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FULL ACCOUNT

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#### Modern culture and our destiny.

In the modern world, where violence is gaining ground, and the quiet ones are cruelly trampled upon, we had long felt the need to male known the presence of Negro men of culture. The number, quality and variety of talents should be the first assertion to the world of our presence.

The preparatory work for this Congress, which was planned eighteen months in advance, was difficult, and sometimes even des-

perate. It was our faith that saved us.

Obviously, we were bound to suffer from the modesty of our resources. There were not many of us to make the Congress arrangements. The limited possibilities of an overworked Secretariat compelled us to throw the programme into some degree of confusion. Thus, some Papers which should have been presented on the First Day (Taking Stock) had to be adjourned until later, and the third and last Part (Future Prospects) was, for lack of time, not followed by discussion.

Finally, and this is most important, about thirty Papers were not presented; it was impossible to find time for everyone. being published in a second Volume. We are very happy to realize that our expectations were exceeded, and that our appeal found an echo from various sources, which were more numerous than we

expected.

But we have been more than consoled for our regrettable shortcomings (in the face of heavy and unpredictable tasks) by the fervent attention with which the public (and especially African Youth)

has followed our proceedings.

During those days at the Sorbonne we went through some exhilarating hours of fervour and enthusiasm — and, in spite of the diversity of our origins, backgrounds and convictions, the unanimity which emerged had nothing artificial about it. This Congress was a great event in the conscience of the world.

The Congress was welcomed with very lively interest by the Press in France, from the progressive and atheistic organs, to the Christian papers of every shade. Outside France, in the U.S.A., in the French-speaking Antilles and the English-speaking West Indies, in Brazil, in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, in the Arab countries, and as far as South Africa (as well as the countries of Central Europe and Asia), the Press, the Radio and the Cinema News reels commented at length, and are still commenting on the event.

In Number 11 of this Review, we shall return in detail to the reactions of the World Press. We may say, on the whole, that we are not greatly embarrassed by the few criticisms which have been levelled. The texts which are published here are sufficient answer to them.

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We may, however, perhaps be permitted to revert to the justi-

fication for our preoccupation with culture.

Every people in every age has known some form of culture. The men who, tens of millions of years ago, decorated the walls of their caves with frescoes, which are still astonishing in their freshness, already had their culture, because it is the very nature of man to be cultured (1). To man (who thinks) the call to culture is rather what instinct is to the bee (who perhaps does not think).

But culture has not always had such a wide and precise meaning as it has to-day; it has not been imposed with so much rigour in the

life of society.

Culture is no longer a distinctive decoration reserved for themselves by a handful of elect, nor an activity for the luxurious alone.

This is because modern culture has acquired a number of

dimensions and has accentuated its old ones.

It is more widely diffused than ever, thanks to rapid printing, automatic reproduction, radio and television, the cinema, and increas-

ingly speedy means of communication.

All social strata now share not only in acquiring the products of culture, but also, directly or indirectly, in cultural creation itself. It may be said that the under-developed countries are manifestly beginning to take part. Individualistic culture, particularly that form whose object was to glorify the individual singularity of an exceptional case, is yielding place, little by little, to culture inspired by society. Under the pressure of events creative artists are coming down from their ivory tower and giving themselves up to social problems. To-day, whether they are believers or unbelievers, they are all more or less "committed".

The result is that they are not indifferent either to alien cultures

or to the achievements of science or to political options.

That means that we are tending towards the totalisation of cultural consciousness. However paradoxical it may seem, the

<sup>(</sup>I) A study should one day be made, from the point of view of the ethnographer, the sociologist and the historian, of those abnormal beings, peculiar to the "civilised" world, who are called uncultured. They are beings who have been wrongfully deprived of the means of communicating with those who surround them in their own community.

acquisition of traditional knowledge is sometimes less important than the creation (or the action, or the work) which answers to some of the current problems of mankind. It appears in effect that the extent of these problems (upon which the consciousness of the people is nourished) is beyond the range of traditional Western ideas and values. These ideas and values, far from being renounced, will be widened, strengthened and supplemented by the aspirations, anguish and passions of the new social strata and the new peoples.

But what si common to the conscience of all mankind is the feeling that certain problems are gravely urgent and dangerously interdependent. Thus, atomic power lays an unimagined new emphasis upon questions of social justice, national sovereignty and

international concord.

In this way, whatever may be the level of our modern equip-

ment, we are still concerned with world culture.

In effect, culture becomes a formidable instrument of political action at the very moment when it has the ambition and the vocation

to inspire policy.

Culture in the service of ordinary politics is not a new phenomenon. Politicians have always made use of culture as well as spirituality to find a foundation and a buttress for their authority. Princes and emperors have everywhere made certain of the fidelity, if not the docility, of the masters of their times. In our own times we know the importance of doctrine and system to the political parties. Every government, moreover, has a cultural policy which determines the trend of education as well as of the arts. According to the values selected, the destiny of under-developed peoples is oriented in one direction or the other without any need to consult them. We are therefore under the duty to pay attention to all cultural production, to assess its trends and its possible effects, and to react accordingly.

But creative culture rejects any subordination and is determined to discharge to the full its own responsibilities, of which the main one is to maintain freedom of expression. We know from experience that there is no authority which can permanently confine the cultural vitality of a people within the limits of a specific law. It is enough for men of culture to be vigilant for their own liberty. To do that

is to be vigilant for Liberty.

We must escape from the tyranny of the State, from the slavery of money and from that cowardice which might lead us to greet certain forms of culture with an uncompromising negative, as though we held, once and for all, a monopoly of the whole truth. To believe that the whole end of culture is the achievement of ultimate truth is to be dangerously ingenuous.

For culture is merely the vital effort through which each race and each individual by their experience and aspirations, their work and reflections, reconstruct a world which is filled with life, thought and passion and seems to thirst more than ever for justice, love and

peace.

It is important that the majority of the human family should not be deaf mutes shut up in their own universe under the guardianship of a minority whose problems, works and intentions they fail to understand.

It is important that the great problems should be accessible to every conscience, and that all the cultural originalities should be within everyone's reach. This is the gravest moral and political problem of our times, in face of which Europe has failed, thereby becoming henceforth disqualified to lead the world.

This makes it clear that we, for our part, have two primordial

tasks:

- to bring before the world audience the expression of our original cultures, so far as they interpret the present life of our peoples and our personality;
- 2. to reflect back to our own peoples the image of their aspirations, their experience and their joys, illuminated by the experiences, joys and hopes of the world.

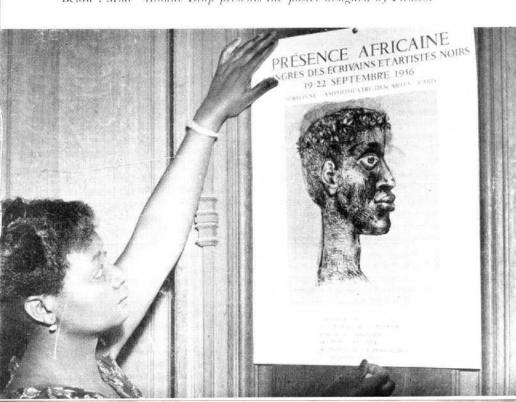
In short to make our culture into a force of liberation and solidarity, and at the same time the hymn of our innermost personality.

#### PRÉSENCE AFRICAINE

P. s. We shall be grateful to our readers for any reflections, criticisms or suggestions about the reports and discussions contained in this Volume.



Above: A view of the speakers' platform at the opening session Left to right: J. Rabemananjara, R. Wright, A. D.op (standing), Dr Price-Mars, P. Hazoumé, A. Césaire, E. Saint-Lot, J. Alexis. Below: Mme Alioune Diop presents the poster designed by Picasso.



## The spirit of civilisation, or the laws of African negro culture

Whether we like it or not, 1955 will mark an important date in the history of the world, and first and foremost in the history of the coloured peoples. Bandoeng will be from now on a rallying for these peoples. Not because of the intrigues which the two Blocs tried to stir up there, but because of the spirit of liberation which came to birth there. The Bandoeng spirit was the anxiety which the Afro-Asiatic peoples showed at that time to strengthen their personality by asserting it, so that they should not come empty-handed to "meetings of give and take". For world civilisation, and, in the first instance, Peace, will either be the work of all, or it will not come about at all. How can we believe that the Bandoeng spirit, which for us is primarily a spirit of culture, does not also animate the Indians, and particularly the Negroes of America? For the Negro race, more than any other, was the victim of the great discoveries. The European Renaissance was built on the ruins of African Negro civilisation, the force of America has waxed fat on Negro blood and The slave trade cost Africa two hundred million dead. But who can tell what cultural wealth was lost? By the grace of God, the flame is not quenched, the leaven is still there in our woun-

ded hearts and bodies to make possible our Renaissance to-day.

But this Renaissance will be the doing not so much of the politicians, as of the Negro writers and artists. Experience has proved it, cultural liberation is an essential condition of political liberation. If white America conceded the claims of the Negroes it will be because writers and artists, by showing the true visage of the race, have restored its dignity; if Europe is beginning to reckon with Africa, it is because her traditional sculpture, music, dancing, literature and philosophy are henceforth forced upon an astonished world. This means that if the Negro Writers and artists of to-day want to finish off the work in the Bandoeng spirit they must go to school in Negro Africa. Gide already noted at the beginning of the century that, for an artist or writer, the most effective way of being

appreciated and understood by the stranger is still to nourish his work from the roots of his own soil.

There can be no question in this introduction to our Cultural Stocktaking of getting lost in detail, or even dealing with the different literary and artistic forms. There is no question of making a survey of African Negro civilisation, but rather of culture, which is the spirit of civilisation. We must start by talking of the coloured man who has given birth to this culture, and first of all sketch out a physiopsychology of the Negro.



It has often been said that the Negro is the man of Nature. By tradition he lives of the soil and with the soil, in and by the Cosmos. He is sensual, a being with open senses, with no intermediary between subject and object, himself at once the subject and the object. He is, first of all, sounds, scents, rhythms, forms and colours; I would say that he is touch, before being eye like the white European. He feels more than he sees; he feels himself. It is in himself, in his own flesh, that he receives and feels the radiations which emanate from every existing object. Stimulated, he responds to the call, and abandons himself, going from subject to object, from Me to Thee on the vibrations of the Other: he is not assimilated: he assimilates himself with the other, which is the best road to knowledge.

This means that the Negro by tradition is not devoid of reason, as I am supposed to have said. But his reason is not discursive: it is synthetic. It is not antagonistic: it is sympathetic. It is another form of knowledge. The Negro reason does not impoverish things, it does not mould them into rigid patterns by eliminating the roots and the sap: it flows in the arteries of things, it weds all their contours to dwell at the living heart of the real. White reason is analytic through utilisation: Negro reason is intuitive through

participation.

This indicates the sensitiveness of the coloured man, his emotional power. Gobineau defines the Negro as "the being who is most energetically affected by artistic emotion". For what affects the Negro is not so much the appearance of an object as its profound reality, its super-reality; not so much its form as its meaning. Water moves him because it flows, fluid and blue, above all because it cleanses, still more because it purifies. Form and meaning express the same ambivalent reality. Emphasis is nevertheless laid on the meaning, which is the signification of the real, no longer utilitarian, but moral and mystic, a symbol. It is not without interest that contemporary scholars themselves assert the primacy of intuitive knowledge by "sym-pathy". "The finest emotion we can experience is mystic emotion. There lies the seed of all art and all real science".

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It is this physio-psychology of the Negro which explains his metaphysics, and therefore his social life, of which literature and art are only one aspect. For social life in Negro Africa rests, according to Father Placide Tempels, on a combination of logically co-ordinated and motivated concepts. Those whom the Europeans call "primitives", asserts the same missionary, "live" more than the Europeans do, "by ideas and according to their ideas".

At the centre of the system, animating it as the sun animates our world, is existence, that is, life. This is the supreme good, and the whole activity of man is directed solely towards the increase and expression of vital power. The Negro identifies being with life, or, more specifically, with vital force. His metaphysics is an existential ontology. As Father Tempels writes, "being is that which has force", or better, "being is force". But this force is not static. Being is in unstable equilibrium, always capable of gaining or losing force. In order to exist, man must realize his individual essence by the increase and ex-pression of his vital force. But his force, the sub-stratum of intellectual and moral life, and to that extent immortal, is not really living and cannot really grow except by co-existing in man with the body and the breath of life. These, being made of substance, are perishable, and disintegrate after death.

But man is not the only being in the world. A vital force similar to his own animates every object which is endowed with a sentient character, from God to a grain of Sand. The Negro has drawn up a rigid hierarchy of Forces. At the summit, a single God, uncreated and creator, "He who has force and power of himself. He gives being, substance ans increase to the other forces". After him come the ancestors, and first, the founders of clans, the "demigods". Then, going down the scale, we come to the living, who are, in their turn, ordered according to custom, but above all in order of primogeniture. Finally, at the bottom of the scale, the classes of animals, vegetables, minerals. Within each other the same hierarchy.

This is the appropriate place to point out the outstanding place occupied by Man at the centre of this system, in his quality of a person, actively existing, capable of increasing his being. For the universe is a closed system of forces, individual and distinct it is true, but unified. Thus all creation is centred on man. To the extent that the being is a vital force, the ancestors, if they do not wish to be non-existent, "perfectly dead"—it is a Bantu expression—must devote themselves to reinforcing life and existence, which enables them to share in it. As for the inferior beings—animals, vegetables, minerals—they have no other purpose in the designs of God, except to support the actions of the dead. They are instruments, not ends in themselves.

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The merit of this existential ontology is that it has, in its own turn, inspired a harmonious civilisation. And in the first place, an authentic religion. For what is a religion, if not, as its etymology indicates, the link which gives the universe its unity, which unites God to the lyme grass and the grain of sand?

This ontology is its dogma. With regard to cult, which is

religion in act, in Negro Africa it is expressed by the sacrifice.

It is the head of the family who offers the sacrifice. He is the priest designated purely by his character as the eldest descendant of the common Ancestor. He is the natural mediator between the living and the dead. Nearer to the dead, he lives in intimacy with them. His flesh is less flesh, his spirit is less chained, his world more powerfully persuasive: he already shares the character of the dead. Sacrifice is, above all, an entering into relationship with the Ancestor, the dialogue of me and Thee. With him we share the nourishment whose existential force will give him the sentiment of life. And communion goes as far as identification, so that by an inverse movement the force of the Ancestor flows into the sacrificer and the community whom he incarnates. Sacrifice is the most typical illustration of the general law of the interaction of the vital

forces of the Universe.

If we look at the natural aspects of society, the unit of order in the world, we find that the simplest component, the basic cellule is the family. African Negro society is, in effect, made up of widening concentric circles, superimposed and interlaced, formed on the pattern of the family. The tribe is a group of several families, the kingdom a group of several tribes. But what is the family? It is the clan, the totality of all those, living and dead, who recognize a common ancestor. This common ancestor is the link which unites God to men and is himself a genie and a "demi-god". His life often takes the form of a totemic myth, sometimes linked with an astral Hence the importance of the animal in Negro cosmogony. The ancestor has received from God a vital force, and his eternal vocation is to increase it. We see that the aim of the family is to preserve in perpetuity a patrimony of vital force which grows and intensifies itself to the extent of which it is manifested in living bodies, in more numerous and more prosperous human beings. The family shows itself as a microcosm, an image of the universe, which is reflected on an enlarged scale in the tribe and the kingdom. The king is only the father of the greatest family; he is the descendant of the Leader of Tribes.

The family, the tribe and the kingdom are not the only communal organisations which at the same time bind and sustain the Negro. Alongside them there is a whole network of interlocking organisations. These are the *fraternities of age*, a sort of friendly society to which a whole generation belongs, the *craft guilds* and the *brotherhoods* 

of secret rites. The latter have a social and political, or even religious, rôle. In truth, all these organisations have a religious basis, among peoples where the distinction between sacred and profane, political and social, appears late and infrequently.

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It is in social activities, sustained by religious feeling, that literature and art naturally integrate themselves. A Western man finds it difficult to appreciate the place which social activities, including literature and art, occupy in the African Negro calendar. They are not relegated to Sundays or "theatrical evenings" but, to take the example of the Sudan Zone, they fill the whole eight months of the dry season. At this time men are fully occupied with their relations with the Others: genies ancestors, members of the family, the tribe, the kingdom, even strangers. There are festivals all the time and Death itself is the occasion for a festival, the supreme Festival: festival of harvest and festival of sowing, births, initiations, marriages, funerals: guild festivals and brotherhood festivals. And every evening, the vigil round the hearth, with the leaping flames shining on tales, dances and songs, gymnastic games, drama and comedy. Work itself, which celebrates the marriage of Man and Earth is a narrative and a poem. Thus we have the songs of labour, the songs of the peasant, the boatman, the herdsman. For in Negro Africa, as we shall see, all literature and all art is poetry.

The question all the time is to enter into relations either with the legendary totemic Ancestors, or with the mythical genies — but the genie is often merged with a star or an animal, and the legend depens into a myth. Significant in this connexion is the festival of initiation, which is opened and accompanied by numerous sacrifices. It is concerned with initiation into the cosmogonic myth, the legends and customs of the tribe: more specifically with the birth of Knowledge through poetry, song, drama, and masked dance, to the primordial rhythm of the tom-tom. Then it is that the seed dies in order to germinate, that the child dies to himself, in order to be born again as an adult in the Initiator and the Ancestor. This is a religious, animistic existentialism. The other — Adult, Ancestor, genie or God — far from being an obstacle, is the supporter and the source of vital force. Far from there being any conflict in the confrontation of Me and Thee, there is a conciliatory agreement, not a derealisation, but a greater realisation of the individual essence.

Literature and art are therefore not divorced from the generic activities of man, and particularly from skill in craftsmanship. They are its most effective expression. Do you remember in "The Negro Child". Laye's father forging a golden jewel? The prayer, or rather the poem, which he recites, the song of praise which the Griot sings as he works the gold, the dance of the smith at the end of the operation, it is all that — poem, song, dance — which, more than the gestures of the craftsman, accomplishes the work, and

makes it into a work of art. The arts in the general sense of the word are, in the same perspective, linked together. Thus, sculpture only fully realises its object by the grace of the dance and the sung poem. Look at the man who incarnates Nyamié, the Sun-Genie of Baoulé, under the mask of the Ram. Watch him dancing the actions of a ram to the rhythm of the orchestra, while the chorus sings the poem of the deeds of the genie. In both cases we have a functional art. In this last example the masked dancer must identify himself with the Genie-Sun-Ram, and, like the sacrificer, communicate his force to the audience which takes part in the drama.

This brings out another characteristic of the poem — once again. I call every work of art a poem; it is created by all and for all. True there are professional literary men and artists; in the Sudanese lands they are the Griots who are at the same time historiographers, poets and tellers of tales: in the lands of the Guinea and the Congo they are the civil Sculptors of the princely courts whose ermine epaulette is a badge of honour: everywhere they are the Smiths, as the multiple technicians of magic and art, the first artist, according to a Dogon myth, who, to the rhytm of the tom-tom made the rain fall. But alongside these professionals there is the people, the anonymous crowd which sings, dances, carves and paints. Initiation is tho school of Negro Africa in which man, putting away childish things, assimilates, with the science of his tribe, the technique of literature and art. It will, moreover, be seen from the two examples given that every manifestation of art is collective, made

for all, with the participation of all.

Because they are functional and collective, African Negro Literature and art are committed. That is their third general characteristic. They commit the person — and not only the individual — by and through the community, in the sense that they are techniques of essentialisation. They commit him to a future which will henceforth be to him the present, an essential part of his ego. That is why the African Negro works of art are not, as has often been said, copies of an archetype repeated a thousand times. Certainly there are subjects, each of which expresses a vital force. But what is striking is the variety of execution according to personal temperament and circumstances. Once again the craftsman-poet takes up his position, and commits, with himself, his race, his history and his geography. He makes use of the material which lies to his hand, and the daily facts which compose the west of his life, while he scorns the anecdote, because, being without significance, it does not commit. Painter or sculptor, he will on occasion make use of instruments and materials imported from Europe : be will not hesitate to represent the machine, the pride of the West: he will go so far as to dress some ancestral genie in European style. In the new Society inspired by the spirit of the Colonial Pact, the teller of tales will not hesitate to give Money its due place, the leading one, as the incarnation of Because he is committed, the craftsman-poet is not concerned to create for eternity. Works of art are perishable. While their

spirit and style are preserved, we hasten to replace the ancient work by modernising it as soon as it becomes out of date or perishes. This means that in Negro Africa "art for art's sake" does not exist; all art is social. The Griot who sings the noble to war makes him stronger and shares in the victory. When he hymns the deeds of a legendary hero, it is the history of his people which he writes with his words, by restoring to them the divine profundity of a myth. Right down to the fables, which, through tears and laughter, help to teach us. Through the dialectic which they express they are one of the essential factors in social equilibrium in the guise of the Lion, the Elephant, the Hyena, the Crocodile, the Hare, the Old Woman, we read clearly with our ears, our social structure and our passions the good and bad alike. Sometimes it is the refusal, addressed to the Great Ones, the Right opposed to brute force. Sometimes it is acquiescence in the order of the universe of the Ancestors and of God. And, concludes the Jolof, "thus the fable threw itself into the sea. He who shall breathe it first will go to Paradise". The savour of Negro wisdom!...

At the same time, it is impossible to seize the essence of African Negro literature and art if one imagines that they are pruely utilitarian and that the African Negro has no sense of beauty. Some ethnologists and art critics have gone so far as to allege that the words "beauty" and "beautiful" are missing from the African Negro Languages. The truth is that the African Negro assimilates beauty to goodness, and especially to effectiveness. Thus in the Jolof of Senegal, the words târ and rafet, beauty and beautiful are more appropriate in referring to a person. In speaking of a work of art Jolof would use the adjectives dyêka, yem, mat, which I should translate by "fitting", "adequate", "perfect". Once again, it is a question of functional beauty. A beautiful mask, a beautiful poem, is one which produces in the public the emotion aimed at: sadness, joy, hilarity, terror. The word bahai—pronounced "bahhai"—is significant. It means "goodness" and is used by the young dandies to describe an attractive young girl. Beauty for them is "the promise of happiness". Conversely, a good deed is often called "beautiful".

If a given poem produces its effect, that is because it finds an echo in the minds and feelings of its hearers. That is why the Fulah define a poem as "words pleasing to the heart and the ear". But if for the African Negro, as for the European, "the great rule is to please", they do not both find pleasure in the same things. In the Graeco-Latin aesthetic which survived in the European West, except for the Middle Ages, down to the end of the XIX century, art is the imitation of Nature; I mean, of course, "adjusted imitation": in Negro Africa, it is the explanation and knowledge of the world, that is a sentient participation in reality which subtends the universe towards super-reality, or more exactly towards the vital forces which animate the universe. The European takes pleasure in recognizing the world through the reproduction of the object, which

is called the "subject", the African Negro from knowing it vitally through image and rhythm. With the European the chords of the senses lead to the heart and the head, with the African Negro to the heart and the belly, the very root of life. The mask of the Ram gives pleasure to the Baoulé spectators because it incarnates the sun-Genie in plastic and rhythmic language.

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Image and rhythm, these are the two fundamental features of

African Negro style.

Image first of all. But before going any further, we must pause a moment on the question of language, so as to reach an understanding of its nature and function from a brief study of the African Negro tongues. We shall thus be better able to appreciate

the value of the African Negro image.

It is clear to us that language is the major instrument of thought, emotion and action. There can be no thought or emotion without a verbal image, and no free action which is not first planned in thought. This fact is even more true among peoples. most of whom disdain writing. Language is a power in Negro Africa. Spoken language, the word, is the supreme expression of vital force, of the being in his fulfilment. God created the world by the Word—we shall shortly see how. In the human being, speech is the animated and animating breath of prayer; it has a magic power, it fulfils the law of participation and by its intrinsic virtue creates the thing which is spoken of. In the same way, all the other arts are merely specialised aspects of the major art of speech. Before a painting consisting of a network of white and red geometric forms, representing the dawn chorus of birds in a tree, its creator expresses himself in these words: "These are wings, and songs; they are birds..." (1)

The first outstanding characteristic of the African Negro languages is the wealth of their vocabulary. There are ten, and sometimes twenty words to describe an object, according as it changes form, weight, volume or colour; as many words to describe an action, according as it is simple or multiple, weak or strong, beginning or ending. In Fulah the nouns are divided into twenty-one genders, all neuter, under a classification based partly on their semantic value, partly on their phonetic value and partly on the grammatical category to which they belong. But it is the verb which remains most significant in this respect. In Jolof it is possible, by means of affixes, to construct from the same root more than twenty verbs with different shades of meaning, together with at least as many derivative nouns. Whereas current Indo-European languages lay emphasis on the abstract idea of time, the African Negro languages stress the aspect, the concrete fashion in which the verbal action unfolds

<sup>(1)</sup> Jose Redinha: Paredes pintadas da unda, Estampa 17. (Lisbod, 1953).

itself. This means that they are essentially concrete languages. The words are always pregnant with images; through their value as

signs transpires their value as sense.

The African Negro image is therefore not an equation-image, but an analogy-image, a surrealist image. The African Negro has a horror of the straight line and the false "right word". Two and two do not make four, but "five" in the words of the poet Aimé Césaire. The object does not signify what it represents, but what it suggests, what it creates. The elephant is strength, the spider, Prudence; horns are the, Moon, and the moon is Fertility. Every representation is an image, and the image, I reiterate, is not an equation, but a symbol, an ideogramme. Not only a figure image, but substance — stone, earth, copper, gold, fibre — as well as line and colour. Any language is wearisome that does not tell a story. Better still, the African Negro does not understand such language. How astonished the first Whites were to discover that the "Natives" did not understand their pictures, or even the logic of their speeches.

I have spoken of a surrealistic image. But, as you might guess, African Negro surrealism is different from European surrealism. The European is empiric, the African is mystic and metaphysical. André Breton writes in Signe ascendant: "Poetic analogy" — by which we must understand European surrealist analogy — "differs fundamentally from mystic analogy in that it in no way presupposes, beyond the weft of the visible world, an invisible universe, which tends to manifest itself. It is entirely empiric in its approach". Negro surrealist analogy, on the other hand, presupposes and mani-

fests the hierarchic universe of vital forces.

Power of the image, power of speech. So it is in Dahomey, among the Fons, where the king, on every outstanding occasion during his reign, uttered a rhythmic sentence, whose key word furnished a new name. "The Pineapple that laughed at the thunder". And the word, and the pineapple were despotically graven everywhere, and became an image: in wood, clay, gold, bronze and ivory; on the throne, the headgear, the commander's baton and the

walls of the palace.

The proof is that in African Negro poetry the abstract word is rarely met with. Here there is no need to comment upon the image: the hearers are gifted with double vision. In sculpture some masks achieve an exemplary power of suggestion, such as the mask of the Genie-Moon-Bull among the Baoulé. A man's bearded face with the horns and ears of a bull — sometimes the horns are not a question of the anecdote or the "slice of life". The facts are images and have the value of examples. Hence the pace of the recital, its progress by leaps and bounds, its material improbabilities, the absence of psychological explanation.

An image, however, does not achieve its effect with the African Negro unless it is rhythmic. Here the rhythm is consubstantial with the image; it is the rhythm which perfects the image by uniting sign and sense, flesh and spirit into one whole. It is only artificially

and for the sake of a clearer account that I have distinguished the two elements. In the music which accompanies a poem or a dance the rhythm creates an image as much as the melody. In the mask of the Genie-Moon-Bull it is rhythm which makes it possible to substitute an image with the same symbolic value; crescent moon in place of horns and horn of abundance in place of birds.

What is rhythm? It is the architecture of the being, the internal dynamism which gives him form, the system of waves which he emits in relation to Others, the pure expression of vital force. Rhythm is the vibratory shock, the force which, through the senses, seizes us at the root of our being. It is expressed through the most material and most sensual means; lines, surfaces, colours and volumes in architecture, sculpture and painting: accents in poetry and music: but in doing this it guides all that is concrete towards the light of the mind. With the African Negro rhythm enlightens the spirit to the precise extent to which it is embodied in sensuality. African dancing abhors physical contact. But watch the dancers. If their lower limbs are shaken with the most sensual tremors, their heads are sharing in the serene beauty of the masks, of the Dead.

Once again, the primacy of Speech. It is rhythm which gives it its effective fulfilment, which changes it into the word. It is the word of God, that is, rhythmic speech, which created the world. It is also in the poem that we can best capture the nature of African Negro rhythm. In this case rhythm is not born of the alternation of long syllables and short syllables, but solely of the alternation of accented syllables and unaccented syllables, of strong tones and The question is one of rhythmic versification. weak tones. is verse, and therefore a poem when an accented syllable recurs at the same interval of time. But the essential rhythm is not that of the words, but of the percussion instruments which accompany the human voice, and more specifically those of them which mark the basic rhythm. We are dealing with a multiple rhythm, a sort of rhythmic counterpoint. It is this which saves the words from that mechanical regularity which breeds monotony. In this way the poem appears as a piece of architecture, a mathematical formule based on unity in diversity. Here is the rhythm of the words in two Jolof poems chosen at random. (1)

<sup>(1)</sup> Cf. Langage et Poesie Negro-Africaine in Poesie et Langage. Editions de la Maison du Poete. Brussels.

As may be guessed, the basic rhythm in the first case is 444, in the second 3333. In both cases the verse is a tetrameter. But the public often takes part in the poem. We then have two groups of rhythm; this allows both the leader of the reciters and the leader of the tom-toms to give themselves up entirely to their inspiration and to multiply counter-time and syncope, solidly supported by the basic rhythm. For the monotonous basic rhythm, far from being a handicap to inspiration, is its essential condition. The rhythmic elements, however, are not limited to those which I have described. In addition to the clapping of the public and the steps and gesture of the reciters and the tambourinists, it should be noted that there are certain figures of speech — alliterations, paronomasis, anaphora which, being based on the repetition of vocables or sounds form secondary rhythms and add to the effect of the whole. Finally, the port makes ample use of those descriptive words whose importance has been brought out by M. de la Vergne de Tressan. He tells us that these words, formed by onomatopoeia sometimes amount to as much as a third of the vocabulary of African Negro languages.

The "prose recital" partakes of the grace of rhythm. In Negro Africa there is no fundamental difference between prose and poetry. Poetry is merely a more markedly and regularly rhythmic form of prose: it is recognized in practice from the fact that it is accompanied by a percussion instrument. The same phrase may become a poem by accentuating its rhythm, thus expressing the tension of being: the being of being. It appears that, "long, long ago" all recitals were strongly rhythmic, were poems. In more recent times the recital was still recited, and was spoken in a monotone voice and in a higher tone: it was an element in a religious ceremony. As we know it to-day even in the form of a fable, which is the most secularized form, it is still rhythmic, although not so strongly. In the first place dramatic interest is not spared, or more specifically, sparing the dramatic interest does not mean, as it does in modern European recitals, banishing repetition: quite the reverse, dramatic interest is created by repetition, the repetition of a fact, a gesture, a song or words which constitue a leitmotiv. But nearly always some new element is introduced, some variation in repetition, a unity in diversity. It is this new element which emphasizes the progress of the drama.

means that the prose recital is not above resorting both to figures of speech based on the repetition of vocables, and to descriptive words. That is not all: the structure of the African Negro sentence is naturally rhythmic. Because, whereas the Indo-European languages use a logical syntax of subordination, the African Negro languages turn more willingly to an intuitive syntax of co-ordination and juxtaposition. And, in propositions of almost equal length, the words

are arranged in groups, which each have a major accent.

On the plane of rhythm, the music is linked to the words and the dance, but certainly more closely to the poem than to the dance. For the African Negro it is the element which specially characterizes the poems. In the Senegalese languages the same word — woi in Jolof, kim in Serer, vimre in Fulah — means the song and the supreme form of poem: the ode. In any event, a poem is not complete unless it is sung, or at any rate given rhythm by a musical instrument. And the prose of the public Crier is given solemnity and acquires authority by the voice of the tom-tom. It has often been observed that, in African Negro music, rhythm takes precedence over melody. This is because the object of music, as I have already said, is not so much to charm the ears as to re-inforce the words, to make them more effective. Hence the place which is given to rhythm, to sudden falls, inflexions and vibrati; hence the preference for expression over harmony.

Great stress has been laid in recent years on the ethnologic, religious and social values of African Negro sculpture. And yet those writers and artists were not wrong who, at the beginning of the century emphasized its aesthetic value, its rhythm. Just look through the works which contain reproductions of African Negro sculpture, such as that of Carl Kjersmeier called Style Centres of African Negro sculpture (Paris, Copenhagen). Pause over Figure 48, which represents a female statuette from Baule. Two themes of sweetness sing an antiphony. The ripe fruit of the breasts. The chin and the knees, the buttocks and the calves are also fruit or breasts. The neck, the arms and the thighs are columns of black honey. In another volume this Fang statuette from Gaboon again offers us fruits — breasts, navel, knees — with which are contrasted the curved cylinders of the trunk the thighs and the calves. Now look in the first volume at this high Bambara mask, representing an antelope. Strophe of the horns and the ears; antistrophe of the tail and the neck and the hairs of a mane sprung from the sculptor's imagination. As André Malraux writes in Les Voix du Silence; "The African mask is not the fixation of a human expression, it is an apparition... The sculptor does not interpret the geometry of a phantom of which he is ignorant, he calls it up by his geometry: the effect of his mask comes not so much from the extent to which it is like a man, as from the extent to which it is unlike; the animal masks are not animals; the antelope mask is not an antelope, but the Antelope-Spirit, and it is its style which makes it a spirit". Its style must be understood to mean its rhythm.

Rhythm is even more manifest in African Negro painting. The

modern painters of Potopoto and Elisabethville have begun to persuade attentive observers of this. They are merely following a tradition which is already ancient. We know that the African Negro sculptor is often a painter as well. And now, for the last twentyfive years, the mural paintings of Negro Africa have been discovered, reproduced and commented upon. In these paintings rhythm is not marked by dividing lines between light and shade; it is not arabesque as in classical European painting. African Negroes, for the rest, paint in flat colours, without shadow effects. Here as elsewhere, rhythm is born of the repetition, often ar regular intervals, of a line, a colour, a figure, a geometric form, but above all from colour contrast. In general, against a dark ground, which creates the effect of space or dead time, and gives the picture its depth, the painter arranges his figures in light colours, or vice-versa. The design and colour of the figures correspond less to the appearance of reality than to the profound rhythm of the objects. Two examples will be enough for me to illustrate this truth. First, Painting 12 of Paredes pintadas The upper part consists of a frieze which depicts the sumptuous procession of a prince. It consists of six people moving from left to right. Starting from the right we see: three members of the escort, two bearers carrying on their shoulders a sort of palanquin in which the prince is lying, and then, closing the procession, the fourth member of the escort. The ground is light brown; the figures are painted in three colours, the three traditional colours of Negro Africa, white, black and red. The six members of the procession all near a white head-dress, a black tunic, a red belt, white trousers and black footwear. But the monotony of this basic rhythm must be broken by introducing secondary rhythms. The two bearers have tunics speckled with white spots, while the members of the escort merely have a row of white buttons on their black tunics, except the one who opens the procession whose tunic is buttonless. One of the bearers wears gaiters, like the members of the escort, whereas the other wears low shoes. The two men who open and close the procession each have a staff, but one is white and the other Finally, of the two birds painted at the foot of the frieze, one is black, speckled with white spots, like the bearers' tunics, while the other is white like the trousers and headgear of the members of the procession. Now look at Painting 54 A, which represents plants in pots. The two figures are painted in two colours; blue and red on a straw-coloured ground. Everyting is blue and red, stems, leaves, flowers, pots, — and symmetrically arranged in quasi-geometric forms with secondary rhythms, decorative paintings, I shall be told. I would answer, African Negro paintings, rhythmic paintings. And the facts are all the more significant since the examples chosen have undergone European influence.

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I must come to an end. Such then is the African Negro for whom the world exists by the fact of its reflexion upon himself. He does not realise that he thinks: he feels that he feels, he feels his existence, he feels himself; and because he feels the Other, he is drawn towards the other, into the rhythm of the Other, to be re-born in knowledge of and of the world. Thus the act of knowledge is an "agreement of conciliation" with the world, the simultaneous consciousness and creation of the world in its indivisible unity. It is this urge of vital force which is expressed by the religious and social life of the African Negro, of which art and literature are the most effective instruments. And the poet sings: "Hail to the perfect circle of the world and ultimate concord!" (1)

I shall be told that the spirit of the Civilisation and the laws of African Negro culture, as I have expounded them, are not peculiar to the African Negro, but are common to other peoples as well. I do not deny it. Each people unites in its own aspect the diverse features of mankind's condition. But I assert that these features will nowhere be found united in such equilibrium and such enlightenment, and that rhythm reigns nowhere so despotically. Nature has arranged things well in willing that each people, each race, each continent, should cultivate with special affection certain of the virtues of man; that is precisely where originality lies. And if it is also said that this African Negro culture resembles that of ancient Egypt, and of the Dravidian and Oceanic peoples like two sisters, I would answer that ancient Egypt was African and that Negro blood flows in imperious currents in the veins of the Dravidians and the Oceanics.

The spirit of African Negro civilisation consciously or not, animates the best Negro artists and writers of to-day, whether they come from Africa or America. So far as they are conscious of African Negro culture and are inspired by it they are elevated in the international scale; so far as they turn their backs on Africa the mother they degenerate and become feeble. Like Antaeus who needed to support himself on the earth in order to take flight towards the sky. That does not mean that the Negro artists and writers of to-day must turn their backs on reality and refuse to interpret the social realities of their background, their race, their nation, their class, far from it. We have seen that the spirit of African Negro civilisation became incarnate in the most day-to-day realities. But always it transcends these realities so as to express the meaning of the world.

The literary and artstic history of Europe proves that we should remain faithful to this spirit. After the set-back of Graeco-Roman aesthetics at the end of the XI century, the writers and artists of the West discovered Asia, and above all Africa, at the end of their quest. Thanks to Africa they were able to legitimate their discovers by giving them a human value. This is not the moment that we should choose to betray, with Negro Africa, the very reason of our

lives.

LEOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOR

The session ended at 6 p.m.

<sup>(1)</sup> Aimé Césaire : Cahier d'un retour au Pays Natal.

### Racism and Culture

It is worth paying some attention to the unilaterally decreed normative value of certain cultures. One of the paradoxes which are rapidly encountered is the reflex action of egocentric and sociocentric definitions.

The first thing which is asserted is the existence of human groups which have no culture, then a hierarchy of cultures, and

finally the idea of cultural relativity.

From negation to singular and specific recognition it is precisely this fragmentary and bleeding history which we must sketch

out at the level of cultural anthropology.

We can say that there exist certain constellations of institutions, lived out by given men, within the limits of specific geographic areas, which, at a given moment, have undergone the direct and brutal assault of differing cultural systems. The technical development, generally high, of the social group which has thus appeared, justifies it in installing an organised domination. The undertaking of de-culturisation shows itself as the negative side of a more gigantic work of economic, and even biological, enslavement.

The doctrine of cultural hierarchy is therefore only a modality of the systematic creation of a hierarchy, which is implacably pur-

The modern theory of the absence of cortical integration among colonial peoples is its anatomo-physiological aspect. The apparition of racism is not fundamentally determining. Racism is not the whole but only the most obvious and day to day element, in sum, at certain moments, the crudest element in a given structure.

To study the relations of racism and culture is to raise the question of their reciprocal action. If culture is the entirety of motor and mental behaviour resulting from the encounter of man with Nature and with his fellow, we must say that racism is well and truly a cultural element. There are therefore cultures which include racism and cultures which do not.

This specific cultural element, however, is not encysted. Racism has not attained sclerosis. It has to renew itself, to take on shades, to change its physiognomy. It has had to share the fate of the

cultural whole which inspired it.

Racism, in its vulgar, primitive and simplified form, claimed to find the material basis of the doctrine in biology, the Scriptures having proved inadequate, it would be wearisome to recall the efforts made at that time; comparative form of the skull, the number and configuration of the grooves of the encephalon, the characteristics of the cellular layers of the skin, the dimensions of the vertebrae, the microscopic appearance of the epidermis, and so forth.

Intellectual and emotional primitivism seemed to be the obvious consequence, a fact whose existence merely had to be recognised.

Crude and sweeping assertions of this kind gave place to more subtle arguments. Here and there some survivals are still found. Thus "the emotional instability of the Negro", "the sub-cortical integration of the Arab", the quasi-generic guilt of the Jew are premises which are still found in some contemporary writers. The monograph of J. Carothers, for example, under the patronage of the WHO, on the basis of "scientific arguments" embarks on a physiological lobotomy of the African Negro.

These residual positions are, in any event, tending to disappear. Racism which wants to be rational, individual, determined, genotypic and phenotypic, is changing into cultural racism. The target of racism is no longer the individual man, but a certain way of life. Extremists talk of a message, a cultural style. "Western values" are singularly linked with the already famous call to arms of "Cross

against Crescent".

True, the morphological equation has not entirely disappeared, but the events of the last thirty years have shaken the most ingrained convictions, overthrown the chess-board, and reconstructed a

number of relationships.

The memory of Nazism, the common misery of different men, the common enslavement of extensive social groups, the appearance of "European colonies", that is the introduction of a colonial regime in the heart of Europe, searching of conscience by the workers of colonising and racist countries, technical development, have all profoundly modified the aspect of the problem.

We must try to discover the consequences of this racism on the

cultural level.

Racism, as we have seen, is only one element in a larger whole, namely the systematic oppression of a people. How does an oppres-

sor behave? Here we find constants.

We find the destruction of cultural values, of the modalities of existence. Language, dress, technique, are de-valued. How can we account for this constant? The psychologists, who are inclined to explain everything by movements of the soul, claim to find the reasons for this behavour in personal contact with individuals; the criticism of an unusual hat, a way of speaking or walking.

Such attempts deliberately overlook the unparallelled character of the colonial position. In effect nations which embark on a colonial war are not concerned with the clash of cultures. A colonial war is a gigantic business concern and all perpectives must be related to this basic fact. The first requirement is the enslavement of the

people in the strictest sense.

For this purpose their standards of reference must be overthrown. Expropriation, spoils, raids, objective murder, are backed up by the sack of the cultural system, or at least condition this sack. The social panorama is demolished, values are trampled upon, crushed, voided.

The lines of power are broken and no longer afford any strength. They are face to face with a new whole, not offered to them, but imposed upon them, asserted, heavy with all the weight of cannons

and swords.

The institution of the colonial system does not automatically bring about the death of autochthonous culture. It is, on the contrary, clear from the observation of history that the end sought is the sustained death agony rather than the complete disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, formerly full of life, and open to the future, becomes closed, fossilised in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. At once present and mummified, it bears witness against its members. In effect it defines them beyond appeal. The apathy of the colonial peoples, so universally displayed, is merely the logical consequence of this operation. The reproach of inertia constantly levelled against the "native" is the height of bad faith. As if it were possible for a man to develop except within the framework of a culture which recognises him and which he decides to assume.

It is thus that we see the introduction of archaic and inert organisms functioning under the supervision of the oppressor and cari-

caturing the old, fertile institutions.

In appearance these organisms reflect respect for the traditions, the cultural peculiarities, the personality, of the enslaved peoples. This bogus respect is in fact identified with the most consequential disdain, the most elaborate sadism. The characteristic of a culture is to be open, traversed by spontaneous, generous and fertile lines of power. The installation of "reliable men" responsible for performing certain actions is a conjuring trick, which deceives no Thus the Kabyle djemaa nominated by the French authorities are not recognized by the autochthones. They are duplicated by another djemaa democratically elected, and naturally most of the time it is the second who dictates the behaviour of the first.

The constantly reiterated anxiety to "respect the culture of the autochthonous population" does not therefore mean that weight will be given to the values borne by the culture, and incarnated in the men. Far more frequently we divine in this approach the deter-

mination to objectivate, encapsule, imprison and encyst.

Phrases such as "I know them", "they are like that", translate this objectivation when it has succeeded to the utmost. In this man

I know the gestures and thoughts which define these men.

Exoticism is one form of this simplification. From that moment

no cultural confrontation can exist. On one side there is a culture which is recognised as having qualities of dynamism, expansion, depth. A culture in movement, perpetually renewed. On the other side we find characteristics, curiosities, things, but never a structure.

Thus in the first place the occupying power installs its domination and massively asserts its superiority. The social group which is militarily and economically enslaved is de-humanised by a multidimensional method.

Exploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidation; systematic oppression, relieve each other at different levels in order to make the autochthone literally a chattel in the hahds of the

occupying power.

This chattel-man, without means of subsistence, without reason to live, is shattered at the very heart of his being. The desire to live, to go on, becomes more and more indeterminate, more and more phantasmal. It is at this stage that the famous guilt complex appears. In his early novels Wright gives a very detailed

description of it.

Gradually, however, the development of production techniques, the industrilisation — incidentally, imitated — of the enslaved country, the increasing need for the existence of collaborators impose a new attitude on the occupying power. The complexity of the means of production, the development of economic relations, which, willingly or unwillingly, involve relations between ideologies, throw the system out of balance. Vulgar racism, in its biological form, corresponds to the period of the brutal exploitation of the arms and legs of men. The perfection of means of production inevitably brings about the camouflage of the techniques for exploiting men, and hence of the forms of racism.

It is therefore not as a result of spiritual evolution that racism loses its virulence. There is no internal revolution which explains the obligation of racism to modify itself and to evolve. Men everywhere liberate themselves by brushing aside the lethargy to which

racism and oppression had condemned them.

At the very heart of the "civilsing nations" the workers finally discovered that the exploitation of man, the basis of a system, wears various aspects. At this stage racism dares no longer show itself without disguise. It denies itself. In a growing number of circumstances the racist conceals himself. The man who claims to "feel" them, to "guess" them, finds himself watched, observed, judged. The project of the racist is then a project haunted by a bad conscience. His salvation can only come from an engagement of the passions such as one finds in certain psychoses. And it is not one of the least merits of Professor Baruk that he has explained the semiology of these passionate deliriums.

Racism is never a super-added element discovered by hazard from a research into the cultural foundations of a group. The social constellation, the cultural whole, are profoundly influenced by the

existence of racism.

It is currently said that racism is the plague of humanity. But we must not be satisfied with a phrase of this kind. We must tirelessly seek out the repercussions of racism at every level of sociability. importance of the racist problem in contemporary American literature is significant. The Negro in the cinema, the Negro and folk lore, the Jew and children's stories, the Jew in the saloon, are inexhaustible themes.

Racism, to return to America, haunts and vitiates American culture. And this dialectic gangrene is exacerbated by the realisation and the will to fight of millions of Negroes and Jews who

are the targets of this racism.

On examination, this passionate, irrational and unjustified phase presents a frightening aspect. The circulation of groups, the liberation in various parts of the world of men who were previously kept in an inferior position, makes equilibrium increasingly precarious. Unexpectedly enough the racist group denounces the emergence of racism among the oppressed. The "intellectual primitivism" of the period of exploitation gives place to the "mediaeval and even prehistoric fanaticism" of the period of liberation.

At one moment we might have thought that racism had disap-This euphoric and unreal impression was merely the consequence of developments in the forms of exploitation. The psychologists then spoke of a prejudice which had become unconscious. The truth is that the rigour of the system makes it superfluous to make a daily assertion of superiority. The need to call in various degrees on the adhesion and collaboration of the autochthones modifies the relationship in a less brutal, more subile, more "cultivated" It is, moreover, not rare to see a "democratic and humane" ideology emerging at this stage. The commercial understaking of enslavement and of cultural destruction gradually gives way to a verbal conjuring trick.

The interest of this development is that racism is taken as a theme for meditation, sometimes as a technique of publicity.

It is thus that the blues "plaint of the Negro slaves" is offered to the admiration of the oppressors. It is a bit of stylised oppression which brings a profit to the exploiter and the racist. No oppression and no racism, no blues. The end of racism would sound the knell of the great Negro music.

As the too celebrated Toynbee would say, the blues is the slave's

response to the challenge of oppression.

Even to-day for many people, including some coloured people, Armstrong's music has no real meaning except in this perspective.

Racism bloats and disfigures the visage of the culture that practises it. Literature, the plastic arts, songs for the shopgirl, proverbs, habits, patterns, whether they are designed to challenge racism or to popularise it, in any event emphasize it. This implies that a social group, a country, a civilization, cannot be racist unconsciously.

We repeat, racism is not an accidental discovery. It is not

a hidden and dissimulated element. No super-human effort is needed

to bring it to light.

Racism leaps to the eye precisely because it falls into a characteristic whole — the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another which has reached a higher stage of technical development. That is why military and economic oppression most frequently precedes, makes possible and legitimates racism.

The habit should be abandoned of regarding racism as a dispo-

sition of the mind, a psychological flaw.

But the man who is the target of this racism, the social group which is enslaved, exploited, deprived of substance, how do they behave? what are their defence mechanisms?

What attitudes do we discover here?

In a first phase we have seen the occupying power legitimate its domination by scientific arguments and the "inferor race" denying itself as a race. Because no other solution is open to it, the racialised social group tries to imitate the oppressor and therely deracialise itself. The "inferior race" denies itself as a different race. It shares with the "superior race" the convictions, doctrines and other assumptions concerning itself.

Having witnessed the liquidation of his standards of reference, the collapse of his cultural system, nothing is left for the autocthone but to recognise with the occupying power that "God is not on his side". The oppressor, by the global and alarming character of his autority, succeeds in imposing on the autochthone new ways of looking at things, and particularly, a deprecatory judgment of his

original way of life.

This event, which is commonly called alienation, is naturally very important. It is found in official documents under the name of assimilation.

But the alienation is never a complete success. Either because the oppressor limits the development in quantity and quality, or because unexpected and extraneous phenomena make their appearance.

The group which had been rendered inferior had admitted, since the force of reasoning was irresistible, that its misfortunes

resulted directly from its racial and cultural characteristics.

Guilt and inferiority are the usual consequences of this dialectic. The oppressed one then tries to escape from this, partly by proclaiming his complete and unconditional adherence, to the new cultural models and partly by pronouncing an irretractable condemnation of his own cultural style (1).

The need of the oppressor to dissimulate, at a given moment, the forms of exploitation, does not, however, involve the disappea-

<sup>(1)</sup> A phenomenon, which has been little studied, sometimes appears at this stage. Intellectuals and scientists of the dominant group make a "scientific" study of the dominated society, its aesthetic, its ethical universe.

In the Universities the handful of colonised intellectuals have their cultura

rance of exploitation. Economic relations, grown more elaborate and less crude, call for a daily white-washing, but alienation at

this level, remains formidable.

Having judged, condemned and abandoned his cultural furms, his language, his diet, his sexual behaviour, his way of sitting, reposing, laughing, amusing himself the oppressed one, with the energy and tenacity of a shipwrecked man, hurls himself into the culture

which is imposed upon him.

Developing his technical knowledge from contact with increasingly perfected machines, entering the dynamic circle of industrial production, meeting men from distant regions in the backgrounds of capital concentration, that his, in his place of work, discovering mass production, the gang, "production time", that is, output by the hour, the oppressed one regards it as a scandal that racism and disdain should be maintained against him.

It is at this stage that racism is made into a question of individuals. "There are a few dyed-in-the-wool racists, but you must

admit that, on the whole, people are friendly...".

In time all that will disappear. This country is the least racist...

At the United Nations there is a Commission responsible for the campaign against racism.

Films about racism, poems about racism, messages about

racism.

Spectacular and futile condemnations of racism. The truth is that a colonial country is a racist country. If in England, Belgium or France, in spite of the democratic principles asserted by these countries, there are still racists, it is the racists who are right, in contrast with the rest of the country.

It is not possible to enslave men without logically inferiorising them through and through. And racism is merely the emotional, affective and sometimes intellectual unfolding of this inferiorisation.

The racist in a culture which includes racism is therefore normal. In his case the integration of economic relations and ideology is perfect. It is true that the idea which one forms of a man is never entirely dependent on economic relations, that is, we must not forget, relations existing historically and geographically between men and groups. More and more members of racist societies are taking up a stand. They are placing their lives at the service of a world where racism will be impossible. But this withdrawal, this abstraction, this solemn engagement, are not within the reach of all. We cannot demand that a man should oppose, without some detriment, the "prejudices of his group".

