing critical questions, especially regarding internal and external impediments to political and socioeconomic development.

Liberia's Lesson

While it has always been a developing country, Liberia had a middle income economy until the 1980s when, among many others, the country's development declined precipitously as the economy was in tatters, civil and public services rendered ineffectual and infrastructure deteriorated. The situation which eventually culminated into the continuing bloody civil war, can be attributed substantially to national anti-intellectual proclivities which started with (or at least were sharply aggravated by) the 1980 military coup.

Immediately following the coup, Sergeant Doe, the coup leader, allayed fears and anxiety by promising protection, increased economic growth, and eradication of corruption in addition to justice and equality for all in a democratic society. A year after the coup, he went a step further by establishing a high-power constitution commission to write a new constitution (Seyon, 1988). However, the military government reneged on its promises and conversely, destroyed the economy, instituted a state of despotism, quintupled corruption, and blatantly abused human rights and the sacrosanctity of life itself. For example, *inter alia*, the military regime embarked on arbitrary executions, the beating and jailing of journalists, opposition leaders and students alongside the banning of opposition parties (Hayden, 1988; Seyon, 1988; Sherman, 1988). These heinous deeds were capped by the pronouncement of Decree 88A which forbid any criticism of Sergeant Doe, his government or government officials. Violation of this decree was considered a felony and violators could be detained indefinitely (Seyon, 1988; Sherman, 1988).

The Doe regime's havocs and consequent long term instability were not only aggravated by, but also accentuated anti-intellectual sentiments and attitudes. This can be substantiated by many factors, including (A) the regime's indirect message that intellectualism and education were not important as evidenced by the limited experience and educational backgrounds of the coup leaders, (B) the hindering of the freedom of thought and expression, (C) the regime's official statements and actions affecting education, (D) appointments to civil and public service positions with no regards for the jobs to be performed and without considering whether those appointed possessed the requisite job skills, (E) as unchecked job appointments precipitated retrenchments in both public and civil services, graduates of academic institutions and technical schools were left unemployed leading to frustration and a disregard for the education process, (F) underfunding of the general education sector alongside irregular teacher payment and gross reduction, even abrupt elimination, of

subsidies to non-governmental institutions, (G) the destruction of academic institutions epitomized by the August 22, 1984 army attack on the University of Liberia in which students were killed, some, along with their professors beaten in addition to the destruction of instructional equipment, (H) the harassment, jailing and brutal treatment of intellectuals, and (I) flagrant disregard for intellectual advancement, democratization and improvement of the society as a whole (Sherman, 1988; Seyon, 1988).

In addition to the foregoing, some within the ranks of the Liberian intellectual community directly and indirectly contributed to the intense anti-intellectual climate of the 1980s. This group included individuals who, prior to the coup, were critical of the government but, following the coup, when given positions of responsibility, were (or perceived as) ineffective and incapable. Whether this real or seeming ineptitude was due to personal inability or behind the scene political restrictions, it nonetheless heightened anti-intellectual sentiments. This was exacerbated by the pseudo efficiency of leaders with limited educational backgrounds and political experience.

As the increased anti-intellectual climate minimized the value of academic achievement, technical knowledge and long term experience, the military government continued to offer high level positions to people who had little or no knowledge or backgrounds relative to those positions. Coupled with an atmosphere of incalculable corruption, this trend not only affected the running of the government but also impeded national growth and development. Yet, the government did not see, let alone exterminate the virulence of anti-intellectualism and thereafter embrace the reality that an efficacious running of a government and the achievement of a respectable pace of development required skilled human resources. As a result, the problem worsened until it led to a civil war.

Naturally, the presence of intellectuals is not a solution in itself. However, as Liberia bestrides the threshold of the palace of peace and unity following the bloody devastating civil war, we look forward to national resettlement and reconstruction. As these processes gear toward socioeconomic development, it behooves the Liberian political leadership to be mindful of the pestilential consequences of external and internal impediments to development and how such impediments can be exacerbated by anti-intellectualism.

It further behooves Liberia to understand that the history of socioeconomic development incessantly shows that some degree of efficacy is likely in the development process when the vanguards of that process include people with expertise either through formal education or long term experience. Thus, following the war, Liberia's first step toward unity, reconstruction and socioeconomic development should be a judicious and indiscriminate utilization of her skilled human resources. It takes skilled, experienced and genuine human agents to deal efficaciously with internal and external factors. Such agents are

also needed to discover and exploit natural resources, mobilize capital and develop technology, produce goods and carry on trade (Harbison & Myers, 1965).

In addition, as academic freedom (including freedom of expression) is a mark of democracy, Liberia hungers for a new breed of intellectuals in the next republic. Such individuals should be prepared and able to lead the way in posing new radically different questions concerning the nation's political and socioeconomic development. This new breed should enable the nation to rediscover itself, be itself and moreover, transcend itself. This is necessary because our experience has confirmed what has been found in history; viz., throughout history, where the enlightened have ceased to be leaders of enlightenment, the consequence has been a major downward trend in terms of human, social and material progress. At best, stagnation sets in and at worst, backwardness, barbarism and savagery do overpower the society itself (Mboukou, 1982).

In conclusion, considering the urgent need for development vis-a-vis the many internal and external threats to the same, it is difficult to overemphasize the detrimental effects of anti-intellectualism. Hence, if Liberia is to rise again and vigorously pursue a course of socioeconomic development, its political leadership must be willing to utilize the nation's skilled human resources without regard for ethnicity, sex and political affiliation. Similarly, the Liberian intellectual community must lead in the posing of relevant questions, in analyzing, and incisively criticizing issues, policies, plans and strategies related to the nation's political advancement and socioeconomic development. Furthermore, both the political leadership and the intellectual community need to ensure that the growing generation does not receive misleading messages and distorted concepts of schooling and intellectualism. Children of this generation must not be misinformed that schooling is unimportant; all one needs is to be in the right place at the right time and he or she too can slap Ph.D.s.

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Arabic and Islamic Literacy in Twentieth-Century Liberia

Augustine Konneh

Historians have conventionally treated Liberia as a state with a single educational system: the Christian English system that supplies candidates for the civil service and professions. A more complete account of education in Liberia must also take into consideration the tradition of Islamic education. Especially in the interior, where Islamic schools have long been a part of Islamic missionary activity, Arabic literacy constitutes a major alternative to English education—and in some areas Islamic schools provide the major form of literacy training. The goal of this paper is to discuss the stimuli that promote its expansion in Liberia; namely, Quranic schools.

The most remarkable feature of Islam in twentieth-century Liberia has been the rapidity with which diverse communities such as Vai, Loma, and Kpelle have embraced the faith. Indeed, Liberia is one of the countries where Islam is growing most rapidly. The agents of Islamization are mainly the Manding people, who by the mid-nineteenth century established themselves among many groups in Liberia (Corby 1988:48-49; Holsoe 1987:136-137; Hopewell 1958:84).

Manding economic and cultural contributions in West Africa as a whole, and Liberia in particular, are so considerable that the study of such people is invaluable to understanding patterns of development in the area. My interest in studying the Manding of Liberia is twofold: first, they have been less studied than the Manding in The Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and other countries; second, their case is an interesting one in regard to their contribution to the economic and cultural development of modern-day Liberia.

Initially, my research was to be undertaken in Liberia; but, because of the civil war in that country, it was carried out in Sierra Leone among Liberian refugees from June, 1990, to June, 1991. During the course of the research, I interviewed hundreds of Liberians (both men and women) of all ages. I also interviewed forty older Sierra Leoneans who were between the ages of 50 to 70.

A great deal of work has been carried out on Quranic education in Africa; yet, much of this has concerned the training of those who become teachers or scholars in their own right, a group that makes up less than ten percent of the total student population. This understandable focus on the achievements of the superior students has distracted attention from the impact of Quranic education on the majority of the people who pass through it—rather as if one were to attempt to describe the American education system by a study of the graduates

of Harvard and Yale universities only. Islamic learning must be understood beyond this scope (Fisher 1968) .

Islamic learning in Liberia was for centuries concentrated in the hinterland, along the trade routes followed by Manding merchants and missionaries. By the late nineteenth century, for example, Manding Muslim scholars had begun to establish Quranic schools in Cape Mount (Holsoe 1967) . Many parents sent children between the ages of seven and eleven to these "traditional" Quranic schools to learn Arabic and the Quran. The Manding and Vai ethnic groups who traveled widely for trade and other purposes played the role of teacher in Cape Mount (Holsoe 1987 :141) .

A Manding trader (who is also a cleric or *karamoko*) in order to establish himself as an educator first settles in a town, ingratiates himself with the chief, and eventually gets permission to instruct one or more of the chief's younger boys in the Quran. After one boy is handed over for instruction, others tend to follow rapidly. A school is formed when enough students have begun their tutelage. The school, held in a mud-and-wattle palaver house beside the teacher's house, is open on four sides. In one corner a heap of firewood provides heat and light. In the center of the floor are the ashes of a fire. Around the walls of the school are stacked the boards inscribed by the teacher with Quranic texts (Fisher 1975 :193; Sanneh 1975 :175-176) .

The students begin reading their lessons from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. or 8: 00 a.m. at which time the teacher begins teaching the Arabic alphabets to the newly enrolled students. All the chapters are different; and some texts have lists of single letters written below them, presumably for the beginners.

The *karamoko* lies in a hammock hung lengthwise, while fifteen or more students, all small boys ranging in age from five to ten, sit on the dusty floor or squat against the walls, each clutching a board. Most of the boys are dressed in short trousers only, and their bodies are smeared with dust and ash. The boys are heard morning and evening reading and repeating aloud extracts of the Quran written out for them on wooden tablets by the *karamoko* (Konneh 1992:63). The *karamoko* begins by reading from a magnificent, huge copy of the Quran. He reads, half-chanting, and all the boys follow him, phrase by phrase. This is purely oral recitation.

The older pupils assist the teacher in making sure the others recite their lessons properly. Each student works on a different chapter, and the teacher moves from student to student with a Quran. This routine continues for two hours a day, five days a week. It is not performed on Wednesdays and Thursdays. During the afternoons the pupils help the *karamoko* on his farm and assist his wives with the housework—notably in fetching water and firewood. It is apparent from observation and investigation that much of the students'

“free time” is devoted to rehearsing the lessons given the day before, so that the number of hours devoted to study each day may total well over four (Sherrif 1990; Fisher 1975:176).

Although many children expressly wanted to go to these schools, some also confessed a willingness to attend Quranic schools because others did so. One such pupil was Boima Kroma, who said: “I saw everyone rushing into it, so I wanted to gain experience in it too.” He ascribes this desire to God’s encouragement, but it also may have been due to the fact that his younger brother, Ismaila, was studying at a Quranic school in Sierra Leone. Still others were forced to attend against their wishes. One of them said, “...at that time I was not big enough and did not know the differences or wants and not wants.” Another noted, “I never wanted to learn it because it was too hard—but I was forced to” (Zodua, 1990). Indeed, the somewhat compulsory recruitment to Quranic schools kindled some resistance on the part of the pupils. Mole Bise told me that in the old days the meaning of the Quran was never explained to students lest they run away from the teacher, who depended on their farm labor. Some, however, went gladly “because my father said I should go to learn it” or “because it is beneficial in Heaven” (Sherrif, 1990).

There are recognized stages in the learning of the Quran. The teaching usually progresses from the first chapter to the last, although some teachers say that with bright pupils they may start in the middle and come back to the beginning. The Quran is divided into four “sacrifices”: WATINI, TABAH, YAS, and KA. At the completion of each sacrifice, the parents of the child provide a ritual meal for the teacher and pupils (Kanneh 1991).

Generally speaking, the first person with whom one studies teaches the Arabic of the Quran through memorization and recitation. Depending on the eagerness of both pupils and teachers, this can take one year to eleven years or more. Most people spend six to ten years at this stage. However, it should be noted that in some cases the pupils also learn to recite the meaning of the Quran as well and are then able to translate in the productive sense to varying degrees of knowledge. One can define the five degrees of knowledge as follows:

(1) An individual or student learns to “read” the whole Quran in the sense of being able to produce the correct sound sequence in Arabic of any Quranic passage presented, but without being able to translate it into his own language. One may or may not be able to “explain” what it means.

(2) The student is able not only to read out the Arabic of any Quranic passage, but also to recite the Arabic from memory without a text, possibly the whole Quran. Again, one may or may not be able to “explain” what it means.

(3) The student is able to “read” the Arabic of any Quranic text and recite it from memory and also recite a translation of the whole Quran. One may also have studied one or more of the commentaries on the Quran in a similar way.

(4) The student can "read" and translate the whole Quran into his own language.

(5) The student's Arabic is strong enough to read commentaries on the Quran, lawbooks, textbooks on how to pray, and so on. Advanced students not only write personal letters in Arabic but are also fluent in modern and spoken Arabic.

Most people interviewed found learning Arabic difficult to some degree, although some of the more experienced literates recalled an early aptitude for the language. Others remember finding it so difficult that they almost gave up. Most agree that what makes a good student is obedience and cleverness, although others think that an interest in learning is also important.

At what stage is one considered to have learned enough to continue his education on his own? Answers varied considerably. Some think that this occurs when the teacher has taught one all he knows, while others insist that the pupil should be able to recite from memory and read at sight any passage of the Quran clearly and correctly (without necessarily knowing its meaning). The majority think that until one can read and answer a letter written in Arabic correctly, one is not able to continue on his own. A mastery of the whole Quran comes nearest to being generally accepted as the mark of a learned person. This ability is always referred to when people discuss others' expertise, or lack of it, in Islamic learning. In addition, a clear and fluent style of reading the Quran is much valued and admired.

What, then, is the use of Arabic or Islamic literacy? Among literates there is a wide range of activities in which Arabic, as with any language, is employed. For some people, knowledge of Arabic provides a living, enabling a teacher to use students' labor on his farm for instance. Students may pay, where the family can afford it, but up-country in Liberia the teacher usually receives occasional small gifts in kind at each "sacrifice" in Quran learning and the right to have the students work for him. This practice is often advanced as a reason for the length of Quranic education, since the student spends as much time on the farm as he does with his books, if not more (Sanneh 1979:98).

On a less official plane of activity, there are "Muslim doctors or wise men who set people on the right road and teach them" (Swaray, 1990). Advice and help in a moral or religious sense certainly is a part of their role. Yet, the practitioner is often called upon to use his skills to discover certain facts about the world, or to influence the workings of it by divination and magic. For instance, a Muslim doctor may be asked to find out where a long-lost relative is now living and to summon him back to his family, to help someone's business enterprise or farm to prosper, or to help someone get a job. The means by which these tasks are achieved lies in the consultation of Quranic and mystical texts and is, in its more difficult manifestations, the province of expert Arabic literati.

Many other practitioners make a living at a lower level, writing out verses of the Quran as protective charms for houses, farms, and persons. It is only necessary to be able to write out the appropriate passage, whether one understands it or not, in order to collect a fee, which may be as high as \$20 to \$50 for this simple act. In fact, every single Arabic literate that I know provides this service from time to time, although they may not all charge for it.

There are other people in West Africa (with practices similar to the Manding) with whom it can be instructive to compare their Islamic educational practices. One such people are the Jakhanke of Senegambia. Education lies at the heart of the Jakhanke clerical or missionary enterprise. This enterprise (rather than trade as with the Manding) has been the instrument of Islamic expansion and spread. Their clerical activity has survived most vigorously and distinctively because its only purpose is the imparting of Islamic knowledge. References to their work indicate not only that imparting Islamic knowledge was of paramount importance to them but also that the Jakhanke realized it was a vital focus for their competition with traditional "pagan" powers for the soul of Black Africa (Sanneh 1979:147).

Jakhanke clerics recruited the children of their neighbors. The good relationships established by the cleric pay off by creating trust for the *karamoko* in the education of their children. Many times early recruits are the children of the cleric himself or those of his relatives. This practice provides a springboard for the development of trust and confidence. That is, the manner in which they handle their own children indicates the degree to which they may succeed in attracting the children of the surrounding population.

Pupils are admitted at the nursery-school level (between the ages of three and four). The enrollment day is Wednesday. The new pupil is initiated through a formal ceremony of shaving his head. Other clerics delay the removing of hair until the passing out ceremony. A small pound of pounded grain is placed in each palm of the pupil's hands. The pupil delivers the pounded grain to his parents, first the father and then the mother, indicating acceptance of enrollment. The Bismila (the phrase which begins every chapter of the Quran) is then written on the palms for the pupil to lick.

The students perform social and economic functions for the cleric. A head student presides over the functions of the other students. It is he who oversees the given tasks. He is responsible for the practical organization of student labor. He uses a horn to signal the assembling of students for labor and the end of work. Meals are mostly served at work as an incentive to students. Younger students are often exempted from farm labor and meal restrictions. Student labor is crucial in agriculture for adequate food supply within the cleric's domain and that of the immediate community (Sanneh 1979:151).

Jakhanke Quranic schools serve as vehicles in the spread of Islam. Graduates influence their parents as well as their community members to convert. Many of them establish their own schools and recruit students. The parents of students become potential followers. With Jakhanke the establishment of educational networks from one end of the diaspora to the other implants Islam among non-Muslim cultures of Senegambia (Sanneh 1979:170-177).

In comparison to Islamic experiences elsewhere in West Africa, the Liberian case reveals several key differences. The Manding trader is also the teacher of Islam. During the day he performs his trade functions, and in the evening he assembles children to spread Islamic knowledge. As Manding traders settled among the local people of the interior, they integrated religious instruction into the village or town life. They established schools, built mosques, and provided many religious services for the community which paralleled those offered by traditional religions, including education. There is little doubt that as long as the Manding has been doing business in Liberia, they have also been teaching and proselytizing.

From a historical perspective, western schooling had begun in the interior of Liberia by the late nineteenth century. In the county of Cape Mount (Robertsport) English education began in 1865 when the Reverend Daniel Ware, an Americo-Liberian, settled there and took into his family some Vai boys and girls, giving them instruction in both spoken and written English. The first organized attempt to Christianize the Vai occurred some twelve years later when Bishop C. C. Penick established the St. John Mission under the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. By 1904 its enrollment numbered ninety Vai children and ten other Liberians (Ellis 1914: 111-112). St. John's, with its sister school Bethany Mission, was the most important English educational institution in the County, providing the majority of previous generations with a high school education. Practically every famous Vai person in Liberia passed through St. John's. An account of St. John's history would almost constitute an account of the spread of American-English literacy in the County.

Although obtaining a western education is difficult because of the financial expense, many think the benefits are enormous and practical for daily living. According to Abdulai, a Vai informant, English education helps one by "knowing friends who are the sons of important men and they can help you." Bise says his schooling taught him English, which allows him to write to his friends, while Boakai looks forward to a government job when he completes his schooling. Among the older men, Momodu says it helped him get a job as a clerk in Clay (Bomi). It was the opinion of most of those interviewed that a well-educated man in the American-English tradition would be someone who wrote and spoke good English. Abdulai says that: "you've had enough education when you can go to Monrovia and get a good job." Others claim that just being able to read and

write one's own letters to friends is a great help. In addition, literate skills in English enable one to earn a living or to write to important people to ask for favors (Kuyateh 1990).

This instrumental view of education has been commented on frequently by various writers and is by no means confined to the African continent. The relationship between American-English schooling and obtaining employment in the industrial-bureaucratic sectors is obvious to everyone and is a frequent topic of conversation in Vai country. Vaanii Zodua, one of my informants in exile, displayed on the wall of his parlor a diagram, probably taken from the UNESCO *Courier* showing the growth of education in the United States and how the number of years spent in formal education is positively related to one's income. Vaanii said he put it there because it demonstrates the importance of getting a western education (Zodua 1991).

Cognizant of its future benefits in the "modern" world, many parents who could afford it sent their children to a western educational school regardless of their own faith. Many of the parents were recent converts to Islam who were, nevertheless, willing to expose their children to the western form of education. Based on the amount of money available and the interest of the children, parents would try to send as many children as possible to school. Formerly, and to an extent even today, outside support is often necessary if a young man or woman wants to go to high school or college. Many times support comes through a friend, a guardian, or a patron throughout high school or college. Others work for their fathers in return for support for their next year's education. It is quite usual to be helped out by an elder brother, uncle or aunt who has a salaried job (Kemo 1991).

Many parents, because of scarce financial resources as well as cultural assumptions about gender, prefer to send boys to school rather than girls. The reasons given include that boys serve as the direct successors to the position of household head and are thus the future supporters of their parents. The phrase, "the root of the house", came up frequently. So did the assertion that the men have to create a living for themselves, as opposed to women, who were described as being able to attach themselves to an already productive male or household. Almost as frequently presented were arguments which compared girls unfavorably with boys in terms of suitability for being schooled, supposing a tendency on the part of the girls to get pregnant or to be unable to put as much effort into studying as the boys. The people who brought forward the latter argument were all men; women who thought that boys should be preferred for schooling stressed the men's key role in economic affairs and household structure. Of the two people who thought girls should be sent first, only one gave a positive reason that had to do with their ability to profit from learning; the other, a young man literate in Vai, pointed out that educated girls would marry richer and more powerful men, thus creating advantageous alliances for

the girls' families of origin (Bokai 1990). This presupposes highly restricted access to western education for women; otherwise, a high education would not guarantee such a match—scarcely an endorsement of general education for women.

Although many Muslim parents send their children to western-style schools, many still hold on to the principles of Islam. They believe that western education has an immediate benefit as oppose to Islam which has a future benefit—in heaven. When asked why they would not consider conversion to Christianity, many of the Muslim informants associated Christianity with settler dominance. They argued that the settlers used Christianity as other colonialists had done to pacify and control the Liberian population. They also recalled the great lack of discipline that has been demonstrated by Christian leaders, including allegations of womanizing by religious leaders, mismanagement of state funds, and rampant corruption (Alhaji 1990).

Many of my informants claimed that there are pull factors to Islam. One of the most important is the utilitarian values of Islam for business, because of its connection to trade networks. They claimed that association with Muslims introduced traders to information and insights for successful commerce (Crowder 1969:234-235). Strategies for trade were familiar to the Muslim trader, and the trader would be more apt to share them with a fellow believer than with a non-Muslim. Thus, the non-Muslim trader, in order to break the barriers of trade and to benefit from what the religion has to offer, converted to Islam. Many informants alluded to the fact that the driving force in their conversion was what the religion has to offer for trade. Mamadie Kuyateh is an example. He claimed that the very first day he attended prayers in the mosque in his hometown of Salala, one of the Muslim "big men" interviewed him and offered him money to start in business. Others claimed to have been helped by other Muslims after converting to the faith, whereas before they did not receive any assistance. As one informant said, "Muslims care for their own" (Sillah 1991). Thus, religious schooling choices reflect a balancing of options: measuring the value of Islam's commercial networks against the practical value of English literacy.

The strategy of Quranic education is changing, probably in response to the challenge of western school education. Not only do students now learn to read and translate Arabic, but they have to complete memorization of the Quran before they begin comprehension lessons. Many of the students are learning to translate Arabic from a textbook called *DuRUZ LoKATI AL-ArABIYA* published in Saudi Arabia. One of the teachers in Cape Mount, Alhaji Fahnbulleh, uses an elementary textbook which explains the tenses and several textbooks on law and religion, all of which are written in Arabic. It seems significant that recent years have seen the founding of "formal" Muslim schools in the cities, often with private backing, since the Liberian government has always sup-

ported the Christian or American-English tradition of education and actively ted against Islam and Islamic schooling.

The new Quranic schools possess buildings, classrooms, textbooks and administrative teaching hierarchies borrowed more or less directly from the government and mission schools. One of these new schools was run by Alhaji Siaka Sherrif at Caldwell near Monrovia. Some of these new schools teach both Islamic studies—the Quran and the Arabic language—and parts of the curriculum taught in American-English schools. Some have even received government funds. Part of the pressure towards “formalization” resides in the fact that without, it one’s teaching and learning activities do not earn the label “school,” especially when one does not teach part of the American-English curriculum, and so government support cannot be obtained.

In Liberia, where the official language is English and where there is no great volume of trade involving Arab states or the largely Muslim states in West Africa, opportunities for using Arabic as a language of commerce rarely occur. Even where it is used, it is unlikely that the Arabic language was spoken in the transactions, for they almost certainly occurred in English or one of the local languages. This results in tremendous indifference in Quranic education to the students’ aspirations, for the learning remains almost wholly embedded in Islam and can rarely be used to earn a living in governmental administration.

Quranic education in Liberia is still not, to a large extent, reinforced by the institutional arrangements of the nation and thus operates at a considerable disadvantage. American-English education still enjoys a virtual monopoly of positions of importance in politics. In the new-style Quranic schools, Arabic is taught as a foreign language; and some of the schools devote half of their schedule to American-English subjects. This is an attempt to rival the Christian and government schools in competing for pupils, for in the long run the situation regarding the general use of Arabic is likely to change. If, on the other hand, the Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia, begin investing heavily in sub-Saharan Africa, as is more than probable, then Arabic may become indispensable for government and business people in Liberia.

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PHANTOMS OF THE HINTERLAND

1847

July 26

1918

Forty-one years of Liberian Independence

From the U.S.

greetings to all Liberians
in the United States



BENJAMIN ANDERSON—Liberian Explorer
Musahdu—1868, 1874

The motto of the Republic of Liberia:
The Love of Liberty brought us here

One of three greeting cards for Liberian Independence Day (dated 1915, 1916 and 1918) in the Frederick Starr Collection, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University (Box 146-1, folder 4). Photographer unknown. Contributed by Robert S. Leopold.

**PHANTOMS OF THE HINTERLAND: THE "MANDINGO" PRESENCE
IN EARLY LIBERIAN ACCOUNTS**

PART II*

Warren L. d'Azevedo

OF MUSLIMS AND PAGANS: AN ENTIRELY ORIENTAL TOWN

The questions that arise from Anderson's account of the first four months of his journey (before he actually left Bopolu for Musadu) become even more perplexing in view of the fact that while he was preparing to return at last from Musadu in December, 1868, the renowned Liberian scholar and statesman Edward Wilmot Blyden, accompanied by the English author W. Winwood Reade, made a brief trip of a few weeks to Bopolu. Blyden was among those who had helped to persuade some wealthy Americans to finance Anderson's expedition, and the two seem to have been closely associated for many years. Yet Blyden's account of his own visit to Bopolu could not have presented a more remarkable contrast to that of his beleaguered protege.⁶² The trip took him all of four days during which he remarked with continual delight on the landscape and the courtesy of the people. At Suen (which Anderson had passed quickly with little comment) he had a pleasant chat with the controversial old elder, Getumbe, and sympathetically recorded his version of the "war with Buchanan." Later, at King Momolu's town of Totokole, he had an equally engaging encounter with Fan Kwekwe ("Fahquehqueh") the "famous" Gola chieftain who had been a major force in the wars of Gola consolidation and who, after Momolu's death, was to institute Gola dominance along the route from Monrovia to Bopolu and beyond. Learning that Fan Kwekwe and Getumbe were related to Momolu, Blyden mused that "there seems to be considerable martial talent in the family. If educated, they would have made their mark in any part of the world." As for their destructive warfare, he points to "the history of Europe and America for the last fifteen years," with an admonishment: "Now when we witness such things among the foremost nations of the earth, why should we utter unmitigated judgement against our aboriginal brethren for their petty wars?"⁶³

A striking feature of the account is that Blyden and his party appeared to have experienced none of the difficulties that others had reported. His writing has the tenor of an idyll of discovery marked by blandly pedestrian observations of sunlit forests, crystal streams, singing birds, productive farms and friendly greetings from passing natives. He noted in particular the large number of "Mandingo" traders that congregated in the various Dei and Gola towns on the

way and, as the party approached Bopolu, how the commercial traffic increased "coming from almost every point of the compass, bound for the Boatswain capital and regions beyond."⁶⁴ At Bopolu Blyden was greeted with expansive cordiality by "the King" (Momolu), to whom he presented a letter from the President of Liberia. Then, requesting permission to address "the Mandingoes, a large number of whom were present," he stated with considerable eloquence and tact the diplomatic and educational purpose of his visit. "I quoted in the course of my remarks several passages from the Koran in Arabic, referring to the sameness of origin of all nations and to the one overruling Providence."⁶⁵

This remarkably graceful entrance to the town undoubtedly had been preceded by word of his deportment through each of the towns he had passed on his way, and there is scarcely anything to equal it in the records of early Liberian travelers to the interior. Obviously Blyden, the consummate diplomat and journeyer, was experienced in the protocol of courtly manners as well as what was expected of visiting dignitaries in their dealings with leaders of African chiefdoms. Most notable is that he singled out the attendant "Mandingo" from others who may have been present, employing his knowledge of Arabic and Islamic culture to good effect and skillfully indicating a common bond between Christian Liberians and the Muslims of the interior. His trip to Egypt and Syria a few years earlier had profoundly excited his interests in ancient North African history and Islamic civilization. This bias is clearly evident throughout his account of the Bopolu journey. He leaves little doubt that his entire concern was with the "Mandingo" segment of the population and there is scarcely any mention of others ("the pagans") who apparently constituted the vast majority. The character of the place becomes strangely incongruous as he first describes it: "The aspect of the town is entirely Oriental. The traveler who had visited Egypt, finding himself at Boporu, might easily, but for the conical and thatched roofs of the houses, fancy himself in some of the quarters of Cairo or Alexandria."

He is especially intrigued by the small mosque near the center of town surrounded by a large daily market that causes him to reflect on the "universal habit among Orientals to carry on traffic in the vicinity of sacred places. In the time of our Saviour they even made the sacred inclosure of the Temple itself the scene of traffic and mercenary excitement." He also remarked on the abundance and variety of goods available, noting that most of the sellers were women. Other sites of interest were the grave of "King Boatswain" and a deep creek where the large catfish are protected from being caught or killed.⁶⁶

Blyden was much impressed by "King Momoru Sou," tracing his descent through "King Boatswain" (Sao Bosu) his "Mandingo" father, and his Gola mother; also recording the succession of leaders of the Kondo confederacy after Sao Bosu's death before Momolu's attainment of leadership. He told Blyden that he held his heterogeneous alliances together by the astute use of intermar-

riage, and suggest that "If the Liberians would lay hold of my hand in that way, you would form connection through me, as a link, with the distant tribes." At one point, Blyden's admiration of this native monarch was so compelling that he seemed to tolerate the most extreme deviation from his own convictions. He describes the revolt of slaves, belonging to "a prominent Mandingo," who captured the town of their master and held it for three weeks before they were recaptured and brought to Momolu for judgement. After a hearing before a council of chiefs, they were beheaded "one morning before breakfast" in the presence of Momolu, "and their bodies thrown into that stream."⁶⁷ Blyden, though expressing sympathy for the aspirations of the slaves, has this to say about Momolu's involvement:

To secure order, regular industry, and security, among such a number of ignorant and uninstructed people, he is obliged occasionally to act examples of great severity...Those who would effectually recoil in horror from this picture, must remember the awful enormities which have been perpetrated in the interest of slavery by nations and communities in other lands, professing Christianity...Such vigorous procedure on the part of Momoru, then, must not be attributed to the fact that he is a native or a Negro, but that he is a *man*. Such actions flow from the essence of human nature, which is virtually the same under all zones and all conditions of existence...We must give Momoru and his people the Gospel. As a man, however, and as a ruler, Momoru is for many reasons worthy of respect, if not admiration. He is a man of first class intellect. His head would be accepted even by Caucasians as a model...He is intellectually the Mithridates of the interior. His judicial and executive powers are astonishing.⁶⁸

Here, as elsewhere in his account, this ardent foe of slavery reveals himself nevertheless as an early exponent of what might be considered today as a cultural relativist approach. He speaks of Momolu's "considerable tact in adapting himself to the often conflicting prejudices of his heterogeneous subjects...half Mohammedan and half pagan in his genealogy, he manifests the same hybrid characteristics in his religious demeanor. He does, to conciliate the pagan element [of which we have heard little!], a great many things which the Mandingoes, from a religious scruples and better knowledge, will not do." Thus, after noting some of the local native rituals at which Momolu presides, Blyden admonishes the reader, "Now, before indulging in merriment at the expense of those people, let us consider whether they are any worse in their superstitions than the ancient cultivated Greeks and Romans. *They* often prepared food and deposited it in certain places for the gods."⁶⁹

This highly literate and sensitive man approached his sojourn in the Liberian interior with all the ardor of a champion of the "Negro race" and of African culture, that was to characterize his entire career. His journal is not only a reflection of his deep personal convictions in this regard but also an instrument of a zealous desire to improve Liberia's relations with its African hinterland. It is clear throughout that he is addressing an audience of Liberians and Westerners, many of whom he believes to be imbued with invidious misconceptions about native cultures and who need to be instructed by a broader and more humanizing historical perspective. He takes every opportunity to note the admirable appearance of the native towns which demonstrates that "the primal object of government is secured, namely, order and tranquility, social well-being and protection." Warrior chieftains such as Getumbe and Fan Kwekwe, though "pagans" and feared and reviled by the Liberian settlers, are engaged in friendly discussion in which their exploits are found to be both justifiable and ultimately benign: they desire nothing more than equitable relations with the government. The depiction of Momolu as a paragon of sovereigns serves Blyden well in pressing the critique that had made him a contentious figure in Monrovia society:

I was struck with the great deference and respect paid by these people to their rulers, a point in which Liberians would do well to follow their example. But they have the advantage over us in never having been under foreign masters, in never having imbibed a sense of inferiority or a feeling of self-depreciation. They had never had to look up to white men for anything, so as to form in their minds comparisons between themselves and others disparaging to themselves. They are entirely free from the mental and moral trammels which the touch of the Caucasian has imposed upon us. And they are at large from the operation of a great many other nameless influences which clog our progress in the march to independence and self-reliance.⁷⁰

In reading Blyden's report, one becomes aware not only of his intrinsic political agenda but also of the privileged role that the Mandingo Muslims play in his perceptions. He consistently avoids explicit comment about the local native populations other than an occasional passing remark like "The inhabitants of Boporu, as I have already hinted, are composed of pagans and Mohammedans. The Mohammedans are, of course, the most intelligent, wealthy, and enterprising class." One would suppose, by his account, that the "pagans" were a negligible element and that the "Mandingo" were the only significant group with which Liberians should be concerned. In view of the realities that are "hinted" at, and the fact that the Manding residents and traders were not actually the dominant political power in the area, one is confronted with a

peculiar disposition to elitism in Blyden's intellectual orientation. Undoubtedly much of this has to do with his admiration of Arabic civilization and Islam as well as his Christian gentleman's inclination to consider "pagans" as heathen folk in need of civilizing enlightenment. Thus the "Mandingo" emerge as colleagues in a noble enterprise that Liberians must recognize and help to activate. A greater portion of his description of Bopolu is devoted to details of the deportment and dress of the Islamic officiates, their religious observances and ceremonies. Having arrived at Bopolu during the month of Ramadan, it is to be expected that these activities would be most likely to attract his attention. To his credit he found time for a laudatory digression about the "Mandingo ladies" as well: "...their hands and feet are very small, and beautifully formed; their countenance open, intelligent, and prepossessing; their manner easy and graceful...I saw various styles of beauty among the girls; the lascivious and coquettish beauty; the refined and dignified beauty; the reserved and intellectual beauty; the scornful beauty; the amiable and attractive beauty; the sociable beauty; and the impressive beauty; — a style every one understands without detailed description."⁷¹

This delightful eulogy is followed by a solemn discourse on the evils of polygamy that dooms "these interesting girls" to the "dark and gloomy harem," a practice too prevalent "in most oriental countries." Among the women he spoke to he "did not hear one express approval of the system, and some expressed most decided disapprobation, presenting arguments which would have been applauded in any woman's rights convention." Perhaps in recollection of Momolu's suggestion of diplomatic intermarriages, he asks, "Are there no young gentlemen in Monrovia gallant enough to rescue a native sister, in the bloom of her life and beauty, from the horrors of the harem?" Of course, the idea of harems in Bopolu is a somewhat overblown metaphor!