But, let us repeat, every colonial group is racist.

system revealed to them. It may even happen that the scientists of the colonising countries become enthusiastic over some specific feature. The concepts of purity, naivety and innocence appear. At this stage the vigilance of the indigenous intellectual must be redoubled.

"En-cultured" and decultured at the same time, the oppressed one continues to be confronted by racism. He finds this consequence illogical, it is inexplicable, motiveless, wrong. His knowledge, the acquisition of precise and complicated techniques, sometimes his intellectual superiority over a great many racists, lead him to describe the racist world as being moved by passion. He observes that the racist atmosphere impregnates every element of social life. The feeling of an overwhelming injustice then becomes very keen. Forgetting racism-consequence an onslaught is made to the sense of humanity, to love, to respect for supreme values.

In fact racism obeys a logic without flaw. A country which lives and draws its substance from other peoples, inferiorises those

peoples. Racism applied to such peoples is normal.

Racism, therefore, is not a constant in the human mind.

It is, as we have seen, a propensity which is inherent in a given system. And Jewish racism is no different from Negro racism. Either a society is racist or it is not. There are no degrees of racism. We cannot say that a particular country is racist but in that country we do not find lynchings or extermination camps. The truth is that all that, and more, exists beyond the horizon. The potentialities, these latencies, circulate dynamically, included in the life of psycho-affective and economic relations.

Discovering the uselessness of his alienation, the depth of his despoilment, the inferiorised one, after this phase of deculturalisation

and externalisation, recovers his original position.

The inferiorised one plunges with passion into this culture which he has abandoned, left, rejected, despised. There is a very definite exaggeration, psychologically related to the desire for forgiveness.

But behind this over simplified analysis there is well and truly an intuition by the inferiorised one of a truth which has spontaneously appeared. This psychological histry merges into History and

Truth.

Because the inferiorised one re-discovers a style which was formerly devalued, we witness a culture of culture, Such a caricature of cultural existence would prove, if need were, that culture survives, but cannot be broken into fragments. It cannot be ground between the upper and the nether mill-stone.

Nevertheless, the oppressed one goes into ecstasies at each rediscovery. The wonder is perpetual. Having previously emigrated from his culture, the autochthone now explores it with gusto. All is now a constant honeymoon. The former inferiorised one is in a

state of grace.

But one does not undergo domination with impunity. The culture of the enslaved people is sclerosed, moribund. There is no life circulating in it. More precisely the only life which exists is dissimulated. The population which normally here and there assumes a few fragments of life, which preserves the dynamic meaning

of the institutions, is an anonymous population. Under a colonial

regime they are the traditionalists.

The former émigré, by the sudden ambiguity of his conduct, causes scandal. He opposes a vehement and aggressive exhibitionism to the anonymity of the traditionalist.

State of grace and aggression are two constants which are rediscovered at this stage. Aggression being the mechanism of passion

which permits an escape from the pangs of paradox.

Because the former émigré has precise techniques, because his level of action is situated within the limits of relations which are already complex, these re-discoveries assume an irrational aspect. There is a gulf, a gap, between intellectual development, technical acquirements, highly differentiated modalities of thought and logic, and a "simple, pure" emotional basis, etc...

Rediscovering tradition, living it as a defence mechanism, as a symbol of purity, as a salvation, the decultured one leaves the impression that mediation is taking its revenge by substantialising itself. This reflux towards archaic positions which have no relation to technical development is paradoxical. The institutions valorised in this way no longer correspond to the elaborate methods of action already acquired.

The encapsuled culture, vegetating since the foreign domination, is re-valorised. It is not re-thought, resumed, made dynamic from within. It is taken by assault. And this precipitous re-valorisation, not structural, but verbal, covers paradoxical attitudes.

It is at this moment that reference is made to the incorrigible character of the inferiorised ones. Arab doctors sleep on the ground and spit all over the place, etc.

Negro intellectuals consult a witch-doctor before taking a deci-

sion, etc.

The intellectuals who have "collaborated" seek to justify their new attitude. The customs, traditions and beliefs which were formerly denied and passed over in silence are violently valorised and asserted.

Tradition is no longer the subject of irony by the group. The group no longer flees. They re-discover the sense of the past, the cult of the ancestors...

The past, henceforth a constellation of values, is identified with Truth.

This re-discovery, this absolute valorisation, with its somewhat unreal pace, objectively indefensible, assumes an incomparable subjective importance. At the end of the passionate honeymoon the autochthone will have decided "with full knowledge of the facts" to fight against all forms of exploitation and alienation of man. Conversely, the occupying power, at thist point, will multiply its appeals to assimilation, and subsequently to integration and community.

The wrestling of the native with culture is too solemn and too abrupt an operation to stand any flaw. No neologism can mask

the new evidence; a plunge into the gulf of the past is the condition

and the source of liberty.

The logical end of this determination to struggle is the complete liberation of the national territory. In order to achieve this liberation the inferiorised one brings into play all his resources, all his acquisitions, old and new, his own and those of the occupying power.

From the outset the struggle is total, and absolute. But at this

stage one hardly sees any sign of racism.

At the time when he imposed his domination to justify enslavement, the oppressor relied on scientific arguments. Here there is nothing parallel.

A people who undertake a struggle for liberation rearly legitimate racism. Even during acute periods of armed insurrection one never witnesses the mass formation of biological justifications.

The struggle of the inferiorised is located on a definitely more human level. The perspectives are radically new. From now on it is the classical opposition of the struggle for conquest and power.

During the course of the struggle the dominant nation tries to circulate racist arguments again, but the elaboration of racism shows itself increasingly ineffective. There is talk of fanaticism, of primitive attitudes in the face of death, but once again the mechanism, henceforth out of action, fails to respond. Those who were formerly motionless, those who timorously obeyed the constitution, the fearful, the eternally inferiorised spring suddenly to life, and emerge in battle.

The occupying power no longer understands.

The end of racism begins with this sudden incomprehension. The spasmodic and rigid culture of the occupying power, once liberated, is finally open to the culture of the people who have truly become brothers. The two cultures can stand side by side and enrich each other.

In conclusion, universality resides in this decision to bear the burden of the reciprocal relativism of differing cultures, provided

only that the colonial status is irrevocably excluded.

Frantz FANON

The session ended at 12.30 p. m.

## Reflections, comparative, on West Africain Nationalist movements (1)

I have long had the conviction, and now declare, that every scholar has the primary obligation, to whatever public his words may command, of announcing, by way of preface, where he stands, ideologically in short, give "philosophical vita", — to the degree, of course, that any man can rationally understand the roots of his

mental processes.

To meet this obligation is even more an imperative duty, when a man presumes to evaluate cultural and political developments in a land not his own. I am presuming, today, to give some Reflections, comparative in nature, on West African Nationalist Movements, principally in British West Africa. I owe you, and now initiate this paper, with a discharge of the debt; a description of the mental "baggage impedimenta" that accompanies this presump-

You know that I bring to this task, birth and rearing in that national and cultural entity known as the United States of America. This vast and varied community, now numbering more than one hundred and sixty eight million souls, claims free individualism and variety of opinion as one of its chief glories. That I am native to that culture therefore tells you nothing at all about me, or the coloring of what I shall say about Nationalism in West Africa.

But when I tell you that I was reared from my earliest days, to regard myself as of African descent; that the most dominant personality in my early life, and in my family life, was my paternal grandmother, a woman of mixed African and Indian descent, who chiefly gloried in her African origins; you may begin to understand my roots.

When I tell you further, and with pride, rather than shame, that she was born a slave; that, under the greatest difficulties, economic

<sup>(1)</sup> I gratefully acknowledge the assistance, in the preparation of this paper, of Martin L. Kilson, Jr., A.B., Lincoln University, M.A., Harvard University.

and social, she created without outside help, and through her own indomitable energy and industry, a secure family unit for her two sons; that she labored unceasingly at any and at all tasks, to purchase economic security and higher education for her children, and that, in her old age, she presided like a benevolent matriarch over her sons' two families, that eventually included eighteen grandchildren, continuing to do for each of her grandchildren what she had done for her own sons; I say, when I tell you my aim in life has been to be worthy of this old woman, you will perhaps understand my sentiments.

Many persons, including many of my own compatriots, will thereby label me as a romantic, where Africa and Africans are concerned. I do not resent such a characterization. I reply, only, that I view Africa, and Africans, and all of the disinherited of the world, of whatever race or color, through the lens provided for me by that African woman, who loved me, chastised me, worked for me, as she had, before, for my father, her son. She remains for me an eternal silhouette of Mother Africa; a woman, but also a human being; wronged, but never defeated; exposed to brutality, but never brutalized; born and bred to be a slave, but finding, for herself, and for her children and other posterity through all ages to come, a place of Freedom and equal dignity in the world.

I view Africa also, through the lens of my particular intellectual

and spiritual heritage.

I have heard, at this Congress, at least suggestions, that Africa and Africans need to renounce Europe, I find myself unable to agree. There is at least something of Europe — perhaps a portion that Europe, itself, has long since renounced — that is forever, I hope, a

part of me.

This is the heritage of my particular political, intellectual and spiritual background. Here in the City of Light, I find myself on sacred ground. My parents received their education at the hands of that class of Americans of the last century who were known as New England Radical Abolitionists. These were believers in absolute human equalitarianism. They agitated unceasingly against the institution of chattel slavery, as long as it existed in the western world; and they transmitted, to those whom they taught, that passionate belief in human equalitarianism that, in our generation, has led to the great victories for human rights crystallized by the series of decisions rendered in recent years by our United States Supreme Court, confirming the equal rights of all citizens of the United States, without regard to race, creed, or color.

Few in the United States, or in Europe — perhaps not in France, itself — realize that these decisions spring from the ancient well of equalitarianism first pronounced, elaborated, and essayed in this Paris, during the eighteenth century. Here, during the generation before the glorious revolution of 93, were born and enunciated those sentiments later affirmed in the American Declaration of Independance; and by men who had been educated in the art and science

of human freedom by the "philosophes" of the enlightenment. Predominantly north European by ancestral genealogy, the men who made the American Revolution were eighteenth-century French by ideological conviction. Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, were formed by Montesquieu, Condorcet, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Physiocratic School. They taught the American revolutionaries, that "All Men Are Created Equal"; and when Jefferson wrote those French-inspired words into American Declaration of Independence, he did so as the convert of an intellectual and spiritual movement that has since persisted in the United States. With that tradition I here confess a common communion, as a believer, two centuries removed, in a Faith born in Paris and yet, I think, without a peer in the realm of ideas in the whole world since.

I think it appropriate to remind you of a curious historical circumstance, 18th Century by date, but astonishingly pertinent to our

discussion today.

In the year 1771, there was published here a pamphlet so radical in nature that, shortly after its appearance, the author had his press suppressed by Royal edict. The publication was "Ephemerides du Citoyen, ou Bibliothèque Raisonnée des Sciences Morales et Politiques"; the author bore the unlikely name, for a "radical", of Dupont de Nemours; he was, indeed, a progenitor of the noted American family of great wealth of the present time.

The pamphlet condensed Saint-Lambert's novel, Zimeo; this was a story of enslaved Negroes of Benin, who revolted successfully in Haiti (and this was two decades before Toussaint L'Ouverture's successful rebellion!), destroyed all of the plantation manor houses but one (that of a kindly master), and, establishing a free, African

State, persumably lived happily ever afterward.

To this tale, de Nemours added reflections in the Physiocratic vein. Quoting a correspondence that reached back to 1742, between the Englishman Adam Smith, and the American, Benjamin Franklin. he pointed to the economic wastefulness of chattel slavery. He concluded, that Franklin, the American, was right; that slavery should be abolished in the French and English American colonies; and that free black states should be created in West Africa, to produce, in a free economy, by free men living in a free, self-governing State, those commodities needed by Europe and formerly derived from the chattel slave system.

Rivers of blood and tears have flowed in Europe, in America, and in Africa, in the two centuries since Benjamin Franklin, and the French *Philosophes* proposed their simple solution for human inequalities *vis-à-vis* Africa and Africans. Theirs was the inoculation, in the intellectual blood stream of the Western World, of

an idea that apparently "did not take".

But only apparently; the principle born here in Paris, two centuries ago, has in cur decade found fruition in the creation of national States, that are in direct line from that idea.

I have the honor to serve as the President of the Lincoln Uni-

versity, that is located in the State of Pennsylvania, nearby to the city of Philadelphia. We were founded in the year 1854; but our line of descent is much older, and includes Benjamin Franklin's formulations, and those of men whom he inspired. We have some modest claims to fame; one being, that Professor Fontaine, a member of this Congress, and the brilliant professor of philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania, is a graduate of Lincoln University.

Another son of Lincoln University, is Thurgood Marshall, the brilliant attorney who successfully organized and plead, before the Supreme Court of the United States, the civil rights cases that have, in our day, reaffirmed the devotion of the American nation to the

principle, that all men, indeed, are craeted equal.

But — even beyond the great scholar, Fontaine (and I am sure that he will forgive me for saying so) — even beyond the great advocate; — Thurgood Marshall — we hail, at Lincoln University, as our chief jewels, the two Africans who have been the chief architects of Nationalism, in West Africa — Nnamdi Azikiwe, of Nigeria,

and Kwame Nkrumah, of the Gold Coast.

In any appraisal of Nationalism, the ancient intellectual history of the ideas that have set it in motion, should not be neglected. Do not, therefore, in appraising Nationalism in West Africa, forget that its leadership was developed in a University created one hundred years ago; that owed its creation to intellectual and spiritual forces cultivated in this city — indeed, in this University, where our meetings are now held; and transmitted, through Jefferson, but even more, through Franklin, to a young Nation across the seas.

Let it not be thought, that I mention the educational background of these leaders of Nationalism in West Africa, to provide an advertisement for their University. I think it important to mark the flow of the great idea through the intellectual bloodstream of the culture.

Note also, that these great leaders of African Nationalism were educated in the United States; and not in their metropolitan institutions. Indeed, this fact has frequently been referred to by colonial administrators, as one of the chiefest criticisms of the American

educational system.

Be this as it may, I think these men, in America, received a kind of spiritual education almost impossible for any person from any colony to receive anywhere else in the world. They were educated in an atmosphere of the solidarity of a great, black minority, that was in process of struggling for their rights. In America, Azikiwe and Nkrumah were identified with the struggles and vicissitudes of black people working with utmost courage, and intelligence, together in common. Given a climate where the old ideas of human equality yet had vitality; given the psychological security of belonging to a fellowship of aspirants for total freedom; given a higher educational institution permeated with these ideas, their formation had almost the quality of inevitability.

There was another factor, characteristic of the American culture. It is our tradition, that students should work to help support

themselves while engaged in higher education. No college or university student thinks himself demeaned by the necessity of engaging in the most menial occupations; so long as he is earning his way toward greater opportunities for service. All of us work with our hands. In working with one's hands, the university student learns to work with, and identify himself with manual workers of all levels. This was the preparatory experience enjoyed both by Azikiwe and Nkrumah. For example: Azikiwe worked as a porter, a laborer in a steel mill, once, even, as a boxer; Nkrumah was employed, at one time, as a welder in a ship-building yard.

To men so formed, the aspirations of the worker are not theoretical abstractions. Though highly criticized in some European educational circles, I believe this feature of the American educational system of incalculable value, in raising up a leadership that can never be divorced from the common man, that finds identification easy; and it is my further conviction, that the accession of Azikiwe and Nkrumah to leadership among the common people of West Africa owes much to this part of their American education.

#### П

You will remember, that I qualified my ability to give a definitive evaluation of Nationalism in West Africa, by placing in my title the cautionary word, "Reflections". There are, of course, people armed with what they believe to be the universal guide to the explanation of human actions, institutions, and destinies. I must confess myself something of a sceptic when presented with these confident analyses, whether inspired by old, or new, religions. What I have already said has been intended to suggest possible formative influences upon personalities involved in the development of Nationalism in West Africa.

Note, also, that I presume, with even greater caution, to speak principally of Nationalism in that section of Africa best known to me - British West Africa. To compare national movements, without discrimination, as between British African, and French African territories, requires a generalized synthesis of knowledge I One might compare, more easily, nationalist movecannot claim. ments in French West African territories with those in French North African territories; or the nationalist movements in British West Africa with those in British East Africa, particulary in Kenya; for, save for Kenya and Uganda, the rise of Nationalism in British East and Central Africa has not as yet been too significant, although more than shadow of portent now appears on the horizon. One would be better advised, even, to essay even a more limited comparison; as, for example, to compare, nationalist movements within a specific region of a particular Colonial empire.

It is clear, it seems to me, that the initial forces (cultural, political, social, and economic) that gave rise to African nationalism

after World War I were external to African society. These forces may be designated as Imperialism, both in its political and economic phases; and Colonialism, here defined as the system utilized by European imperial powers to control and administer their African territories. Colonialism is therefore the basic matrix within which, and from which, African nationalism arose. By staking out territorial claims in Africa, European colonial powers created politicoterritorial formations (e.g., "Nigeria", "Gold Coast", "Kenya", etc.), which were hitherto as unknown to Africans as they were to Europeans.

In most instances, tribes and ethnic groups which lived a more or less separate and isolated life for centuries, were for the first time, perhaps, placed within one politico-territorial entity and ruled, not as separate tribes, but as an organic whole. The Ibo and Yoruba, though still distinct peoples with different cultures, were now ruled not as Ibos, or Yorubas, but as "Nigerians". Thus the framework has been set for the gradual transformation of the tribal ideology ("ribalism"), into a national ideology ("Nationalism").

I am, of course, not insensible to the former existence, a millenium ago, of great and ancient States in West Africa. But it may here be agreed, that it is going to be extremely difficult to reconstitute such units, geographically, after the long lapse of centuries, and the more recent demarcation of colonial units, almost by "happenstance", that are now potential States. Nor am I ignorant of the threatened fragmentation of such potential States as Nigeria, on the basis of sub-nationalities; a species of "nationalism within nationalism".

Here may I insert the comment, par passim, that I am not as sceptical as some, regarding the possibility of developing new and viable States from regions but recently formed by drawing lines on a map; States that will be not only viable, but that may be bound together by the common loyalties of its citizens to an entity created, perhaps artificially, within the memory of living man. learn easily; and I believe the first generation of Africans to become altogether literate, in the Gold Coast that was, that is also the Ghanato-come, may show a loyalty to the new Nation quite as passionate as that of the citizens of a Nation several centuries older. Americans, who developed a fierce National pride in less than a century (with a Civil War and various rebellions thrown in for good measure), may be less fearful than others, that it is impossible to combine, in a new Nation, Ashanti, Eve, Fanti, and Ga. Indeed, every growing evidence, is that this is precisely what Dr. Nkrumah and his colleagues have already done!

To continue with our expose; colonial rule provided a peaceful and stable climate in which European entrepreneurs could undertake modern economic activity. Given the fact that the European economy needed certain primary or raw products found in Africa, the solution proposed by the American, Benjamin Franklin, in 1742,

became a twentieth century inevitability; and that is, the creation of free black states in West Africa.

The inevitability, however, has led through definite stages. Europe was convinced that, in addition to raw materials, it needed also market and investment outlets; time and technological change have in this day raised serious questions as to the validity of this classical explanation for colonial motives, but it cannot be doubted that it had force a generation, even a century, ago. It was only a question of time when the European entrepreneurs would call on the State power of the mother country to protect, and help the furtherance of their new economic adventures. Undoubtedly, therefore, the economic penetration of Africa, from 1850 onwards, is one of the chief keys to an understanding of the rise of African nationalism.

The pre-European African society was a more or less closed socio-economic system. In European terms, the social and economic structures were generally undifferentiated. Land, the basis of all subsistence, was normally communally owned and worked. Economic activity was limited to subsistence agriculture and small handicraft industries such as basket-weaving, pottery making, bronze working; and there was little variation in economic life; it tended to flow through the same channels year after year, with neither technique nor methods of economic organization showing significant change. Each family, or extended family, was generally self-supporting; no extensive exchange system prevailed, with barter constituting the basic mode of exchange; class differences were virtually non-existent, though status-differences did prevail, for in the community were chiefs, headmen, medicine men, and the like.

With the rise, extension, and increased proliferation of modern European Imperialism, the old African society was destined to undergo significant changes, with the introduction of a money or exchange economy into Africa, and the subsequent commercialization of a significant part of the African subsistence agricultural economy, it was only a question of time when the social fabric of the old society would wither away. Money (i.e., capital) gave rise to agricultural (and particulary mineral) production for the export mar-This, in turn, gave rise to an African wage-laboring class, no longer tied to the land whose existence was now dependent upon its ability to dispense of its labor. Also, Africans, partook directly in the new economic activity; thus thousands of middlemen, traders, hawkers, arose. As these people accumulated greater and greater amounts of capital, some branched of into other fields; lorry owners, money-lending, large-scale cocoa and palm oil production, and activity in other areas. In time, these Africans used their new wealth to provide higher education for their offspring. A corollary stimulation was the activity of missionary groups and the needs of European firms, requiring trained Africans to help conduct their businesses. Thus has emerged a commercial and educated African middle class, whose interest is no longer based on the old

tribal society, but rather on the new exchange economy and the way of life based on it.

It is this new middle class, I submit, which is the basic and major force within the African community responsible for the rise of African nationalism. Having developed new interests (educational, social, economic, and political) separate from the tribal society, as well as aspects of the means to serve these interests, the African middle classes have moved into the forefront of nationalist political development in Africa. The nationalistically oriented middle classes view Colonialism not only as a system of government and administration, but also as an organic social system within which certain more or less well defined social relationships prevail and permeate every aspect of life. In short, it is viewed as a system in which a particular ruling class prevails (i.e., the European entrepreneurs, business administrators, senior service officials, clerks, etc.), and for which it continues to exist.

It is the aim of African nationalism, to shatter this social system. In its struggle against the colonial system, African nationalism slowly brings the masses within its fold; these masses also, like the middle class, experience, and are awakened to, the oppressive

and restrictive nature of colonialism.

In this connection, I recall the words spoken to me, in a Nigerian town, by a civil servant who was an ardent political opponent of Dr. Azikiwe. The man was highly critical of Azikiwe; but he expressed his gratitude to him, and to the University that had helped form him. "Your man", he said, "awakened us!".

The educated middle class remains the spearheading force behind African nationalism. It is the only class among the African population capable of comprehending the forces making for change in modern society; it understands both the methods and the ideologies of Western political behavior and activity. Not even the traditional rulers were capable of setting African nationalism afoot; at best they have assisted, but also resisted, the middle class Africans in this process.

## III

The foregoing analysis, I believe, holds true for nationalist movements wherever found in Africa; Nationalism in British West Africa, be it remembered, has been greatly affected by finding its leadership in men formed in the American racial, political, and economic climate. Learning the peculiarly American meaning of a fluid, mobile, "middle class"; having been accustomed to the labor performed by the lowest "class" of manual workers; observing and assimilating the techniques of power politics among "masses" that have no sense of permanent commitment to their present status; they have brought to colonies dominated by European administrators and metropolitan-trained Africans, that fresh faith in social

and economic mobility for all amen, equally created and endowed,

that is the genius of the American State and people.

But this analysis must be modified and qualified when one considers particular nationalist movements elsewhere than in British West Africa, with care. For instance, in French North Africa we find a powerful fendal structure with a well-developed religious superstructure — Islam. No such structure exists in Sub-Saharan Africa, save in Northern Nigeria, and perhaps in Uganda. The North African middle classes, in their nationalist undertakings, have had to contend with Colonial rule, but also with the associated rule of a quasi-feudal, religious aristocracy. To the benefit of the nationalistic success, the old aristocracy has generally given little trouble to the nationalists. In Sub-Saharan Africa, there is no feudal class; there are only traditional or natural rulers whose status is contingent upon functions, that are mainly ceremonial or even magical, rather than economic.

It must be observed, that whith the establishment of Colonial rule, exercised in British territories through those institutions described as "Indirect Rule", the traditional rulers of West Africa secured significant political power in spite of their lack of economic power. As a result, the traditional rulers became a sort of buffer between the emerging middle class and the colonial rulers; and here were sown the inevitable seeds of future conflict between the tra-

ditional rulers and the educated middle class.

If we turn to British East Africa, we find realities that again tend to qualify our analysis. One reason is that the development of an African middle class has not been as great as that in West Africa. Here we find a small white settler population, in association with a considerable population of Asiatics long schooled to trade, performing the functions participated in by a black middle class in British West Africa. Similary, the comparatively larger proportions of migrant French in the French colonies, as compared to the numbers of British in the Gold Coast and Nigeria, who in the French colonies perform middle class functions open to Africans in British territories, constitutes an interesting difference, and, perhaps, a significant commentary on the differences between nationalist movements in the two colonial regimes. The Africans in East Africa have been relegated primarily to the status of agrarian laborers, on large farms and plantations owned by Europeans. By contrast, the development of individual cocoa farming in the Gold Coast has demonstrated the great advantage for the development of a people of such individual agricultural enterprises as compared to the collectivistic plantation.

It will be noted, also, that West Africa has had a much longer history of European education, than East Africa. Indeed, an American (then a colonial!), James Thompson, from Maryland, esta-

blished the first English school in the Gold Coast, in 1741.

These differences between West and East Africa have given rise to nationalist movements that differ in several important respects.

Free access to the land has been the major factor in the rise of nationalist movements among the blacks; this has not been the case either in Nigeria or in the Gold Coast. Secondly, the extremely frustrating nature of the social, economic and politic aspects of colonial rule in Kenya has tended to make the masses of Africans develop a high level of political and social consciousness; they have participated in the nationalitisc upsurge from its appearance in Africa, as witness the Thuku Movment in 1921. Thirdly, the low level of education in western terms, as well as the tight social and political controls, has forced the nationalist leaders in Kenya to mobilize the masses along traditional, "nativistic" lines, rather than along the Western lines of political, party mobilization. The Kikuyu political movements have drawn on many tribal patterns as a means to secure support for a given political program; they have also utilized the indigenous language for purposes of political education.

Finally, of course, the nationalism of Kenya has heen more militant than that of West Africa. Indeed, armed rebellion has been

used; to my knowledge, this has never occurred in West Africa.

#### IV

Let me conclude.

In the foregoing description of Nationalism in West Africa, I have employed the useful device of invoking the framework of an emerging middle class, to provide the structure within which these developments may best be understood. But the student must always take care, that his framework does not become a cage, into which the apparent facts are stuffed without regard to circumstances and ideas that may be so arranged only with the greatest violence to the

integrity of the material.

In this melange of cultures that is this Congress, we obviously suffer from the semantic misunderstandings that confuse even men long accustomed to communicating with each other within the framework of the same culture, and its dominant tongue. While others may wish to do so, I submit that such a word as "colonialism" may be applied with universal application to (a) British colonies, (b) American Negroes, (c) French colonies, only with that sublime confidence that has inspired the great religious prophets, who knew that they knew everything because the ultimate had been revealed—and personally—to them, by God himself. What is true of differential aspects of "Colonialism", must apply to interpretations of "Nationalism" in different colonial systems.

I am less confident, not, myself, having enjoyed the ultimate revelation. I began with caution, and I would conclude with only

ilmited confidence, that my "Reflections" are sound.

I. — I believe that African Nationalism has a quality of human inevitability. I have no fear at all, that viable African States may not easily be established as successful, operating entities. To those

who say that it has required the European one thousand years in which to learn what is regarded as some high secret of self-government, I would say—"The worse for you!" The genius of the West has been simplification, rationalization; what you regard as so complex is in fact very simple; in fact, the greatest concession I will make to the Western mind, is its genius for simplification; and as I have seen African children assimilating, in the school room, and with the greatest facility, intellectual concepts and processes long thought of as the esoteric, private property of the European brain, the art and science of governmental administration of the modern State is far less complex than the administration of the African village to which the people have long been accustomed.

- 2. I affirm Democracy; the rule of the people; their right—everyone of them—to be consulted when a decision involving the entire community is to be made. Even respecting the brilliant minds in this Congress, I would assert the right of the most illiterate man—and woman—to be consulted, and yield a judgment on his future—as much as anyone of us. Between this People and their Government, I am unwilling to interpose any self-constituted group—be it an intellectual or political elite—that arrogates to itself the right to make decisions on behalf of the people.
- 3. Now this, you will observe, is no more than what was conceived here in Paris two hundred years ago. This is what was written into the American Declaration of Independence, in 1776, when we ceased being a colony. This is what we who are American Negroes have shed our blood, and tears for, for bitter years; the certain knowledge that we are right, and the present evidence that we are winning, arms us with new courage and determination.

I would not wish to be chauvinistic; but my firm conviction remains, that through one of the priceless ironies of human history, the African now finds himself where he may be the spearhead, to realize in our own time, the New Man the "Philosophes" envisioned. Best fitted of all men, by reason of belonging to the fraternity of the oppressed, to emerge into the mid-twentieth century divested of the impedimenta that are the curse of other cultures, he may assimilate what he wishes from the West, be it political, scientific, or spiritual.

This is the task, eternal, of Mankind; to build a society where it is practised, as well as announced,—that "ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL:AND ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN INALIENABLE RIGHTS, AMONG WHICH ARE LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

Horace Mann BOND.

# Ethnology and Negro Cultures

To contribute to the revision of the whole series of representations upon which colonialism relies to justify itself, that seems to us, at the present moment, to be the most urgent task of Negro writers. The moment has come to check and re-consider certain conceptions, postulates and theories, which still serve as a basis for the appreciation of Negro cultures. Since they have been worked out in the light of ethnology, our view is that it is this science which should be examined for the purpose of such an attempt. If, in effect, the navigators and explorers opened the way to the conquerors by the invaluable indications which they gave about the African countries, the ethnologists completed their work by studies, followed by diggings, devoted to peoples and cultures who have excited curiosity ever since the days of antiquity. In undertaking to explain, naturally in their own way, this new world which men were in the process of sharing out, and which had to be enslaved and exploited, they have built up a whole body of theories, which they have imposed upon everyone, including the Negroes them-Their work demands our attention, because in relying on the high authority of science they have given official stamp to certain fundamental errors from which their authors could not shake themselves free. If they have, to some extent, enlarged our knowledge of Negro Africa, we must not be astonished that they have not enabled us to understand it better. In our view, the responsability for this lies, not with the perfection of the tools of this science, but with the spirit in which it was applied. The white man has lived for centuries in a state of collective narcissism, cultivating a very marked sense of superiority. When with the progress and discoveries of navigation in the XV century he realised that the world was vaster and more diverse than he had imagined, instead of dominating his ego-centricity and modifying his standards of value in the light of his new knowledge, he assessed the rest of the world on the basis of the judgments he has already formed about himself. Right in the middle of the XVIII century we find serious Spanish writers doubting the human essence of the American Indians. Others, more steeped in biblical teaching, nevertheless had great difficulty in reconciling the existence of these autochthones

with the Book of Genesis (1).

Just as the most enlightened minds of antiquity saw nothing wrong in the institution of slavery, so four centuries of constant contact, instead of weakening this feeling of white superiority, strengthened it to such an extent that it is still reflected through the me-This observation can be dium of their most abstract conceptions. verified in the second half of the XIX century when we go back to the beginning expansion of ethnology, whose development coincided with the expansion of colonialism. If it set itself the target of embracing and co-ordinating research and knowledge in Biology, Zoology, Anatomy, Palaeontology and Geology, with a view to the systematic study of man, it nevertheless appears on analysing its first results, that its vocation has been to rationalise the old prejudice of superiority. Hence its first gropings. Its work left the impression that the general tendency was in the first place to deny or inferiorise the Negro Culture (2).

This was the period when evolutionism had become a sort of "Open Sesame". Whenever it was applied to the interpretation and explanation of the history of civilisation, of the varieties of culture, it was with the fixed idea of the superiority of Western civilisation, of the white man. Certain stereotyped terms were eagerly adopted, without change in meaning, which bore more relation to the prejudices of superficial observers than to the exact designation They are found used in classifications, systems of of the facts. establishing a hierarchy in which white superiority was rationally

established.

This preoccupation is evident in the principal theories which explain the origin and development of civilisation. Georges Montandon gives us a summary of them in his work "Traité d'Ethnologie Culturelle ". (1934).

The sociologists have drawn up a scale according to which they distinguish peoples (Laplay speaks of "races") dividing them into simple and complex. In this distribution the Negroes find

themselves relegated to the lowest stages.

The Ethnographers, with Morgan, starting with the most important inventions have in turn drawn up a scale of nine stages occupied from bottom to top by ancient, middle and recent savages ancient, middle and recent barbarians, and ancient, middle and recent civilised men. These stages are marked by:

1. Language.

- 2. Fire, the axe, the spear.
- 3. The bow and arrow.
  4. Pottery.

<sup>(1)</sup> See Anthony Indisco-XVIII century Spanish Theories on the origin of the Indians liencias Sociales, Vol V, Pan-American Union.

<sup>(2)</sup> We may say all exotic cultures.

5. Domestication of animals, and pasturage, agriculture and irrigation, the idea of personal property.

6. Iron (the first invention not directly connected with food).

7. Writing.

8. Gunpowder, the compass, paper and printing, the discovery that the centre of the Universe is the sun and not he Earth.

9. Steam, electricity, the theory of evolution.

Still another hierarchy which should have demonstrated the superiority of the white man. It is, however, certain that Morgan would have modified the scale of these inventions and their distribution, if he had been familiar with the current data of Prehistory brought up to date by Criticism and archaeology.

For the school of Vierkandt and Deniker, who start from psychological criterion, peoples were divided into primitive and civilised. Between these two groups a buffer-type of semi-civilised is admitted, who are nearer to the primitive. As Europeans according to the opinion of the man in the street were regarded as the unly civilised beings, there will be no difficulty in understanding where the Negro peoples were placed. This classification, which, by its authentic character, brings into highest relief the concept of white superiority, is still the one which is most current. Its popularity grew with the work of Levy Bruhl. In spite of his recantations on the subject of prelogism, his law of participation flows from the explanation of a series of facts which tend to establish the antithesis in question, and, as a result, Negro inferiority.

Finally economists and geographers have the same anxiety in explaining the development of society, on the one hand by the successive stages of hunters, pastors, farmers, and on the other by the physical surroundings. Through conceptions which differ widely, both in the branch of science under review, and the criterion adopted, one finds a striking community of objective. The first preoccupation of these scientists is to establish and demonstrate something, in the quietude of their work-rooms, making use of evolutionism by a method which favours their case. We are still a long way from the notion of culture as we understand it today. It was rather a question of civilisation, and that consisted of a certain stage of development in letters, arts and sciences, and in refinement, reached only by the white peoples of Western Europe.

There is no question of the Negro peoples having their own cultures or civilisations. Even a writer like Elliot Smith with his super diffusionist theory claims that the Negro cultures have nothing of their own since he places the cradle of civilisation in Egypt—but a white Egypt. In France, and we might add the Latin countries, although certain scientific circles have ended up by making the term "civilisation" an equivalent of "culture" in the sense understood by Anglo-Saxon anthropologists, it is the old conception which has prevailed up to now, with the idea of the superiority of the white

peoples of Western Europe (3). One is even tempted to see in this preference for giving a new meaning to the term "civilisation" rather than adopting "culture" in its current scientific meaning, the tendency to nourish confusion in the French mind, which believes that its civilisation is superior to all others and represents

the ideal (4).

This preocupation of the west is even more evident in the fields of religious ethnology, where, also, the theories do not escape the influence of evolutionism, or rather, of a certain application of evolutionism. Predisposed to discover sins of inferiority in the slightest manifestation of Negro cultures, the Westerns had at first great difficulty in recognising the strong spirituality which transcends them. Incapable of freeng themselves from their ancient mould of thought, strangled by their intolerance, their lack of understanding was responsible for some gross errors of judgment. It was unthinkable to them that the Negro should be capable of lofty metaphysical conceptions, still less that he should live by them. Placed in the zoological scale at a stage bordering on the higher apes, they must have in that field the most elementary thoughts, starting from which the species had developed to teach the stage characterised by the Christianity of European Whites. An abundant literature had, moreover, emerged, ever since the XVI century, from the views and observations of superficial travellers in search of gold or curiosities, and the meditations of charitable missionaries lamenting the miserable lot of the pagans. The theorists, later, merely had to use this material and classify and catalogue the facts and build explanatory theories to enable them to be understood. Even if if it was realised these accounts were designed, among other things, to justify the work of evangelization under whose patronage the colonialism and economic imperialism of the Christian Whites presented itself, not enough attention was paid to this fact. And that was quite in accordance with the rigour of the method, objectivity and impartiality of the authors.

One of the most fashionable misinterpretations of Negro beliefs was certainly that of President De Brosses who popularised the term "fetishism" with his book "On the cult of fetish gods" which appeared in 1760. Like a good Christian, this Portuguese saw gods everywhere among the "Savages" and thought that revelation was the privilege of a handful of good people (meaning the chosen group of whites). By his comparative method, he is regarded with Lafiteau and Fontenelle as the forerunner of the ethnologists (5).

<sup>(3)</sup> Following Lucien Febvre "Centre International de Synthese" 2nd Vol. cited by Price Mars in "Formation ethnique, folk-lore et culture du peuple haïtien" 2nd ed. Imp. Theodore, Port au Prince 1956.

<sup>(4)</sup> It is, moreover, the special property of colonists to insist with pride on their civilising mission as a biological need for the weaker peoples.

<sup>(5)</sup> According to Mgr. Bros in "Ethnologie religieuse" — Paris 1923.

He helped to give the XIX century the vision which they had of the Negro religions: a crude polytheism, a commination of magic and witchcraft. Starting from these views, the explanations of scholars, each one more mistaken than the last, were diffused in books which became works of authority. Naturism and cuhemerism became topical. Animism, magism and pre-animism were welcomed with interest as rational explanations of these religions. What emerges from all these works is the "primitivism" of the Negroes, their fundamental difference from the Whites, the deficiencies of their religious thought. That immediately established the need to take them out of their state, to "civilise" them, to christianise them. Psychologically the Negroes were compared to white neurotics who were reliving their childhood, or to children (6). When Levy Bruhl disclaimed the ideas of "Primitive Mentality" his views had already gained authority and his law of participation as we have already seen, confirmed the judgments which had already been formed about the Negroes. Tylor had a number of disciples and still exercises considerable influence in all circles. his authority as a scholar, while correcting the observations of Des Brosses, to some extent confirmed them. For the one, there were gods everywhere, for the other, there were spirits everywhere. As for Preus at the beginning of this century, he takes us a step backwards; it is magic which dominates and inspires the spiritual manifestations of the Negroes. There is there a pre-animist phase through which we should have passed first. The disciples of Preus think that Tylor was too generous, and made a concession to the Negroes which is not justified.

It is certainly not by accident that the religious aspect is the one which ethnology has particularly stressed. We know the dominant place which phenomena of this order occupy in the life of what are called "primitives", particularly the Negroes. It appears that there is a more pronounced anxiety to inferiorise them in this field. They must be reached in what is most intimate and most essential to them. "The choice which we make of our subject of study", writes Roger Bastide, "the technique which we apply in our observation of the real, the conceptual organisation which we give to the material collected, the generalisations which we give to the material collected, the generalisations which we draw from our work, all this is full of more or less explicit "valorisations"

which depend on our social condition" (7).

<sup>(6)</sup> Quite recently, giving her traveller's impressions following a tour in America, Madeleine Renaud, of the Company which bears her name together with that of Jean Louis Barrault, made this statement about Haïti; "Our most moving recollection is perhaps Haïti. I have never seen "Le Misanthrope" produce so much effect as it did on these Negro children". (See "Le Nouvelliste" Port-au-Prince. 15.7.56 news by teletype A.F.P.).

<sup>(7) &</sup>quot;Sociologie et Psychanalyse" p. 264. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1950.

We hope we have sufficiently demonstrated the spirit which inspired the work of ethnology in the XIX century. The result is that instead of correcting the errors of appreciation by the Whites on the question of the Negroes and their cultures, and in spite of their scientific pretensions, the ethnologists have provided a rational basis for colonialism by working out a real dogma of the inferiority of the Negroes. There is no reason to be unduly astonished that this science has been so faithful to such a vocation, if one merely recalls the politico-social conditions and the circumstances of the age in which it is found. In the mind of many scholars did it not have, and has it not still the object of devoting itself specially to the study of the peoples who are called "primitive"? (8)

For these scholars, the postulate of the absolute inferiority of Negro Cultures, once established, must condition the whole orientation of this science. (9)

But if the study of man must content itself with being that of the man that is called primitive, or obey a division of labour, as is wished, we see there someting more than the curiosity of the learned, a certain desire to get to grips with the facts, or pure intellectual interests. It is rather that primitive man, and particulary the Negro must be thoroughly well known in order to be more easily assimilated and better exploited. Hence the necessity to engulf him sufficiently to extinguish in him the consciousnes of his own value. At the same time one cannot maintain that this science has not well and truly developed to a point where all the the ways of looking at things which we have analysed above have

<sup>(8)</sup> Van Gennep in "Religions, Mœurs et Légendes" vol 4, P. 23, quoted by Mgr. Bros defines Ethnology as "The study of existing populations or existing groups which have not yet reached the stage of production characterised by large-scale industry".

Professor Raffael Corso, for his part, says, "The customs, techniques, practices, beliefs and artistic productions of peoples who are not civilised correspond to Ethnology II, Folklore, cited by Carvalho Neto".

<sup>(9)</sup> Others, for the same reasons, would wish to define in detail the object of the ethnological sciences. For Mauss, for example, "The only reason for the existence of Ethnography is to devote itself to the study of the phenomena which take place in the nations which are called savage". (See Mgr. Bros in "Ethnologic Religieuse" p. 11, as well as the Manual of Ethnography of Mauss. Let us add that from this arises the deadlock in which the scholars of the Old and New Worlds find themselves in formulating a definition of folk-lore. Whereas the Europeans wish to limit it to the study of certain phenomena among peoples called civilised, others, particularly the Latin Americans wish to apply it to the study of all popular phenomena, without paying attention to the old division of peoples into civilised and primitive. At the last Congress of Sao Paulo in 1954, we saw these two tendencies clash, without reaching an agreement. (Consult the recent book of Carvallo Neto, "Concepto de Folklore" for the present state of the question).

Finally, arising out of the same causes, mention must be made of the confusion between the limits of Ethnography and Folklore which have been the subject of learned discussion in the Société d'Ethnographie de France, particularly at its meeting of 25th April 1954. (See "Mois d'Ethnographie Française", May 1947).

been abandoned. The drawback is that the spirit which they have helped to form and maintain still dominates the relations of Whites and Negroes and that we must reckon as the lasting work of the writers and thinkers of the branch of science the sentiments, ideas and reactions which Negro cultures suggest to the Whites. The terms "barbarian", "savage", "primitive" with their implications, their pejorative sense (10), the displeasing epithets which are inevitably attached to Negro men and cultures relate to representations which have been left intact by all the recent progress of science. It would be impossible to understand the behaviour of the West and to realise what there is at the basis of this movement of thought without going back to the beginnings as we have tried to do.

Nevertheless, the question which arises for us Negro writers is this: since this instrument of knowledge is imposed upon us, what possibilities of exploitation does it offer us in our mission of defending our national cultures and bringing out their value?

First of all, whatever use has been made of Ethnology, let us recognise at the outset that it is before all, and that it could reveal itself as, the science of human comprehension. This emerges from different sources. Already one of the most notable advances of the followers of this branch of science is to attach less importance to the link of dependence between Race and Civilisation. Because they were unable to dissociate these two orders of facts, some minds, which were nevertheless outstanding, reached conclusions from their reasoning whose blindness astonishes us. Biology equally affords no foundation for the idea of a pure, superior chosen race. Although these are still merely speculations of the learned and there is still a great deal to be done before, with the support of UNESCO, they become the reasoning of M. Everyman, from the point of view of the recovery of the Negro, it is nevertheless considerable. Il their leaders can convince them that their so-called inferiority is in no way inborn and is consequently the motivation of their political domination and their economic enslavement, they will be better able to have confidence in themselves and forge themselves a destiny in greater harmony with their dignity as men.

Since the development of these studies has called for a greater effort of objectivity, and less ethno-centricity on the part of scientists, we have reached a healthier conception of culture. A better interpretation of history, and the understanding of phenomena such as borrowings, changes and models, have both finished by putting the accent on the functional character of cultures and on

Some Latin scholars still use the term "civilisation" in scientific writings in the current sense which it had before the second half of the XIX century. (See, among

others, the quotation from Professor Corso, cited on note (8) above).

<sup>(10)</sup> On the subject of the term "primitive", Professor Herkovits writes: "The conception implicit in this terminology impregnates our thought more than we imagine. It explains a number of the judgments which we pass upon the native peoples". ("The Bases of Cultural Anthropology" P. 65).

the principles of their diffusions, their diversities and their dynamism. In the mean time the preference given to inquiries on the spot, and to the methodical checking of facts has struck a blow against preconception by enabling questions to be tackled with a more open The result has been a greater understanding of Negro Cultures, which it is no longer a question of judging arbitrarily in isolation from their context so as to integrate them in a preconceived scale of values. Some remarkable work has also emerged as a result which gives a completely new picture of Negro Cultures. It was Frobenius in Germany who tried to construct a complete science of civilisation by looking at it in its own life, independently of those who produced it, and who was one of the first, in spite of his mistakes, to revive the ethnology of Africa. It was Father Tempels who brought to light the profound philosophy of the Bantu, which is so dominant in the Negro continent: a philosophy which helps in a full understanding of the different manifestations of these cultures. The art of Negro Africa, after being misunderstood, has, as a result of learned discussion, instead of disdain, retained the attention and called forth admiration by its deep meaning. It was Marcel Griaule (11) who made himself the enlightened guide of the interpreters by indicating how it is in close relationship with religious sentiment. These examples, which could be multiplied, confirm what Frobenius wrote in his book "The Destiny of Civilisations", namely, "The History of human civilisation is the history of transformations in the human sentiment of life. Different civilisations are different forms of the sentiment of life". Placed in such a perspective the study of Negro cultures cannot but gain in depth. Without this recasting how could we realise the human warmth which impregnates them, since the assessments formerly made of their value did not enable us to appreciate their orientation, their own scale values, in short that sense of life of which they are the expression?

Religious ethnology in particular, from the point of view of the rehabilitation of the Negroes, has changed its ground. It is sufficient, in this connexion, merely to recall the work of the Vienna school with Father Schmidt's original monotheism, followed, among others, by those of Mgr. Le Roy on "the religion of the primitives" and Father Trilles on "the pygmies in Africa". To an increasing degree one ends by realising that monotheism can no longer be the monopoly of the Westerns even if it should be proved that the ancient Isrealites owed nothing to Negro Egypt. In some cases one wonders if it is not necessary to go back on what is called the crude polytheism of the Negroes, and whether it is not rather a question of the existence of intermediate spiritual entities whose veneration, like that of the Roman Catholic Saints, in no way excludes the adoration of a supreme God. For it must not be forgotten, as

<sup>(11)</sup> See "Les arts de l'Afrique Noire" Editions du Chêne, Paris 1947.

Westermarck says, that "Man's belief in supernatural agents is an effort to explain alien and mysterious phenomena which suggest the intervention of a cause of volitionary nature.

The cause presumed is the will of a supernatural being. This kind of being is therefore conceived as being above all things wilful! But a being endowed with will must possess a spirit, with emotions, desires, and a cerrain degree of intelligence.

Neither the savage nor ourselves (our italics) can imagine a wilful being who is nothing but will. If, therefore, one sees a supernatural agent in a natural object, it goes without saying that at the

same time one endows it with mentality and life". (12)

These quotations from Westermarck flow from our pen just at the right moment to allow the observation that we are on the road towards a better understanding of the religious symbolism of the Negro, upon which special light is being thrown by modern Egyptology. The influence of the historical-cultural school is making a large contribution. In this connexion the theory of Adolphe Jensen (13) who proposes to take into account the successive phases of expression and utilisation through which cultural phenomena pass, seems likely to prove sufficiently fertile to penetrate the sense of certain manifestations which are apparently incomprehensible to the Westerner.

The least, therefore, that one can say about these tendencies which I have briefly discussed, is that Africa is in the process of being REDISCOVERED. We are not under any illusions. We know that this attempt, however disinterested it may appear, will allow the Westerners to acclimatise their domination to a century in which the progress of the sciences, the enlargement of moral consciousness, and internal conflicts, are making the foundations of colonialism more precarious. We may well see in this search for truth, the search for new formulas of exploitation which are more acceptable and less shocking. We are all the more aware of this since this progress is far from having the upper hand, even in unduly traditionalist learned circles, over certain ancient prejudices. A certain terminology, as we have already indicated strangely recalls the XVII century. (14)

In spite of all our knowledge in this second half of the XX

<sup>(12) &</sup>quot;The origin and development of moral ideas" Vol. 2 P. 579. The same author rightly points out that "the fact of admitting that supernatural beings exist does not necessarily imply that one accords them religious veneration". Op. Cit. Same Vol. p. 586.

<sup>(13) &</sup>quot;Mythes et cultes chez les peuples primitifs" Payot, Paris, 1954. Our reference is to the method of work and not to the substance of the theory about the Dema divinities.

<sup>(14)</sup> We must pay tribute to the objectivity of those who, having seen the confusion and inexactitude of certains terms, are making an effort to change them.

For example, Herskovits, whom we have already cited in connexion with the term "primitive" proposes to substitute for it in the classifications, "civilisations

century, the scholls and universities persist in teaching that Western civilisation is of Graeco-Roman origin, running a pen through everything which this origin owes to its predecessors. Our learned compatriot, Cheikh Anta Diop, who, in his work, "Nations negres et culture" has recently put this historical monstrosity into perspective, has put us sufficiently on guard against certain authors who might at least be thought objective, but who, in spite of their apparent generosity, continue the tradition of inferiorising the Negroes. There is even a drama for those of us who are obliged to make use of their work, although they are drawing nourishment,

sometimes unwittingly, from a tainted source...

At the same time, with all necessary perspicacity, conscientious Negro writers should, in our humble opinion, warmly welcome this new scientific spirit. They have an immediate interest in encouraging this REDISCOVERY, not merely in order to enrich the intellectual patrimony of the race, but to contribute the re-adjustments which will bring to light the truth about their cultures. It seems to me that this discipline on their part also offers the possibility of giving a scientific basis to their ideological struggle which will lead their people to take stock of their position, and have faith in their destiny. Using the same method they have the opportunity of doing better work than the Westerners. Since it is a question of concentrating on the manifestations of Negro life in order to interpret them properly, are they not more capable of that sympathetic introspection of which Colley speaks in connexion with the participating inquiry. In every culture there are problems and subtleties which are not really intelligible except to the men of that culture. It has often been claimed that such men are incapable of detachment and cold objectivity in their studies. Once again we touch on the problem of "valorisation" raised by Bastide, against which, however, this argument cannot stand. sation for valorisation, that of the scientists of a given culture offers the advantages of greater possibilities of penetration and comprehension for the reasons which we have just given. In the case of such scientists, there is less reason to fear those inevitable conflicts of culture which result in judgments of value which have a false obiectivity.

The example of our country shows the ethnological work of our indigenous school, whose distinguished father, Dr. Price Mars, is leader of our Delegation, largely contributed to our national re-awakening during the years from 1919 to 1930 by consolidating the moral front against the Yankee Occupants. It goes without

without writing". It does not seem to us that he has been listened to. Professor D.P. Mukerji, criticising the designation of "under-developed countries" adopted by international organisations, has expressed the wish that it might be replaced by a more dynamic term which recognised the combination of social-cultural and economic aspects which characterise the development of a society. (See the newspaper "Le Jour" of 5th July 1956 in an article by Mesmin Gabriel "Liasson").

saying in the studies which we undertook to show our participation in the exchanges between our culture and others, a special place was reserved for African antiquities. In spite of the bitterness of our struggle, which was oriented by current problems, there is, we believe, no enlightened mind which, since Diop's work, overlooks the desirability of such an approach. It was on the basis of these antiquities that the colonial writers set about inferiorising the Negroes. The important thing for them has been, and is, to convince the Negroes that they have no history, and that, having achieved nothing in the past, they are not capable of anything in the present. There are not very many who, like Jensen, have made amends by pointing out rather that the Negroes have no historical consciousness. But precisely what we look for in these studies of African antiquities is the re-awakening of an historical consciousness on the scale of the milennial past of our race. The Negroes scattered throughout the world, and who, under the cultural pressure of the West, still hesitate to deny themselves, and prefer to find their own way, have a real need of these motives of pride and these reasons to believe, so as to cling to life. Studies of this kind should have a very salutary effect upon a country which, like Haïti, wishes to assert its personality in following the direction of its history, in spite of contingencies of all kinds, and in spite of the fact that its vision of the world is determined by an education whose books are written by Frenchmen. It is not advocating a wrong-headed racism, to point out that the movements of liberation undertaken in this country in the name of human dignity, would not have been possible without a national consciousness, fortified by the realisation of racial consciousness. The biography of our principal heroes, the works of our greatest writers, clearly prove that.

I therefore remain firm in the conviction that it is with this understanding of their responsibilities that Negro writers will revalorise their national cultures in following the message of Cheikh Anta Diop and that they will have the last word in the great debate

of colonialism.

Emmanuel C. PAUL

## Culture and colonisation

For the past few days we have been greatly exercised as regards

the significance of this Congress.

More particularly, we have wondered what is the common denominator of an assembly that can unite men as different as Africans of native Africa, and North Americans, as men from the West Indies and from Madagascar.

To my way of thinking the answer is obvious and may be brie-

fly stated in the words: colonial situation.

It is a fact that most native countries live under the colonial system. Even an independent country like Haiti is, in fact, in many respects a semi-colonial country. And our American brothers themselves, thanks to racial discrimination, occupy within a great modern nation an artificial position that can only be understood within the context of a colonialism that has certainly been abolished but whose after-effects still persist down to the present day.

but whose after-effects still persist down to the present day.

What does this mean? It means that in spite of our desire to maintain a note of calm in the discussions of the Congress we cannot, if we are to come to grips with the situation, avoid raising the problem that has the greatest influence upon the development of native cultures, namely, the colonial situation. In other words, whether we like it or not, we cannot pose the problem of native culture without at the same time posing the problem of colonialism, for all native cultures are to-day developing under the peculiar influence of the colonial, semi-colonial or para-colonial situation.



But what, you may ask, is culture? It is desirable that this should be defined in order to dissipate certain misunderstandings and reply very precisely to certain anxieties that have been expressed by some of our enemies, and even by some of our friends.

The legitimacy of this Congress has, for example, been questioned. It has been said that if culture must be national, surely, to speak

of negro-African culture is to speak of an abstraction.

Is it not obvious that the best way to avoid such difficulties is to choose our terms carefully?

I think it is very true that culture must be national. It is, however, self-evident that national cultures, however differentiated they may be, are grouped by affinities. Moreover, these great cultural relationships, these great cultural families, have a name: the are called *civilisations*. In other words, if it is an undoubted fact that there is a French national culture, an Italian, English, Spanish, German, Russian, etc., national culture, it is no less evident that all these cultures, alongside genuine differences, show a certain number of striking similarities so that, though we can speak of national cultures peculiar to each of the countries mentioned above, we can equally well speak of a European civilisation.

In the same way we can speak of a large family of African cultures which collectively deserve the name of negro-African culture and which individually reveal the different cultures proper to each country of Africa. And we know that the hazards of history have caused the domain of this civilisation, the locus of this civilisation to exceed widely the boundaries of Africa. It is in this sense, therefore, that we may say that there are, if not centres, at least fringes of this negro-African civilisation in Brazil and in the West Indies, in Haiti and the French Antilles and even in the United States.

This is not just a theory invented for the purposes of the present argument; it is one that is, in my view, implied in a sociological

and scientific approach to the problem.

The French sociologist Mauss defined civilisation as "a group of sufficiently numerous and sufficiently important phenomena spread over a sufficiently large number of territories". It may be inferred from this that civilisation tends towards universality and culture towards particularism; that culture is civilisation regarded as peculiar to one people or nation, not shared by any other, and that it indelibly bears the mark of that people or nation. To describe it from the outside, one might say that it is the whole corpus of material and spiritual values created by a society in the course of its history, and by values we mean, naturally, elements as diverse as technics and political institutions, things as fundamental as language or as fleeting as fashion, the arts as well as science or religion.

If, on the other hand, one were to define it in terms of purpose, revealing its dynamism, one would say that culture is the effort of any human collectivity to endow itself with the wealth of a perso-

nality.

This is tantamount to saying that civilisation and culture define two aspects of the same thing; civilisation defining the widest outskirts of culture, its most external and most general aspects, while culture represents an internal irradiant cell that is the most unique

aspect of a civilisation.

It is known that Mauss, in his efforts to find reasons for the compartmentation of the world into clearly defined "civilisation areas", found them in a profound quality that was in his view common to all the social phenomena and which he defined by the term arbitrary element. "All social phenomena", he declared, "are to some

extent the work of the collective will, and when we speak of human will, we infer a choice between different possibilities... It follows from this characteristic of representational collective practices that the area over which they spread, as long as humanity does not constitute a single society, is necessarily finite and relatively fixed".

Thus, all culture is specific. Specific in that it is the work a single particular will, choosing between different possibilities.

We see where this idea leads.

To take a concrete example; it is indeed true to say that there is a feudal civilisation, a capitalist civilisation, a Socialist civilisation. But it is obvious that on the compost of the same economic pattern, life, the life passion, the élan vital of any people gives rise to very different cultures. This does not mean that there is no determinism running from base to superstructure. It means that the relation between base and superstructure is never simple and should never be simplified. In this respect se have the dictum of Marx himself who writes (Das Kapital, Vol. III, p. 841 et seq.)

"It is always in the immediate relations between the masters of the means of production and the direct producers that we discover the intimate secret, the hidden foundation of the whole social struc-This does not mean that the same economic basis—the same, that is, as regards the main conditions—may not by reason of innumerable distinct empirical conditions, e.g. natural and racial factors, historical influences acting from without, etc., manifest itself in an infinity of variations and graduations that may only be discovered by an analysis of the empirical circumstances concerned".

No better way could be found to say that civilisation is never so special that it does not pre-suppose, to breathe life into it, a whole constellation of ideational resources, traditions, beliefs, ways of thought, values, a whole intellectual equipment, a whole emotional

complex, a fund of wisdom that precisely we call culture.

This, I submit, is what legitimises our present meeting. All who have met here are united by a double solidarity; on the one hand, a horizontal solidarity, that is, a solidarity created for us by the colonial, semi-colonial or para-colonial situation imposed upon us from without; and on the other, a vertical solidarity, a solidarity in time, due to the fact that we started from an original unity, the unity of African civilisation, which has become diversified into a whole series of cultures all of which, in varying degrees, owe something to that civilisation.

We may accordingly consider this Congress from two points of view, both of them equally valid, namely, that this Congress is a return th the sources, a phenomenon characteristic of all communities in times of crisis, while, it is at the same time an assembly of men who must get to grips with the same harsh reality, hence of

men fighting the same fight ans sustained by the same hope.

For my part, I can see no incompatability between the two things. On the contrary, I believe the two aspects to be complementary and that our bearing, which may seem to indicate hesitation and embarrassment between the past and the future, is in fact only natural, seeing that it is inspired by the idea that the shortest way to the future is always one that involves a deep understanding of the past.

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I now come to my main theme, namely, the concrete conditions underlying the problem of native cultures at the present day.

I have said that this concrete conditioning may be briefly expressed as the colonial, semu-colonial or para-colonial situation

in which these cultures are developing.

The question at once arises: What influences can such conditions have upon the development of these cultures? And first of all, can a political status have cultural consequences? This is not immediately obvious. If one believes with Frobenius that culture is born of man's emotion before the cosmos and that it is no more than "παιδενμα" then there can be little or no influence of politics upon culture.

Or again, if one holds with Schubart that the essential factor is a geographical one, if one believes that "it is the spirit of the countryside that forges the soul of a people", there can be little or no

influence of politics upon culture.

If, however, one believes, as common sense dictates, that civilisation is first and foremost a social phenomenon and the result of social facts and social forces, then the idea that politics can in-

fluence culture becomes crystal clear.

This influence of politics upon culture is expressly recognised by Hegel in the Lessons from the philosophy of history when he writes this innocent little phrase which Lenin, however, must have considered less innocent than it appears as he quoted it and underlined it twice in the Philosophival Notebooks:

"The importance of nature should be neither over- nor underestimated; certainly the gentle sky of Ionia greatly contributed to the grace of the poems of Homer. Nevertheless, it cannot in isolation produce Homers. Nor does it always produce them. No bard

arises under Turkish domination".

This can mean only one thing, namely, that a political and social system that suppresses the self-determination of a people thereby kills the creative power if that people.

Or, what amounts to the same thing, wherever colonialism has existed, whole peoples have been deprived of their culture, deprived

of all culture.

It is in this sense that the historic meeting in Bandung may be said to have been not only a major political event; it was also a cultural event of the first magnitude in that it was the peaceful rising of peoples athirst not only for justice and human dignity but for what colonialism bad chiefly denied them, namely, justice.

The mechanism of the death of culture and of civilisations under the colonial system is beginning to be well known. In order

to flourish, a culture must have a framework, a structure. Nothing can be surer than that the elements that buttress the cultural life of a colonised people disappear or become debased as a result of the colonial system. I am referring naturally in the first place to political organisation. For it must not be forgotten that the political organisation freely evolved by a people is a significant factor in the culture of that people and, moreover, conditions that particular culture.

Furthermore, there is the question of language. Language has been called "psychology petrified". The native language, the language learnt at school, the language of ideas, once it ceases to be the official and administrative language suffers a loss of status that hinders its development and sometimes threatens its very existence.

We must fully grasp this idea. When the English destroy the state organisation of the Ashantis in the Gold Coast, they deal a

blow to Ashanti culture.

When the French refuse to recognise as official languages Arabic in Algeria or Malgache in Madagascar, thus preventing them from achieving their full potentiality in the modern world, they deal a blow to Arab culture and Madagascan culture.

Limitation of the colonised civilisation, suppression or debasement of all that it rests on, how in these conditions can we feel suprised at the suppression of one of the characteristics of all live

civilisations, namely the faculty of self-renewal?

It is, we know, a commonplace in Europe to disparage nationalist movements in the colonial countries by representing them as obscurantist forces priding themselves on reviving medicaval ways of life and thought. This, however, is to forget that the power to leave behind the past is one that belongs to a live civilisation, and that a civilisation is alive when the society in which it finds expression is free. What is happening at present in Africa or in free Asia is, in my view, highly significant in this respect. I shall confine myself to remarking that it is Free Tunisia that has abolished the religious tribunals, not colonial Tunisia, and that it is Free Tunisia that has nationalised Habu properties and abolished polygamy and not the Tunisia of the colonists; that it was the India of the English that maintained the traditional status of the Indian woman, but an India freed from British tutelage that gave the Indian woman equal rights with man.

Let us not delude ourselves! Limited in its action, its dynamism hampered, the civilisation of the colonised society from the first day enters the twilight that is the precursor of the end.

Spengler, in his Decline of the West, quotes these lines from Goethe:

"Thus thou must be, no man his face can change. So saith Apollo, thus the prophet spake Develop in life the from graven in thee That neither time, nor king, nor law can break". The great reproach we way justly level at Europe is that she broke the upsurge of civilisations that had not yet reached full flowering, that she did not permit them to develop and achieve the full richness of the forms graven in them.

It would be superfluous to detail the process by which the death of this whole was accomplished. Suffice it to say that it was stric-

ken at its base. At its, base, and thus irretrievably.

We recall the pattern worked out by Marx in respect of the societies of India, namely, small communities that break up because the foreign admixture disrupts their economic pattern. This is And not only for India. Wherever European coloonly too true. nisation has occurred, the introduction of an economy based on money has led to the destruction or weakening of traditional links, the break-up of the social and economic structure of the community as well as the disintegration of the family. When a member of a colonised people makes this kind of remark, European intellectuals tend to reproach him with ingratitude and to remind him complacently of what the world owes to Europe. In France, one can still remember the impressive picture painted by M. Caillois and M. Béguin, the former in a series of articles entitled "Reversed Illusions", the latter in his preface to M. Pannikar's book on Asia. history, sociology, ethography, morals, technics, all are brought in. And what importance, these writers ask, can be attached to a few acts of violence, that were in any case unavoidable, as compared with such a long list of benefits? There is certainly much But neither of these gentlemen can that is true in this picture. persuade world opinion that the great revolution about by Europe in the history of humanity is either the introduction of a system based upon respect for human dignity, in spite of all their efforts to make us think so, or the invention of intellectual integrity; this revolution turned upon very different considerations that it would be disloyal not to face, namely, that Europe was the first to have invented and to have introduced everywhere under her sway a social and economic system founded on money and to have mercilessly destroyed everything-I repeat, everything, culture, philosophy, religions,—everything that might prevent or slow down the enrichment of a group of privileged men and peoples. I am well aware that for some time it has been claimed that the evils caused by Europe are not irreparable. It is said that by taking certain precautions, the devastating effects of colonisation could be mitigated. Unesco has been considering the problem and lately (Unesco Courrier, February 1956), Dr. Luther Evans, the Director General, stated that "in certain conditions technical progress could be introduced into a culture in such a way as to harmonise with it". While a well know ethnographer, Dr. Margaret Mead, declared that if we bear in mind that "every culture forms a logical and coherent whole" and that "the slightest modification of any single element of a culture brings in its train changes in other respects", it should be possible by taking the necessary precautions "to introduce into certain cultures, basic education, new agricultural and industrial methods, new rules of hospital administration, cet., with a minimum of dislocation, or, at least, to make use of the ine-

vitable dislocation for constructive ends".

All this is certainly steeped in good intentions. One must, however, resign oneself to the facts. This is not a case where there might be said to be a bad king of colonisation destroying native civilisations and attacking the "moral health of the colonised people", and another good kind of colonisation, an enlightened colonisation backed by ethnography, which could integrate the cultural elements of the coloniser within the corpus of the native civilisations harmoniously and without risk of the "moral health of the colonised peoples". One must resign oneself to the facts: the tenses of colonisation are never conjugated with the verds of the idyllic.

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We have seen that all colonisation leads in the longer or shorter run to the death of the civilisation of the conquered society. But can it be said, if the native civilisation dies, that the coloniser replaces it with another type of civilisation that is superior to the native kind, that is, by the conqueror's own civilisation?

This illusion, to parody a fashionable expression, I propose to call the Deschamps Illusion, after Governor Deschamps who, at th eopening of this Congress yesterday morning, pathetically recalled that Gaul had once been colonised by the Romans, adding that the Gauls had not retained too unhappy memories of that colonisation. The Deschamps Illusion is, moreover, as old as Roman colonisation itself and might just as well be called the Rutilius Namatianus Illusion, as I find among Governor Deschamps' ancestors a man who was not Governor but Palace Chamberlain, which is not indeed without some analogy, who in the 5th century A.D. expressed in Latin verse a thought rather similar to that expressed by Monsieur Deschamps yesterday morning in French prose. Naturally such a comparison raises certain problems. One may in particular wonder if the comparison is valid for such widely differing historical situations; if, for example, one can compare, on the grounds of colonisation, a pre-capitalist colonisation with a capitalist colonisation. Nor does this absolve us from wondering incidentally whether the position of Governor, or Palace Chamberlain, is one that best qualifies a man to pass impartial jugdment on colonialism. However that may be, let us hear what Rutilius Namatianus has to say :

"Fecisti patriam diversis gentibus unam; Profuit injustis te dominante capi Dumque offers victis proprii consortia juris Urbem fecisti quod orbis erat".

We may note in passing that no poet has ever yet been inspired by the modern colonial system; never has one hym of gratitude resounded in the ears of modern colonialists. And that in itself is a sufficient condemnation of the colonial system... But no matter. Let us come to the heart of the illusion, namely, that just as in Gaul a Latin culture was substituted for a native culture, so there will occur throughout the world off-shoots of French, English or Spanish civilisations as a result of colonisation. But this, I repeat, is an illusion.

Moreover, the spread of this misunderstanding is not always unconscious or disinterested. In this respect we shall confine ourselves to recalling that in 1930, when a politician like Monsieur Doumer interrupted the historian Berr or the ethnographer Mauss at a meeting of philosophers and historians to define the word civilisation, it was to point out to them the political dangers of their cultural relativism and to insist that the idea that France had a mission to spread "civilisation"—by which he meant French civilisation—to her colonies must not be upset. An illusion, I say, for we must be quite convinced of the opposite, namely, that no colonising country can give its civilisation to any colonised country, that there is not, there has never been and there never will be scattered throughout the world, as was thought in the early days of colonisation, a "New France", a "New England, or a "New Spain". This is worth emphasising: a civilisation is a co-ordinated group of social functions. There are technical functions, intellectual functions, and functions of organisation and coordination.

To say that the coloniser substitutes his civilisation for the native civilisation-could mean only one thing, namely, that the colonising nation ensures to the colonised, that is to the natives in their own

country, the fullest mastery over these different functions.

What, however, does the history of colonisation teach us in this respect? That techniques in colonial countries always develop alongside the native society without the colonised ever being given the chance to master them. (The great misfortune of technical education in all colonial countries is the attempt by the colonists to bar the way to technical qualifications for native workmen; the attempt that finds its most odious and most radical expression in South Africa is, in this respect, highly significant.) That as regards intellectual functions there is no colonial country of which the main characteristic is not illiteracy and the low level of public education. That in all colonies, as regards the functions of organisation and coordination, the political power belongs to the colonial authorities and is directly exercised by the governor or resident-general, or is at least controlled by him.

(This, incidentally, explains the vanity and hypocrisy of all colonial policies based upon integration or assimilation—policies clearly recognised by the native peoples for the snares and booby-

traps they are.)

You see the extent of the requirements. I shall sum them up by saying that, for the coloniser, exporting his civilisation to the colonial country would mean nothing less than a deliberate attempt to establish native capitalism, a native capitalist society in the image

of and also as a competitor of metropolitan capitalism.

One has only to glance at the facts to realize that nowhere has metropolitan capitalism given birth to native capitalism. Moreover if a native capitalism has not arisen in any colonial country (I do not mean the capitalism of the colonists themselves that is directly connected with metropolitan capitalism), the reasons must not be sought in the laziness of the natives but in the very nature and logic of colonial capitalism.

Malinowski, who is certainly open to criticism from other angles, once had the merit of drawing attention to the phenomenon that he

called the "selective gift".

"The whole conception of European culture as a cornucopia from which all blessings flow freely is fallacious. There is no need to be a specialist in anthropology to see that the "European gift" is always highly selective. We never give, and we never shall give native people living under our domination—as it would be complete madness from the point of view of political realism to do so—the four following elements of our culture:

1. — The instruments of physical power—firearms, bombers, etc.

or anything that makes defence effective or aggression possible.

2. — Our instruments of political mastery. Sovereignty always remains the prerogative of the "Bristih Crown", or the "Belgian Crown" or the French Republic. Even when we practice indirect

rule such rule is always exercised under our control.

3. — We do not share the main part of our wealth and our economic advantages with the natives. The metal that comes from the African gold and copper mines never flows along African channels, apart from wages that are in any case always inadequate. Even under a system of indirect economic exploitation such as we practice in Western Africa or in Uganda when we leave a proportion of the profit to the natives, the entire control of economic organisation always remains in the hands of the western enterprise.

Nowhere is full political equality granted. Nor full social equality. Nor even full religious equality. In fact, when we consider all the points just mentioned, it is easy to see that there is no question of "giving", nor of offering "generously", but rather of "taking". We have taken from the Africans their lands and, generally speaking, it is the most fertile lands we have taken. We have bereft tribes of their sovereignty and of the right to make war. We oblige the natives to pay taxes but they do not control, or at least never entirely, the administration of these funds. Finally, the work they do is never voluntary except in name".

(Introductory essay on the anthropology of changing African cultures,

ra28).

Several years later Malinowski drew the following conclusions in

The dynamics of culture:

"It is the selective gift which, of all the elements of the colonial situation, has perhaps the greatest influence on the process of cul-

tural exchange. What the Europeans refrain from giving is both significant and clearly determined. It is a refusal which tends to nothing less tham a withdrawal from the process of cultural contact of all the economic, political and juridical benefits of the superior culture. If power, wealth, and social advantages were given to the natives the cultural change-over would be relatively easy. It is the absence of these factors, our "selective gift", that renders the

cultural change so difficult and so complicated"

As we see, there is never any question of the gift being offered in its entirely, hence if there is never any question of a civilisation being offered to others, there can be no question of a transfer of civilisation. Toynbee in *The World and the West* propounds a most ingenious theory of the psychology of the impact of civilisation. He explains that when the ray of civilisation strikes a foreign body "the resistance of the foreign body refracts the cultural ray by decomposing it in the same way as the prism decomposes light rays to produce the colours of the spectrum". He holds that it is, moreover, the resistance of the foreign social body that impedes the total diffusion of one culture in another, causing a kind of purely physical selection by which only the least important and most harmful elements are retained.

The truth is very different; Malinowski is right and Toynbee The selection of cultural elements offered to the colonised is not the result of a physical law. It is the result of a political decision, the result of a policy deliberately chosen by the colonist, a policy that may be summed up as the import-export of capitalism itself, by which I mean its foundations, its virtues and its power.



But, it may be said, there is still another possibility, namely, the elaboration of a new civilisation, a civilisation that will owe something both to Europe and to the native civilisation. If we discard the two solutions represented, on the one hand, by the preservation of the native civilisation and, on the other, by the export overseas of the colonists' civilisation, might it not be possible to conceive of a process that would elaborate a new civilisation owing full allegiance to neither of its component parts?

This is an illusion cherished by many Europeans who imagine they are witnessing in countries of British or French colonisation the birth of an Anglo- or Franco-African or an Anglo- or Franco-Asiatic

civilisation.

In support of it they rely on the notion that all civilisations live by borrowing, and infer that when two different civilisations have been brought into contact through colonisation, the native civilisation will borrow cultural elements from the colonists' civilisation and that from this marriage will spring a new civilisation, a mixed civilisation.

The error inherent in such a theory is that it reposes on the

illusion that colonisation is a contact with civilisation like any other

and that all borrowings are equally good.

The truth is quite otherwise and the borrowing is only valid when it is counter-balanced by an interior state of mind that calls for it and integrates it within the body which then assimilates it so that both become one—what was external becoming internal. Hegel's view applies here. When a society borrows, it takes possession. It acts, it does not suffer action. "In taking possession of the object, the mechanical process becomes an interior process by which the individual takes possession of the object in such a way as to strip it of its separate identity, transform it into a means and impart to it the substance of his own personality". (Hegel, Logic Vol. II, p. 482).

Colonisation is a different case. Here there is no borrowing arising out of need, no cultural elements being spontaneously integrated within the subject's world. And Malinowski and his school are right to insist that the process of cultural contact must be regarded mainly as a continuous process of interaction between groups

having different cultures.

What does this mean if not that the colonial situation, that sets the colonist and the colonised in opposing camps, is in the last resort the determining element?

And what is the result?

The result of this lack of integration by the dialectic of need is the existence in all colonial countries of what can only be termed a cultural mosaic. By this I mean that in all colonial countries

the cultural features are juxtaposed but not harmonised.

What, however, is civilisation if not a harmony and an integration? It is because culture is not just a simple juxtaposition of cultural features that there cannot be a mixed culture. I do not mean that people who are biologically of mixed blood cannot found a civilisation. I mean that the civilisation they found will be a civilisation only if it is not mixed. It is for this reason too that one of the characteristics of culture is its style, that mark peculiar to a people and a period and which is to be found in all fields in which the activity of a people is manifested at a given period. I feel that Nietzsche's remarks in this respect are worth considering; "Culture is above all a unity of artistic style in all the vital manifestations of a people. To know many things and to have learnt much are neither an essential step towards culture nor a sign of culture and could indeed go hand in hand with the opposite of culture, namely, barbarism, which implies a lack of style or a chaotic mixture of all styles".

No truer description could be given of the cultural situation common to all colonised countries. In every colonised country we note that the harmonious synthesis of the old native culture has been destroyed and has been replaced by a heterogeneous mixture of features taken from different cultures, jostling one another but

This is not necessarily barbarism through lack not harmonising. of culture. It is barbarism through cultural anarchy.

You may be startled by the word barbarism. But this would be to forget that the great creative periods have always been periods of great psychological unity, periods of communion, and that culture does not live intensely or develop except in the presence of a system of common values. Where, on the other hand, society is in dissolution, forms splinter groups and is criss-crossed by a medley of values that are not recognised by the community as a whole, there is room only for a debased style and, in the last resort, for sterility. A further objection is that any culture, no matter how great, or rather the greater it is, is a mixture of extremely heterogeneous We recall the case the case of Greek culture, consisting of Greek elements to which were added Cretan, Egyptian and Asiatic elements. We may even go further and state that in the realm of culture the composite is the rule and the uniform the harlequin's This is a view of which the American anthropologist Kroeber has become the interpreter (Anthropology, New York, 1948):

"It is", he writes, "as though a rabbit could be grafted with the digestive organs of a sheep, the respiratory gills of a fish, the claws and teeth of a cat, a few tentacles of an octopus, a further assortment of foreign organs borrowed from other representatives of the animal kingdom, and could not only survive but reproduce itself and prosper. Organically, this is obviously an impossibility, but in the realm of culture it is a very close approximation to what ac-

tually takes place".

It is no doubt true that the rule here is heterogeneity. however beware; this heterogeneity is not lived as such. In a live civilisation this heterogeneity is lived internally as homogeneity. Analysis may reveal the heterogeneity, but the elements however heterogeneous are lived in the consciousness of the community as theirs in the same way as the most typically native elements. civilisation does not feel the foreign body, for it is no longer foreign. Scientists may prove the foreign origin of a word or a technique, nevertheless the community feels that the word or the technique is A process of naturalisation, ascribable to the dialectic of having, has taken place. Foreign elements have become mine, have passed into my being because I can dispose of them, because I can organise them within my universe, because I can bend them to my uses; because they are at my disposal, not I at theirs. precisely the operation of this dialectic that is denied to the colonised. people. Foreign elements are dumped on its soil, but remain foreign. White man's things! White man's manners! Things existing alongside the native but over which the native has no power.

But, it may be asked, once the original unity is broken, is it not possible that the colonised people can reconstitute it and integrate its new experiences, hence its new wealth, with the framework of a new unity, a unity that will not, of course, be the old unity, but a

unity nevertheless?

Agreed. But is must be realized that such a solution is impossible under the colonial system because such a mingling, such a commingling, cannot be expected from a people unless that people retains the historic initiative, in other terms, unless that people is free.

Which is incompatible with colonialism.

Referring back to the previous statement on the dialectic of need, Japan has been able te commingle the traditional elements with those borrowed from Europe and melt them down into a new culture that nevertheless remains Japanese. Japan, however, is free and acknowledges no law but that of her own needs. should, moreover, be added that such a commingling postulates a psychological condition, namely, historic boldness, self-confidence. This however, is precisely what the coloniser has endeavoured, right from the start, in one thousand and one ways to take away from the colonised.

And here it must be clearly understood that the famous inferiority complex that they are pleased to find in the colonised is not just a matter of chance. It has been deliberately created by the coloniser.

Colonisation is a phenomenon that, among other disastrous psychological consequences, involves the following: it raises doubts regarding the concepts on which the colonised could build or rebuild their world. To quote Nietzsche: "Just as earthquakes devastate and ravage towns so that men build their dwellings on volcanic soil with misgivings, so life itself collapses, grows weaker, loses courage when then overthrow of his beliefs robs man of the basis of his security, his peace of mind, his faith in what is enduring and eternal".

This lack of courage to live, this vacillation of the will to live, is a phenomenon often remarked among colonial peoples, the best-known case being that of the people of Tahiti, analysed by Victor

Segalen in "Les Immémoriaux".

Thus the cultural position in colonial countries is tragic. Wherever colonisation occurs, native culture begins to wither. And among the ruins there springs up, not a culture, but a kind of subculture, a sub-culture that, because it is condemned to remain marginal as regards the European culture and to be the province of a mall group, an "élite", living in artificial conditions and deprived of life-giving contact with the masses and with popular culture, is thus prevented from blossoming into a true culture.

The result is the creation of vast stretches of cultural wastelands or, what amounts to the same thing, of cultural perversion or cultural by-products.

This is the situation which we black men of culture must have

the courage to face squarely.

The question then arises: in such a situation, what ought we, what can we, do? Clearly our responsibilities are grave. What can

we do? The problem is often summarised as a choice to be made. A choice between native tradition and European civilisation. Either to reject native civilisation as puerile, inadequate, outdated by history, or else, in order to preserve our native cultural heritage, to barricade ourselves against European civilisation and reject it.

In other terms, we are called upon to choose: "Choose between fidelity and backwardness, or progress and renunciation".

What is our reply?

Our reply is that things are not as simple as they seem and that the choice offered is not a valid one. Life (I say life and not abstract thought) does not recognise, does not accept these alternatives. Or rather if these alternatives are offered, life itself will transcend them.

We say that the question does not arise in native society alone, that in every society there is always a state of equilibrium between old and new, that it is always precarious, that is it in a constant state of readjustment and that it has in practice to be rediscovered by every generation.

Our societies, our civilisations, our native cultures are not exempt from this law.

For our part, and as regards ou particular societies, we believe that in the African culture yet to be born, or in the para-African culture yet to be born, there will be many new elements, modern elements, elements, let us face it, borrowed from Europe. we also believe that many traditional elements will persist in these cultures. We refuse to yield to the temptation of the tabula rasa. I refuse to believe that the future African culture can totally and brutally reject the former African culture. To illustrate what I have just said, let me use a parable. Anthropologists have often described what one of them proposes to call cultural fatigue. example they quote deserves to be recalled as it is profoundly sym-The story, which takes place in the Hawaiian Islands, is as follows: A few years after the discovery of these islands by Captain James Cook, the king died and was succeeded by a young man, Prince Kamehamela II. On being converted to European ideas the young prince decided to abolish the ancestral religion. It was agreed between the new king and the high priest that a great festival should be organised and that during the festival the taboo should be solemnly broken and the ancestral gods repudiated. On the appointed day, at a sign from the king, the high priest hurled himself upon the statues of the god, trampled them underfoot and broke them, while a great cry went up: "The taboo is broken!" Naturally, some years later the people of Hawai welcomed the Christian missionaries with open arms. The rest of the story is well known, it has passed into history. This is the simplest and clearest example we know of a cultural subversion preparing the way for the enslavement of a people. And I ask, is this renunciation of its past and its culture by a people, is this what is expected of us?

I say distinctly, there will be no Kamehamela II among us! I believe that the civilisation that has given negro sculpture to the world of art; that the civilisation that has given to the political and social world the original communal institutions such as village democracy, or fraternal age-groups, or family property, which is a negation of capitalism, or so many institutions bearing the imprint of the spirit of solidarity; that this civilisation that, on another plane, has given to the moral world an original philosophy based on respect for life and integration within the cosmos; I refuse to believe that this civilisation, imperfect though it may be, must be annihilated or denied as a pre-condition of the renaissance of the native peoples.

I believe that, once the external obstacles have been overcome, our particular cultures contain within them enough strengh, enough vitality, enough regenerative powers to adapt themselves to the conditions of the modern world and that they will prove able to provide for all political, social, economic or cultural problems, valid and original solutions, that will be valid because they are original.

In the culture that is yet to be born, there will be without any doubt both old and new Which new elements? Which old? Here alone our ignorance begins. And in truth it is not for the individual to reply. Only the community can give the answer. We may, however, affirm here and now that it will be given and not

verbally but by facts and by action.

And this is what finally enables us to define our role as blak men of culture. Our role is not to prepare a priori the plan of future native culture, to predict which elements will be integrated and which rejected. Our role, an infinitely more humble one, is to proclaim the coming and prepare the may for those who hold the answer—the people, our peoples, freed from their shackles, our peoples with their creative genius finally freed from all that impedes them and renders them sterile.

To-day we are in a cultural chaos. Our part is to say: "Free the demiurge that alone can organise this chaos into a new synthesis, a synthesis that will deserve the name of culture, a synthesis that will be a reconciliation and an overstepping of both old and new". We are here to ask, nay to demand: "Let the peoples speak! Let the blak peoples take their place upon the great stage of history!"

Aimé CESAIRE

## 20th. SEPTEMBER, at 9 p.m.

Mr. Alioune Diop:

If you agree, I will ask our friend Saint-Lot to take his place, so that we can start our Session straight away, if you see no objection.

Mr. Saint-Lot:

Thank you, Gentlemen, and dear Colleagues.

Alioune Diop;

Gentlemen, you have seen on two occasions, that we have been obliged to limit the number of speakers, because we have had far more papers than we expected - there have been 48. It is very difficult, believe me, to find time for everyone, particularly of the speakers do not limit themselves.

That is why there are, particularly in the English Delegation, a certain number of Rapporteurs who have not yet been able to speak. I can reassure them; they will be able to speak to-morrow, and we will make an effort to ensure that nearly everyone can be heard.

I would merely ask you, first, to remember the need for everyone to limit himself so as to make room for others, and secondly, to understand that it has not been easy to find time for everyone, in the circumstances in which this Congress has been organised. The Chairman (Mr. E. Saint-Lot):

Gentlemen, here is the Agenda which has been laid down for to-morrow's Session, for the Plenary Assembly;

Louis Achille; Negro Spirituals and the Expansion of Negro Culture.

Jacques Alexis: The Marvellous Realism of the Haitians:

Abdoulaye Wade: Should Negro Africa work out its own Positive Law?

John Davis: The participation of the Negro in the Democratic Process in the United States.

Cheikh Anta Diop: The Contribution of the Negro to the Progress of Man kind: the Prospects of African Culture.

Richard Wright: Tradition and Industrialisation. of the Tragic Elite in Africa.

James Ivy: The NAACP as an instrument of Social Change. George Lamming: The Negro Writer and his World.

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Cedric Dover: Perspective on Culture.

René Depestre: (the title of whose Paper has not yet been indicated. John Holness: The Crisis of Colonial Industrial Technique.

Marcus James and Peter Blackman (the titles of whose Papers

have also not yet been mentioned).

This list is certainly not exhaustive. If conditions are favourable

we can hear additional speakers.

If the Assembly has no objection to this list being finally accepted, we will adopt it as the Agenda for to-morrow's session. No objection? (Silence).

A Speaker: (who did not speak in front of the microphone):

We should specify the time allotted to each speaker.

### The Chairman:

There you are raising a question of extreme importance. I do not know what will be the opinion of Mr. Diop or of the Assembly. But then, these Papers, which have been prepared — most of them are written — have been more or less subject to complete immunity from the point of view of editing. By this very fact it is difficult to ask a Speaker to change his text in no time at all.

Quite apart from that, it is also difficult to succeed in keeping

a text within a given time.

I will indicate straight away the other difficulties which we have. We have a limited time. The Papers are fairly voluminous. But on the other hand, I put myself in the place of someone who has prepared a Paper. Its preparation has taken him some time. It includes a structure, a composition. If he is not left the necessary time, he has no time to do the work of synthesis which is needed.

## Mr. Senghor:

Mr. Chairman, I really think that one should be able to express oneself in twenty minutes. It is a question of discipline.

#### The Chairman:

Exactly, but perhaps not every speaker can observe the discipline of a teacher, which you and I share.

## Mr. H. Bond:

... This evidence of hooliganism from the spectators when the speech of the very distinguished delegate from the Cameroons was interrupted, Mr. Thomas Ekollo. I should appreciate the acceptance of the delegates for him to have an opportunity to conclude his remarks. I come four thousand miles and made a great sacrifice of time and effort, because this is a great experience. But I am accustomed to a climate of opinion on any man who has something to say is permitted to say it. (Applauses.)

## The Chairman:

If I understand rightly, the observation of our distinguished

colleague refers to the position of the Delegate from the Cameroons, who was apparently interrupted in the course of reading his Paper. Was that done because of the rule which you have just adopted, imposing imitation of the time of speaking?

## A Speaker:

He was not allowed to finish his Paper, his contribution.

## The Chairman:

Do you want him to do it now, in the course of the present Session?

## A Speaker:

Oh, no.

## The Chairman:

At the Plenary Session, then?

## Mr. A. Diop :

We asked him twice to finish, because there were two other speakers.

#### M. H. Bond:

It seems to me the African delegate can be discouraged.

I understand that the President has to limit time. But the time was limited to him as a result of pressure from the audience. In my own feeling, the audience should remain disciplined. And disciplined severely.

## The Chairman:

I should also like to take part in this discussion, if possible. I will then hand over the Chairmanship.

I should like to put some questions to our colleague from the Cameroons.

#### Alioune Diop:

Mr. Chairman, ask each speaker to hand in his name. Then we can limit the time accordingly. Thus we have E. Glissant, Dr. Cook, Father Bissainthe.

#### Father Bissainthe:

I have some general remarks to make; I shall limit myself to that.

In the course of the different declarations which have been made, reference has frequently been made to the Catholic Church, to which I have the honour to belong. I know that sometimes people have spoken evil of the Catholic Church. But I would just like to make certain things clear.

People speak often enough of a certain religious colonialism.

If this religious colonialism did exist—it is possible— I think it important to emphasize that it was in a certain context. In the old days, the Western missionary lived, obviously, by his Western civilisation and inevitably said to himself that the Catholic Church was, to some extent, assimilated with Western religion. For him Christian civilisation was, to some extent, identified with Western civilisation.

It was normal that, living in this atmosphere, he should have confounded things somewhat, and that, living in Africa, he did not

adequately understand African cultures.

But I should like to emphasize, when I hear you protesting precisely against what you call a religious colonialism, that our Popes have been doing that for a long time. I know texts which date from 1636, for example, texts addressed by the Pope to the Bishops of the Belgian Congo, in which, at that early date, he protested against what you are now calling religious colonialism.

He said that to go and preach Spain, France or England in Asia, or to carry them to Asiatics or Africans, was not Christianity, since Christianity consisted first of all, in bringing the Catholic religion

to all the world.

The protest is absolutely legitimate. I want to emphasize that it is essential that you should make a distinction when you speak of the Church to which I belong. The Catholic Church consists of two things; there are Churchmen, and there is the Church. This Church is a spiritual Church, a Church which obviously wishes well to the whole world and which wants to contribute something to everybody —but to everybody something in his own culture.

When the Catholic Church addresses itself to Africans, it certainly intends to contribute something to the Africans, but within their own African culture. If men have not undertstood this, the fault lies with the men and not with the Church, the principles of the

Church.

The Church in which I, for example, believe, is a Church which is capable of being Catholic, that is to say, a Church which is capable, in Africa of becoming African, in Haiti, of becoming Haitian. That is the Church in which I believe. And in Haiti, I am certain that one day, —which will come, and I hope soon— the Catholic Church can become Haitian, can mould itself into certain Haitian forms.

Mr. Saint-Lot, to whom I was speaking this afternoon, said to me, "Are you certain that if you sing a Gregorian chant to a Haitian peasant, that will do something to his soul?" And I answered, quite specifically, "No". Frankly, I do not think that a Gregorian Chant would be absolutely suitable for a Haitian. It is therefore necessary that our Catholic religion should adapt itself to my country—should become truly Haitian in my Haitian country. It is essential to come to this.

I should therefore have wished that all of you, my African

brothers, when you speak of the Catholic Church, should make this distinction, which is absolutely essential.

There exists a Catholic Church which believes in the values of Africa, and intends to explore them, intends to give them their worth.

This Catholic Church exists, and I would really like you to recognise that it exists. And, on the other hand, there are also Churchmen, who have not always understood the Church.

### Mr. Saint-Lot:

Will you allow me a slight observation, Father? It is certain, is it not, that the judicious remarks which you have just made are clearly addressed to the author of this morning's Paper. But I think that, in this case also, a distinction should be made.

Certainly these gentlemen wanted to examine the role of the priest of religion in colonial countries. And this priest, that Church, are the representatives of the spiritual authority. This spiritual authority is not autonomous. It is bound and this is a principle of the Church itself; render unto God those things which are God's and unto Caesar those things which are Caesar's —to follow the directives of the temporal authority. And when the temporal authority has given those directives, a priest is the prisoner of those directives. I do not know if you see my point of view clearly.

I say that the priest is the prisoner of that directive. In Haiti it is another thing. But even now you are obliged to follow the directives of the Haitian government.

I therefore think that the role of the priest who is assigned to colonial missions is really difficult. That is my personal opinion.

### Father Bissainthe:

I will pass over that point because I do not wish to waste your time. I would merely make a few suggestions. But when I raised this point, do not think that I did it out of animosity towards all those who are here; I regard you all as my brothers, and you may be certain that I have the deepest affection for you.

I would like to make a few suggestions to the Congress.

I could have wished that Congresses of the nature of this one might be held, for instance, every five years, in different countries. These are simply suggestions which I make. I think that a Congress of this kind is very interesting, and that by holding similar ones in different countries, that might help us to understand the true values of our respective countries; it would also prolong the work of this Congress.

A suggestion I would make would be that, for example, in each country each year there should be sessions of Negro culture. That would be very interesting.

I would even have wished —and this has not been done in this Congress— that after the address of a speaker, he could be asked

questions on certain points -immediately after his address (Applause.)

The Chairman:

The second speaker is Mr. Achille.

Mr. Achille:

Mr. Chairman, I have put my questions in writing, in accordance with the instructions I received. I think the Rev. Mr. Ekollo must have them.

Mr. Ekollo :

I must, first of all, claim the indulgence of my audience. I am not very fluent, because I have really only been speaking French since I arrived in France. When I was at home, I spoke the language of the country. I must ask you to excuse me. French is my language of adoption; it is not my real language.

Should I, first of all, read Mr. Achille's questions?

Mr. Achille puts two questions to me:

1. "The author does not seem to take into account that for a great number of theologians, who are not exclusively Catholic, Christianity is Western in character, and aims in the first place at enabling man to share in the life of grace of Jesus, assuring him of eternal life, in short, saving him from original sin and from his own sins. Is it not humanising and therefore, devalorising— the teaching of Christ, to see nothing in it but a way of perfecting some national cul-

I must first of all say to Mr. Achille that I am very sympathetic towards his question. In reading it, and even the one which follows, I see that Mr. Achille thinks exactly as I do in the particular case. Therefore, in principle, there is no opposition between us.

I would merely point out to Mr. Achille that it is a very delicate matter to deal with this kind of question before this audience. So far as I am concerned, I think I was very brave to accept this com-

mission.

As I said at the beginning, I have no intention of doing any evangelisation, or even of making an apologia for Christianity. think that we Africans find ourselves in a period when we are trying to discover a cultural basis -and that, on the other hand, we have to take into account a number of ideologies. I therefore thought it necessary to take stock of this question of Christianity in relation to the future of our civilisation.

In effect, the present tendency is to reject Christianity outright. It has been said—and it was quoted this morning—that "religion is the opium of the people." But I myself, when I study the Gospel, I do not in any way see that the typical religion, the Christianity, which flows from the Gospel, is that religion of obscurantism.

my part, I rather see in it highly cultural values, values which have a great importance in political life, cultural life and social life.

I had provided, for our Review (1), an article in which I presented what I regard as the cultural values, values which everyone

can recognise in Christianity and the Gospel.

You will see that, in answer to the question put to me by Mr. Achille, I could not speak of Grace in this place, and that no one would listen to me. I wanted to put the problem on a purely cultural level.

Only, I am not in agreement with you when you say, "Is it not humanising and therefore de-valorising, the teaching of Christ to see in it nothing but a means of perfecting some national culture?" I would say that perhaps you have read my Paper a little too quickly. In fact, it is no part of my intention to say that Christ came upon Earth to bring a culture. Not at all.

But I observe one other thing: it is that the spirit of Christianity can give a strength; the spirit of Christianity can inspire a culture, give it what it lacks. Moreover, Christianity is not a culture, everyone knows that; it is only a spirit, and I think that spirit is

capable of contributing strength, of giving...

### The Chairman:

Father Ekkolo, may I interrupt you?

There is another question which I would like to ask; it is certain that in Mr. Achille's mind (perhaps), as in mine, there is no question of confusing the doctrine of Christianity, with the use which is made, or has been made of that doctrine. History is there to prove that it has in fact been used in a way which might well provoke a certain mistrust towards it, among colonial peoples particularly, since Christianity has identified itself so closely with the temporal power, and particularly with the power of torture.

Christianity represented, if you like, the breach, the first breach, through which Western imperialism came to weigh upon the coloured

peoples, and that, wherever it was established.

An exemple: among us, when it landed, the first thing it did—by virtue of an ordinance of Colbert— was to Christianise the native; he was baptised, his African name was taken away from him, and he was labelled with a name drawn from the calendar. That is why we have all these names which have nothing in common with Africa. And then from that day up to his death—the death of the slave—he never met from the Catholic priest that pity, that compassion, which is at the root of the Christian doctrine. He has always met him on the other side of the barricade, the side of the master, the oppressor.

And then the lack of feeling of this priest thus gave birth—even in spite of our atavism— to a certain mistrust of Christianity.

<sup>(1)</sup> Présence Africaine.

That is something which it is up to you, pastors who are of the same race as us, to destroy, you who have racial affinities with us. But I warn you, the task is not an easy one.

### Mr. Ekollo :

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. But you express —and you do it in very fine language—what I think myself. Perhaps Mr. Achille could answer you more validly than I. The fact is that all of us deplore the same thing. And merely out of intellectual honesty, I wanted to put forward here the thought of the African man in relation to Christianity. We all associate ourselves with your criticism. But —and here I agree with what the Father said just now—we must not confuse what we mean by "the Church". There is the Church, which is a supra-national reality, the body of Christ —and then on the other hand, there is the institutional Church. That is why you will find two parts in my Paper.

Having made a criticism which has been supported by every-body, I said in my heart, "This criticism is still, too superficial, because it does not go to the heart of the question." I have still more profound convictions. That is why I say that, considering that Christianity is a force, we must try to adapt it, to find its true

substance, so as to help us.'

### The Chairman:

Gentlemen, we will go on to the next speakers.

(There was a discussion between the Chairman and a member of the audience, away from the microphone.)

# Mr. Ekollo:

Yes, there is a second question. I will read it: "Does the author not think that it will normally be necessary to wait until Africa, after assimilating the Christian message, gives it a specifically African form and modalities—in the same way as Western Christianity, as he emphasizes so well, has adopted Hebraic and Graeco-Latin forms?"

In any event, without ceasing to watch over the universality of the Church, that is certainly what the Church of Rome increasingly desires. I begin by the last part: the universality of the Church.

You are familiar with the results of the work of the Occumenic

Council of Protestant Churches.

In the first part of the question, I am asked if we must not wait until Africa has assimilated Christianity. That is exactly what I say. But when do you think Africa will have assimilated Christianity? When will it have made this effort of adaptation? Do you want us to wait for the spirit...

A speaker (away from the microphone): ...

### The Chairman:

Gentlemen, I think Mr. Achille is satisfied.

We will go on to the next speakers, on the tenth Paper. First, I call upon Dr. Cook.

Dr. Cook :

Mr. Chairman, I would like to put a few slight questions, or

rather, make a few remarks.

When I arrived here, I asked Mr. Diop if this meeting was a cultural congress or a political congress. He told me, "It is purely a cultural congress." Obviously, it is not always easy to separate the

cultural from the political.

In these conditions, it seems to me that the point which interests us, the listeners —particularly those who came at 6 o'clock this evening to hear my friend Césaire —is precisely this question of politics. And then I ask myself, first of all, what am I doing in this outfit. Mr. Césaire has certainly said that we American Negroes have a semi-colonial status; but since 7 o'clock I feel myself less and less at one with my African compatriots. And that troubles and hurts me greatly.

I would like to ask Mr. Césaire to clear up a few points. Is it merely to discuss colonialism and colonialism only that we are here? We are discussing colonialism; is it because the other questions on

other aspects of culture are only pretexts for this Congress?

I am sorry. Perhaps I am expressing myself badly, but this is something which is very near my heart. (Applause.)

### The Chairman:

We will adopt the following procedure. Since there are several speakers who wish to put questions to the same Rapporteur, he will take a note of these questions and then answer each of them in turn when he is on the platform. As "questioners" we have Senghor, Wright and Saint-Lot. Also Mr. Davis. All about Mr. Césaire.

### Mr. Davis:

I must speak in English, and I suppose Mr. Césaire will understand.

I would like to say that it is undoubtedly true that American Negroes have a tremendous sympathy for and a working interest in the freeing of Negroes everywhere in the world from various states. It is inevitable, both as Americans and as Negroes. America has always taken an anti-colonist position; from George Washington down to Dwight Eisenhower, every president has taken this position. I don't have to tell you how difficult our relationships have been with our allies because of this, and one reads the papers: one hears how the British and the French talk about us. One knows this to be true and that we are accused of all sorts of "backdoor" pressure in this regard.

In addition to this, as American Negroes (as Mr. Senghor said the other day) we are very conscious of our Negro culture. I came up on the Spirituals, on the writing of Prof. Cook's father, H. Cook,

who was a composer, on the writings of Burleigh. I was surrounded by Negro "blues" which today are characterised as a music of protest. "Blues" are not a music of protest: "blues" is what everyone in the world has at times. This explains their popularity. brother is a cultural anthropologist: I have spent many days listening to records where he stressed the relationship between Spirituals and African chants.

We are surrounded in America by Afro-Cuban music and Afro-Brazilian music. Practically all of our music and all our enjoyment is Negro. The Negro, as a new civilisation in the western hemisphere, has changed it. It is Negro but it is also a part of the nations in which they will find themselves.

So, I came to this Congress with the full consciousness of my Negro cultural heritage, of which we Negroes in America are very proud. It is one of the things which give us most of our self-respect.

I came to this Congress as an American and as a Negro generally against colonialism. What hurts me is that I heard colonialism denounced in many different ways. I have not heard what happens afterwards, or let me say this: as an American, I am a builder. We are pragmatic people; we do that which has to be done next in terms of democratic ideas. We don't do it very well all the time; sometimes we have to fight bloody civil wars. But on the whole, we prefer to make change without blood because we believe that those institutions which grow as part of the culture, are institutions which will last longest. No political scientist would say that force is not important in government; for any political scientist would say that those institutions which grow naturally and peacefully are those which operate best and which last longest.

Now, what alarms me is the fact that so far this is negative: and in this regard, I want to ask Mr. Cesaire, I think, a few questions.

I first have to know what he means when he says the situation of the Negro in America is best understood in terms of colonialism? If he means in terms of races, I can understand that. position, it seems to me, is that of a minority in the country. This exists with regard to many groups in many countries. Sometimes it is religious minority; sometimes it is a racial minority.

What American Negroes want —I should make this very clear and have been fighting very hard for and with great sacrifices, both personal and in terms of blood, is for the complete equal status as citizens; and since 1936 we have been making tremendous progress in this regard. We do not look forward to any self-determination in the belt if this is what Mr. Cesaire had in mind when he said by

reference. I want to know exactly what he had in mind.

I also want to question him with regard to the way he treated Margaret Mead. Dr. Mead (this means her professionnal name) was writing about how America could help backward countries by giving technical assistance and technical aid. This is not colonialism; she was concerned with how this could best be done without

upsetting the indigenous culture. Your choice here is either to have no aid, or have your culture upset —Americans being too practical to attempt to do both: to help you and not upset your health.

Now, empirical policy has gone far in the world and it has gone further in America than anywhere else. In America, social

scientists are empiricists.

I also want to know how he was quoting Malinowski? When he started out, I thought he was quoting Malinowski in a derisive fashion and at the end, I thought he was approving Malinowski. I want to know on which side he was.

The Chairman:

I call upon Mr. Senghor.

Mr. Senghor:

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen,

If I intervene in the discussion, it is because, really, I feel that there is a problem. Our brothers of the United States and our brothers of Haiti ask themselves, "What have we in common with the Africans? Are we at one with them, both on the political level and on the cultural level?"

On the cultural level? I will come back to that, but I think that there is a solidarity, because I have paid a great deal of attention to Negro-American literature, and I know that current literature was born from the New Negro movement. (I am not res-

ponsible for inventing that expression.)

I say that there is a certain community, both political and cultural. Political, first of all. You are fighting against segregation, for equality. So are we. You are American citizens, we are French citizens. I have even been a member of a Government, where, I must

say, most of the time I was in opposition to the majority.