It is unlikely that there was or has been any more elemental or impassioned plea for Liberian alliance with the interior. Yet, while extolling the virtues of the "Mandingo" and their religious commitment, Blyden is also critical of certain of their practices and the general resistance to progressive change: "Mohammedanism, though a great advance upon paganism is, nevertheless, a powerfully obstructive influence in the country." The major problem is the "adherence to the letter" of the Koran which must be read and quoted only in Arabic to the effect that "Many a glowing and aspiring intellect has no doubt writhed and perished in the straight jacket or procrustean framework by which it has been confined and hampered." The remedy is to be found in the "loving power of the Gospel...with the institutions, the teachings, the art, the society of Christendom."⁷² At the same time, however, Liberians are reminded that they have little reason to feel themselves superior to the peoples of the hinterland, for "As regards secular matters, the country, if not in a flourishing condition, is yet, in many respects, a great deal more independent than this independent Repub-

lic." He comments at some length on their proficiency in agriculture, manufacture and trading, making it clear that his fellow Liberians could gain much from closer ties with them. Concluding with what seems to have become an epistle on current evolutionary theory to his errant countrymen in Monrovia, he writes in part, "We have now passed in rapid sketch over the conditions of hundreds of thousands of the people within our territory, and contiguous to our eastern and northeastern frontiers. Now, I would ask, are such a people to be called *savages*, as they are too often thoughtlessly called even by ourselves?...If they are savages, they are the most civilized savages known to history; if barbarians, the most enlightened barbarians."⁷³

TWO GENTLEMEN OF MONROVIA

In comparing the written accounts of visits to Bopolu by Blyden and Anderson one is struck by the vastly different character of the experience as each describes it. Here are two contemporary Liberians, each intent upon contributing to their country's knowledge of its African setting, and each observing the same native town within the same year, yet the reader is left with the impression that they had travelled through quite different worlds. Though they knew one another and were closely associated in similar ventures, Anderson makes no mention of Blyden in his narrative excepting for one brief allusion to an Arabic grammar that had been given to him by the latter, and Anderson's name does not appear in Blyden's account at all.⁷⁴ In his 1871 article "Mohammedanism in Western Africa," Blyden acknowledges Anderson briefly as "the enterprising Liberian traveller, who has recently visited Misadu, the capital of the Western Mandingoes."⁷⁵ Beyond this, there seems to be no record of mutual recognition. Yet there are certain peculiar correspondences of discrete details between the two accounts that strongly suggest Blyden might have seen Anderson's manuscript or read the book before his own appeared in 1871.⁷⁶

Whatever the case, Bopolu was observed by two men of quite distinct personality and vision who nevertheless represented, each in his own mode, the early spirit of mission and adventure that had made Liberia possible and was to become less manifest over subsequent decades as a beleaguered settler class struggled to establish an insular dominion and identity as a nation. Their urge to incorporate the vast areas of the interior into the national prospect through peaceable negotiation and accommodation was not shared by many leading Liberians of their time or later, nor were their ambitious proposals for development seriously attended.

It would be of considerable interest to explore the historical sources for information about the relations of these two men. They were almost the same age and were actively involved in Liberian affairs during one of the most turbulent periods following the formation of the Republic. Throughout their careers each had held important positions in government and was among the

country's leading citizens. Little seems to be known about Anderson's personal associations or political concerns other than what is indicated by Blyden's support of his expeditions and schemes to extend access into the interior, or by the fact of his almost continuous appointment to cabinet posts through many administrations. Born in the United States in 1834, he was educated and spent most of his life in Liberia. For many of his early years he worked as a surveyor and then first became Secretary of the Treasury under President Daniel B. Warner from 1864 to 1868. It was Warner, together with a wealthy New Yorker, Henry Schieffelin, that Anderson credits for backing his expedition of 1868: no indication of Blyden's role is given.⁷⁷ (His second expedition to Musadu in 1874 was undertaken during the administration of Joseph J. Roberts under government authorization. This was at a time when Blyden had just returned from a self-imposed exile in Sierra Leone and was engaged in petulant confrontation with President Roberts.) In 1870 Anderson was again Secretary of the Treasury during the brief and ill-fated presidency of Edward J. Roye. He held the same post from 1876 to 1878 under President James S. Payne. During the administration of Hilary R.S. Johnson in the late 1880s, he was appointed Secretary of the Interior. What little can be gleaned of his status and attitudes suggests that Anderson may have been a constituent of the emergent Liberian middle class with its economically progressive and socially anti-elite orientation. His "friends in Monrovia" might well have been among the eager young businessmen, technicians and office seekers pressing for a policy of Liberian national expansion through interior trade and diplomatic alliances. Moreover, the tenor of his relations with wealthy Americans associated with the New York Colonization Society would indicate that he identified with their hopes of defining Liberian boundaries deeper into the interior in order to secure advantageous access to Sudanic markets, and also to establish an American and Liberian interest in the region in anticipation of British and French incursion.

Anderson's link to Blyden is indicated by a few instances in which the latter proposed him for specific projects. The first was Blyden's apparent support for the 1868 expedition as noted above. Then in 1871, while residing in Sierra Leone, Blyden urged Governor Kennedy to permit Anderson to explore the territory between the colony and "the headwaters of the Niger." When no action was taken, Blyden himself succeeded in being appointed to carry out the expedition the following year.⁷⁸ Some years later Blyden was developing a scheme to build a railroad "from Boporu going back...into the Valley of the Niger and the heart of the Soudan." With the help of the Liberian government and a Commodore Shufeldt of the American Naval Squadron, work was actually begun with the assistance of Benjamin Anderson and a group of Africans. But the project failed for lack of government support. While Blyden was Minister of Interior and also President of Liberia College in 1881, Anderson was hired as a tutor in mathematics.⁷⁹ Thus, the paucity of reference to one another in their writings, or indicated

by other sources, is puzzling, especially in view of their shared commitment to opening the interior and extending Liberia's territorial jurisdiction.

One possible explanation may lie in their divergent personal orientations. Anderson maintained a modest low profile career in government and, excepting for the episodes of his two remarkable expeditions, he seems to have had little public influence. His writing reveals him as a practical man impatient with obstacles to his earnest objectives whether they be native chiefs impeding his progress or government officials failing to act upon his suggestions. Quite the reverse of Blyden, his ambivalent attitude toward the Mandingo and his generally testy relations with native peoples on his route, as well as with his own entourage, led him to outbursts of angry confrontation. He appears frustrated at every turn by the unreliability and deceitfulness of the people who stood between him and a splendid barbaric civilization beyond. In this he very probably reflected a disposition of many young Monrovia gentlemen of his time. Nothing, however, could be more antithetical to the tone of Blyden's own account. Nor is it likely that Blyden was among those "friends in Monrovia" who had persuaded him to avoid the direct route to Bopolu in the interests of safety; for Blyden made the trip quite easily and even pleasurably a few months later. It seems improbable that they were not aware of one another's experiences or that they viewed themselves as competitors. More probable is that Anderson was overshadowed by Blyden's brilliant international reputation and perhaps was put off by his high-flown romanticism and advocacy of contentious social issues. His general approach was a practical one of seeking advantageous economic and political ties with tractable native polities or with distant Manding states.

Blyden, on the other hand, was a man of broad intellectual interests who was eventually to achieve international recognition as a scholar and visionary champion of his race. Born at St. Thomas in the West Indies in 1832, he emigrated to Liberia at the age of nineteen scarcely more than three years after it declared its independence as a sovereign republic in 1847. While working as a clerk he attended a Presbyterian high school and devoted himself so assiduously to the study of theology, the classics, geography and mathematics that he was ordained as a minister and became the principal of the school within eight years of his arrival in the country.⁸⁰ By the early 1860s he was a professor of Greek and Latin at Liberia College and was appointed Secretary of State by President Daniel B. Warner. It was during this period that he made trips to the United States and England attempting to stimulate emigration to Liberia and defending his nation against its many detractors. Already, his extensive writings on race issues, the slave trade and African history had made him one of the foremost voices of black liberation and an early advocate of black African nationalism. At the same time, he was a vigorous critic of Liberian settler society for its moral decadence, dependence on foreign patronage, and self-imposed insulation from the vast cultural and economic resources of its African setting. A particu-

larly divisive issue at the time was the intense partisan animosity that had developed between the "Mulatto" and "Negro" factions in Liberian society. Blyden, a strong proponent of race integrity, was joined by his friend Alexander Crummell and others who looked upon the dominant minority of light-skinned mulattoes in commerce and government leadership as a barrier to Liberian progress, charging them with attitudes of contempt and superiority with regard to the "true Negroes" in the population. He accused them of opposing the development of schools in the hinterland, of resisting the extension of Liberia's boundaries, of restricting West Indian immigration and the admission of educated blacks into the college and the government. These concerns occupied much of his political attention during the late 1850s and the 1860s.⁸¹

Blyden, though trained as a Christian clergyman, was an outspoken critic of many missionary efforts which, in his view, had failed to comprehend or to accommodate the positive realities of African culture. He felt that Islam was successful because it was an African-oriented religion adapted to the moral and practical needs of the people with which it came into contact. Moreover, he had become convinced that Liberia's development depended to a large extent upon opening direct relations with the "Muslim states" of the far interior. Consequently, in 1866 he embarked on a journey to Egypt, Syria and Lebanon where he buttressed his notions concerning black African influence in ancient Mediterranean civilizations and where he devoted some months to the study of Arabic. Upon returning to Liberia he pioneered the teaching of Arabic at Liberia College with the intention of training students who would act as emissaries to the Islamicized Manding areas of the interior.⁸² It was this vision that led him to encourage Benjamin Anderson's expedition of 1868 and to make his own visit to Bopolu that same year.

Blyden's close friend Edward James Roye became president of Liberia after an extremely bitter campaign in which the issue of color was a major factor. Roye's candidacy was supported by a coalition of "darker-skinned" progressives, lower status settlers, "Congo" captives, and educated natives of the new True Whig Party who proclaimed him Liberia's first "full-blooded Negro" president. Blyden was to extol him as "a pure descendent of the Ibo tribe" whose election had successfully challenged the entrenched mulatto aristocracy. The campaign pledged a policy of national integration through a system of general education, incorporation of the indigenous population, the building of railroads and "the formation of a friendly alliance with distant and powerful tribes." These objectives were, of course, enthusiastically endorsed by Blyden, if not influenced by him. Within a year, however, Roye was deposed by the opposition ostensibly for his role in soliciting an unpopular British loan and his attempts to extend his term of office. He died shortly thereafter and Blyden himself was attacked by a "mulatto-incited mob" and thought it wise to flee to Sierra Leone.⁸³

During his sojourn in Sierra Leone he continued his efforts to persuade colonial leaders to extend relations with the vast African hinterland. His resoluteness was rewarded by two successive British governors who were induced to support his expeditions far up the Scarcies River through distant chiefdoms of the Temne, Susu and Limba. He negotiated treaties with Muslim rulers and called upon the British Government to establish a protectorate over the entire region. His glowing reports stressed the commercial and political advantages of such a policy yet, at the same time, revealed something of the ambiguity of his perspective. Again, as in the case of the Bopolu trip, his intentions seem directed solely to making contact with powerful Islamic polities to the east while either ignoring or expressing low opinion of intervening peoples nearer the coast. He writes that his route took him through "the darkest portion of the interior accessible from Sierra Leone. No foreigner had ever traversed it...the people are, as a rule besotted pagans, entirely at large from the influence of Mohammedanism."

England is praised for its "moral ascendancy" which "qualify her...to contribute largely towards rescuing tribes...from their present abject condition and assist them to take part in the work of the world's progress." While appealing to European missionaries to take up the challenge of the hinterland, he aroused their already considerable antagonism to his Negro nationalist ideas by charging them with failure to instill a "pride of race" in their black students. Most irritating to the white missionary establishment was his averment that the moral influence of Islam on the "pagan" peoples of the interior was far superior to what he found to be the case for the degraded Christianized natives nearer Freetown. Moreover, Blyden extolled the Muslim educational system, its great mosques and "universities" attended by hundreds of young men, and where even pagan slave children were taught the Koran: the latter observation was clearly an allusion to his profound lifelong critique of the slave system and its consequences in the United States.⁸⁴

It was not long before his radical notions of educational reform and his aggressive championship of partisan race issues helped to spur a movement for black self-government in Sierra Leone that led eventually to official disapprobation and the active enmity of the European church leadership. Disappointed by the obstacles to his ambitious programs he returned to Liberia in 1873 and found himself well-received by old friends and enemies alike. Though President Joseph J. Roberts, the opponent and successor of Blyden's deposed friend Edward J. Roye, offered him the position of Secretary of State his continued distrust of the "mulattoes" caused him to decline. Almost immediately he resumed his involvement in the local issue of color by calling upon the American Colonization Society to send only "genuine Negroes" to Liberia rather than "planting here a nest of vipers who hate the country and the race." So intense were his views in this regard that his alienation from the elite leaders of

government frustrated many of his most cherished objectives in educational and Liberian interior policy.

Within a few months of his return to the country Blyden's speeches and writings not only castigated the corruption and ineptitude of what he asserted to be the racially mixed mulatto oligarchy, but also vexed one of the most controversial issues in Liberian society by counseling his countrymen to "amalgamate" with the great tribes of the interior such as the Mandingo, Hausa and Fula. When an American naval vessel intervened on behalf of the Liberian Government in the Grebo resistance of 1874, the depth of Blyden's dissent from official policy was expressed by his sympathy for the cause of the Grebo Reunited Kingdom and the intimation that Liberia might be better off under native rule.⁸⁵ Had it not been for his growing international reputation, the financial support of benefactors abroad, and his popular following among a socially progressive and African-oriented minority of the country, it is unlikely that his continued presence in Liberia would have been tolerable either to him or its current leadership. By 1879, however, a few years after the death of President Joseph J. Roberts (the man whom Blyden had considered a major adversary) he emerged again into prestigious public service with an appointment as Ambassador to the Court of St. James under President James S. Payne.

Though Benjamin Anderson and Edward Blyden were contemporaries of diverse temperament and experience, their careers intersected at mutually salient moments in their lives, and each was driven by a similar dream of expanding Liberia's fortunes into the hinterland. Born as descendants of American slaves, they had emigrated to Liberia as youths where they completed their formal education and entered into public service during the tumultuous period of its transition from a colony under white American patronage to an independent Republic. Each in his own way demonstrated a profound commitment to the cause of repatriation and to Liberia as the hallmark of African redemption. For Anderson, the aim was the practical one of exploration to discover opportunities for trade and political alliance that would extend his country's power and jurisdiction. For Blyden — the pan-Africanist and champion of a race — the motives were polemical and visionary: Liberia should become the locus of an exemplary Negro society and a spur to African ascendancy. While for both men, "Mandingo" and Islamic societies beckoned as a prototypal African civilization to be enjoined in a common mission of pagan redemption and African progress, Anderson anticipated the point of conjunction to be at "Musardu, the Capitol of the Mandingoes" on the far eastern plateau: Blyden, on the other hand, discovered it wherever he met a Muslim cleric or other evidence of the ostensible "Mandingo" presence in the interior. Each represented the most enterprising and adventuresome spirit of their unique nation during its formative decades and each was under the thrall of a myth that beguiled their Western-derived culture through much of the nineteenth century.

THE ROAD TO BYZANTIUM

As suggested in the preceding discussion, there is little to indicate that Benjamin Anderson was directly identified with the African nationalist ideology advocated by articulate contemporaries like E.W. Blyden or Alexander Crummell.⁸⁶ Though encouraged in his career and explorations by the patronage of leading representatives of the "progressive" faction in the Liberian government such as Daniel B. Warner, James S. Payne and Edward J. Roye, he seems not to have been formally allied with any political group. Skilled in mathematics and surveying, he was apparently sufficiently esteemed in Monrovia circles to be appointed by President Warner as Secretary of the Treasury while in his early thirties, a position he was to hold in the cabinets of four administrations between 1864 and 1892. Excepting for the two noted expeditions which afforded him modest fame throughout life, his career seems to have been that of a capable but otherwise undistinguished government minister, intermittent surveyor-engineer and teacher until his death at an advanced age some time in the early twentieth century.⁸⁷

His writings reveal him as a staunch though moderate patriot driven at a crucial point in his youth by the fortuitous opportunity of great adventure and a desire to advance his nation's urgent need to consolidate jurisdiction over a hinterland beyond which lay a realm of untold wealth and eager allies. The tenor of his statements of purpose were neither visionary nor politically radical in the contemporary Liberian context, but might well have reflected the aspirations of even the most conservative of the merchant class impatient for expansion of trade and the pacification of unruly tribes. However, his attitude toward the indigenous African population, though patronizing and often censorious, is more in keeping with the unquestioned sense of moral authority and inherent rectitude of a civilizing national mission current among the progressive statesmen of his day.

Two years before Anderson embarked on his first expedition, President Daniel Warner was energetically promoting such a plan with the support of his friend and colleague E.W. Blyden. In his Annual Message of 1866 he alluded to his general intent in terms that were clearly designed to override any objections of conservative legislators by stressing the practical advantages to the government of expanded administrative jurisdiction:

I have for a long time thought that the native tribes residing within the near jurisdiction of the Republic could be brought into closer relationship with us, by being required to contribute to the support of the Government, and by being allowed such a representation in our National Council as will easily commend itself to their comprehension. Such a measure inaugurated among these, will induce those tribes more remote to seek

to sustain similar relations with us. No desire to exterminate these people and aggrandize their territory brought us here. These are our brethen [sic], deluded though they often appear; and our Constitution expressly declares that their improvement is a cherished object of this Government...and when they shall have been convinced that the civilization of which the Republic is the nucleus must spread far and wide over this continent, enlightening and refining its inhabitants, and raising them in the scale of being...I am sure that they will become willing coadjutors...There are in these forests men of royal blood, and minds susceptible of the most exalted ideas of systematic and well-balanced government; and, by a proper appreciation of them, they could be made to sustain to us a much nearer and dearer relation than that of being mere contributors to our treasury.⁸⁸

Thus, in this brief passage, Warner tactfully sought to appease those who opposed the incorporative-assimilationist programs pressed by him and his supporters by holding out the enticement of increased revenue through taxation of the "aborigines," a goal few in the financially insecure government would not favor. Moreover, his reference to "those tribes more remote," and to "men of royal blood" undoubtedly were allusions to the kingdoms of the savanna to which he hoped to send emissaries. This hope was realized through his young Secretary of the Treasury, Benjamin Anderson, who, with Warner's backing, visited the United States sometime in 1866-67 where he met American philanthropists interested in promoting exploration of the interior beyond Liberia.⁸⁹ With additional contributions from prominent Liberians and the government, Warner brought his plan into fruition when Anderson departed Monrovia in February 1868 for "the journey to Musardu."

It can be assumed, therefore, that Anderson's perception of the project reflected that of President Warner as well as a circle of like-minded citizens of Monrovia. Perhaps this was the group he refers to when he states that no particular destinations was indicated by its American promoters but that "The especial point...agreed upon by my friends in Monrovia, was Musardu, the capital of the Western Mandingoes."⁹⁰ It also may be assumed that his diffident anticipation of conditions and peoples intervening between Monrovia and his destination was exacerbated by a popular lore about the interior shared by his urban contemporaries. This is most apparent from the disgruntled and indecisive character of his journal during the two months it took him to reach Bopolu, a scant fifty or so miles to the interior. The unexpected revelation of this phase of the journey was that not only the Gola were an impediment to his plans but that the "Mandingo" of the region were equally involved in connivances to prevent Liberian penetration eastward to the sources of trade with the savanna.

His ambivalent reaction to this phenomenon and to the diversity of Muslim character and influence in the area has been above as one of the more intriguing aspects of his narrative. Through it all, however, there is his unflagging determination to push to the country of the "true Mandingoes" where his charge and ambitions would be fulfilled.

The compelling fascination of the Manding among nineteenth century Liberians is nowhere manifested with such straightforward simplicity as in the written accounts by this urban gentleman somehow transformed into an intrepid explorer who endured privations and dangers scarcely imagined by his fellows. To return at last bearing witness of peoples and resources in the mysterious region feared and coveted by the insular settler communities of the coast. There were others — like Seymour and Ash, for example, who ventured almost as far in search of the mythic realms — but none left so full or cartographically verifiable an account and none, so far as we know, had turned dream into reality by actually walking the winding streets of "the capital of the Western Mandingoes."

When Anderson set out at last from Bopolu for Musardu four months had passed since he had left Monrovia, an interval marked by the incredible confusion that he attributes to the malice and connivances not only of members of his party, but of all the native persons he encountered — including, much to his chagrin, even the Mandingo traders and leaders from whom he had expected some good will. The enigmatical implications of the initial phase of his expedition (comprising almost half of the 118 pages of the 1870 narrative) have been in some detail above, yet it is especially interesting to note how discreetly the recorded observations of those first three months are passed over in his brief prefatory s of the narrative:⁹¹

Musardu can, by easy journeys, be reached from Monrovia in twenty-five or thirty days. I was obliged, however, from the delays and inconveniences incident to interior traveling in Africa, to occupy thirteen months. Sometimes I was compelled to spend considerable lengths of time in one place. I have not on that account burdened this report with insipid recitals of what, every day, nearly repeated itself. Whatever struck me as descriptive of the country, or illustrative of the manners of the people, that I have recorded. I am sensible that the regions through which I have traveled are capable of yielding vaster stores of information, in a scientific point of view, that what I have afforded; but I shall be satisfied if this humble beginning succeeds in encouraging others in the same direction, and on a more extensive scale. I shall now proceed to narrate the journey from Monrovia to Musardu; but *especially from Boporu to Musardu*. [my italics]

Then — as though none of the remarkable adventures he had in his fateful roundabout trip from Monrovia to Bopolu, or his detailed description of the situation in Bopolu itself, were of particular importance — he leaps forward some weeks of traveling time and many pages of narrative to continue his summary as follows:

I shall rapidly march through the two grand divisions of the Boozie [Loma] country. I shall first make the reader acquainted with the Domar Boozie; introduce him at once to the populous and thriving towns of Zolu, Zow-Zow, Salaghee, Fissahbue, and Bokkasaw. Leaving Domar country, we shall enter the Wymar country, give time to rest at Ziggah Porrah Zue...its capital, the vast and noisy market of which takes place every Sunday, upon the banks of the same river on which Clay Ashland, Louisiana, Virginia, and Caldwell [Liberian settler communities near Monrovia] are seated — the St. Paul's. We shall then cross that river upon a suspension bridge of wicker-work, elevated twenty-five feet from its surface, and come into the territory of one of the most warlike kings in the Wymar country, the bloody Donilnyah. We shall not tarry long in his presence; but, hastening away, nothing shall stop our progress — not even the Vukkah mountains, a boundary acknowledged to divide the fertile hills of Wymar from the almost treeless plains of Manding. Crossing these with the tramp and speed of a soldier, we shall quickly descend into the country of the Western Mandingoes, visit their principal cities; and, finally, take up our abode in their very capital — Musardu.

Nowhere else in his narrative does Anderson display such a lilting dramatic style. One is almost led to suspect that this introductory summary was reproduced from talks delivered before rapt Monrovia audiences upon his return from unparalleled adventure; or, perhaps, it was meant for his American patrons who were eager "that an exploration should be made of the country east of the Republic" (that is, into the Manding savanna), and who promptly published the account.⁹² Whatever his intent, it seems clear that Anderson expected the interest of his readers to be piqued "especially" by that part of the narrative dealing with the region *beyond* Bopolu. It is also clear that Anderson himself had viewed his impatient passage through the cordon of "our ruder coastal tribes" — constituting the obstreperous Dei, Gola, Vai and "Bopolu-Mandingo" domains — as an unpleasant preliminary to his ultimate mission. The only amiable moments recorded in that entire first interval of the expedition are his expressions of grateful respect for King Momolu Sao at Bopolu, and the warm sentiment evoked in praise of his Gola guide and interpreter.⁹³

There is something poignant about the fact that Anderson's first encounters with "Mandingo" individuals in the coastal interior were almost without exception adverse. His early Mandingo guide, Kaifal, plotted with King Bessa against him, as did the treacherous Beah later in the expedition. He found the Mandingo traders to be untrustworthy, and the itinerant Muslim clerics (excepting the "priests" of Bopolu) to be masters of chicanery and corrupters of their religion. Even the "Bopolu Mandingo," from whom he might have anticipated assistance in establishing a liaison with their Manding fellows in the great civilization of the savanna, strove to impede his venture. Only King Momolu Sao, the son of Sao Bosu and a Gola woman, befriended him. And only his loyal Gola interpreter — a former ward of a prominent Liberian citizen, and kindred to the very peoples most responsible for obstructing Liberian commerce to the interior — was to remain with him as companion and protector throughout his journey. Thus the man who as much as any other of his time exemplified the driving force of the Mandingo myth and the yearning to contact a great tradition beyond the forest was beholden to the least likely of benefactors.

Once having passed through the needle's eye of Bopolu, Anderson's mood becomes increasingly exuberant, his eye keener for the condition of the country, and the nearer he reaches his goal the more his narrative is interlaced with chatty and witty digressions. He is at last a man fulfilling the dream that had impelled him to this point. His route took him quickly northeastward through the edge of Kpelle ["Pessy"] country whose towns he found "neither commendable for cleanliness nor industry," and whose lack of sufficient defense suggested either "cowardice or laziness." While resting a day in a village of "an indifferent appearance" and a boring "sameness," he is moved to comment: "The only thing that rendered the idle hours tolerable was King Momoru's daughter, who had married a Mandingo residing in the village. She very much resembled her father, and was of the same jovial disposition."⁹⁴

Two weeks after leaving Bopolu he entered the country of "the Deh people...a small tribe intervening between the 'Pessy' [Kpelle] and 'Bonsie' [Loma/Bouzie?] people." These were a people about whom almost nothing was known at the time and whose relative isolation and diminishing population caused them to remain a mysterious element in the interior well into the twentieth century.⁹⁵ Anderson may well have been the first Liberian or European to visit them and to offer brief ethnographic commentary. He found the aspect of their neat farms of rice, corn, cotton and tobacco "truly pleasing to look at," and the people "very industrious." But he also thought them fearful of strangers and "less hospitable than other tribes," possibly because of their preferred isolation:

They seem to be a distinct people, and speak a strong, rough, guttural language, similar to our Kroo tribe on the coast, whom they resemble in many other particulars, They have more fire in their eyes than the Pessy people, and are said to eat their enemies in war...The Deh people, in proffering their hospitalities, offered us dog for dinner, which was politely declined.

With this final salute to the "ruder tribes" of the western Liberian hinterland Anderson pushed on northeastward, where within a few days, he arrived in a country where every impression suggests to him that he is approaching his destination. The towns become large and densely populated, and are surrounded by high clay walls. This was the country of the "Domar division of the Bonzies," whose farms were being raided for women and slaves by the "Barline people."⁹⁶ Evidencing considerable partisanship, and passing lightly over the matter of local slave labor, he remarks that "It was therefore necessary that our Bonsie friends should exercise constant vigilance, and be ready to sally forth from their walls at a moment's warning to repel these incursions." The entire prospect of his journey had undergone sudden transformation:

You no sooner arrive in the Bonsie country, than a contrast of cleanliness, order, and industry strikes you. That tribe, continually represented to us as savage, fierce, and intractable [possibly due, in part, to Seymour's unfortunate experience ten years earlier], at once invites you into its large walled towns with all the hospitalities and courtesy that the minds of this simple, untutored people can think of.

He was greeted by bands of musicians and salvoes of musketry. The extravagant hospitality afforded him "from mere quantity alone, became oppressive." Within hours, he was induced by the discomfort of local women and children to shave his beard and change from his "American cloth" to more suitable garb: "This part of Africa likes a clean face, and especially a full-flowing gown, which is not only more graceful attire, but more comfortable and healthy than the tight-fitting pieces which we call civilized clothing."⁹⁷

The weekly market at Zorzor ["Zow-Zow"] impressed him greatly: "The hum of voices could be heard in the distance like the noise of a waterfall. It is attended by five or six thousand people." He noted the abundance of rice, salt, kola, cotton cloth, ornaments and many other commodities. With a keen eye to potential Liberian commerce in a densely populated country where everyone goes clothed in fine woven cotton, though "no foreign manufacturers scarcely reach them," he speculates how great a "blessing" cotton-gins would be to the region:

Taking into account that these people not only clothe themselves, but furnish vast number of cloths that are brought to the coast to be used in the leeward trade, it shows what the cotton-producing power of the country would become if this primitive, barbaric industry were only assisted by some labor-saving machinery.⁹⁸

Anderson seemed pleased by everything he saw in Loma country. The rice fields were so vast that only patches of forest and secondary growth remained uncultivated. The general appearance of the people is lauded in terms not afforded any he had met thus far:

...the Boozies are well built, generally from five and a half to six feet high in stature, with stoutly developed bodies of sufficient muscular strength to hold a United States musket, bayonet fixed, at full arm's length in one hand. They are an exceedingly healthy people, and of very clean habits. They bathe regularly twice a day, night and morning, in warm water, besides the intermediate cold water baths they are sure to take at whatever creek they happen to cross in their daily walking. For cleaning the teeth, they use a brush made of ratan, admirably adapted to the purpose.

But, as we have noted before, Anderson reveals a special predilection for feminine charms frequently laced with a hint of dalliance. Some of his observations seem to be meant for the amusement of his Monrovia friends and may well reflect the level of sophisticated raillery in those circles at that time. For example, he writes that "the ladies of Wymar are fond of dancing, and they spend much of their time in this amusement: they are not acquainted with the polite and delicate paces of their sisters at Monrovia; but for downright solid-footed dancing, they can not be surpassed. They are all fine, large, robust women, and have the happiest-looking countenances in the world."⁹⁹

He is, however, a bit put off by learning of one of "the singular institutions that prevail in this country...a kind of convent for women, in the mysteries of which every woman has to be instructed." This is, of course, the female secret association which, like the Poro-type organizations for men, is ubiquitous in the region. It is interesting that this is the only mention of either phenomenon, though he passed through country where both are and were crucial features of social organization. He seems not to have given heed to their existence (and, apparently, this was true of other Liberians of the period) until confronted with the Loma instance.¹⁰⁰ As with a host of male travelers and ethnographers since his time, he is constrained to admit that he was unable to penetrate the mysteries of the women's organization excepting to learn that they "consist in the main of a peculiar kind of circumcision and of certain other practices necessary for health." He learns that girls and young women were secluded in a fenced area

outside of town and that "It is death to any man to be caught within its precincts, which is instantly inflicted without reprieve by the women themselves." When invited to visit "the sacred grounds of this female mysticism," on a special occasion when "the rigid rules of the institution are relaxed," he was oppressed by what he saw:

Their heads were wound with enormous turbans, and their bodies decked out in all the finery their friends in town could afford. They kept their heads hanging down in a solemn manner. Even children, six or seven years of age, were included in this moping, surly observance. Their friends from town crowded around, delighted at the sight, and with unfeigned pleasure asked me if it was not fine. I should have been more pleased to have heard these women and children laughing and singing in their rice and cotton-farms, than to have seen them tormenting themselves with a senseless, morose custom. I was carried into one of their establishments, and made to shake hands with my moody sisters.¹⁰¹

This note of compassion for his unfortunate "sisters" (as for "our heroine" so cruelly executed after the slave insurrection at Bopolu) is an expression of the moral high ground by a chivalrous Liberian gentleman confronted with the disturbing practices of the aborigines. But this experience also offended his esthetic standards that for the most part had given high marks to the ladies of Loma. In one especially notable observation (once again an apparently playful digression for the benefit of his Monrovia friends) he provides an inadvertent insight concerning contemporary Liberian standards of comeliness:

Many of the women are very pretty; and for the many faces with which I am acquainted at Monrovia resemblances, and close resemblances, are to be found among the Boozies. Most of our people at Monrovia are fond of deriving themselves from the Mandingoes. I am sorry to say that this Boozie type of resemblance does not confirm an origin so noble and consoling. We must therefore rest satisfied with humbler antecedents.¹⁰²

Thus we find here a rare confirmation of the fact that the special admiration Europeans and Americans had felt for the "Mandingo" (whether as slaves, masters of trade, or as emissaries of great kingdoms) was not only shared by Liberians as a consequence of their unique history on the African coast, but had evolved into a lore by which some of them, at least, postulated an elite personal identity and even a line of descent from the "lords of the interior." It is such a view that Anderson lightly satirizes at the expense of his readers among the Liberian gentry, and it is tempting to speculate that the barb was partly directed to the pretensions of the upper class "mulatto element" about which Blyden had been so vexed.

But g digressions of this kind do not deter Anderson from his appointed task. He remains throughout a man with a single well-defined mission who, despite constant hardship and frustration, is capable of moments of palliative drollery and real enjoyment of his surroundings. Such moments increase as he proceeds toward his goal, and he appears to succumb to a mood of elation and impending triumph. Much that would have irritated or outraged him earlier on his trek is treated with an unruffled objectiveness. The ubiquitous warfare erupting on all sides, rumors of attack and threats to his person that had evoked bitter complaint about native character among the "runder tribes" nearer the coast, are reported with calm indulgence and even exemption. When he is summoned to the town of "the terrible Dowlinyah...king of the Wymar Boozies," his friends tried to dissuade him:

Many of Dowlinyah's atrocities were repeated to me; how, when he had suspected the fidelity of one of his wives, he compelled her to pound the child of her supposed illicit connection in a mortar;...his terrible cruelty to his prisoners whom he captured in war...He had no peer in cruelty and wickedness except Comma...Comma's town, it must be remembered, was the place were Seymore [sic] had his right hand nearly slashed off [on the expedition of 1858].

Anderson nevertheless was determined to go, and three days later was presented to Dowlinyah who was freshly returned from a campaign against the Domar Boozies:

The king, seated on a mat, was dressed in a gaudy-figured country robe; on his head was a large blue and red cloth cap, stuck all over with the talons of large birds...His countenance assured us that he had not been misrepresented, notwithstanding his effort to compose it in a peaceful manner. It was one of the most threatening and the blackest visages I had seen for some time. He bade me welcome...Suddenly his iron horns and drums sounded, his warriors rushed forth from their concealed places, performing all the evolution of a savage and barbarous warfare. The thundering plaudits of the people themselves increased the din. After this tremendous flourish had subsided, the king arose, and stepping forward, he waved his right hand in all directions, announcing by that gesture the uncontrolled authority with which he reigned in his dominion...He celebrated my visit to his country by a war-dance...in which, however, palm-wine flowed instead of blood...He came forth with wild and prodigious leaps; a war-cap of leopard-skin, plumed with horse-hair, covered his head; he was naked to the waist, but wore a pair of Turkish-shaped trowsers [sic]...His

black and lowering countenance had undergone a terrible change, which was heightened by the savage grin which his white teeth imparted to it. The most frantic gestures now took place, amid the stunning plaudits of the whole town...This being ended, the king called upon his women to give the finishing stroke to this happy business.¹⁰³

This air of flippant condescension (granted the rich ethnographic detail provided) gives way rather quickly to respect and toleration as Anderson observes the crowded well-regulated weekly and day markets abundant in commodities of great variety, and visited by Mandingo traders with bullocks to exchange for kola and slaves (the latter transaction seem no longer to arouse his Liberian sensibilities). He notes the King's athletic and well-armed bodyguard and especially that his dominion extended all the way to the western border of "the Mandingo country." In the midst of these reflections, and while still in doubt about this monarch's intentions, Anderson writes, "Dowilnyah now proposed to forward me on to Musardu under his protection — and a more powerful protection could not be obtained. His own nephew was to accompany me." Thus after months of delays and obstructions the way to the promised land is cleared by the most unexpected of gatekeepers.