The question therefore arises, have we got freedom to associate in order to obtain that equality? And why? Precisely to be able to efface our alienation. I remember an American priest saying to me, "Sure, literature of protest, we're fed up with it." And Alain Locke in one of his extremely clear-sighted articles on Negro-American poetry, said that the most Negro poems" are not the poems which speak about 'Negroness' but the poems which speak about wind and water etc.

We therefore wish to liberate ourselves politically, so that we can fully express our Negroness, that is our true Negro values.

But when we have attained what you call equality, and what we call "the defeat of colonialism", when we have attained that, there will still be a problem, the one raised the other day by Wright. He is American. Is he American? Being American, is he heir to European civilisation, African civilisation or American civilisation?

But Césaire and I put this problem to ourselves also, we have often put it to to ourselves. Many of us are Marxists. But Marx was not an African. His doctrine was born from the situation of men

in Western Europe. And he said himself that his theory of Capital was only valid for Western Europe.

Therefore, we too are objectively half-castes, and that is where I should "quarrel" with Césaire, while agreeing with him. To-day, we are, objectively, cultural half-castes. We are meeting to-day in the Descartes Amphitheatre, and much of the reasoning of French Negroes stems from Descartes. And that is why —frequently, moreover— you do not entirely follow us, and we do not entirely follow you, because you are pragmatists, like the Anglo-Saxons.

I also think that all the great civilisations were civilisations which resulted from cross-breeding — objectively speaking; the Indian civilisation, the Greek civilisation, the French civilisation and so forth and so forth. In my view, and objectively speaking, this cross-breeding is essential. It results from contact between civilisations.

In effect, either the external situation has varied; a cultural contribution then enables us to make an adaptation to a new situation. Or the external situation has not varied; a cultural contribution then enables us to make a better adaptation to the situation.

Therefore, I think that the situation in which we find ourselves is natural; it is precisely a situation which will generate progres. For progress lies in the resolution of contradictions.

But Césaire is right when he says —and I said it myself twenty years ago—that we must not be assimilated, we must assimilate; that is, there must be freedom of choice, there must be freedom of assimilation.

But freedom is only truly fertile when it is no longer felt to be cross-breeding. If you like, there must be objective cross-breeding, but the cross-breeding must not be felt subjectively.

I will not expand my remarks, but I will summarise them. We are in exactly the same position—you Americans (and I would even say, you Haitians) because, after all, you are under the yoke of an international capitalism. We are in exactly the same political situation, and we are in the same cultural situation.

The problem for us, consists first of all, in getting rid of this political alienation. Césaire has not offered us any solution. He has not said, "It is the Communist solution, it is the Socialiast solution, it is the Democratic solution, etc."

I am really speaking to you very sincerely, and very seriously. I am explaining the reasons why we say that in order to live our culture, to have an authentic culture, there is a political problem to be solved, and that even when we have solved this problem, there will still be another problem, that of the choice between civilisations in contact; we shall have to see what we shall take from Western civilisation and what we shall keep from Negro-African civilisation.

These, quite simply, are the remarks which I wished to make. (Applause.)

(Mr. Wright, English.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I shall be as brief as possible; the hour is late.

I can only say, I wish we could have begun this Conference at the level where it is now. Perhaps we could have gone somewhere and grappled with some concrete issues. I am still here with a mind full of questions about African culture. It has been presented to us and it has been praised. The manner in which it has been shattered, has been discussed: and I thought that with the political situation shaping up rapidly, we could have addressed ourselves in a concrete manner about why that culture was so easily shattered and how we could have gone about protecting it; modifying what seemed to be perhaps its too deeply subjective content: draining it off into objectivities and instrumentalities, that would have enabled a section of the ground to be cleared for the erection of concrete projects.

I have the feeling that we have not yet even touched upon the central heart of this problem and the discussion is going at such a

high and abstract level that it is becoming lost and blurred.

I had thought also that we would have been able to emerge out of here with some startling stance towards the Western world, that would have banished from their minds this chronic sense of dependence which they feel about Africa and which conditions in Africa compel Africans to feel.

That's all I want to say. I feel we have yet to address ourselves to the core of this question. It has to be re-thought, re-felt and

done again.

My raising the question of my relationship to African culture is not the result of any confusion in my mind: I know my roots and assumptions — but the manner of linking on, the manner of defining this has yet to he done. These are the « live » questions from which we could have started grappling from the first day.

Mr. Achille:

Mr. Chairman.

As the speakers follow each other, the speeches become less valuable. In sum, what I wanted to say has already been partly said, both by the American Delegate and by Senghor.

Allow me, however, to raise briefly, two points.

I must express, at the outset, my admiration for the extremely close-knit and rigorous dialectic of our friend Césaire, who has left no room for any illusion on the part of those who might still have them. He has demolished all possible pretext.

Nevertheless, in this admirable whole, I find a tendency (to some extent) towards systematisation —I would almost say towards a

certain idealism. I will explain.

His Paper centres on an essentially colonial situation. For

reasons which those who know me a little will guess, I ask myself the question whether the same reasoning could be applied to countries which are not exactly in a colonial situation. I am thinking, in particular, of the United States.

In the United States the Negroes are extremely numerous. They show signs of a harmonious cultural development which is not exclusively national, I mean exclusively Negro. It is Negro and American at the same time. It is therefore, cross-breeding, and this cross-breeding is, if I may say so, relatively well balanced.

I am thinking also of the countries of British West Africa.

I was struck by the statement made this morning by the Dlegate from this region. He gave us to understand that, in sum, the political evolution of the se British African territories has not given rise to any literature, and has not even raised the problems which concern us here. I should, moreover, like to come back to that if the speaker were here.

I therefore have the impression that this Paper does not entirely apply to all the branches, all the families of the Negro race. And in our character of an International Congress, we should make an effort to be able, while centring our discussions on Africa (which is the greater part) also to take into consideration what might be called the minorities — Negro minorities in the Negro world.

Secondly, there is a question of terminology.

I have the impression that the word "culture" was used in the course of the Paper — I am sorry for this little over-refinement—in two senses. Sociologists often speak of "culture", whatever it may be. When one speaks of the culture of a people, that does not mean that this culture is perfect, nor that it is entirely original. Every people has a given culture at any moment of its history, its existence.

But at the same time the speaker spoke of that culture as if it

were a perfect culture, and extremely pure.

It is this confusion which seems to me a little daring, because, in sum, where are we going to find a pure culture? And the African cultures which we want to develop, are they not already cross-bred with different Negro elements, even inside Africa? Nearly all cultures are cross-bred. I cannot help thinking of English culture. Obviously I shall be told that England has no culture, that England is a barbarian country —because in the end, I should be wasting my time in endeavouring to find original styles in England. There are none, or practically none.

That is why Senghor has already answered my question when he talks of the objectivity and subjectivity of culture. It is from the moment that one can assume one's proper culture —whatever, incidentally, may be the alien and multiple origin of its elements—

that one can speak of a culture.

Finally, a last question. I put it not only to Césaire, but to the Congress in general, a question which has been in my mind since the beginning of the Congress. It is this;

What is the origin of the adjective Negro, applied to Africa? Here I address myself especially to the Africans; do the Africans, in

their African languages, call themselves Negroes?

It is quite clear that nowadays all Africans and descendants of Africans scattered over the whole world employ for the purpose of designating themselves, even officially in the eyes of the Press of the whole world, an expression, which, in sum, has been imposed, I think, from outside by the colonising nations. That is a question which I put.

### The Chairman:

There is a State of South Africa, which has nothing in common, by its legal constitution—with the Negroes; the Union of South Africa.

I think that since Africa is inhabited by Negroes and whites, we are bound to distinguish Negro Africa from White Africa. North African for instance, inhabited by Berbers or Arabs, must not, specifically, be confused with Negro Africa.

### Mr. Achille :

I do not see the possibility of doing anything else. But, after all, I think that this label, which has been imposed upon us by White geographers...

### The Chairman:

I do not see why...

### Mr. Achille :

I have no objection, I merely put the question, the question of origin.

### The Chairman:

I think there are no more speakers except myself, because I have put my own name on the list.

I also wanted to put a question to my friend Césaire. It overlaps a little with what Mr. Achille has just said. My first reaction, when I heard mention of the semi-colonial conditions of Haiti, was naturally a slight reaction of startled surprise. But when I gave serious thought to Haitian realities, I saw that my friend Césaire had not exaggerated anything.

What we call the colonial status is a bloc, and political liberation is not enough to entail complete liberation. The sequels of colo-

nialism are still present among us.

I should like, for a moment, to draw the attention of the members of Congress to the nature of some of the problems which are facing us, and which are certainly awaiting them when they have reached the stage of liberation.

The sequels of colonialism are even harder than colonialism

tself. For we have not yet succeeded in liberating ourselves morally

and intellectually and spiritually from colonialism.

We are searching for ourselves, and the circumstances in which colonialism came about are such that, after all, there had been, a mingling of races, in our case a biological cross-breeding. There has been not only that, but also the formation of an elite. This elite, of Antilles origin, has been more or less attracted by the master. It his the ways of thought, the reactions, and the ways of life of the master which it has adopted. And it has come about that this elite finds itself cut off from our masses. Our whole history has felt the effect of this. Our whole evolution, more or less chaotic, has felt the effect of this opposition, this duality between the masses and our elite, in its intellectual attitude, even in its mode of expression (they express themselves in French) in its reactions, in its collective representations, which are markedly different, and nearer to those of the former master.

I therefore realised that, in the last analysis, protest would not be in conformity with the dictates of intellectual honesty. And I do not protest. Those who have protested —I heard my friend and colleague Achille speaking of Mr. Césaire's generalisation— he did not cite Haiti, but he might have done. I confess that for us it is a reality. And if we accord a certain value to what is written, it would seem that even our countrymen in the United States do not

escape from that either.

There is a work which has just appeared, Negro Bourgeoisie, whose author, Mr. Benjamin Frazier, is evidently a learned sociologist, in which he points out exactly this sociological phenomenon of the attraction exercised on the elite of the Negro community by the master, whom they tend to imitate. That is normal. And then, in imitating and adopting these attitudes of the master, we find something which may also very well have its biological explanation because, very frequently, this elite is half-caste. A half-caste in whom cross-breeding is perhaps far more extensive. Because, basically, even among ourselves, we are half-castes. It is understood that there has been an intermingling; but there has been a cross-breeding which has been much more accentuated in this elite, and which explains, even biologically, why they are much nearer to the master than the old slaves.

This is a problem which we should be able to consider, in accordance with the spirit of this Congress, with the utmost objectivity and the greatest scientific calm, so as to try and contribute a solution

of a rational nature.

We should not, by a mere affective reaction, want to reject all these realities. All the sociologists who have written about Haiti whatever country they belong to, American sociologists, German sociologists, French sociologists, have all pointed it out.

There is a breach between the head and the trunk. There is a popular culture and a culture of the elite. And it is only thanks to Dr. Price Mars—for we must admit that for some time now there

has been a re-adjustment in the attitude, even of the elite; there were dances of the people which could not be performed in the drawing-rooms, there were popular tunes which were also not played in the drawing rooms—it was, as I say, thanks to the movement of Dr. Mars, who has achieved a sort of moral and intellectual integration, that to-day we see the Haitian elite accepting artistic manifestations of popular origin and recognising them as something national.

For a long time, then, even in our schools, as a result of the training which we had, we were taught that we were rather descendants of the Gauls. It is amazing. And then we were always expected to blush at anything which was Negro. We were full of self-disgust. It is what Dr. Mars calls collective Bovaryism.

This is not merely the work of an elite catalogued, if I may say so, from the point of view of pigmentation. No. There is a different sociological phenomenon there. Initially their skin may have been this or that colour. But those who emerged from the masses and aspired to form part of the elite adopted the modes of thought and the same reactions as the elite. It happens that at this moment, this elite is bilingual. It consists of Negroes and of very light-coloured people who had this attitude, an attitude which was not national. Their whole passion was to make it obvious that they had nothing in common with the popular masses. (Applause.)

### Mr. Césaire :

It is a great honour for me to have been put in the dock to-night by so many speakers. I shall make every effort to give the best. answer I can to the flood of questions which have been put to me.

Quite sincerely, I was very pained to learn what emotions my words had aroused in certain Congress members, particularly among the American Delegation. If any of my expressions schocked you, Gentlemen, I offer you my very sincere apologies individually and personally.

All of us who are here to-night have very different origins. One might say that the only unity of this Congress is its diversity. We have been trained in very diverse disciplines; we come from very different political backgrounds. But I think we can recognise that we are all here among men of good faith.

And, in particular, I have heard opinions advanced in the course of this Congress which are in no way mine. Not at all. And yet none of these opinions has shocked me. Because I think that the Golden Rule of the Congress is to listen to the most diverse opinions, even if, sometimes, they do not seem to us to be justified. In this way, I have heard put forward, and I have listened to, the exposition, the point of view of Christians. I would even say that I was extremely shocked, not by these opinions, but—although I am an atheist myself- by the attitude of the audience when it refused to listen to the message of Pastor Ekolio. I think, in effect, that that was a matter of elementary good behaviour, and that we should be grown-

up enough to be able to bear all truths, wherever they may come

from, and all opinions, whatever they may be.

What I have said does not commit the Congress; it only commits myself; what I have said does not commit the Congress. I am a man of good faith. I try to expound the result of my study of the problems which are common to us. I express my point of view, in accordance with my own conscience. I do not impose this point of view upon others, Certainly, I may be mistaken. I conceive that I still have a great deal to learn—particularly from all those who are taking part in this Congress. But I repeat that there is nothing exclusive in my point of view. And I think you will accord me that liberty which I recognise in others. I earnestly beg you to do so.

Dr. Cook has put me a question. He was very moved by two

things.

First, he said he was extremely moved by a judgment which I passed on American Negroes. In my opinion there was nothing derogatory in that judgment. I merely said that I thought that in my view the situation in which the American Negroes found themselves was not without analogy with a colonial situation.

Once again, I may be wrong, because I am not a specialist on American problems. But it seemed to me that the special position in which you are, in the heart of the great American democracy, was not without analogy with what we know in the colonial countries. Perhaps that is rather looking at it from the outside. At any rate,

that is the impression I have formed.

In any event, if this situation is not typically colonial, there is, all the same, a fact which you cannot deny; it is that this situation, however special it may be, is linked to a specific historical situation. Whether you like it or not, it is linked to the fact that America was, at the beginning of her history, a colonial territory, and that at a given moment, as in the Antilles and as in this Hemisphere, Negroes from Africa were introduced for the needs of the plantations.

In other words, if you are not in a colonial situation, you are, in a situation which, as Senghor just now very rightly said, is a sequel of slavery—and therefore, in the last analysis, a sequel of the colonial regime. And I think that this is undeniable, and is not passing a derogatory judgment on American democracy, to say that slavery has left its traces—which those people are trying to eradicate—but has nevertheless left traces which still persist to-day in the history of the United States.

It seems to me that this phenomenon of racial segregation is very typically a survival, a sequel of slavery, and therefore of the colonialism of the XVII and XVIII centuries... Please.

# The Chairman:

I do not object to your presentation of the subject. But there is one fact; is that we represent a minority of fifteen millions in the midst of a population of 160 million souls. The problem, is therefore not the same as that which arises in the case of Africa.

Mr. Césaire :

Certainly. There is no identity. No. I did not wish to make them identical. It was simply a very broad view, to say that the Negro problem in the United States is a colonial problem. No. I tried in presenting my Paper (which was not exclusively devoted to that question) to ask those present this question; how is it that people who are so different in their origins etc. speak a language which can be understood by all of them? And it seemed to me that the common denominator was the colonial situation, which weighs so heavily upon us at the present moment, but which did also weigh upon you, at a given moment in history, and which, perhaps, at the present moment, was of infinitely less weight, in view of the fact that we had, in origin, a history which was largely common. The situation of the Negroes in the United States cannot be understood if it is divorced from its colonial antecedents.

Secondly, this point having been put into perspective, a question seems to have greatly shocked Dr. Cook —and I must say that the manner in which he formulated his objection, hurt me a little.

He said this: "But, in the end, what am I doing in this outfit? Has culture been a pretext? Have we been led into a trap?" That hurt me a little. Not for myself, I am accustomed to take my own responsibilities. I am sufficiently well known in that respect. But I was a little upset in relation to my friend Alioune Diop and in relation to the organisers of the Congress.

I would not in any event wish anything I have said to involve the responsibility of the Officers and the responsibility of Alioune Diop.

No, dear Dr. Cook, it was not a pretext. I am convinced that the aim pursued by the Officers has *genuinely* been to study and examine in detail all the problems which face Negro culture.

Everyone solves his problems in his own way, with his own convictions, and his own philosophy—and that I can well understand. But in my personal capacity, and with my personal experience, I judged that one could not, in an assembly largely formed of Africans or representatives of colonial peoples, pose the problems of Negro culture without integrating them into the reality which conditions them, namely the colonial context.

And that is so true that I am not the only one to have thought in this way. We have heard the statement by Pastor Ekollo. How did he put the problem, the problem of his Christianity? He himself was obliged to put it in the colonial context.

Consequently, if we are here to go deeply into these problems, we cannot fail, at some given moment, to tackle the question of colonialism.

In any event, I have done it at my own risk and peril. I have done it according to my own means, according to my convictions. What I have said only expresses my own point of view. I should

not like anyone to think, at any given moment, that what I have said should commit the whole of the members of the Congress.

Mr. Davis has put several questions to me, which I should like

to answer.

One of them is linked with the one Dr. Cook has put to me. He tackled me on the question of the colonial state, and, once again he reproached me for having assimilated the state of the American Negroes to a colonial status. I think that this question is linked with the one which was put to me by Dr. Cook, and I have just unfolded my thought on this subject and given him every satisfaction on this

point.

Dr. Cook has reproached me for having, in passing, very lightly scratched Dr. Mead, who is an extremely remarkable American ethnographer, and I must point out that what I said about her is very benign. "Certainly I recognise the good intentions of Dr. Mead; her work is extremely important, but I have no faith at all in the success of her undertaking." I did not in any way think that one could, from without, provoke the evolution of the societies in question. In effect, I think it very possible that a society should change its culture, its civilisation. It seems to me that that is an internal movement, and that the call to modification must come from within and not from without.

That is why I think that the work of UNESCO, however interesting it may be, can, in the present context, only have an extremely limited value.

Mr. Davis has asked me what I finally thought about Malinowski, adding that he had not fully understood the position which I

took up with regard to him.

I have passed my time in rendering homage to him. I thought that he had produced an extremely interesting document on cultural changes. I think that Malinowski has had the merit, by this theory of the selective gift, of making a very interesting contribution to science, a positive contribution to what I call anti-colonialism. In my opinion he has shown admirably that the coloniser never gives his civilisation to the people whom he colonises, so that, in the long run, the coloniser always gets back in return for this gift something which is, unfortunately, more important.

I know very well that on the other hand, there are some of

I know very well that on the other hand, there are some of Malinowski's views which may shock, but in the end I think that there is there a very useful contribution to the study of contacts

between civilisations and the history of cultural changes.

Senghor has put me a question about cultural cross-breeding. He has himself put the question into a perspective with which I am

in entire agreement.

I said that I levelled no sort of malediction of reprobation against the half-caste. I have not said that there is a sort of "original sin" which weighs on the half-caste and that the half-caste will never create a civilisation. And that is what Senghor has so clearly pointed out, that, in effect, cross-breeding is not felt inter-

nally. I certainly said that there is heterogeneity at the outset, externally, but that this diversity is felt internally as homogeneity. From that moment cross-breeding no longer exists.

When one speaks of cross-breeding, that is like something which remains external, something, therefore which is not integrated. Therefore, if the thing is not integrated, there is no true civilisation.

Then I turn straight away to Achille's question, because it is

connected.

I turn straight away to the reproach which he has levelled against me, and which I recognise is justified. He says, in effect, that he believes in the existence of a tendency towards systematisation and generalisation. That is true, on all the evidence. recognise it. That is almost a condition of this type of work (unfortunately). It is quite obvious that we wanted to draw up syntheses. For that purpose, we did not begin by exhausting all the analyses. One is sometimes obliged to exaggerate this feature or that, sometimes to suppress one or another. That is true. I was much more concerned to bring out the general movement of things, rather than to deal exhaustively with particular situations.

Achille has put the problem which was the subject of questions by Mercer Cook and Mr. Davis; the colonial situation—about

which I have already explained myself sufficiently.

Achille has spoken of cross-bred culture and pure culture. But there I think there is a slight misunderstanding. A slight misunderstanding in form.

I did not in any way wish to oppose cross-bred culture and pure culture. I did not in any way mean to say that there were civilisations or cultures which might appear to be cross-bred, or which might appear to be pure. There is a confusion between the social fact

and the biological fact.

In effect, one can oppose cross-bred races to a pure race, so far as a pure race can exist, which I do not believe. But one cannot oppose a cross-bred civilisation to a pure-bred civilisation. That is not what I meant. I explained myself just now; I spoke of heterogeneity lived as homogeneity. In consequence, it is no longer in any way a question of the purity of a civilisation, because, obviously, there could not be a pure civilisation. There are no pure civilisa-There are civilisations of borrowings.

English and French civilisation have been mentioned. One could equally have cited Greek civilisation, formed out of autochthonous Greek elements, formed out of elements moulded into it, Cretan, etc., etc. One would never end. In consequence, there is

really nothing there to divide us.

Achille says to me, "Yes, but in that case, is style really a cha-

racteristic of culture and of civilisation?"

I think that style is a characteristic of civilisation. One may say that the English have no common style, but, for my part, when I see a man walking in a certain way in the street, I say to myself, "Ah, that's an Englishman." (Laughter) I do not know if it is the

same thing from an architectural point of view; I know nothing about that. I do not say that they have not done some very great things from the point of view of painting; I know nothing about it. They have written some extremely remarkable books. Their English novels are certainly something. To adopt a certain tone, to choose a certain form of presentation, all that —and we must not laugh at it—all that is part of culture.

Culture is everything. Culture is the style of dress, the way of holding your head, the way of walking, the way of tying your tie—it is not only writing books and building houses. It is everything. And I think that the ethnographers who are here—Mr. Paul, for example—will not contradict me; at the present moment this conception is the one which sociologists and ethnographers have of

culture.

There is no doubt, then, that there is an English style of things. When I see a motor-car, I know very well, from its particular style, that it is English. In consequence, style is an indelible mark. Style is the indelible mark of this people on the reality which has been written by that people.

There is a French style. I do not know if it is White or Negro. There is an American style. And I therefore think that every

culture has its own proper style.

These are the few answers which I wanted to give. They are

extremely inadequate, extremely imperfect.

I am sorry, there was one extremely important question which was put to me, which I nearly overlooked, that of Richard Wright. I did not entirely grasp it; I did not have the headphones on at that moment.

The Chairman: (away from the microphone)...

# Mr. Césaire :

Very well. If further details are wanted, I am at your disposal.

### The Chairman:

I think we have completed the Agenda for this evening. In other words, the questions have been put on the Papers read during the day.

The Session ended at 11.50 p.m.

# Culture and creativity

In every community there is a growing awareness that culture is vitally important, that cultures have suffered from various retarding and destructive influences, and that the hostile forces which inhibit cultural development must be opposed. Therefore, I have flattered myself that even these casual notes, arising from attempts to add perspectives to personal involvement, may have some value.

# What is Culture?

A.P. Elkin (1), whose penetrating studies of Australian aborigines are well known, says that "Culture is a time-process. It is the stream which flows from the past through the structured channel of society, giving it substance and meaning; and its members, significance, bias and purpose".

Melville J. Herskovits (2), whose great reputation is founded on his exceptional knowledge of the cultures of Negro peoples, defines a culture as "the way of life of a people, while a society is an organised aggregate of individuals who follow a given way of life. In still simpler terms a society is composed of people; the way they behave is their

culture".

This definition usefully stresses the difference, and the connexion, between a society and its culture. For a culture is not an abstraction which comes mysteriously in "contact", or in "conflict", with another culture. It is a dynamic, integrative totality of beliefs, customs and skills produced by people, diffused by people, and drawn upon by people to enrich their personalities and ease their relations with each other in the particular societies in which they live. It contains the myths, codes, conventions and techniques without which social living is impossible.

Indeed, it is a characteristic of all human groups, unlike all animal ones, that they possess cultures which normally meet all their complicated needs. For this reason all societies resist cultural

<sup>(1)</sup> Man and His Cultural Heritage. Australian Journal of Science, 121: 1-28 (supplement), 1949.

<sup>(2)</sup> Man and His Works. New York (Knopf), 1948, p. 29.

infiltrations, especially when they are introduced by invaders and exploiters, though they will modify and adopt those that are useful. A culture could not be stable, nor could it grow, if resistance and transformed acceptance were not part of the cultural process.

It follows, since a culture is inclusive, that it is illogical, though it may be discreet, for a cultural magazine or a gathering of artists (3) to say that it is not concerned with "isms", that politics is not the business of the artist. In spite of this discretion, I have never known a "purely cultural" conference at which delegates have not clashed over "isms" for there can be no productive appraisal of cultural problems, and no vigorous affirmations of cultural values, without associated evaluations of the effects of political situations, economic exploitation, industrial developments and religious impacts. The timid make no contribution to such discussions other than clarifying the causes of their timidity.

### The Structure of Culture

A culture consists of a large number of groups of elements, which give it a series of characteristic patterns. In a small and compact society its members will be familiar with most of its significant patterns, but the most learned man in the smallest society will never know all its cultural elements.

The cohesion of a society depends on the universality, within it, of a number of essential values. Certain beliefs, attitudes and practices must be held in common for the smooth functioning of a society, and the cultural process accordingly ensures that all its normal members are able to learn these binding essentials. Their function sug-

gests that they can be called conjunctives.

Myths are conjunctives of special interest to the artist, for they are themselves works of art. They are the products, expressed mostly in poetry, drama and the dance, of imaginative and transforming attempts to explain and control phenomena, natural or invented, in constructive and satisfying terms that find validity by involving gods, exceptional persons, or superior ways of life. Thus, they help individuals to deal with fear, frustration and perplexity, to cope with the present by reliance on the successful techniques and interventions of the past, and to work for the future united by faith in their system, traditions, and themselves.

A society also contains values and skills that are usually created and perpetuated by small groups of specialists, such as medicine men, potters or weavers, but shared by large numbers of their fellows. In a small society a particular product may be made by very few specialists, but it will be used by many; and those who prefer an alternative will base their choice on an appreciation of both. The

<sup>(3)</sup> My use of this term includes all those who are engaged in any form of creative activity.

function of these values and skills suggests that they can be called associatives, for they join people together in activities and appreciations. They form, with the conjunctives, the foundations of a culture.

The other elements of a culture are those which alter and enrich cultural patterns by enlarging the areas of choice. In a well-balanced society they promote vigour by opposing inventions from within and borrowings from other cultures to its relatively stable foundations. Thus, their function is to change and enlarge, and for this

reason they can be called alteratives (4).

Morris Opler (5) also includes in a culture "a limited number of dynamic affirmations" which he calls themes. These themes, balanced by counter-themes and expressed as patterns when formalised, help to control behaviour and stimulate cultural activity, as they represent the most basic ideas of a group. Not much is known about them, partly because the clear-cut definition of key themes is a defeating task, as is seen in Opler's own attempt to list the twenty which condition the culture of the Lipan Apache Indians of the American Southwest, but that cultures are strikingly influenced by special conjunctives or themes, many of which are common to other cultures, and that themes are of fundamental importance to the artist, seems to be beyond doubt.

Many patterns, for example, are created by the theme of reverence for old age and its counter insistence on the social virtues of youth; or by that of the superiority of men and the compensatory qualities of women; or by that of the dangers of evil intentions and the counter-theme of a social inheritance and discipline which raises one above fear. It is easy to multiply such examples, but difficult to state them in a way that analyses their complexity. They have so many aspects and relations, each of which changes in time and place, and the eyes that see them have so many ways of seeing them, that they elude the scientific method; but it is possible for the artist

to reveal what the scientist can only try to catalogue.

### The Dialectics of Culture

In the so-called western world, for which the odd euphemism "free world" has become popular, the justification of internal and external exploitation has created an emphasis on the invigorating effects of "individual enterprise". Therefore, the cultural process is sometimes explained in terms of elements added by the achieve-

<sup>(4)</sup> The terminology proposed here is derived from Ralph Linton's scheme for cultural analysis in *The Study of Man* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1936). He divides culture into a core (foundations), consisting of universals (conjunctives) and specialities (associatives), surrounded by a fluid zone of alternatives (alteratives). As his terms have been criticised, and lead him along paths very different to those I follow, I have thought it best not to employ them.

<sup>(5)</sup> Themes as Dynamic Forces in Culture. American Journal of Sociology, 51: 198-206, 1945.

ments of individuals. But individuals are products of their culture and elements are not merely added to it by individual genius or enterprise, though the importance of individuals is evident. Cultures are made, enlarged and transmitted by individuals reacting to each other and to social needs — the needs of groups of individuals.

This interaction explains why inventions always appear when the condition of a society requires the modification of old methods or the development of techniques that seem to be startlingly new, though they are never as new as they seem, nor as revolutionary as verbal elasticity allows us to claim. In other words, inventions and individual achievements are part of the cultural process. It is a dialectical process of action and reaction, of the conflict and resolution of opposites, of the continuous breaking down and building up we call growth; and a culture, as we have seen, is structured accordingly. It need scarcely be added that when we reduce its interwoven complexities to models, as I have tried to do in these notes, we merely try to assist comprehension without depicting realities.

The dialectical nature of the cultural process becomes clearer if we give some further consideration to the three main groupings of cultural elements. The conjunctives can only be known to all the members of a society because various devices ensure their transmission, normally without significant change, from one generation to the next. Yet these foundations of a culture are not static. Minor variations accumulate and become modifiers; some associatives expand into conjunctives; and conjunctives that are successfully ques-

tioned break up into associatives.

A religious schism, for instance, does not affect the conjunctive quality of many of the old religious values, but an increasing number become associatives. A similar disintegration takes place when a new religion is forced upon a people; and the documents of conquest suggest that invaders have always been aware of the rôle of religion in maintaining their own cultural forms and reducing the resistance of the invaled. Among its more conspicuous effects is the promotion of a class of convert collaborators who convince themselves that, in finding a supposedly superior faith and greater proximity to the victors, they are in the advance guard of their society. They are regarded otherwise by those who know that introduced religions strike at the very heart of a culture. That is why religious revivalism, and hostility to missionaries, is a feature of the rising nationalisms of today.

The associatives, as already indicated, augment the conjunctives in giving a compact culture its characteristics and capacity to survive, but their development contrasts markedly with the comparative stability of the conjunctives. Old values which have grown to the point of intracultural iniversality become conjunctives; disputed conjunctives become associatives; inventions, which become more frequent according to social pressures and the maintenance of additional specialists, undergo a testing period as alteratives; approved inventions and borrowings from other cultures become associa-

tives; and, as the artist is a kind of inventor, inspired works of art also increase the associatives and sometimes become conjunctives. Thus, the growth of a culture, without upsetting its balance, arises from the interaction of its elements.

The alteratives form, so to speak, a region in which the continuous operation of choice, and the support of choice by usefulness, makes it a testing ground for inventions and the much larger number of introduced or borrowed elements. Some die out through opposition or disregard; others exist somewhat precariously because they serve powerful persons or coteries; many grow by approval and into associatives.

The assimilation of successful alteratives is usually a slow process, but it can sometimes be almost dramatically rapid, especially when increaed sources of energy, and so of control over nature, are offered. The addition of horsepower to manpower by the introduction of the horse to the Plains Indians of America is a notable example: it so transformed their way of life that a great new "horse complex" of cultural traits was developed. Considerable cultural changes have also been brought about by the introduction of quite simple tools, such as the steel knife, to communities which previously lacked them.

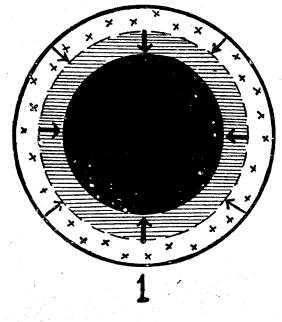
### Pre-Industrial and Industrial Cultures

The cultural process so far outlined is typical of pre-literate societies, but it also works similarly in closely knit pre-industrial societies. Most societies are still pre-industrial, but all are, in greater or lesser degree, affected by the march of industrialisation and the consequences of exploitation.

Nevertheless, those societies which have served industrialisation without becoming markedly industrialised themselves remain relatively compact and culturally well-balanced. Their cultures are characterised by a solid foundation of conjunctives and associatives in a functional relationship with each other and with alteratives (figure 1). The trend of the cultural process, though overweighted with the elements of change, remains more or less normal and adjustable.

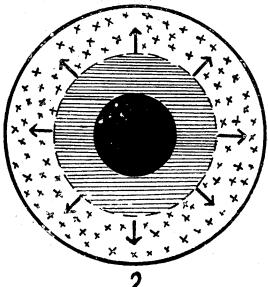
The cultures of industrial capitalist societies, on the other hand, are evidently in advanced stages of disintegration. Their religions are divided into denominations which cannot fill their churches, and the basic claims of all are learnedly denied by groups of sceptics, pedants and atheists. Consequently, since their ethical values are derived from religious beliefs, the old morality is not merely disputed in all its aspects, but abused in practice by large numbers of people whose behaviour is more often connected with corruption than with opposing standards. All this is reflected in a disregard for life itself which fattens on the distorted efforts of scientists and the justifications ol puny-minded prelates turned devil's advocates.

In short, in such a society the cultural process has become reversed or very nearly so. It is dominated by a vast jungle of altera-



#### FIGURE 1

A smodels of a hypothetical growing culture. There is a large core of conjunctives (black) and associatives (hatched), balanced by alteratives which become associatives if approval leads to increasing usage or appreciation. Thus, the trend (arrows) is towards the enlargement of the core.



### FIGURE 2

Here a culture is imagined in which the excessive growth of alteratives has reversed the cultural process. The trend is towards further disintegration of the conjunctives and associatives, but forces are also released which seek to restore the harmony of the cultural process.

tives (figure 2), which spreads as the foundations crumble and material demands and competitive trade stimulate more and more inventions and adaptations. Sects, coteries, split loyalties, individualism, contempt for tradition, moral debasement, lost skills, artistic poverty, and an overwhelming number of everyday choices are its main characteristics. They produce, and are enlarged by, apathy, insensitivity, irresponsibility, aggressiveness, perverted sexuality, neuroses, decreasing communicability, and incessant appeals to return to spiritual values and the standards of the good old days.

The coloured artist has sensed, and been disturbed by, this situation for some time. Twenty years ago Paul Robeson (6), noting that artistic achievements in Europe had declined "as abstract intellectualism penetrated deeper and deeper into the people", revea-

led it in a paragraph:

"As Western civilisation advances, its members find themselves in the paradoxical position of being more and more in control of their environment, yet more and more at the mercy of it. The man who accepts Western values absolutely finds his creative faculties becoming so warped and stunted that he is almost completely dependent on external satisfactions; and the moment he becomes frustrated in his search for these, he begins to develop neurotic symptoms, to feel that life is not worth living and, in chronic cases, to take his own life. This is a severe price to pay even for such achievements as those of Western science."

It is a frightening picture, for de-cultured people, swollen with material power and experimenting with weapons of mass destruction, are dangerous people. But fortunately their dangerousness is restrained by their own sense of danger and disunity, and it may well be that the western nations have moved into the stage of lunatic displays of might which they can no longer translate into the action they threaten. Truly did Lao-tse say: "Is a man strongly armed? Then shall he not win."

### The Reintegration of Cultures

One of the consequences of disintegrating cultures in our day is that good people, helped by cultural records, seek to preserve and revive certain skills and activities. They deserve gratitude, for they provide important satisfactions and contribute to the restoration of the cultural process when its mechanism is eventually repaired or rebuilt.

We have seen this task attempted in many countries. Fascism sought cohesiveness in cultural revivalism, and Nazism took this approach further by myth-making, or rather by reviving some domestic myths, on a grander scale. Both failed, in spite of almost total militarisation, for a complex of reasons centred around the culture

<sup>(6) &</sup>quot;Primitives", The New Statesman, 8 August 1936.

builders were poor workmen, and that any society which aspires to

glory through calculated inhumanity can only end in defeat.

The communist revolutions succeeded because they were in fact revolutions; and it takes a revolution, as William Morris foretold in News from Nowhere, to restore and quicken the cultural process. For a revolution does what reformist socialism cannot do: it promotes inspiring myths, as Christianity did in Roman times, which unite its supporters in common beliefs, loyalties, purposes and efforts. In our own time we have seen how the peoples of the Soviet Union have been bound together by a common ethos, in harmony with the policy of cultural autonomy, which has survived error, despotic criminality, and attacks from within and without.

This is common knowledge. Unfortunately it is not equaly well known that the communist revolutions have the advantage of not having to cope with cultural disintegration comparable to that of industrial countries of the West. It is a very real advantage which should be considered in explaining why the "backward" countries have preceded, and will continue to precede, the technologically

advanced nations in establishing communism.

The rising nationalisms of the Afro-Asian peoples share the same advantage and the comparable inspiration of struggle against injustice. Their cultures have been assaulted, retarded and robbed (if we could see the major treasures stolen from Asia and Africa in one town it would take days of wandering through several giant buildings), but by the nature of their exploitation they have retained much of their foundations, while poverty and lack of industrialisation have prevented more than a relatively slight growth of alteratives. Moreover, in their efforts to free themselves from colonialism, insistence on cultural history began cultural revivals that have grown impressively since independence was secured.

It is not, as I have suggested, sufficiently realised how much the strength of the communist, and other newly independent, nations lies in the vitality of their cultural processes; and, for the same reason, the danger of the reversal of cultural processes is at best only dimly understood. Their material achievements have been so warmly praised (7), and "the scientific attitude" is so entrenched in them, that it is difficult for their planners to appreciate that this

is where the danger lies.

They know that, in raising living standards and increasing cultural opportunities, rapid and extensive industrialisation is imperative; but, on the whole, they seem not bo know that the success of economic planning, without perspectives and controls from cultural planning and research, can disintegrate the cultures they have worked so hard to build. This is inevitable if inventions, adapted

<sup>(7)</sup> In this connexion lyricism easily becomes mysticism. The London Daily Worker, for instance, recently published an article by Harry Pollitt on Chinese progress under the headline "Outstanding Miracle of Our Time" — which is not as flattering to Chinese efforts as its editor intended.

borrowings and prosperity — and consequently a vast increase of choices and coteries, of which we have had much evidence lately —

are allowed to owerveight the alteratives.

I am not forgetting that all cultures are continuously changing, nor that the stresses and strains of a disintegrated culture bring about that "fresh vision of venture and an inspiring myth" (Elkin) upon which a new cycle of cultural development can begin. Nevertheless, the enlargement of the sense of process, which would restrain the production of alteratives in an industrialising state, demands the cooperation of the most forward-looking brains, including those that the arts, social sciences and movements that seem to be "against the tide of progress" can supply.

## Separatism and Collectivism

We tend to think in terms of differences and similarities, of separateness and unity, that can be mutually exclusive but need not be so. It is possible to reconcile the belief that one's own culture is the best in the world (as indeed it is for those who belong to it) with respect for other cultures and a feeling of unity with many of them. The good Englishman is also a good European; the petty Englishman's nationalistic stomach is upset the moment he boards the Channel steamer. The good Negro feels that there is a Negro world with which he wants to be productively identified; the black arriviste, who is more than a little afraid of discovering that he is a Negro after all, asserts that there is obviously no such thing as a unifying Negroness, since Negro groups are divided by language, customs, geography and political affiliations.

What are the facts? Cultures are resistant and distinct, but cultures also acquire similarities through comparable influencing circumstances. The nearer they are to each other the more similarities they share, the relationships being so evident that they can be grouped into culture areas, of which there are remarkably few in the world. In Africa, excluding the Mediterranean strip, there are at the most nine culture areas. Egypt is one of them and its continental margins meet four areas which carry reciprocal contacts beyond their own borders. Those who dislike the implications of Egyptian Negroness, as emphasised by Cheikh Anta Diop (8), should bear

these relationships in mind.

The African languages belong to three stocks, excluding Arabic and the other introduced Hamitic and Semitic languages. But the Negro-African languages, according to L. Homburger (9), "represent varied modifications of Egyptian dialects, adopted at different periods by various peoples in touch with Egyptian civilisation." Later (10), in again stressing that "all Negro-African languages have

<sup>(8)</sup> Nations Nègres et Culture. Paris (Editions Présence Africaine), 1955.

<sup>(9)</sup> The Negro-African Languages. London (Routledge), 1949. (10) Indians in Africa. Man, 56: 18-21, 1956.

a common basis", he points out how much the Egyptian language owes to Dravidian migrations, thus adding philological support to the opinion held by H. V. Vallois (11) and other anthropologists

that the black peoples of Africa came from South India.

This evidence of linguistic unity is of much importance to Pan-Africanism and it will become still more important when the freedom of Africa raises the language question in new perspectives. Together with other evidence it also denies the elderly view, perpetuated by Sonia Cole (12), of the early Egyptians as an enclosed and aloof people who were "not enterprising explorers", and who "had no desire to diffuse their civilisation amongst their barbaric neighbours".

In the New World the majority of the African ancestors of its Negro populations came from two West African culture areas and their influences are still strong (13), especially where "togetherness", enlarged in Haiti by early independence, has favoured their survival. In the United States the feeling of being Negroes, which urges more interest in Africa than is admitted by a certain type of critic, is in conflict with the assimilation process: even those Negroes who can afford the "American way of life" have the discomfort of

knowing that they remain Negroes.

There are American Negroes who realise, too, that they must be separate before they can belong, that the Negro minority must develop in Negroess into an honoured place in the American scene. James Weldon Johnson, a pioneer of the Negro resurgence whose name belongs with the truly great men of America, said this on more than one occasion. In his mellow autobiography (14) he foresaw that the Negro would "add a tint to America's complexion and put a perceptible permanent wave in America's hair"; but he hoped that in the process of assimilation "the Negro will not merely be sucked up but, through his own advancement and development, will go in on a basis of equal partnership".

And there is certainly time enough for this advancement; for there are no indications that its growing Negro population of fifteen millions or so can be fully integrated within a capitalist America, though more and more Americanisation will increase the illusion, and the casualties, of assimilation. In the not so long run, especially as America is not providentially immunised against socialism and the infectiousness of Pan-Africanism, a forceluf number of American

<sup>(11)</sup> Les Races Humaines. Paris (Presses Universitaires de France), 1951.

<sup>(12)</sup> The Prehistory of East Africa. London (Penguin Books), 1954.

<sup>(13)</sup> M. J. Herskovits: The Myth of the Negro Past. New York (Harper), 1941. This great book is not popular with some American Negroes, but it is imperative reading for those interested in the cultural backgrounds of the New World Negroes and the survival of African characteristics. Its study should be associated with that of Black Folk — Then and Now (New York: Holt, 1945), an introductory cultural history of the Negro peoples by W.E.B. Du Bois, the doyen of Negro scholars and the father of the Pan-African movement.

<sup>(14)</sup> Along This Way. New York (Viking Press) 1937.

Negroes may prefer autonomy and closer relations with Negro groups elsewhere in the New World and un Africa. This is not, of course, a prediction, but it is a recognition of possibility in the "changing world"

which Americans are so fond of talking about.

The Negroes of the Americas do not complete the picture of the Negro world. In a basic sense the aborigines of Australia are also Negroes, especially if we accept the reasonable theory that the aborigines and the Negroes of Africa stemmed from the same sources in South India. There are black peoples in Asia too, some of whom are the results of Afro-Asian relations within historical times. These relations have been specially close between the peoples of the east coast of Africa and the west coast of India, as Homburger (op. cit., 1956) has helped us to realise; but his observations on Indians in Africa should be balanced by information on Africans in India.

It would be at least as interesting, for Negroes have made There are hints of important contributions to Indian development. these contributions in references to the old state of Janjira, some fifty miles to the south of Bombay, as the "Negro State"; and in the common use of the word muvalli (from the Arabic mowalled or mulatto) on the west coast. Negroes from the West Indies have also found a place in India within the Eurasian community, to which they have added Negroid characteristics, some common West Indian names (such as Johnson), and various achievements, especially in the field of sport.

It follows, even from this perfunctory outline, that the concept of Negro unity has foundations that go beyond the desire to stand together against a common enemy; and this unity will be strengthened (not weakened, as those suppose who have not grasped the significance of events since the liberation of India) when colonialism has been liquidated everywhere. Indeed, Negro cultures have so much in common that their differences remind one, with due regard for the dangers of analogic thinking helped by models, of the differences between circles, ellipses, hyperbolae and parabolae, which are shown in projective geometry not only to have properties in common but to be the same sort of curve.

Ideally, therefore, Negro cultures can grow in freedom while beginning to merge, for with every extension of a group some of its distinctiveness disappears, just as the common area of overlapping circles can itself grow into a circle (figure 3). The common area produced by the overlapping of different shapes can reach considerable proportions too, without achieving unity with any of the overlapping shapes (figure 4), and the parallel applies to many disparate

groups that have overlapped under conditions of hostility.

These models seem to me to encourage the thought, perhaps because I am too addicted to pictorialising ideas, that the possible long-term unity of a group of cultures implies the probable success of their early federation. The translation of probability into reality needs above all things a passionate, over-riding, impatient desire to secure it; for if a significant number of representative Negroes want it they will get it, despite the protestations of fearful whites who know that groupings are greater than groups, and the whining of Negroes who have found it profitable to sing the songs their masters like to hear.

But passion must be given dimensions by knowledge—and as the movement grows it must subsidise the production of that knowledge. A great deal is already known about Negro cultures, but it needs to be collated, revaluated, extended and synthesised by Negro scholars controlled by objective tempers and historical perspectives, though inflamed by their Negroness. There are already enough Negro scholars to promise that the ways of conducting this great venture in purposive learning would soon be found; and new political realities in Africa and Asia offer prospects of means that did no exist before.

# The Problem of Language

An advantage in closer relations between the Negro peoples is that most of their intelligentsia can communicate in English or French. This advantage also creates a problem, for a language is more than a dynamic system of patterned sounds and signs for expressing needs, facts and thoughts. It is the repository of a society's knowledge of itself and of other societies, and the major instrument for enlarging and transmitting that knowledge. It is, as Franz Boas put it (15), "a reflection of the state of culture and follows in its development the demands of culture;" for there is no language which cannot meet the needs of its society no matter how complicated its advances may be.

The symbolic and symbolising character of language has been stressed by Ernst Cassirer in many works. According to him (16) "Language and myth stand in an original and indissoluble correlation with one another, from which they both emerge but gradually as independent elements. They are two diverse shoots from the same parent stem, the same impulse of symbolic formulation, springing from the same basic mental activity, a concentration and heightening of simple sensory experience. In the vocables of speech and in primitive mythic figurations, the same inner process finds its consummation: there are both resolutions of an inner tension, the representation of subjective impulses and excitations in definite objective forms and figures."

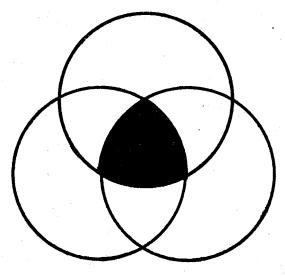
In fact, words, especially those expressing qualities and beliefs, are highly charged with symbolic content and fine shades of meaning, so that ways of interpretation are fostered which largely limit the things we know to the words with which we know them... And this

<sup>(15)</sup> Quoted from D. Bidney: On the Philosophical Anthropology of Ernst Cassirer and its Relation to the History of Anthropological Thought. In P.A. Schlipp (editor): *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*. Evanston, Illinois (Library of Living Philosophers), 1949, pp. 467-544.

<sup>(16)</sup> Language and Myth (trans. S.K. Langer), New York (Herper), 1946, p. 88.

### FIGURE 3

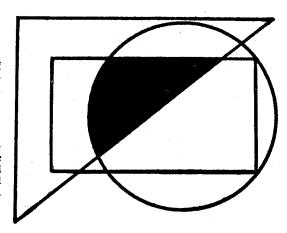
The overlapping of similar shapes creates a common area (black) which continued overlapping can increase to the point of complete unity.



# 3

### FIGURE 4

The overlapping of dissimular shapes also creates a common area (black) which continued overlapping would enlarge, but in an irregular manner and never to the point of completely uniting all three shapes. The cultural analogies, which should not be carried too far, are noted in the text.



word-knowledge is, of course, intracultural: there are no exact synonyms in other languages. We might think that the Greek men and the Latin luna mean the same thing, but Cassirer (17) reminds us that they "do not express the same intention or concept". The Greek word stresses the function of the moon in measuring time, while the

Latin word denotes its brightness.

The intracultural quality of words, it need scarcely be added, is a major factor in promoting unity of meaning within the group. The word fixes the essential meaning and it is not radically altered by later qualifications, or apparently different usages. "Time" retains its quality of imparting the notion of succession, whether we use it in praising the performance of an orchestra or a watch. "Race" embodies the concept of biologically inherited qualities, virtues and likenesses peculiar to a distinct group of living things, and we do not alter its essence when we apply it to a contest on the track between men or horses, since such a race is a test of biological inheritance and Therefore, it is idle for those who like such terms as the "Negro race" to assert, when they cannot deny the complaint that human groups today are not races, that they are not implying peculiar biological qualities, for the biological implications of the word "race" cannot be separated from it.

These considerations seem to lead to the conclusion that the language problems of the coloured peoples can only be solved, when much insight, determination and "in-group" feeling are brought to

their solution, along the following lines:

Groups which have their own languages must be encouraged to develop them freely, fully and without reservations about the advantages of education in another language more suited to "the tempo of the modern world". Experience in the Soviet Union and China has justified this approach, though I remain to be convinced that the replacement of Chinese ideographic writing by alphabetic writing is a development, as is the simplicafition of characters, and not imposition by scientific planners which may do cultural harm. Languages cannot, of course, grow naturally under foreign domination, but scholars and writers can do much preparation for the day

when oppressed cultures are free.

The language problems of uprooted groups who have practically lost their own languages are much difficult, especially as circumstances have prevented the transformation of their acquired languages beyond the levels of "pidgin" and patois to those of advanced dialects turning into languages. It is evident such groups must continue to use the languages they know, but it seems clear that knowledge of the conventional forms should not be allowed to impede the growth of dialects; for in the long run European languages in non-European surroundings will be transformed into advanced dialects capable of serving the creative writer as well as the needs of communication.

<sup>(17)</sup> Essay on Man. New Haven (Yale University Press), 1944, p. 134.

Meanwhile, it is the lot of the coloured writer in this position to see his society in the terms of language which, even when it is the only language he knows, is neither his own nor the country's to which he belongs. His thought-patterns, responses, values and "world perspectives" are tied to the forms of a language that has grown with another culture. He is not part of the scene, and the ways of symbolisation, which produced the language; and the language is foreign to the scene in which he has his being, though he may be viewing it from one of those metropolitan hot-houses in which the Lotus and the Beautiful Savage are cultivated.

At worst he becomes corrupt. At best he remains a deprivedperson tormented by his awareness of deprival. He tries to clothe the feelings, impressions and ideas aroused by his environment in the words, rhythms and ways of expression belonging to another; or he makes an effort to gain atmosphere and acquire greater flexibility by conveying the feel of dialect. Occasionally he does not have to try: he recites personal experiences or folktales with a spontaneity unimpeded by grammar and punctuation—and the boys of Bohemia

hail him as a fresh, amusing and exotic genius.

This statement of creative disability, which I share with many others, is neither a criticism nor an argument against trying to master an instrument made for other music. Obviously, we must do the best we can with what we have, but in such circumstances there is all the greater need for inderstanding the difficulties and estimating the results. It is a weakness of many coloured writers that they do not appreciate the over-balancing of form invariably produced by a cultivated manner, or the ease with which conventional fluency becomes a mask for superficiality.

### The Rôle of the Artist

The artist is a special kind of inventor, a myth-maker who creates according to the depth, quality and timelessness of his belonging, and the fulness of his care for the artist's functions and responsibilities.

The supreme myth-maker has always been the poet (18), but he has largely lost his status as the recorder of his age. The Arabs, writes Ibn Khaldun (19), "considered poetry to be the noblest of all forms of discourse. They made it the depository of their knowledge and history, the witness to their virtues and vices, the storehouse for the greater portion of their scientific ideas and wisdom." The Greeks had the same view: for Aristotle poetry was the distilled essence of history.