Pushing on gratefully, the dogged wayfarer becomes aware that he is free of the forest at last and is now on the verges of the savanna: "The tall grass and treeless slopes, plains, and hills led my Congoes [recaptured slaves he had employed as carriers on the coast] to declare that I had missed the route, and walked into the Congo country; and they commenced to thank me for returning them into their country Mesumbe." Numerous herds of elephant roamed the open country, and great farms of rice, cotton and millet produced by hoe agriculture, replaced the small slash-and-burn efforts of the westerly peoples. Always alert to potential Liberian resources, Anderson is fascinated when "the road led through a district which was a solid mass of iron ore...The iron was so pure that the road leading through it was a polished metal pathway, smoothed over by the constant treading of travelers." In the Loma villages near Ballatah people were busy smelting iron, and the conical clay furnaces are described in some detail. Finally he arrives at "Vukkah," a town at the foot of a range of hills by the same name that "form a marked and acknowledged boundary between the Boozie and Mandingo territories.

Vukkah was the last Loma town on his route, and Anderson remarks on its "disagreeable contrast to the usual neatness of Boozie towns...The inhabitants are the most ill-favored of all the Boozies...noted for mischief and trouble...We had not been in the town an hour before we had a row with one of the principle men of the place." Threatened with dire consequences, Anderson is nevertheless confident that his incongruous friendship with the individual he had once described as a merciless and barbarous tyrant would now see him through: "I

was, however, under too powerful a protection to be disturbed. Dowilnyah was not to be trifled with. To take a head from a shoulder was mere pastime with him." Then, revealing a remarkable permutation from his impatient and judgmental stance with crafty native authorities during the many months since extricating himself from Bessa's Town, he presents a brief statement of ethical contingency worthy of his colleague Edward Blyden:

Much allowance, however, must be made for these African rulers. Tyrannical and bloodthirsty they sometimes appear; but this character is artificial, and practiced in many instances to inspire terror and respect, without which they could not hold authority a single hour. Beset by rivalships and conspiracies, they are forced, from the boisterous circumstances of their situation, to employ every means conservative of their authority and their lives.

With this ameliorative pronouncement Anderson took leave of the Gola, the "Boporu Mandingoes," the "Pessey," the "Dey/Deh/Belle," and the "Domar and Wymar Boosies." On Saturday, the fifth of December, 1868, ten months after departing Monrovia, he wrote: "We now crossed the Vukkah hills, and were fairly in the Mandingo country."¹⁰⁴ Two days later he entered the walled town of Musadu.

MUSADU: FROM MYTH TO REALITY

When Benjamin Anderson walked onto the western plain of the Konyan region he was greeted as an illustrious stranger the likes of which had not been seen there before. Yet his arrival seemed to have been long anticipated and his mission well-known. In this area, so remote and obscured from the foreign settlers and colonies of the coast, there was vastly more knowledge about Liberian and European activities and interest than Anderson had of his new Manding hosts. Through their networks of trade many of them had visited Monrovia, Cape Mount, Sierra Leone and the intervening peoples and markets along the ancient routes of commerce. Information about political and commercial conditions throughout the interior — and, particularly, any obstacles to direct access to lucrative coastal markets such as the blockade imposed by the Gola or the confused situation at Bopolu — reached the Manding towns of Konyan and elsewhere as rapidly as it took travelers to pass the word along. So there can be little doubt that news of Anderson's journey and his purpose had preceded him and that he was being welcomed as an emissary from a country coveted as a potential partner in commerce and control of the unruly forest tribes.

These possibilities seem not to have occurred to Anderson as he reacted with characteristic discretion to the extravagant expressions of praise afforded him by the attendants of Vomfeedolla, the king of Musadu:

I had never before been so complimented, and I became uneasy at the high importance attached to the Tibbabue ["American"] visit, fearing that great expectations in the way of dashes or presents might be disappointed. For my bundles, bulky and pretentious in appearance, contained books, instruments, and clothes, more than the means upon which many hopes were then founding and growing. After the speeches were over, the king and his people gave me repeated welcomes, with the particular privilege of doing at Musardu whatever I was accustomed to do at Monrovia, a large liberty, granted only to distinguished strangers.¹⁰⁵

However, Anderson's account of his first two days in Mandingo country is peculiarly indifferent and meager for the man who had striven so mightily to reach this place. One has the impression of anti-climax, that he had become weary of the trip and was now dejected by what he saw. On the previous day he had stayed at the Mandingo town of Mohommadu about which he notes somewhat wryly, "The walls...are quadrilateral in shape, each side being a series of bastions, which at a distance looks like some old fortified front. The walls, however, are so thin that a four-pounder could demolish them in a very little time." And though he was "entertained in a very hospitable manner," a house was assigned to his party which was "small indeed in this dimensions to what we had been accustomed in the Boozie country...Being wearied with the journey, I threw myself into a hammock, and commenced surveying alterations and arrangements which a change in the character of the country had introduced." His first night in Musadu, following the audience with the king, was livened by some Mandingo girls who "came to sing and dance for us, and we wasted some powder [firing off guns] by way of returning the compliment." But during the night there was little rest:

...our slumbers were disturbed by a harper, who, in a tremulous minor key, improvised that since Musardu had been founded such a stranger had never visited it. The harp itself was a huge gourd, and a most unmusical "shell" it proved to be. It had three strings, the thrumming of which disquieted me on two accounts. First, the noise, intrinsically disagreeable. Secondly, the expectation which that noise might be raising, as the bard in his *nocturne* declared my many gracious qualities...my wealth and my liberality...he dwelt upon with loud and repeated effort.

One would surmise that Anderson had been serenaded frequently by village bards plucking similar stringed instruments as he journeyed through the interior. And he was undoubtedly familiar with the sound of such music among the native peoples in and near Monrovia.¹⁰⁶ Therefore this sardonic complaint

has a curious prominence among his exceedingly sparse commentaries about the Mandingo land he had just entered, or about his first night in the fabled Musadu of his zealous errand. It is as though he was overtaken by a kind of lassitude at the moment of accomplishment, and now sought to distance himself from his surroundings by condescension and triviality. In a similar vein he reflects upon the character of the King of Musadu whom he had just met:

King Vomfeedolla in appearance has a mild, gentle countenance. His features would please those who are fond of a straight nose, broad forehead, thin lips, large intelligent eyes and an oval chin. Like all Mandingoes, his skin is a smooth, glossy black. In stature he is rather below the general towering height of this tribe. He does not possess the fiery energy of his royal Boozie brother, Dowilnyah, who, though many years his senior, far excels him in that respect...He is said to be a great warrior; but the evidences around Musardu prove that if he is, he must belong to the unfortunate class of that profession.¹⁰⁷

This vivid portrait reveals as much about Anderson's personal ambivalences as of the monarch he has been at pains to discover. His subtle allusion to "those who are fond of a straight nose..." etc., is reminiscent of his earlier mockery of "most of our people at Monrovia [who] are fond of deriving themselves from the Mandingo" rather than from peoples like the Loma whom they most resemble (quoted in the preceding section). He was, after all, a prominent citizen of Liberia at a time when the issue of skin color and "Negro" versus "mulatto" appearance was a contentious factor in urban social life and politics. Blyden, Crummell, Warner, Roye and others of the "true Negro" faction had led strong movements in this regard, but Anderson's leanings are not readily ascertainable from available sources. There is scarcely any hint in his narrative about himself being a black repatriate from the United States, or about the different perceptions of native Africans concerning Liberians, "Americans" or white foreigners — an aspect of race relations that Blyden never hesitated to exploit in his negotiations with indigenous polities. One notable exception may be found in the account of his return journey to Musadu in 1874. Before meeting Vomfeedolla again at that time, he was profoundly embarrassed to discover among the papers he had intended to present, an article from the *Liberia Advocate* addressed to the king in Arabic characters with full translation in English:

It began well, inviting the Chief, to come and see us etc., but midway it contained an unsavoury revelation about our once being slaves. Now the Mandingoes have a hard-hearted and unalterable opinion respecting the freest man if he has once been a slave...which so alarmed me for my future standing in Musahdu that I cut out the offending passage...Remembering that Prof. Blyden once complained to me [a rare reference to

this illustrious colleague!] how hurtful in its influence a similar writing contained in the prefatory remark of some bible brought from Beirut, — might prove, I wondered how the present mischievous confession could have ever crept into a piece meant to be a general invitation to the noblest Africans in the land, as well, as also, to show our own dignity and importance.¹⁰⁸

But, in 1868, Vomfeedolla, one of those “noblest Africans,” is rather unfavorably compared to the “royal” Loma barbarian, Dowilnyah, and is hardly mentioned in the remainder of the lengthy account of his stay in Musadu. A few lines later in the narrative the elaborate apparel of Mandingo males is said to be “made and worn as a Mandingo *only* can make and wear them...nothing to be desired either as to taste and utility.” On the other hand, in sharp contrast to his earlier praise of the lively and graceful Loma ladies, he writes of their Mandingo counterparts, “But I must deplore a fashion observed by the women, in wrapping up their faces and bodies in a manner truly ungraceful, and unhealthy, too.”¹⁰⁹

It is, perhaps, presumptuous to attempt diagnosis of Anderson’s state of mind or general viewpoint by even the most sensitive or informed reading of his accounts. Apart from sparse biographical notices in the early literature, we have no information about his personal attitudes or character other than what can be gleaned from those solitary narratives. Whereas with Blyden there is a large corpus of writings throughout a lifetime of thought and activism, together with a continuing stream of critical discussion about his intellectual role, Anderson remains an enigmatic figure excepting for his brief emergence on the historical scene through the accounts of his remarkable journeys of exploration into the Liberian hinterland. Yet the richness and spontaneity of his observations provide numerous clues that mark him as an individual and a man of his times. His courage and commitment in volunteering for a dangerous mission on behalf of his government to initiate alliance with the mysterious “Kingdom of the Mandingoes,” establish his singular identity from the outset and give sense to the dogged and often incomprehensible determination with which he endures every frustration of his undertaking. And he does succeed as a black American, as a Liberian and as the first explorer to penetrate so far into this section of the African coast.

Of particular concern in the present discussion, however, has been what his experience contributed to contemporary knowledge of an all but unknown region and what was revealed of early Liberian perceptions of native peoples, and especially the legendary Mandingo. It is in this context that Anderson’s observations constitute an abundant store of potential insight. His inherent distaste of the deportment and conditions of “the ruder tribes” of the coast is a clear reflection of Liberian settler attitudes toward the peoples with whom they

had so much difficulty for over fifty years of the colonial and national enterprise.¹¹⁰ Among these, the Gola enact the villainous role of primary obstructors to his own and the national interest. And the Mandingo of Bopolu also conspired against him.

What Anderson seemed not to realize was that the entire coastal region was in a ferment of competition for control of trade. His problem was that he was not perceived as a temporary visitor or entrepreneur who would return immediately to the Liberian settlements, but that he had made known to all his intention to pass on to Musadu. This was precisely the kind of contact between the Liberians and the far interior resources that the Gola chieftains — and even the “Bopolu Mandingo” of the Kondo Confederacy — were determined to prevent. The perplexity and exasperation aroused in him by the behavior of the “different Mandingo” at Bessa’s Town and at Bopolu, who connived to have him harassed and misrepresented all along the way to the very borders of Mandingo country, is perhaps the major dramatic element of his narrative.¹¹¹ His predicament also helps to explain why he had so much difficulty during the first phase of his journey, while numbers of Liberian petty traders were conducting business in native towns of the interior without incident, and during the time when Blyden and others were making the trek to Bopolu quite easily. It may account as well for the ambivalent attitudes expressed about the Mandingo who are dealt with more critically (and, perhaps, more realistically) than was the case for many other early commentators.

Continually in the course of his narrative he points to instances of chicanery and exploitation on the part of immigrant Mandingo, and even their clerics, often deriding what he perceives to be a corrupting influence of their religious pretensions and acquisitiveness. At the same time he is impressed by the attire, the lordly manner and the sincere religious convictions of some he meets, and there is always the underlying expectation that farther to the interior he will find the exemplary society of their kind. Though Anderson exhibits some of the conventional predisposition of his Liberian contemporaries to accept the image of Manding superiority and inherent nobility, unlike Blyden or some others of the period he is seldom given to extol them as bearers of a great civilization or religion that required only the infusion of Christian virtues and Western values of progress to flower into an African renaissance. Moreover, as he proceeded on his journey, one senses in him an increasing air of disenchantment with regard to the Mandingo, and a concurrent tendency to improved toleration and goodwill toward each successive native group he encounters. Thus eventually it was his stay among the Loma under the patronage of the barbarous Dowilnyah that seems to have been the most pleasurable and requiring of his journey.

Anderson remained in Musadu — the apogee of his mission — for a total of nineteen days of the journey that would extend more than a year. He nevertheless dutifully recorded his observations mainly with an eye to the concerns of his

sponsors. He remarks favorably on the dry and healthful climate of the high plateau as compared to that of the coast, but his first impression of Musadu was discouraging. The town with a population he estimates at seven or eight thousand persons presents a dreary picture of dilapidation and the damages of war. Its streets were narrow and cluttered, and its small mosque in need of repair. He was told by old men of the town "that what I saw of Musardu was only the ruins of a former prosperity."¹¹² But he was excited by a military demonstration presented by King Vomfeedolla in which large contingents of infantry and cavalry engaged in simulated battle. He especially noted their weapons and the elaborate equipment of riders and horses, only to remark later that "if Musardu is not characteristic for cleanliness, it is because the horse and his master equally occupy and almost equally litter that capital."¹¹³

Over the following days he learned that the country was almost continually at war with neighboring polities. Each confrontation was carried out with ferocious destructiveness and the slaughter or enslavement of the defeated. Some of these wars were directed against "Kaffres, or unbelievers" living in the hills to the eastward who were objects of plunder.¹¹⁴ Here as elsewhere Anderson has referred frequently to the fact that many of the Mandingo he met or heard of on his journey were not Muslims, and were fleeing into the forest region for safety. Liberians were generally unaware of the mounting aggressiveness of Islamic movements in the savanna precipitating region-wide disturbances and migration, a process resulting in increasing Mandingo and Islamic penetration into Liberia up to the end of the century.¹¹⁵ The situation at Musadu was such that Anderson was moved to propose that in order for Liberia to carry on trade safely "free from the risks and interruptions incident to a country peopled by barbarians and semi-barbarians, and divided into so many jarring interests, it would be necessary to establish four trading forts — two in the Boozie and Barline countries...and two in the Mandingo country."¹¹⁶

Though admiring the propensity for agriculture and manufacture at Musadu, Anderson is dismayed to discover the scarcity of goods:

My friends now tried again to provoke me to trade, offering the same articles they had offered before — gold, horses, and female slaves. Indeed, this is all the Mandingoes of Musardu had to offer by way of trade. Not a bullock or a country cloth was to be seen, though these things are notoriously the articles of merchandise belonging to Musardu. Every thing liable to be seized in war...sad experience has taught them to keep out of reach, in some friendly Boozie town in the rear of the Vukkah hills...¹¹⁷

Of considerable interest to him, however, was the abundance of gold "worn extravagantly by the Mandingo ladies," and which "would form a lucrative trade between Musardu and Liberia." He is told that the main gold district was

some two weeks walk to the east through hostile and dangerous country. Anderson suspected that he was being subjected to a familiar Mandingo deception, and was convinced that the gold fields were no more than four days walk from Musadu. Regretting that he could not continue his journey eastward — “a direction which I have always had the presentiment contains the prosperity and welfare of Liberia,” he bade farewell to Musadu and turned toward home. His parting thoughts reflected on the prospects of Mandingo-Liberian relations:

The leading vice of a Mandingo is avarice, which, by however much it is stimulated, the present state of the country affords him but little means to gratify. Nothing can be accumulated among themselves that war does not instantly dissipate. Nevertheless, they are quick and intelligent, easy to be managed by persuasion, and they offer to Liberia a more speedy prospect of assimilation and union than any other tribe with which I am acquainted.¹¹⁸

Footnotes

*This is the second part of a three-part series. Endnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the series.

⁶² E.W. Blyden, “The Boporu Country,” *African Repository* XLVII(11) (July 1871):199-203; (August 1871):236-242; (September 1871):258-262; (November 1871):321-337.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 199, 203. Blyden commenced his journey from the town of Vonzwah December 27, 1868. More than ten months earlier, Anderson had left from there but was now just departing Musadu for the return trip. It is interesting to note that Blyden makes no mention of the “Mandingo priest—Kaifal—at Vonzwah” about whom he had written in a letter to H.M. Schieffelin on December 7, 1870, and with whom he had conferred on a matter of Arabic translation. (H.M. Schieffelin, ed, *Peoples of Africa* [New York: Anson C.F. Randolph & Co., 1871], pp. 70-71. See also 2nd edition of the work with a new introduction by Kahlil Mahmud [Ibadan: Ibadan University Press 1974]). If this is the same man—the “learned Mandingo, Kaifal-Kanda”—who Anderson had contracted as a guide to Musadu, and who he blamed for the delays and treachery experienced during the early phase of his journey, then one might well wonder whether it was Blyden who had recommended Kaifal to him. If so, is

it possible that Blyden was included among those unnamed persons in Monrovia who Anderson charges with misleading him?

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 240-241. These and other observations of the market and various places of interest are very similar to those made by Anderson six months earlier (June, 1868), yet there is no mention of Anderson in Blyden's account. One wonders, however, whether Blyden could have seen either the manuscript or the 1871 published narrative by Anderson before he completed his own.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 260. "That stream" ("Marvo creek") was the "catfish pond" about which Anderson (*Narrative of a Journey*, pp. 43-44) expressed his outrage at some length. Not only did Anderson describe the atrocities committed against the slaves in agonizing detail, but he was especially horrified by the brutal execution of the woman ("our heroine") who had rallied the revolt. By contrast, Blyden's account of the affair is brief and temperate, vindicating Momolu and making no mention of the heroic woman. It is tempting to speculate that Blyden had Anderson in mind when he dismisses the matter somewhat casually by counseling his readers that "those who would affectively recoil in horror from this picture, must remember the awful enormities which have been perpetrated in the interests of slavery by nations and communities in other lands professing Christianity."

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 259-260 The panegyric tone of this brief tribute to Momolu might well highlight one of the most extravagant statements of praise ever made by a Liberian of the repatriate class about an indigenous African ruler. Fortunately Blyden's scholarly instincts and his admiration for the man led him to write down local lore concerning the origin of Bopolu, the lives of Sau Bosu and Momolu, and the succession of rulers in the confederacy (See pp. 236-239, 258-259). He reports that "Boatswain" (Sau Bosu) was a Mandingo whose native name was Sabsu and who, after serving as a youth on an English Merchant vessel, returned inland to form a coalition against the Gola, expelling them from Bopolu and establishing a major depot for furnishing slaves to the coast (the account seems also to include elements of settler lore about early colonists': relations with Boatswain). Apparently Momolu Sau was known as Mohammed Sabsu among the Mandingo (See Blyden's translation of "A Letter from the King of Musadu", which was carried by Benjamin Anderson to Momolu and to the Liberian president—printed in Schieffelin, *Peoples of Africa*, pp. 129-136).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 261-262. Important insights are provided here with regard to the requirements of an astute African ruler for making cultural accommodations in a community involving adherents of indigenous religious beliefs as well as Islam. Blyden writes of Momolu: "During our visit, he had his son circumcised with great pomp and ceremony, feasting and dancing, in deference to the Mohammedans." [Though circumcision was practiced among most of the

peoples of the region, this apparently is a reference to the special festive rite known as *bili* among the Mandingo and other Mande groups such as the Vai]. Momolu also is said to have brought the remains of a leading man who had been buried in a distant place, and had them "reinterred, with all the ceremonies which the pagan customs require...a plate of cooked rice and other articles were brought and carefully deposited on the grave, for the use of the dead. This of course the king considers absurd, but it is in deference to an old custom." Likewise, the king's air of condescension toward local indigenous custom might have been in deference to Blyden as a Mandingophile as much as it was an indication of his own split allegiances. Nevertheless, these observations vividly illustrate processes of acculturation that were taking place throughout the western interior of Liberia with the penetration of the Mandingo carriers of Islam. As for Blyden's reference to Momolu as "half Mohammedan and half pagan," it is interesting to note the similarity of this comment to that of "a learned Muslim from Kankan" in a letter translated by Blyden prior to 1870 in which it is written that "the King of Misadu is partly Moslem and partly pagan. The King of Bokoma [Bopolu] is a great pagan, his name is Labsu [sic] Mohammed" (see "Arabic Manuscript in Western Africa," in Schieffelin, *Peoples of Africa*, pp. 70-73). However, the derogatory tone of the letter is not reflected in Blyden's comment: to the contrary, Momolu's "hybrid" allegiance is extolled as a positive attribute of his character.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 322-324.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 329-331.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 332-335.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 335-336.

⁷⁴ Anderson, *Narrative of a Journey*, p. 40. The absence of mutual reference seems all the more remarkable in view of the fact that Blyden had encouraged support for Anderson's first expedition and had recommended him in 1871 to Governor Kennedy of Sierra Leone for a possible exploration to the Niger (See Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-African Patriot 1832-1912* [Oxford University Press, 1970], pp. 89-90). Though Lynch (p. 42) cites Johnston and Anderson as giving a central role to Blyden in persuading the American benefactors to fund Anderson's 1868 venture, neither of the latter sources makes any mention of him in this regard. Rather, in the place cited, Johnston (*Liberia*, pp. 250-252) writes that Anderson visited the United States sometime in 1886-87 where he met "several American philanthropists" who were concerned that Liberia had no fixed interior boundaries: Anderson then volunteered his services and funds were found. Nathaniel Richardson states that it was President Daniel Warner who visited the United States, met the wealthy Americans, and was the principal promoter of Anderson's expedition: Blyden

is not mentioned (*Liberia's Past and Present*. London: The Diplomatic Press & Publishing Co., 1959, pp. 104-105).

⁷⁵ This article was originally published in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* (January 1871), and later is included in Blyden's book *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, [1887] (Edinburgh University Press, 1967), (quotation from p. 187). The lack of mutual reference in the journals of Blyden and Anderson seems less peculiar in view of the fact that scarcely any mention is made by either of them of the previous expeditions of George Seymour and Samuel Ash in 1858, or of the reports of any of the government agents, missionaries or interior travelers before them. Nor did the earlier writings contain much cognizance of information garnered by others. There seemed to be little compulsion to refer to a body of accumulating knowledge, and circumstances were such that the retention or retrieval of relevant information was not generally practiced. The accounts of Blyden and Anderson, for example, had very limited local circulation as installments in contemporary Liberian newspapers or in Colonization Society journals (as also was the case for accounts of earlier expeditions into the interior). Anderson's report of the 1868 journey, though printed in a small privately funded edition in 1870, became rare almost immediately, while the report of his 1874 expedition had appeared only in a contemporary Liberian newspaper or as excerpted notices in Colonization Society publications until it was eventually printed in limited edition by the College of West Africa Press in 1912. Thus it is quite rare to find mention of Blyden's Bopolu trip in the literature, and the important details of Anderson's sojourn were seldom recounted. It is not surprising, therefore, that early contributions of explorers such as Seymour and Ash, or others, were not more fully acknowledged by their successors. Yet these contingencies cannot explain the almost total absence of mutual referment in the writings of two men like Blyden and Anderson who were colleagues at the time when each was embarked on similar missions. [Addendum. As Part Two of this essay goes to press I feel obliged to insert a note of appreciation of the fact that the problem of unreferenced, neglected, misrepresented, or lost documents is always with us, and modern scholars may be held at least as culpable as their forebears. A case in point is the long underrated expedition of George Seymour in 1858, the journal of which has been known to modern scholars only through a brief summary in the 1860 Proceedings of the *Royal Geographical Society* and one segment in the otherwise "lost" issues of the *Liberia Herald*, from 1860. But very recently I learned that two colleagues in England have recovered the synopses of the Seymour text published serially in issues of the *New York Colonization Journal* (See James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, "Contested Forests: Modern Conservation and Historical Land Use in Guinea's Zياما Reserve," *African Affairs* 93, 1994, p. 485 fn.). About the same time, a colleague with whom I had been corresponding sent me a copy of pages from *The Home and Foreign Record* of the Presbyterian Board of Publication, Vol.

XI, 1860, containing biographical notes on Seymour and a briefs of his journal garnered from the *Liberia Herald*. As I had been trying for over two years to track down repositories of relevant issues of that newspaper to no avail, this news was like fresh scent on the trail. Almost simultaneously I became the astonished recipient of a letter from Dr. Robert Leopold of Smithsonian Institution containing an entry of the *Maryland Colonization Journal*, Vol. 10, 1860, entitled "Travels in the Pessah and Barlain Countries" attributed to a "Mr. Sims, a Liberian," and followed by an eight-page extract of a most remarkable account of his 1858 tour of the interior—the same year as Seymour's journey! Though Blyden made passing reference to Sims as one of the explorers of Liberia (see *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 1887, p. 306), the name seems absent from the historical record thereafter. But then a rumor filtered through the tangled grapevine of Liberianist scholarship that lengthy segments of Sims' journal also had been discovered by Dr. Leach and Fairhead in issues of the *New York Colonization Journal*—there, under our very noses for 135 years! Apparently a group of scholars are now working with them to annotate and eventually publish these "lost" journals of two major Liberian explorers. There is, perhaps, no better example of the mysterious workings of synchronicity in ethnohistorical research. The strands are coming together and the knot is about to be tied. But, oh how I should like to have set my eyes on those materials before Part One of this essay was written! The comparison of the experiences and observations of Seymour and Sims with those of Anderson would have yielded considerable additional insight to the argument. But that exciting task must now await the full presentation of the "lost" texts.]

⁷⁶ See, for example, (in their respective narratives) Blyden's descriptions of the Bopolu market (p. 241) and in Anderson (p. 44); the account of the slave insurrection and the "catfish pond" in Blyden (pp. 259-260) and in Anderson (pp. 41-44); of the mosque, in Blyden (p. 241) and in Anderson (p. 40) among other instances.

⁷⁷ Anderson, *Narrative of a Journey*, p. 5. Nor is Anderson mentioned by Blyden either in his own journal or in the letter to Rev. J.B. Pinney appended to Anderson's published narrative in 1870. Yet Anderson does make a passing reference to "a small Arabic grammar given to me by Professor Blyden" (*Ibid.*, p. 40).

⁷⁸ Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden*, pp. 89-93, 155.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147. (See also Humphrey Fisher, "New Introduction" in Anderson, *Narrative of a Journey*, p. vi).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-42.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48. Blyden's determination to learn Arabic provides an interesting insight into his orientation to prospects on the West African coast. Though he certainly must have been aware that Arabic was read or spoken by few individuals — even among the Muslims — in Liberia and Sierra Leone, he seemed to be under the impression that it was a general language in the interior of Africa where the hope of African redemption beckoned. (Cf. Thomas W. Livingston, *Education and Race: A Biography of Edward Wilmot Blyden* [San Francisco: The Glendessary Press, 1975], p. 76).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-53. (See also Gus Liebenow, *The Evolution of Privilege* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969], pp. 61-63).

⁸⁴ For detailed discussion of Blyden's views on race and Islam during this period, see Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden*, Chapter 5, *passim*. V.Y. Mudimbe has written a penetrating analysis of contradictions in Blyden's thought and his pioneering role in the development of an Africa-oriented ideology (*The Invention of Africa* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988] pp. 98-134). See also Blyden's observations on Sierra Leone and a comparison with Liberia in Chapter 10 of *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*.

⁸⁵ Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden*, pp. 106-107, 140-144.

⁸⁶ For a cogent discussion of the dissident views of Blyden and Crummell, see Henry S. Wilson, ed., *Origins of West African Nationalism* [London: Macmillan & Co., 1969] pp. 20-24, 34-41, 105 ff. If Anderson entertained any particular conviction about the political controversies raging about him in mid-nineteenth century Liberia, scarcely any evidence of it is reflected in his writings, excepting, perhaps, his occasional admonishment of government for inefficiency or indifference with regard to commercial and diplomatic opportunities in the interior.

⁸⁷ Sir Harry Johnston (*Liberia*, p. 250) remarks in passing that Anderson was still living in Monrovia in 1905. As exploration of the interior increased during the late nineteenth century he frequently was sought out for guidance. Johann Büttikofer's party consulted with him in 1880 prior to undertaking a major research expedition (See *Reisebilder Aus Liberia* Vol. I [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1890] pp. 29-30).

⁸⁸ Quoted in Huberich, *Political and Legislative History*, pp. 1232-1233.

⁸⁹ Humphrey Fisher, "New Introduction," p. v. (See Note 46 above). This situation is remarkably similar to that in 1858 when President Stephen Allen Benson sponsored the expedition of Seymour and Ash with the aim of reaching to "Moosadoo" (See Note 45 above). Seymour had emigrated from the United States to Liberia in 1848 where he became a prominent citizen and founder of an independent mission known as Paynesville in the interior. In 1855 he made a tour of the country interior to Grand Bassa (See his journal reprinted from the *Liberia Herald* in the *African Repository*, June 1856, pp. 169-182). Three years later,

President Benson encouraged him to make a further exploration with Musadu as the destination. Though it was commonly reported that the expedition was funded by public subscription from Liberians, the editor of the *Home and Foreign Record* of the Presbyterian Board of Publication, Vol XI, 1860, p. 302, prefaces a s of Seymour's journey with the statement: "...they undertook a long journey into the interior, under the general direction of President Benson, the funds for defraying the expenses of which, were raised in part in Liberia, but mainly contributed by a few liberal gentlemen in the city of New York." One wonders whether these American benefactors were the same who supported Anderson's expedition ten years later. Whatever the case, the special interest in such projects displayed by wealthy New Yorkers of the period is worthy of further research.

⁹⁰ "Journey to Musardu" 1870, p. 5.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 6-7.

⁹² See the brief introduction to the 1970 narrative by Joseph Henry, Secretary to Smithsonian Institution, indicating that the manuscript was sponsored by H. Maunsell Schieffelin and presented to the Smithsonian for distribution. As for the tone of the opening remarks of the narrative, it appears that Anderson was something of a celebrity upon his return to Monrovia. He and his wife were honored in a formal reception given by Edward J. Roye, a close friend of Blyden and former President Daniel B. Warner who were vigorous supporters of his progressive tribal policies. In May of the same year Roye was elected President by an enthusiastic popular constituency, but by May of 1971 the conservative faction of the legislature had aroused a successful movement to depose him: he was impeached, jailed, and eventually drowned in an attempt to escape to a British ship in the harbor. (Cf. A. Doris Banks Henries, *Presidents of the First African Republic* [London: Macmillan, 1963] p. 45).

⁹³ Of the latter he writes: "I was particularly blessed by Providence in getting in my interest a near relation of the king's. He is a Gola man by the civilized name of Chancellor. He had long resided in Monrovia and Cape Palmas with one of our best citizens, Dr. S.F. McGill, and could speak English fluently, besides several native tongues. He adhered with unflagging seal to my interest, and never ceased importuning his royal kinsman night and day respecting my affairs. He was of mild disposition, full of encouragement and sympathy; having nothing to contradict the universal benevolence of his person and character..." (*Ibid.* pp. 33-34).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51. These are the people referred to in Liberian nomenclature today as Belle. It is likely — though difficult to determine by his map — that they are the group Anderson speaks of in his 1874 journal as "another Pessey tribe called the Pelle or Belle people which had harassed the country for two years"

(*Narrative of the Expedition Dispatched to Musahdu by the Liberian Government in 1874*. Edited by Frederick Starr [Monrovia: College of West Africa Press, 1912] pp. 17-18). But in the 1870 report of the 1868-69 expedition he refers to them as Deh or Dey and, though not confusing them with the coastal Dei ("Dey"), he notes correctly the similarity of their language to the "Kroo" [Kruan or Kwa-speaking] peoples on the coast. D. Elwood Dunn and Svend Holsoe point out that these people call themselves Kuwaa, and that the name Belle is a disparagement stemming from the Manding term for cannibals (*Historical Dictionary of Liberia* [Metuchen, N.J. & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1985] pp. 105-106). The Gola refer to them as *Le* and share with other westerly groups a persistent lore attributing to them much the same characteristics stated by Anderson (See W.L. d'Azevedo *Gola of Liberia* Vol. 1 [New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1972] pp. 75, 172-173). Until recently, the remote village of Belle Yella in their territory had been the location of an infamous Liberian prison camp.

⁹⁶ Anderson, "Journey to Musardu," 1870, p. 53. The designations "Bonsie" and "Boozie" seem to be employed interchangeably in this section of the narrative [e.g., pp. 55-60]. Though this could be a typesetter's error, it is just as likely that Anderson's "Bonsie" are the western Loma, known as Gbunde in earlier sources, who are said to refer to themselves as "Gboode," and who Liberians called "the Domar Bouzie" as distinct from "the Wymar Bouzie" to the northeast (Cf. Dietrich Westermann and M.A. Bryan, *Languages of West Africa*, Part 2 [London: Oxford University Press, 1952] p. 38). Anderson's map clearly indicates that he passed first through an area designated as that of the "Domar Boozie" before continuing northeast to the "Wymar Boozie." Anderson's "Barline" refers to the northern Kpelle ("Pessy") district now known as the Gbalein-Faala Chiefdom of Lofa County. What is especially noteworthy here is the remarkable accuracy and detail of Anderson's pioneering ethnographic and demographic observations in areas that were not to be described again by Liberians or foreigners until after the turn of the twentieth century.

⁹⁷ "Journey to Musardu" 1870, pp. 53-54.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56. Ten years before, Seymour and Ash had discovered that this area was the source of the fine cotton cloth prized by Liberians and foreign traders.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁰⁰ This is not to say that Liberians were unaware of these important institutions, especially the widespread "Poro" that had been a special focus of European commentary about this region since the seventeenth century. Yet very little is said about them in early Liberian reports. Many of the events witnessed by Anderson, such as those involving warfare and ceremonial activities, certainly were linked to the traditions of the men's Poro association as well as the Sande association of women. Yet neither is specifically mentioned

(excepting for the brief comment on a "morose custom" presented below). It is possible, of course, that urban Liberians of the period took these practices for granted, or merely ignored them as elements of indigenous "heathenism."

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69. Compare this to Blyden's eloquent disquisition on "women's rights" and "the dark and gloomy harem" at Bopolu during the same period ("The Boporu Country," p. 330).

¹⁰² "Journey to Musardu," 1870, pp. 62-63. Again, compare Blyden's intimate and romantic exuberance concerning "Mandingo ladies" ("The Boporu Country," p. 329).

¹⁰³ "Journey to Musardu," 1870, pp. 71-76. Though Anderson makes much of the ferocity of the headman Comma, and identifies his town as the place where Seymour had his right hand "nearly slashed off," Seymour himself apparently took responsibility for his misfortune by attributing it to his failure to await the approval of a local chief to pass through the country (See *Home and Foreign Record* of the Presbyterian Church, 1869, p. 302). Nevertheless, his injury was sufficiently severe to cause his declining health. In a letter written by a Rev. T.E. Dillon, giving an account of a journey to "Gibbee Country" east of the town of Marshall, he writes: "When in the Gibbee country, I was within twenty miles of George L. Seymour's mission of 1859, among the Pessy people. The station was called Paynville [sic], the native name being Darpeh." A footnote reads: "Mr. Seymour was a Presbyterian missionary. While exploring further interiorward, he was wounded, and died from the effects, and his mission was thus ended" (From a section of "Extracts" from the New York State Colonization Journal of April, 1871 reprinted in Schieffelin, *Peoples of Africa*, pp. 142-143). George Seymour died in 1860, and his patron Stephen Benson died in 1865, three years before President Warren sponsored Anderson's expedition.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-86.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90. Moreover, he had grown up in Baltimore until he left for Liberia in 1851, and visited the United States a number of times thereafter. It seems doubtful that he would not have been familiar with the ubiquitous African-derived music of American slaves and free blacks (See, for example, Holloway *Africanisms in American Culture*, pp. 196; 200-201), unless his status as an educated free black man and member of the Liberian settler elite had diminished his appreciation of such cultural expressions.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* Here, as elsewhere, Anderson evidences a preoccupation with comparative physiognomy and skin color—especially with regard to certain admired Mandingo traits, and the individual variation found among indigenous peoples of the interior. Given the frequency of such comments in

Anderson's journals, one would suspect that these aspects of appearance were of particular significance to Liberians of the period.

108 "Expedition Dispatched to Musardu," 1874, p. 29. Anderson's sensitivity in this regard may stem from indications that he was not born a slave. A copy of his 1870 *Journey to Musardu* in the Rare Book Collection of the State University of New York at Binghamton has a handwritten note on the title page—"from Henry M. Schieffelin Esq., New York," and on the printed Introduction page there is a note in what appears to be the same handwriting—"Mr. Anderson went from Baltimore, Dec. 1851, then 16 years old—born free—1870, 35 years old." This book seems to be a pre-publication copy, for the Introduction does not carry the name of Joseph Henry, Secretary of the Smithsonian, and there is a long handwritten Table of Contents (possibly Anderson's) prior to its abridgement for printing. If Anderson was especially mindful of his freeborn status, it is not difficult to imagine the discomfort he, Blyden, and other repatriates might have experienced from the knowledge that the general opinion among indigenous Africans of the region was that all Liberians from America were ex-slaves.

109 "Journey to Musardu," 1870, pp. 90-91.

110 Elsewhere he uses epithets such as "our idolatrous Queahs" and "the wooden-headed tribes of our coast" ("Expedition Dispatched to Musardu," 1874, pp. 7, 29).

111 For example, at Bopolu he had spoken of the "jealousy of the Mandingoes" who did not want him to reach Musardu, and directed his Mandingo guide Beah to create delay and mischief along the way. Three months later in Loma country the guide disappeared: "Beah was trying to carry out the secret instructions he had received from the Boporu Mandingoes...he sent word to the Boozies at Zolu that they were not to allow me to go anywhere...I was now entirely abandoned...to grope my way to Musardu by inquiry or instinct" ("Journey to Musardu," 1870, pp. 48, 63-64, 69-70).

112 *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

113 *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 104.

114 *Ibid.*, p. 95 and *passim*.

115 For excellent discussions of the impact of these developments on Liberia, see Martin J. Ford "Ethnic Relations and the Transformation of Leadership Among the Dan of Nimba, Liberia." Ph.D. dissertation in Anthropology, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1990. Pp. 49-80; Richard A. Corby "Manding Traders and Clerics: The Development of Islam in Liberia to the 1870s." *Liberian Studies Journal* 8, 1988; and, Augustine Konneh "Indigenous

Entrepreneurs and Capitalists: the Role of the Mandingo in the Economic Development of Modern-day Liberia." Ph.D. dissertation in History, Indiana University, 1992.

116 "Journey to Musardu," 1870, pp. 100-101.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

118 *Ibid.*, pp. 100-102, 106-108.

Book Review

George D. Browne, *The Episcopal Church in Liberia Under Indigenous Leadership: Reflections on A 20-Year Episcopate*, Third World Literature Publishing House, 1994, 188 pp.

The book under review is a valuable, scholarly contribution to the study of Liberia and will serve as a useful research source for Liberianists. It provides a historical assessment of the Episcopal Church in Liberia over a period of 48 years. The author has cleverly woven together in a comprehensive and proportionate pattern past and present developments. The central theme, difficulties and challenges encountered in the last 20 years to achieve self-support and independence from the Church in America and the measures undertaken by the author, as diocesan head, to reach this and other goals, is vividly but modestly illustrated. All who read this book will be proud.

Browne objectively acknowledges the historical place of other religious groups in Liberia, such as the Muslims and adherents to the traditional religion; as well as the Baptist Church as the first Christian denomination. This, plus the account of his role in bringing into being the Liberian Council of Churches and ushering the Liberian Church into the Anglican Province of West Africa, demonstrates that he was not parochial in conceptualization, as many religious leaders are inclined to be.

The Episcopal Church in Liberia Under Indigenous Leadership interestingly reveals the parallel development of the Church and the Republic of Liberia. It clearly shows how difficult periods of national development coincided with problematic periods of the Church's growth, as were their stages of prosperity; perhaps a natural phenomenon.

The ten pages devoted to the work and leadership styles of George Browne's two immediate predecessors: Bishops B.W. Harris and Dillard Brown, provide an insight into the financial and spiritual attitude of the Church during that period as well as the nature and extent of support given by the parent organization in the United States. It facilitates an understanding and appreciation of problems the Liberian Bishop had to face and the methods he used to solve them.

In six brief chapters, Bishop George D. Browne provides a vivid account of his 20 years stewardship. The perplexing situation he inherited in terms of lack of self-support, low local morale and dependency; the difficult choice he had to make between lay education and clerical training as a basis of increasing and sustaining membership; the social problems he encountered with the State and the Masonic Craft; the steps involved in joining the Province of West Africa; and the devastating effects of the current civil war on the Liberian Church as well as on him personally, make for an easy and informative reading.

In a significant revelation George D. Browne discusses the time and manner he intended to terminate his tenure as Bishop of the Liberian Diocese. But, of course, it is regrettable that the Almighty had other plans. He was made to take his place among his predecessors five years before reaching his goal and the canonical retirement age of 68.

In summation, *The Episcopal Church in Liberia Under Indigenous Leadership: Reflections on A 20-Year Episcopate*, by George D. Browne, is an interesting and readable book. It gives a vivid account of the Liberian Church, not only during the 20 years of George D. Browne's administration, but as far back as 1945 when Bishop B.W. Harris assumed the reins of the diocese, covering a period of 48 years. It is significant that this includes the bishopric of three among the four Blacks in the Liberian Church. The book is a testimony of Bishop Browne's scholarship, courage and leadership. It would be a valuable research source in the library of Liberians in general and Episcopalians in particular. The author needs our commendation and respect. There are 10 pages of photographs which will serve as a monument to the work of George D. Browne, the first Liberian-born Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

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Gifford, Paul, *Christianity and Politics in Doe's Liberia*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Fascinating was the word I used to describe this book at the time I completed reading it. I came to realize how little I knew about politics and Christianity in Liberia although I had been schooled in the country. I do not remember doing any in-depth Liberian history not even at the college level. And I am sure I am not an exception, there are many Liberians who know next to nothing about the country they call home. I want my frustration to be known because I have been in gatherings in this country (United States) and issues about Liberia were brought up and saw Liberians looking for help. This is not to imply that ordinary Liberians should know everything about Liberia, but there are basic facts that I think every educated Liberian should know.

Well, I was asked to do a book review not preach, so let me turn my attention to Gifford's book. In the introduction Gifford points out a sad and unethical practice in African Christianity. The unreliability of statistical information for African Christianity is notorious. Most churches do not have any kind of record at all. And when their statistics are calculated to provide information, most often it is for purposes like obtaining financial assistance which encourages consider-

able exaggeration. When churches lie to get funds you wonder what else they would not do considering the situation.

The Christianity that had come to Liberia in the early 1800's can only be described as the "slave Christianity." By and large those who brought Christianity to Liberia in the first place were white Americans, free born and freed slaves. This will explain why there was an emphasis on experience, conversion, revival, and the lack of social concern that came to characterize Liberian Christianity. When the role of the Christian Church in Liberia is examined, Christianity as part of the dominant structure becomes clear. Professing Christianity and speaking formal English were marks of identification that one belonged to the dominant class. The True Whig Party, Freemasonry, and Christianity were reportedly the three pillars on which the whole oppressive structure was built. Religious leaders and political leaders were sometimes one and the same. A perfect example is at the time of the 1980 coup: William Tolbert was the President of the country and also _____ of the Baptist Convention; Bennie Warner was Vice-President and the presiding Bishop of the United Methodist Church; and Reginald Townsend was the National _____ of the True Whig Party and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church. So stood the three pillars of the establishment, these three at the very center of the Whig privilege, were also the heads of three of Liberia's oldest churches.

Liberia has been infiltrated by all kinds of theologies over the years, especially during the eighties when all kinds of evangelical theologies were being preached. When people are taught that demons are responsible for all kinds of evils, including individual sins, poverty and sickness, and the remedy is prayer, they become passive even in the face of blatant economic and political ills. The socio-political affect of this kind of Christianity was powerful to the point that educated and semi-educated Liberians sat and watched the deterioration of the country, because to have gotten involved was to have fallen under the influence of satan. Liberian evangelical Christianity not only left the system unchallenged, it was always quick to praise government officials. Evangelists from abroad who came to Liberia for revival services also made it their business to meet government officials. In most cases, these were the evangelists who brought their Faith Gospel of Health and Wealth to Liberia. This "gospel" taught individuals to trust God for their share of God's riches. Many individuals took seriously this gospel and waited for their riches to come but instead of riches they continued to see more and more poverty and human sufferings.

Political corruption has been a major part of our history as a Nation. From our presidential election in 1927 that won us a place in the Guinness Book of Records to the Military Rule in the 1980's we continue to make negative records. Foreign companies drained our natural resources with the help of many of our government officials. Politicians spoke about societal problems, even though they knew they were not going to do anything about them. As a way of

protecting their interest, foreign companies hired government officials as their representatives to the government. Therefore, when a government official is the legal advisor to a foreign company, you wonder whose interest is he serving.

When some Liberians declare that the civil war is a form of punishment from God, their declaration is coming out of a context. If demons are responsible for the social evil then God is dealing deterioration of the Nation while at the same time observing the degree of efficiency and honesty with which foreign organizations were being run by mostly white individuals. Some drew a sad conclusion, that whites were not only more educated; they "possess some moral superiority." It was therefore not surprising when a Liberian told a white foreigner, "you can be trusted because you are white." (p. 187) Many Liberians would strongly disagree with such a remark but this reviewer's feeling was reinforced when in the late 1980's the American government sent a team of financial advisors (white men) to Liberia to help the government deal with the economic crisis of the Nation. I do not think the issue was skin color, it was corruption; every level of government had become very corrupt.

I highly recommend this book to the general public, especially Liberians, for it is well written and documented. While it is true that we may not all agree with the book's arguments I still maintain the view that this is a book of documented facts.

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Easy Prey: Child Soldier in Liberia

New York: Human Rights Watch/Africa
Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Projects, 1994. 80 pp.

This report by Human Rights Watch/Africa is a vivid description of the existence of Child Soldiers in Liberia. Through interviews with young combatants, oral accounts of social workers, counselors, representatives of warring factions, and international organizations, the report's author records for posterity a valuable feature of the Liberian civil war.

The report cites the involvement of all warring factions with the exception of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) in the employment of child soldiers as active combatants. It is however highly probable that the AFL used youngsters under 18 years old. This high probability is cited because of the haphazard, hasty, and unstructured manner in which youngsters were recruited in the early

months/weeks prior to the start of full scale warfare. As rebel leader Charles Taylor's forces advanced, the government of Liberia under Samuel Doe reportedly also recruited idling street youngsters and pressed them into military duties.

These youngsters were quite ignorant of the implications of military action, and were easy recruits due to their urge for adventure. A large percentage of the recruits were born in villages where there are no official records of actual birth dates.

In the absence of ideology on part of the warring factions, recruits were drawn, in addition to the urge for adventure, by peer pressure, survival needs, coercion, and deception by the factions.

The report cites conversation with six young combatants under age 18 at a checkpoint between Yekepa, Nimba County and Danane, Ivory Coast in June of 1991: "why are you fighting?" Reply: "For Justice, Freedom, and Equality." What do you mean by Justice, Freedom, and Equality? "Gangai [Taylor's *Non de Guerre*] promised if we fight he will give us better schools, homes and hospitals."

Easy Prey cites the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child which requires governments to promote the Social Re-integration of child victims of armed conflicts. Liberian authorities signed and ratified the Convention of July 1993, though children are being used as combatants. It is hoped that the International efforts will be made to enforce the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The report is both a useful addition to the growing literature on the civil war in Liberia and an objective recording of the flagrant violations of the rights of childhood.

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Recent Publications and Theses

Brauntigam, Deborah, "South-South Technology Transfer: The Case of China's Kpatawee Rice Project in Liberia." *World Development* (Washington), 21, 12, 1993, pp. 1989-2001.

Conteh, Al-Hassan. "Migration and household structure in Liberia." Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1993. 204 pp.

Deger, Saadet and Somnath Sen, *Arms and the Child*, Oxford University Press, 1994, 176 pp.

Dunn, D. Elwood, *Liberia*, World Bibliographical Series Volume 157, CLIO Press, Oxford (U. K.) 1995. 207 pp.

Gale, Steven H. *West African Folktales*, Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Publishing Group, 1995. 216 pp. (With Instructor's Manual, 48 pp.) [23 Liberian tales, pp. 67-159]

Goodwin-Gill, Guy S. and Ilene Cohn, *Child Soldiers* (A study on behalf of the Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva), 1994, 250 pp.

Horton, S. Augustus P., *Liberia's Underdevelopment In Spite of the Struggle: A Personal Analysis of the Underlying Reasons for Liberia's Underdevelopment*, University Press of America, 1994, 122 pp.

Kollehlon, Konia T., "Religious Affiliation and Fertility In Liberia," *Journal Biosec. Science* (1994), 26, pp. 493-504.

Nagbe, K. Moses, *The Road to Romeo* (A short story that relates to civil war conditions in Liberia), Pen-Tina publications, Monrovia RL, 1992, 62 pp.

Saha, Santosh Chandra. "The Romance of Nationhood: An Investigation of the Attitudes of educated Africans toward Liberia, 1847-1980." Ph.D. thesis, Kent State University, 1993. 353 pp.

Save the Children. *Children at War*. 1994, 22 pp. (Available at 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8 Rd., England).

Somah, Syruliva L., *Historical Settlement of Liberia and Its Environmental Impact*, University Press of America, 1994, 172 pp.

Sundiata, Ibrahim K., *From Slaving to Neoslavery: The Bight of Biafra and Fernando PO in the Era of Abolition, 1827-1930*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1995. 256 pp.

Weller, M. (Ed.), *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement: The Liberian Crisis*. Cambridge International Documents Series, Vol. 6, Cambridge University Press, 1994. 465 pp.

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News and Notes

Svend Holsoe's Liberia Collection Now Housed at Indiana University

The Archives of Traditional Music of Indiana University announces the donation of the largest private collection of Liberian research materials to the University at Bloomington, Indiana. The Svend E. Holsoe Collection to be housed in the Archives at Morrison Hall incorporates audiotapes, films, manuscripts, photos, and documents over the last forty years. Indiana celebrated the announcement of the donation on March 1, 1995 with a special day of events climaxed by a lecture by Dr. Amos Sawyer, Past Interim President of Liberia. Scholars who joined Dr. Holsoe at Indiana University for the occasion included D. Elwood Dunn, Warren L. d'Azevedo, William Siegmann, Jane Martin, Lester Monts, and Cynthia Schmidt. The event was hosted by Ruth M. Stone, Director of the Archives of Traditional Music.

With the creation of a major center for Liberian research materials, the Archives welcomes additional recordings and documents that other individuals may hold. The state-of-the-art storage and cataloging facilities are supported by the university's strong commitment to preservation of these materials for use by present and future scholars.

Deadly Pursuit by NPFL and LPC in Pleebo and Harper

A Report from the Catholic Church of Maryland County to *Africa Faith & Justice Network*, Washington, D.C., November 28, 1994.

On October 25, 1994, the residents of Pleebo city (18 miles north of Harper), Maryland County, were awakened by the sound of different types of guns. There was fierce fighting with heavy artillery exchange between Taylor's NPFL and the so-called LPC (Liberian Peace Council).

At about 4 a.m., NPFL attacked the city which for one and a half months had been occupied by LPC following the escape of NPFL to the Ivory Coast. At day break, many people were fleeing the city while others took refuge in the Catholic Church and the Rectory. A nurse who ran to the Rectory cried that her daughter

had been killed by the NPFL soldiers familiar to her. They had threatened to kill her, accusing her of providing medical care to the LPC soldiers. They shot between her legs several times and let her go only after killing her daughter.

Meanwhile, some soldiers at the Rectory disrobed the priest of his cassock and other clothing leaving him in his brief and T-shirt only.

In his effort to intercede for civilians who were being taken from their homes by the NPFL soldiers the priest was escorted by two of the soldiers to collect some civilians who were trapped in their houses, including four missionary sisters, to be taken to the church and Rectory for safety.

In order to get permission from a higher authority to continue his effort beyond the public transport parking station, the priest was directed to a General Morris Nyan Campari who sent him to General Zahr at the station. There, Zahr ordered his men to strip the priest of his T-shirt. Immediately, the shirt was ripped off in pieces, and the Priest was told to sit on the pavement. There were NPFL soldiers (familiar faces) all around Zahr. About eight dead bodies seen on the ground appeared to be civilians—two of them women. One man had been decapitated, his abdomen cut open and his head was on the street away from him. The Priest was later ordered to return to the Rectory clad in his brief only, accompanied by four armed NPFL soldiers.

A man who was going to the Rectory with his wife and his eight month child was killed before his family. Eye witnesses reported that another young man was taken from the church and thrown alive into the flames of the house of the city mayor, his boss, with his hands and feet tied; a third man was taken from the Rectory, tortured with puncture wounds of his chest, killed, and his body left outside the Rectory. Whenever the NPFL soldiers passed by the body they would mockingly comment that their "friend" was still "sleeping."

The shooting continued until 5:00 p.m. There was no way to get food for those trapped in the Church and the Rectory. It was at that time that the NPFL soldiers declared the mission grounds and surrounding quarters as "battle zone." They then ordered the priest to collect his people from the rectory and the church to be taken to "Carter High," a notorious NPFL checkpoint, allegedly for "safety." On their way out from the rectory, it was observed that the group that took refuge in the church, including the four sisters, had already left, presumably for the checkpoint.

On the journey there was a change of escorts. When it appeared that the new escorts were not told of their destination, the priest led the people in a different

direction opposite the checkpoint, tramping for two days through bushes and farming area to the Cavalla River, where he crossed to safety to the Ivory Coast.

Harper

At about 3:00 p.m. that day, news of the Pleebo attack by NPFL soldiers reach Harper. There were reports of chaos and destruction in Pleebo and that many civilians had been killed. The priest and the nurse were falsely (as we learned two days later) reported dead. LPC soldiers had retreated, the report continued, and NPFL fighters were advancing rapidly to Harper. Many civilians, accused by NPFL of being sympathizers or supporters of LPC, because of their decision to remain in the city during LPC occupation, were victims; particularly at risk were the Catholic Church and medical personnel, as well as any service group: i.e., owners of stores, entertainment places and cook shops. Also at risk were young male civilians whom NPFL claims are recruits of LPC. It was reported that NPFL soldiers were on a rampage, totally mad.

Hearing this news, overwhelming fear gripped Harper. By late evening, hundreds of people were fleeing the city. Many elderly and sick sought refuge at the Rehab Center where Sr. Mary Sponsa Beltram, OSF, a missionary, takes care of handicapped children and the elderly.

When it was obvious that the Liberian Church personnel were indeed targets, including the Bishop of the diocese and priests, it became necessary that they too should leave. Father John Thompson, SDB, a missionary priest who did not consider himself at great risk, being a foreigner, decided to remain in Harper with Sr. Sponsa and the children.

The Cavalla River was overflowing and the current very strong. There were only small canoes available for crossing. In their panic to cross, many lost their lives by drowning.

Upon his arrival to safety in the Ivory Coast, the priest reported that the sisters and the others in the Church might have been taken to "Carter High" and later to the NPFL base north of Pleebo. The sisters and some Lebanese merchants were taken to the border for crossing on October 29, 1994. They had been in the custody of the NPFL for four days.

LPC Entry in Pleebo and Harper

The pandemonium that broke out in Pleebo and Harper shortly before the arrival on September 14, 1994 of LPC forces in the area was a result of stories circulated by displaced people from Sinoe County about atrocities allegedly committed by LPC when they entered Sinoe County a year ago.

Fearing that they too might be victims of atrocities thousands of Marylanders, as well as NPFL fighters and displaced people from Sinoe, fled to the Ivory

Coast last September when reports of LPF advance on Pleebo and Harper reached them; many people who fled at that time had not yet returned before the attack by NPFL.

The offensive by NPFL against LPC on October 25, 1994, was very sudden and said to be the worst in Maryland County since the civil war, even including the ECOMOG bombing and shelling in May 1993. In the rush to get to safety, people, (including ourselves) left all their belongings behind. All the farmers abandoned their crops.

Many of the fighters who launched this attack from the Ivory Coast were NPFL men in arm who fled the area last September. They had occupied Maryland County for four years and were familiar to most Marylands. They and their leaders were often seen in Tabou, Ivory Coast, during the one and half months of LPC occupation of Harper and Pleebo.

Looting By Zahr's Men

It is reported that Zahr is desperately pursuing the destruction of Harper and Pleebo to, as he put it "teach Marylanders a lesson," since their county had been spared much destruction during the almost five years of civil war. There is now unrestricted looting, and even roofs of houses in Pleebo are being taken down. People are still being hunted and killed, even in villages. The latest death now confirmed is that of Mr. John Hillary Tubman who was reported killed by NPFL's notorious "Rebel King." The late Tubman was a leading Liberian businessman in Harper and proprietor of the only cinema in the city.

Although there is a restriction on the entry to and departure from Liberia, NPFL fighters are seen crossing every day to the Ivory Coast, some with looted goods for sale. With Tabou crowded as it is, and the ease with which NPFL fighters are allowed to commute with border lines and move about in the Ivory Coast, Liberian civilians in Tabou feel insecure.

Since it is uncertain when the mayhem will end, we have begun making plans to mobilize our priests and other personnel to see how the thousands of Liberians taking refuge in the Ivory Coast could best be served.

We solicit your prayers for the return of peace to our country in the immediate future.

Some Thoughts About the Liberia National Conference

Amos C. Sawyer

I. Introduction

The Liberia National Conference now scheduled to be held from Wednesday, August 24, to Saturday, September 3, 1994 is the current focus of the peace process. It is expected that the deliberations of the conference will be helpful in moving the peace process forward. Liberians who are interested in achieving peace in their country and restoring their land and the international community, particularly the West African sub-region, the United Nations, and the United States must be interested in the conduct and outcome of the conference and, therefore must do what is necessary to ensure its success.

The organizers of the conference must be commended for their initiative. They must also be thanked for welcoming inputs from others so as to improve the organization of the conference, ensure relevant and high quality deliberations, and implementable decisions. It is against this background that I venture to raise a few issues and make a few suggestions.

I have had an opportunity to talk with a cross section of Liberians including officials of the Liberian National Transitional Government and representatives of warring factions; I have also been privileged to hear the views of foreigners residing in Liberia, diplomats accredited near this capital and representatives of international organizations operating here in Liberia. Up to this point, there seems to be a few basic issues that require attention in order to ensure clearer understanding and a confusion-free start to the conference. It is important that these issues be addressed, where appropriate, prior to or during the conference; because a conference held amid unaddressed fundamental issues or a conference not appropriately focused to address fundamental issues may not only end inconclusively, but may, as a result of its inconclusive ending, add to the already existing problems which it was organized to address in the first place, rather than reducing or throwing further light on the problems. Therefore, it is with a view to ensuring clarity of issues and sound, positive and productive outcomes that the issues raised and the suggestions made here are to be seen.

II. Issues

The first issue is, what is the Liberia National Conference? Is it a sovereign national conference or a people's consultative assembly? The answer to this question will clarify a number of issues that have to do with the character and nature of the conference, its authority and mandate, the nature and force of its decisions, the role of the LNTG in the conference, the question of eligibility for participation, and the implications of its decisions for the Cotonou Accord.

A sovereign national conference is a conference organized by the governing authority, i.e., the government, upon broad agreement amongst the major national forces, with the participation of all relevant political, military and social forces within the country, with a view to ending a national crisis, shaping the national destiny, and putting the country back on a proper constitutional footing after the ending of the crisis. Because a sovereign national conference is "sovereign," its decisions are binding on all . . .

If the Liberia National Conference is intended to be a sovereign conference, it requires a more active involvement of the LNTG. It will have to be launched on the basis of a legislation, an executive order or some other legal mandate from the government. The government will have to be an active party to the conference. All major national institutions and most major national forces will have to be committed to participating and abiding by its decisions.

Clearly, in current circumstances, the holding of a sovereign national conference will also require close consultations with the international community, particularly ECOWAS, the UN and other governments and international agencies that are cooperating under the Cotonou Accord; because decisions taken by a sovereign national conference may have immediate and far reaching implications for courses already charted and for the nature of further international cooperation.

Many Liberians and foreigners are of the impression that because of popular support for the Liberia National Conference and frustrations over the failure thus far to trigger much success particularly with respect to disarmament since March 7, 1994, the decisions of Liberians that emanate from the conference should constitute law and be implemented as such. On this issue, we must temper the expectations of the public prior to the holding of the conference, and make it clear at the very opening of the conference that the decisions of the Liberia National Conference will not carry the force of law.

If the Liberia National Conference is to be a sovereign national conference, time will be required to have all the necessary conditions met. At best, at this point, the first item of business at the Liberian National Conference may be to address this issue and organize the appropriate approach for the holding of a sovereign national conference in the immediate future if one is desired, or was intended. Alternatively, the conference may consider adjoining shortly after opening to put in place the necessary measures to effect its transformation into a sovereign national conference.

The other option is to affirm that the Liberia National Conference is a consultative conference of Liberian citizens held under chapter III, article 17, of the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, which reads as follows:

All persons, at all times, in an orderly and peaceable manner, shall have the right to assemble and consult upon the common good, to instruct their representatives, to petition the government or other functionaries for the redress of grievances and to associate fully with others or refuse to associate in political parties, trade unions and other organizations.

To the extent applicable, in view of our hybrid constitutional circumstance, a people's consultative conference held under the Constitution at this time will serve the useful purpose of deliberating on the issues and defining positions which are to be transmitted to the governmental institutions for consideration. There is an important place for a "sense of the people" position on the critical issues which befuddle the peace process at this time, especially in view of the stalled ent process and justifiably growing international impatience with us.

Since the Cotonou Accord produced a "government by agreement or contract" amongst "the parties," the further marginalization of the Liberian people from the peace process can be put in check with one great act of solidarity and determination manifested in a clear-cut, unequivocal, policy and action-orientated position coming out of the Liberia National Conference, a people's consultative assembly. The mechanism can then be put in place to ensure that conference decisions are properly introduced into the governmental decision-making processes to eventually have the force of law.

III. Objectives

The second issue is, what does the Liberia National Conference seek to achieve? As I understand from the proposed agenda of the conference published in local newspapers, and from discussions with some members of the organizing committee, this conference is organized with a view to energizing the peace process by (a) reviewing progress achieved thus far and identifying obstacles and difficulties along the path to peace; (b) strengthening the peace process by enlisting the greater and more direct and intensive involvement of various relevant sectors of the Liberian people, (c) improving the strategy for the achievement of peace as stipulated in the Cotonou Accord, (d) providing an opportunity for the Liberian people to have a decisive word on the course of the peace process. If these are the objectives, then the conference organizers will do well to focus mainly, if not exclusively on them. This will require the operationalization of the objectives to a point where they can be stated in clearly focused, on concrete terms that have a direct connection with the Cotonou Accord: If this is to be the approach, then there are four key issues of immediate and urgent consideration emanating out of Cotonou: (a) disarmament, (b) repatriation, (c) elections, (d) governance.

IV. Approach

Quite a bit of time and resources of the conference are committed by the organizers to reconciliation and healing, and to the resolution of ethnic conflicts. These are all issues of prime importance which must be addressed. Nonetheless, the time frame within which the conference is scheduled, will only permit a preliminary consideration of these rather deep and protracted problems. Moreover, the question of reconciliation and healing only fully comes alive at this time within the context of disarmament. And so we will do well to contextualize the urgent issues properly, particularly when agreements or understandings regarding some issues serve as incentives to making progress on others.

Disarmament remains the central issue, and it is important that a strategy is devised to move the conference forward in such a way so that other issues are discussed and decisions made in view of their potential contribution to moving the disarmament process forward. And so, far from perceiving atomistic and autonomous issues requiring independent analysis and decisions, the interconnections of the major and immediate issues which hinder the peace process must be properly made, the issues properly juxtaposed and time appropriately allotted for their discussion and for conference decision-making.

If we accept the view that disarmament is the most crucial issue requiring the attention of the conference, then the decisions about repatriation, elections, and transitional governance must be linked to and be compatible with decisions regarding disarmament. The conference will have to organize itself to come forward with an integrated package.

Against this perspective, let us take a cursory look at each of the key issues: (a) disarmament, (b) repatriation, (c) elections, (d) governance.

V. Disarmament

The disarmament program has not worked. It is said that the failure can be attributed to a number of major and minor reasons. These include intransigence of warring factions, due largely to insincerity and the existence of hidden agenda on the part of the leaders of the warring parties; failure to meet their expectations with respect to the allocation of government positions; constant shifts and hemorrhaging within the ranks of warring factions leaving them unstable with violent leadership struggles; and negative impact of internal leadership squabbles on the allocation of positions in government, etc. Each of these and all other arguments require careful articulation by those who hold them at the conference so as to facilitate a clear understanding of the problem by all participants in the conference. All of this should lead to a careful consideration of the current strategy for disarmament, an assessment of the need to re-inforce that strategy, modify it or change it completely.

Many individuals and organizations amongst the Liberian people are already beginning to call for the enforcement of disarmament as a result of the failure of voluntary compliance. If this question becomes a consideration of the conference, a number of attending issues will have to be addressed. First, enforcement of disarmament against three or more warring parties is not a practical proposition. Every effort has to be made to ensure compliance of most of the warring parties, and then, to the extent that one warring faction continues to pose the obstacle to disarmament, a strategy for enforcement against that isolated warring faction can then become a NATIONAL CAUSE.

Second, it must be borne in mind that enforcement of disarmament carries a considerable price in lives and property. Liberians must be prepared to pay that price. To sit by and expect, at this stage in our crisis, ECOMOG to take the leadership in the enforcement of disarmament is unrealistic and a distorted reading of international opinion at this time. Liberians are being reminded by the UN, ECOWAS, and every other international body that it is time that we begin to carry an increasing burden for the achievement of peace in our country. ECOMOG will not become our national army, no matter what we expect out of a Status of Forces Agreement. Decisions to send soldiers into enforcement action are decisions reserved to governments, who in the final analysis, will have to answer to their population and institutions about the consequences of such decisions. This brings us to the debate about a national army.

Proposals have been advanced about the establishment of a new national army comprising warring factions as a condition for disarmament. While we continue to oppose this proposal, we must distinguish it from a proposal to organize an appropriate fighting force as an instrument for the enforcement of disarmament if needs be. In this respect, unless the Armed Forces of Liberia opts to be considered a faction, it must be considered the legal and appropriate organ for such national service. As the legitimate military force of Liberia, the Armed Forces of Liberia must be properly placed, as the constitution requires, under civil authority, given the necessary and needed reinvigoration to ensure its social, geographic and ethnic balance, and outfitted to undertake its prescribed national responsibility.

The pension and benefit scheme already passed into law by the IGNU serves as a basis for the refurbishment of the institution while rewarding long term and other service by those of its members who will be retired. Innuendoes and distortions notwithstanding, IGNU had negotiated the signing of the AFL and the retirement of those who for reasons are to be determined appropriate for retirement, thus, the passage of the retirement benefits act, the best this country has ever had. IGNU never negotiated away the disbandment of the Armed Forces of Liberia or the total demobilization of its members. In the event members of the Armed Forces declare themselves a "warring faction," then it is important to consider their status on an individual basis so that the appropriate

changes can be made in that national institution enabling it to efficiently undertake its legal national responsibility.

Clearly, the enforcement of disarmament does have implications for ECOWAS, particularly ECOMOG, the United Nations and other international agencies. These must be fully studied and appropriate actions taken by the Government of Liberia.

VI. Repatriation

At present, more than 30 percent of our population resides in refugee camps in neighboring countries. Strategies for their repatriation and assistance for that purpose are amongst the issues of this crisis which have been most successfully addressed. Evidence seen from spontaneous repatriation gives indication that once the disarmament question is successfully addressed, the repatriation program is likely to be successful.

Perhaps, what needs to be addressed are questions as to how various approaches to disarmament will affect repatriation, or how the misery of being a refugee may serve as an incentive for participation in a national program to enforce disarmament. In other words, different scenarios on disarmament may call into question diversified approaches to repatriation. Also, until disarmament takes place and the conditions become conducive for Liberians to return home, what can Liberians at home, as individuals and in their institutional structures do to improve the lives and well-being of Liberians who live in refugee camps? In any event, it is important to discuss the question of repatriation as it relates to disarmament both from the standpoint of an inducement to the disarmament process as well as a beneficiary of that process, and the appropriate conference decisions taken.

VII. Elections

One of the developments which has spurred the frenzy about deciding what to do about the peace process at this time relates to the fact that the Cotonou Agreement had anticipated sufficient progress in disarmament to the extent that elections would take place on the 7th of September, 1994. Implied in that consideration was that the inauguration of the newly elected government would take place within a short time following the announcement of the election results. Also, the Cotonou Accord provided a specific time table within which those responsible for disarmament, namely ECOMOG and the UN, and those responsible for elections, namely, the LNTG would fulfill their assignments. This has not happened. Surprisingly and ironically, while in the premises, there are shouts about the inability of LNTG to fulfill its mandate and therefore a need to review its tenure, there are no corresponding shouts that the UN and ECOMOG have also been unable to carry out disarmament and, therefore, their

mandates should also be reviewed. The irony is that these institutions are themselves warning Liberians that they are indeed reviewing their missions here.