<sup>(18)</sup> The word "poet" means "myth-maker".

<sup>(19)</sup> M. G. de Slane: Les Prolégomènes d'Ibn Khaldoun. Paris, 1868, vol. 3, p. 367. De Slane's translation of the Prolegomena is also indispensable to students of racial attitudes and the cultural history of the Negro, as I have tried to show in Phylon, 13: 107-119, 1952.

In other words, peoples spoke through their poets, for the materials of poetry were the ideas and histories of people. So poets moved among the people, inspiring and being inspired; and the people kept their names and words alive from generation to generation, as the Arabs have kept alive the songs of Antara (20), the great pre-Islamic poet and warrior who asserted that "Night is my complexion, but day is my emblem... and I will prove that I am the Phœnix of the age."

Thus, the relationship between the poet and the people gave him an assured audience in his day and beyond, but the problem of the contemporary artist is to find this productive relationship at a level which keeps him artistically and materially alive. Without it he dries up altogether, or drifts into the illusion of vitality by producing for a more prosperous audience, instead of working within his community. Coloured unity can help to save coloured artists from this fate, until socialism gives them the kind of security Chinese artist have found.

Afro-Asian unity, in the spirit of Bandoeng and the Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, should also quicken the robust and responsible criticism so necessary to the maturing of artists and the appreciation of art. It would speed the clearance of rubbish and the establishment of standards; it would illuminate the understanding that art is partisan because it is participant, that the greatness of a work of art depends on its creator's roots in his society and the extent to which he comprehends, dialectically and historically, his interactions with it.

Richard Wright (21) has told us what the comprehension of partisanship involves. Negro writers, he says, "must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not in order to encourage them, but in order to change and transcend them. They must accept the concept of nationalism because, in order to transcend it, they must And a nationalist spirit in Negro writing possess and understand it. means a nationalism carrying the highest possible pitch of social consciousness. It means a nationalism that knows its origins, its limitations; that is aware of the dangers of its position; ... a nationalism whose reason for being lies in the simple fact of self-possession and the consciousness of the interdependence of people... The Negro writer who seeks to function as a purposeful agent has a serious responsibility. In order to... depict Negro life in all of its manifold and intricate relationships, a deep, informed, and complex consciousness is necessary; a consciousness which draws for its strength upon the fluid lore a great people, and moulds this lore with the concepts that move and direct the forces of history today..."

It is a comment on our times that Mr. Wright no longer accepts this analysis, at least in so far as the American Negro writer is con-

<sup>(20)</sup> Dover: The Black Knight. Phylon, 15: 41-57, 177-189, 1954.

<sup>(21)</sup> Blueprint for Negro Writing. New Challenge, Fall 1937.

cerned, but I remain grateful to him for it. It helped my thinking when I first read it in New York nearly twenty years ago, and the notes offered here indicate that it is still worthy of consideration, not only by American Negro artists, but by all other coloured artists as well.

At any rate I shall continue to believe that the content of coloured life must be interpreted and given new dimensions by profoundly conscious coloured artists. It is an indescribably rich content, for wherever there are coloured peoples there is, in addition to challenging problems, a pulsing, pervading folkart rooted in myth and magic, in mass imagery and social understanding, of which the Negro spirituals, the Haitain "primitives", and the Afro-Asian peasant arts are examples. Indeed, coloured artists are surrounded by the living classicism for which western artists are pining, and that they can turn it to good account, as James Weldon Johnson did in God's Trombones and Sterling Brown in Southern Road, has often been shown. They have the added intercultural advantages, too, of ressemblances in ideology, myth and circumstance woven into the Afro-Asian determination to be free from "the insult of dwelling in a puppet's world."

### Art and Not Art

Art, in the perspectives of this discussion, is intracultural. It brings ideas, intentions and potentialities from the depths of a culture (figure 5) to the level of expression, not as set patterns, but as images which reveal the conflict and resolution of themes and motivations which urge development, make history, and unite us with history. These transformed and transforming images are the projections of personal fulfilment through intense participation. They enlarge and change the understanding that people have of themselves, other people, and the whole progression of history and nature. And because they are images of process, and process is unitary, they move outwards from intracultural confines to the pattern levels of other cultures.

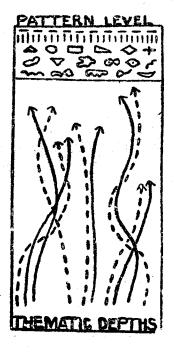
Obviously, then, the deeps of a culture is not fishing ground for foreigners or isolated natives. The foreigner, or the native who has become a foreigner, can make successful efforts to know its pattern levels, but he can never make it wholly his culture. He can identify so sensitively that he can begin to think like the native; he can even go a long way, as J.P. Beaglehole (22) requires, towards thinking with the native's prejudices; but he will remain confined to the pattern levels. He will be able usefully to report and interpret, but he will not be able to create.

He will remain the outsider looking in. "Can any one", asks Virginia Woolf in one of her books of essays, "believe that the

<sup>(22)</sup> Is International Understanding Possible? The Listener, 43: 367-368, 1950.

novels of Henry James were written by a man who had grown up in the society which he describes, or that his criticism of English writers was written by a man who had read Shakespeare without any sense of the Atlantic Ocean, and two or three hundred years on the far side of it, separating his civilisation from ours?" It is a most pertinent comment, for James was a writer of delicate awareness, born to the English tongue and a highly Anglicised heritage. who loved England and was exposed for many years to its social and intellectual climate.

The limitation of intercultural communication to pattern levels is a mechanism of the cultural process that actually ensures the



#### FIGURE 5

A « visual aid » supplementing the discussion on themes and counter-themes, and the rôle of the artist in expressing them.

spread of cultures. For, as the pattern levels grow, there are increasing opportunities, without the confusions of having to deal with intangibles, for intercultural knowledge and exchanges. Nevertheless, there are people who do not like being shut out from the depths of a culture. There are the unfortunates, understandably not content with the valuable work they can do apart from the actual making of art, who have been deprived by foreign conditioning of their ancestral cultural rights. There are the victims of western sophistication who want to possess the cultures in which they have sought escape. And

there are the scholars who feel they would be denying their own occupations and humanism if they did not claim, as Melville Herskovits (23) does that "any human being can master any culture, even in its subtlest aspect, provided he has the opportunity to learn it".

in its subtlest aspect, provided he has the opportunity to learn it".

He adds that "Everyday experience in the United States richly corroborates this. Second generation Japanese, called Nisei, dress, talk and otherwise behave as do their fellow-Americans. Their thought-processes, value systems, and goals are those of the country in which they live". But the fact is that they would not be called Nisei if they were wholly Americanised, that they retain many Japanese cultural characteristics, and that their interest in Japan, and things Asian, has a quality which their fellow-Americans do not share. Moreover, if we admit that Herskovits is right, the mastering of another culture goes beyond the total denial of one's own culture to the necessity of being born in the mastered culture — in which case the question of mastery no longer arises.

The error of Herskovits' deeply good-natured belief seems to arise from the conclusion that anyone can learn a culture because culture is learned behaviour. Thinking along these lines we come to the further conclusion that the artist can make art in any culture which he has learned or to which he is sensitive, but here again the evidence is against it. A Gauguin can, of course, pleasure himself and others hungry for tropical bosoms and colours, but his beautiful paintings remain the idealisations of the atelier and the boulevards. They are not Tahitian paintings. They are pictorial reports mixed up with longings and protests against the aridity of the West. Therefore, they have contributed nothing to Tahitian culture; and the ultimate test of a work of art is its value to the society in which it is produced.

The intracultural nature of art, and the manner of its production, decides the lingering controversy about form and content. They are not separate, nor are they fused. Form is the resolution and transformation of content, not the mere dressing up of a given kind of content in a particular way; and in the process a harmony is

achieved wihich leaves form and content visible yet one.

Thus, experiments in "pure form" cannot be art, though such an opinion must allow for the hostility that many feel towards those who devote themselves to configurations of shapes, colours or sounds while the rest of the world weeps. "Art" which does not go deeper than pattern levels is also not art, but it is not necessarily bad. Indeed, much of it is good because it has served good purposes in its own society. For example, in China, as in other people's democracies and liberated nationalisms, imitative, mediocre, "one-theme" paintings have flourished like bean sprouts; but they have given pleasure, inspiration and information to millions. They have provided visual aids beyound the reach of photography; they have

<sup>(23)</sup> Tom. cit., 1948, pp. 44, 149.

stimulated interest in pictures amongst the masses; and they have provided visual aids beyond the reach of photography; they have rejection. We must recognise their usefulness while insisting that they fail to be art.

#### The Partisans of the Proletariat

The condition of art in the West is reflected in the radical differences of approach between western artists. Some find their place in movements, mutual admiration circles, and the cultivation of the exotic; others occupy themselves with prolonged experiments, or concentrations on aspects of form, that influence styles and encourage mannerisms; many magnify futility and irresponsibility by affecting the abstraction of reality.

These approaches have spread so far that they must be seriously assessed by those who are concerned with art in the coloured world; but they are not likely to be so influencing as the attitudes of western artists who have sought new inspirations by purposive identification with the working class. They affirm the freedom and unity of all mankind through the leadership of the "organised proletariat".

Jack Lindsay (24) puts it this way:

"Human unity can be realised—by a specific social force, the ised proletariat. Therefore the necessary creative sense of union organised proletariat. with the people in their historical situation becomes today a sense of solidarity with the organised proletariat. What limits the writer today is the lack of this sense of solidarity, for without it he cannot embody in his work the concrete future...

"He can only grasp the whole situation by being partisan of

proletariat...
"The artist, in so far as he was a good artist, has always been a partisan of life. Now to be a partisan of life means to ge a partisan of the

proletariat...

"At every point we have found that the problem of restoring health and wholeness to art means the artist's realisation that the working class alone can break through the impasse threatening our society. The working class alone can realise human unity.

This statement occurs in what is not much more than a British "Party book", but its phrasing gives it wider applications and its point of view is, in fact, widely held by communist artists in noncommunist western countries. Its humanism is reassuring, but its parochialism is disturbing. Mr Lindsay seems not to know, though he is one of the most sensitive and erudite writers in Europe, that the patterned way of thinking implicit in the cliché "the organised proletariat", with its associated parrot cries of "reactionary" and "coloured chauvinist", has bedevilled relations between communists

<sup>(24)</sup> After The Thirties London. (Lawrence and Wishart) 1956, pp. 161, 167,

and coloured people in the past (25) and should not be allowed to do

so in the future. (26)

Certainly, the "organised proletariat", which is "a specific social force" in highly industrialised countries, is a tremendously important and growing agency of progress that may ultimately become the determining factor in bringing about human unity. But to say, at this stage of history, that "the working class alone can realise human unity" seems to carry the need for a new myth Indeed, after we have seen so many communist revolutoo far. tions made by heroic, disciplined and organised communists of all classes, and their allies, it is a very "thirtyish" profession of faith for 1956. In China, for example, the People's Government was brought to power by peasants, workers, intellectuals, clerks, petty officials and not a few landlords and traders, the working class element being so small and so little of an "organised proletariat" that, after six years of economic reconstruction on an unparalleled scale, there are now only ten million or so industrial workers in a population of over 600 millions.

Today the artist with a sense of history will be a partisan of the most progressive force in his society; and this belonging, if deeply felt and understood, will keep him critically aware of responsibility to all progressive forces. Generically, all the Afro-Asian peoples (apart from an unimportant number of shameful types) constitute a progressive force; and it divides up into peasants, workers, and other groups, including for the moment the nationalistic bourgeoisie. Not to know this is to have missed the significance, emphasised by the Bandoeng Conference, of the struggles for liberation throughout the coloured world; and to argue that conferences of coloured peoples are expressions of racisme, when the Afro-Asian movement has the support of communist governments, goes beyond illogicality to imbecility

Mr Lindsay's approach also illustrates an understandable inclination amongst communist writers to over-rate the rôle of communism in the production of art. It has helped to obscure the fact that the making of art by communists has been confined by the pious belief that there is such a thing as communist or working class art which reveals the richness of working class culture. But there is not working class culture, or sub-culture for class and culture may be equaed though classes show cultural variations and influences. The cultural advantages of the working class, apart from the kind of world unity that the coloured peoples are developing, are the possession of a large nimber of culturemaking skills in addition to access (greatly limited, of course, in capitalist nations) to all parts of the total culture.

<sup>(25)</sup> I included some notes on this point in "Notes on Coloured Writing", Phylon, 8: 213-224, 1947. This essay was elaborated into a pamphlet entitled Feathers in the Arrow (Bombay: Padma Books, 1947).

<sup>(26)</sup> But, as I write, Aimé Césaire, the Deputy for Martinique and the leading Negro communist in Paris, is reported to have resigned from the Communist Party.

The peasant class shows comparable advantages but, as the older productive group, they have a richer heritage of myth and other lore.

These advantages are so important in the restoration of the cultural process that it is fortunate that a communist revolution cannot sweep away "bourgeois culture" (there is no such thing, though there is a bourgeois development of culture) and establish "communist culture". What is swept away is much of the rubbish and falsity; what is established, or rather re-established, is the productive working of the cultural process — and it is part of the predynamic of communism that the disintegration of cultures releases forces directed towards the re-etablishment of the cultural process. The great new myth which urges and binds together these efforts is the transformation of the age-old belief in man's ability to control nature and its incorporation in the foundations of the political structure.

There follows the cultural flowering we have seen, and which has recently been emphasised by the differences in magnitude between the achievment of People's China and the liberated nationalisms of Asia. The Chinese determination to "Let flowers of all kinds blossom, and diverse schools of thought contend" promises still more impressive achievements during the next few years, but the distance between cultural developments in China and the other Asian countries will be reduced—and not only because of stimuli and support from China. For all the coloured peoples are marching at different speeds towards a common goal; and at various points many who have taken the wrong turning will rejoin them singing: "I have had the courage to look behind me at the corpses of my days."

Cedric DOVER.

## The Cultural Contributions and Prospects of Africa

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am going to talk to you to-night, first about the contribution of Negro Africa to civilisation, secondly about the cultural prospects of Africa, and in the third place about the specific nature of African culture. You will therefore see that the Paper for which I am responsible is an extremely complicated technical Paper which it has been almost impossible to prepare in full.

An important idea has been expressed by our comrade Césaire, and referred to again by the last speaker, namely the idea of a people of craftsmen; it is obvious that it is the people who create the basis of the tradition, but it is the elite who draw upon it to create the

higher forms of culture.

This remark alone justifies the perspectives which I will try to

draw here.

In general, writers start from artistic considerations in assessing what mankind owes to the Negro world in its slow progress through the ages. This is a way of restricting the problem at the outset, of limiting it to the single field of feeling. This unconsciously partial attitude is the result of a historical and social context which we cannot elaborate here. How should the problem be put? It seemed to us more judicious to make the effort to re-discover the general history of the Negro world and that of the African world in particular. Starting from this knowledge of our past, it becomes possible to assess the African contribution to the progress of the world by a simple process of comparison, beginning with the fundamental features of African culture and taking chronology into account.

Embarking upon these researches led to the discovery, beyond all doubt, that the ancient Egyptian and Pharaonic civilisation was a Negro civilisation. From this point of view arguments have been adduced both anthropological, ethnological, linguistic, historical and cultural. To judge their value it is enough to refer to the work Nations Nègres et Culture, published by Présence Africaine. If need be

these arguments will be recalled to the members of Congress during discussions in the Commissions with a view to drawing up the Final Report which will be published.

However, if time allows, I will try to give a few examples.

It is important to make one major point clear straight away. If Egyptian civilisation was Negro, that does not mean that all the Negroes now living on the continent took part in it in the same degree. It is true that round about Egypt and the Meroitic Sudan (formerly called the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan) which were already civilised in the days of Diodorus Siculus, there existed African tribes which "did not yet know humanity" (the expression comes from Diodorus himself) which were in all probability real savages roaming round the Nile Valley like the Barbarians of our IV century round the Roman Empire. They were the Xyllophages (eaters of grasshoppers), Strutophages (eaters of ostriches), as the Greeks called them, the Ichtyophages (fish eaters) and those whom Diodorus calls "the drivers of elephants". Perhaps this explains to a certain extent the different level of culture which is found in certain African peoples, leaving aside the retrogression due to re-tribalisation provoked by colonialism. This latter factor is often predominant in explaining the backward state of certain tribes.

It remains none the less true that the Egyptian experiment was essentially Negro, and that all Africans can draw the same moral advantage from it that Westerners draw from Graeco-Latin civilisation.

At present it becomes relatively easy to assess the contribution of the Negro towards human progress. As one might foresee, it

will go beyond the traditional limits of art.

In so far as Egypt was incontestably the great initiator of the Mediterranean world, this contribution exists in the fields of science, architecture, philosophy, music, religion, literature, art and social life etc... I cannot here stress the detail of this vast influence which embraces all branches of activity since the beginning of time. There is all the less reason to do this since the fact is not challenged by any specialist. The specialists are merely content to look for an extra-African, White, origin for Egyptian civilisation.

It has been enough for us to demonstrate in a fashion which can hardly be contested, the Negro origin of Egyptian Pharaonic civilisation to determine by that fact alone the Negro contribution to human progress. In discussion it will therefore be possible to criticise very closely the idea of a Negro Egypt. And here I would like

to cite you a few examples.

Hérodotus was an Indo-European; he therefore had no interest in asserting that "the Egyptians had dark skin and curly hair", that they were Negroes and that it was they who had civilised the Mediterranean world, if it was not true. One can no longer doubt the value of these arguments; if it was a question of analysing complex facts, facts of a social nature, or some other nature, it might have been possible to cast doubt on them, but one must at least admit that a traveller who arrives in a country is capable of recognising the colour of the inhabitants' skin. And it is merely an observation of this kind which Herodotus makes.

His evidence has been found to be correct on much more com-

plex questions.

In the fifth century B.C. an island of Negroes, the Colchians, lived on the Shores of the Black Sea; their origin interested all the scholars of antiquity. Herodotus suggests an explanation in his Book II: "The Egyptians did, however, say that they thought the original Colchians were men from Sesostris' army. My own idea on the subject was based first on the fact that they have black skins and woolly hair"; he gives other reasons upon which I will not dwell. It is certain that Herodotus' opinion about the origin of the Egyptians is not an isolated one. All the scholars and writers of antiquity bore witness in the same sense, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Aeschylus etc, etc.

When Herodotus employs the root "melanos", the strongest word which existed in Greek to describe a Negro, modern scholars translate by "bronzed skin, sunburnt skin". But let justice be done; there are some scholars of good faith. I will give you proof. A member of the Institute travelled in Egypt between 1783 and 1785, I refer to Volney, the famous scholar Volney. The revelations which he made after his voyage in the Near East caused a sensation, and here is his testimony about the Egyptian people after 5 000 years of history; "They all have puffy faces, protruding eyes, flat noses and thick lips, in other words a real mulatto face. I was tempted to attribute it to the climate, until after visiting the Sphinx, its appearance gave me the clue to the puzzle. On seeing that head, so characteristic of the Negro in all its features, I remembered that remarkable passage of Herodotus where he says 'For my part I think the Colchians are a colony of the Egyptians, because like them, they have black skins and woolly hair', that is that the ancient Egyptians were real Negroes like all the natives of Africa, and that explains why their blood, mingled for many centuries with that of the Greeks and Romans, must have lost the intensity of its original colouring while retaining the imprint of its pristine mould. One can even give this preliminary observation a very general scope and raise the question that physiognomy is a sort of monument which is appropriate in many cases to establish or throw light upon the origins of peoples etc." Further on Volney concludes, "But, reverting to Egypt, the facts which she has contributed to history afford many reflections to the philosopher. What a subject for meditation to see the present barbarism and ignorance of the Copts issued from the alliance of the profound genius of the Egyptians and the brilliant spirit of the Greeks, and to think that this black race which is to-day our slave and the object of our despising is the one to which we owe our arts and sciences and even the use of language. Imagine finally that it is in the midst of people who claim to be the friends of liberty and humanity that sanction has been given to the most barbarous slavery and the question has been raised whether Negroes have an intelligence of the same kind as White men." (Volney, Voyages en

Syrie et en Egypte, Paris 1787, Vol. I, pp. 74-77).

Champollion discovered to his surprise that in 1 500 B.C., according to the Egyptian bas-reliefs, the white race was the most savage of all mankind and was at the bottom of the scale, whereas the Egyptians and the Sudanese (Nubians) were at the head of civilisation. At the sight of these paintings he cried. "But the sight of them nevertheless has something flattering and consoling, since it enables us properly to appreciate the road we have since travelled." (Cf: Letter 13, cited in Nations Nègres).

Another Egyptologist of good faith, Amélineau, does not express himself differently. From his study of Egyptian civilisation, Amélineau arrived at the following conclusion; "The conclusion which flows from these considerations is that the conquered people of the Anous initiated these conquerors into at least a part of the road of civilisation and art, and this conclusion, it will easily be seen, is one of the most important for the history of human civilisation, and consequently of religion. Egyptian civilisation —this is perfectly clear from what has gone before— is not of Asiatic origin, but of African origin, of Negroid origin, however paradoxical this assertion may seem. We are not accustomed to endowing the Negro race and the neighbouring races with intelligence, with enough intelligence even to have been able to make the first discoveries necessary for civilisation; there is, however, no single one of the tribes now inhabiting the interior of Africa which has not possessed, which does not still possess one or other of these first discoveries etc." (Cf. Nations Nègres.)

In re-discovering our past in this way we have contrived to re-create that historical consciousness without which there can be

no great nation.

Let us now turn to the other cultural prospects of Africa. It is essential to specify the background against which we place ourselves in speaking of culture. This conception, to my mind, is linked with the emergence of a multi-national State embracing practically the whole of the Continent. That is to say that the cultural problems will only arise in their full force on the day when we have achieved national independence on the continental scale by a victorious struggle against colonialism. Certainly, in the course of this struggle cultural weapons are already necessary; no-one can do without them. That is why we must forge them in parallel within the framework of our struggle for national independence. Culture will therefore be essentially at the service of the fight for national liberation.

When we have created, as I have just said, a continental and multi-national sovereign State, it must be endowed, whatever one may say, with an ideological and cultural superstructure which will be one of the essential bulwarks of security. That means that this State, as a whole, must be conscious of its past, which implies the

preparation of a General History of the Continent, embracing the individual histories of the different nationalities. The role of history in the life of a people is sufficiently well known to make it unnecessary to stress it here. One of our preoccupations has been to work out the broad lines of this History of the Continent. If we ponder for a few instants on the plane of artistic creation, we see that it is not valid, that it does not reflect the national soul of a people except so far as the artist has drawn upon the sources of Tradition, that is, so far as he is not really cut off from his Past,

even if he is creating in reaction against it.

But the real basis of culture is language. Many African intellectuals are impotent in face of the difficulties raised by the African linguistic mosaic. They forget that the fact is general, and not peculiar to Africa. They forget that Africa is a Continent and not a single Nation and that there is no continent in the world where linguistic unity has been achieved. To remind ourselves of this, let us cite the linguistic mosaic of India which is only a fraction of the Asiatic continent; or of Europe where more than a hundred languages and dialects are spoken, which does not prevent Europeans from communicating with each other. In effect, these languages are not all situated on the same level, some are more important than others because of their extent, their wealth or the development of their literature, and above all because of the importance of the political role played by the countries where they are spoken. Thus in Europe to-day, instead of dreaming of establishing a common European language, in which even basic culture would be given to citizens of different nationalities, men are, in general, content to learn three languages, French, English and German, which enable them to make themselves understood anywhere on the continent.

It would, nevertheless, be possible to choose an African language which would become a governmental language. We do not, however, disguise the difficulties which that presents; they will certainly be raised in the course of discussion, but they will not be any greater in the Africa of the future than those which the Government of India is now encountering in imposing Hindi. It is astonishing to see that India has not accepted the accomplished fact, that is a linguistic unity achieved on the national scale —at any rate in appearance—but on the basis of a foreign language, English being the official language during the colonial period. It would therefore have seemed convenient to use it to drown the 300 native languages and dialects. But the Indian authorities, who are not wanting in profundity, realised that it did not come to the same thing to impose a native or a foreign language on the people. The latter implies a cultural alienation out of all proportion with the cultural alienation implied in extending a native language to the whole group. In other words an Italian is less alienated culturally when French is imposed upon him than if a Zulu language were imposed upon him. That is what the Indian authorities saw clearly, and in the face of this

inevitable dilemma they have chosen the lesser evil.

The achievement of linguistic unity, whatever may be the historical background in which it is contemplated, always involves a certain alienation of small linguistic groups. But this fact is without importance if it is looked at closely; such minorities are always bilingual, and their second language is one of culture and expansion. It is for analogous reasons that, starting from the Ile de France, French has imposed itself upon the Basques, the Bretons and the Alsatians, for national reasons superior to the human reasons which would militate in favour of maintaining linguistic mosaic and anarchy. There are cases in which it is salutary to stifle dialects in order to stifle micro-nationalism. All peoples who have become great Nations have had to face this problem and have solved it.

The practical side of adopting a native form of expression can be demonstrated at all levels; it is easy to see that a French peasant would have no interest in allowing his son to be educated in the English language. The time needed to acquire the knowledge essential to agriculture, to health, in short to every citizen of a modern State would be at least doubled by the handicaps caused by the use of a foreign form of expression. In the same line of thought, if we want to educate the average African, we shall be obliged to resort

to a native form of expression.

Certainly this reform cannot be introduced overnight. There is no question of pressing for the immediate creation of vernacular schools. We should be handicapped by the absence of qualified teachers and appropriate text books and by the lack of technical terms in existing languages. But the need nevertheless remains. Nothing could equal the value of such an experiment in revivifying

the national soul of a people.

Thus it is the duty of African intellectuals to harness themselves to the solution of the problems which will have to be settled if this revolution is to be achieved at the earliest desirable moment. Along these lines some work has been done in clearing the ground partly by studying in detail the kinship of the African languages, establishing their individual genius, and studying grammatical aspects which have hitherto been disregarded by the experts and partly bu integrating technical terms on the basis of judicious conventions. (Cf. Nations Nègres.)

I now come to the problem of Art. It has been very frequently discussed in the course of this Congress, and therefore I will not

dwell upon it.

I will merely say that Art as a whole, that is, sculpture, painting, music and architecture, should help the African to realise himself more and more each day. The majesty of its rhythms and accents should be on the scale of the continent.

One might have analysed American music and pointed out the profound kinship in the realm of feeling which exists between it and African music, and then what is lacking to make it, for example, an African national music; American music was born in such special conditions that the coefficient of national pride in it is comparatively

low; that is why it could not be the basis of an African national music. In the realm of feeling there is a Negro kinship which all of us can feel. Thus American music is effectively Negro music, but it cannot be a national music.

The last prospect for contemplation is the industrial prospect. You will very well remember that I was supposed to bring out the prospects for the future, and I was therefore supposed on the level of history, of language, of culture in general and of technical and industrial organisation to advocate valid and virtually acceptable proposals. That is responsible for the heterogeneous character of my Paper. Very well, Industrial Prospects.

They are perhaps the most important, because they must be realised first so that we may all the better achieve the others. It is by industrialisation to the utmost that we shall obtain the material power necessary to guarantee our political frontiers, pending the establishment of that planetary unity which is so much talked of.

In this field Nature has not overlooked Negro Africa. Our continent is, so to speak, the centre of the world's energy and raw materials. In the face of our reserves of hydraulic energy, of uranium and thorium, of solar, aeolian and tidal energy and so forth and of the raw materials of the equatorial zone, not to speak of other minerals, Europe is like an empty cupboard compared with Africa. This idea is so obvious that instead of continuing to enlarge its industrial infrastructure, Europe finds it now more advantageous to build factories in Africa itself in proximity to the sources of energy and the raw materials. It has gone as far as contemplating the construction of equatorial barrages and the export of electrical energy to Europe by cable, thus obviating the need to push the industrialisation of the African continent to excess.

All this makes it easy to see clearly the industrial destiny of Africa and the need for her sons to equip themselves for the tasks which await them. I urgently refer the reader to the article called "Alerte sous les Tropiques" which I published in the December-January 1956 number

of the reviaw "Présence Africaine".

This article is a brief survey of African technical and industrial problems seen by an African. All comrades who are interested in the technical aspect

of our problems should read it and meditate upon it.

In conclusion, upon the historical plane we know where we come from and it is true that you do not know where you are going until you know where you have come from. The problem of our antiquities is settled in its broad lines; we know the background against which we must work, the framework within which we must assemble facts to fill the gaps in our history, to create an African historical consciousness. On the linguistic plane we can say that an over easy solution is to be avoided and that it is necessary at all costs to elevate certain native languages to the level of modern requirements and make them capable of reflecting philosophic and scientific thought. On the plane of art it is necessary that the rhythm and majesty of art should be on the continental scale, that they should translate the pride

of a people who are proud of their past and of themselves. On the industrial plane we are the centre of the world's energy, and that is the capital thing. It is no good talking of the fraternisation of peoples, of planetary unity, one can foresee that there will be a certain lapse of time before this comes about, because there are still many obscure forces existing in society. Therefore, more than ever it is necessary to be vigilant until such time as our energies can be employed in creating a material force which will enable us to guarantee our political frontiers on the basis of industrialisation to the utmost, founded on our sources of energy and our raw materials.

I should like to end by emphasizing a final capital prospect. While Negro Africa is orienting itself towards a multi-national State which will embrace practically the whole of the Continent with a first class industrial equipment, the Antilles could orient themselves towards the formation of a Federation of islands on the lines of Indonesia, which instead of looking to America or Europe would maintain relations of fraternity and kinship, economic, commercial

cultural and political relations, with Negro Africa.

Cheikh Anta DIOP.

### Tradition and Industrialization

The plight of the tragic elite in Africa.

M. Chairman, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The hour is late and I am pressed for time. There is an accumulation of material that has emerged from this conference — there are many things in my mind that I want to say and I hardly know how and where to make a choice. I shall try to make three short remarks before moving into the body of my text. This afternoon, my old friend, Cedric Dover, from the United Kingdom, recalled a passage on nationalism that I had written quite a few years ago, —a passage on nationalism among American Negroes — M. Dover expressed the hope that this statement of mine on Black nationalism

would remain valid for some decades to come.

At the time I wrote that short statement on Black nationalism, we American Negroes lived our lives in a bitterly hostile racial environment. We had to build pour own black churches, our black schools, our black butchershops, our black hospitals, our black newspapers, black graveyards, and a black culture in general. short, we had to construct black ghettos in which to live. Had we not built them, we would have perished. Since that time, however, our claims to humanity have found a great deal of implementation in American law backed by police and military action. I hope, and this is all that I can say about this matter at present, that that implementation in law and that police and military action on our behalf will continue. I would like to explain that the Black Nationalism that we, American Negroes, practised in America, and which we were forced to practise, was a reluctant nationalism, a proud and defensive one. If these implementations of American law continue, and, as they continue, that nationalism of itself will be liquidated. I hope, even though I wrote lines to justify Black Nationalism in America, that they need not remain valid for decades to come.

I don't think I need to say that I consider that the sentiments I expressed concerning nationalism are still valid for those areas of the world in which black people live under white domination, depri-

ved of the vote, deprived of their language, and deprived of being

master of their destiny.

I would like to say — I don't know how many of you have noticed it there have been no women functioning vitally and responsibly upon this platform helping to mold and mobilize our thoughts. This is not a criticism of the conference, it is not a criticism of anyone, it is a criticism that I heap upon ourselves collectively. When and if we hold another conference— and I hope we will — I hope there shall be an effective utilization of Negro womanhood in the world to help us mobilize and pool our forces. Perhaps some hangover of influence from the past has colored our attitude, or perhaps this was an oversight. In our struggle for freedom, against great odds, we cannot afford to ignore one half of our manpower, that is, the force of women and their active collaboration. Black men will

not be free until their women are free.

I have spent most of my adult life and most of my waking hours brooding upon the destiny of the race to which I belong by accident of birth and by accident of history. I have been long associated with Présence Africaine; I have been intimately associated with this conference and worked with it. When I was asked to This summer while in Normanwrite a paper, I readily consented. dy, I set down my thoughts. The paper you see gere is a result of that effort. I have not changed a line in this paper. But, yet, when I came to this conference, certain impressions, profound and irrefutable, certain ideas occurred to me, certain kinds of realities emerged which has compelled me to want to modify some of the formulations in the latter part of my discourse. I had thought of going home and doing this, but that would have meant my remaining out of the sessions. But the sessions gripped me because of their interest. Finally, in my dilemma, I decided that the best thing I could do - in order to be honest - was to correct my paper as I read it, in public. Some of my formulations and conclusions went beyond the reality that has emerged here and some fell short of that reality. I would like, if you will permit me, to try to form a focus of my formulations in your presence. This, I think, is the only honest way for me to do it, and the only honest thing for me to do. Especially do I want to emphasize the lack of objectivity of attitude which has characterized these sessions. Without more ado I shall proceed and, midway in my text, when I start criticizing my own formulations, I hope you would understand what I am trying to do.

So great a legion of ideological interests is choking the atmosphere of the world today that I deem it wise to define the terms in which I speak and for whom. All public utterances these days are branded for and against something or somebody. And especially is this true of us who have been doomed to act and live and speak in a web of racial, political, and economic facts.

Knowing the charged climate in which we all live, I, as a Western man of color, strive to be as objective as I can when I seek to communicate. But, at once, you have the right to demand of me: What does being objective mean? Is it possible to speak at all and not have the meaning of one's words construed in six different ways? I hope that my answer will be objective enough to illustrate the meaning of objectivity. First of all, let us admit that there is no such thing as objectivity, no such objective fact as objectivity. Objectivity is a fabricated concept, a synthetic construction devised to enable others to know the general conditions under which one has done something, or observed the world or an event in that world,

So, before proceeding to give my opinions concerning Tradition and Industrialization, I shall try to state as clearly as possiblew here I stand, the mental climate about me, the historic period in which I speak, and some of the elements in my environment and my own personality which propel me to communicate. The basic assumption behind all so-called objective attitudes is this: If others care to assume my mental stance and duplicate the atmosphere in which I speak, if they can imaginatively grasp the factors in my environment and the impulses motivating me, they will by able to see, more or less, what I've seen, will be able to apprehend the same general reality. By stating the assumptions behind my statements, I'm striving to convert you to my outlook, to the generality and reasonableness of my argument.

Obviously no striving for an objectivity of attitude is ever complete. Tomorrow or the day after someone will discover an element or a nuance that I've forgotten to take into account, and my attitude will have to be revised, discarded, or extended, as the case may be. Hence, there is no such thing as an absolute objectivity of attitude. The most rigorously determined attitude of objectivity is, at best, relative. We are human; we are slaves of time and circumstance; we are the victims of our passions and illusions. The most that our critics can ask of us is: Have you taken your passions, your illusions, your time, your circumstance into account? That is what I am attempting to do. More than that no reasonable man of

good will could demand.

First of all, my position is a split one. I'm black. I'm a man of the West. These hard facts condition, to some degree, my outlook. I see and understand the West; but I also see and understand the non—or anti-Western point of view. How is this possible? This double vision of mine stems from my being a product of Western civilization and from my racial identity which is organically born of my being a product of that civilization. Being a Negro living in a white Western Christian society, I've never been allowed to blend, in a natural and healthy manner, with the culture and civilization of the West. This contradiction of being both Western and a man of color creates a distance, so to speak, between me and my environment. I'm self-conscious. I admit it. Yet I feel no need to apologize for it. Hence, though Western, I'm inevitably critical of the West. My attitude of

criticism and detachment is born of my position. Me and my environment are one, but that oneness has in it, at its very heart, a schism. I regard my position as natural, though others, that is, Western whites, would have to make a most strenuous effort of

imagination to grasp it.

Yet, I'm not non-Western. I'm no enemy of the West. Neither am I an Easterner. When I look out upon these vast stretches of this earth inhabited by brown, black, and yellow men, — sections of the earth in which religion dominates the emotional and mental landscape — my reactions and attitudes are those of the West. I see both worlds from another and third point of view. (This outlook has nothing to do with any so-called Third Force; I'm speaking

largely in psychological terms.)

Since I'm detached from, because of racial conditions, the West, why do I bother to call myself Western at all? What is it that prompts me to make an identification with the West despite the contradiction involved? The fact is that I really have no choice in the matter. Historical forces more powerful than I am have shaped me as a Westerner. I have not consciously elected to be a Westerner; I have been made into a Westerner. Long before I had the freedom to choose, I was molded a Westerner. It began in childhood. And the process continues.

Hence, standing shoulder to shoulder with the Western white man, speaking his tongue, sharing his culture, participating in the common efforts of the Western community, I say to that white man: "I'm Western, just as Western as you are, maybe more; but I don't

completely agree with you."

What do I mean, then, when I say I'm Western? I shall try to define what that term means to me. I shan't here, now, try to define what being Western means to all Westerners. I shall confine my definition only to that aspect of the West with which I identify,

that aspect that makes me feel and act Western.

The content of my Westernness resides fundamentally, I feel, in my secular outlook upon life. I believe in a separation of Church and State. I believe that the State possesses a value in and for I feel that man — just sheer brute man just as he is — has a meaning and value over and above all sanctions or mandates from mystical powers either on high or from below. I am convinced that the humble, fragile dignity of man, buttressed by a tough-souled pragmatism, implemented by methods of trial and error, can sustain, nourish human life, can endow it with sufficient meaning. I believe that all ideas have a right to circulate without restriction. I believe that all men should have the right to have their say without fear of the "powers that be", without having to dread punitive measures of other men or the threat of invisible forces which some castes of men claim as their special domain, — men such as priests and Churchmen. (My own position compels me to grant those priests and Churchmen the right to have their say, but not at the expense of having my right to speak annuled.) I believe that art has its own autonomy, an independence that extends beyond the spheres of political or priestly powers. I feel that science exists without any a priori or metaphysical values. I feel that human personality is an end in and for itself. In short, I believe that man, for good or ill, is his own ruler, his own sovereign. I hold human freedom as a supreme right and good for all men.

These are my assumptions, my values, my morality, if you insist upon that word. Yet I hold these values at a time in history when they are threatened. I stand in the middle of that most fateful of all the world's centuries: the 20th Century. Nuclear energy, the center of the sun, is in the hands of men. In most of the land-mass of Asia and Africa the traditional and customary class relations of feudal, capitalistic societies have been altered by murder and terror. Most of the governments of the earth today rule, by one pretext or another, by pressure upon the individual, by fiat, secret police, and machine guns. Among intellectual circles the globe over the desperate question has been raised: "What is man?" In the East as in the West, wealth and the means of production have been taken out of private hands, families, clans, and placed at the disposal of committees and state bureaucrats. consciousness of most men on earth is filled with a sense of shame, of humiliation, memories of past servitude and degradation, — a sense of fear that the periods of servitude and degradation will return. The future for most men is an apprehensive void which has to be filled, created anew at all costs. With the freeing of Asia and most of Africa from Western rule, more active religio nnow foments and agitates the minds of men than at any time since 1455! Man's world today lies in the Pythonlike coils of vast irrational forces which man cannot control. — This is the mental climate out of which I speak, a climate that tones my being and pitches my consciousness on a certain plane of tension. These are the conditions under which I speak, - conditions that condition me.

Now the above assumptions and facts would and do color my view of history, that record of the rise and fall of traditions and religions. All of these past historical forces which have, accidentally or intentionally, helped to create the basis of freedom in human life, I extol and count as my allies. Those conditions of life and of history which thwart, threaten, or degrade the values and assumptions I've listed, I reject and consider harmful.

Naturally a man holding such values will view history in a rather novel light. How do these values compel me to regard the claims of Western imperialism? What virtue or evil do I assign to the overrunning of Asia and Africa by Western Christian white men? What about color prejudice? What about the undeniable technical and industrial power and superiority of the white West? How do I feel about the white man's vaunted claim — and I'm a product, reluctant, to be sure, of that white man's culture and civilization — that he has been called by his God to rule over the world and to have

all overriding considerations over the rest of mankind, that is, colored men?

And since religion, by and large, has tacitly endorsed racism, how do I view religion, any religion whether in Europe, Asia, or Africa? And since tradition is generally but forms of frozen or congealed religions, how do I regard tradition...?

I've tried to lead you to my angle of vision slowly, step by step, keeping nothing back. If I insist over and over again upon the personal perspective, it is because my weighing of external facts is bound organically with that personal perspective. My point of view is a Western one, but a Western one that conflicts at several vital points with the outlook of the West! Am I ahead of or behind the West? My judgment is that I'm ahead. And I do not say that boastfully; such a judgment is implied by the very nature of those Western values that I hold dear.

Let me dig deeper into my personal position. I was born a black Protestant in the most racist of all the American states: Mississippi. I lived my childhood under a racial code, brutal and bloody, that white men said was ordained of God, said was made necessary by their religion. Naturally, I rejected that religion and would reject any religion that prescribes for me an inferior position in life; I reject that tradition and any tradition that proscribes my humanity. Since the very beginnings of my life on this earth were couched in this contradiction, I became passionately curious as to why Christians felt it mandatory to practice such wholesale denials of humanity. My seeking carried me back to a crucial point in Western history where a clearly enunciated policy on the part of the Church spelt my and others' doom. In 1545 the Pope divided the world between Spain and Portugal and decreed that these two nations had not only the right, but the bounden duty of enslaving all infidels. Now, it just so happened at that time that all the infidels, from the white Christian point of view, were in Asia and Africa and the many islands of the Atlantic and Pacific; — and it just so happened that they were all people of color.

Further reading of history brought me abreast of a strong current of opposition to that Church that had condemned all colored mankind. When I discovered that John Calvin and Martin Luther were stalwart rebels against the domination of a Church that had condemned and damned the majority of the human race, I felt that the impulses animating them were moving in the direction of a fuller concept of human dignity and freedom. But the Protestantism of Calvin and Luther did not go far enough; they underestimated the nature of the revolution they were trying to make. Their fight against the dead weight of tradition was partial, limited. Racism was embedded in their rejection of the claims of the Church that they sought to defeat. Calvin and Luther wanted freedom, but only for their kind, that is, European whites. So, while recognizing the positive but limited nature of Calvin's and Luther's contribution,

I had to look elsewhere for a concept of man that would not do

violence to my own concept of life.

Strangely, the ultimate consequences of Calvin's and Luther's rebellious doctrines and seditions actions unwittingly created and fertilized the soil out of which grew something that Calvin and Luther did not dream of. (And this is not the first time that I shall call your attention to an odd characteristic of the Western world; the men of Europe seem prone in their actions to achieve results that contradict their motives. Europeans have a genius for calling things by wrong names; they seek to save souls and they become involved in murder; they attempt to enthrone God as an absolute and they thereby establish the prerequisites of science and atheistic thought; they seem wedded to a terribly naive and chiddlike view of the world and themselves and they are filled with consternation when their actions produce results that they did not foresee.) Determined to plant the religious impulse in each individual's heart, declaring that each man has the right to stand face to face with God, Calvin and Luther blindly let loose mental and emotional forces which, in turn, caused a vast revolution in the social, cultural, governmental, and economic conditions under which Europeans lived, a revolution which finally negated their own implied racial attitudes!

The first and foremost of these conditions were the guaranteeing of individual conscience and judgemnt, an act which loosened, to a degree, the men of Europe from custom and tradition, from the dead hand of the past, evoking a sense of future expectation, infinitely widening man's entire horizon. And yet this was achieved by accident! That's the irony of it... Calvin and Luther preoccupied with metaphysical notions, banished dread from men's minds and allowed them to develop that courage which enabled them to amass a vast heap of positive fact relating to daily reality. As a result of Calvin's and Luther's heresy, man began to get a grip upon his external environment. Science and industry were born and, through their rapid growth, each enriched the other and nullified the past notions of social structures, negated norms of nobility, of tradition, of priestly values, and fostered new social classes, new occupations, new structures of government, new pleasures, hungers, dreams, in short, a whole new and unheard of universe. A Church world was transformed into a worldly world, any man's world, even a world in which black, brown, and yellow men could have the possibility to live and breathe.

Yet, while living with these facts, Europe still believed in and practiced racism, a racism that the very logic of the world they were

creating told them was irrational and insane!

Buttressed by their belief that their God had entrusted the earth into their keeping, drunk with power and possibility, waxing rich through trade in commodities, human and non-human, with awesome naval and merchant marines at their disposal, their countries filled with human debris anxious for any adventures, psychologically armed with new facts, white Western Christian civilization, with a long,

slow, and bloody explosion, hurled itself upon the sprawling masses of humanity in Asia and Africa.

Perhaps now you'Il expect me to pause and begin a vehement and moral denunciation of Europe. No. The facts are complex. In that process of Europe's overrunning of the rest of mankind a most bewildering mixture of motives and means took place. White men, spurred by religious and areligious motives, — that is, to save the souls of a billion or so heathens and to receive the material blessings of God while doing so — entered areas of the earth where religion ruled with an absoluteness that did not even obtain in Europe. Are we here confronted with a simple picture of villainy triumphing over virtue, of right over wrong, of the superior over the inferior, of the biologically fit blond beast over biologically botched brown, yellow, and black men? That is what Europe felt about it. But I do not think that that is a true picture of what really happened. Again I call your attention to the proneness of white Europe's doing one thing and calling that thing by another name.

What, then, happened? Irrationalism met irrationalism.

(I would like to pause here and try to fill a slight gap in this paper and I will try to do it as quickly and in as foreshortened a manner as possible. Some few thousand years ago somewhere n the mountains of Greece, a mood overcame some poor Greek hunter or farmer. Instead of the world that he saw being full of life born of his own psychological projections, it suddenly happened that he saw it bleakly and bluntly for what it was. The mood of objectivity was born and we do not know on what date. But we find its reality in Greek life and in Greek art. This idea of objectivity was a seed-idea that slept on in Western culture and did not come to full growth until religion had been pushed back in Europe to a degree that allowed it to flower in science and industry. When the idea of objectivity was being explored in Greece, Egypt and most of Africa were wrapped in ancestor religions, powerful religions, sensitive and vital. Who knows but what Africa too had not discovered the idea of objectivity? But maybe the occasion for its application never came. I mention this to show that the heritage of the irrational confronting us is not a black heritage or a white heritage, but a human heritage. And he who first discovered objectivity no doubt discovered it by accident, and the possession of this attitude of objectivity demonstrates no superiority or inferiority.)

The irrationalism of Europe met the irrationalism of Asia and Africa, and the resulting confusion has yet to be unraveled and understood. Europe called her adventure imperialism, the spread of civilization, missions of glory, of service, of destiny even... Asians and Africans called it colonialization, blood-sucking, murder, butchery, slavery, etc. There is no doubt but that both sides had some measure of truth in their claims. But I state that neither side quite knew what was happening and neither side could state the real process that was taking place. The truth lay beyond the blurred ken of both the European and his Asian and African victim.

I have stated publicly, on more than one occasion, that the spoils of European imperialism do not bulk so large or important I know that today it is the fashion to list the long and many economic advantages that Europe gained from its brutal and bloody impact upon the hundreds of millions of Asians and Africans. The past fifty years have created a huge literature of the fact that the ownership of colonies paid princely dividends. I have no doubt of it. Yet that fact does bot impress me as much as still another and more obscure fact. What rivets my attention in this clash of East and West is that, an irrational Western world helped, unconsciously and unintentionally, to smash the irrational ties of religion and custom and tradition in Asia and Africa! THIS, IN MY OPINION, IS THE CENTRAL HISTORIC FACT! The European said that he was saving souls, yet he kept himself at a distance from the brown, black, and yellow skins that housed the souls he so loved and wanted so badly to save. Thank the white mans's God for that bit of racial and color stupidity! His liberating effect upon Asia and Africa would not have been so thorough had he been more human...

Yes, there were a few shrewd Europeans who wanted the natives to remain untouched, who wished to see what they called the "nobility of the black, brown, and yellow lives remain intact. The more backward and outlandish the native was, the more the European loved him. This attitude can be boiled down to one simple wish: the imperialist wanted the natives to sleep on in their beautifully poetic dreams so that the ruling of them could be done easily. They devised systems of administration called "indirect rule", assimilation, gradual constitutional governement, etc... but they all meant one simple thing: a white man's peace, a white man's order, a white man's tranquillity,

and a white man's free trade.

Again, I say that I do not denounce this. Had even the West known what it was really doing, it could not have done a better job of liberating the masses of Asia and Africa from their age-old traditions. Being ignorant of what they were really doing, the men of Europe failed to fill the void that they were creating in the very heart of mankind, thereby compounding the felony.

There are Europeans today who look longingly and soulfully at the situation developing in the world and say: "But, really, we loved'em. They were our friends." To attitudes like that I can only say: "My friend, look again. Examine the heritage you left behind. Read the literature that your fathers and your fathers' fathers wrote about those natives. Your fathers ware naive but honest men".

How many souls did Europe save? To ask that question is to make one laugh! Europe was tendering to the great body of mankind a precious gift which she, in her blindness and ignorance, in her shortsightedness, was not generous enough ti give her own people! Today, a knowing black, brown, or yellow man can say:

"Thank you, Mr White Man, for freeing me from the rot of my irrational traditions and customs, though you are still the victims

of your own irrational customs and traditions!"

(Now, at this point, I shall begin some self-criticism. I wondered at this conference, when I heard delegate after delegate rise and speak, if we were sufficiently beyond the situation in which we have been hurt to permit my making an ironic statement of that sort. I wrote this paper up in the country, projecting an ideal room filled with secular-minded Africans more or less like myself in outlook. (I am trying to bring my paper into focus with the reality that has emerged from this conference.) I felt that I could esasily make a statement like that. Being an American Negro with but few lingering vestiges of my irrational heritage in both America and Africa, I felt that I could be intellectually detached. But I place a question mark, in public, behind that statement.)

There was a boon wrapped in that Western gift of brutality. Over the centuries, meticulously, the white men took the sons and daughters of the chiefs, of the noble houses of Asia and Africa and instilled in them the ideas of the West. They had no thought about how these men would fare when cast, like fishes out of water, back into their poetic cultures. Shorn of all deep-seated faiths, these Westernized Asians and Africans had to sink or swim with no guides, no counsel. Over and above this, the Europeans I aunched vast industrial enterprises in almost all of the lands that they controlled, enterprises that wrought profound alterations in the Asian-African ways of life and thought. In sum, the Europeans set off a more deep-going revolution than had ever obtained in all of the history of Europe. And they did this with supreme confidence. On one occasion Christian Englishman chartered a company for one thousand years to deal in black slaves...! Oh, what hope they had!

I would like to question the statement I have just made when

I would like to question the statement I have just made when I said that the Europeans had set off in Africa a more deepgoing revolution than had obtained in Europe. As a result of this conference, I know that the masses of Africa are in motion. Just what kind of a revolution is taking place and what level that revolution has reached, I cannot say. What direction will revolution take? Will it be akin to the West or, will it have notions of its own? I do not know.

Who took here? Who gave? It is too complicated a process to admit of such simple questions. But the Europeans naively called it soul-saving, money-making, modern administration, missions of civilization, Pax Britanica, and a host of other equally quaint appellations. History is a strange story. Men make history with one set of motives and the consequences that flow from their motives have nothing whatsoever to do with those motives. What irony will history reveal when these pages of Europe's domination of Asia and Africa are finally and honestly written! That history will depict a ghastly racial tragedy; it will expose a blind spot on the part of white Westerners that will make those who read that history laugh with a sob in their throats. The white Western world until relatively recently the most secular part of the earth — a secularity that was the secret of its power (science and industry) labored unconsciously and tenaciously for five hundred years to make Asia and Africa (that

is, the elite in those areas) more secular-minded than the West! As a result of my being here at this conference, I question this statement. When I wrote that statement, I was hoping and dreaming, for black freedom. But after listening to the gentlemen of the cloth who spoke here this morning describe the African as being incurably religious, I wonder now if I can say that the African is more secular-minded than the West. Will there be a latching on of Western techniques at some point of African religious development? I am honest enough to react to the reality before me and show you how my formulations went wide of the mark or under the mark. One must try to govern one's own emotions and perceptions and relate them to reality.