Nevertheless, the strong interest in elections as the panacea for the resolution of the crisis must be addressed. Elections are seen both as an exit from war as well as the foundation upon which a new Liberian democracy is to be built. In order to achieve both objectives (exiting war and beginning democracy), elections require disarmament and, as such, any and all considerations of elections must take place with full cognizance that disarmament is the essential precondition. With this linkage, the questions then are, to what extent can issues related to elections and preparation for elections be made to contribute to the process of **ent**? To what extent can the national and international institutions concerned about elections be focused to contribute to the achievement of d' **ent**? These questions need to be addressed.

Finally on the question of elections, considerable concern has been shown by the international community with respect to the electoral system to be adopted in view of the fact that elections are, in the current circumstance, the exit from war, and therefore could not be held under ideal conditions as stipulated in the elections law of Liberia, particularly under the single-member district system of electoral representation. The alternative of a proportional representative system has been floated by the United Nations.

While this recommendation may immediately address the questions associated with the mechanics of elections in Liberia, it may not fully address the question of the nature of the relationship between the representative and the people, the constituency, a questions that has a lot to do with how people feel in harmony with or alienated from their government, a question which, if not properly addressed leaves a dangerous vacuum which could in time be transformed into breeding ground for conflicts between local people and their officials and government.

With respect to the type of electoral system to adopt at this time, the question should revolve around the functions to be performed by elected officials in the immediate post-war period as well as considerations about the mechanics of elections. It may well be possible to marry together appropriate features of various forms of electoral systems to fit the current multiple functions of elections and elected officials at this time in our political history. A careful consideration of these issues should emerge from the conference and the appropriate conference decisions taken.

VIII. Governance

The most talked about issue with respect to the conference is the fate of the LNTG. Newspaper reports have spanned the spectrum of speculations and

proposals, ranging from advocacy for the extension of the mandate of the LNTG as currently constituted to liquidation of the LNTG and its replacement by an executive president and one or two vice presidents. Again, like most other issues, this question is discussed in a rather atomistic manner, in isolation of the main question which is disarmament. The fact is that in such changing circumstance where Liberians will have to take greater responsibility for disarmament, any consideration of the nature, character or type of governance, let alone the quality of personalities required to govern must be directly linked to the implementation of the adopted strategy for disarmament. It is the workload that should determine who is recruited to do the work. Let us not continue to place the cart before the horse.

Cotonou assumed that full cooperation in disarmament would obtain, once opportunity was available to warring factions for greater participation in governance. If it turns out that this assumption no longer holds true, then the new strategy for disarmament must require a corresponding and compatible strategy for governance. These issues must be carefully and seriously addressed.

Finally, with respect to governance, the economic situation as at present must be addressed. No matter the governmental form, strategies must be formulated to ensure that government attain access to resources to support its activities. At present the natural resources of the country are still outside the control of the government. Warring factions, including those that are parties to the Cotonou Agreement and are participating in the government, continue to occupy areas of Liberia which contain the rich resources of the country.

Again, the disarmament question needs to be addressed in a way that will provide strategic economic opportunities to the government and the economic question has to be addressed in a way to support the disarmament process. Perhaps it is possible with the cooperation of ECOMOG and cooperating warring factions to carry out disarmament on an incremental basis, section by section, with some priority given to certain areas of economic importance. The fact remains that no government will be considered viable, meet its obligations with respect to the issues of the day and successfully undertake normal functions of governance without access to resources over and above those currently available from maritime revenues.

The international community should take as much interest in this issue as it has taken in the dispensing of relief and the search for a rapprochement amongst divergent groups in the conflict. The often heard criticism that LNTG has not been able to extend its authority across the country cannot be justifiably leveled against LNTG in the absence of disarmament and the availability of resources. The conference will do well to address the economic question which is so crucial to governance and make the appropriate conference decisions.

IX. Conclusion

The protracted nature of the peace process and the failure of several approaches to produce the desired results have left the international community weary about the Liberian crisis and about Liberians. The threats to pull out or down-size international operations are apparently real. Unfortunately, the failed formulae were not put together by Liberians alone. Many of the international agencies that are now manifesting fatigue and impatience were themselves party to or originators of ideas and arrangements which have not worked. We can only ask that they too look more realistically on the Liberian situation, engage Liberians continually in the search for approaches to the resolution of the problem and scale down the threats of withdrawal because the threats of withdrawal are themselves incentives to those who do not want to earnestly find peace in Liberia.

The ultimate responsibility for peace in Liberia rests on the shoulders of Liberians. Unless Liberians manifest greater evidence that they want peace and are prepared to honestly and publicly demonstrate the goodwill and sincerity required to achieve peace, the problem will not be resolved and the international community will remain confused, frustrated and prone to conjure up unworkable solutions for Liberia.

Our best wishes to the participants of the conference. This conference must not fail. The signal sent to the Liberian people and the international community from a failed conference will not augur well for the peace process.

Congratulations and profound thanks to the organizers of the Liberia National Conference.

Monrovia, Liberia
21 August 1994

**Democracy Or Disarmament:
Some Second Thoughts On Amos Sawyer
And Contemporary Politicians**

Carl Patrick Burrowes*

Although this paper was written by Sawyer in his capacity as private citizen, given the multiple roles he has previously played as academic and head of the self-styled Interim Government for National Unity (IGNU), it is likely to be taken with much more significance than a similar contribution by any other citizen. For that reason, it deserves more than the uncritical acceptance it is likely to receive from his supporters and the equally uncritical dismissal it will probably receive from his detractors: In short, it deserves a close and critical examination. Despite the explicit tone of elder statesman adopted by Sawyer, the implicit argument reads like that of a politician in the narrow sense, primarily concerned with advancing his partisan interests against his opposition while protecting his "legacy" (i.e., IGNU and the 1984 Constitutional Commission, which he chaired¹). Running through this paper is an implicit emphasis of form over substance; of constitutionalism in a context without a functioning government; of government as the source of sovereignty over the people; of leaders over their constituents; of disarmament over democracy.

The explicit argument presented in this paper by Amos Sawyer holds disarmament to be the "central issue," the key to unraveling the Liberian crisis. This is a position advocated by many Liberians. But unlike those who would call for the abolition of all factions—including the infamous Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), Sawyer argues for exempting certain military forces from dissolution. Furthermore, Sawyer's practice while "president" of IGNU doesn't match his professed commitment to disarmament. Throughout his tenure, Sawyer preserved the long-discredited AFL at taxpayers expense, although his regime was protected by ECOMOG. This apostle of peace was also responsible for creating the so-called "Black Berets" military force, albeit surreptitiously.

Sawyer raises important issues when he questions the "character and nature of the conference, its authority and mandate" and "the question of eligibility for participation." However, he offers a top-down approach to legitimation, emphasizing the leaders over their constituents when he recommends a "sovereign national conference . . . organized by the governing authority, i.e., the government, upon broad agreement amongst the major national forces." Sawyer insists that the government exercise the central part in organizing the conference, because it is the sovereign power. Although government sponsorship is posited as essential for this conference, it was not raised in the context of the Banjul Conference of August 1990, where Sawyer managed to get himself selected "president" at a meeting attended by a few dozen people who were invited and could afford to attend. Furthermore, Sawyer's insistence

on state involvement evades the matter of the government's lack of sovereignty, both in the sense of lacking legitimacy and in lacking control over the territory of the nation.

Herein lies the central problem with Sawyer's analysis and the strategy pursued by his coalition over four years, a problem shared by the conveners of the National Conference: The power to legitimize institutions and leaders resides only with the people and can be activated only through democratic elections. By evading that reality, Sawyer is able to evade its implication—that is, in the absence of a sovereign government, the only source of legitimacy for the conference would have to be the sovereign Liberian people, the very source of any government's legitimacy. In deed, the crisis would probably have been moderated by now, if only political "leaders" had spent as much time securing a mandate from the population as they did scoring points against opponents at international conferences. While it is true, as suggested by Sawyer, that "no government will be considered viable . . . without access to resources over and above those currently available from maritime revenues," the argument presented here, but ignored by Sawyer is that no government will be considered viable without a mandate from the people for whom it presumes to speak. That was true for the Tolbert regime, for Doe as well as for Sawyer's so-called national government. In deed, the lack of democratically elected leaders and representative institutions is a major cause of our current crisis and a factor in the prolongation of the war.

For Sawyer and most of the country's current political class, however, democracy is an end, upon which Liberians must wait until the "ideal conditions as stipulated in the elections law of Liberia" are laid²—presumably by "experts" who use their academic credentials to mask partisan agendas. At point 7.2, he avers pointedly, "all considerations of elections must take place with full cognizance that . . . [the] . . . ent is the essential precondition." While this juxtaposition of democracy and disarmament may serve to keep Sawyer's supporters riled against his enemies, it does not serve either interests, which exist instead in a dynamic complementarity.

Not only is this argument for postponing elections debatable, it is surprising coming from an academic known for criticism of previous Liberian regimes for the absence of representative government.³ Until the turn of the century, however, Liberia embodied the republican ideal of small, decentralized government, reflected in regular elections, short tenures in public offices, checks between branches and some degree of responsiveness of the governors to pressures from the governed. Concerning tenure in office, the original constitution of 1847 limited the president and legislators to two-year terms because of the commitment of those who wrote the constitution to maintaining a democratic government. In their view, long tenures in public office were incompatible with the "republican" society they were intent upon maintaining.

From 1847 to 1907, Liberia held national elections approximately 16 times, with politicians limited to two-year terms (Table 1). These Nineteenth Century elections were held despite armed conflicts in the environment which Sawyer, in a recent interview with the *New York Times*, described as worse than the current situation. Efforts to change the tenures of elected officials proposed by several later administrations, with support from the legislature, repeatedly were rebuffed when submitted to the electorate as referenda. In addition to the campaigns between parties, there were rivalries within the various alliances, with unexpected outcomes. The presidential contests of 1867 and 1869 were so close they had to be decided by the House of Representatives, in keeping with the constitution. Indeed, one factor precipitating the civilian overthrow of the Edward James Roye government (1870-1871) was his insistence on lengthening his term of office.

In 1907, the tenures of the president and representatives in the House were finally raised to four years and senators to six. The winning of this extension of tenure during the administration of Arthur Barclay (1904-1911) was part of a larger expansion of national government that included the creation of a national army and incorporation of rulers of neighboring polities into a partnership with the central administration. The alliance between executive branch officials and local traditional rulers was mutually beneficial. On the one hand, chiefs delivered soldiers and voters en bloc to urban leaders, culminating during the 1923 election in 45,000 votes being cast for incumbent Charles D. B. King (1920-1930) when only 6,000 persons were legally registered to vote, earning Liberia a dubious place in the Guinness Book of Records for the world's most rigged election. National leaders in turn provided their rural allies with the resources needed to overcome local challengers. Through the state, public officials forged a national alliance of incumbents that would prove increasingly immune to pressures from their still largely localized political opponents.

The most decisive change in presidential tenure and prerogative came after 1948 with the restoration of the four-year term along with the simultaneous removal of all limits on presidential succession and expanding prerogatives. With these changes in the tenure of officials, republican values concerned with the protection of civil society came to be dismissed as "old fashioned" and inefficient. With support from foreign governments and corporations, the executive branch came to predominate over other institutions and, after the Second World War, came to dominate the media. Contested elections, short office tenures and other rudimentary features of a democratic society would disappear thereafter. In contrast to the country's 17 previous presidents, with average terms of four years and six months each, Tubman would serve effectively as president-for-life, dying in office after 27 years.

While destroying Liberia's republican tradition, the Tubman regime simultaneously extended the voting rights to women and men of indigenous backgrounds. But this apparent extension of citizenship rights was a populist ruse, extending the franchise in name while the vote became increasingly meaningless in practice. It was a deception that won widespread support and continues to enjoy support from politicians of Sawyer's generation who were socialized in the Tubman era.⁴ Rather than organize free and fair local elections in Monrovia and other communities under their control, they insist on generously extending the franchise to quarters of Liberian territory held by their rivals. In 20 years, they have steadfastly refused to allow elections in the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA), the Liberian People's Party (LPP) and other organizations they control, on the basis that the ideal conditions have not been created. While insisting on the accountability of their opponents, they have provided no accounting, for example, for the millions of dollars supplied by various foreign agencies ostensibly for use in a fight against poverty and other social ills that have been applied instead to the creation of enormous patronage networks, which sustain their various personality cults and employment-free lifestyle. It is interesting to note that despite Sawyer's role as leader of LPP and indeed as a major promoter of the entire party system in Liberia since the 1970, this contribution was offered in the author's name only, suggesting a lack of consultation with his fellow partisans and constituents. In preaching democracy over a 20-year period while refusing to practice it, Sawyer and other politicians of his ilk helped sow a fertile field of cynicism among young Liberians that various military leaders have harvested.

In this paper, however, Sawyer seeks to blame the failure of the war entirely on his opponents, implicitly Charles Taylor. "These include intransigence of warring factions, due largely to insincerity and the existence of hidden agenda on the part of the leaders of the warring parties; failure to meet their expectations with respect to the allocation of government positions; constant shifts and hemorrhaging within the ranks of warring factions leaving them unstable with violent leadership struggles; and negative impact of internal leadership squabbles on the allocation of positions in government, etc." The self-righteous tone evident in this section is in keeping with Sawyer's past publications, in which his previous opponents whether William R. Tolbert, Jr., or Samuel K. Doe, were excoriated, while presenting himself and his allies as blameless.⁵ This passage also betrays an elitism—employed by many of Sawyer's fellow politicians, which devotes attention entirely to the "leaders" of various factions, while ignoring the concerns, needs and motivations of the thousands of Liberians who fill the ranks of the various factions. Until the concerns and motivations of the fighters themselves are addressed, it is unlikely that the war will be resolved.

Elsewhere, Sawyer continues, "to the extent that one warring faction continues to pose the obstacle to disarmament, a strategy for enforcement

against that isolated warring faction can then become a NATIONAL CAUSE." This claim ignores the fact that this strategy has been pursued by a coalition led by Sawyer himself for the last four years, without positive results. In fact, when Sawyer got himself selected to head IGNU, Liberia was plagued with three factions. In strategizing to isolate one "intransigent" faction, he created the "Black Berets," succored the AFL—even in the face of its responsibility for the Harbel massacre, and turned a blind eye to the efforts of Alhaji Kromah, George Boleh and others who organized military factions while living in Monrovia. Furthermore, Sawyer's failed cause can not become a national one, simply because he declares it so, as long as significant numbers of average Liberians continue to support a faction, no matter how intransigent its leaders.

Sawyer's concern with form over substance can be seen in his claim that "unless the Armed Forces of Liberia opts to be considered a faction, it must be considered the legal and appropriate organ for . . . national service. As the legitimate military force of Liberia, the Armed Forces of Liberia must be properly placed, as the constitution requires, under civil authority, given the necessary and needed reinvigoration to ensure its social, geographic and ethnic balance, and outfitted to undertake its prescribed national responsibility." This Alice-in-Wonderland-like characterization of the AFL ignores mountains of evidence that the army had renounced its constitutional moorings decades ago, by staging a coup, by engaging in repeated massacres of civilians, even while Sawyer paid it with national funds.

While insisting out of one side of his mouth on civilian authority over the military, one finds Sawyer insisting also on deferring to the wishes of the military in choosing to opt out of its mandated place in the governmental structure. What about the wishes of the majority, terrorized for decades by the AFL? This deferential treatment of the AFL poses a real danger for innocent civilians, a danger which became evident days after Sawyer's statement was published, when elements of the AFL under the leadership of Charles Julu stormed the seat of government at Ducor Palace in another attempted coup, an attempt that would likely have succeeded, but for the timely intervention of ECOMOG.

Sawyer's concern with protecting his legacy can be seen in his repeated and pointless evocation of the "Constitution of the Republic of Liberia," a document which he supervised the writing of but was dead upon arrival, never having been respected even by the government for which it was written. Although he notes euphemistically "our hybrid constitutional circumstances," he still insists that any conference, to be proper, must be conducted under chapter III, article 17 of the paper. This evocation of constitutionalism would be laughable if it wasn't occurring in a context in which armed marauding bands have killed tens of thousands and displaced over a million persons, all in the name of restoring constitutionalism.

This obsession with his legacy is most clearly evident in his reference to IGNU's controversial and much contested decision to provide pension and benefits to the AFL, even while other civil servants were being retrenched or forced to work without being paid on time. He notes defensively "Innuendoes and distortions notwithstanding, IGNU had negotiated the g of the AFL and the retirement of those who for reasons are to be determined appropriate for retirement, thus, the passage of the retirement benefits act, the best this country has ever had." Despite this attempt at dissimulation, certainly Sawyer must know that the issue is not the quality of the package, but rather the fact that it was given to a group which in the eyes of many Liberians was a part of the problem rather than the solution, a group that deserved to have its leadership and some of its members punished rather than rewarded.

The paper also evidences an obsession with pleasing the external players in the Liberian drama over any concern with average Liberians. Note, for example, his concern that "Many Liberians and *foreigners* are of the impression that because of popular support for the Liberian National Conference and frustrations over the failure thus far to trigger much success particularly with respect to disarmament since March 7, 1994, the decisions of Liberians that emanate from the conference should constitute law and be implemented as such." Witness also his insistence that a "sovereign national conference will also require close consultation with the international community." If the conference is "sovereign," why would it need to consult closely with external players? Imagine a "stateman" of Germany or Ghana insisting on consultation with foreign powers as a prerequisite for the convening of a sovereign conference!

Toward the end of the paper Sawyer adopts a magisterial, Olympian stance, speaking as if an outsider speaking to Liberians, arguing, "Liberians must be prepared to pay that price (in lives and property). To sit by and expect, at this stage in our crisis, ECOMOG to take the leadership in the enforcement of ent is unrealistic and a distorted reading of international opinion at this time. Liberians are being reminded by the UN, ECOWAS, and every other international body that it is time that we begin to carry an increasing burden for the achievement of peace in our country." (See also point 5.6.) The question that begs answering is: Why did Liberians not assume this urgent burden under Sawyer's leadership? Why has it become urgent now that he has left office?

In closing, Sawyer notes, "The Ultimate responsibility for peace in Liberia rests on the shoulders of Liberians. Unless Liberians manifest greater evidence that they want peace and are prepared to honestly and publicly demonstrate the goodwill and sincerity required to achieve peace, the problem will not be resolved and the international community will remain confused, frustrated and prone to conjure up unworkable solutions for Liberia." In this scheme, the confusion of the international community is ranked as more significant than the pain and degradation endured by Liberians for what seems an eternity.

As insistence upon disarmament above all else is a recipe for stalemate, since it places the resolution of pressing personal and social issues as hostage to the will of faction leaders and politicians who in practice determine the disposition of the disarmament question. This is evident at point 6.2 where Sawyer cynically notes that "what needs to be addressed are questions as to how various approaches to disarmament will affect repatriation, or how the misery of being a refugee may serve as an incentive for participation in a national program to enforce disarmament." Here, one finds Sawyer, the ostensible peacemaker, urging the manipulation of the pain of displaced persons toward the disarmament of his opponent. Since his own family lives in the safety of the United States, including two able-bodied sons, they presumably would not be involved in enforcing this disarmament. As a result, the misery of some other Liberians would be used as "an incentive" for carrying out his political project.

While Sawyer is right in pointing up the role dishonesty and insincerity have played in prolonging the war, he is wrong and disingenuous in sharing blame generously with all Liberians. The blame must rest with the political leaders, who must have the honesty to admit that without elections of any kind they speak for no one but themselves. Furthermore, they can only demonstrate their goodwill by seeking a mandate from Liberians—not in the sweet bye and bye, but beginning here and now, in whatever organizations and territories they control. While democracy alone will not solve the crisis, there will be no solution until Liberians begin to select and repudiate their representatives, a process that must begin within each political organization before it can be extended to the level of the state. During the U. S. Civil War, the Union continued to hold elections in its territory, despite the secession of the South, and achieved its victory in part by offering enfranchisement to blacks, who reciprocated by joining the ranks of the Unionist forces. In more recent years, it was the institution of democracy in the ranks of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) that helped to ensure its victory over more feudal rivals in the long-running Eritrean civil-war. Even during the darkest days of Apartheid, South Africa's African National Congress (ANC), black trade unions and other pro-democracy organizations continued to conduct internal elections, even among prisoners in the notorious Robben Island prison.⁶ What is missing in Liberia is not the opportunity but the will on the part of politicians to further the development of a democratic culture and representative institutions. Rather than being subordinated to disarmament, only democracy is likely to produce long term demobilization, by luring fighters away from autocratic leader toward the peaceful and empowering way of life that elections and political accountability together engender.

TABLE 1. CONTESTED ELECTIONS, 1847 TO 1955⁷

Year	Parties		Incumbent		Challenger	
	Incumbent	Challenger	Name	Birthplace	Name	Birthplace
1847	tion	Anti-Admin.	J. J. Roberts	VA	S. Benedict	GA
1849	True Liberian	Anti-Admin.	J. J. Roberts	VA	S. Benedict	GA
1855	Republican	Anti-Admin.	S. A. Benson	MD	E. J. Roye	OH
1863	Republican	Anti-Admin.	D. B. Warner	MD	B. J. Drayton	SC
1867	Republican	Old Whig	J. S. Payne	VA	Unknown	
1869	Republican	True Whig	J. S. Payne	VA	E. J. Roye	OH
1871	True Whig	Republican	E. J. Roye	OH	J. J. Roberts	VA
1875	Republican	True Whig	J. S. Payne	VA	A. W. Gardner	VA
1883	Republican	True Whig	H. R. W. Johnson	Monrovia	H. R. W. Johnson	Monrovia
1891	True Whig	New Repub.	J. S. Cheeseman	Edina	A. D. Williams	Monrovia
1893	True Whig	New Repub.	J. S. Cheeseman	Edina	A. D. Williams	Monrovia
1895	True Whig	People's	W. D. Coleman	KY	W. D. Coleman	KY
1897	True Whig	People's	W. D. Coleman	KY	W. D. Coleman	KY
1899	True Whig	National Union	G. W. Gibson	MD	A. D. Williams	Monrovia
1903	True Whig	People's	A. Barclay	Barbadoes	W. D. Coleman	KY
1905	True Whig	People's	A. Barclay	Barbadoes	W. D. Coleman	KY
1911	True Whig	Republican	D. E. Howard	Bassa	J. J. Dossen	Cape Palmas
1919	True Whig	Unit Whig	C. D. B. King	Monrovia	C. D. B. King	Monrovia
1924	True Whig	People's	C. D. B. King	Monrovia	S. G. Harmon	Edina
1927	True Whig	People's	C. D. B. King	Monrovia	T. Faulkner	MD
1931	True Whig	People's	E. J. Barclay	Brewerville	T. Faulkner	MD
1935	True Whig	People's Unit Whig	E. J. Barclay	Brewerville	C. D. B. King	Monrovia
1943	True Whig	Democratic	W. V. S. Tubman	Cape Palmas	J. F. Cooper	Monrovia
1951	True Whig	Reformation	W. V. S. Tubman	Cape Palmas	D. Twe	Sasstown
1955	True Whig	Independent TWP	W. V. S. Tubman	Cape Palmas	E. J. Barclay	Brewerville

Sources: Cassell, C. A. (190). *Liberia: History of the First African Republic*. New York: Publishers, pp. 264, 351, 379; Dormu, A. K. (1970). *The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia and the Declaration of Independence with notes*. New York: Exposition, p. 67; Dunn, D. E. & Holsoe, S. E. (1985). *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*. Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow, p. 43; and Dunn, D. E. & Tarr, S. B. (1988). *Liberia: National Polity in Transition*. Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, pp. 54, 58; and Lynch, H. R. (1967). *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832-1912*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 21. Wiley, B. I. (1980). *Slaves No More*, Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, p. 193, 331; True Whig Party. (1969). Complete Dossier of the Centennial Celebration of the True Whig Party of Liberia, 1869-1969. Monrovia, n. p., p. 45; *Liberia Herald*, March 16, 1853, p. 62.

Footnotes

*Burrowes served as a manager of the independent campaign to elect Amos C. Sawyer mayor of Monrovia in 1979. Having worked closely with Sawyer in the Movement for Justice in Africa through the 1970s, he resigned in the early 1980s, citing undemocratic practices and the lack of financial accountability. A journalist and journalism educator, he recently completed a Ph.D. dissertation on press-government relations in Liberia, 1830 to 1970.

¹ Sawyer, A. (1987). "The Making of the 1984 Liberian Constitution: Major Issues and Dynamic Forces." *Liberian Studies Journal*. 12 (1), pp. 1-15.

² In Liberia, elections are a question of trust. (March-April 1992). *Africa Report*, pp. 5-6; Interview: Electoral Commission Co-Chair Patrick Seyon. (March-April 1992). *Africa Report*, pp. 6, 10-11.

³ Sawyer, A. (1988). *Effective Immediately; Dictatorship in Liberia, 1980-1986: A Personal Perspective*. The Hague: Africa Centre; and Sawyer, A. (1992). *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy & Challenge*. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies.

⁴ This is evident, for example, in Sawyer (1987, p. 2) where he argues: "There is, whether we like it or not, a set of values and predispositions which must exist in any society if democratic life is to thrive in that society. It is these values and predispositions which constitute what I refer to as the culture of democracy. For example, the existence of democratic life in a society presupposes the acceptance of social equality as a societal value, contestation of ideas as a norm for social interaction and exchange, and non-arbitrariness in decision-making as a minimum basis for governance." Missing from his list (and from the rest of article) is a concern for *individual* liberties—elements that are widely accepted as foundational ingredients of a democratic culture and, I would add, that would serve as important antidotes against clientelism.

⁵ Sawyer, 1992; Sawyer, 1988; Dew Mayson explains presence. (June 5, 1991). *The Inquirer* (Monrovia), pp. 1-10.

⁶ McPherson, J. M. (1991). *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 65-91; Firebrace, J. with Holland S. (1985). *Eritrea: Never Kneel Down*. Trenton, N. J.: Red Sea Press, pp. 29-44; and Naidoo, I. (1982). *Robben Island*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 164-175.

⁷ In some years, the opposition and incumbent parties may have endorsed the same person for the presidency while contesting other offices.

Fullerton, California
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More Thoughts On The Liberia National Conference

Herbert Brewer, Jr. and Ezekiel Pajibo

INTRODUCTION

Did the recently recessed Liberia National Conference (LNC) provide Liberians with the opportunity to end the country's civil conflict? Certainly not. The LNC at its October 3rd recess suggested that the resolution of the Liberian crisis would necessarily require that: (1.) there be immediate disarmament and that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) be empowered to enforce the disarmament after 60 days. (2.) the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) remain essentially as is with some minor modifications. Its term of office would be expanded by 9 months after completion of disarmament, at which point national elections would be held; the "collective presidency" would be headed by someone who would wield executive power instead of arriving at decisions based on consensus; the Transitional Legislative Assembly (TLA) would be expanded by 13 additional seats which would be held by non-warring factions, purportedly representing the 13 counties.¹

PROBLEMS

While the conference provided an opportunity for the, up until now, broadest consultation among Liberians, it nonetheless had serious flaws. It lacked the fundamental capacity to carry out its decisions. This is largely due to the fact that its participants lacked popular participation: in other words, elections. Additionally, the conference organizers all had declared political ambitions which therefore lent suspicion to their intentions for convening a national conference. It put the integrity of the process under a cloud even before the conference began and relied on methods which historically have not achieved peace. That was why, for example, "conference organizers up [until opening day] had not decided on the criteria for accreditation."²

We would like to examine the arguments which informed the debates leading up to the conference with particular reference to Amos Sawyer's "Some Thoughts About the Liberia National Conference."

PROPOSAL I

According to Sawyer, the conditions for success would have depended upon: the nature and character of the conference; in other words, would the conference be a "sovereign national conference" or a "consultative assembly?"³ In either case, Sawyer relies on a strict adherence to a restrictive formal constitutionalism.

This is problematic, not to say utopian, given the war conditions in the country and the absence of any living constitution. While Sawyer is not able to provide constitutional justification for the convening of a "sovereign national conference," he is however able to quote chapter III article 17 of the 1985 constitution as the justification for a "consultative assembly." This is because the framers of the 1985 constitution never envisaged a civil war, and therefore did not make constitutional provisions to deal with a national calamity of this magnitude. Sawyer himself concedes as much when he describes the current situation as "our hybrid constitutional circumstance."⁴ The 1985 constitution, like the nation, has been destroyed. It is therefore immaterial to dwell on the constitutional niceties of the matter. This focus on constitutionalism is a disguise behind which the Monrovia political class attempts to hide its agenda of achieving political power without being accountable to the masses of Liberia.

The real question Sawyer and all of us are grappling with is: how do we, Liberians, legitimately constitute ourselves into a self-governing people under the rule of law? This becomes especially relevant in these circumstances when all previous efforts at ending the crisis have produced undesirable results.

POLITICIANS

Why has this been so? The obstinacy of the warlords bear primary responsibility as the major and immediate obstacle to peace. However, our political class must share some of that responsibility as well. Their inability to inspire confidence and trust among the Liberian people is an important factor. This failure is largely due to their social and political isolation from the masses. In other words, Liberia's political class lacks a tried and tested constituency and, as such, does not speak on behalf of any defined constituency except themselves.

PROPOSAL II

Therefore, we need to formulate a basis upon which genuine representation can be achieved which creates legitimate structures that provide the opportunity for Liberians to resolve our national crisis. It takes time; it cannot be hasty. Other hasty solutions (Akosombo I only being the latest example) have been tried and have failed.

According to UN estimates, a majority of Liberians (1 million) reside in greater Monrovia. The second largest concentration of Liberians (800,000) reside in refugee camps in neighboring countries. That means that 1.8 million or 75% of our pre-war population is accessible and therefore could be consulted in determining what path to peace our nation should take.

To achieve this, we might consider drawing electoral districts in Monrovia and require each district to elect delegates to a national assembly. Similarly the

refugee camps in the neighboring countries would be required to elect their delegates based upon the same formula as Monrovia.

This assembly would deliberate on a framework that would be the basis for resolving the war. It is important to stress that such an assembly would confer legitimacy on its outcome since its participants would have been popularly chosen. Secondly, the selection process would be open to all tendencies in Liberian society. What is envisaged is a type of non-party election, much like that which occurred in Uganda. Because these delegates would have been chosen by the people, we are assuming that they would have the political capacity to convince the population to take mass action should the need arise. More importantly, Liberians would see themselves as the real actors in this historical drama and not mere onlookers. After all, it is the Liberian people who have suffered most in this war.

THE AFL

Another issue presented in Sawyer's advisory to the national conference that requires comment is the question of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). It is our conviction that the AFL should be disbanded. This view is held by many Liberians. Since Sawyer wrote his paper, the AFL has provided more reasons why it must be disbanded: 1. Bowen's actions in Akosombo, where, to borrow Sawyer's phrase ". . . the Armed Forces of Liberia [opted] to be considered a faction," and therefore cannot "be considered [a] legal and appropriate organ."⁵ 2. The Charles Julu fiasco.⁶ 3. Bowen's and the AFL hierarchy's refusal to obey the orders of the LNTG regarding Bowen's dismissal.⁷ The list appears endless. The AFL does not deserve the trust of the Liberian people.

From the onset of the war the AFL never defended Liberia's people or borders. Earlier this year, AFL chief Bowen threatened to turn Monrovia into a "Kigali."⁸ An armed forces chief who has no qualms commanding an army that visits genocide on its people has no business in matters of security regarding such people. Quite simply, Bowen and the AFL cannot be trusted. The notoriety of the AFL is well established and for a politician in Monrovia such as Sawyer to even muster the temerity to cloth the AFL in constitutional garb tells us a great deal about the new political class in Monrovia. A properly constituted national conference may want to place the matter of war crimes trials on its agenda.

CAUTION

Perhaps this was what the Catholic cleric, Michael Francis meant when he stated that "our most ardent revolutionaries [emphasis ours] have surprised us in their agility in changing loyalties and their callousness toward the common good. . ." Francis was speaking, no less, at the March 1994 University of Liberia Commencement Program. Francis wanted to know why "many of our most

vocal activists, even among the student body, have been able to quiet their consciences with extraordinary ease and facility?" He poignantly added that "now we have the spectacle of the erstwhile howling wolves who not too long ago came thundering down upon us with all the fury at their disposal, now projecting themselves as bleating lambs."⁹ The observant prelate then cautioned that "We (Liberians) should be wise enough not to be taken in by wolves in sheep's clothing."¹⁰ This is advice Liberians would do very well to heed.

CONCLUSION

For if indeed as Sawyer suggests, "the ultimate responsibility for peace in Liberia rests on the shoulders of Liberians"¹¹ then why are politicians not so keen on involving the people in a meaningful way in the peace process. There are those who might suggest that our proposals are impossible or unrealistic. To them we can only provide the wise counsel of the great African-American Writer, James Baldwin who said that "in our time as is in every time, the impossible is the least that one can demand—and one is, after all, emboldened by the spectacle of human history . . . for it testifies to nothing less than the perpetual achievement of the impossible."¹² In reverence to the elders who precede us we can say no more.

Footnotes

¹ Communique of the Liberia National Conference, October 3, 1994.

² "Peace at Last?", *New Democrat Weekly*, August 25, 1994, p. 1.

³ Amos Sawyer, "Some Thoughts About the Liberia National Conference." Monrovia, August 21, 1994, pp. 2-4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶ For details of Charles Julu's September 15 putsch, see for example, *Monrovia Daily News*, September 29, 1994, p. 1; "The Coup That Went Badly Wrong" in *West Africa*, 26 Sept.-2 Oct., 1994, pp. 1662-1664.

⁷ Remarks to the Liberian community in Washington, D. C. by David Kpormakpor, Chairman of the LNTG, Washington, D. C., October 2, 1994.

⁸ See Ezekiel Pajibo, "The Perils of Bringing Peace to Liberia" in *Liberia Report*, May/June, 1994.

⁹Michael K. Francis, "The University in the New Liberia," commencement address at the University of Liberia, March 1994.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Amos Sawyer, *Op. Cit.*, p. 16.

¹² James Baldwin, quoted from the "The Fire Next Time," in Cornell West, *Race Matters*, (New York, 1994), p. xiii.

Washington, D. C.
November 4, 1994

United Nations
Seventh Progress Report of the Secretary-General
on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of Security Council resolution 911 (1994) of 21 April 1994, under which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission to Liberia (UNOMIL) until 22 October 1994. This report provides an update on events in Liberia since my last report, of 26 August 1994 (S/1994/1006), as well as recommendations for the planning of future United Nations peace-keeping involvement in Liberia.

II. Political Aspects

A. Mission to Liberia of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General

2. In my last report (S/1994/1006), I noted my increasing concern about the recent evolution of the situation and the absence of progress in the peace process in Liberia. I informed the Security Council that I had decided to send to Liberia a fact-finding mission, headed by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, as Special Envoy, to review the situation, in consultation with my Special Representative to Liberia, Mr. Trevor Gordon-Somers, with a view to assisting me in determining options for the future United Nations role in facilitating the peace process in that country.
3. During his mission, from 16 to 26 August, the Special Envoy met, *inter alia*, representatives of the Liberian National Transitional Government, the leaders of the factions and other prominent Liberians. He held consultations with the Field Commander of the Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Major-General John Inienger, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Eminent Person for Liberia, Reverend Cannan Banana. He also met the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, and President Henri Konan Bedie of Cote d'Ivoire.
4. The main findings of the Special Envoy were the following:

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- (a) The governance of Liberia has been seriously affected by the inability of the five-member Council of State to reach consensus on most issues and by the lack of resources available to the Government to administer the country;
 - (b) The factions have not shown the commitment and political will required for implementation of the Cotonou Agreement (S/26272, annex). The command and control difficulties within the factions have contributed to the instability of the security situation and to the lack of success of the peace process. Furthermore, the flow of arms and ammunition to the various factions has added to the crisis;
 - (c) A number of significant questions in regard to the electoral process remain unanswered, including the electoral system to be adopted, the repatriation of refugees, and resources required to carry out the elections;
 - (d) The limited financing available to ECOMOG has been a significant factor in hampering the group's ability to carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement. ECOMOG has not been able to provide security for unarmed UNOMIL military observers in accordance with that Agreement and agreements reached between the United Nation and ECOWAS.
6. In conclusion, the Special Envoy pointed out that since Liberia is a small country, with a small population, the world does not seem to pay much attention to the suffering of its people. He stressed that while this was to some extent understandable, experience had shown elsewhere that failure to mobilize the necessary resources at an early stage might well lead, later on, to even more costly operation. He also pointed out that, if left unchecked, the crisis in Liberia would undoubtedly affect the stability of its direct neighbors- as it is already doing- as well as the stability of West Africa.
7. Several significant events took place, shortly after the Special Envoy left Liberia, and these have affected the peace process. First, the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, convened a meeting of the leaders of the warring factions on 7 September at Akosombo, Ghana, to review the continuing delays in the

implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. The meeting was attended by Charles Taylor, leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), Alhaji Kromah and a delegation of General Roosevelt Johnson, representing both wings of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) and General Hezekiah Bowen, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). Although invited, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) and the Lofa Defence Force (LDF) declined to attend the meeting. Representatives of the Liberian National Transitional Government, OAU and the United Nations were present as facilitators. The meeting culminated in the signing, on 12 September, of a supplementary agreement to the Cotonou Agreement. Although General Johnson's wing of ULIMO did not sign the agreement, he sent a letter to the Chairman of ECOWAS on 2 October, informing the Chairman of his acceptance of the agreement.

8. Secondly, the Liberian national conference, a citizens' initiative, convened on 24 August to deliberate on the many aspects of the peace process. After extended sessions, lasting until 3 October, the Conference adopted a set of resolutions concerning the peace process and suspended further consultations for a period of two months, after which time it plans to reconvene to assess progress made in regard to disarmament and demobilization.
9. Thirdly, a dissident group within the Armed Forces of Liberia attempted to stage a coup against the Liberian National Transitional Government on 15 September. The attempted coup was successfully foiled by ECOMOG.

B. Akosombo Agreement

10. The objective of the Akosombo Agreement was to add further detail to those aspects of the Cotonou Agreement which were too general or, for other reasons, had proved deficient in their implementation. The Agreement reaffirmed the Cotonou Agreement as the only framework for peace in Liberia. It sought to strengthen the role of the Liberian National Transitional Government in governing the country during the transitional period by giving it a more central role in the supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. In this regard, it also stated that all decisions of the Council of State should be made on the basis of a simple majority, as opposed to the Cotonou Agreement's provision for consensus, which had left the Council unable to reach decisions. Nominees to the Council of State would be changed, with each of

the signatories to the agreement (AFL, NPFL, ULIMO) appointing one new member. The remaining two members, representing unarmed Liberians, would each be appointed by the Liberian National Conference and jointly by ULIMO and NPFL. Participation in the Transitional Legislative Assembly would be broadened by adding 13 representatives from the various countries.

11. In regard to military aspects, the Akosombo Agreement called for the immediate re-establishment of the cease-fire and provided more details concerning its implementation, the disengagement of forces and the responsibilities of the factions with regard to the assembly and disarmament of combatants. It provided for internal security and planning for a new national army. The Agreement foresaw that if the process of disarmament and demobilization took place according to the agreed schedule, general elections could be held by October 1995.
12. The Akosombo Agreement also further outlined the peace enforcement powers of ECOMOG, and, in so doing, provided a more central role to the Liberian National Transitional Government. It specified that should any faction of group refuse to desist from acts in violation of the Agreement, the Transitional Government, in collaboration with ECOMOG, would have the power to use the necessary force available to assure compliance. Furthermore, under the Agreement the Transitional Government would conclude a status-of-forces agreement with ECOWAS.
13. The conclusion of the Agreement coincided with an upsurge of fighting in and around Gbarnga, the headquarters of NPFL, NPFL being attacked by ULIMO-Kromah and the condition of LPC, ULIMO-Johnson, AFL and NPFL breakaway ministers. This attack, according to some reports, was carried out with the clandestine support of some elements within ECOMOG.
14. Soon after its signing, the Akosombo Agreement became engulfed in controversy as members of the Liberian National Transitional Government and various Liberian interest groups called its validity into question. Reservations were expressed regarding the credibility of the signatories who, while negotiating at Akosombo, were also engaged in military confrontation on the ground. Given the breakdown of command and control within the factions, doubts were also raised regarding the capacity of those who signed the agreement to deliver on their commitments. In addition, the provision

permitting the factions to change their nominees in the existing Council of State and in the Cabinet of the Liberian National Transitional Government was strongly criticized.

15. In view of the reactions to the Akosombo Agreement, the Chairman of ECOWAS sent a delegation to Monrovia on 17 September and, therefore, invited prominent Liberian civilians and representatives of the Liberian National Conference to meet him at Accra on 18 September. The purpose of those meetings was to explain the rationale behind the Agreement and to discuss issues of concern which created opposition to it. As a result of those consultations, opposition to the Akosombo Agreement has reportedly diminished. To date, however, there has been no movement towards its implementation.

C. Liberian National Conference

16. The Liberian National Conference, like the Akosombo Agreement, reaffirmed the Cotonou Agreement as the only framework for restoring peace and ensuring good governance in Liberia. Like the Akosombo Agreement, it sought to enable the Liberian National Transitional Government to play a more central role in the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement.
17. The Conference made a number of important recommendations regarding disarmament, governance and the electoral process, which converge with the Akosombo Agreement and could serve to advance the peace process. The Conference called for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire, deployment of ECOMOG throughout the country, comprehensive disarmament and demobilization within a 60-day period, and a series of punitive actions, including enforcement against those parties that failed to comply. The Conference recommended the establishment of a Disarmament and Demobilization Compliance Committee to monitor progress. It also recommended the establishment of a Peace Enforcement and Demobilization Fund, calling on the international community to mobilize resources for ECOMOG and on the Liberian National Transitional Government to contribute \$1 million to the fund. Like the Akosombo Agreement, the Conference also highlighted the importance of a reconstituted national army and, in this connection, called for the reorganization and restructuring of the Armed Forces of Liberia during the transitional period.

18. As regards strengthening the ability of the Liberian National Transitional Government to govern the country, the Conference, like the Akosombo Agreement, called on the Council of State to adopt its rules of procedure quickly. It also called for the Transitional Legislative Assembly to be expanded by an additional 13 persons, representing each of Liberia's counties. The most significant point of divergence between the resolutions of the Conference and the Akosombo Agreement is that the Conference called for the retention of the existing members on the Council of State, conferring upon the the functions of Head of State, while the Akosombo Agreement permitted the factions to review the status of their appointees and to effect changes in the current membership.
19. With respect to the holding of elections, both the Akosombo Agreement and the Liberian National Conference concurred on a similar time-frame, with elections scheduled to take place around October 1995. However, while both the Cotonou and the Akosombo agreements were silent on the system to be adopted for the elections, the Conference proposed that the existing system, based on absolute majority, be retained for electing the President, Vice-President and the Senators, with a change to proportional representation for elections to the House of Representatives.
20. The Conference recognized the role of the Chairman of ECOWAS in facilitating the peace process and called on him to continue consultations with and among Liberians in his search for peace in the country.
21. The attempted coup by dissidents within the Armed Forces of Liberia came at a time when the Liberian National Transitional Government was seeking to restore the army to its constitutional status. This decision was supported by the Liberian National Conference, which called for the reorganization and restructuring of AFL to reflect geographic and ethnic balance. Decisive action by ECOMOG in terminating the coup attempt has been followed by the partial g of AFL in its barracks at the Barclay Training Centre and at Camp Schefflin. However, it has been reported that some AFL elements may have joined LPC and/or ULIMO-Johnson in their efforts against NPFL. Relations between AFL and the Liberian National Transitional Government have been further complicated by the attempt of the Chairman of the Council of State to remove the current Chief of Staff, who has refused to step down, supported by his nominated replacement and the AFL high command.

III. Military Aspects

A. Situation on the ground

22. As indicated in my report of 26 August (S/1994/1006), in July 1994 a coalition of forces was formed by AFL, LPC and ULIMO-Johnson. Reports indicated that the principal objective of the coalition, supported by NPFL breakaway ministers in the Liberian National Transitional Government, was to defeat Charles Taylor and capture Gbarnga. Around mid-August, troops began to congregate in the Bong Mines and Kakata area, planning a move against Gbarnga. There are reports that some elements of ECOMOG (see para. 13 above), as well as some prominent Liberians, may have supported those efforts.
23. Charles Taylor's departure from Liberia on 6 September to attend the Akosombo meeting exacerbated the breakdown in NPFL command, thereby providing the opportunity for Alhaji Kromah's wing of ULIMO to attack Gbarnga and take control of Taylor's headquarters on 8 September. At this point, on 9 September, 43 unarmed United Nations military observers and six non-governmental organization personnel were detained by NPFL. The breakdown of command and control in NPFL-held areas and the taking of Taylor's headquarters at Gbarnga provided the coalition forces with the opportunity to launch a series of attacks against Taylor's forces in the northern and eastern regions of the country.
24. Over the course of the past few months, a number of countries in the south-eastern part of the country have come under the control of LPC. NPFL now seems to control parts of Nimba and Bong counties, as well as some parts of northern Grand Gedeh and Margibi. ULIMO-Johnson is still in control of Grand Cape Mount, Bomi and lower Lofa counties and has repelled recent incursions on Tubmanburg by ULIMO-Kromah, reportedly assisted by some elements of ECOMOG. Upper Lofa continues to be under the control of ULIMO-Kromah. Margibi county, especially between Kakata and Konola, is an area of intense fighting between NPFL and coalition forces, as the latter attempt to move northward towards Gbarnga.
25. According to some reports, the various factions continue to receive arms. There are also allegations of complicity on the part of some ECOMOG elements with the warring factions, particularly in

regard to military activities of coalition forces against NPFL. The fact that these allegations persist constitutes an impediment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

26. In recent weeks, ECOMOG has suffered casualties from ambushes by both NPFL and ULIMO-Johnson in the Margibi area. Civilians have also been killed by land-mines planted in an apparent effort to disrupt the advance of coalition forces.
27. Overall, the military situation remains confused, with groups aligning and realigning themselves depending on their short-term interests and the breakdown of command and control within the factions. The situation in Liberia is reaching the point where warlords, without any particular political agenda but with the control of a certain number of soldiers, are seeking territory for the sake of adding to their own claim to power. Reports indicate that the fighting is likely to persist both within NPFL and between NPFL and rival factions until control of Gbarnga is consolidated. The current fighting in Liberia is small-scale bush fighting. The results are not large military victories, but deaths mostly of civilians, the decimation of entire villages and the breakdown of any semblances of law and order. Most of the fighters are not well trained, but are young men and boys, often with little choice but to be manipulated by the various warlords.

B. UNOMIL operations

28. It will be recalled that, in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement at the UNOMIL concept of operations, unarmed United Nations military observers were to be deployed together with ECOMOG troops which were to provide their security. Given ECOMOG's logistic difficulties, UNOMIL began its deployment before ECOMOG. In so doing, UNOMIL sought and received the commitment of the factions to ensure the security of its military observers. The first months of such deployment went smoothly. ECOMOG soon followed by the UNOMIL deployment pattern in some areas, including Gbarnga in the northern region. However, in July of this year, because of the already deteriorating security situation, especially in the western region, UNOMIL deployment was reduced from 29 to 21 team sites.
29. On 9 September, NPFL elements detained 43 unarmed UNOMIL military observers and 6 non-governmental organization personnel at nine sites in the northern and eastern regions, confiscating their

transport, communications and most other equipment. This occurred soon after Charles Taylor's headquarters was taken by ULIMO-Kromah. It is felt that the detention of those personnel may have been a premeditated action on the part of NPFL (1) to use the observers as a shield against attacks by renegade NPFL forces or rival factions, and (2) to secure reliable communication and transportation facilities from UNOMIL and non-governmental organizations to further their war efforts.

30. Immediately after the crisis began on 9 September, UNOMIL undertook round-the-clock contacts with faction representatives, NPFL interlocutors, neighboring countries and ECOMOG in order to secure the release of those detained. On my instructions, my Special Representative personally informed Charles Taylor that the United Nations held him responsible for the welfare of the UNOMIL military observers and non-governmental organization personnel being held in his area and demanded their immediate release and the return of their property. I also sent a message to the Chairman of ECOWAS, stressing ECOMOG's responsibilities regarding the security of UNOMIL personnel and urging him to exert pressure on Taylor to release those detained and to remind the other factions of their responsibilities under the Cotonou Agreement to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel.
31. On 14 September, 33 United Nations military observers were released and found their way to relative safety. An attempted helicopter rescue of the United Nations military observers stationed at Harper was aborted when the helicopter was shot at by NPFL elements and forced to leave the area after rescuing 2 of the 12 observers detained there. On the same day, the ECOMOG contingent from the United Republic of Tanzania located at Gbarnga attempted to move with six UNOMIL military observers and six non-governmental organization personnel to Monrovia. When the convoy was between Konola and Kakata in Margibi county it was ambushed by elements of ULIMO-Johnson. Two Tanzanian soldiers were killed (a third later died from his wounds), seven were wounded and four were captured by ULIMO-Johnson troops. UNOMIL was able to airlift the United Nations non-governmental organization and some ECOMOG personnel from Konola to Monrovia. However, further attempts to reach Kakata were aborted when the Tanzanian battalion was ambushed by ULIMO-Johnson. The troops eventually all reached Kakata, but the contingent was looted of its arms and equipment by NPFL in the process. Among

the material looted by the NPFL was a container of 492 weapons which had been handed over earlier by disarming combatants and was located at the Konola encampment site.

32. By 18 September, all military observers and non-governmental organization personnel had been released. The conduct of the observers under detention was exemplary in every respect. However, some of them, especially those held at Harper, were mistreated, beaten and terrorized by those who had detained them. NPFL has retained all of UNOMIL's transport, communications and other equipment, and, except in a few cases, observers were not permitted to carry personal items with them when they were released.
33. Given the breakdown in the cease-fire and the fact that, as experience has shown, ECOMOG cannot provide security for unarmed UNOMIL military observers, UNOMIL is unable, at this time, to carry out many of its mandated activities. As a result, all UNOMIL team sites have been evacuated except for those in the Monrovia area. It has also been decided to reduce, as a temporary measure, the personnel of UNOMIL from its authorized strength of 368 (including engineering and medical elements) to approximately 90 observers. Accordingly, as at 12 October, the military strength of UNOMIL stands at 190. Some observers have been transferred to other United Nations peace-keeping operations. This temporary reduction in the military component will be matched by a commensurate reduction in the civilian staff.

IV. Humanitarian Aspects

34. Since my last report, the suffering of the population in rural Liberia has significantly increased. The turmoil that has followed the factional fighting over the past several weeks has resulted in some 200,000 persons being uprooted from their places of temporary or permanent residence. In the counties of Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Grand Bassa, River Cess, Nimba and Maryland, UNOMIL overflights have confirmed that whole towns and villages have been evacuated and their populations decimated. The insecurity has resulted in the closure of all major roadways and terminated all forms of communication in rural areas. Displaced persons and refugees who have fled to Monrovia and across the borders of Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire tell of the horror of the in te killings, torture, rape, destruction of property and looting of per-

sonal effects. Refugees also report that thousands of other Liberians have sought refuge in the forested areas and are unable to move because of the insecurity.

35. At Nzerekore, Guinea, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that, since 14 September, food aid and other assistance has been provided for over 45,000 newly arrived refugees. That is expected to increase further as the fighting in Bong county continues. At Tabou, Cote d'Ivoire, UNHCR also reports that over 30,000 new refugees have been registered during the same period.
36. Because of insecurity, international and local relief organizations located in Liberia have not been able to deal with the growing tragedy inside the country and this has had disastrous consequences for those in need. For example, before the fighting, the World Food Programme provided nearly 4,000 metric tons of food each month for approximately 420,000 suffering Liberians in Nimba, Margibi and Bong counties. These resources were distributed by five relief agencies. Insecurity has now reached levels that make it impossible for the movement of relief supplies, including across the border from Cote d'Ivoire, leaving thousands without access to the assistance on which they depend to cover their basic needs.
37. Many of the emergency relief projects of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in water, sanitation, child trauma counseling and immunization have been interrupted by the fighting. In Bong county, over the past several weeks, UNICEF has lost nearly \$1 million worth of drugs and supplies through looting of warehouses. Local non-governmental organizations still present in the area do not have supplies to distribute. In addition, water projects, schools, health centers and hospital sanitation projects have been abandoned.
38. The Phebe hospital, the major secondary health care institution serving Bong county, has been ransacked and looted. As a result of the fighting at Gbarnga, some 30,000 residents had sought sanctuary near the hospital. During the last week of September, fighters attacked and killed several hospital workers and internally displaced persons. Survivors have fled to the bush, and no official report on their overall condition has since been received. UNOMIL is seeking the approval of Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire for assessment

missions to their border areas where the majority of refugees are currently located. The missions will include members of the United Nations and the non-governmental organization community. Information gathered will facilitate decision-making and refine emergency assistance strategies to be carried out upon the cessation of hostilities.

39. Since the commencement of renewed hostilities, humanitarian relief agencies, the United Nations system and UNOMIL have lost over 80 jeeps and trucks, tens of thousands of gallons of fuel, hundreds of tons of rice, beans and other relief items, communications equipment and supplies and materials worth several million dollars. The practice of looting transportation and communication assets and supplies is aimed at restocking and re-equipping the fighters to sustain the offensive of their factions. Almost all international relief operations have ceased, except at Buchanan and Monrovia. Whatever little humanitarian assistance is still available is being administered by the national staff of the relief agencies.
40. It is estimated that about one half of the international personnel of relief organizations have left Liberia as a direct result of the insurmountable difficulties and impossible conditions for the distribution of humanitarian assistance. Several staffers have taken up duties across the borders in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea to support ongoing efforts to assist the growing numbers of refugees. However, this is a temporary palliative since such stocks as have not been looted have run dangerously low. There is also no near-term prospect for resupply of food and other assistance given the present dangerous conditions and the increase in the numbers of suffering persons. Public appeals to the factions for the creation of zones of tranquility and a cessation of hostilities have gone unheeded, as have calls for respect and sanctity of facilities such as hospitals and health centers.

V. Financial Aspects

41. The General Assembly, by its resolutions 48/247A and 48/247B of 5 April and 29 July 1994, respectively, authorized by the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in the amount of \$23 million gross for the mandate period ending 22 October 1994, for the maintenance of UNOMIL. Therefore, should the Security Council decide to extend the current mandate of the Mission beyond 22 October 1994, at the reduced strength indicated in paragraph 33

above, I shall request the General Assembly at its current session to make adequate financial provisions for the extension of the Mission.

42. As at 10 October 1994, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNOMIL special account since the inception of the Mission amounted to \$5.8 million. In order to provide UNOMIL with the necessary cash-flow, a total of \$2 million has been borrowed from the Peace-keeping Reserve Fund. This loan remains unpaid. Outstanding assessed contributions for all peace-keeping operations on 10 October 1994 totaled \$1,416 million.
43. With regard to the Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Cotonou Agreement on Liberia, as at 10 October 1994, voluntary contributions received amounted to \$17.8 million, of which disbursements totaling \$14.5 million have been authorized.

VI. Observations and Recommendations

44. The political, military and humanitarian developments of the past month have left Liberia in a desperate state. Long-term peace and stability in the country require genuine reconciliation between all elements of society. The Liberian National Transitional Government, the factions and the people of Liberia need to focus on political accommodation to stop the country from sliding deeper into chaos. In this regard, I support the initiatives taken by President Rawlings and the resolutions of the Liberian National Conference to strengthen the authority of the Liberian National Transitional Government in managing the administration of the country. I call on the Transitional Government to take a more active role in the facilitating national reconciliation and I urge all Liberians to take concrete steps towards that end. The Transitional Government, the factions and the other interest groups must remember that it is the civilians, especially those outside the main population centers, who are the most vulnerable to the suffering caused by this conflict.
45. It is obvious that the peace process has stalled. At the ECOWAS summit, held at Abuja on 5 and 6 August, President Rawlings indicated that if there was no progress by the end of the year he would be obliged to consider withdrawing the Ghanaian contingent from ECOMOG. Nigeria has reportedly reduced its presence in ECOMOG while Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania have indicated that they may both withdraw their contingents from the operation. It should be emphasized that the frustration of ECOMOG

troop-contributing countries derives both from the lack of financial resources to sustain the operation and from the lack of progress in the peace process to justify their sacrifices. A withdrawal or significant downsizing of ECOMOG in the face of growing breakdown of law and order in the country will have serious consequences both for Liberia and for the subregion.

46. Reports from all quarters suggest that there can be no military solution to this conflict. The ability of the factions to wage war has undoubtedly been sustained by the continuing supply of arms and ammunition to them. This must stop. I am confident that ECOWAS member States will continue to use their good offices to ensure that the factions are denied any form of support so as to bring the fighting rapidly to a halt. As the ECOWAS summit at Abuja reminded member States, the arms embargo must be implemented rigorously. It should be borne in mind that continuing hostilities in Liberia will undoubtedly affect the stability of the subregion as a whole.
47. In view of the need to consult with ECOWAS on its intentions for ECOMOG and in order to support the recent initiatives by its Chairman, President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, I have decided to dispatch a high-level mission to consult him about the respective roles and responsibilities of ECOMOG and UNOMIL in Liberia, taking recent developments into account. This review will seek to determine how best the international community can continue to assist Liberia in bringing about a cessation of hostilities. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNOMIL for a period of two months to allow the high-level mission time to conduct its work and present its conclusions to me. After consideration of its findings, I shall be in a position to make the appropriate recommendations to the Council on the future role of UNOMIL in Liberia.
48. The quest for peace in Liberia can be successful only if the Liberians demonstrate that they are ready for a genuine national reconciliation based on mutual respect and accommodation. However, while the responsibility for peace in Liberia lies primarily with the Liberians themselves, the fact is that the lack of adequate material support by the international community to the regional effort through ECOMOG has made it more difficult to assist the Liberians in advancing the peace process.

49. In closing, I should like to express my appreciation to my Special Representative and the Chief Military Observer, and to all the military and civilian personnel of UNOMIL. I should like to express my admiration especially for those observers who were detained; they have proved their commitment to peace in Liberia through their commendable behavior under very trying circumstances. I should also like to thank the Government of Cote d'Ivoire for its assistance in securing the safe release of the detained United Nations and non-governmental organization personnel.

U. S. Government Proclamation 6730**Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants
or Persons Who Formulate or Implement Policies That Are Impeding
the Transition to Democracy in Liberia or Who Benefit From Such Policies
September 30, 1994****By the President of the United States of America****A Proclamation**

In light of the long-standing political and humanitarian crisis in Liberia, I have determined that it is in the interests of the United States to restrict the entrance into the United States of Liberian nationals who formulate or implement policies that impede Liberia's transition to democracy or who benefit from such policies, and the immediate families of such persons.

NOW, THEREFORE, I WILLIAM J. CLINTON, by the power vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, as amended (8 U.S.C. 1182 (I)), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, hereby find that the unrestricted immigrant and nonimmigrant entry into the United States of persons described in section 1 of this proclamation would, except as provided for in section 2 or 3 of this proclamation, be detrimental to the interests of the United States. I hereby proclaim that:

Section 1. The entry into the United States as immigrants and nonimmigrants of persons who formulate or implement policies that impede Liberia's transition to democracy or who benefit from such policies, and the immediate family members of such persons, is hereby suspended.

Sec. 2. Section 1 shall not apply with respect to any person otherwise covered by section 1 where entry of such person would not be contrary to the interests of the United States.

Sec. 3. Persons covered by sections 1 and 2 shall be identified pursuant to procedures established by the Secretary of State, as authorized in section 5 below.

Sec. 4. Nothing in this proclamation shall be construed to derogate from United States Government obligations under applicable international agreements.

Sec. 5. The Secretary of State shall have responsibility to implement this proclamation pursuant to procedures the Secretary may establish.

Sec. 6. This proclamation is effective immediately and shall remain in effect until such time as the Secretary of State determines that it is no longer necessary and should be terminated.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-four, and of the independence of the United States of America the two hundred and nineteenth.

William J. Clinton

The Akosombo Accord (I)

This Agreement, which supplements and amends the Cotonou Agreement, is made and entered into this 12th day of September A.D. 1994 by and between the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) represented by and through its leader Charles G. Taylor (hereinafter referred to as THE PARTY OF THE FIRST PART), the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy, (ULIMO) represented by and through its leader Lt. Gen. Alhaji G.V. Kromah (hereinafter referred to as THE PARTY OF THE SECOND PART), and the Armed Forces of Liberia represented by and through its Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. J. Hezekiah Brown (hereinafter referred to as The Party of the Third Part), hereby:

WITNESSETH:

PREAMBLE

NPFL, ULIMO, and AFL reaffirm their acceptance of the Cotonou Agreement as the framework for peace in Liberia. However, having realized the slow pace in the full implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, resulting from the failure of ent and the inability of the Liberia National Transitional Government (LNTG) to achieve the objective of its mandate within a six-month period as set forth under Section B Article 14 (2) of the said Cotonou Agreement: and having noted with grave concern the protracted human suffering and the undue hardships to which the people of Liberia (inside and outside the country) have been overly subjected as a result of the senseless Liberian civil crisis: and

Having realized the urgent need to bring this ugly civil crisis to an immediate and lasting end:

Do hereby agree to the following:

PART 1 MILITARY ISSUES DECLARATION

Section A: Article 1

COUNT 1 is amended to read as follows:

The parties to this agreement hereby agree and declare a ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities effective as of the signing of this amendment.

Section B: Article 3
Supervisory and Monitoring Authority

COUNT 1 is amended to read: That the LNTG, ECOMOG and UNOMIL, in collaboration shall supervise and monitor the implementation of this Agreement.

The parties hereby expressly recognize the neutrality and authority of ECOMOG and UNOMIL in respect of the foregoing.

Accordingly, the LNTG shall ensure that ECOMOG and UNOMIL shall enjoy complete freedom of movement through Liberia.

Section C: Article 4
Terms and Conditions

COUNT 4 is amended to read: The LNTG, in collaboration with ECOMOG and UNOMIL, shall ensure that all points of entry including sea ports, airfields and roads shall be monitored and supervised.

COUNT 5 is amended to read: The warring parties shall undertake to disengage assembly points within the time frame in the schedule to be attached to this document.

COUNT 6 That the LNTG shall enter into a Status of Forces Agreement with ECOWAS within 30 days from the signing of this Agreement.

COUNT 7 That the existing Status of Mission Agreement already executed with the United Nations (UNOMIL) is herein incorporated by reference and is applicable.

Section D: Article 5
Acts of Violation

COUNT 2 is amended to read: The following acts shall constitute violations of the Agreement:

Sub-Section (b): Any deliberate discharge (whether with conventional or unconventional weapons) against the position of any warring party by another, of firing at any individual or property or any seizure or abduction of individuals and properties.

Sub-Section (f): While the right to communication shall not be abridged, any proven use of communication devices, facilities or propaganda designed to incite or having the effect of inciting hostilities between any of the warring parties.

Sub-Section (h): Obstruction of the implementation of any of the provisions of the Agreement by any party and/or individual.

Sub-Section (i): Harassments, intimidations, or attacks upon any official of the LTNG, relief organizations, ECOMOG, UNOMIL, Ceasefire Violations Committee as well as individuals.

Sub-Section (j): Obstruction of the activities of the LNTG, ECOMOG, UNOMIL and the Ceasefire Violation Committee.

Sub-Section (k): The facilitation or creation of new or splinter armed groups. To this end, any individual or group of individuals suspected to creating or assisting to create any new armed or splinter group or facilitating existing splinter group(s) (directly or indirectly) shall:

1. Not be recognized under the Cotonou Agreement
2. Shall be disarmed and disbanded by ECOMOG in collaboration with LNTG verified by UNOMIL.
3. Thereafter be persecuted under the laws of Liberia.

Section E: Article 6 Disarmament

The introductory paragraph is here amended to read: the ultimate objective of disarmament under the Cotonou Agreement being primarily to create a conducive security environment for absolute peace in order to have free and fair elections in the country, NPFL, ULIMO, and AFL, hereby agree to disarm to ECOMOG with the cooperation of the LNTG and monitored and verified by UNOMIL in accordance with schedule to be attached to this Agreement. The parties further mandate the LNTG to begin the formation of appropriate national security structures to facilitate the _____ ent process. Accordingly appropriate measures shall be undertaken to enable the AFL to assume its character as a national army.

Until such measures are completed the AFL like all other parties and warring groups shall be completely disarmed in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement. In order to ensure the secure environment for the proper functioning of the unified government in Monrovia the LNTG in collaboration with ECOMOG shall ensure that no group or individuals bear arms in the perimeter of the capital. However, the personal security of the leaders of the warring parties shall be reflected in the Status of Forces Agreement.

COUNT 4 is amended to read: Each of the warring parties shall ensure that its combatants report all weapons and warlike materials to ECOMOG which would be inventoried by ECOMOG, monitored and verified by LNTG and

UNOMIL. Upon proper inventory, such weapons and warlike materials, shall be taken by ECOMOG to the designated armories, monitored and verified by UNOMIL and LNTG.

COUNT 5 is amended to read: All non-combatants who are in possession of weapons and warlike materials shall also report and surrender same to ECOMOG, monitored and verified by LNTG and UNOMIL. Such weapons and warlike materials shall be returned to the owners after due registration, licensing and certification by the governing authority after elections.

COUNT 7 is amended to read: For the sole purpose of maintaining the ceasefire, ECOMOG shall conduct any search to recover lost or hidden weapons, observed and monitored by UNOMIL and LNTG.

Section F: Article 7 Encampment

COUNT 1 is amended to read: The parties agree and fully commit themselves to the encampment of their combatants, and maintenance of command and control in encampment center shall, in addition to disarmament and demobilization serve as transit points for the further education, training and rehabilitation of said combatants.

Section G: Article 8 Peace Enforcement Powers

The following amendments are hereby made to wit

1. That in the event any party, new armed group or splinter group and/or individuals refuse to desist from acts in violation of the Agreement, the LNTG, in collaboration with ECOMOG shall have the power to use the necessary force available to compel compliance.
2. All violations of the ceasefire shall be reported to UNOMIL, who shall, on immediate receipt of the information or violation, commence an investigation and make findings thereof. In the event the violation can be cured by the party, UNOMIL shall pursue such a course. However, should such a course not be possible UNOMIL shall submit their findings to the Ceasefire Violations Committee. The Violations committee shall invite the violating party(ies) for the purpose of having such party(ies) take corrective measures to cure violations within such time frame as may be stipulated by the committee. Should the violating party not take the required corrective measures, and the use of peace enforcement powers are recommended against the violator—the LNTG in collaboration with ECOMOG shall thereupon take the necessary action.

**Section H: Article 9
Demobilization**

COUNT 2 is amended to read: Further, the parties hereby call upon the LNTG, UN, OAU, ECOWAS and other international organizations and countries, to design a programme which recognizes the peculiarities of the parties and finance the process of demobilization, retraining, rehabilitation and reintegration of all former combatants to normal social and community life.

COUNT 3 is amended to read: It is agreed that the LNTG in collaboration with the parties shall immediately commence a community information and educational programme, explaining to the public by means of communication devices or any form of media, the essence and purpose of ceasefire, encampment, disarmament and demobilization. Such programme shall include other social institutions.

COUNT 4: Internal security arrangements including police, customs and immigration will be put in place immediately. Planning for restructuring and training of the AFL will be the responsibility of the LNTG, with the assistance of ECOWAS, United Nations and friendly governments.

**Section K: Article 12
Scheduled of Implementation**

This article is amended to read: The attached schedule of implementation to be attached to this Agreement, including disarmament, encampment and demobilization of combatants, preparation of a Status of Forces Agreement, restructuring of AFL and dissolution of the parties drawn up by ECOMOG and UNOMIL in collaboration with parties, shall be given to each of the parties prior to implementation. The parties undertake that they will create no obstacle to the full implementation of any of the foregoing activities.

**PART II
POLITICAL ISSUES: SECTION A**

**Section B: Article 14 (7)
Is Hereby Amended To Read Thus:
Executive**

- i) The parties further agree that during the transitional period leading up to the inauguration of an elected government, the executive powers of the Republic shall be vested in the five-member Council of State which is hereby established. Each of the Parties (AFL, NPFL, and ULIMO) shall appoint one member to the Council and the remaining two, representing unarmed Liberians, shall be chosen from among prominent Liberians, one appointed by the Liberian

National Conference recently convened in Monrovia and the other, by NPFL and ULIMO. The designation of Chairman and two Vice Chairmen shall be determined through a process of elections to be carried out within 7 days of the signing of this Agreement. The new Council of State will be inducted under the auspices of the Chairman of ECOWAS or his representative within 14 days of the signing of this Agreement.

- ii) The Council of State shall conduct and be responsible for the day to day operations of government. All decisions shall be made on the basis of a simple majority.
- iii) The Council shall also devise and implement appropriate rules of procedure in respect of its operations, to be signed by all members on the occasion of their induction into office.
- iv) The parties hereby agree that the allocation of Ministries, public corporations and autonomous Agencies as agreed by the parties in Cotonou, Benin on November 3-5, 1993 shall be maintained, taking into account existing factions in respect of existing vacancies. All boards of Public Corporations shall be constituted in accordance with the Acts creating said Corporations.
- v) In the case where the executive post is allocated to one party, the two deputy posts in a given Ministry, Public Corporation or autonomous Agency, the Council of State, shall appoint qualified Liberian citizens to occupy the third and or remaining deputy posts.
- vi) The Council of State shall also exercise its executive prerogative powers to appoint qualified citizens in all other subordinate Presidential appointed posts in government as may be provided by law in consultation with the parties.
- vii) Each of the parties shall have the right to review the status of its appointees in the LNTG through the Council of State and any change in appointment by the Council of State, should follow as closely as possible the constitutional procedures. Once appointments have been made to the Council of State changes can only be effected for cause and then consistent with existing laws.

Section B: Article 14
Legislature

COUNT 9 is amended to read:

- i) That the parties agreed that the Transitional Legislative Assembly shall be a unicameral body composed of 48 members. The TLA is

expanded by 13 eminent citizens selected through the Ministry of Internal Affairs from each of the 13 counties, and appointed by the Council of State.

- ii) The parties further agree that the TLA shall give consideration to providing appropriate benefits for the heads of warring parties.