In the minds of hundreds of millions of Asians and Africans the traditions of their lives have been psychologically condemned beyond recall. Millions live uneasily with beliefs of which they have been made ashamed. I say, "Bravo!" for that clumsy and cruel deed. Not to the motives, mind you, behind those deeds, motives which were all too often ignoble and base. But I do say, "Bravo!" to the consequences of Western plundering, a plundering that created the conditions for the possible rise of rational societies

for the greater majority of mankind.

But enough of ironic comparisons. Where do we stand today? That part of the heritage of the West that I value has now been established as lonely bridgeheads in Asia and Africa in the form of a Western educated elite, an elite that is more Western than the West...

(Again I must check and correct my perceptions against the reality, mainly religious in nature, that has emerged from this

conference.)

Tragic and lonely and all too often misunderstood are these men of the elite. The West hates and fears that elite and I must, to be honest, say that the instincts of the West that prompts that hate and fear are, on the whole, correct. For this elite in Asia and Africa constitutes islands of free men, the FREEST MEN IN ALL They stand poised, nervous, straining at THE WORLD TODAY. the leash, ready to do, with no weight of the dead past clouding their minds, no fear of foolish customs benumbing their consciousness, eager to build industrial civilizations.

I wonder, as a result of this conference, whether my description was idealistic or factual. I think that if more material could have emerged from this conference, and had we had more discussions,

I could make a judgment. As it is, I cannot judge at this moment.

What does this mean? It means that the spirit of the Englihtenment, of the Reformation which made Europe great now has a chance to be extended to all mankind! A part of the non-West is now akin to a part of the West. East and West have become confounded. The partial overcoming of the forces of tradition and oppressive religions in Europe resulted, in a roundabout manner, in a partial overcoming of tradition and religion in decisive parts of Asia and Africa. The unspoken assumption in this history has been: WHAT IS GOOD FOR EUROPE IS GOOD FOR ALL MANKIND!

I say: So be it.

I agree with what has happened. My only regret is that Europe could not have done what she did in a deliberate and intentional manner, could have planned it as a global project. My wholehearted admiration would have gone out to the spirit of a Europe that had had the imagination to have launched this mighty revolution out of the generosity of its heart, out of a sense of lofty responsibility. Europe could then stand proudly before all the world and say: "Look at what we accomplished! We remade man in our image! Look at the new forms of life that we brought into being!" And I'm sure that had that happened, the majority of mankind would have been European in a sense that no atom or hydrogen bombs can make a man European... But, alas, that chance, that rare opportunity, is gone forever.

Europe missed the boat.

How can the spirit of the Englihtenment and the Reformation be extended now to all men? How can this boon be made global in effect? That is the task history now imposes upon us. Can a way be found to merge the rational areas and rational personnel of Europe with those of Asia and Africa? How can the curtains of race. color, religion, and tradition-all of which hamper man's mastery of his environment — be collectively rolled back by free men of the West and non-West? Is this a Utopian dream? Is this mere wishing? No. It is much more drastic than that. The nations of Asia and Africa and Europe contain too much of the forces of the irrational for anyone to think that the future will take care of itself. islands of the rational in the East are too tenuously held to permit of optimism. And the same is true of Europe. (We have but to recall reading of ideas to "burn up entire continents" to doff our illusions. The truth is that our world — a world for all men, black, brown, yellow, and white - will either be all rational or totally irrational. For better or worse, it will eventually be one world...

How can these rational regions of the world be maintained? How can the pragmatically useful be made triumphant? Does this entail a surrender of the hard-bought national freedoms on the part of non-Western nations? I'm convinced that that will not happen, for these Asian and Africans nations, led by Western educated leaders, love their freedom as much as the West loves its own. They have had to struggle and die for their freedom and they value it passionately. It is unthinkable that they, so recently freed from color and class domination of the West, would voluntarily surrender their sovereignty. Let me state the problem upside down. What Western nation would dream of abdicating its sovereignty and collobarating with powers that once so recently ruled them in interests that were not their own, — powers that created a vast literature of hate against them? Such an act would be irrational in the extreme. And the Western educated leaders of non-Western nations are filled with too much distrust of an imperial-

minded West to permit of any voluntary relinquishing of their

control over their destinies.

Is there no alternative? Must there be a victorious East or a victorious West? If one or the other must win completely, then the fragile values won so blindly and accidentally and at so great a cost and sacrifice will be lost for us all. Where is the crux of this matter? Who is to act first? Who should act first? The burden of action rests with the West, I say. For it was the West that began this vast process. And of what must the action of the West consist? It must aid and, yes, abet the delicate and tragic elite in Asia and Africa to establish rational areas of living. THE WEST, in Asia and Africa to establish rational areas of living. THE WEST, IN ORDER TO KEEP BEING WESTERN, FREE, RATIONAL, MUST BE PREPARED TO GIVE TO THE ELITE OF ASIA AND AFRICA A FREEDOM WHICH IT ITSELF NEVER PERMITTED IN ITS OWN DOMAIN. THE ASIAN AND ELITE BE GIVEN THEIR HEADS! MUST AFRICAN The West must perform an act of faith and do this. Such a mode of action has long been implied in the very nature of the ideas which the West has instilled into that Asian-African elite. The West must trust that part of itself that it has thrust into Asia and Africa. Nehru. Nkrumah, Nasser. Sukarno, and the Western educated chiefs of these newly created national states must be given carte blanche, right to modernize their lands without overlordship of the West, and we must understand the methods they will feel compelled to use.

Never, you will say. That is impossible, you will say. Oh, I'm asking a hard thing and I know it. I'm Western, remember, and I know how horrible my words sound to Westerners so used to issuing orders and having those orders obeyed at gun point. But what rational recourse does the West possess other than this? None.

If the West cannot do this, it means that the West does not trust itself, does not trust the ideas which it has cast into the world. Yes, Sukarno, Nehru, Nasser and others will use dictatorial methods to hasten the process of social evolution and to establish order in their lands, — lands which were left voids by a long Western occupation and domination. Why pretend to be shocked at this? You would do the same if you were in their place. You have done it in the West over and over again. You do it in every war you fight, in every crisis, political or economic, you have. And don't you feel and know that, as soon as order has been established by your Western educated elite, they will, in order to be powerful, surrender the personal power that they have had to wield?

Let us recognize what our common problem really is. Let us rethink what the issue is. This problem is vast and complicated. Merely to grasp it takes an act of the imagination. This problem, though it has racial overtones, is not racial. Though it has religious aspects, is not religious. Though it has strong economic motives, is not wholly economic. And though political action will, no doubt, constitute the means, the modus operandi, the problem is not

basically political.

The problem is freedom. How can Asians and Africans be free of their stultifying traditions and customs and become industrialized, and powerful, if you like, like the West...?

I say that the West cannot ask the elite of Asia and Africa, even though educated in the West, to copy or ape what has happened in the West. Why? Because the West has never really been honest with itself about how it overcame its own traditions and blinding customs.

Let us look at some examples of Western interpretation of its own history. A Civil War was fought in America and the American school children are taught that it was to free black slaves. was to establish a republic, to create conditions of economic freedom, to clear the ground for the launching of an industrial society. (Naturally, slavery had to go in such a situation. I'm emphasizing the positive historic aspects, not the negative and inevitable ones!) The French fought a long and bloody Revolution and the French school children are taught that it was for Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Yet we know that it was for the right of a middle class to think, to buy and sell, to enable men with talent to rise in their careers, and to push back (which was inevitable and implied) the power of the Church and the nobility. The English, being more unintentionally forthright than others, never made much bones about the fact that the freedom that they fought for was a freedom of trade.

Do these misinterpretations of Western history by the West negate the power and net gains of the Western World? No. It is not what the West said it did but what the results really were that

count in the long run.

Why have I raised these points of Western contradictions? Because, when non-Westerners, having the advantage of seeing more clearly — being psychologically outside of the West — what the West did, and when the non-Westerners seek to travel the same road, the West raises strong objections. I've had a white Westerner tell me: "You know, we must stay in Africa to protect the naked black natives. If we leave, the blacks we have educated will practice fascism against their own people." So this man was in a position to endorse the shooting down of a black elite because that black elite wanted to impose conditions relating to the control of imports and

exports, something which his country practiced every day!

The same objections are leveled against Nkrumah in the Gold Coast, against Sukarno in Indonesia, against Nasser in Egypt, against Nehru in India. Wise Westerners would insist that stern measures be taken by the elite of Asia and Africa in order to overcome irrational forces, such as racism, superstition, etc. But if a selfish West hamstrings the elite of Asia and Africa, distrusts their motives, a spirit of absolutism will rise in Asia and Africa and will provoke a spirit of counterabsolutism in the West. In case that happen, all will be lost. We shall all, Asia and Africa as well as Europe, be thrown back into an age of racial and religious wars, and the precious heritage — freedom of speech, a secular state, the autonomy of science -, which is not Western or Eastern, but human, will be snuffed out of the minds of men.

The problem is freedom from a dead past. And freedom to build a rational future. How much are we willing to risk for freedom? I say let us risk everything. Freedom begets freedom. Europe, I say to you before it is too late: Let the Africans and Asians whom you have educated in Europe have their freedom, or you will lose

your own in trying to keep freedom from them.

But how can this be done? Have we any recent precedent for such a procedure? Is my suggestion outlandish? Unheard No. A ready answer and a vivid example are close at hand. A scant ten years ago we concluded a tragically desperate and costly war in Europe to beat back the engulfing tides of irrational fascism. During those tense and eventful days I recall hearing Winston Churchill appeal to the Americans when Britain was hardpressed by hordes of German and Italian fascists. Churchill said:

"Give us the tools and we'll finish the job." Today I say to the white men of Europe:

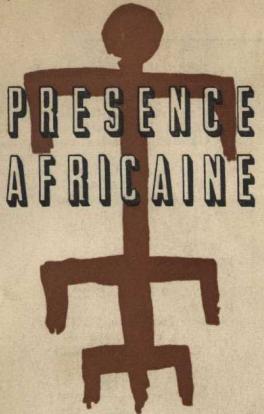
"You have, however misguidedly, trained and educated an elite in Africa and Asia. You have implanted in their hearts the hunger for freedom and rationality. Now this elite of yours your children, one might say - is hard-pressed by hunger, poverty, disease, by stagnant economic conditions, by unbalanced class structures of their societies, by oppressive and irrational tides of tribal religions. You men of Europe made an abortive beginning to solve that problem. You failed. Now, I say to you: Men of Europe, give that elite the tools and let it finish that job!"

This conference, I feel, must proceed to define the tools and the nature of finishing that job, and the strenghthening of that elite.

Freedom is indivisible.

Richard WRIGHT.

The session ended at 23 h. 50.



# SECOND CONGRESS of NEGRO WRITERS AND ARTISTS

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#### THE POLICY OF OUR CULTURE

«What we desire is not to know, but that we should not be prevented from believing that we already know.»

NIETZSCHE.

Among the capital sins of colonialism, one of the most pernicious, because it was for a long time accepted by the West without discussion, was the concept of peoples without culture.

It had a corollary, which consisted in passing off the culture of the colonized peoples, and especially of the Africans, in the occasional instances where recognition was granted to it, as a dead thing. The conqueror, faced with a corpse, could find nothing better to do than simply to impose his own culture, which for its part could not fail to be an expression of life.

But it is a commonplace to say that culture is not a mere assemblage of works and norms which can function automatically in every climate and at all periods.

These works and these norms must have a subject which fires them with its passions, its aspirations and its genius.

The most universal philosophical doctrine or literary work is only valid by virtue of the men who live by it. It is only the people who give it authority and dynamic force.

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This principle has never ceased to inspire Présence Afri-

caine since its foundation.

In the course of the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists our intention was to bring out its main lines; we wished to suggest in our Resolutions that the traditional definition of culture proposed and imposed by the West is not sufficient. Nor is it sound. A capital of priceless cultural experience in Asia and Africa is in danger of being lost to markind.

This capital, we would recall, does not lie in the picturesque and exotic character of the sum of customs, myths, and

religions, which a good team of specialized research workers would have no difficulty in collecting and confiding to the custody of a museum.

It lies in the will of the peoples who give its values reality in everyday life. It is not so much the works which it is important to « save » therefore. The task is to restore to the peoples the dimensions of their natural responsibility in this atomic age.

But, specifically, in our time, the political independence of the peoples needs to be safeguarded by economic and cultural independence. That means that the under-developed peoples must construct their own unity. Their natural weakness demands their solidarity.

This renaissance of the coloured peoples is primarily the task of the political leaders. It is also the task of the men of culture.

The resolutions published in this Volume have no other value except as indicating the directions in which men of culture can collaborate in this enterprise of human restoration, can assert the independence of their people and withdraw them from the tutelage of the West, and improve the chances of peace by contributing to the construction of democracy the very life-blood of their experience and the fruit of their sufferings.

Nothing is more foreign to our designs than the desire to range ourselves against the peoples of the West.

But the world needs to be remade, not to satisfy the West's thirst for hegemony, but in order to stand up to the imperative necessities of security in a century when men are growing in numbers, peoples in lucidity, and the dangers which beset us in complexity, and when the direction of the planet requires the governors to speak the language of the governed that they may know their sufferings and their aspirations.

It is therefore not only valuable for our people to escape from imperialism, but it is equally necessary for them to express themselves, to express their soul according to the measure and forms which the atomic age imposes on our destinies.

The liberation of our personality from the stifling ascen-

dancy of the West therefore meets a positive need, that of enriching and humanizing the conscience of mankind.

African men of culture are not called upon to be the agents of Western hegemony. In this way they would impoverish their own peoples and all others as well.

«What we desire» said Nietzsche «is not to know, but that we should not be prevented from believing that we al-

ready know.»

Our peoples already know, even if their knowledge has not been able to evolve and adapt itself to the conditions of modern life. They know medicine, agriculture, war (alas!) astro-

nomy, music, poetry and the rest.

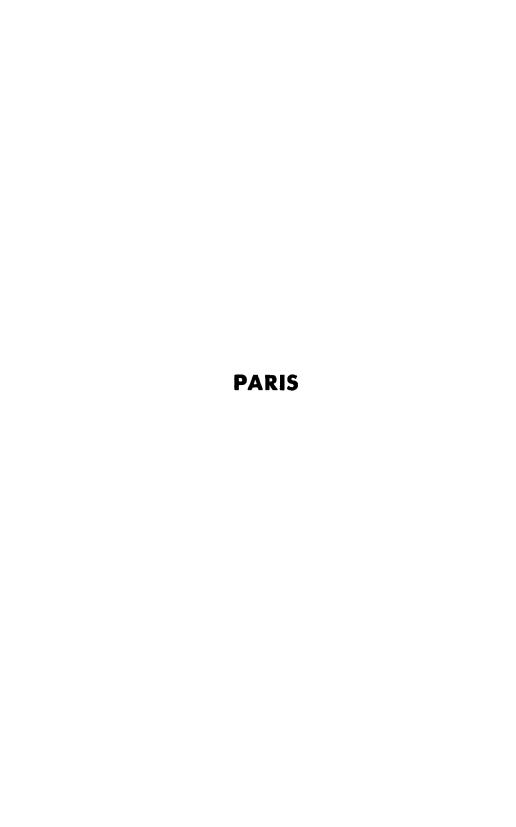
For them, to cultivate themselves should consist in being able, in face of their world responsibilities, to develop their knowledge and the aptitudes of their genius. They must break all the bonds which prevent them from revealing themselves in all fulness.

Let us be fully understood. There is no longer any question of engrafting on to Western culture a few charitably tolerated offshoots of our own culture. I repeat that for the Africans it is a question of enriching our own culture with the contribution of the West and still more of the atomic age. If our culture is to live and prosper, it is enough, in the first place, for our people to be animated by the passionate desire to seize hold of modern realities in the light of their aspirations. This will of a person manfully determined to develop himself vigorously under the influence of the imperatives of modern life, is the first condition of salvation. The second is to give full value to our patrimony and to make it a marvellous agent of the defence of individuals in their community. The third is for ourselves to determine in face of the great problems of mankind.

The Resolutions of the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists are inspired by this ambition and are thus designed to define the policy of our culture.

PRÉSENCE AFRICAINE.







#### APPEAL

## THE UNITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AFRICAN NEGRO CULTURE

Our first Congress in 1956 had for its central theme: The Crisis of Negro Culture. Our principal concern at that time was to point out the causes responsible for that crisis and to dissipate ambiguous conceptions. It was under the influence of colonialism and its interests that Western nations wrongfully accepted the idea that there can be a nation without a culture of its own. They were unaware both of the contribution of Afro-Asian peoples to mankind's heritage and of the conscious and systematic action exerted against indigenous cultures. Colonial governments, having far too much to camouflage before their own peoples' eyes, could not allow our cultures to bear witness against the colonial system and its ideology.

This year, our preoccupation is less critical and more constructive in character. In 1956, we diagnosed the disease; in 1959, we propose a remedy: That our peoples should work and strive in concert. In fact, we are not the only peoples as-

piring after Unity.

For some ten years now, European nations have been trying to regroup themselves. Their interests, however, seemed unified already. Being the foremost peninsula of Asia. Europe has played in history a role of which all her nations can be proud. As the active rearing ground of the white race, she has given rise all over the world to achievements that are bold, impressive, and effective. She has dominated nature and peoples in a fashion that means to be glaring and incontestable. Her culture, rightly or wrongly, has set up a great number of her own characteristics and has made them pose as universal values. Viewed from a certain perspective, Western culture is the culture of the World of 1959.

Why then does Europe to-day speak of regrouping itself? It is precisely because the universality of this culture has

now begun to be questioned, first, by the two giant nations, next by the peoples overseas. It is also because this culture, in a growing world, needs to be supported by new sociological data. The balance of political, military, traditional forces is no longer sufficient to sustain its unity and authority. And thus, when Europe thinks to-day of unification, it is without doubt to safeguard her prestige and vocation; but, above all, it is also to secure her last chances of remaining the leading and controlling power among the rising nations.

For the new powers are contesting with Europe for world

leadership:

First, the U.S.A., of which Europe is but the economic vassal (in fact it is to free herself from this economic imperialism that Europe is striving).

Next, the Soviet Union, for whom the European nations are an excellent field for experimenting with and expanding

their new civilization.

Finally, the Bandung powers (Asia, the Arab World and Africa), for whom the present period is a stirring stage in

their political and cultural reawakening.

The birth and growth of this political and cultural consciousness does not concern only the Bandung powers but also the very structure of the whole world. Mutatis mutandis, they can be considered as the proletariate of the modern, and one can discern in this urgency an inspiration and a vocation of universalizing action. Having for their starting point, problems, situations and aspirations that Europe has perhaps never had to experience, they have a mission to make known their cultural personality, and also to create, thereby, new dimensions and new laws for human cultural life. And this in the name of a majority of the human race, whose hunger and misery weigh far more than the prestige of the West upon the march of History.

For this it is imperative that they should establish their

own solidarity.

Here, of course, we are dealing with cultural unity and solidarity. We are scattered over the face of the earth, as imperialism, slavery and the racial policy of the Western Nations have flung us. We live under different political and economic regimes, and we belong to different nations. We find ourselves in Arab, Portuguese, French, English, and other cultures which differ considerably from one another and from our traditional Negro Culture.

Yet, we have common features in our aspirations, in our condition, in our knowledge of the past : features numerous

enough to vindicate the Unity of Negro Culture.

In order to make our Conference a success, it is necessary that we should restate some of our aims, in particular, our

desire:

1) To demonstrate the fact that the exclusive dissemination of authority by Western culture is a betrayal of our personality, our spiritual interests, and our aspirations. It is also a betrayal of universal values. It behoves us therefore a) to formulate our own specific problems and b) to tackle mankind's major problems in our works (after having ascertained the technical, economic and political data of man's modern condition).

2) To build up a community of cultural «totems». «Culture», says a sociologist, «is a family album». Descartes, Shakespeare, and Goethe owe the brilliant prestige they enjoy among Western peoples to their being, before all else, familiar orders of reference, totems of a large family. These totems, whatever their absolute value or insignificance may be, constitute the foundations and the horizon lines of a culture's inmost being. The Pantheon of African «totems» should therefore be erected — a Pantheon of Ancient and

Modern.

3) To marshal a body of supporting evidence. A society always secretes ideas, beliefs and judgments that are accepted and that need no justification or apology. These judgments and beliefs are the atmosphere and the lines of force, or the magnetic field, by which every creation, every cultural exchange within society, is inspired. They cannot be questioned without upsetting the moral foundations of the group. Every writer is a prisoner to his society's ideology and Weltanschauung, even though he should reject them. With our peoples,

let us think anew our common « evidence ».

4°) To build up a community of style or expression. The true style of a society is a faithful reflection of its soul at a given moment of its history. Springing from the depths of being, the totality of forms of expression represented by a people's genuine style exerts a reaction upon the soul of that people at grips with new experiences. This means that vocabularies, kinds and themes inspired by our peoples, should express and satisfy their progressive aspirations by successive stages. We shall thus have to draw from our peoples our inspirations and our resources of expression.

All these original contributions (authority and responsibilities, great men and totems, evidence and judgments of value, vocabulary and style) should at the same time distinguish us from others, portray us to others, and link us to and arti-

culate us with mankind in general.

Hence the significance of constituting a real population of writers and artists, subjected to its own laws, having specific tasks to perform, and conscious of the historical importance of its role in a world which, on account of the irruption of

coloured peoples on the stage of world responsibilities, is going to redefine the laws and structures of world culture, economics and politics.

Palaeontological, prehistoric, and linguistic research could bring to light, from our past, the first foundations of the unity of our African World; and the colonial era (which is far from being over) could furnish decisive elements of our cultural solidarity.

Nevertheless, it is perhaps the conditions of modern life and of the future which will, imperiously, consolidate the

unity of our cultural consciousness.

Every one of us has therefore the responsibility to make his special field a driving force in our struggle for the unity of our peoples, in order later on, to make that solidarity, a universalizing force.

It is this that we intend to examine during the second World Congress of Negro Authors and Artists, which will be

held in Rome at Easter 1959.

The agenda that we propose comprises two parts:

1) The foundation of our culture and its chances of achieving unity and solidarity.

2) The tasks and the responsibilities of each discipline

The first part could be made the object of three studies (on the past, the present, and the future of our culture) en-

trusted to three specialists or groups of specialists.

The second part should comprise a series of studies on the present tasks and responsibilities of the historian, the linguist, the theologian, the scientist, the poet, etc. (bearing always in mind our preoccupation with solidarity).

At the end, a final declaration or motion which, from what precedes, should aim at bringing out the main points in our

cultural policy, is envisaged.

The Spring of 1958.

#### PROPOSED PLAN

## THE UNITY OF AFRICAN NEGRO CULTURE AND RESULTING RESPONSIBILITIES

A — Cultural Unity as a result of

1) The African Heritage:

— The lessons of palaeontology, History, etc.

— Cultural and spiritual analysis

2) The Colonial Experience:

— Common traits of various colonial systems : slavery, colonialism, racial discrimination

— The rise of national consciousness

3) Modern Trends:

- Tendency toward integration: Europe, The Atlantic Nations Group, the Eastern Nations Group, the Afro-Asiatic Group.
- Modern requirements for an African Community:
   technological, economic, political cultural factors.
   The Conclusion: Constructive forces in the establish-
- ment of an African Negro Civilization.
- B Responsibilities in each field: (History, linguistics, poetry, theology, sociology, etc.)
  - 1) What falsifications or twists has the force of colonialism or racism wrought in your special field of study or in your art?

2) What inspirations can that field or art legitimately expect from the present aspirations of the Negro peoples?

Taking for a starting point the concrete situation of your people, what tasks can your field or art propose, what new laws can it lay down for the achievement of a stricter objectivity and a more authentic universality.

Final motion of the Congress:

PLANNING A CULTURAL POLICY

### Preparatory work of the Commissions

The Commissions of the Second Congress directed their work more specially toward the part of the plan entitled

Responsibilities.

Work was planned within the framework of four major Commissions; Literature, Human and Political Sciences, Arts and Mathematical and Technical Sciences. Each of these Commissions might include a number of Sub-Commissions according to the subjects under discussion.

The object of this preliminary organization was to enable Congress members to base their proposals on the theme of the Congress (Unity and Responsibilities) in the technical de-

tail of their various spheres.

It therefore seems valuable to publish the texts which served as a basis for working out the programme of each Commission. These texts are in no way exhaustive and were merely conceived as a working plan, drawn up well before the Congress. They are nevertheless well calculated to show the spirit in which we felt it necessary to make preparation for the Congress.

I

#### The Literary Commission

In addition to questions dealing with the oral literature and the new manifestations of Negro poetry — Studies on the Antilles, Madagascar, etc. the working plan proposed to the Rapporteurs provided for work on Poetry, the Novel and the Theatre.

#### A) POETRY

- a) Studies on poetry and poetical works in oral or vernacular Literature.
  - b) Studies on the phenomena of mimetism in Negro Li-

teratures (with reference to Western Literatures). The Causes of these phenomena — The Consequences — Causes of the

eventual disappearance of this mimetism.

c) Studies on movements of Reaction against this literary abdication previously studied — Advances and Retreats — Errors and Achievements — Causes and consequences of these reactions against mimetism.

d) Studies on the interferences between the oral literatures and the new manifestations of Negro peotry — Studies on the beneficial influences of Western literatures.

e) The New Content of Negro poetry with reference to Negro Peoples and their diverse Styles of expression. Over and above these national poetries, does there exist any general system of Negro Stylistics?

If it is still to be created, on what basis?

f) Has poetry any direct influence on the development of Negro peoples? To what extent? And for what reasons? (These reasons should in some way constitute the conclusion of this chapter on poetry.)

#### B) THE NOVEL

 a) Studies on Novels in the vernacular (e.g. Chaka) — Their characteristics — Do they show any original dimension? In countries where French, English etc. are spoken, are there stories, legends from which the modern Negro Novel could originate?

b) Studies on the Negro Novel since Colonisation.

The African novel
 The West Indian

3. The North American 4. The South American

The condition of the Negro Novel of this period with reference to the direct or indirect influences (phenomena) of colonisation.

Is there any link between these zones of the Novel? (e.g.

between Wright and Roumain?)

Study, in each zone, of the progressive movement toward

the expression and the liberation of the Negro.

c) Has the need for this liberation conditioned the expression of the novel? Does this expression bring itself close to Novels or other works in the vernacular? To what extent? Why, if not?

d) Reckoning from the preceding studies:

Does there exist what we can call THE NEGRO NOVEL? In other words: can we define a system of ethics common to the diverse negro zones, an ethical system which would stand out clearly from the novels, and above the respective languages?

e) Has the Negro Novel a future? That is, can we foresee

or map out the new role of the Novel in the period of decolonisation and construction now in the offing?

#### C) THE THEATRE

This chapter is particularly difficult. It can be divided as follows:

a) The popular African theatre (in vernacular):

1) Fundamental characteristics (e.g. The absence of the stage in the western sense of the word; or again, the difference between the African and the Western dramaturgies.

2) The conceptions of the world, of existence, of society,

which this theatre portrays.

3) Technical means employed.

b) The theatre as it really exists in certain countries with a big Negro population (ideal example: America).

1) Are Negro plays acted in this theatre? Which? The

significance of these plays.

- 2) The problem of Negro Actors; Can they act non-Negro plays with profit? Why? The ethical problem of their utilization. What roles are reserved for them to play?
- c) Possibilities of the development of a Negro Theatre:

1) In Africa

How to continue the popular African theatre while at the same time adapting it to present-day, international forms of the theatre, and yet without disfiguring this African theatre?

The content of this theatre with reference to the struggle

of African people for self-assertion.

Specific Problems (rhythm, dramaturgy, language, theatrical poetics, etc.); technical problems (creation of theatrical companies, subsidies, help to actors etc.)

2) In Countries (like America) where a Negro theatre al-

ready exists:

Making African dramaturgy eventually more profound? Search for a theatrical form locally valid for (acceptable to) the coloured people (for example: can an American-Negro

theatre of real worth be promoted?)

Solutions proposed for the problem of coloured Actors.

3) In non African countries (like the West Indies) where a stock of oral literature already exists.

Problem of the revival of this fund of oral literature.

The language problem (is a theatre in the Creole language possible?)

Problem of theatrical forms.

#### d) Conclusion:

 Liaison between the diverse theatrical zones. Exchange of relations. 2) The content of a World-Wide Negro theatre. Is this

possible? If not, why?

3) Problems that would arise for such a theatre as regards the solidarity and the advancement of the Negro peoples.

#### I. — CONSIDERATION

The preceding remarks concerning the Novel, Poetry, and the Theatre are proposals of work to be discussed. It would be desirable that each organisation of the S.A.C. should enrich this plan by considering it in the light of problems particular and local. The important thing is to let the other Sections know the problems that face each particular Section. But it is necessary to discuss next a general plan valid for every branch of Study. The following then could be the eventual plan of discussion at Rome, in the Sessions of the Literary Commission.

#### II. — PLAN OF DISCUSSION

Plan proposed for the Commission's use in Rome.

A) A rapid examination of the Papers for each discipline. Observations on the content of these papers.

B) The perennial nature (permanence) of native literary forms in the countries of Africa, and their blossoming forth

in countries with an African population.

C) The meeting of the native and the Western forms. The conflict or the harmony which results according to the countries considered : (Haiti, the West Indies, America, Madagas-

D) Proposals for the development of these diverse Negro literatures. Problems of language, of form, of possibilities of expression, of diffusion. Respect for local peculiarities.

Solidarity in spite of the diverse zones and the diverse

languages employed.

E) Is a world-wide Negro literature desirable? if not, why? What should be the criteria (principles) of such a literature? Its function? Its scope?

F) Eventually: a Final Resolution of the Commission, re-

sulting from its deliberations.

#### II

#### Commission of the Human Sciences

The work of this Commission tended to stem from a historic view of the development of Africa. At any rate, the plan of work laid down aimed at asking each reporter to take into account the lesson of traditional (pre-colonial) Africa in each sphere or discipline envisaged. This search for traditional conditions was not aimed at a « formal return » to structures which are sometimes obsolete, but at simplifying the work for the modern elaboration of an African humanism, rooted in the realities of the Negro-African peoples.

#### PLAN

#### 1. — STARTING POINT:

Study of Traditional forms of Collectivism (Synthetical in a natural way) in Africa.

a) Description (non specialisation, initiating and synthetic

character of knowledge)

b) Cultural Significance (can bases of civilisation be ex-

tracted from this general character?)

NOTE: This Section will be dealt with by Africans on the spot, or by European specialists who will be asked for Papers.

#### II. - SPECIAL STUDIES

The transition to the modern, analytic forms. Preamble.

1) Criticism of the exercise of the human sciences by Western Scientists as a consequence of colonialist imperialism, and by reason of their belonging to a limited Culture.

2) How can the exercise of these Sciences by African Scientists modify the methodology of these human Sciences.

Division into Disciplines.

Ethnography: pure ethnography, Linguistics; Sociology; History and Human Geography; Political Economy; Political Sciences.

- A) ETHNOGRAPHY (The Study of ethnics) divided into:
- 1) Pure Ethnography:

a) Ethnography in a closed Society.

b) Ethnography of Society in visible transformation.
c) New possible definitions of Ethnography, in terms of modern data and of the new African research workers.
Within these data.

- a) How do Africans accede to the exercise of ethnography?
- b) How can they give a new content to these Sciences?
- c) How these Sciences modify (influence) them.

#### 2) Linguistics.

- a) Study of African linguistic forms and the links between them.
- b) Study of the transformation of languages of African origin. Study of the zones where they have spread (problems: Reunion, The West Indies).

c) Study of the contribution of non-African languages to African languages.

d) Study of the influence of African or non-African lan-

guages (Creole or French).
e) Contribution of the exercise of linguistics to the problem of the Unity of the Negro World.

#### B) — Sociology

a) Study of traditional forms of African Society.

b) Study of the forms of Society in countries with populations of African origin, and their correspondence (deformed or not) with the traditional forms of African Society.

c) Study of the influence of colonisation on African Society.

d) Study of African Society in the period of decolonisation - the myth of the « uprooted ».

e) Future prospects.

f) Spirit and conditions of work and of existence of the African Sociologist.

g) Marxism.

1) The specific characteristics of the economic situation of under-developed countries compared with the Western proletariat.

2) The too exclusively western character of Marx's references.

3) The need for African Marxists to de-Westernize their thought within the scientific framework of their discipline.

#### C) HISTORY AND HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

In these disciplines the plan drawn up for ethnology and sociology applies generally bearing in mind the scientific specifications to be established.

#### D) POLITICAL ECONOMY

- a) Study of the Structure of the Economy of African Societies before the colonial era.
- b) Study of the Structure of Colonial Economy in Africa.
- c) The contribution of the different economical doctrines and practices to the elaboration of economic concepts in the Africa under construction.
- d) Economic problems that the new African States have to grapple with.
- e) Economic problems in countries with an African Population (e.g. integration of the Negro in the Economic Life of the USA) (another example: the economic problem in the West Indies with reference to a possible West Indian Federation and Afro-West Indian solidarity.
- f) The contribution of African economists to economic thought.

#### E) POLITICAL SCIENCE

- a) Concept of democracy in traditional Africa (e.g. democratic practices — feudalities)
- Exercise of democracy and political life under the colonial regime.
- c) Analysis of the great political conceptions in their application to colonised countries (e.g. democracy in South America, assimilation in the West Indies).
- d) Examination of the political difficulties which face the new African States.
- e) New forms of democracy in Africa and in countries with an African population — from traditional conceptions and through world political experience.
   Defence force which can result from them.
- f) African contribution to political thought, in the course of the struggle for the establishment of this democracy.

#### III. — CONCLUSION

With these analytic modern forms for a starting point, can we at last arrive at a synthetic superior cultural form, which prolongs in an organic manner the traditional, synthetic, natural African forms?

#### Ш

#### The Commission of the Arts

# ORGANISATION PROPOSED TO THE VARIOUS REPORTERS

#### I. — THE PLASTIC ARTS

#### A) PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

1) From the diverse expressions in this field, can the general laws of traditional African Statuary be drawn out?

2) The Influence of Colonisation on this Art.

3) Reasons why painting lagged behind Sculpture in

Africa.

4) The State of Sculpture and painting in countries with peoples of African origin. African Sources in these artistic zones (Haïti)

5) The influence of African plastic Arts in Europe and,

inversely, the influence of Western on African Arts.

6) Can a common Aesthetic be established to guide

research for an African Art?

a) The spirit and the conscientiousness of the artist for the reconquest of the African personality.

b) Regional or National peculiarities...

c) The organic link between these peculiarities and the

eventual African-Aesthetics.

7) The definition itself of this aesthetics following from the preceding studies, as a tendency, and as a reality.

#### B) ARCHITECTURE

A study of the laws of town-planning with reference to each country.

The need to abandon mimetism in architecture (errors per-

ceived in this field in the various countries.)

The need for a rational organisation, in consideration of the people's need.

#### II. — MUSIC AND THE DANCE

1) An analysis of the criteria of an African system of rhythm.

2) The continuance of African Music in countries with

peoples of African origin.

3) Can the dance be regarded as a constitutive element of civilization?

4) Conditions for the development of an African musical Art.

#### III. — THE CINEMA

1) The « ethnographic » cinema in Africa.

2) The Negro Činema in the U.S.

3) Conditions of the employment of Negro Artists.

4) The tasks of an African Scenario.

5) The problems of the Creation of an organised cinematographic Center.

Conditions for the liberty of such a Center.

NOTE. — We suggest that the Anglo-Saxon and the American Sections of the S.A.C. should enrich this scheme for discussions in Music, the dance, the cinema, which interest them in a manner technically more precise.

#### IV

#### The Mathematics and Technical Sciences Commission

We make below certain suggestions that can help you in collecting material for your paper to the «Commission of the Pure and applied Sciences» of the next Congress of the African Society of Culture.

We think that two main headings of unequal importance

could constitute the frame-work of these reports:

1 — The Unity of the development of technics throughout Africa (African cosmogonies — pharmacopæia and the medical and para-medical African activities — technics for the conquest of nature etc. the survival of these practices among the Afro-Americans).

II — a) The need for African Unity in the development

and the fecundity of scientific research.

b) The consolidation of African Unity by a common development of scientific Research (There is a question, in short, of the role of Modern Science in the Unification of the Continent).

In giving the name « Euratom » to its first « Continental Institute » Europe wished to emphasize this importance of Science as factor of Union.

It is our duty, at a moment when there is no longer a School of a Continental Class in Africa, since the burning down of the «Library of Alexandria» it is our duty to trace out the main outlines of an organisation of scientific research in which all the African peoples shall be associated in a task which should be one of the sources of their presence and their power in the world.

v

## General conclusion on the preparatory work of the Commissions

The plans set out above were in principle intended to serve as an outline for all the work of the Congress. This was the case with certain Commissions. In the case of others which were too specialized (such as the Sub-Commission on Theology) it was impossible to draw up a working plan in advance. Finally the practical conditions which governed the proceedings of the Congress did not always allow the plan to be respected. Some Commissions had to dispense with discussion on points of detail which were sometimes important. The time available, unexpected difficulties of organization, and the occasional absence of suitable equipment, often compelled the Commissions to speed up their work unexpectedly. Be that as it may, the reader will be able to verify that the Congress members worked with the constant desire to go deeply into the subjects proposed. The Resolutions of the various Commissions are the proof of this.

## The foundations of our unity arising from the colonial epoch

The echoes of certain criticisms are already reaching us. The theme of to-day's session « The foundations of our unity arising from the colonial epoch » may appear rather artificial. In it we should prefer to find evidence of faith and hope or a fighting slogan rather than the expression of a living reality.

A number of the Congress members come from independent nations such as the U.S.A., Haïti, Ghana, Guinea and Ethiopia, and for that reason their situation would seem closely to resemble that of the peoples still at grips with the harshness of foreign domination and whose forces are wholly bent on their will to complete liberation.

Better still, the members of this assembly — and this is a positive fact — do not differ only in that they hail from different places. They differ even more by the diversity, one might say opposition between their intellectual training, their

political choice and their religious convictions.

Some are English-speaking and are deeply influenced by Anglo-Saxon discipline. Others are French-speaking or speak Spanish or Portuguese, and their minds have been formed in a native way and are more tinged with Roman uprightness and Cartesian logic than with the Pragmatic aspect of things.

Some are believers, Musulmans, Animists, Marxists, Free-

Thinkers etc.

We may try to discover in such varied elements the existence a common characteristic based, not precisely on a concept of race, but exclusively on the urge of a spiritual claim, but would not such an attempt spring from speculation of specious dialectic?

People wonder, after all, if they have not before them a miniature caricature of the U.N.O. in colour, and they quickly

accuse us, once again, of reversed racial prejudice.

We, the others, have a dark skin, but the objections have a tough hide. During our first congress many of us fully expressed their opinion on this point. For centuries the whites

have been holding meetings, but if the blacks do the same

thing it is considered to be heinous.

Through repeating these arguments they perhaps secretly hope to sow doubt among us and to shake our convictions both about the legitimacy of our movement and about the deep-seated reasons for our conviction?

Our adversaries should make the best of the situation! We are not victims of wishful-thinking. Nevertheless, we do not at all underrate the objections of those who criticize us. They do, at least, offer us an advantage in that they make us vigilant and give us a clear view of the dangers to which we are exposed. These questions occupy the mind even if one only makes a small effort to elucidate and strengthen the sources of communion and the factors of collaboration between people apparently different from each other.

My intention is to suggest to you certain means which may lead to a solution and which may help to clarify the pro-

blem set before you.

We shall have to examine the value of certain cultural data which form the sum total of our affinities and which serve as

points for reference along our route.

These data alone determine the foundations of our unity and clarify its meaning. We can only imagine these foundations as having harmony as their centre, a rallying-point where all the influences, varied as they are and which we owe to the West, meet intimately, together with the hereditary qualities which come from our deep ancestral roots and our acquired knowledge in every branch.

At the beginning of our examination one thing must be said. After having been the pitiless instrument of the dispersion of Negroes through slave-trading, and after having taken advantage of their division to parcel out Africa, the West has become, without realizing it, the agent responsible for the re-integration of consciences which is taking place, at the present moment, in the very heart of the great « black » family.

The West has shown itself to be a complex of negrophobic

values.

It may well deplore this discovery, and we know, from unquestionable signs, that it now feels vexation and regret,

perhaps even fear.

The West also knows, however, that the phenomenon is irreversible — that is one of the unforeseeable consequences of its own conduct. For a long time it has proclaimed that it alone had the monopoly of the universal. It has arrogated to itself the vocation of imposing its stamp everywhere and on everything. Its clearest ambition was to reduce the world to its own measure, to extend its own law and to force humanity to conform to its pattern. This dream certainly does not lack

grandeur; it swells with male pride. Somewhere in Western man, in the darkness of the soul, a belated spark of Promethean fire always burns. But what results did he really expect from these enterprises which aimed at hegemony? Did he think that these vassals who bowed before him would never recover possession of his secrets? The West would have had to colonise behind closed doors, administer without orders and govern without words!

History is so made that every human act may have a boomerang effect. Of the powers gathered together at the Congress of Berlin for the partition of Africa, which would ever have foreseen this wonder? Their languages were to serve as a rallying point, as an instrument of communication and as an arm to the very people for whose lands the European diplomats were coldly ratifying the charter of dismemberment and distribution. The baptismal certificate of the Pan-Negro movement, the beginning of our community of hope, was to be read between the lines of the treaty of 1878.

The language of the conqueror will allow the vanquished scattered across the world to contact each other from one continent to another. It is a strange adventure! The West has become the semaphore of Negro peoples. From Tananarive to Port-au-Prince, from Conakry to Harlem, from Bamako to Fort-de-France, from Trinidad to Bahia, from Dakar to Havana, from Nyasaland to Jamaïca and from Little Rock to Durban, the Negro-Africans call each other in the nonchalance of the English accent, the vivacity of French and the vocal richness of Hispano-Portuguese!

Their joy, their sadness, their love, their anger, their worries and their hopes will be sent from one horizon to another on the wings of this practical morse which is, henceforth, for them the language of their masters. Not one lynching, not one attack, injustice or offence, however slight, will be perpetrated against a member of the tribe, whether it be on the banks of the Mississipi, in the suburbs of Johannesburg or in the streets of Zomba, but what a message will at once go out in the very language of the criminal so that the sensitivity of black people throughout the world will be moved and they will jointly condemn the act.

It is through that very language that the blacks from all parts of the world go back through the ages in search of their origins, strengthen their fraternity and unite their beliefs in the future welfare of their people.

Nothing illustrates this fact better at present than this Congress itself. Is it not amazing that not one of us has thought of using his mother tongue when writing his report or taking part in debates? A man from Madagascar or a Yoruba could have done it, but the text would still have had to be translated into a «foreign» tongue for everybody to understand it.

Would the idea of such a meeting have arisen in our peoples' minds if it had not been for the fact of white mens' settling down in each one of our countries. They have divided our hands, but our souls have been linked again in space. They thought they had shut us up into their closed systems, in the ghettos of boundaries set up for their own advantage, but the power of their language and the force of their ideas are undermining the foundations and making the walls crumble.

The white man tries in vain to oppose the great surge of African unification. He knows that his measures are only dilatory, he knows what result they will have and he knows quite well the fate of those among us who are willing to serve as tools in his last battle! The West has only itself to blame. Once again it is providing one of the essential components of our union, of the new confraternity of the blacks of the universe.

Here we see, from the outside, one of the striking characteristics of our unity. It grows hard, it flowers with the insolence of paradox on the very land of colonisation, and it is adorned, like a trophy of victory or of irony, with the true sign of our « alienation ».

One question comes up at the beginning: at this stage of the evolution, are we really faced with an alienation in the usual sense of the word?

Has there been any deliberate intention of depriving us of any essential value, of stripping us of a genuine quality really ours and of replacing it by another element of foreign origin so that we should be radically transformed by it?

Perhaps the rulers did, to start with, actually intend to compel us to understand their language, however superfically. What else could they do? How could they otherwise communicate their orders? It seemed natural for them, also, to want to teach us the characteristics of their grandeur, the signs of their present prestige, the great deeds of their history and the whole marvellous framework so as to give us an idea of their race as some privileged, superior species. They wished to make us swoon in admiration at the brilliance of their power and humiliate us utterly at the thought of the vastness of our nothingness.

It was impossible for them to innoculate us effectively and cultivate in us the virus of inferiority without resorting to this magic spell.

There is abundant proof of the truth of this. Those among Negroes who suffer least from a complex are often to be found among groups where the rare presence of Whites has not made it necessary to learn their language. In the long run, however, this undertaking brings with it another consequence. The language of the colonizer has become as familiar to the colonized as their mother tongue, and some of them know no other. For

many, if not for all, this language has lost its strangeness long ago.

So, it is not really correct to speak of our «alienation». If there is any «alienation» it is rather the language itself which is the chief victim. We have taken it over and we can now claim that it belongs to us as much as to those who possess it by divine right, and in this way we feel as French, English or Iberian as the real product from the Seine, the Thames, the Tagns or the Ebro.

To tell the truth, our Congress is a language stealers' Congress. That crime, at least, we have committed! We have stollen from our masters the treasure of identity, the motive force of their thought, the key to their souls, the magic Sesame which opens wide the door to their mysteries in the forbidden cave where all the booty robbed from our fathers is piled up and for which they will one day answer!

It is obvious to everybody. Among our ranks, different though we may seem, there exists an atmosphere of resolute fraternity, a sentiment of pledged solidarity, a current of common responsibility, that kind of almost mystic understanding composed of a shared secret, of secret meetings cut short, of tacit allegiance, of a mission to be fulfilled and of a goal to be obtained. From these signs one recognizes at all times the nature and the originality of the links uniting accomplices in the same action.

For such they are — accomplices and not simply companions. There is more than companionship, more than comradeship in our will to be ourselves and to live among ourselves. There is a warmth, an intimacy which goes further than the joy or the satisfaction of being members of the same association. It is not at all a question of advancing along parallel roads: parallel lines never meet.

Our aim is to follow in each others' footsteps, to pool our talents, suffering, experience and ideas in the service of a common cause, and to re-instate, in the circle where world events take place, our values which have for so long been ignored, despised and brutally swept aside from the great road of history.

If we don't go so far as to dream of a world political organization, it is at least obvious that we intend no longer to be perpetually absent from the meeting places of men. Nor shall we be eternal underlings whose acts and thoughts it is the sport of others to interpret.

The fact that we are all preoccupied at the same time about these questions defines what I call our «complicity», because this automatically makes us different from other men and explains the mutual attraction we exert on each other. Beyond the call of the blood, these preoccupations provide the cement which binds the materials forming the basis of our construction.

Now, what have we gained so far? It must be the singular process of lucidity through which the possession of a foreign language has taken us.

The road of re-discovery for Negroes separated and spread throughout the four corners of the world, will lead through Paris, New-York, London, Lisbon and Madrid. Western civilization and culture will provide the corner stones for the building of our awareness.

How can one fail to see that these glimpses contain something troubled, like a silent menace which, contrary to our aspirations, seeps through everything which it is our calling to affirm. The problem of our unity can only arise in the conditions created and directed by our relations with our oppressors, and it would thus be the product, either bastard or venal, of our own servitude, the reservoir of our miseries and of the maledictions which accompagny our Chamite-like fate.

Seigneur Mannoui would be right in saying: « Negroes have a congenital complex of dependence! »

You might as well give, not the funeral oration of colonialism, but praise of its beneficial vitality! What a fine service we should render to its victims in giving them this priceless present — the enlightened, pointful understanding of the character of their destiny! Blessed be those who dominate us for having shown us what we are! But who does not realize the extreme weakness, not to say falseness, of any wealth or ideal essentially at the mercy of circumstances beyond its control!

There is yet a graver danger. Will not the invasion of our cultural field by the thinking categories and intellectual mould of the occupying power bring about the stifling and drying-up of our own roots and of our hereditary concepts?

In any case, this invasion threatens to contaminate us and we can enumerate the ravages it causes and from which the West itself suffers: mental schisms, religious ostracisms, ideological quarrels and that kind of scepticism or subtle nihilism, so contrary to our customs and traditions, which seems, this side of the ocean, to symbolize moral elegance among the fine spirits of to-day.

This is of the utmost importance; the whole future of our cause depends upon it. We must be extremely vigilant with regard to it and use all the resources of our sagacity and wisdom. You can see what I am thinking of — the grubs of the old white man's universe moving, as one of our poets says:

in little caterpillar jumps, slowly, as when one sips milk, slowly, like a marble rolling, in little earthquake quivers into the interior of his civilization, into the core of his culture.

Woe to the unwise, to those among us who have not been able to forearm themselves against the attack of the invisible column. Underground work is more fatal than gangrene in the blazing sun. The best efforts and the most praiseworthy energy devoted both to the construction and the consolidation of our unity can be suddenly destroyed by it. These efforts will have been sapped, inwardly ruined by these rodents of a new anatomy.

II

What a fine subject for mockery on the part of our eternal enemies! Europe will have shot its Parthian shaft at us and will not be satisfied at having divided our territories at its leisure. We shall have helped Europe ourselves, and we shall not only have validated but even worsened the absurd cuts by superimposing spiritual barriers and ideological curtains, simply because we shall have had neither the courage nor the capacity to liberate ourselves everywhere from the impact of its guardianship. Nothing should be accepted or lived any longer unless it has been re-thought and re-experienced by us, otherwise the West will have bitten into the marrow of our being with its ills.

Must we extend the analysis to another plane? In the cultural order which concerns us, the latent signs of disagreement and the threat of disaggregation are as much to be feared, and it seems that our adversaries have a fine time in

harrying us with their sarcasms.

Far from being a favourable factor in our union, the possession of the invader's language and culture could raise dangerous barriers between us. It would show the division between ourselves and the mass of our peoples, and our separation from them would equal our attachment to the peoples of our masters so that, the more our cultural links with them were strengthened, the wider the gulf between us and those of our people who have not had the same chances would become.

But there is worse. Among ourselves, privileged as we are, don't we feel this gulf? We differentiate between one another as much as the Latin or the Anglo-Saxon and we reflect the differences of character and national temperament which separate us. Two mentalities face each another, two humanisms and two philosophies. Everybody knows that the «entente cordiale» between the British Lion and the Gallic Cock is expressed far more in public than in private.

Thus it seems right to think that more intellectual affi-

nities exist between François Mauriac, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Aragon and the French-speaking negro writers and artists than between their English or American counterparts who, in their turn, feel more closely allied to Faulkner, Hemingway, Ezra Pound and Aldous Huxley. Their turn of mind makes them look to the great white authors and artists of their country or town rather than to their cousins in Paris or uncles in Africa.

So as to make us drink the absinte, the tempters use sirenvoices or the speech of prosecutors: Descartes is not Bacon, Shakespeare is not Racine, Lamartine is not Byron nor Edgar

Allan Poe Baudelaire.

The American Negro and the British Negro don't have the same point of view as the French or Portuguese Negro. How can they pretend to understand each other over fundamental questions like those which are set by this Congress?

The very creation of the African Cultural Society is not

to be spared from criticism and the whole principle has to be

re-considered: it is a club of « racists »!

The so-called cultural unity, so brilliantly publicised, would then depend on pure mystification : the dialectic of

pigmentation!

Neither Alexandre Dumas nor Pushkin ever felt the need to proclaim that they had negro blood, and no-one would think of questioning the European quality which they eminently share with Ibsen, Dostoievski, Walter Scott or Balzac.

All those Negroes can complain as much as they like.

They are only intellectuals in so far as they consider themselves Westerners. Both in what they have acquired and in what they produce they represent only a sample, varied and coloured if you like, but typical also, only that it is wrapped in the cellophane of a humanity irremediably marked with the stamp of the West. For that reason they are nothing more than « racists », « racists » and ingrates !

Those who are accused, I would be tempted to add, what

have you to reply?

#### Ш

Here we are entering the heart of the problem, our problem, that of the black intellectuals. We are faced with two kinds of questions:

1) Forgetting the shade of skin, in what way do the socalled black intellectuals, even though they drink at the same river of knowledge as their Western counterparts, differ from 2) Under the chequer-work of their intellectual filiations, what exigencies, what inner harmony do these same men obey in order to be able to give to their progress and their attitudes the same outer aspect and order?

These two questions really come to the same thing, the question of our value, of our development as men in the special conditions under which we have been placed by the enigmas of history.