ARTICLE 16 (1) is hereby amended to read:

- 2) Is hereby amended to read: That the transitional government shall have life span of approximately 16 months commencing from the date of installation of the five member Council of State.
- 3) Is hereby amended to read: That General and Presidential Election shall take place on October 10, 1995, and the newly elected government shall be installed on the first Monday of 1996.

Section H: Article 20

The parties agree that all provisions of the Cotonou Agreement not amended here are herein incorporated by reference and the same are hereby applicable and remain in full force and effect except for the below listed provisions:

- 1) Part 1, Section A Art. 2
- 2) Part 1, Section B Art. 3, Count 3
- 3) Section D, Art. 5 (d)
- 4) Part II Section A Art. 13
- 5) Part 2, Section B Art. 14, 4, 6, 7, i, ii, iii, iv

remain in full force and effect except for the below listed provisions:

- 1) Part 1, Section A Art. 2
- 2) Part 1, Section B Art. 3, Count 3
- 3) Section D Art. 5 (d)
- 4) Part II Section A Art. 13
- 5) Part 2, Section B Art. 14, 4, 6, 7, i, ii, iii, iv

**Done at Akosombo, Republic of Ghana
This 12 day of September 1994**

SGD. CHARLES G. TAYLOR
Leader, National Patriotic
Front of Liberia (NPFL)

SGD. LT. GEN. ALHAJI G.V. KROMAH
National Chairman
United Liberation Movement
of Liberia for Democracy
(ULIMO)

SGD. LT. GEN. J. HEZEKIAH BOWEN
Chief of Staff
Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)

SGD. HIS EXCELLENCY FLT. LT.
J.J. Rawlings, President of the
Republic of Ghana and Current
Chairman of ECOWAS

SGD. AMBASSADOR TREVOR GORDON-SOMERS
Special Representative of the
United Nations Secretary General
in Liberia

AKOSOMBO AGREEMENT II

This Agreement on the Clarification of the Akosombo Agreement made this 21st day of December A.D. 1994 is intended to clarify and expand pertinent provisions of the said Akosombo Agreement.

Section A: Article 1 Ceasefire

The parties to this agreement hereby declare a ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities effective as of 23.59 hours on the 18th day of December 1994.

Section C: Article 4 Terms and Conditions (Safe Havens and Buffer zones)

Consistent with Section C Articles 4 Count 5 of the Akosombo Agreement, the parties agree to facilitate the establishment of safe havens and buffer zones throughout Liberia in accordance with a plan to be drawn up by the LNTG in collaboration with UNOMIL and ECOMOG in consultation with the parties. In this connection, the deployment of ECOMOG and UNOMIL, the establishment of buffer zones, safe havens and other measures necessary to restore normalcy throughout the territory of Liberia, shall be undertaken in accordance with the Cotonou and Akosombo Agreements.

In keeping with Section C Article 4 Count 6, the LNTG shall enter into a status of forces agreement with ECOWAS within seven (7) days as of the seating of the Council of State established under this agreement.

Section H Article 9 Demobilization

Consistent with Section H Article 9 Count 4 of the Akosombo Agreement it is agreed by the parties that in the reorganization of the Armed Forces of Liberia, the police, immigration, and other security agencies, the combatants and non-combatants who satisfy conditions for recruitment shall be considered for inclusion. In this connection, the Council of State established under the Akosombo Agreement clarified by this Agreement shall establish appropriate committees which shall be charged with determining the criteria for recruitment, taking advantage of the relevant expertise of ECOMOG and UNOMIL.

Section K
Article 12
Schedule of Implementation

The parties hereby agree to abide by the schedule of implementation hereto attached and incorporated herein by reference.

PART II
Political Issues

Section A
(Executive)

Consistent with Part II Section A (1), of the Akosombo Agreement the provision for the function and structure of the five-member council of state provided for in the Cotonou and Akosombo Agreements are hereby reconfirmed.

The procedure for the appointment of the relevant officials of Government as enshrined in the Akosombo Agreement is hereby reaffirmed. Such officials shall be appointed based on merit.

The parties agree that a five-member Council of State shall be established.

The first four members of the new Council of State shall be appointed as follows:

NPFL	1
ULIMO	1
AFL/Coalition	1
LNC	1

The fifth member of the Council of State shall be a traditional Chief selected by the NPFL and ULIMO in person of Honorable Tamba Taylor in accordance with Part II Section A (1) of the Akosombo Agreement and agreed by the parties.

Consistent with Part II Section A (1) of the Akosombo Agreement, the induction of the Council of State shall take place in the City of Monrovia under the auspices of the Chairman of ECOWAS or his designee within fourteen (14) days as of the ceasefire date.

Section H
Article 20

Consistent with Section H Article 20 of the Akosombo Agreement, the parties reaffirm the acceptance of the ECOWAS peace plans including the Cotonou and Akosombo agreements as the best framework for peace in Liberia.

All provisions of the Akosombo Agreement not herein clarified remain in full force and effect.

Done at Accra, Republic of Ghana, this 21st day of December, A.D. 1994.

Signed by

Charles G. Taylor, Leader
National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)

LTG. Alhaji G.V. Kromah, National Chairman
United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO)

LTG. J. Hezekiah Bowen, Chief of Staff
Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)

Attested to:
His Excellency Ft. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings
President of the Republic of Ghana and
current of ECOWAS

3. Acceptance and Accession Agreement

This acceptance and accession undertaking made and entered into the 21st day of December A.D. 1994 by the Lofa Defense Force (LDF), represented by Mr. Francois Massaquoi, the Liberia Peace Council (LPC), represented by Dr. G.E. Saigbe Boley, Sr., The Central Revolutionary Council (CRC-NPFL), represented by J. Thomas Woewiyu; ULIMO represented by Major General Roosevelt Johnson, the Liberia National Conference (LNC), represented by Counsellor J.D. Bayogar Junius, all of them herein after collectively referred to as the non-signatories to the Akosombo Agreement, hereby:

Witnesseth:

Whereas, an agreement, referred to as the "Akosombo Agreement" was made and entered into on the 12th day of September, by and between the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)

and the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO), in an effort to establish a ceasefire, facilitates disarmament, encampment, demobilization, and to pave the way for a free and fair election; and

Whereas, the non-signatories to the Akosombo Agreement did not participate in the discussion leading to the Akosombo Agreement; and

Whereas, a need arose for further discussions between the signatories to Akosombo for clarification and expansion of the provisions therein with the view of facilitating the acceptance and the implementation of the agreement, which said discussion the non-signatories fully participated; and

Whereas, after intense discussions and negotiations between the parties to the Akosombo agreement and the non-signatories thereto, the non-signatories have agreed to accept the terms and conditions of the Akosombo Agreement with the clarification thereto as set forth and contained in the agreement on the clarification of the said Akosombo agreement.

Now therefore, the non-signatories to the Akosombo agreement, in consideration of their participation in the discussion on the clarification of the Akosombo agreement, and in further consideration of the political agreements agreed upon and accepted by them, agree as follow to wit:

1. That the Lofa Defense Force (LDF), the Liberia Peace Council (LPC), and the Central Revolutionary Council (CRC-NPFL), in their individual capacities; the LNC and ULIMO agree to accept and to accede to the Akosombo Agreement and the agreement on clarification of the aforesaid Akosombo Agreement.

2. That the non-signatories commit themselves individually and collectively to the terms and conditions of the Akosombo Agreement and the Agreement on Clarification of the said Agreement, and undertake to fully implement and discharge all the tasks and the responsibilities, and to abide by all the terms and conditions as set forth and contained under the said Akosombo Agreement, and the Agreement on Clarification of the said Akosombo Agreement, as if they were signatories thereto and/or specifically named therein.

In witness whereof, the parties hereto have hereunto set their hands and affixed their signature this 21st day of December A.D. 1994 in the City of Accra, Republic of Ghana:

Signed

ULIMO Represented by and through its Chairman,
Major General Roosevelt Johnson

Lofa Defense Force (LDF) Represented by and through its leader,
Francois Massaquoi

Liberia Peace Council (LPC) represented by and through its _____, Dr.
G.E. Salgbe Boley, Sr.

The Central Revolutionary Council (CRC-NPFL) represented by and through
its Chairman, Jucontee Thomas Woewlyu

Liberia National Conference (LNC) represented by and through its Chair-
man, Counsellor J.D. Bayogar Junius

Attested to:

His Excellency Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings
President of the Republic of Ghana and
Current _____ of ECOWAS

**4. Schedule on Implementation of the Akosombo Agreement
From Ceasefire to Elections
(28 December 1994 – 14 November 1995)**

12/28/94 2359 hrs.	Ceasefire
Within 14 days of Ceasefire	Installation of the New Council of State
12/29/94–1/11/95	Factions inform combatants of cease fire (2 weeks).
1/12/95–2/4/95	Factions disengaged from checkpoints/ present combat positions to areas under own arrangements (3 weeks).
	Verification by ECOMOG/UNOMIL/LNTG/ Warring factions (3 weeks).
1/21/95–2/7/95	Mission/build-up of logistics ECOMOG/ UNOMIL/LNTG (2 weeks).

2/8/95-4/21/95	Deployment of ECOMOG/UNOMIL to safe havens throughout country (10 weeks).
2/13/95-3/13/95	Completion/preparation for new Assembly/encampment sites (4 weeks).
3/1/95-4/30/95	Combatants in Assembly/encampment sites (4 weeks).
4/1/95-5/30/95	Disarmament/demobilization (8 weeks).
4/1/95-6/7/95	Disarmament and Demobilization (8 weeks).
6/8/95-11/11/95	Preparations for Elections.
11/14/95	Election Day.
1/1/96	Inauguration of new Government.

LIBERIA**HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES
BY THE LIBERIAN PEACE COUNCIL
AND THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL OVERSIGHT**

**A Human Rights Watch/African Report, May 17, 1994
Vol. 6, No. 3.**

Introduction

In late 1993, a new armed faction emerged in Liberia, known as the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), which has been fighting Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) in the southeast of the country. While both sides have been responsible for severe human rights abuses against the civilian population, in recent weeks the LPC appears to have stepped up its campaign against civilians, especially those it considers to have supported the NPFL. Some 40,000 civilians have been displaced by the fighting, and they describe systematic and gratuitous abuses by the LPC.

There are consistent reports that elements of the Nigerian contingent of ECOMOG, the West African peacekeeping force—not the Ghanaians or the Ugandans, who are also stationed in the area—are aiding the LPC. Displaced persons and other observers report that the Nigerians are supplying arms and ammunition to the LPC as a way to weaken the NPFL, while profiteering on the side. It is not clear how high up the collaboration goes in the Nigerian contingent.

The United Nations mission in Liberia, UNOMIL, has a mandate to report on violations of the cease-fire and violations of humanitarian law, but it has not been reporting publicly about the situation in the southeast. By avoiding the human rights issues, UNOMIL is failing to implement its mandate in Liberia.

In April, the U.N. Security Council extended UNOMIL's mandate for another six months, with the proviso that the situation be reviewed on May 18. Human Rights Watch/Africa calls on the U.N. to ensure that UNOMIL implements its mandate in Liberia, including the requirement to report on violations of humanitarian law. Human Rights Watch/Africa further calls on ECOMOG to launch an immediate investigation of the charges that members of the Nigerian contingent may be assisting the LPC, and make its findings public.

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Liberia remains a divided country: the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG), a coalition government, was seated on March 7 and now governs the capital, Monrovia, backed by the West African peacekeeping force

(ECOMOG); Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), claims to control 60 percent of the country; the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), made up primarily of soldiers from former President Samuel Doe's army, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), controls at least two western counties; and a new faction, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), also made up largely of Krahns from the AFL, controls territory in the southeast.

The peace agreement signed in July 1993, known as the Cotonou accord, was believed to be Liberia's last, best hope. The accord stipulated that concomitant with disarmament, a five-person Council of State elected by all the factions would take power from the interim government until elections were held. A thirty-five-member transitional parliament would include thirteen members from the NPFL and the interim government, and nine from ULIMO. An important element of the plan involved the creation of a UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to help supervise and monitor the agreement, in conjunction with ECOMOG. The plan also provided for an expanded ECOMOG force, under the auspices of the OAU, to be composed of African troops outside the West African region. By the end of January 1994, some 800 Tanzanians were deployed in Kakata, and 900 Ugandans were in Buchanan.

Although some progress was made in early 1994 toward ending Liberia's bloody civil war, the situation is now very precarious. Political infighting and renewed combat have brought disarmament to a virtual standstill. As of late April, only some 2,500 combatants had been demobilized, out of a possible total of 40-60,000. In March, ULIMO split into two along ethnic lines: the Krahn group, headed by Gen. Roosevelt Johnson, is battling the Mandingos, led by Alhadi Kromah. The inter-ULIMO fighting in the western counties of Bomi and Cape Mount has reportedly claimed hundreds of civilian lives since it flared up in March. Two other factions, the NPFL and LPC, have been fighting in the southeast, taking a heavy toll on the civilian population.

Indeed, a characteristic of the Liberian civil war has been that civilians suffer the most, and are killed in far greater numbers than combatants. The lack of protection for civilians from abuses by all sides and the profound distrust among the warring factions remain obstacles to lasting peace.

The Liberian Peace Council (LPC)

The fighting between Charles Taylor's NPFL and a relatively new faction, calling itself the Liberia Peace Council (LPC), began in October 1993 and continues at this writing. The LPC claims to control six counties—Sinoe, Grand Gedeh, River Cess, Grand Kru, Maryland, and Grand Bassa. The fighting, which began in the area of Grand Kola, got as far as the LAC plantation in early February, and had reached the outskirts of Buchanan by late April.

Little is known about the LPC. The LPC emerged after the Cotonou peace agreement was signed by the NPFL, ULIMO and the interim government in July 1993. It is clear that the LPC is an offshoot of former President Doe's army, the Armed Forces of Liberia, and of the Krahn wing of ULIMO. It is composed mainly of people from the Krahn ethnic group. "The LPC was formed because the Mandingos [in ULIMO] weren't going to spill blood to liberate Grand Gedeh [the county where many of the Krahn live]," a well-informed, foreign observer in Monrovia noted. "The only way to get the LPC to disarm is to convince ECOMOG that they will be safe with Taylor in the government."¹

The LPC'S strength is estimated to be some 800 fighters, organized into mobile combat units. It is headed by George Boley, a Krahn and former minister of education in the Doe government, also formerly a member of ULIMO.

According to Boley, the LPC was formed because of "continued acts of atrocities by the NPFL in southeastern Liberia" since the Cotonou agreement. He also claimed that most of his fighters were refugees from the Ivory Coast who had been forced to flee from the NPFL. Boley described the LPC as "a broad-based national entity which advocates the protection of the rights of exiled and displaced citizens and residents of Liberia as well as the restoration of constitutional democratic leadership in Liberia."²

In recent statements, LPC spokespersons have made it clear that they will continue fighting until they are included in the transitional government. LPC Secretary General, Octavius Walker, told reporters on April 14 that the LPC wanted six seats in the transitional parliament as well as portfolios in the interim government, but that discussions with the NPFL had failed to produce an agreement on amending the Cotonou accord to include the LPC. "We will fight on until they include us in the administrative process," he said.³

LPC and NPFL Attacks on Civilians

Thousands of civilians have been displaced by the fighting, with some 40,000 registered in the city of Buchanan alone, according to international relief organizations. Testimony from displaced persons and foreign observers indicates that the LPC is responsible for serious human rights abuses against the civilian population, especially those the LPC considers to have supported the NPFL. Abuses include widespread looting, arbitrary arrest and detention, forcible recruitment, beatings, torture, rape, and extrajudicial executions.

The NPFL has also been responsible for abuses against civilians. When the NPFL recaptures a village from the LPC, the inhabitants are often considered to have collaborated with the LPC. In one incident reported in January 1994 in Yapperstown, the NPFL killed eight women and nine men whom they accused of helping the LPC.⁴ As a foreign national in Buchanan noted: "It's terminal either way. If the NPFL comes, they say you are LPC, and visa versa."⁵

David, a displaced Bassa man who arrived in Buchanan in late April, described the way civilians have suffered at the hands of both factions: "First the NPFL took our things. They killed my brother's pregnant wife in November 1993. My brother survived and told me about the killing." Then, he said, the LPC came: "They told the whole village to leave. We escaped—about 300 or 400 of us—and went to the bush for two months."⁶

In some cases, the displaced persons either do not know, or are afraid to reveal, which faction was responsible for the attack. One very elderly man interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Africa in a Buchanan hospital had been shot in the chest and had his right hand smashed by the same fighter. "It's just gratuitous violence," a foreign relief worker commented.

There are many cases of villages being burned by either the NPFL or the LPC, and sometimes both factions destroyed part of the village at different times. Among the villages in the southeast reportedly burned include the following: Darsaw Town; Debah Town; Johnsoo Town; Bleabeh Town, almost entirely burned by the LPC, then the NPFL burned what remained; Jamestown, burned by the NPFL; Talowtown, burned by both NPFL and LPC; Tubmanville, burned by LPC; Yapperstown; Flayzor Town.⁷

The majority of the displaced are women, children, and the elderly; able-bodied men are usually arrested and either forcibly recruited or incarcerated. Many of the displaced are suffering from bullet wounds, dehydration, or malnutrition. Some civilians were caught in cross-fire, but others were clearly targeted.

Abuses by the LPC

While both sides are responsible for widespread looting, arbitrary arrests, beatings, and extrajudicial executions, it appears that the LPC has stepped up its campaign against civilians. On one day in mid-April, twelve displaced persons arrived in Buchanan, having been tortured with roasted cutlasses by the LPC. The men were burned on their backs and on their genitals; the women were beaten.⁸

The following cases were reported to Human Rights Watch/Africa:

J., a medical worker from River Cess, fled the fighting with eighteen of his relatives in late February 1994. He was arrested by the LPC on March 3 in Neetown, apparently because he had an identity card issued by the NPFL'S civilian arm, the NPRAG, which the LPC took as proof that he fought with the NPFL. His relatives were allowed to continue to Buchanan, but he was subjected to a form of torture known as "tabey."⁹ Although one LPC fighter wanted to execute him, another fighter intervened

and brought him to the battalion commander, a former AFL colonel. He was then taken to a makeshift jail. Despite their threats, J. refused to state that he was an NPFL rebel.

During his imprisonment, he was forced to work for the fighters, performing such functions as picking cassava, cutting wood, digging for copper, and picking coconuts. There were approximately seventy-five other men in the jail with him, all civilians from the Bassa ethnic group. The women, girls, and children were held separately in a church building, and it was believed that many of the women were raped by the LPC.¹⁰

In early April, a young man was identified by an LPC fighter to be an NPFL rebel. Although he denied the charge, the LPC arrested him and tied him up. The fighters roasted their cutlasses in a fire and then burned the man over various parts of his body. Since the man continued to deny the allegation, one of the fighters decided to take more drastic measures to force the confession: he got his army knife, and cut out the man's right eye. At that point, the battalion commander arrived, angered because he had not ordered such treatment. However, since they had no means to care for the wounded man, the commander ordered him to be executed. Five LPC fighters took the man into the bush and killed him with cutlasses.

On February 3, 1994, the LPC captured Gorwor Town and began searching the civilians. They found three young men, one about fifteen years old, the other two in their early twenties. When searching the youngest one, they found a Charles Taylor T-shirt in his bag (on the back was written, "Ghankay¹¹ is OK"). All three young men were then shot.

M., a twenty-seven-year-old medical worker, was arrested by the LPC in Newcess beach and forced to work as a combat medic. When he tried to refuse, three Krahn soldiers beat him.

The Role of ECOMOG

There are consistent reports that members of the Nigerian contingent of ECOMOG—not the Ugandans or the Ghanaians, who are also stationed in the area—are aiding the LPC. Displaced persons and foreign observers believe that the Nigerians are supplying arms and ammunition to the LPC as a way to weaken the NPFL, and possibly profiteering on the side.

The background to the hostility between NPFL and the Nigerian contingent of ECOMOG dates back to the initial ECOMOG intervention in August 1990, when Charles Taylor accused Nigeria's President Ibrahim Babangida of at-

tempting to rescue Liberian President Doe. Taylor's NPFL soon targeted West African nationals from the countries participating in ECOMOG, including many Nigerians; it is believed that hundreds were executed, and hundreds of others were held in detention.

An uneasy truce existed between 1990 and 1992, but the recalcitrance of the warring factions made a political settlement impossible. The NPFL grew increasingly hostile toward ECOMOG, particularly the Nigerian contingent. Taylor referred to Babangida as a "mad dictator" and accused him of trying to commit genocide on the Liberian people.

ECOMOG finally began to deploy its forces in NPFL territory in April 1992, in accordance with the Geneva peace agreement, but was forced to withdraw all its forces after the offensive of a new warring faction, ULIMO, against the NPFL. However, Taylor prohibited the departure of 580 ECOMOG soldiers stationed in NPFL territory, and effectively held them hostage until late September, when they were released due to the intervention of former President Jimmy Carter. During their return to Monrovia, many of the soldiers were humiliated, beaten, and had their weapons, vehicles and personal belongings confiscated by the NPFL. This incident increased ECOMOG'S hostility toward the NPFL.

The situation exploded again in October 1992, when the NPFL attacked Monrovia. The urgency of the situation compelled ECOMOG to accept the assistance of other Liberian factions—the AFL and ULIMO—in fighting the NPFL. There have been many allegations that ECOMOG actually armed ULIMO and the AFL. Sources in the State Department and the Pentagon have confirmed that ECOMOG supplied—or at least facilitated—some arms to AFL and ULIMO. There were also many reports that ECOMOG provided transportation to ULIMO fighters.

A remarkably similar pattern seems to be emerging between Nigerian ECOMOG and the LPC. Residents of Buchanan report that LPC fighters have free run of the city, sometimes checking their weapons at an ECOMOG checkpoint at the outskirts of the city and reclaiming them when they leave. Some observers have reported seeing a joint ECOMOG/LPC checkpoint, and displaced persons report seeing the Nigerians transporting LPC.

The implications of this are obviously very serious, even though it is not clear how high up the collaboration goes in the Nigerian contingent.

On March 7, the Liberian National Transitional Government was seated, a new interim government with representatives of all the factions who signed the Cotonou agreement in July 1993. A high-ranking official of the new government was skeptical about ECOMOG'S intentions:

At one time, there was only Taylor, there was no ULIMO. ECOMOG sat here until ULIMO was born under some mysterious circumstances. They told us not to worry, that ULIMO would be put in its place. Now, they say the same thing about the LPC.¹²

A foreign diplomat in Monrovia echoed this sentiment, calling the LPC "ULIMO East."¹³ He continued: "Who monitors the monitors, monitoring the peacekeepers?"

However, there are also examples of other contingents in ECOMOG protecting civilians from the LPC. When the LPC attacked Compound 2 outside Buchanan in March, many civilians were injured or killed, and those who could fled to SOS Village, approximately six km. away, where the Ugandan contingent of ECOMOG was based. This was followed by some 175 NPFL fighters with about 400 of their relatives who also sought refuge at SOS Village, and who agreed to hand their weapons over to ECOMOG. The LPC responded by accusing ECOMOG of assisting the NPFL. For its part, the NPFL accused ECOMOG of enticing the soldiers to come into the _____ ent center, and demanded that their soldiers be returned.

The U.N. Response

UNOMIL was established by the Security Council on September 22, 1993, initially for seven months. It comprises 303 military observers tasked with monitoring the cease-fire and verifying that the regional peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, is fulfilling its mandate to secure the country and carry out disarmament. UNOMIL is also supposed to help coordinate humanitarian relief and report violations of international humanitarian law to the Secretary-General. This mandate should enable the U.N. to deploy personnel throughout the country and provide accurate information about what all the factions are doing, including their responsibility for human rights violations.

In April, the United Nations Security Council extended the UNOMIL's mandate for another six months, but called for the situation to be reviewed on May 18 and June 30. This provides an important opportunity to re-examine UNOMIL's progress and purpose, and reinforce the need for its mandate to be implemented.

UNOMIL has not been reporting publicly on either the violations of the cease-fire in the southeast or violations of humanitarian law, although apparently reports are being sent to New York. According to General Opande, the commander of UNOMIL: "We collect as much information as possible, wherever we go, whatever we see, whatever we hear." But he made it clear that UNOMIL has to be careful in investigating human rights abuses. "We've done some investigations, but they haven't been conclusive."¹⁴

UNOMIL is itself restricted in its movements, and has not been capable of conducting investigations of such violations. As a U.N. colonel explained:

Often a twelve or fifteen-year-old boy stops a U.N. car, and starts complaining and arguing.... He only knows that he is in power and that he has someone who will do anything he commands—even kill. Sometimes it takes hours of discussion, when they have no right to restrict us.¹⁵

In one incident in March, General Opande was evacuating forty-six civilians from a combat zone. Although he had received authorization from the faction that controlled the area, ULIMO, the convoy was still harassed at every checkpoint. After the LPC attack on Compound 2, UNOMIL apparently tried to investigate reports that civilians were killed by the LPC; the UNOMIL observers were then detained by the LPC for a couple of hours.¹⁶

When asked about the relations between Nigerian ECOMOG and the LPC, UNOMIL officials admitted that they had heard such reports, but could not confirm them. "Maybe there are some deals going on between ECOMOG and the LPC," one U.N. official said. "But they don't need a lot of weapons and ammunition to take an area in Liberia." He continued: "These factions take what they want from a village—they kill, rape, stay in charge for a couple of weeks. Then the other group counterattacks. But they don't really attack each other; it's the civilians who are attacked."¹⁷

Unfortunately, the U.N. is reluctant to discuss human rights abuses, for fear of derailing the peace process. According to former president of the interim government, Amos Sawyer:

The question of casting blame for anything—including human rights violations—is the last thing the U.N. wants to get involved in. It stands in the way of access. The U.N. is being unwittingly manipulated by the so-called parties, because it wants to maintain its relevance to those parties.¹⁸

By avoiding the human rights issues, the U.N. is failing to discharge its mandate in Liberia.

Recommendations

To the United Nations:

The U.N. mission in Liberia constitutes one of the only means of exerting pressure on the Nigerians, as well as the warring factions, to halt this downward spiral.

The U.N. must implement its mandate: U.N. observers are authorized to report on violations of the cease-fire and of humanitarian law, and they must protest publicly when they are restricted in their movements.

The U.N. must pay close attention to the situation in the southeast, and perhaps recommend replacing some of the Nigerian contingent with G and Ugandans, who have a good reputation among the civilians.

The new human rights officer for UNOMIL must engage in active human rights monitoring, so that human rights violations can be documented and their perpetrators identified.

The human rights aspect of the UNOMIL mandate must be reinforced, so that the observers are fully cognizant of their responsibility to report on violations of human rights.

To ECOMOG:

ECOMOG should launch an immediate investigation into the charges that members of the Nigerian contingent are assisting the LPC, and make its findings public.

ECOMOG must ensure that all the warring factions—NPFL, AFL, ULIMO, and LPC—are disarmed and demobilized in a systematic and even-handed manner.

¹ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview in Monrovia, April 26, 1994.

² James Butty, "Threat to Peace," *West Africa* magazine, London, December 6-12, 1993

³ "Liberia Militia Says It Will Fight On," *Reuters*, April 14, 1994.

⁴ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview in Buchanan, April 26, 1994.

⁵ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview in Buchanan, April 26, 1994.

⁶ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview outside Buchanan, April 23, 1994.

⁷ Human Rights Watch/Africa interviews in Buchanan, April 1994.

⁸ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview in Buchanan, April 26, 1994.

⁹ "Tabey" is a form of torture used by all the factions in Liberia. It involves tying the victim's elbows behind his or her back, which forces the chest to protrude and often causes nerve damage in the arms.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview in Buchanan, April 23, 1994.

¹¹ Charles Taylor claims to have Gola ancestry. During the war, he adopted a new middle name—"Ghankay"—which means warrior in the Gola language, and is often referred to by this name.

¹² Human Rights Watch/Africa interview in Monrovia, April 27, 1994.

¹³ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview in Monrovia, April 27, 1994.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview with General Opande in Monrovia, April 20, 1994.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview with Colonel Winkler in Monrovia, April 19, 1994.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview in Monrovia, April 18, 1994.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview in Monrovia, April 19, 1994.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch/Africa interview with Amos Sawyer in Monrovia, April 25, 1994.

Liberia: the role of the United Nations
Eric Avebury
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
Royal African Society, September 28,1993

The current state of affairs in Liberia arises out of the civil war of 1989 to 1990, in which the dictator Samuel Doe was overthrown, and in the end tortured and killed by Mr. Prince Johnson, leader of an armed faction, the so-called Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), on September 10, 1990. At the request of the United States, Mr. Charles Taylor, of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), who had control of much of the country at that time, had refrained from entering the capital, Monrovia, for two months prior to that date, and it is an intriguing question how Mr. Johnson and his 500 men got in so easily. Most people believe the Americans arranged it.

The remnants of Mr. Doe's army, amounting to perhaps 1,000 men at the time, were not disbanded, but regrouped as a faction known as the Armed Forces of Liberia, or AFL.

A cease fire, brokered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was signed in Bamako by the three factions mentioned, on November 28, 1990. After that, ECOWAS arranged an All Liberia Conference in March 1991, without the participation of Mr. Taylor, who feared that he would be killed if he attended, or indeed any other representatives from outside Monrovia. The delegates confirmed the appointment of Amos Sawyer as head of an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU), whose legitimacy was not recognised by Mr. Taylor, and which derived its authority solely from the presence of foreign military forces. (The United Nations and some member states have since recognised IGNU, however, on what legal basis it is not clear). Mr. Taylor formed his own administration in the rest of the country, the National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG).

A series of four meetings was then held in Yamoussoukro, in the Cote d'Ivoire, at which an agreement was finally hammered out between all the armed factions, on the logistics of elections, and the pre steps to be taken on encampment and ent of the various armed forces. One of the points in the final agreement, Yamoussoukro IV, was that Mr. Taylor was asked to cede a 3 km buffer zone along the border with Sierra Leone, and Senegalese troops occupied this area.¹ But they allowed a new faction, armed and trained in Sierra Leone, the United Liberation Movement or ULIMO, led by Alhaji Kromah, to infiltrate across the border and attack the NPFL forces, starting in August 1992. Several complaints were lodged by the NPFL with ECOMOG, but no action was taken. This is extremely important, because the version of history now being peddled by ECOWAS is that the cease fire held until October, when it was broken by the NPFL. Fighting between the NPFL and ULIMO actually

started two months earlier. When NPFL forces pursued ULIMO troops which had crossed ECOMOG lines into Monrovia, clashes occurred on the outskirts of Monrovia, starting on October 2 with a confrontation between NPFL and ECOMOG at the Po river bridge where, according to the official ECOMOG press release, 46 NPFL soldiers were killed with the loss of 5 ECOMOG troops. From October 2 to 15, ULIMO were regrouping behind the shield of ECOMOG and were being reinforced by sea from Sierra Leone. This was the bait of the trap set by ECOMOG, to tempt Mr. Taylor to go after these forces, thus giving ECOMOG the excuse they had been waiting for, to launch an all-out assault on the NPFL on October 15, with the objective of a military rather than a political solution.

Throughout the whole of the period from the revolution against the regime of Mr. Doe to the breakdown of the cease fire in the summer of 1992, the United Nations were content simply to endorse the policies of ECOWAS. As the Secretary-General put it in his Agenda for Peace of June 17, 1992, '*should the Security Council choose specifically to authorize a regional arrangement or organization to take the lead in addressing a crisis within its region, it could serve to lend the weight of the United Nations to the validity of the regional effort*'.² Having committed the Security Council to the unlikely proposition that peace and order could be restored in Liberia, and democratic elections arranged, under the auspices of the neighbouring dictators like Babangida, Conteh, Rawlings and Strasser, the United Nations disabled itself from putting forward or accepting any independent initiatives, being imprisoned within the framework of strategies determined by ECOWAS, and particularly by Nigeria. This can be seen clearly in the speech of the UN Secretary-General to the OAU Summit meeting in Cairo on June 28, 1993, when he said:

*Liberia is a good example of the type of co-operation between the United Nations and a regional organisation that was envisaged in Chapter VIII of the Charter. At the initiative of ECOWAS the Security Council convened on 19 November 1992 to consider the conflict in Liberia. The Council adopted a resolution (No 788) imposing an arms embargo on the country, urging the appointment of a special envoy for Liberia, and calling upon all parties to the conflict to respect and implement the cease fire and other accords. Shortly afterwards I named Mr. Trevor Gordon-Somers as my Special Representative for Liberia and dispatched him to the region to assess the situation and help mediate the conflict.*³

The danger of this approach is that prior to the Security Council debate, the only input they had was from ECOWAS itself, and from the US, the only one of the permanent members of the Council which had retained a diplomatic presence in Monrovia throughout the revolution and since. It was clear that, as Herman Cohen, US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, said in an interview with the BBC on November 11, 1992.

ECOWAS is no longer a neutral party... ECOMOG.. [is] now one of the combatants... so I think the next step... and we are now discussing this in Washington... will be United Nations intervention to provide a neutral party to try and bring about a political solution..⁴

Mr. Cohen was speaking out of turn and was persuaded to withdraw his remarks the following day. But there was plenty of evidence to show that ECOMOG had become a party to the conflict. For instance, Major-General Ishaya Bakut, the Nigerian commander of the ECOMOG force at the time, said in a letter to Mr. Prince Johnson of INPFL of September 7, 1992:

We downplayed your participation because we still think you are an ally of ECOMOG.⁵

Hilary Anderson, a freelance journalist who was in Monrovia in August 1992, wrote that

'.. if you were on the lookout... for signs of collaboration between ECOMOG and ULIMO, it was all there.⁶

According to Africa Watch,

The collaboration between ECOMOG and AFL/ULIMO has changed the dynamics of the war, and raises questions about ECOMOG's commitment to human rights..... Since ECOMOG re-established its defensive perimeter around Monrovia in late 1992, it has taken the offensive. A pattern has emerged whereby AFL or ULIMO soldiers often form the front lines of attack, while ECOMOG follows behind with heavy weapons.⁷

Channel 4 News showed fraternisation between ECOMOG troops and the AFL on the streets of Monrovia.⁸

Brian Garnham, the British ecologist who was later murdered by AFL troops, said in a letter to the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative that

... ULIMO and the former Doe forces have been aided and abetted by ECOMOG. ECOMOG can no longer be considered a non-biased peacekeeping force.⁹

Mr. Amos Sawyer had recruited his own armed force, the Black Berets, which were trained in Guinea and Ghana, both of them contributors to the ECOMOG force.¹⁰

Thus at the time the Security Council passed Resolution 788, not only was ECOMOG an active participant in the conflict, but it had formed alliances with four armed factions to defeat Mr. Charles Taylor, who then held all of the country outside Monrovia. The Security Council was being advised by peace-keepers whose object was to achieve a military victory, at no matter what cost.

Security Council Resolutions 788 and 813 both condemned 'the violation of the cease-fire of 28 November 1990 by any party to the conflict',¹¹ which gave ECOMOG carte blanche to continue bombing and shelling, while the NPRAG were not supposed to take any action in self-defence. We did ask the Foreign Office to call for a total cease-fire, and the reason given by the Minister who replied, Lynda Chalker, for the omission was that previously Charles Taylor had used a general cease-fire to regroup and rearm.¹² The Security Council were therefore quite deliberately endorsing ECOMOG's policy of achieving a military rather than a political solution.