The reasons are common coin. We are, in the same way as Mauriac or Malaparte, the real inheritors of the Greeks and Romans, the Gauls and Saxons, the Vikings and Iberians. Our masters in thought are Homer and Socrates, Aristotle and Cicero, Plato and Virgil, Montaigne and Bacon, Pascal and Dante, Cervantès and Shakespeare, Racine and Camoëns, Dickens and Voltaire, Spinoza and Hegel, Nietzsche and William James, Swinburne and Kierkegaard, James Joyce and Valéry. Here I stop for fear of forgetting some.

There is no doubt about those which follow, either an Aimé Césaire, a Richard Wright, a George Laming or a Sédar Senghor would flourish much more easily in a salon in Paris, London or New-York or in a group at Saint-Germain-des-Prés than in a village in the Congo or under a Sudanese hut.

Like any Western intellectual we all find rare, delicate pleasure in listening to Mozart or Beethoven, Purcell or Wagner, and we are equally enchanted by Michael Angelo, Raphael, Goya, Gauguin, Vlaminck or Picasso.

With regard to French, English, American, Spanish or Portuguese, I must say that we use and abuse them fully, not to say deliriously. We really recognize, from the intellectual point of view, that we have a full share in the vast universe of the West.

All this is true, wholly true, and we are overjoyed at being able to proclaim this in the glorious « Eternal City » in which, more than in any other city in the world, this western civilization shines out with unequalled splendour and where it has left the traces of its beauty and force on so many masterpieces. Believe me when I say that it is not without pride or emotion that we see, in the depths of our being, our personality which has spread out its wings and which now ripens and bathes in the sun of a culture, the deeds and dynamic aspect of which have not yet ceased to startle the world.

Our presence in Rome, like the former choice of the Sorbonne for our sittings, has a significance which admits of no doubt. It bears witness of gratitude and is an expression of homage to the genius of this beautiful culture which is more fos us than a source of wonderment; it is a source of distinction and enrichment.

It is no less true to say, however, that if this really is what we feel it is not, in itself, enough. It illuminates only one side

of the complex reality of our intellectual life, and it leaves the other side in complete darkness, a side which, though it may be more secret is perhaps not less rich nor less authentic. That part of us which, above borrowed antagonisms and the jumble of formations, unites those of us who are French, English or Spanish, speaking in the same ways as it unites us all, across seas and beyond time, to our peoples, our homelands and our dead.

It is this, this obscure, mysterious gift which makes us different from our Western brothers. They will never feel the torment or the rending, the fire and nip of which we feel against our sides, for they will never have to experience the kind of tension that is in us, born of our faithfulness to our original well-spring and of our attachment to their culture.

Before it helped us to reach a state of balance and mastery this culture transformed our brains into a permanent home for conflict, and it only shows itself to be fruitful and beneficial to us in the sense that it thrives on the very substance of our division, our anguish is always its tonic and delight

light.

That condition is our own. From the West Indies to the Indian Ocean, from Sao-Paolo to Leopoldville, that condition is common to all of us. It is not just some kind of sulky masochism nor something artificial which might be the tropical form of a new romanticism. If we only consider the data of our destiny we see that this condition affects its basis and

colours all its aspects.

In spite of their generosity neither Mauriac, nor Sartre nor Basil Davidson can participate in it, nor can any intellectual of their race. On the other hand, by instinct and without even knowing one another, Pere Blackman from Haiti, Glissant from the West Indies, Diop from Sénégal and Ramandraivonona from Madagascar do partake of it in the communion of their aspirations, as they are suffering together, and it is like a mystic loaf of bread which gives to their confraternity the meaning and the flavour of a healing sacrament.

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Such is our tragedy, then, the drama of an oppressed conscience continuously torn between two tendencies. I am French by education, from Madagascar by race, and my personality is in danger of becoming worn-out in that continuous struggle, crushed under the weight of the paradox and disintegrated by the impact of my ambivalence.

Our critics have, by their perspicacity, well weighed up the tragic stakes in the battle. The scales have only to be tipped in favour of our faithfulness to the foreign culture, for example, and the balance will be lost. We should literally be trun-

cated men, the wounded of an eternal war.

Then, it is said of us that we are « uprooted ». This rather ugly word expresses the idea very well: trees cut off at the base, severed from the sap of the earth and hung in the air, nourished only at the will of the mind! That is the heresy of cultural assimilation — a mango-tree of Abidjan deprived of its sap and native soil, yet supposed to blossom as an apple

tree from Normandy!

In political jargon that is called loyalty towards the West. Our fidelity to the culture received would be the price of our infidelity to ourselves. Does culture imply any other intention than that of bringing those gifted with thought to the highest point in which their minds can expand and flower? We have no intention of giving up that which makes us what we are, and this is the contrary of a relinquishment on the part of men.

Because we refuse to accept the terms of an absurd dilemma, because we mean to keep our balance and cultivate those roots which link us to our people, and because we form a common front against that which threatens to rend us, we are accused of plotting against the West and out of contempt or pity, they say we are suffering from an uprush of natio-

nalistic fury!

One would have to have a singular lack of imagination or be suffering from a good dose of bad faith if one did not understand in which direction our efforts are tending and that they constitute a passionate search for proportion, for harmony and for dialectic conformity between the two columns of our inner construction.

Well, haven't we emphasized this? The foreign culture could only be embodied in us if it fed on the substance of our torment and thus gave proof of a veritable restoration of itself through having swallowed our intellectual molecules. But at the same time a strange reversal of functions is taking place. In order to take this upon ourselves and live it fully we must, in our own turn, feed upon it and use it as a form of sustenance indispensable to our health; it will thus be the

vitamin supplied to our spirit.

Our intellectual growth and our development as men spring from the combined, uninterrupted action of this double « chewing-over ». The assimilation follows a process which is the reverse of that which we have just mentioned; it is the culture and its instrument, the language, which become assimilated. In this process they will lose some of their primitive qualities but they will gain, as they are transformed, a quality which they have never known before, a renewal of themselves made, as it were, out of the flesh and blood of our soul: « they have, as we say, disgorged their whiteness ».

Then, from culture and language, will come a kind of radiance, « soft and diffused », in our colour and reflecting our image. We may still speak the same language as François

Mauriac and use the same words as Hemingway, but we no longer use the same mode of expression as they do. The words, by the miracle of transmutation, have assumed on our lips and under our pen an import which they have not and which they never could have acquired among their original users.

It is not a question of style or temperament, of talent or of optics as might be found in Gide or Valéry, Montherlant or Claudel. This phenomenon surpasses the particular and takes

on the value of a collective distinction.

It is not a question of racial prejudice either. If we no longer find ourselves in the company of Mauriac or of Aragon, Negroes that we are, we recognize, without any sense of dis-cord, that we are the twin brothers of the Arab Bourguiba, of the Berber Amrush, of the Brahman Nehru and of the Asiatic Ho Chi Minh. All the colonized, half-colonized or ex-colonized of the earth can have the same from of expression, for their position as « underlings » or former « subjects » can only be imposed upon them in the same terms under the variety of forms and combinations of events.

The truth is that, under the impulse of our own drama, we speak Malagasy, Arabic, Wolof or Bantu in the language of our masters. Because we have the same form of expression, even if we don't possess the same language, we manage to understand each other perfectly from Tamatave to Kingston and

from Pointe-à-Pitre to Zomba.

There we touch upon one of the factors which give unusual strength to our cohesion and our brotherhood. It is from this that the uniformity of our attitude comes and can be explained by virtue of a general connivance and secret consensus (I spoke of « complicity ») in the same way as the uniformity of our reactions and our emotional change in face of any decisive event in world affairs. When one has the same form of

expression one naturally has the same soul.

From this also, our contribution to this same culture can be evaluated. It has given us a treasure but we, in our turn, return it in the form of originality. One of the most striking phenomena of this century is the appearance of Negro values in the field of history. This is seen in our dances, our painting, our sculpture, novels and poems — a host of examples of black « vitality » which have contributed very much to the development of artistic conception and the renewal of cultural sensitivity in the West.

What! You speak of our ingratitude! There are insults which we won't put up with; they return of their own accord

against those who throw dirt.

The part our poets and novelists have played in the renaissance, deepening and lustre of literature, and of French literature especially, is quite well known.

By their « expression », the works of Glissant, Césaire, or

Senghor give literature a special strain and open up horizons for it which would never have been discovered by Françoise Sagan, Paul Eluard or any other writer, regardless of his personal value or talent!

Sartre writes: « a poem by Césaire bursts and turns back on itself like a rocket. Suns spring off it, turn and explode into new suns; it is a perpetual outstripping.

« It is impossible to find the calm unity of opposites, it is a matter of making one of the opposites of the blackwhite couple rise up like a sexual organ against the other. The density of these words, thrown up into the air like stones from a volcano, represents « negroism » asserting itself against Europe and colonization. What Césaire destroys is not the whole of culture, it is white culture, and what he brings to light is not the desire for everything — it is the revolutionary aspirations of the oppressed Negro ».

I apologize for this long quotation; these things had to be said, and well said. That is also why we are here at this Congress, in order to tell the West that we are not fighting it because it is the West. We are not rising up against Western culture for its own sake. I think I have said enough to make the position clear.

We come from the four corners of the globe to show that we are unanimous in our resolve to struggle against a certain spirit in the West responsible for former servitude and guilty of wanting to maintain and prolong our present oppression. We are against all forms of imperialism, cultural or otherwise, which is but the flagrant negation of culture and the supreme expression of contempt for men.

We are here to solemnly affirm our right and our will to share with others the responsibilities of universal culture.

No one person can bear this burden, and, as it is not the monopoly of anybody, things universal can, by their very nature, only be the combination of our qualities in our diversity.

Besides, in face of the unprecedented upheavals which beset the world, is it not natural to think of creating new dimensions and new laws for culture? This is naturally the task of all.

Is this always the case with culture, however. Its inherent quality is to make man realize its scope and to bring him, as a reward for his trials and efforts, to spiritual fulfilment and the conquest of his development.

What is the stumbling-block on the road of our accomplishment? It is always and above all the hard rock of colonialism, its sequels and substitutes of every kind.

We have no reason to be surprised. The ultimate significance of our attitude and unity in action arises from and is

determined by this reality. It is the prison wall against which our dreams and enthusiasms beat their heads.

These tensions, this lack of balance, these threats of uprooting and of mutilation, these signs of opposition between us and the breaking of relations with our peoples — all this we owe to the absurdity of the universe which is imposed upon us. This universe has a general characteristic; everywhere among the English, the French, the Spanish and the Portuguese it is more weighed down with foreign values than with those of our fathers.

This principle will follow us and will not leave us until it has awoken echoes which have for long been dormant or numbed in our conscience — the feeling of frustration, the spectacle of deprivation, both due to the highest kind of trickery.

In the construction of his humanism the white man has almost everything at his disposal, and he has only to soak himself in the meaning of his quest for everything to come to him in superabundance. Since one of the master initiators of his culture whispered to him the magic formula « gnôthi seauton », he knows that he must reach self-knowledge and discover and become what he is.

That means that he must first retrace his steps along the long chain of generations from which he comes. He only forms one of the links in this chain and he will be careful to hand them on intact or improved to those who come after him. Classical humanism, turned towards the past, teaches man the science and the aim of investigation, that is, of discovering oneself by, re-creating the presence of those from whom one has inherited life, thought, art and religion.

Thus François Mauriac bears the whole of his country within him as a living, speaking thing. In the historic sky of France he practises permanent telescopy of the stars and is always in contact with the middling and principal stars whose rays illuminate him constaltly. He maintains a dialogue, a continual commerce, with his fathers in spirit and these prove to be his fathers in body so that between them and himself there is no gap, not the least break in the development of his race; there is a harmonious continuity of destiny.

But we, alas! We have enumerated our forefathers in spirit. What is common to them and our forefathers in body, to them and to us? Still, there is no rootless people, no people without any spiritual ancestry! Where is our Pindar and our Socrates, our Charlemagne and our Jeanne d'Arc, our Rimbaud and our Barrès?

Every people has its heroes and its saints. Every country has its holy hills and its legendary grottoes. Though they have not had the stature of a «Roi Soleil» or a «Little Corporal» in the course of universal history, they have nevertheless filled their epoch and their homeland with their renown, the

thunder of their genius and the heroic quality of their virtues.

Our complaint against the colonialist is that he wittingly turned us aside from all this and that he made us despise it so that we should more readily venerate his totems, his pan-

theon and sanctuary alone.

Our task is consequently precise; we must put our values in order, restore our plundered heritage and re-assemble the pages brutally and secretly torn from our family album. I borrow this formula from a great Christian philosopher, Gabriel Marcel: proceed « to the resurrection of a whole concrete consensus in which we have been participating since it originated and without which each one of us is nothing. It is like restoring to life a heritage and a homeland in a way which includes what they possess that is most vital and most concrete ».

But the past is not enough. Culture is not the equivalent of a museum and in no way evokes the image of something motionless. It is at the same time a re-creation and a continuous creation, an endless renaissance and springing-up. Our humanism will be built, as it is among any people, on that re-discovered, re-created basis as well as on the sum total of the new contributions which guarantee its dynamism and

expansion.

We have been told about Hammurabi and Sardanapalus, Darius and Themistocles, Alexander and Cæsar. Why, then, do not our independent states begin by imposing the experience of our history besides that of others? The names of Toussaint Louverture, Samory, Behanzin, Hadj Omar, Chaka, Radama, Andrianampoinimerina and Ramaromanompo should not remain filled with mystery for our children any more than those of Tuthenkamon or Ramses.

The cultural unity of the West is worked out in the schools; the little Pole is taught about the same Roman Empire, then the Middle-Ages, the Renaissance and modern times like any school-child in Lille or Florence.

We are proud that our poems have been translated into German, English, Russian, Italian and Chinese, but isn't it mortifying to think that no school at home has tought of starting to spread them among our men of to-morrow? No man is a prophet in his own country. The European, however, is one both at home and abroad!

My conclusion comes out naturally. In the organization of our humanism, in the building up of our spiritual integrity we need not look for any other cause of our weakness and confusion: we are men full of others' density, full of the presence of others.

I mentioned an enormous frand; it strikes us perhaps less than the shock caused by the immensity of the chaos, the gulf made and maintained in us by coming hands, adept at taxing us with the absence of our country, the absence of our

history and the absence of ourselves.

How, then, can people be mistaken about the object of our crisis? The dishonesty of certain men in the West and of certain governments is that they pretend to be ignorant of its meaning. They find pretexts and stop up their ears so as not to listen to our reproaches and cries of indignation which rise up because of their lack of understanding.

Nobody is better qualified than the West to understand

Nobody is better qualified than the West to understand the nature of our impatience and of our awakening into revolt. It has itself taught us to diagnose this evil. The more Western culture influences us, the more it pushes us forward and encourages us to invoke its precepts and apply its principles.

We have faith in some and faith in others, but we are naïve in attributing to them a virtue which the West no longer recognizes. It tells us that it has got rid of its infirmities

through the talisman of liberty.

But when the West sees us taking up its methods and following the way it has itself opened up for us, it has us arrested, thrown into prison, dragged before tribunals, condemned, executed or kept in exile.

While I am actually speaking, tha children of Africa are being shot dead and are suffering and dying in jails; think

of Leopoldville and Zomba.

Their crime is to believe that, thanks to the formula and principles of the Whites — their masters in freedom and democracy, they will succeed in healing their wounds and filling in the huge gap which prevents them from regaining their balance and rising to their full adult stature.

I thus recall their memory. Several of them were ready to join us for these solemn days: Kasavubu, Kanza Daniel,

Dr. Hastings Banda, Tom Mboya!

We have always felt ourselves to be at one with all those, Whites or Blacks, who fight and suffer for triumph in some noble cause.

And, as we think of them, their sacrifice, their ordeal our conviction is firmer than ever: the theme of our Congress is not a vain slogan. If there is a dream, we know it now, this dream shines and lives like a light of hope in the hearts of thousands and thousands of Africans.

The independence of Africa, the unity of Africa strides nearer from the horizon, and the time has come « to give the great Negro cry, so loud that the foundations of the world

shall be shaken!»

JACQUES RABEMANANJARA.

# The reciprocal basis of national cultures and the struggles for liberation

On the occasion of our last Congress, devoted to the crisis in Negro-African culture, the cultural phenomenon was analysed in its relationships with colonial domination. Following the profound upheavals which have since taken place in the world, and especially in the colonial Empires, it is the situation of culture in its relationships with national history and national consciousness that concerns us to-day.

Negro-African culture, the Unity and Interdependence of that culture in its renaissance and flourishing, the responsibility of that culture — these problems are fundamental. We must approach them without passion. It is very specifically a question of knowing whether we shall liberate ourselves without aftermath from an alienation which for centuries has made of us the great absentees of Universal History.

I have chosen to study with you the question of the reciprocal basis of national culture and the struggles for liberation.

Colonial domination, because it was total and over-simplified, made short work of displacing, in spectacular fashion, the cultural existence of the subject people. The negation of national realities, new legal relationships, introduced by the occupying power, the rejection of the natives and their customs to the fringes of colonial society, expropriation and the systematized enslavement of men and women, rendered possible this cultural obliteration.

I demonstrated three years ago, at our First Congress, that under colonial conditions, cultural dynamism is fairly rapidly replaced by a substantification of attitudes. The field of culture is then marked off by guard-rails and signposts. They are so many defence mechanisms, of the most elementary type, which can be assimilated on more than one ground to the instinct of preservation. The interest of this period is that the oppressor comes to be no longer satisfied

with the objective non-existence of the dominated nation and culture. Every effort is made to induce the colonized to confess the inferiority of his culture, transformed into instinctive behaviour, the unreality of his Nation, and in the extreme case, the unorganic and incomplete character of his own biological structure.

In the face of this situation the reaction of the colonized is not unequivocal. While the masses preserve intact those traditions which are most heterogeneous in the light of colonial conditions, while the style of craftsmanship becomes solidified in an increasingly stereotyped formalism, the Intellectual hurls himself frantically into the phrensied acquisition of the Culture of the Occupant, taking great pains to disparage his national culture, or immures himself in the circumstantial, methodical, passionate and rapidly sterile enumeration of his culture.

The common characteristic of these two lines of approach is that they both lead to intolerable contradictions. Turncoat or substantialist, the colonized is ineffective, precisely because the analysis of the colonial situation is not carried out with rigour. The colonial situation almost entirely arrests national culture. There is not, and there could not be, any national culture, any national cultural life, any cultural discoveries, any national cultural transformations in the setting of a colonial domination. Here and there, daring efforts sometimes emerge to give a fresh start to cultural dynamism, to give a fresh orientation to themes, forms and tonalities. The immediate, palpable, evident interest of these convulsions is nil, but in pursuing their consequences to their extreme limits, we can perceive the beginnings of the national consciousness becoming less opaque, of a challenge to oppression, of an opening of the struggle for liberation. National culture, under colonial domination, is a contested culture, whose destruction is aimed at in systematic fashion. It very rapidly becomes a culture condemned to clandestinity. This notion of clandestinity is immediately perceived in the reactions of the occu-pier, who interprets the taking of pleasure in traditions as fidelity to a national spirit, as a refusal to submit. This persistence in cultural forms condemned by the colonial society already amounts to a national manifestation.

This manifestation comes rather under the laws of inertia. There is no offensive, there is no re-definition of relations, but instead there is a closing in on a kernel which is increasingly circumscribed, increasingly inert, and increasingly empty.

At the end of two or three centuries of exploitation, a real emaciation of the national cultural panorama takes place.

National culture becomes a stock of motive habits, of traditions of dress, of piecemeal institutions. It displays little mobility, there is no true creativity, no effervescence. The poverty of the people, national oppression and the inhibition

of culture, are one and the same thing. After a century of colonial domination, one finds a culture which has become rigid in the extreme, sedimentary, fossilized. The perishing of national realities and the agony of national culture preserve a relationship of reciprocal dependence. That is why it becomes of capital importance to follow the evolution of these relationships during the struggle for liberation. Cultural negation, the scorn of motive or emotional national manifestations, the outlawing of all specific character in organization, all these contribute to engender aggressive behaviour on the part of the colonized. But this behaviour follows the type of badly differentiated, anarchic and ineffective reflexes. Colonial exploitation, poverty and endemic famine, emphasizing the occupier's character as a ferocious profiteer, force the colonized increasingly into open and organized struggle. Progressively and imperceptibly, the need for a decisive confrontation becomes pregnant and is felt by the great majority of the people. The tensions which were previously inexistent, multiply. International events, the crumbling of colonial empires, whole sectors at a time, sustain and reinforce the spirit of combat and encourage and give form to national consciousness. These new tensions, present at every stage of colonial realities, have a repercussion on the cultural plane. In literature, for example, there is relative over-production. From being, as it was a minor replica of the dominator, autochthonous production differentiaties itself and becomes deliberately particularist. Essentially consumers during the period of uncontested oppression, the Intelligentsia becomes productive. This literature deliberately restricts itself in the first period to the poetic and tragic genre. Novels, short stories and essays are tackled later. There seems to be a sort of internal organization, a law of expression, according to which poetic manifestations become rarer in proportion as the objectives and methods of the struggle for liberation become more specific. The themes seem to us also to obey a similar law. In fact one finds fewer and fewer of those bitter and despairing recriminations, that flourishing and sonorous violence, which, after all, keep the occupier tranquil. During this period, the colonialists encourage these attempts and facilitate their existence. The sharp denunciations, the display of grievances, the expression of passion are assimilated by the occupier to a cathartic operation. To facilitate these operations is, in a certain sense, to avoid dramatization, to clear the atmosphere. But this situation can only be transitory. In effect, the progress of national consciousness in the people modifies and makes specific the literary manifestations of the colonized intellectual. The continued cohesion of the people constitutes an invitation to the intellectual to raise his voice more loudly. Complaints give place to claims and then to a call for action. In the next period the rallying cry appears. If the literary

forms and themes evolve with the crystallization of national consciousness, the public to whom the intellectual addresses himself will also change. Whereas at the outset the colonized writer produced solely with an eye to the oppressor, either to charm him, or to denounce him through the medium of ethical or subjectivist categories, he progressively assumes the habit of addressing himself to his own people. It is only after this moment that one can speak of national literature. There is at the level of literary creation, a resumption and clarification of typically nationalist themes. This is the literature of combat, properly so called, in the sense that it summons a whole people to the struggle for national existence. Literature of combat, because it informs the national consciousness, gives it its contours, and opens up to it new and boundless prospects. Literature of combat, because it takes charge, because it is will made temporal. At another level, that of oral literature, the tales, epics and popular songs, which were formerly reduced to a repertory and crystallized begin to be transformed. The story-tellers who used to recite inert epi-sodes, give them animation and introduce into them increasingly fundamental modifications. There is an endeavour to actualize the conflicts, to modernize the forms of struggle evoked, the names of the heroes, the type of arms. The allusive method becomes increasingly frequent. The formula, « Once upon a time » is replaced by the more ambiguous one, « What you are now going to hear happened somewhere, but it might happen here, to-day or to-morrow ... » The example of Algeria is typical in this respect. After 1952 or 1953 the stereotyped and wearisome story-tellers completely overhauled both their method of exposition and the content of their recitals. The audiences, formerly scattered, become compact. The epic, with its categories of typefication, reappears. It is an authentic spectacle which resumes its cultural value. Colonialism was not wrong in proceeding, after 1953 to the systematic arrest of these story-tellers. The contact of the people with the new tales awakens a new rhythm of respiration, forgotten muscular tensions and develops the imagination. Every time the story-teller recounts a new episode to this audience we witness a real invocation. The existence of a new type of man is revealed to the public. The present is no longer closed in upon itself, but quartered out. The storyteller restores liberty to his imagination, innovates, performs a work of creation. It may even happen that characters which are not very suitable for this transmutation, such as highway robbers and vagabonds, are taken in hand and remodelled. The emergence of imagination, of creation in songs and popular epic tales, must be followed step by step in a colonized country. The story-teller responds by successive approximations to the expectations of the people, and goes his way, in apparent solitude, but in reality sustained by his audience, in search

of new models, national models. Comedy and farce disappear, or lose their attraction. As for dramatization, that no longer takes place at the level of the intellectual's crisis of conscience, but by losing its character of despair and revolt, it has become the common lot of the people, it is part of action which is in preparation or already under way.

On the plane of craftsmanship the sedimentary forms which seemed to be stupefied gain progressive tension. Woodcarving, for example, which was turning out certain faces or certain poses by the thousand, becomes differentiated. The expressionless or downtrodden mask becomes animated and the arms tend to move away from the body, to indicate action. Groups of two, three or five figures make their appearance. The traditional schools are incited to creation by the emergence of droves of amateurs or dissidents. This new vigour in this sector of cultural life often passes unnoticed. And yet its contribution to the national struggle is, in my eyes, capital. By animating faces and figures, by taking as his creative theme a group implanted on the same plinth, the artist is inviting organized movement.

If one studies the repercussions of the awakening of national consciousness in the sphere of ceramics and pottery. the same observations can be noted. First of all the forms abandon their formalism, jugs, jars, tanks, dishes are modified, at first imperceptibly, and then sharply. The colours, restricted in number, and obeying traditional laws of harmony are multiplied and subjected to the counterstrokes of the revolutionary urge. Certain ochres, certain blues apparently forbidden from all eternity within the boundaries of a given cultural region, impose themselves without creating any scandal. Similarly, the absence of any featuring of the human face, characteristic, according to sociologists, of perfectly clearly defined regions, suddenly becomes entirely relative. The colonialist specialist, the ethnologist, rapidly perceive these mutations. On the whole all these modifications are condemned in the name of a codified artistic style, of a cultural life developing in the bosom of the colonial situation. The colonialist specialists do not recognize this new form and run to the help of the traditions of the autochthonous society. It is colonialists who make themselves the defenders of the indigenous style. We remember perfectly, and the example assumes a certain importance, because it does not relate entirely to colonial realities, the reactions of the White specialists in Jazz when, after the second World War new styles like Bebop became crystallized and stable. Treason and prostitution were the commonest expressions at that time. That is because Jazz must only be the broken and despairing nostalgia of an old Negro caught between five whiskeys, his own malediction and the racist hatred of the Whites. As soon as the Negro apprehends himself and apprehends the world

differently, begins to give birth to hope and to force the racist universe to retreat, it is clear that his trumpet tends to become less muted, his voice less husky. The new styles in the matter of Jazz were not only born of economic competition. We must see in them, beyond any doubt, one of the consequences of the inexorable though slow defeat of the Southerners' universe in the United States. And it is not utopian to imagine that in fifty years or so, the category of Jazz as the hic-coughing cry of a poor cursed Negro will only be looked at by those Whites who are faithful to the frozen image of a type of relation, a form of Negroness. One could also seek and find, in the sphere of dancing, melodic singing, rites and traditional ceremonies, the same urge, one could discern the same mutations, the same impatience. Long before the political or armed stage of the national phase an attentive reader can thus feel and see the new vigour, the coming combat, manifest itself. There are unaccustomed forms of expression, themes not previously treated, and endowed with a power which is no longer one of invocation, but one of assembly and convocation: « with a view ». Everything concurs to re-awaken the feelings of the colonized, and to make attitudes of contemplation or setback untopical and unacceptable. In acquiring a new image of craftsmanship, of dancing, of music, of literature, and of the oral epic, the colonized people reconstructs its perception. The world loses its accursed character and all the conditions are fulfilled for the inevitable confrontation.

We have witnessed the appearance of the movement in its cultural manifestations. We have seen that this movement, these new forms, were linked to the crystallization of the national consciousness. But this movement tends to become increasingly objective, to institutionalize itself, from whence comes the necessity for a national existence at all costs.

One of the errors, which is, moreover, difficult to justify, is to attempt cultural inventions, a restoration of the value of autochthonous culture within the framework of colonial domination. That is why we arrive at a proposition of paradoxical appearance, that, in a colonized country, the most elementary, the crudest and most undifferentiated form of nationalism is the most fervent and most effective form of defence of national culture. It is not out of place, I think, to recall that there can be no authentic culture which is not national. Culture is, first and foremost, the expression of a nation, its preferences, its prohibitions, its values, its models. It is also, at every level in the overall society which constitutes itself into a nation, other prohibitions, other values, other models. National culture is the sum of all these appreciations, the resultant of the external and internal tensions of the society as a whole and the different layers of that society.

In the colonial situation, culture, deprived of the twofold support of the nation and the State perishes and becomes moribund. The condition for the existence of culture is there-

fore national liberation, the rebirth of the State.

The nation is not only a condition of culture, of its effer-vescence, and its constant renewal, of its deepening. It is also a requirement imposed by culture. At the outset it is the struggle for national existence which releases culture and opens to it the doors of creation. Later it is the nation which ensures culture of its conditions, of the framework for its expression, the mediation for its thought. The nation brings together in the interests of culture the different elements which are indispensable to it and which alone can give it credibility, validity, dynamic force and creative power. Equally it is its national character which will make culture permeable to other cultures, and enable it to influence and penetrate other cultures in turn. That which does not exist can hardly act upon the real, nor even influence that real. It is necessary in the first place that the re-establishment of the nation should give life, in the most biological sense of the term, to national culture.

We have thus followed the increasingly essential cracking of the old cultural sediments and found, at its birth, the renewal of expression, on the eve of the struggle for national liberation. There remains one fundamental question which arises here. What are the relations which exist between the struggle, the conflict, political or armed, and culture? During the conflict, is there a suspension of culture? Is the national struggle a non-cultural manifestation? Must we say in the end that the liberating combat, though fruitful for culture in its after-effects, is in itself a negation of culture? Is the struggle for liberation, yes or no, a cultural phenomenon?

We think that the organized and conscious struggle undertaken by a colonized people to restore the sovereignty of the nation, constitutes the most fully cultural manifestation there is. It is not only the success of the struggle which subsequently gives validity and vigour to culture, there is no hibernation of culture during the combat. The struggle itself, in its evolution, in its internal process, develops the different trends of culture and adumbrates new ones. The struggle for liberation does not give national culture back its old value and contours; this struggle which aims at a fundamental redistribution between men, cannot leave either the cultural forms or the cultural content of these people intact. After the struggle there is not only the disappearance of colonialism, but also the disappearance of the colonized.

This new humanity cannot fail to define a new humanism for itself and for others. This new humanism is foreshadowed in the objectives and methods of this struggle. A combat which mobilizes every layer of the people, which expresses the intentions and impatience of the people, which does not fear to support itself almost exclusively on that people, is bound to triumph. The value of this type of combat is that it achieves the best conditions for cultural invention and development. After the national liberation, achieved under these conditions, there is not that cultural indecision found in certain independent countries which is so painful. That is because the nation, in the form of its coming into the world, its way of life, also has an influence on culture. A nation born of the concerted action of the people, which incarnates the real aspirations of the people, which modifies the status, conditions and future of the people, can only exist under the forms of exceptional cultural fertility.

The colonized who are anxious about the culture of their countries and wish to give it universal dimensions must therefore not place their trust solely in the principle of inevitable independence, not graven on the consciousness of the people,

to achieve this task.

National liberation, as an objective, is one thing; the methods and popular content of the combat are another. It seems to us that the future of culture, the wealth of a national culture, are also proportionate to the values which have inspired the combat for liberation. And now the time has come to denounce the pharisaic attitude of certain people. National claims, it is said here and there, are a phase which mankind has passed. This is the hour of big combinations and the backward nationalists should therefore correct their errors.

We think, on the contrary, that the error, heavy with consequence, would be to want to skip the national stage. If culture is the manifestation of national consciousness, should not hesitate to say, in the case which concerns us, that national consciousness is the most elaborate form of culture. Self-consciousness does not mean being shut off from communication. Philosophical reflection, on the contrary, teaches us that it is the pledge of communication. National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing to give us international dimensions. This problem of national consciousness, of national culture, assumes special importance in Africa. The birth of national consciousness in Africa has a strictly contemporaneous relation with African consciousness. The responsibility of the African towards his national culture is also a responsibility towards Negro-African culture. This conjoint responsibility is not the result of a metaphysical principle, but the consciousness of a common law that every independent nation in an Africa where colonialism remains anchored, is a nation which is surrounded, fragile, in constant -danger.

If man is what he does, then we should say that the most urgent thing to-day, for the African intellectual, is the cons-

truction of his nation. It is cultural creation in Africa to-day, and the establishment of nations, the unveiling of an African culture, the determination to make that culture dynamic, to lay bare its connecting links. If this construction is genuine, that is, if it reflects the manifest will of the people, if it reveals the African peoples in their impatience, then national construction will necessarily be accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universalizing values. Thus, far from separating itself from other nations, it is national liberation which brings its nation on to the stage of history. It is in the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness arises and vitalizes itself. And after all, this two-fold emergence is nothing other than the focal point of all culture.

Dr Frantz Fanon.

# The political leader considered as the representative of a culture

Since culture is not an entity or a phenomenon which is separate or separable from a people, the political leaders who have, in a free and democratic manner, acquired the confidence of that people with a view to directing it along the way it has chosen, are at the same time the expression of the aspirations of their people and the representatives or defenders of its cultural values.

The culture of a people is necessarily determined by its material and moral conditions. The man and his surroundings

constitute a whole.

Every free and sovereign people finds itself placed in conditions more favourable to the expression of its cultural values than a colonized country, deprived of all freedom, whose culture sustains the nefarious consequences of its state of subjection. Whether it is a question of a free people or of a colonized people, the political leader who truly remains the authentic expression of his people is the one whose thought, sense of existence, social conduct and objects of action are in perfect harmony with the characteristics of his people.

Whether he tends, in a conservative spirit, to ensure the maintenance of an old economic, social and moral equilibrium, or in revolutionary manner, to replace the old conditions by new conditions more favourable to the people, the political leader is, by the very fact of his communion of ideas and action with his people, the representative of a culture. That culture may be reactionary or progressist according to the nature of the aims set for the action of the political movement to which the people have committed themselves.

The man, before becoming the leader of a group, a people, or a party of the people, has inevitably made a choice between the past and the future. In this way he will represent and defend the old values, or he will sustain and give impulsion to the development and constant enrichment of all the values of his people, including the cultural values, which by their content and their form will express the realities of the conditions of existence of the people, or the need which they

experience or feel for a transformation.

In consequence, whatever may be the fundamental character of a culture, reactionary or progressist, the political leader who is freely chosen by a people, maintains a natural link between his action and the culture proper to his people, since, in any event, he could not act effectively upon the people if he ceased to obey the rules and values which determine their behaviour and influence their thought.

Why are the great thinkers of capitalism not accepted by the peoples who have chosen other ways of evolution? The leaders of the popular democracies could not represent a culture which was capitalist in essence for the good reason

that their peoples have chosen the socialist system.

Arab culture is equally different from Latin culture because of the fact that the Arab peoples and the Latin peoples obey

different thoughts and different rules of life.

In addition to the material and technical state in which a people finds itself, their mental, philosophic and moral state gives their culture a form of expression and a significance which are proper to them, quite independent of the extent to which they have a decisive influence on the general cultural context.

The imperialists use scientific, technical, economic, literary and moral cultural values in order to maintain their regime of exploitation and oppression. The oppressed peoples equally use cultural values of a contrary nature to the former, in order to make a better fight against imperialism and to extricate themselves from the colonial system.

If scientific knowledge, modern techniques and the elevation of thought to the level of higher human principles for the perfecting of social life, are necessary for the enrichment of a culture, they none the less retain the capacity of being

used for contradictory purposes.

It is at this point that the cultural value of a people must be identified with the contributory value which it may represent in the development of <u>universal civilization</u> in establishing between human beings concrete relations of equality,

solidarity, unity and fraternity.

Thus, the true political leaders of Africa, whose thought and attitude tend towards the national liberation of their peoples can only be committed men, fundamentally committed against all the forms and forces of depersonalization of African culture. They represent, by the anti-colonialist nature and the national content of their struggle, the cultural values of their society mobilized against colonization.

It is as representatives of these cultural values that they

lead the struggle for the decolonization of all the structures of their country.

But decolonization does not consist merely in liberating oneself from the presence of the colonizers: it must necessarily be completed by total liberation from the spirit of the « colonized », that is to say, from all the evil consequences, moral, intellectual and cultural, of the colonial system.

Colonization, in order to enjoy a certain security, always needs to create and maintain a psychological climate favourable to its justification: hence the negation of the cultural, moral and intellectual values of the subjected people; that is why the struggle for national liberation is only complete when, once disengaged from the colonial apparatus, the country becomes conscious of the negative values deliberately injected into its life, thought and traditions... in order to extirpate them in the conditions of its evolution and flourishing. This science of depersonalizing the colonized people is sometimes so subtle in its methods that it progressively succeeds in falsifying our natural psychic behaviour and devaluing our own original virtues and qualities with a view to our assimilation. It is no mere chance that French colonialism reached its height at the period of the famous and now exploded theory of « primitive » and « pre-logical mentality » of Lévy-Bruhl. In modifying certain forms of its manifestations, although it apparently tries to adapt itself to the inevitable evolution of the oppressed peoples, colonization has never engendered, under the most diverse and subtle aspects, anything but a moral, intellectual and cultural superiority complex towards the colonized peoples. And this policy of depersonalization is all the more successful since the nature of the degree of evolution of the colonized and the colonizer is different. It is all the more deeply rooted where the domination is long-lasting.

In the most varied forms, the «colonized complex» taints our evolution and imprints itself on our very reflexes. Thus the wearing of a cap and sun-glasses, regarded as a sign of western civilization, bears witness to this depersonalization which runs counter to the current of our evolution.

Nevertheless, it is wrong to think that one people, one race or one culture possess by themselves all the moral, spiritual, social or intellectual values: to believe that the truth is not necessarily to be found elsewhere than in one's own national, racial or cultural background is an Utopia.

We have already said that human discoveries, intellectual acquisitions, the expansion of knowledge do not belong exclusively to anyone. They are the result of a sum of universal discoveries, acquisitions and expansion in which no people has the right to claim a monopoly.

The immigrants into the United States did not leave behind them at the frontiers of their respective countries all that they had acquired in the intellectual field; they did not have to re-invent sailing ships, iron tools or gunpowder. They used them for their own needs before certain colonial powers thought of claiming their discovery and the rights of ownership in them.

It is not because he symbolizes the colonial presence that the French gendarme in garrison at Dakar or Algiers is the «proprietor» of the process of liberating the atom. And yet it is in this form and by similar intellectual approaches that colonialism has established the principle of its superiority.

Our school books in the colonial schools teach us about the wars of the Gauls, the life of Joan of Arc or Napoleon, the list of French Départements, the poems of Lamartine or the plays of Molière, as though Africa had never had any history, any past, any geographical existence, any cultural life... Our pupils were only appreciated according to their aptitude

in this policy of integral cultural assimilation.

Colonialism, through its diverse manifestations, by boasting of having taught our élite in its schools science, technique, mechanics and electricity, succeeds in influencing a number of our intellectuals to such an extent that they end up by finding in this the justification for colonial domination. Some go so far as to believe that, in order to acquire the true universal knowledge of science, they must necessarily disregard the moral, intellectual and cultural values of their own country in order to subject themselves to and assimilate a culture which is often foreign to them in a thousand respects.

And yet, is not the knowledge which leads to the practice of surgery taught in the same way in London, Prague, Belgrade and Bordeaux? Is the procedure for calculating the volume of a body not identical in New York, Budapest and Berlin? Is the principle of Archimedes not the same in China and in Holland? There is no Russian chemistry or Japanese chemistry, there is only chemistry pure and simple.

The science which results from all universal knowledge has no nationality. The ridiculous conflicts which rage about the origin of this or that discovery do not interest us, because

they add nothing to the value of the discovery.

But, however much it may dissemble, colonialism betrays its intentions in the organization and nature of the education which it claims to dispense in the name of some humanism or other, I know not what. The truth is that, to start with, it had to satisfy its needs for junior staff, clerks, book-keepers, typists, messengers, etc. The elementary character of the education dispensed bears sufficiently eloquent witness to the object in view, for the colonial power took great care, for example, not to set up real administrative colleges for young Africans which might have trained genuine executives, or to teach the real history of Africa and so forth.

What would have happened on the morrow of the Inde-

pendance of Guinea, if we had not ourselves created, during the period of the Outline Law, our own administrative college? The administrative life of the Republic of Guinea would have faced us at Government level with a multitude of problems which we could only have solved in empirical fashion.

This determination to keep the populations in a constant state of inferiority marks both the programmes and the nature of colonial education. It was desired that the African teacher should be and should remain a teacher of inferior quality, in order to keep the quality of teaching in Africa at an inferior level. In contrast, an obstacle was placed in the way of African officials attaining to senior rank by insisting on the equivalence of diplomas. This diversion was so well managed that some of our trade union comrades, although anti-colonialist, fought furiously about these problems of the equivalent value of parchments instead of directly attacking the fundamental reasons for this policy of hocus-pocus.

Special teachers, special doctors! what the colonial system needed was men to produce, men to create, labourers, woodcutters in the Middle Congo or the Ivory Coast, peasants in the Sudan or Dahomey, and so forth. The colonists of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, the powerful colonial companies of the Belgian Congo and Rhodesia would not have installed themselves in Africa had it not been for the wealth of Africa in its soil and its men, regarded as an instrument to exploit that wealth. And it was in order to resist the great endemic scourges which threatened the quantitative equilibrium of the population by reducing manpower that the colonial power created the corps of African doctors, with the determination to make them a subordinate corps, of « medical workers ».

Thus, on the level of pure knowledge, on the level of universal knowledge, the education dispensed in Africa was deliberately inferior and limited to those disciplines which would allow the better exploitation of the population. In addition, primary and secondary education was constantly directed towards depersonalization and cultural dependence.

We must denounce that false sentimentalism which consists in believing ourselves indebted to the contribution of a culture imposed to the detriment of our own. The problem must be tackled objectively. How many of our young students, even without realizing it, judge African culture by assessing it according to the hierarchy of values established in this field by the culture of the colonial power?

The value of a culture can only be assessed in relation to its influence in the development of social conduct. Culture is the way in which a given society directs and utilizes its resour-

ces of thought.

Marx and Ghandi have not contributed less to the progress of humanity than Victor Hugo or Pasteur.

But while we were learning to appreciate such a culture and to know the names of its most eminent interpreters, we were gradually losing the traditional notions of our own culture and the memory of those who had thrown lustre upon it. How many of our young schoolchildren who can quote Bossuet, are ignorant of the life of El Hadj Omar? How many African intellectuals have unconsciously deprived themselves of the wealth of our culture so as to assimilate the philosophic concepts of a Descartes or a Bergson?

So long as we argue solely in the light of this external acquisition, so long as we continue to judge and to make our determinations according to the values of colonial culture, we shall not be decolonized and we shall not succeed in giving our thoughts and acts a national content, that is to say a utility placed at the service of our Society. So true is it that every culture worthy of the name must be able to give and to receive; we can only regard foreign cultures as a necessary

contribution to the enrichment of our own culture.

The surroundings determine the individual; that is why the peasant in our villages has more authentically African characteristics that the lawyer or doctor in the big towns. In fact the former, who preserves more or less intact his personality and the nature of his culture, is more sensitive to

the real needs of Africa.

There is no indictment to be drawn up against intellectualism, but it is important to demonstrate the depersonalization of the African intellectual, a depersonalization for which nobody can hold him responsible, because it is the price which the colonial system demands for teaching him the universal knowledge which enables him to be an engineer, a doctor, an architect or an accountant. That is why decolonization at the individual level must operate more profoundly upon those who have been trained by the colonial system.

It is in relation to this decolonization that the African intellectual will afford effective and invaluable aid to Africa. The more he realizes the need to free himself intellectually from the colonized complex, the more he will discover our original virtues and the more he will serve the African cause.

Our incessant efforts will be directed towards finding our own ways of development if we wish our emancipation and our evolution to take place without our personality being changed thereby. Every time we adopt a solution which is authentically African in its nature and its conception, we shall solve our problems easily, because all those who take part will not be disorientated or surprised by what they have to achieve; they will realize without difficulty the manner in which they must work, act and think. Our specific qualities will be used to the full and, in the long run, we shall speed up our historic evolution.

How many young men and young girls have lost the taste

for our traditional dances and the cultural value of our popular songs; they have all become enthusiasts for the tango or

the waltz, or for some singer of charm or realism.

This unconsciousness of our characteristic values inevitably leads to our isolation from our own social background, whose slightest human qualities escape us. In this way we finish by disregarding the real significance of the things which surround us, our own significance.

In contrast, the African peasants and craftsmen are in no way complicated by the colonial system, whose culture, habits

and values they do not know.

Is it necessary to emphasize that, in spite of their good will, their discipline and their fidelity to the ideal of freedom and democracy, in spite of their faith in the destiny of their country, the colonized who have been educated by the colonizer have their thought more tainted by the colonial imprint than the rural masses who have evolved in their origi-

Africa is essentially a country of community government. Collective life and social solidarity give its habits a fund of humanism which many peoples might envy. It is also because of these human qualities that a human being in Africa cannot conceive the organization of his life outside that of the family, village or clan society. The voice of the African peoples has no features, no name, no individual ring. But in the circles which have been contaminated by the spirit of the colonizers, who has not observed the progress of personal egoism?

Who has not heard the defence of the theory of art for art's sake, the theory of poetry for poetry's sake, the theory of every man for himself?

Whereas our anonymous artists are the wonder of the world, and everywhere we are asked for our dances, our music, our songs, our statuettes, in order that their profound significance may be better known, some of our young intellectuals think that it is enough to know Prévert, Rimbaud, Picasso or Renoir to be cultivated and to be able to carry our culture, our art and our personality on to a higher plane. These people only appreciate the appearances of things, they only judge through the medium of their complexes and mentality of the « colonized ». For them, our popular songs are only of value so far as they fit harmoniously into the western modes which are foreign to their social significance.

Our painters! they would like them to be more classical; our masks and our statuettes! purely æsthetic; without realizing that African art is essentially utilitarian and social.

Mechanized and reduced to a certain restrictive form of thought, habituated to judge in the light of values which they have not been allowed to determine for themselves, educated to appreciate according to the spirit, thought, conditions and will of the colonial system, they are stupefied every

time we denounce the nefarious character of their behaviour. But if they interrogated themselves, in the light, not of their theoretical knowledge of the world, but by attaining to selfconsciousness, about the true values of their people and their motherland, if they asked themselves what their conduct contributes to all Africa turned towards its objectives of liberation and progress, of peace and dignity, they would judge and appreciate our problems.

They do not realize that the slightest of our original artistic manifestations represents an active participation in the life of our people. They divorce themselves from the

culture of the people, the art of real life.

In all things there is form and substance, and what is of prime importance in African art is its effective and living content, the profound thought which animates it and makes it useful to Society.

Intellectuals or artists, thinkers or researchers, their capacities have no values unless they really concur with the life of the people, unless they are integrated in fundamental manner with the action, thought and aspirations of the populations.

If they isolate themselves from their own surroundings by their special mentality of the colonized, they can have no influence, they will be of no value to the revolutionary action which the African populations have undertaken to liberate themselves from colonialism, they will be outcasts and strangers in their own country.

This intellectual decolonization, this decolonization of thoughts and concepts may seem infinitely difficult. There is, in effect, a sum of acquired habits, of uncontrolled behaviour, a way of living, a manner of thinking, the combination of which constitutes a sort of second nature which certainly seems to have destroyed the original personality of the colonized.

It is not intellectual approaches, nor even a sustained and patient labour of readapting the will which will achieve the purpose. It will only be enough if there is reintegration in the social background, a return to Africa by the daily practice of African life so as to readapt oneself to its basic va-

lues, its proper activities, its special mentality.

The official, who lives constantly among other officials, will not give up his bad colonial habits, because they represent a daily practice for himself and the circles in which he lives. He will not succeed in defining himself in relation to the African revolution, he will continue to define himself in relation to himself as an official living in administrative circles. He will have reduced his human objectives solely to an administrative career.

The artist who is proudly convinced that it is enough for him to be known in order to express the African personality in his works, will remain a colonized intelligence, an intelli-

gence enslaved by colonial thought.

Take the example of the Ballets of our comrade Keita Fodeiba which for several years have been touring the world to reveal through the medium of that traditional mode of expression, African dancing, the cultural, moral and intellectual values of our Society. And yet it was not at the Paris Opera or the Vienna Opera that these artists were initiated. Their choreographic initiation merely starts from their authentically African education and the national consciousness of our artistic values. The troupe is an anonymous troupe in which there is no first or second star. The singers only know the popular songs of Africa as they learned them in their faroff village. The value of the troupe of our comrade Keita Fodeiba is its authenticity, and it will have done more to reveal the social and choreographic values of Africa than will ever be done by all the works of colonial inspiration which have been written on this subject. And that because no author has been able or has understood how to interpret the internal significance of the dance, which is, in Africa, a part of the social and intellectual life of the people.

It is not enough to write a revolutionary hymn to take part in the African revolution; it is necessary to act in the revolution with the people — with the people and the hymns will

come of their own accord.

In order to exercise authentic action, it is necessary to be oneself a living part of Africa and its thought, an element in that popular energy which is totally mobilized for the Liberation, progress and happiness of Africa. There is no place outside this one combat either for the artist or the intellectual who is not himself committed and totally mobilized with the people in the great struggle of Africa and of suffering humanity.

The man of Africa, yesterday still marked by the unworthiness of others, still excluded from universal enterprises, set at a distance from a world which had made him inferior by the practice of domination, this man, deprived of everything, stateless in his own country, seated naked and impoverished on his own wealth, is suddenly re-emerging into the world, to claim the fulness of his human rights and an entire

share in universal life.

This attitude is not without doing some damage to the caricatured image which the colonial conquest had projected here and there, of the black man, doomed, according to them, to congenital incapacity. It is not the least of the errors of certain civilizations to shut themselves up in egocentric considerations in judging what is foreign to them and could not either satisfy their special criterions or their historic tradition, nor correspond to their hierarchy of conventional values.

It is a very heavy responsibility borne by the civilizations

of conquest that they oriented their forces towards the destruction of human societies whose values they had neither the capacity nor the power to appreciate objectively. Contemplating the ruins of this destruction, the world of thought and the world of research are to-day in communion in the same anxious effort to try to snatch from the destroyed civilizations the secret of the unknown values which enabled them to develop according to an intellectual process, the universal knowledge of which is forever lost.

The crime of Fernando Cortez in torturing the last Emperor of the Aztecs appears less as the misdeed of a man than as an irremediable error on the part of the civilizations of

conquest.

In judging in the light of their own proper surroundings, in determining according to the values of their own proper culture, the civilizations of conquest, far from encouraging the development of human values, have reduced their possibilities of expression and, of set purpose, subjected them partially to ferocious exploitation and generalized oppression.

But the reign of force and fraudulent possession is henceforth doomed to disaster, for there no longer exists any external influence, any foreign pressure which can bend a people to the laws of dispossession and domination. In the slow progress of the human universe, which is given sanction in proportion to the development of the universal conscience, brute force and illegitimate sway are becoming increasingly on the fringe of man's positive values.

Africa which only yesterday was still the plaything and the take of boundless appetites, the mute witness of the slow degradation of the noblest social mentalities, is to-day totally committed to the road of its freedom, its dignity and its complete rehabilitation. Yesterday dominated, but not conquered, Africa is determined to deliver its special message to the world, and to contribute to the human universe the fruit of its experiences, the whole of its intellectual resources and the teachings of its proper culture.

The moral personality of Africa, long denied through the medium of the most fantastic interpretations and the grossest historical falsifications, barely precedes the growing manifestation of the African personality, which the forces of conquest and domination can no longer reduce with impunity.

The Negro, whatever may be his place of asylum, whatever his natal region, has finally liberated himself from the weight of a factitious inferiority inflicted upon him by the domination, from the moment that he reappeared in his full and entire authenticity, legitimately proud of the ability to reclaim control over his destiny and full responsibility for his history.

In truth, there could be no confusion between the apparent submission of the African peoples and their profound de-

termination to escape from depersonalization. « To submit in order to save yourself », « to accept in order to endure », that has been the hard philosophy of the Negro snatched from his origins, or deprived of his free will.

No malediction will have weighed so heavily upon a people as that born of a coalition of race and interests to achieve, in the same enterprise, enslavement or destruction, exploita-

tion or ruin.

But the domain of man, growing and extending beyond the bounds of the world, could not tolerate those enclosed estates which the feudal nations appropriated to themselves under the sign of force: the man of to-day requires the whole earth, a total solidarity and a full participation in its works and its enterprises. Partly by necessity and partly by conscious determination, man is proceeding to eliminate the individualistic and racist heresies of which the Negro world will have been the last tragic victim.

The gates of the future will not open before a few privileged ones, nor before a people elect among peoples, but they will yield to the combined thrust of peoples and races when the efforts of all peoples allied by the need of a universal fra-

ternity are joined together and complete each other.

However near this time may be, and however powerful human hopes for a fruitful and unlimited future, universal reconciliation cannot become effective until the excluded peoples have achieved their total independence, exercised their entire dignity and ensured their full blossoming. To meet its requirements and abdicate none of its human responsibilities, Africa is drawing untiringly upon its own sources so as to perfect its authenticity and enrich the nourishing sap from which it has arisen throughout the obscure milleniums of history.

Harmonizing the resources of his thought with the pitiless laws of a world led and directed by the necessities of a constant development, having recourse to the hard disciplines of concrete knowledge as much as to his own moral and spiritual riches, the Negro is committed to maintain intact the values and outlook of an original culture which has survived all the extreme vicissitudes which have marked its destiny.

It is just as superfluous to inquire what might or might not have been good as to try to determine opportunities lost or missed. Only error, analysed objectively according to its causes and effects, brings the mind a constant enrichment and gives man the positive achievement of experimentation.

Negro culture, preserved from any profound alteration, flows into universal life, not as an antagonistic element, but with the anxious care to be a factor of equilibrium, a power for peace, a force of solidarity in favour of a new civilization which will outdistance the great hopes of mankind and fashion itself in contact with all the currents of thought.

The future cannot be conceived as a reiteration of the past, nor as a closed field reserved solely for those human societies

which are secretly initiated or arbitrarily privileged.

The future will be the sum of cultures and civilizations which do not measure their special contribution or drive a bargain in respect of their singular values. To reach these successive summits it is not too much for each one to join his efforts with those of others, to deliver to the world his intellectual resources and his scientific and technical knowledge, for no people, no nation, can move and grow except with and by the others. Any doctrine of cultural isolation or cellularization, whether its motives are a proud superiority or an unacceptable group selfishness, conceals a fatal error in consequence of which the isolated particle will succumb.

Without even wishing to respond to the unnatural challenge of the racist ideal, which insolently claims to harness for itself alone the sap and the fruits of the world, the Negro is convinced that his mere presence entitles him to a full and complete participation in human works, not as a denatured or outdone element, but in the character of a new power, of an unexploited intellectual force whose potentialities are relevant to the universal enterprises of progress, justice and

human solidarity.

In the domain of thought man can claim to be the brain of the world, but on the plane of concrete life, where every intervention affects the physical and spiritual being, the world is always the brain of man, for it is at that level that the totality of thinking powers and units are found, the dynamic forces of development and perfection, it is there that the fusion of energies operates and that in the long run the sum of man's intellectual values inscribed. But who can claim to exclude a particular group of thought, a particular form of thought, or a particular human family without by that very fact putting himself beyond the pale of universal life?

The right of existence extends to presence, conception, expression and action. Any amputation of this fundamental right must be set down as a debit to mankind's account.

It is, for the rest, a difficult mission which the Negro has set himself who has chosen to be at the same time the intellectual instrument of the rehabilitation of a race and the messenger of a culture dispossessed of its right of free expression, and whose profound content and real significance have been falsified by the multiple interpretations given to it by the outside world.

But this action undertaken by the messengers of our culture cannot be isolated from the general movement for the reconquest of the rights of expression and means of development of the people of Africa, totally mobilized in the struggle for their dignity and their liberty, on the side of the equality of men and peoples.

The process of the participation of the Negro in universal achievements stems in the first place from the African personality, which cannot be validly reconstituted by the intermediary of wills or forces external to Africa, or outside the factors of independence and unity on which the destiny of the Negro world reposes. The cultural compromises which the domination has established by way of contact and by way of constraint, impose a complete reconversion upon the man of Africa so that his authentic personality, the full possibilities of his singular values and the means of employing his human resources may all reappear.

In the independence of its young sovereignty, that is the

way in which the people of Guinea have unanimously engaged themselves for the total liberation and effective unity of the African peoples so as to accelerate their march towards technical, economic and cultural progress in a society in perfect social and moral equilibrium and in a world of real hu-

man civilization.

SÉKOU TOURÉ.

# The man of culture and his responsibilities

Since our friends have insisted that I should intervene in this Congress, I thought that the few remarks which I should have to make might usefully deal with a subject which our discussions in the Commissions have shown to be fundamental, namely the legitimacy of our activities as Negro writers and artists, and also the complementary subject of the responsibilities which face men of culture like ourselves in the twofold state of affairs in the world as a whole and in our own individual countries. Where do we stand at the present moment? We have reached a solemn hour, an hour when colonialism is, not, alas! dead, but when at least it recognizes itself to be mortal.

Colonialism still has the power to oppress and to crush, perhaps even more savagely than ever, but one thing is certain; it is morally weakened, it knows itself to be perishable and has lost its historical assurance.

And is not the best sign of that to be found in the sudden success of that neologism which is beginning to play such an important part in the current vocabulary, the word decolonization itself? It is so true that our contemporaries have dimly perceived the great phenomenon which is in the process of coming about, and which will have the result that in the perspective of history men will characterize our epoch by saying that, just as the nineteenth century was the century of colonization, so the twentieth century has been the century of decolonization.

But then, it may be said, since this is the trend of the century, there is nothing for us to do but to stand by and let decolonization happen on its own. We must be convinced of this; decolonization is not automatic; and, still more, not all forms of decolonization are of equal value. Decolonization is not automatic; that means to say that decolonization is never the result of a mere « fiat » arising out of the conscience of the colonizer. It is always the result of a struggle,

the result of strenuous efforts. Even the most peaceful form

of decolonization is always the result of a rupture.

And I also assert that not all forms of decolonization are of equal value. This is proved by the inequalities in the development of the liberated countries, some of which have difficulty in shaking off the aftermath of colonialism, while others, on the contrary blossom rapidly and fully in the bright sunlight of independence.

And thus it seems to me that it is these two general considerations which place in their true perspective our legitimacy

and our responsibilities as men of culture.

Our duty as men of culture, our twofold duty, is there; it is to hasten decolonization, and it is, in the very heart of the present, to pave the way for a good decolonization, a decolonization without aftermath.

What does hastening decolonization mean? It means that we must by every possible means hasten the ripening of popular consciousness, without which decolonization will never

come about.

It is perfectly true to say that it is, in general, in the popular classes that national sentiment survives in the most immediate and most evident manner, and at the height of colonial oppression.

But it is also true to say that this sentiment, immediate as it is, must be made authentic, propagated and purified. This sentiment must be converted into consciousness, that is to say into blazing sun, and no man is in a better position

to do this than the man of culture.

This is no mere Messianic concept of the artist or the writer. And I should never say, romantically, that the artist and the writer are the creators of nations or of national values. This is something much simpler, namely that the man of culture is the man who, by creation expresses and gives form. And this expression itself, by the very fact of being expression, and therefore bringing to light, creates or re-creates — dialectically — in its own image the sentiment of which it is, in

the last analysis, merely the emanation.

Whatever may be said about it, there is never any failure of national sentiment. There is merely inadequacy on the part of the man of culture. Always and everywhere, national sentiment exists; tenuous, perhaps, and assuming unlooked for, and even derisory, forms, but it exists, and even in the most assimilated, or in other words the most dishonoured, countries, and contains the future seed of every cultural renaissance. But this sentiment must be detected. It must be magnified, and in a world of false values it must once again be given its true value. And it is precisely there that the role of the artist and the writer lies, it is precisely that which is the foundation of his legitimacy.

There is no need to look elsewhere for the secret of the

« poetic » abundance in the new-born countries. The Westerners say, « This is strange; they need technicians and they

are creating artists. »

On this point we can trust the people. They know better than anyone what they need, they know it from within, and they know that all creation, because it is creative, is participation in a combat for liberation.

One can explain it as one pleases. The fertilising power

of the word. The greater power of the act.

The colonial system is the negation of the act, the negation of creation. Under a colonial society there is not merely a hierarchy of master and servant. There is also, implicit, a hierarchy of creator and consumer.

The creator of cultural values, under good colonization, is the colonizer. And the consumer is the colonized. And everything goes well so long as nothing happens to disturb the hierarchy. There is one law of comfort in every colonization. « Si

prega di non disturbare ». Please do not disturb.

But cultural creation, precisely because it is creation, disturbs. And the first thing it disturbs is the colonial hierarchy, because it converts the colonized consumer into a creator. In short, even inside the colonial system itself it restores historic initiative to those whom it has been the mission of the colonial system to deprive of all historic initiative.

And that is why all true indigenous artistic creation can only be regarded by the colonizer with a suspicious eye. He may try to accommodate himself to it. He may even try to make use of it. But for the colonizer, at bottom, all indigenous creation is unaccustomed and therefore dangerous. If one proof of this were wanted among so many others, it would be enough to recall the beginnings of Negro literature in France and the scandalously hostile situation created some thirty years ago to men like René Maran and Rabearivelo... By their mere existence they created a scandal... And to the same degree that it is dangerous to the colonizer, it is reassuring, in the true sense of the word, to the colonized, by which I mean that it counterbalances the inferiority complex which it is the mission of all colonization to instil into the colonized.

And that is why we must create... Yes, in the long run, it is the task of the poets, the artists, the writers, the men of culture, by blending, in the daily round of sufferings and denials of justice, both memories and hopes, to create those great reserves of faith, those great storehouses of strength, from which the people can draw courage in critical moments to assert themselves and to assault their future. It has been said that writers are the engineers of the soul. In the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we are the propagators of the soul, the multipliers of the soul, and, in the last resort, the inventors of the soul.

And I also assert that it is the mission of the Negro man of

culture to pave the way for good decolonization and not merely for any kind of decolonization.

Let me make myself clearly understood.

It is clear that for us there is not, and cannot be any decolonization which is bad in itself, and that, for the very simple reason that the worst decolonization will always be superior a hundredfold to the best colonization. The difference between decolonization and colonization is not one of degree but of kind.

But in the end I say, and I maintain, that inside decolonization itself there are degrees, that all forms of decolonization are not equal, and if a « good decolonization » can only be defined by contrast with a « less good decolonization » I would say that the latter is one which within the framework of independence, only thinks of utilizing the old colonial structures by adapting them to the new realities, whereas the true decolonization is the one which realizes that it is its duty to shatter the colonial structures in definitive fashion.

To make myself understood I will say something which may be displeasing, but which must be said because it is true and because it gives a better definition of our responsibilities; that is that one too often sees perpetuated or reconstituted within the societies constituted by nations which have been liberated from the colonial yoke, structures which are in verity

colonial or colonialist.

Or again, inside imperfectly decolonized nations, there is a danger that typically colonialist phenomena of recurrence will be seen to emerge at any moment, utilized no longer by a colonialist or an imperialist, but by a group of men or a class of men who from that moment, inside the liberated nation, take on the role of the Epigonoi of colonialism and use the

instruments invented by colonialism.

Think of the race struggles in Central America or Latin America, to take only one example, and you will observe that it is a question there of an inheritance or a survival from the colonial system in countries which have, nevertheless, achieved independence for the last hundred and fifty years. And if I recall that, it is not for the sake of decrying the effort of liberation which led to the emergence of these countries as nations, but in order to say to all our leaders that we must make ourselves realize one thing; that the combat against colonialism is not over as soon as one thinks and because imperialism has been conquered in the military sense.

In short there can be no question for us of displacing colonialism or making servitude an internal affair. What we must do is to destroy it, to extirpate it in the proper sense of the word, that is, to tear up its roots, and that is why true decolonization will be revolutionary or nothing. This point of view enables us to understand how vain is the temptation felt by

certain people to believe in the idea that between the colonial epoch and the time of liberty we must adjust ourselves by phases and transitions.

And, in effect, Europe, knowing that the end is inexorable, and in order to postpone it, has invented the theory of phases.

That has always been a temptation to the West. At the time when slavery was raging in the territories under French sovereignty — before 1848 — men of goodwill and intelligence, although won over to the idea of the emancipation of the slaves, advocated the idea of necessary phases. And here I am thinking of the French historian Tocqueville, who, agreeing with the principle of the emancipation of the slaves, hedged and temporised at once : « Just think, if the Negro slave were thrown into liberty overnight, what a catastrophe! And first and foremost for himself!» There must therefore be a period of apprenticeship to liberty to try to put the Negro slave in a condition to « bear » liberty some day.

It is this same theory which is to-day applied to peoples. Since it is no longer possible to face the colonial peoples with a blank refusal, they are promised independence, but in due time. They must serve an apprenticeship to independence. And we must be convinced that this is valid for the colonialists of to-day as it was for the slavers of yesterday; slavery cannot be a school of freedom, colonialism cannot be a school of independence. They are two things of a different order and one will never spring from the other except by a

process of breaking away and rupture.

Then, if we reject, as we are right to do, all idea of a period of apprenticeship, if we believe, as we are right to believe, that the passage from colonization to true decolonization can only be by way of rupture, that further increases and more fully defines our responsibilities as men of culture. Because even inside a colonial society it is the man of culture who must enable his people to do without the apprenticeship to freedom. And the man of culture, writer, poet, artist, enables his people to do this, because in the colonial situation itself, creative cultural activity, anticipating the collective concrete experience, already constitutes that apprenticeship.

We have been warned against the temptation to believe that we can ever reconstruct an indigenous culture in a colonial context. And no doubt that is right. But the reconstruction of a culture is a long term undertaking, and there is no doubt in my mind that in the existing colonial situation, and, more specifically, in this moment of transition in which we are living, creative cultural activity, and this is what makes it legitimate, is here and now paving the way for this indis-

pensable reconstruction.

I said to the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists that if there was one thing which characterized the colonial situation, it was cultural anarchy. Colonization has replaced

the primitive cultural unity by heterogeneous culture and cultural anarchy. The colonial order is, in reality, reflected in cultural disorder.

And to-day I assert that, in the present colonial situation - hic et nunc - the writer and the artist are paving the way for good decolonization by contributing here and now their share towards restoring order to the cultural chaos.

Look at the Negro novel. Look at Negro poetry. It is idle to search here for indebtedness, or to indicate influences. The materials may be disparate and heterogeneous, but everything has been recast, everything has been transcended, everything is dominated and reconstructed. For what is art in the end except structure?

That is the first contribution, as it seems to me, of the

Negro writer and artist to the liberation of his people.

And then, secondly, we must go on to the very end tearing away the halo from colonization. Colonization is not order, it is disorder. Nor is it any longer unity, the winning back to the world, the annexation to the world of territories that have been for too long isolated. The contrary is the truth. Imperialism separates, imperialism divides, imperialism, to borrow a word which Senghor has made famous, balkanizes. And it separates and divides in more senses than one thinks, not only in space, but also, and that is no less grave, in time.

In space it is enough to recall the partition of Africa at the Congress of Berlin, as it is enough to recall the Slave Trade,

which was seizure and dispersion.

And this balkanization also extends to time. For imperialism divides history. Before and after are calculated in reference to colonization. Everything before colonization is prehistory. And history only begins with colonization. Thenceforth, and by the act of the colonizer, historical continuity is interrupted, with deplorable cultural consequences; African science, African philosophy, African history, all that becomes folklore, that is to say debased literature, philosophy and science, just as art itself becomes primitive art. And all this culminates in the purely European opposition between tradition and evolution.

Well, we must realize it : when Sékou Touré, leader of a free country, proudly asserts « I am a descendant of Samory », that is not puerile genealogical vanity. It means « I adopt Samory » and in doing that he does a great thing : he reestablishes history, he restores things to their proper place. He affirms that colonization is not history, it is merely an accident and he re-establishes the historical «continuum». He re-asserts or rediscovers the historical continuity which was broken by the colonial intrusion.

We have no need to look elsewhere for our duty as Negro writers and artists; our duty is to re-establish the double

continuity broken by colonialism, continuity with the world, continuity with ourselves.

Because we are forces of truth, it is we who re-introduce our peoples to the world, and in the first place rediscover that solidarity between us, the idea of which colonialism sought to obscure or to destroy. Because we are, and because, transcending the colonial lie, we are determined to be, men of truth, we are at the same time the soldiers of unity and fraternity.

And it is not only solidarity in space which the Negro writer and artist re-establishes, it is also, and in his own

manner, historical continuity.

Tradition? Evolution? The whole of this opposition becomes vain in artistic creation and by artistic creation, because art is that verity which as such fuses and blends in a single stream elements which are analytically disparate.

I claim that there is no need to look elsewhere for the secret of the importance of literature and art in the circumstances through which our peoples are now living. In the conditions which surround us the greatest ambition of our literature must be to strive to become a sacred literature, of our art to become a sacred art. In raising the special situation of our peoples to the level of the universal, in linking them to history, in elevating them to a plane which is precisely that of « becoming », and therefore the opposite of stagnation, artistic creation, by its own force, must mobilize the virgin emotional forces, when at its call unsuspected psychic resources will arise which will contribute towards re-establishing the society whose power of resistance and will to strive have been undermined by the shock of colonialism.

Comrades of this Congress, everything which I have just said seems to me to be enough fo establish the legitimacy of our activities as writers and artists, just as these considerations define our responsibilities.

derations define our responsibilities.

Our legitimacy arises from the fact that we are taking part with every fibre of our being in the struggle of our

peoples for liberation.

Our responsibility is that upon us largely depends the use which our peoples will be able to make of their reconquered liberty. And it is that which, more profoundly than our particular duties, is the foundation of our duties as men. For in the end there is a question which no man of culture, whatever his country, to whatever race he belongs, can escape, and it is this question: « What sort of world are you preparing for us? »

Let this be known; in embodying our efforts in the efforts of the colonized peoples for liberation, in fighting for the dignity of our peoples, for their truth and for their recognition, it is in the last analysis for the whole world that we are fighting, to liberate it from tyranny, hatred and fanaticism.

Beyond the struggles of to-day, with their special circumstances, that is what we want, this rejuvenated world, with its balance restored, without which nothing will have any meaning, nothing, not even our struggle of to-day, nothing, not even our victory of to-morrow.

Then and then only, we shall have conquered and our final

victory will mark the advent of a new era.

We shall have contributed to give a meaning, to give its true meaning to a word which is the most hackneyed, and yet the most glorious; we shall have helped to found the universal humanism.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE.

# The responsibility of men of culture for destroying the «hamitic myth»

For many decades the « Aryan Myth » served as an ideological nationalization for those political leaders in Europe who wished to use racialism for imperialistic ends. A doctrine was assiduously cultivated to show that, among European peoples. one racial group -- « the Aryans » -- were responsible for all of the higher cultural developments, that Aryans were born to rule, that others were by nature inferior and born to serve. Count de Gobineau and Chamberlain perverted the scholarly work of Max Muller into a political doctrine which was eventually worked out with fiendish zeal and efficiency and turned to imperialist ends by Adolph Hitler. A similar racial myth grew up concurrently with respect to Africa — the Hamitic Myth - a dogma which claimed that the Negro peoples of the continent, predominantly agricultural, were biologically inferior to the more Caucasoid pastoralists, who wandered over the continent, conquering and spreading their superior culture and genes. Wherever highly developed societies were present, the rule was « Cherchez les Chamites ». The literature about Africa is still pervaded with the Hamitic Myth. A few quotations will serve to document this fact (1).

D. Westermann, a distinguished scholar whose book, The African Today and Tomorrow, is widely read, in commenting upon the Hamites, states, « owing to their racial superiority they gained leading positions and became the founders of many of the larger states in Africa ». He also refers to them as « this highly gifted race ». Thus we find a scholar who has made great contributions to our understanding of Africa still helping to perpetuate the idea that the Hamites have « racial

superiority ».

Another case in point is C. G. Seligman's little book, « Races of Africa », the third edition of which appeared in 1957, and which is considered a standard work on the anthropology

<sup>(1)</sup> To be documented with quotations from Westermann, Haddon, Seligman, Gunther, etc.

of the African peoples. Despite the fact that a number of eminent scholars participated in the revision of this book, and despite the fact that most of them do not accept doctrines of racial superiority, this book states « that the Hamites arrived in Central Africa, wave after wave — better armed as well as quincker witted than the dark agricultural Negroes ». Seligman's work also refers to mixed Hamitic and Negro strains as being « superior to the pure Negro ».

Because of the prestige of a work like Seligman's one finds a South African liberal, quoting these passages at length with no criticisms in a work published in 1951 called Africa South

of the Sahara.

If we turned to a standard encyclopædia such as Encyclopædia Britannica, the 1949 edition states that Negroes are « on a lower evolutionary plane than the white man », and that « the true Negro undoubtedly represents one of the most primitive of the African stocks. » (The same work also states that the great West African craftsman of Nigeria learned the cire

perdue process from the Portuguese.)

Among all the works still considered standard for reference might be cited Hasting's encyclopædia of religion and ethics which contains statements such as the following about the Negro, « as far as morality is concerned he does not see any harm in murder, theft, or any other crime ». This work also says « the ordinary Negro or Bantu is not morally restrained's and implies that only the fear of ghosts or violence can result in social order among Negroes.

These few instances are cited as remnants of an older appraisal of Negroes which need to be purged from the literature. Most modern anthropologists would reject such formulations. As long as they remained in widely circulated standard works, however, they continue to poison the minds of

countless readers.

## THE GENESIS OF THE HAMITIC MYTH (2)

The origins of the Hamitic Myth were innocent enough. Philologists and linguists of the 19th century were making an earnest attempt to classify the languages of mankind, and « Hamitic » emerged as one of the important branches. From the very beginning, however, a linkage between physical types

<sup>(2)</sup> This section of the paper and the two following are based upon research done at the University of Chicago in 1946 and 1947, and the writer wishes to express his gratitude to Dr. John Victor Murra, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Vassar College (U.S.A.) and Dr. Wilton Marion Krogman, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Pennsylvania, both of whom were then teaching in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, and encouraged the author to begin a re-examination of what I then called the «Hamitic Hypothesis». A Study of its Social function has led me to refer to it now as a « myth ».

and language was assumed. Deniker, in the late 80's was attempting to grapple with the problem of criteria which could be used for classifying mankind, and in establishing the principle that physical traits alone should be used in such classifications. În 1880, he divided the population of Africa into what he called « six great geographical, linguistic, and in part, anthropological, units »: 1) Arabo-Berber or Semito-Hamite; 2) Ethiopian or Kushito-Hamite; 3) Fulah-Zandeh; 4) Negrillo or Pygmy; 5) Nigritian or Sudanese (Guinea Negroes); 6) Bantu; 7) Hottentott-Bushman. (Deniker mentioned six, but presented seven categories.) Within each of these categories he attempted to describe a number of physical types. Deniker points out that as early as 1889 he had « proposed a classification of the human races based solely on physical characters » and that by 1901 he had arrived at 29 « races » combined into 17 « groups ». His « North African Group » was composed of two «races» - The Arab or Semite race and the Berber race. The latter had four sub-types. His « Ethiopian Group » was one race with slight Negroid and or Arabic admixtures. The Galla and Beja were listed as pure « Ethiopian » types (3).

G. Sergi, the Italian anthropologist, accepting Deniker's group designated as « Hamitic », attempted to show that there was a basic underlying unity of physical type within it, and that this type was linked with that of the ancient Egyptians. The later use and popularization of the term « Hamite » was due, in some measure, to Sergi's influence. In the 1901 English edition of Sergi's basic work (4) there is a chapter devoted to « The Hamites », wherein he states that these are the people who originally occupied « The Cradle of the Mediterranean Stock in East Africa ». He described the contemporary

Hamites as follows:

« ... certain African populations occupying an extended area and possessing marked homogeneity in skeletal characters, to a less extent also, in external characters, as well as in the languages formerly and still spoken. I refer to populations which pass under the old name of Hamitic chiefly on account of the linguistic characters which have contributed to classify and group them in a single stock... They still show the physical character of their stock in spite of the incongruous and hybrid forms which have resulted. »

<sup>(3)</sup> Deniker, J., The Races of Man, London, 1900. J.C. Nott and G.R. Gliddon, in their Indigenous Races of Mankind had published an elaborate table in which they presented a classification based on physical type side-by-side with one based on linguistic criteria. They attempted to correlate the two.

<sup>(4)</sup> SERGI, G., The Mediterranean Race, London, 1901. As early as 1894, the French anthropologist, Maurice Delafosse had published The Great Horn, a review of the literature on «Les Chamites de l'Afrique orientale d'après les travaux les plus récents», L'Anthropologie, t. V., 1894, pp. 157-172.

Sergi then proceeded to divide the Hamites into two branches:

#### Eastern Branch (5)

- 1. Ancient and Modern Egyptians, including Arabs
- 2. Nubians and Beja
- 3. Abyssinians
- 4. Gallas, Danakil and Somali
- 5. Masai
- 6. Wahima and Watusi

#### Northern Branch

- 1. Berbers
- 2. Tebus
- 3. Fulah
- 4. Guanches

It will be noted that Sergi put the accent upon the skeletal unity of these diverse peoples. He was very scornful of classifications and nomenclature based upon soft-parts, and insisted that the Mediterraneans, including the Hamites, were derived from neither white stock nor Negro. Of two of the Hamitic peoples in his list, he had the following to say:

« A celebrated anthropologist, when measuring the heads of the mummies of the Pharaohs preserved in the Pyramids, wrote that the Egyptians belonged to the white race. His statement meant nothing; we could construct a syllogism showing that the Egyptians are Germans since the latter also are fair. De Quatrefage classified the Abyssinians among the white races; but if they are black how can they be white ? (6) »

If a skin-colour term was demanded Sergi was in favor of

calling the whole group « The Brown Race ».

The adequacy of Sergi's grouping rests in the final analysis on the actual degree to which these diverse people do show skeletal unity both in a morphometric and morphological sense. He threw his net very, very wide. His emphasis, however, was a sound one, for it focused attention on homogeneity of the less adaptable characters, rather than upon skin-colour and hair-form. Yet, he did not « prove » a genetic relationship between these varied peoples.

Daniel G. Brinton, an American anthropologist, apparently, following Sergi, also used the term « Hamite » as a designation of physical type. He was also a firm believer in the innate su-

periority of Caucasoids.

Another student of this period, Brace said:

<sup>(5)</sup> A.H. Keane, at the turn of the century, was classifying Negroes under the rubric *Homo Ethiopicus*. «Blacks of Caucasic type» were placed in the sub-class Melanchroi of the *Homo-Caucasicus* group, and called «Eastern Hamites». (Keane, A.H., Ethnology.)

(6) Biblical and classical support was sometimes marshalled for classifying Egyptians as «Hamites». Thus Prichard (1848) had referred to Egypt as «the land of Ham watered by the Nile», and John Hall, M.D., writing an «analytical synopsis of the natural history of man» for the 1863 edition of Pickering's work cites Plutarch as an authority for calling the ancient Egyptians the «sons of Ham».

« It should be understood by the reader that by the term Hamite we do not necessarily mean people of black complexion, but those tribes whose language is represented by the ancient Egyptians, a people undoubtedly of brown and swarthy, and sometimes, black, colour with European or Aryan features. »

Brace then stated that Egyptologists were generally agreed that there were three physical types among the ancient Egyptians — Ethiopian, Asiatic, and Asiatic-African. He felt, however, that all of these people irrespective of physical variation should be dubbed « Hamites », for to him, language was the most important criterion in ascertaining « race ». He concluded this chapter with the statement that « The Hamitic Race has disappeared from human families ».

By the time Brace reached Chapter XXI of his book, however, he had resurrected the Hamites and was writing of living peoples whom he called « The Hamitic or (Chamitic) Tribes of Africa ». He included therein the Kopts, Fellahs, Galla, people of the Upper Nile near Senna, and the Eastern Nubians with « a physical type neither that of the fullblooded Negro nor Semitic like the Arab ». Confusion is worse confounded a few sentences later, however, when he says of the Barabara « though their physical type is almost precisely what may be called the Hamitic type, they are not found to be connected either with the Hamitic or Semitic races ».

Brace's attempt to carry water on both the linguistic and anatomical shoulder was typical of much of the anthropological writing of his period. It means that widely divergent physical types were straight-jacketed into a common linguistic « race ». (The Aryans are a case in point.) Some one type in the past was assumed to be the « pure » one and the presentday populations were called « dilutions » or « degenerations ». The simple fact that language can be borrowed or imposed was ignored, as was the evident fact that the physical type of a population can change very quickly through intermixture. Logically, there is no objection to the use of a linguistic term for a racial stock or sub-stock if the speech area actually coincides with a reasonably homogeneous physical type. Such linguistic labels can become very confusing, however, when there are many types of peoples speaking the same type of language. They become completely illogical when it is assumed prima facie that the speakers of a language are all descended from a common homogeneous stock in the past. Those who confined the term « Hamite » to the « original Egyptians » were on much safer ground, with respect to physical anthropology at

It is interesting to note that the great anthropogeographer, Ratzel, was guilty of an inconsistency in dealing with the populations under discussion. At one point he states « Conceptions like that of an Indo-Germanic race, a Semitic race, a Bantu race, are not only valueless, but to be wholly rejected as misleading... Their importance as an indication of distinctions within mankind is uncommonly small ». Yet, he referred to the « Hamito-Semitic » and the « Negroid » as « the two greatest groups in Africa ». He also used the term « Hamite » to apply to « tribes whose type of feature approaches the nobler forms of white faces although their colour is as dark as that of the typical Negro (7) ».

#### SELIGMAN AND THE HAMITIC PROBLEM

To mention the word « Hamite » is to quickly evoke the name of C. G. Seligman, for he more than any other English-speaking anthropologist has been concerned with the study of the people so designated. Seligman began his work during a period which was greatly interested in Egyptology. As predynastic burials were uncovered and new necropoli opened, the discussions about Egypt which had been raging for a century reached their crescendo. In 1907, Edouard Naville attempted to sum up the results of the controversy in the following words (8):

« As for their physical type (i.e. the ancient Egyptians) the views between the numerous experts who have studied Egyptian skulls are decidedly conflicting. However, they are unanimous on one point. They all agree that the pre-historic Egyptians were not Negroes, that they had long hair, generally black, but sometimes fair, and that prognathism hardly appeared... Some of the authors admit a Negroid influence and have come to the conclusion that there were two races, a negroid and non-negroid. This view is strongly attacked by others (9). »

With the establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium in the Sudan after the defeat of the Mahdi, the attention of some English anthropologists was turned away from speculation about ancient Egypt to the intensive study of the peoples of the Sudan as well as to those of the Abyssinian highlands and what are now Kenya and Uganda. In the winters of

<sup>(7)</sup> RATZEL, F., The History of Mankind, London, 1895, p. 31.
(8) NAVILLE, Edouard, The Origins of Egyptian Civilization , J.R.A.I., Vol. XXXVII, 1907.

Vol. XXXVII, 1907.

(9) From our perspective it is hard to conceive of the energy expended and the ink spilled, and the temper displayed, in this dispute about whether Egyptians were «Negroes» or not. Morton's work on Egyptia Crania was hailed as giving the coup de grace to the «negrophiles». When Thompson and McIver's Ancient Races of the Thebaid appeared in 1890 and stressed the Negroid component in the Nubians. Charles Myers disputed his views in a series of articles in the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Not all of this was a sober search for truth, as even a cursory reading of the literature will reveal. It was tied up with the general controversy about the intelligence of Negroes, the rightness of Negro slavery, etc.

1909-10, and 1911-12, Charles Seligman and his wife Brenda were commissioned to make expeditions into the area as the beginning of a series of studies for the Government, of the Sudan. For the next thirty years, Seligman assisted by a corps of colonial administrators and missionaries, who were often short on theory and specialized training, but who were indefatigable observers and recorders, began to publish regularly in Sudan Notes and Records. Out of the group came a few trained anthropologists, among them J. Driberg. Seligman imbued his students and collaborators with an interest in tracing out the affinities between the peoples of Egypt, the Great Horn, and the regions to the South.

Seligman's first important article on this subject appeared in 1913 (10). He began by noting the wide distribution of the Hamitic languages in Africa, and stated that he was interested in « defining the home of the stock which has given rise to so many peoples and spread over so vast an area ». Thus, from the outset, Seligman seemed to assume that the language and population had spread together. Yet, he also stated of the Hamitic-speakers « It cannot be said that a uniform physical type exists ». We can only understand this apparent contradiction if we remember that it was the fashion in those days to search for pure, original types within a heterogeneous population. (N.b. e.g., the search for an Aryan pure type.) He proposed to demonstrate (he said « prove ».) that the « least modified of these Hamitic-speaking peoples of Eastern Africa > were « physically identical with pre-dynastic Egyptians ». (He mentioned that Sergi had already distinguished between Northern Hamites and Eastern Hamites.) By stripping off what he considered accretions, Armenoid and Negroid, he sought to find a contemporary people who would approximate the pre-dynastic Egyptians. The Beni Amer tribesmen on the Red Sea Coast, seemed to meet the requirement. He compiled the following table to prove his point by showing the striking similarities in cranial measurements:

	Number	Head	Head
	of cases	length	breadth
BENI AMER	51	183.5	133.75
Pre-dynastic	45	184.8	131.5
Late pre-dynastic	125		133.5
Nagada	139	185.13	134.87
Early dynastic, Nubia	91	183.0	134.3
Middle Nubia	60	181.8	133.0 <b>5</b>
Middle Nubia	123	183.0	134.0

<sup>(10)</sup> Seligman, C.G., «Some Aspects of the Hamitic Problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan», J.R.A.I., 1913, pp. 593-704. In this same volume of the Journal, Sir H.H. Johnson published a remarkable paper on «A Survey of the Ethnography of Africa; and the Former Racial and Tribal

Seligman also attempted to prove the hypothesis that successive waves of Hamites had scattered all through the Nilotic area and East Africa. He attempted to trace their influence, not only through comparisons of their physical type with that of pre-dynastic Egyptians, but also through cultural evidences, such as presence of the Divine King complex (11), burial customs, the presence of otiose high gods and the cult of the dead, and above all, the cattle complex.

In a later publication (12), Seligman dealt specifically with the Nilotic area and stated his belief that the route of migrations had been up the Blue Nile from Egypt into the Abyssinian highlands, and from there down into the Nile valley

south of the Bahr el Ghazal.

Still again, he studied a list of traits such as the training of bullock's horns, the Azande harp, pseudo-mummification among the Lotuko, worship of the sun by the Ingassa, and the political system of the Shilluk, and sees in them evidence

of contact with ancient Egypt (13).

Seligman's discussion of the Hamites was suffused with assumptions of Hamitic superiority and Negro inferiority. For instance, at one point, he states: «... the incoming Hamites were pastoral Caucasoids — arriving wave after wave — better armed as well as quicker witted than the dark agricultural Negroes». He referred to one tribe as being « contaminated » with Negro blood, and of Negro blood as being a « drag » on the so-called Half-Hamites.

After Seligman, the idea grew that the Bantu were a Hamiticized people; that Zimbabwe was probably a Hamitic civilization; that the Fulani were Hamites who spread civilization into Western Africa; and that the early impulses to State building in the Timbuctoo area were from Hamites. Frobenius, himself not at all a racist, unwittingly reinforced the idea with his studies of the distribution of the institution of the

Schwester-Mutter and « Divine Kingship ».

During the 1920's no one did more to give currency to the Hamitic Myth than the missionary, John Roscoe, who because of his intimate acquaintance with East African areas was

Migrations in that Continent ». It contained many references to «that primitive or modified form of white man, the Hamite» who about 12.000 years ago came across the Red S2a into Africa. Seligman published a letter criticizing a minor point, but he was in essentiel agreement with Sir Harry Johnston's formulation.

<sup>(11)</sup> Seligman, C.G., Egypt and Negro Africa: A Study in Divine Kingship, Frazer Lecture, London, 1933.

<sup>(12)</sup> Seligman, C.G. and Seligman, Brenda, Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan, London.

<sup>(13)</sup> Czekanowski, following Seligman, attempts to reconstruct the history of East Africa in terms of a Hamitic wave pouring out of Abyssinia around 1,000 B.C., — Bahima, Batusi cattle-owners of Galla stock. They split into two streams, one moving toward the White Nile and the other southward toward what is now Kenya. This reconstruction is summarized in Tucker, A.N., The Eastern Sudanic Languages (1940).

highly respected in academic circles. In his Frazer lecture for 1923 (14). Roscoe speaks of an extinct race which once inhabited the Lakes Region of Eastern Africa, and then comments that « The next inhabitants of whose existence we have evidence are a less intelligent people, the Negroes, whose descendants are in the land at the present day... The lowest order of these negroids, I think, is the people to be found on the mountain ridges of Ruwenzori and Elgon... » Referring to the pastoral invaders who came later, Roscoe characterizes them as « ... being of a better physical type and having greater moral courage than the ordinary Negro... » Roscoe's work also shows aesthetic biases as when he says of the Bahima, «their features are like those of Europeans, straight nose, finely shaped heads, with lofty foreheads, thin lips, absolutely unlike the Negro type. »(15) (And, he added that they probably had come from Egypt.) In the Frazer lecture he repeatedly stated as « proof » that the Bahima-Bairu situation in Uganda is a conquest situation, the «fact » that no Bahima would ever have thought of marrying an «inferior » Negro woman. Again and again, in the lecture he refers to «low» and «inferior» Negroes as compared to the «higher » Hamites, unconscious of the possibility that he might be imputing to the original invaders more recent attitudes which were prevalent among the contemporary Bahima, and among some of Roscoe's countrymen.

Such imputation of derogatory social evaluations to people of past cultures foreclosed consideration of an alternative hypothesis, viz., « That the system of social stratification in these areas preceded the introduction of cattle, and that the upper strata may be different in physical type due to social selection within a single society. » In its major outlines, the Hamitic Myth eventually came to include the following propo-

sitions:

a) That there are people living today, viz., the Beja, Beni-Amer, and Haddendoa, who approximate, in physical type, the pre-dynastic Egyptians, and are very probably descended from

b) That successive waves of these Hamites have been pushing into East Africa and westward across the Sudan for scores of decades. That as they wandered they « Hamiticized » the Negro populations in varying degrees. Hamiticization involved a change in physical type and improvement in intellectual and emotional traits, as well as cultural level.

c) That the early waves of Hamitic invaders were impor-

<sup>(14)</sup> Immigrants and their Influence in the Lake Region of Central Africa, Frazer Lecture, 1923, pp. 6, 16.
(15) Roscoe, J., The Bahima: «A Cow Tribe of Enkole,» J.R.A.I., Vol. XXXVII, 1907. Stanley, writing of these African peoples for a popular audience, dwelt at length on the difference between the «handsome» « Europeanlike types as contrasted with « degraded-looking » Negroes. See his In Darkest Africa.

tant culture bearers, and helped to distribute the culture materials of the Egyptian neolithic and early post-neolithic throughout much of Negro Africa.

d) That later waves of Hamites and partial Hamites introduced the pastoral economy and the main features of the

East African cattle complex.

e) That Hamites, although they had sexual relations with Negro women refused to accept them as social equals, and thus came to form an aristocracy.

### EARLY CRITICISMS OF THE HAMITIC MYTH

In the same 1913 issue of the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute where Seligman expounded the Hamitic Hypothesis at length, Sir Harry Johnston published a long article on the ethnology of Africa which supported the general thesis that high cultural development necessarily, meant an infusion of Caucasoid blood. When Torday queried him about this in a letter in which he said, « I admit my partiality for the black man », Sir Harry replied, «I myself require very convincing proof that the pure-blood Negro originated anything ».

Torday returned to the fray in a caustic introduction to Herbert Spencer's Descriptive Sociology of the African Races accusing the proponents of the Hamitic Hypothesis of ethno-

centric and racial bias (16):

« It is asserted that the cleavage between Sudanic and Bantu peoples is due to the hybridization of the latter with some enigmatic people who had some affinity or were identical with the Hamites. On linguistic evidence, Sir Harry Johnston fixed the period of this event at the preposterously short one of not more than one or two thousand years. Of cultural evidence for this theory there is none. To state that the Bantu civilization — or any civilization whatever — is due to the forbears of such absolutely primitive tribes as the Hadendoa, Beja, Bedawib, etc. (identified by some authorities with the enigmatic Hamites) presupposes that these people who were ignorant of agriculture, of the production of iron and of all arts and crafts denoting a higher culture, who, as we know, have not progressed a step during the last five hundred years, and considered all manual labour degrading, had the power to give that which they never possessed. Such a belief reveals less discretion than that displayed by that very indiscreet French lady, Gabrielle d'Estrées, who declared that « la plus belle fille de France ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a ». We can dispense with the Hamitic hypothesis. The physical difference between Sudanic and Bantu peoples is sufficiently accounted

<sup>(16)</sup> Herbert Spencer, Descriptive Sociology of the African Races, Introduction to 1930 edition.

for by their environment and their separation by the belt of virgin forest which precluded inter-communication. »

Many years later, one of Seligman's most brilliant students, Evans-Pritchard (now Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford) reassessed the whole Hamitic Hypothesis in a more sober fashion, stating: «I do not speak of Hamitic and Semitic races as there is a danger of confusion when the same expressions serve to describe both race and language... » In discussing the Hamites as carriers of pre-dynastic Egyptian culture, Evans-Pritchard reminds us that we know little of the social life of the ancient Egyptian population. He characterized the Hamitic Hypothesis as a «tautological construct» and suggested that it be used as a working hypothesis only (17).

Despite these scattered criticisms, no full-scale attack on the Hamitic Myth was made by English-speaking scholars, until 1948 when the American anthropologist, Joseph Greenberg, began to publish the results of his careful analysis of

African languages (18).

#### THE LINGUISTIC CRITIQUE

As mentioned above, the term « Hamitic » came into the literature as a term for a linguistic group and was extended to include a physical type and a way of life (pastoralism) both of which were assumed to have an organic connection with the language. In this, the history of the « Hamitic myth » parallels that of the « Aryan Myth ». As Evans Pritchard pointed out the use of the term then becomes tautological. We infer the former presence of the language when we meet the physical type or the culture without the language. We infer the former presence of pastoralism if we find the language and/or the physical type associated with some other way of life. And evaluations of superiority are associated with the physical type, the language and the culture.

Joseph Greenberg, has attempted to attack the whole Hamitic Myth by demonstrating that various groups in Africa south of the Sahara have been said to have Hamitic speech forms when this was not true at all. Greenberg's conclusions have not been accepted by all Africanists and are still considered « controversial ». Men of culture of African descent who have had linguistic training should evaluate the Greenberg analysis critically, and if they are convinced that his

<sup>(17) «</sup>An Ethnological Survey of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan » Winthrop, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan From Within, 1935, pp. 81, 91.
(18) Joseph H. Greenberg, «The Classification of African Languages, American Athropologist, Vol. 50, pp. 24-29, 1948; Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, Vol. 5, pp. 79-100, 190-198, 309-317, 1949; Vol. 6, pp. 47-63, 143-160, 223-237, 388-398, 1950. and Vol. 10, pp. 405-415, 1954. Reprinted as Studies in African Linguistic Classification by the Compass Publishing Co, for the Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, 1955.

formulations are valid, should publicize them and defend them against the attacks of those who reject them. As members of the general worldwide fraternity of scholars, however, they have the obligation to refrain from using the Greenberg analysis polemically, if they feel that he has not given a convincing alternative to previous formulations.

Whether or not Greenberg has proved his total position conclusively one fact remains, his Studies in African Linguistic Classification have effectively shifted the burden of proof to those who claim that « Hamitic » languages are to be found in Western and Southern Africa. Meinhof's Die Sprachen der Hamiten has been the Bible and the Koran of those who contend that « Hamites » have spread out westward and southward carrying a superior culture and superior genes with them. Greenberg begins his « higher criticism » by taking a crucial instance, the Fulani. Basing his method primarily upon comparisons of vocabulary rather than upon comparisons of structure, he demonstrates quite convincingly that the Fulani language is closely related to Serer-Sin, a relatively obscure language of the Senegal area, and that it exhibits a somewhat more remote connection with the Wolof language of the same general area. He concludes that Fulani is merely a part of the westernmost branch of what Westermann calls the West Atlantic section of his West Sudanic Family and belongs to what Greenberg calls « the far-flung Niger-Congo family ». The orthodox view has been that the Fulani were a group of pastoral culture bearers wandering from the east into Western Africa. Greenberg takes the position that really « ... the Fulani have moved in historic times from west to east across the Sudan ». He suggests that the original home of the Fulani was in Senegal. He uses the Fulani case to document the position that there is no necessary connection between pastoralism and Hamitic speech stating that « I fear the impulse to classify Fulani as Hamitic, whether consciously or subconsciously, came from the stereotype of the conquering cattle owning Hamite... This simple formulation of the relation between cattle conquest and language which has hitherto dominated the literature on Africa will also be shown as false for East Africa in a later article in this series where the supposed Hamitic affiliations of the Masai, Nandi, and other cattle people of this area will be shown to have as little foundation as that of the Fulani. »

Greenberg systematically examines other languages that have been called « Hamitic », or which have been said to show Hamitic influences. He gives convincing alternative interpretations. Greenberg takes the position that there are, however, four languages or language groups which do « ... exhibit such marked morphological and lexical resemblances that their relationship cannot be doubted, » namely, Semitic, Berber, the extinct ancient Egyptian, and the Cushitic

languages of East Africa (Galla, Sidamos, Bedauye, Somali, Kaffa, Afo (19). After a careful examination of Hausa and the

Chad languages he adds them to this group.

He suggests that the name «Hamitic» be abandoned, however, on the grounds that « ... the non-Semitic languages of the Hamito-Semitic family do not form a linguistic unity as against Semitic. Therefore the term « Hamitic », which has been reserved for this use does not refer to any valid linguistic unity ». He suggests the term « Afroasiatic » for this language family but notes that « The term Hamito-Semitic is so well entrenched that it will no doubt continue to be used. » It is his hope, however, that « Hamitic could be entirely eliminated from use even as a linguistic term ».

Greenberg states categorically of his own work that, « If the linguistic analysis presented here is correct, then much of what has hitherto been standard physical anthropology and reconstructed culture history in Africa is in need of reconsideration. The vagueness of the use of the term Hamite as a linguistic term and its extension as a racial term for a type viewed primarily as Caucasoid, has led to a racial theory in which the majority of the native population of Negro Africa is considered to be the result of mixture between Hamites and Negroes... With this is often combined a belief either in the inherent superiority of the Hamitic element or in a factual estimate that it has shown itself everywhere as a conquering, predominantly pastoral element among Negroid agricultural peoples.

He states further that.

« So all-pervading has been the loose application of the term Hamite in African racial classification that if the present linguistic analysis is accepted, the whole problem of physical variation in Africa should be approached once again independent of preconceptions based on language. It would be a rather remarkable accident if a racial classification based on incorrect linguistics turned out to be valid. »

#### THE UNFINISHED TASKS

Torday, Wieschoff, Delafosse, Herskovits, Froebius, Evans-Pritchard and other eminent scholars have, either explicitly or implicitly, attacked the idea that the only stimulus to advanced cultural development in Negro Africa has come from Hamitic or other Caucasoid biological and cultural infusions. Greenberg has gone to the heart of the problem in his brilliant restudy of African languages. None of these men were interested in supporting any political position, nor did any of them suffer, personally, from the derogation of Negro

<sup>(19)</sup> See M. A. BRYAN, The Distribution of the Semitic and Cushitte Languages of Africa (London, 1947).

intellectual and moral capacities. Men of culture of African descent owe a debt of gratitude to these scholars for selecting this problem from among the many they might have chosen and for critically examining a dogma that was not only unscientific, but which was also a political tool in the hands of those who wished to divide and dominate the peoples of Africa. However, men of culture of African descent, because of their own peculiar relationship to the historic process, and because they have a personal interest in giving the coup de grace to the myth have a special responsibility to widen and deepen the attack.

These responsibilities involve four aspects. First, scholars of African descent need to examine their own biases, preconceptions and unconscious attitudes toward the Hamitic Myth. Second, they need to marshal their scientific skills to round out and complete the critique already begun. Third, they need to tackle the task of publicizing the work of those involved in a re-examination of the Hamitic Myth. Finally, they should set in motion a movement to secure the revision of textbooks, encyclopaedias and other reference works which are perpetuating the Hamitic Myth, and to secure corrective editorial comment in reprints of standard works.

With respect to an examination of the biases held by scholars of African descent, themselves, it is important to note that such biases do actually exist — on several levels. There are a few scholars who are wedded to the position that West African cultures are historically related to ancient Egyptian or Semitic cultures. This position sometimes springs from a defensive romanticism which seeks reflected glory from an ancient African past or from an assumed relationship to the Christian and Islamic Judaic prototype. Those who hold this position are not always aware of the full implications of this position. They must be willing to submit their own ideas to critical analysis. On another level one notes certain aesthetic biases that creep into the writings of scholars of African descent — a tendency to assess the Caucasoid physical type as « more beautiful », to speak of its features as « refined » and of Negro features as « coarse ». There are perhaps even a few rare Negro scholars who actually accept the idea of the genetic superiority of Hamitic physical types. We have the obligation to master the latest findings of geneticists, as well as to realize that aesthetic standards are culturally determined. There is an equal obligation not to make claims for Negro priorities where they do not exist.

A critical analysis of the Hamitic myth is well under way, but as Greenberg points out, there are other areas than the linguistic in which research is needed. He points to the need for a re-examination of the entire problem of the relationship of physical anthropology to the Hamitic myth. Some significant work in this field has been done by Oberg who has

raised the question sharply as to whether or not the differences in physical type correlated with social status and cattle ownership within certain East African populations are to be explained in terms of Hamitic invaders or social selection within the population. On the ethnological level there is need for a critical examination of all of the literature which takes the Hamitic Myth for granted. These are tasks which might well be undertaken by sociologists and anthropologists in the ranks of men of culture of African descent. The results will take their place in the general stream of sociology and anthropology; they will be contributions to the disciplines involved as well as to the struggle against racism and imperialism.

If the criticisms of the Hamitic Myth remain buried in the specialist literature or come only to the attention of savants, they will not serve the purpose of effectively destroying the Hamitic Myth. Some scholars will have to assume the responsibility for making these findings available to colleagues outside of the ranks of sociologists and anthropologists, and to an even wider public. This will require assimilating the data and of rewriting it for magazines and journals, and for preparing pamphlets to be read by laymen, both within and outside of Africa. So deeply entrenched is the Hamitic Myth in the popular mind, either as such, or as a part of the general belief in Caucasian superiority, that it will not be dislodged without deliberate efforts towards that end.

Mention has already been made of the « classical » works, the textbooks and other widely disseminated volumes which perpetuate the Hamitic myth. All of these works should be analysed critically, including encyclopedias and reference works, and memoranda should be prepared and sent to publishers calling attention to the specific spots in which errors of fact and overtones of derogatory bias appear. Wherever textbooks are involved requests should be made for corrections in future editions. There is a precedent for this approach in the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in the United States with respect to erroneous and derogatory material about Negroes; and in the work of a UNESCO commission which was appointed to try to eliminate from textbooks all material that might excite hatred and contempt between nations. In fact, the critique of the Hamitic Myth might be made one part of a larger scheme to eliminate racist overtones generally from these works. Standard works of classical or historical significance present a different kind of problem. Obviously they should not be rewritten, except where authors are alive and can be persuaded to prepare new editions. In other cases, publishers and editors should be encouraged to supply prefaces, introductions and footnotes to new editions which point out errors of fact or points of view that do not accord with recent fin-

dings about the Hamitic Myth.

Some of these responsibilities will be assumed by independent scholars, but they should not be left to chance. The Society for African Culture, itself, might take the responsibility for organizing the final assault upon the Hamitic Myth. It could solicit the co-operation of such bodies as UNESCO, the permanent secretariat of the Independent African States (20), as well as prominent scholars irrespective of race, creed or colour. The political unity of an emergent Africa as well as the cause of Truth, demand that men of culture of African descent assume this responsibility.

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<sup>(20)</sup> Among the resolutions on «Cultural Matters» adopted at the Accra Conference of the Eight Independent African States in April, 1958, was the following: «To ensure that syllabuses of history and geography... include such material as may help to give each student accurate information on the way of life and culture of other African countries... To spare no efforts to revise history and geography textbooks and syllabuses... with a view of removing any incorrect information due to colonial or other foreign influences...»