If the Security Council had been minded to seek independent advice, it could have turned to ex-President Jimmy Carter, who had spent time with heads of state in the region, and had come up with proposals for a solution, first in October 1991 and then in September 1992. In his second memorandum to heads of ECOWAS states,¹³ he warned of the 'potentially explosive' developments in Liberia, and particularly the movement of ULIMO troops into south-western Liberia, 'with little opposition from Sierra Leone', as he put it. President Carter proposed the reduction of the ECOMOG forces, then officially 7,000 strong but in the process of being reinforced to 12,000 by the end of the month, and ultimately to 25,000 by June 1993, should be reduced by 50%, and heavy offensive weapons such as tanks, armoured personnel carriers, 105 mm howitzers and other artillery, bombers and warships be removed from the theatre altogether.

The effect of Resolution 813 was therefore to endorse the indefinite increase of ECOMOG's offensive capability, and to condone the murderous attacks they mounted against concentrations of civilians, for example by warships against the people of Buchanan, Greenville and Harper, which began on October 19. Among their targets was the Catholic Relief Service warehouse in Buchanan which was largely destroyed. The use of jet bombers against civilian targets began with a raid on the Firestone rubber plantation at Harbel on November 2, in which an estimated 47 people were killed and 117 wounded. The bombers attacked even *Médécins Sans Frontières* relief convoys, on April 18 at Sanniquille, capital of Nimba County and again on May 29 on the border with Côte d'Ivoire.

The intentions of ECOMOG were foreshadowed in a statement by the Nigerian Ambassador in Monrovia of September 7, when he said

*We are inexorably moving towards another blood bath, this time perhaps largely outside Monrovia. We are poised to crush Taylor's rebellion at all costs, and the costs will be heavy.*¹⁴

Even if the NPFL had not given some excuse for the offensive, plans had been laid already by ECOMOG in September 'to flush out Taylor from Monrovia before 30th of November, 1992' and that 'the ports at Buchanan, Greenville and

Harper which Taylor used should be taken over in three weeks after the arrival of the new Commander', Major-General Adetunji Olurin.¹⁵

So the Security Council could have pre-empted the carnage and suffering, if they had followed the advice of the Secretary-General himself in his Agenda for Peace, that

*Preventive steps must be based upon timely and accurate knowledge of the facts.*¹⁶

The first lesson to be learned from this disaster is that the United Nations must never allow itself to become the compliant agent of a regional organisation, without having the means of independently validating the advice it receives. There is an obvious temptation, in a period when the demands on the United Nations are outstripping its capacity to respond, to welcome uncritically any regional solution which makes no demand on UN resources, and this is what has happened in Liberia. Consideration should be given to an elevation of the role of NGOs which have conflict resolution expertise, such as the Carter Center or International Alert, to ensure that the UN is not dragged into supporting aggressive operations which cost a great many lives—150,000 in the case of Liberia, according to the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Major MP.¹⁷

It may be objected at this point, that the Secretary-General does have the power to appoint independent advisers, and that under Security Council Resolution 788 he has done so, in the person of Dr. Trevor Gordon-Somers, the Special Representative on Liberia.¹⁸ But Dr. Gordon-Somers had no previous experience of conflict resolution, having spent some years before his appointment as an executive officer under the UNDP administrator. He had been a servant of the UN for some 25 years, and his selection for this post was the result of the old boy network, as another high official of the UN told me in an unattributable conversation. This is another example of the cronyism so prevalent in the UN, which was recently analysed by the *Sunday Times*, and it means that the UN has no access to fresh thinking from outside the organisation.¹⁹

The first task undertaken by Dr. Gordon-Somers, under Resolution 788, was to evaluate the situation in Liberia and report back. This resulted in the Secretary-General's Report on the Question of Liberia,²⁰ which gave a selective picture of the state of affairs. It made no direct mention of the huge military onslaught which had been mounted by ECOMOG, contravening that provision of Resolution 788 which called for the cessation of hostilities. Mr. Taylor had announced a unilateral cease fire on November 10, and from that point onwards, all hostilities were initiated by ECOMOG. But Dr. Gordon-Somers merely reported a complaint by Mr. Taylor of persistent bombing attacks, resulting in extensive casualties. He did not say that he had personally seen the damage to the CRS warehouse in Buchanan, to Robertsfield International Airport, to Du Side Hospital in Harbel, to Phebe Hospital near Gbarnga, to the water treatment plant and court house in Gbarnga. ECOMOG knew Dr. Gordon-Somers' itiner-

ary, because they constantly monitored radio communications with Gbarnga, yet the day before he was to arrive at a guest house in Harbel, UN Human Rights Day, December 10, 1992, Nigerian jets rocketed the building, narrowly missing it and blowing out all the windows. Not a word of all this military aggression appears in the report.

The Secretary-General says in his report that he believes it would be the wish of the Security Council to continue and expand the co-operative relationship between the UN and ECOWAS. He states his belief that the comprehensive economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS were an important component of the efforts to bring about a cessation of hostilities, though these went beyond the terms of Resolution 788, and directly contravened the support declared by the Security Council for *'increased humanitarian assistance to the victims of the conflict in Liberia'*. Since all the victims were in the region controlled by Mr. Taylor, the sanctions blatantly violated the Resolution, and together with the bombings which disrupted agriculture, they led directly to the mass deaths and suffering being endured by the people of Liberia today.

The Special Representative did respond to the concerns of the interim government of Mr. Amos Sawyer, though he simply passed on those of Mr. Taylor without comment. Mr. Sawyer raised the breaches of sanctions, and Dr. Gordon-Somers reviewed various route options for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In view of what happened later, it is important to note the conclusion that *'the most direct and convenient route continues to be via Côte d'Ivoire'*.

On March 25, the Security Council considered the Secretary-General's report and passed Resolution 813, in which they urged the parties concerned to *'refrain from any action that will impede or obstruct the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and called upon [the belligerents] to ensure the safety of all personnel involved in international humanitarian assistance.'*²¹

Nevertheless on April 18 the MSF convoy was bombed,²² as already mentioned; on May 29, a UN relief convoy was bombed at Gbinta on the Côte d'Ivoire border, and Gbarnga was bombed several times.

In George Orwell's 1984, the department of state responsible for warfare was called the Ministry of Peace. In Resolution 813, the increase in the strength of ECOMOG from 7,000 to 25,000 men, and the continuing bombardment of civilian populations, is described as *'the continuing commitment of, ... West African States to, and the efforts towards, a peaceful resolution of the Liberian conflict'*. The Security Council condemned *'the continuing armed attacks against the peacekeeping forces in Liberia by one of the parties to the conflict'*, when all the military operations since November 10, 1992, when Mr. Taylor had declared a unilateral cease fire, had been initiated by ECOMOG themselves. The Security Council approved the Secretary-General's report, complete with its omissions and distortions, which

we pointed out to him at the time. The stage was set for the final act of the drama, in which the people of Liberia would be forced to submit to the army of occupation which had already spread death and devastation throughout the land.

At this point, it was very conveniently reported, from the ECOMOG propagandists point of view, that Mr. Taylor's NPFL had committed a particularly atrocious massacre. According to the UNHCR Representative in Liberia, Mr. Charles Mahiga, *'they cut throats, threw out brains, opened stomachs and pulled out intestines, broke legs, and shot, so many bullet wounds that you cannot understand why'*, he said when visiting the site of the massacre at Harbel on June 6, 1993.²³ For good measure, Mr. Mahiga added that the 'rebels' might 'be using body parts for witchcraft,' and *The Guardian*, reporting his comments, embellished the story with a reference to the alleged interception of a radio conversation between Mr. Taylor and one of his commanders two weeks earlier, in which Mr. Taylor had ordered the commander to unleash a 'reign of terror' against refugees on the front lines in the war.

The tape containing the alleged conversation had been played to Guardian reporter Mark Huband in ECOMOG's headquarters, and he had not been offered a copy.²⁴ The Foreign Editor of *The Guardian* saw nothing irregular in publishing allegations based on a tape which was stated to be a forgery by the person said to be speaking on it, nor in refusing to report his comments on it. We suggested to Mr. Huband that he ask ECOMOG for a copy of the tape, so that it could be subjected to scientific analysis, and he agreed to do this in a conversation on July 7. We are still waiting for the tape, and it may be presumed that those who claim to have recorded it are not prepared to have their work subjected to scientific analysis.

On June 9, the President of the Security Council asked the Secretary-General to *'begin immediately a thorough and full investigation of the [Harbel] massacre, including any allegations as to the perpetrators, and report as soon as possible'*.²⁵ He warned that those found responsible would be held accountable, though no decision has been taken to set up a war crimes tribunal in Liberia, still less to provide the means to investigate these crimes properly. We suggested to Dr. Gordon-Somers, who was asked to conduct the inquiry, and to Mr. James Jonah, the UN Under-Secretary-General, to whom he is supposed to report in theory, that if the truth were to be uncovered, trained investigators would be needed on site, particularly ballistics experts, and that the weapons belonging to the AFL contingent who were supposed to be guarding the civilians at Harbel should be impounded, so that they could be subjected to testing. To these communications we received no answer, though it was clear from all the accounts of the survivors right from the beginning that it was the AFL who were guilty of this massacre.

We have also learned that the survivors sent a memorandum to the Nigerian Brigade commander in charge of the Roberts International Airport/Harbel

areas, whose radio call sign was 36, on June 7, two days after the massacre, placing the blame firmly on AFL and asking for AFL contingent to be removed. The commander found the report so damaging that he recommended it should not be made public. He forwarded it to the ECOMOG Chief of Staff on June 9, and it would be interesting to know whether it was made available to Dr. Gordon-Somers in the course of his inquiry.

Dr. Gordon-Somers made inquiries in Monrovia and Abidjan, and also made several visits to the massacre site, where he conducted interviews with survivors. It is not known whether he recorded statements from any of the witnesses quoted by UPI and the Monrovia newspaper *The Eye*. He reported secretly on the massacre to the Secretary-General, whose response was to appoint a further 'international expert panel' to carry on with the investigation. This was to become operational 'within a matter of weeks' according to a letter from Mr. Jonah of July 16.²⁶ One curious feature of the panel's terms of reference was that although 'authorised to make such contacts as necessary with the Interim Government of Liberia, the NPFL, ULIMO and AFL', they were not specifically given leave to contact the ECOMOG forces nominally in charge of the area at the material time.²⁷

It may be that the initial enthusiasm for an inquiry into the Harbel massacre was based on the reports that NPFL troops were responsible, and the assumption that it would provide a useful propaganda weapon against Mr. Taylor. Mr. Abbas Bundu, Secretary of ECOWAS, and the Nigerian commander of ECOMOG, General Olurin, were in Washington DC on June 6, 7, 8 and 9, and it is necessary to ask whether they used the massacre as an argument for maintaining US contributions to the ECOMOG operation, said to have been running at \$26 million a quarter at that time.

The United Nations inquiry by Dr. Amos Wako, former Kenya Attorney-General, following that of Dr. Gordon-Somers, ultimately found that the atrocity was indeed committed by the AFL troops which were supposed to be guarding the refugees, and that evidence pointing to the complicity of Mr. Taylor's forces was actually laid as '*part of a scheme of deception*'.²⁸ This leads to the further question, who had an interest in putting the blame on the NPFL, and who had the opportunity of laying the false trail. Dr. Wako says that the IGNU pathologist, the IGNU Ministry of Justice, AFL, and ECOMOG itself, all concluded '*despite profound differences in their descriptions and interpretations of the evidence found at Camp A, that the NPFL conducted the massacre*'.²⁹ Those persons had a common interest in blaming Mr. Taylor, and it was a pity the United Nations investigators were not asked to examine the conspiracy to pervert the course of justice which is now disclosed.

Dr. Wako did conclude that '*ECOMOG... may have suspected soon after learning of the incident what had actually happened and treated the matter as if it were*

not its direct responsibility'.³⁰ He mentions their submission as evidence of four transcripts of alleged NPFL broadcasts, said to have contributed '*significantly, perhaps conclusively, to the view that the NPFL conducted the Carter massacre*'.³¹ In view of ECOMOG's use of alleged tapes to blame the NPFL for other crimes previously, the use of forged material on this occasion makes it essential that all the tapes in ECOMOGs custody be handed over to the United Nations for scientific examination.

ECOMOG asserted that it had no responsibility to protect large civilian displaced populations which it had caused to be relocated, and Dr. Wako remarks that a need exists for '*a review of the roles and responsibilities of ECOMOG, the Interim Government (IGNU) and the international humanitarian community*'.³² Another worrying conclusion, in view of the representations made immediately after the crime to Dr. Gordon-Somers and Mr. Jonah, was that '*there was no procedure... to systematically collect and preserve readily available information concerning the massacre which could have served as the basis for future investigation*'.³³

Whatever the motives were for singling out this particular war crime, the terms of reference of the panel ought now to be extended to include other murders, such as that of Mr. Brian Carnham, and the massacre of 300 people in Lofa County on July 18. Major Osman Kenneh of ULIMO told the BBC reporter Mr. Foday Foffanah, '*I must be honest with you, we wiped them out like ants*'. In another attack on Lorma people in Vonjama, a further 100 people were reported to have been massacred, and some of the survivors, whose lips, fingers and ears had been cut off, were seen by the reporter in Macenta Government Hospital.³⁴ The Wako report endorses the call made by all the witnesses who gave evidence to the inquiry, that investigations should be conducted into other major atrocities.³⁵

At an International Conference on the Protection of War Victims held in Geneva at the end of August by the ICRC, the participants urged, in their final Declaration, that states make every effort to '*ensure that war crimes are duly prosecuted and do not go unpunished*'.³⁶ They called for the establishment of appropriate international legal machinery, which means that instead of having to set up ad hoc tribunals to deal with offences committed in a particular conflict, there should be a uniform system of justice which applies to all of them. An important corollary of this idea is that resources have to be made available by the Security Council for thorough and immediate investigations.³⁷ Where the

-General has gone wrong in the case of Liberia is in the assumption that deficiencies in technical resources can be made up for by the appointment of so-called 'experts', who may be very well qualified within their own fields, but have no idea of how to set about investigating alleged crimes. This is a task for professionals, as we have tried to convince Dr. Gordon-Somers and Mr. Jonah. But as long as we are arguing the point within the framework of a particular case, we are unlikely to be successful. The mechanisms for investigating war crimes

need to be applied uniformly, just as the tribunals themselves must be. This requires that states agree to yield part of their sovereignty, however, and this is probably the reason why the provisions of common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which are supposed to apply in every conflict, have not been made justiciable.

Mr. Jonah also said, on July 16, that Mr. Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, had been working with great diligence to reach agreements that would '*allow relief supplies to be delivered to all those in urgent need throughout the country*', and he added that if the peace talks then under way led to a cessation of hostilities, it would greatly facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The peace agreement was finally signed in Cotonou on July 25,³⁸ and Mr. Jonah immediately issued a Memorandum of Understanding, in which he said that the United Nations '*will use its best efforts to mobilise international donor support to provide humanitarian assistance...*', and '*the United Nations agrees to make use of NPFL food and medicine available in Côte d'Ivoire.... on the understanding that United Nations will verify [it], by thorough inspection*'. The Cotonou agreement itself provided, in Article 17, that '*convoys of humanitarian assistance should travel to all areas of Liberia through the most direct routes*'.

We wrote to Mr. Jonah on July 31 saying that we hoped '*that humanitarian relief supplies [would] be allowed into the NPRAG areas via Côte d'Ivoire* because not only were the supplies in position and ready to be moved, but we realized that it would take many weeks to organise alternative routes across what had been the front lines of the conflict.

On August 5 it was reported in the *New York Times*, however, that Dr. Gordon-Somers had written to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, asking them to stop agencies from crossing the border into Liberian territory with relief supplies, on the ground that it might endanger the peace agreement.³⁹ Dr. Gordon-Somers telephoned Mr. Amara Essy, Foreign Minister of the Côte d'Ivoire, and then faxed him as follows:

'... I WISH TO INFORM YOU THAT OUR OFFICE IN MONROVIA HAS INFORMED US THAT THE FOLLOWING NGOS ARE PLANNING TO CROSS FROM CÔTE D'IVOIRE THIS WEEK: MSF/BELGIUM, MSF/HOLLAND, AICV AND LUTHERAN WORLD SERVICE (LWS). THIS CROSSING IS NOT AUTHORIZED REPEAT NOT AUTHORIZED BY ECOMOG BECAUSE IT IS A VIOLATION OF THE COTONOU AGREEMENT. WE TRUST THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE NECESSARY MEASURES TO STOP THIS CROSSING WHICH COULD ENDANGER THE PEACE AGREEMENT, WARM GREETINGS, TREVOR'.⁴⁰

We faxed Mr. Jonah immediately, drawing his attention to the warning by the US Catholic Relief Services, that 25,000 children were suffering from malnutrition in the Kakata area, and the statement by Mr. Paul Bonnard of the ICRC that 500 children were starving to death every week north of Kakata. We appealed again for private relief agencies to be allowed to operate via Côte d'Ivoire, and we asked for Dr. Gordon-Somers to be suspended from duty pending an inquiry into the reasons why he issued an instruction which could lead to the deaths of thousands of children.

On August 9 and 11, we wrote for the third and fourth times to Mr. Jonah, and in the fourth communication we referred to the offer which had been made by ICRC, either to take responsibility themselves for inspecting the convoys and accompany them across the border, or to allow UN personnel already on the spot to do so. By this time we had learned that Médecins Sans Frontières and Save the Children had also protested about Dr. Gordon-Somers' lethal instruction, and we had also been informed that he had gone on holiday immediately after issuing it. We asked Mr. Jonah to take action without waiting for Dr. Gordon-Somers to return, emphasising that children's lives were being sacrificed for political reasons and agreeing with the ICRC's description of Dr. Gordon-Somers' conduct as a grave violation of international humanitarian law.

When the Security Council next met to consider Liberia and to pass Resolution 856, which endorsed the Cotonou Agreement and approved the establishment of a UN observer team to monitor the cease fire,⁴¹ they had before them a Report by the Secretary-General⁴², which said that

the rapid expansion of humanitarian assistance activities throughout Liberia will be an essential component in establishing conditions conducive to the effective implementation of the Liberian Peace Agreement. Arrangements are already being made to mount relief convoys utilizing supplies currently available as soon as conditions permit.

The omission of any reference to Dr. Gordon-Somers' obstruction of a relief plan using supplies currently available, which could have been launched already, was misleading. But the French Representative, Mr. Jean-Bernard Mérimée, expressed concern over '*obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid especially the blockages occurring at the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, despite the call of the ICRC for free access*'. The US Representative, Ms. Albright, said that '*according to international relief organizations, delays in the delivery of much-needed relief, put thousands of displaced persons, especially in lower Bong county, at risk of starvation*'. She urged the United Nations '*to find some mechanism to allow crossborder relief shipments from Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea to resume until such time as the full observer contingent referred to in the peace agreement might arrive*'.

The Security Council was thus aware of the obstruction and the serious consequences that were likely to follow. Yet the border remained closed, and thousands of people including many children have now perished as a result. The United Nations must surely take responsibility for their failure to act, when all the facts were known.

One further significant feature of UN policy since October 1992 has to be noted. On October 26, 1992, after the first bombing raids on Gbarnga, all UN personnel were evacuated from NPRAG territory, and apart from a two-day reconnaissance on August 9 to 10, 1993, they have not yet returned. Mr. Jonah claimed, in his letter of July 16, 1993, that *'relief agencies are experiencing difficulty gaining access'* to areas under NPFL control, but this was being economical with the truth. We pointed out that it had been ECOMOG's bombardment which had precipitated the agencies' withdrawal, and we asked whether a date could be set for their return. We also proposed, on August 9, that the satellite communications link with Gbarnga, which had been cut off because Mr. Taylor had no foreign currency since the blockade was established, should be restored at UN expense so as to facilitate the peace process.

Throughout the last year, the United Nations has ignored Mr. Taylor, listening only to the voices of ECOMOG and their satellites. They know that, as a Confidential State Department telegram of October 24, 1992 put it, *'this is a war between Nigeria and Taylor'* and that *'Guinea and Sierra Leone hate Taylor and will stay on board'*. They know that at least some elements in the so-called peacekeeping force were prepared to use political assassination: to quote again from another Confidential State Department telegram, of October 23, 1992, *'the Senegalese Chief of Staff of the armed forces stated to visiting Assistant Secretary of Defense Lelley, that the best solution to the Liberia problem would be to eliminate Taylor, and made his meaning very clear'*.

The United Nations has unwittingly lent its name and prestige to a dishonourable venture by a group of West African dictators, led by General Babangida of Nigeria. The purpose of the dictators, who were friendly with the late military boss of Liberia, President Doe, was to prevent a democratic process in Liberia, and to foist on the country an unelected coalition of military bandits. Over the critical period from July 1990 to June 1991, General Babangida was both chairman of both OAU and ECOWAS, and the United Nations risked too much by supporting a regional peacekeeping process dominated by one autocrat, over which it had no control or influence. Perhaps one lesson has been learned from the past three years, and has been reflected in the latest Resolution of the Security Council, which provides for the deployment of 519 UN and other international personnel alongside a reformed ECOMOG.⁴³ Before deployment of the new force, UNOMIL, the roles and responsibilities of UNOMIL and ECOWAS in the implementation of the Peace Agreement have to be defined, and this could help to prevent a repetition of the Liberian people's agony. The

United Nations must go further, and consider how in any future co-operative operations with regional organisations, they can preserve their freedom to criticise and to avert human rights and humanitarian disasters.

It is a matter for consideration, also, whether the participants in a regional peacekeeping operation should include states which had previously been involved in the conflict. Before the fall of the late Samuel Doe, Nigeria and Guinea had supplied military forces to defend him against Mr. Taylor's NPFL. Sierra Leone and Guinea harboured the forces of ULIMO and helped to arm and train them. Ghana had been host to Sawyer's group. So the principal movers in ECOMOG were not dispassionate peacekeepers, but were interested in particular solutions.

Where a regional force's role changes from that of peace keeping to that of peace enforcement, as ECOMOG's did, to put it in charitable terms, there should be specific authorization by the Security Council. Nothing in any of the Resolutions of the Security Council permitted the offensive military operations undertaken by ECOMOG, particularly those against civilian populations, and the United Nations should take steps to confine any future operations under Chapter VIII of the Charter within carefully pre-defined limits.

From the moment when the Security Council was first seized of the Liberian question on January 22, 1991⁴⁴, every possible step should have been taken to keep communications open with the parties concerned, and to consult them about proposals for peacekeeping and humanitarian aid. Instead, the UN withdrew its staff from Gbarnga and acquiesced in the severance of the radio link with Mr. Taylor. The UN ignored the difficulties faced by the NPRAG in attending meetings, both as a result of the economic sanctions which deprived them of foreign currency, and the continual bombing of Gbarnga, making it difficult for NPRAG leaders to travel out of the country.

Finally, the United Nations has to be careful that all those principally concerned with the solution of a conflict are not citizens of countries with an axe to grind. However impartial they may be, the suspicions of bias that arise in the minds of the parties concerned may create unnecessary difficulties in the process of negotiations. The facts that Mr. Jonah is a Sierra Leonean, as is also Mr. Abbas Bundu, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, have not helped to foster confidence.

Co-operation between the United Nations and a regional organisation under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter may be a useful approach to peace keeping and even to peace enforcement. The experience of Liberia shows that far more work has to be done on the collection of 'timely and accurate knowledge of the facts'; that the Security Council should be careful to specify in advance whether offensive military operations may be undertaken by a regional

force and if so in what circumstances; that mechanisms should be established for the collection of evidence of war crimes, and that humanitarian aid must take precedence over any individual party's objections.

Endnotes

¹ Economic Community of West African States: Third meeting of the Committee of Five on the Liberian crisis held in Yamoussoukro 29-30 October 1991; Final Communiqué.

² An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping, United Nations, A/47/277, June 17, 1992.

³ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, UN Secretary-General, Speech to Heads of State and Government, OAU Summit, Cairo, June 28, 1993, UN Press Release SG/SM/5029.

⁴ BBC Network Africa, November 11, 1992.

⁵ Major-General Ishaya Bakut, unpublished letter to Prince Johnson, September 7, 1992.

⁶ Hilary Anderson, *Focus on Africa*, Jan-Mar 1993, Vol 4, No 1.

⁷ *Liberia: Waging War to Keep the Peace*, June 1993, Vol 5, Issue No 6.

⁸ Channel 4 News, The Monrovia Doctrine, November 25, 1992.

⁹ American/British ecologists in Liberia cry for help, *New African*, March 1993.

¹⁰ *The Inquirer*, Monrovia, October 8, 1992.

¹¹ UN Security Council Resolution 813, S/25469, March 25, 1993.

¹² Baroness Chalker, unpublished letter, April 17, 1993.

¹³ President Jimmy Carter, unpublished letter to ECOWAS heads of state, September 14, 1992.

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¹⁵ Confidential File No ECO/25/9/92: Quarterly meeting of Nigerian Committee on ECOMOG, September 25, 1992; Confidential Report M/1/No 1856/72/9/92: Battalion Commanders confidential meeting, October 1, 1992.

¹⁶ An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping, United Nations, A/47/277, June 17, 1992.

¹⁷ The Rt. Hon. John Major MP, unpublished letter, September 7, 1993.

¹⁸ Security Council Resolution 788, S/RES/788, November 19, 1992.

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²⁰ Report of the Secretary-General on the Question of Liberia, United Nations, S/25402, March 12, 1993.

²¹ Security Council Resolution 813, S/25469, March 25, 1993.

²² Médecins Sans Frontières, Press Release, Brussels, April 22, 1993.

²³ Liberian rebels 'massacre 300', Michelle Faul, *The Guardian*, June 7, 1993.

²⁴ Unpublished verbal communication from Mark Huband to the Chairman of the PHRG.

²⁵ Note by the President of the Security Council, June 9, 1993, United Nations, S/25918.

²⁶ James Jonah, unpublished letter to the PHRG, July 16, 1993.

²⁷ Letter dated 4 August 1993 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, United Nations, S/26265, August 7, 1993.

²⁸ Amos Wako, *The Carter Camp Massacre: results of an investigation by the panel of inquiry appointed by the Secretary-General into the massacre near Harbel, Liberia, on the night of June 5/6, 1993*, United Nations, New York, September 10, 1993, para 98.

²⁹ *Ibid*, para 52.

³⁰ *Ibid*, para 102.

³¹ *Ibid*, para 81.

³² *Ibid*, para 92.

³³ *Ibid*, para 108.

³⁴ Foday Foffanah, *BBC Focus on Africa*, July 30, 1993.

³⁵ Amos Wako, *Ibid*, para 112.

³⁶ Declaration adopted by consensus by the participants in the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims, held in Geneva from August 30 to September 1, 1993.

³⁷ Procedural and evidentiary issues for the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal; *Helsinki Watch Vol 5 Issue 15*, August 1993.

³⁸ Letter dated 6 August 1993 from the Chargé d'Affaires ai of the Permanent Mission of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, United Nations, S/26272, August 9, 1993.

³⁹ UN Envoy Halts Food to Liberians, *New York Times*, August 5, 1993.

⁴⁰ Unpublished communication, Trevor Gordon-Somers to Amara Essy, United Nations, Department of Political Affairs, July 30, 1993.

⁴¹ Security Council Resolution 856, S/RES/856 (1993), August 10, 1992.

⁴² Further Report of the Secretary-General on Liberia, United Nations, S/26200*, August 4, 1993.

⁴³ Security Council Resolution 866 (1993), September 22, 1993.

⁴⁴ Letter from the President of the Security Council, January 22, 1991, S/22133.

The Civil War and Liberian Art
(A Reprint from *New Democrat Weekly* December 16-23, 1993 p. 7)

by Wilton Sankawulo

Like many other aspects of our national development, art has not received adequate support or attention to make the needed impact on the progress of the nation. Art in this context involves sculpture, painting, music, drama, journalism and creative writing. The artist has the rare sensitivity to pry into the lives and consciousness of his people to identify those resources that can be utilized to create a wholesome social order to improve the quality of their life, and point out others that militate against the peace, unity, and progress of the society.

Perhaps an important underlying cause of the disintegration of our society is the neglect of our art. Ours is an uprooted nation that needs to embark upon a soul-searching mission to discover our identity and chart a practical course that can lead to social integration and development. That this matter is urgent is an under-statement. Liberia has fallen to the depths of degradation which requires nothing less than all the resources we can muster. Political and economic arrangements can only begin the process to heal the nation's wounds. But ultimate salvation lies in falling back on our personal resources, discovering and appreciating ourselves—and this can be done chiefly by nurturing our art.

If many of our sister republics that acquired their independence just yesterday are relatively stable and progressive, it is due to the support they give to their artists. When you land at Mohammed Mutala International Airport in Lagos you realize that you are on African soil, particularly Nigeria. With all his western education the average Nigerian elite maintains great respect for his culture. The keen observer can easily note that a significant motive for the great sacrifice which our African brothers are making to save us from ourselves is not only political in nature. They are principally motivated by their love and appreciation for Africa—a phenomenon made possible by the works of their musicians, painters, writers, sculptors, and journalists who are forever bringing to their awareness the values inherent in the African experience. A Liberian proverb says that a small animal can show a big one a trap. It is time we swallowed the pride of being the oldest African Republic and learn from our younger brothers and sisters who are far ahead of us on the road of African Redemption.

The development of Liberian art has been left exclusively to the initiatives of the artists themselves. We have not established any viable institution or program for the development of art. The individual artist has to rely on his or her own resources. Our writers, journalists, musicians, and painters are largely self-made. In the sixties, the Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs established a Center for the art at Kendeja near Monrovia. Regrettably, all the

attention was devoted to the performing arts—singing and dancing—and no scholarly program was fostered to reduce Liberian art to writing to be taught in our schools or published for international consumption. It was sufficient for musicians, singers, and dancers to entertain foreign guests and government officials. No systematic effort was made to make Liberian art a significant component of our lives. Our homes continue to be decorated by the works of foreign artists. Most of the music we hear on our radio stations is foreign. Most of the textbooks in our schools are not written by Liberian writers. Although we maintain a school of journalism at the University of Liberia, journalism in the country is notoriously mediocre.

The development of Liberian art remains a staggering challenge which can be ably met mostly through the intervention of government. Otherwise, this important aspect of the nation's development will continue to linger in the quagmire of mediocrity and the nation will continue to be dangerously vulnerable to social chaos and disintegration.

The matter becomes all the more urgent when we realize that we have lost many of our artists as a result of the civil war. In the absence of a comprehensive report on their fate, several of our prominent artists have reportedly lost their lives in the war and many others have fled Liberia to seek refuge in other countries. Although his death occurred at the beginning of 1989, a new year before the commencement of our civil war, Bai T. Moore, that pioneer of modern Liberian fiction, died as a result of the unsettled conditions of the country which precipitated into the civil war. Not long after his death, the nation's most proficient sculptor, Vanja Richards was killed by security personnel working for the Doe government for political reasons. Tecumsey Roberts, one of our prominent musicians and entertainers, was murdered on Prince Johnson's base during the war. Miatta Fahnbulleh, a leading Liberian singer, resides outside of the country both in search of an audience and refuge. Fatu Gayflor and Zac Roberts now reside in the Ivory Coast, while Gebah Swaray lives in the United States. Ballah the comedian no longer performs for lack of support. Kenneth Best, a leading journalist and newspaper publisher, has fled the country to find asylum in the Gambia where he continues his publishing—though, as an advocate of social reform, he is most needed here to help his country make a new beginning. The list could continue endlessly. God has so far miraculously preserved my life in the war and made it possible for me to find employment with the Catholic Church to help produce reading materials for our schools. The example of the Catholic Church is something which our own government—which is now run by the elite—and patriotic advocates of national progress could well emulate.

Indeed, we have numerous professional and budding artists who are ready to make their contribution to the reconstruction of the nation but need encouragement and support. No aspect of national development comes to fruition

spontaneously. One main weakness of our society is that we often wait for things to happen or for others to do for us what we can and ought to do for ourselves. Our intellectuals who now hold key posts in government should give timely attention to this problem.

Because art becomes self-supporting eventually, it does not require too much funding to develop. In fact, its development can be an asset to government rather than a liability. A school for musicians could be built with instructors from such African countries as Nigeria and Ghana that have made substantial progress in this endeavour. Writers' workshops could be maintained by our higher institutions of learning, especially the University of Liberia, or as an autonomous institution to cater to talented writers and journalists who need training and guidance to properly develop their talents. The Ministry of Education should either commission successful authors to produce textbooks or have preference for books written by Liberian authors for our schools. National awards should be given to the best artists and writers of the year. The government could establish a commission headed by the best artist or writer available to study the art situation in the country and suggest practical measures that could be taken to develop and promote our art.

The Liberian nation has a rich cultural heritage but one that requires development and nurturing. Salvation for any nation depends on the extent to which effective and practical measures are taken to make the works of its artists a practical component of the life and character of the people. We have seen this accomplished in the Far East, the Middle East, and the West. It is most unfortunate that we in this country conceive our art as something to admire on stage, while in real life situations we maintain preference for that of other nations. In consequence, we have very little knowledge, respect and appreciation for ourselves and the great potentials inherent in our rich cultural heritage. No wonder we have carelessly embarked on a systematic program of self-destruction.

Today, we are confronted with a welter of problems which no politician can resolve by some magic formula because the key to these problems resides in self-knowledge and self-understanding which the artist alone can make possible. For instance, we need to combat corruption and develop the type of leadership that is truly committed to the welfare of the nation. Since the beginning of the Liberian nation, personal interests have always taken precedence over national interests, in spite of all the declarations we make about patriotism. Selfish individuals continue to exploit the nation for their own ends while the nation remains neglected and impoverished. This is the root cause of the catastrophe we face today. Liberians must support their artists, the voice of the people, who possess the rare ability to bring to light the root causes of their problems and point to their sources of strength which can be utilized to improve their own condition. Salvation comes from within.

The artists themselves must play a key role in the realization of this objective and not wait for others to take the initiatives. They can do this basically in two ways: First, they must be committed to the grueling hard work and sacrifice required for mastery of their arts so that what result they produce—be it a newspaper, a drawing, a book, or a piece of music—competes favourably with artistic productions anywhere in the world. They must be strong and courageous enough to give all they have to save their country from senseless chaos and destruction. In the final analysis, it is quality production that popularizes art. Doing things “the Liberian way” is one limitation that has over the years compromised the works of the Liberian artists, as those of many other professionals in this country. Our writers and journalists must produce literature, newspapers, and magazines free from technical errors. Our musicians and dancers must produce their “hits.” This will win for them public support and make their trades fulfilling and lucrative.

Second, organizations of musicians, artists, writers, journalists, and other votaries of the fine arts, should forget about political considerations and be primarily concerned with the development of talent and concrete production. Whatever political or societal concepts they may have should be conveyed through their works. We can no longer afford an organization of non-writing writers nor that of non-performing musicians, singers, or painters. We want to see the actual works of our artists circulated on the local and international markets. To achieve this objective, the artists must organize themselves, pull their resources together and develop means of enhancing the quality of their works to compete with what their counterparts produce in other parts of Africa and the world. This will not only help to win for them national and international support, it will also help Liberians to know who they are, what they truly want, and to take their rightful place in the community of nations.

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