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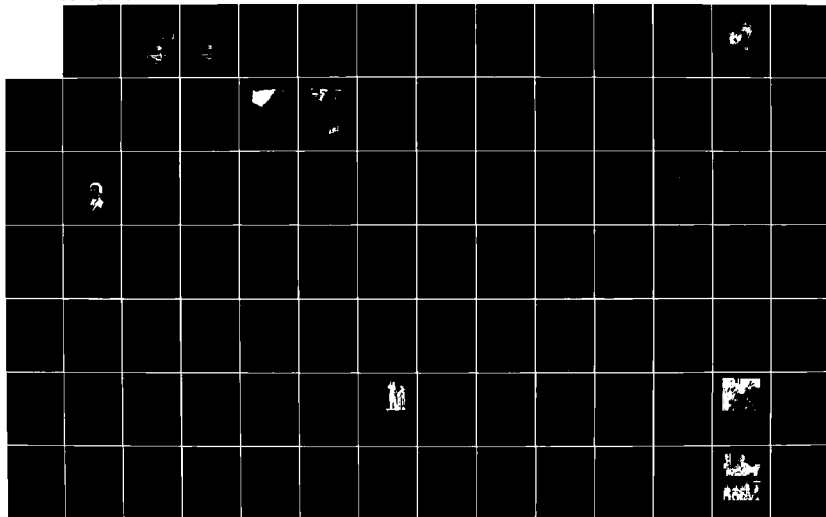
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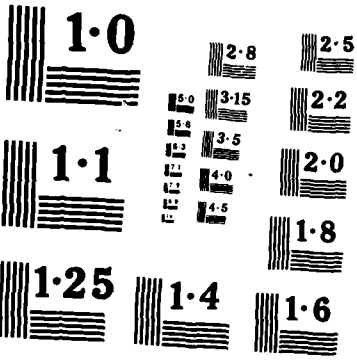
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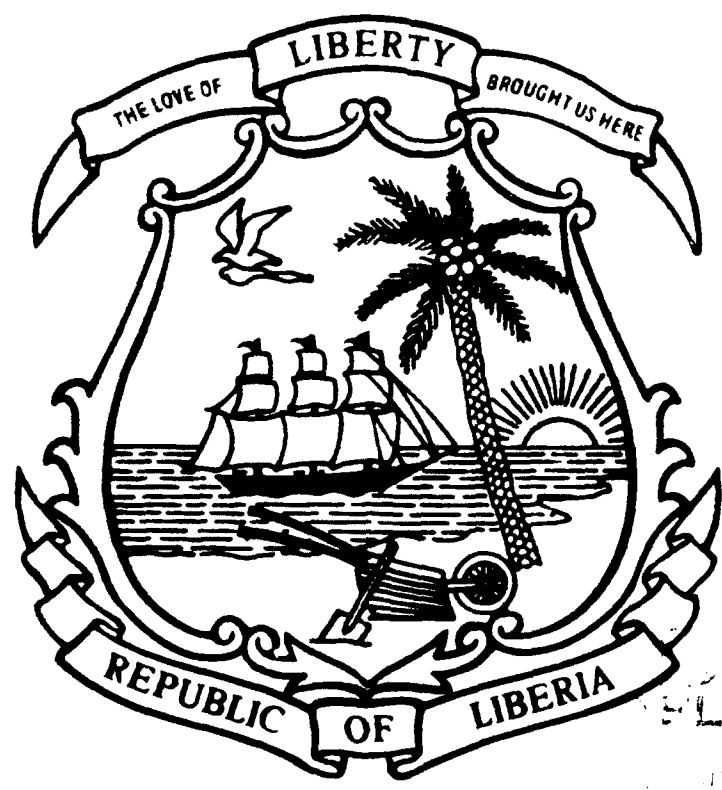
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Liberia

a country study

Foreign Area Studies
The American University

Edited by
Harold D. Nelson
Research completed
September 1984



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On the cover: Liberia's national coat of arms, adopted in 1847

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Foreword

This volume is one of a continuing series of books prepared by Foreign Area Studies, The American University, under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program. The last page of this book provides a listing of other published studies. Each book in the series deals with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its economic, national security, political, and social systems and institutions and examining the interrelationships of those systems and institutions and the ways that they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic insight and understanding of the society under observation, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal of it. The study focuses on historical antecedents and on the cultural, political, and socioeconomic characteristics that contribute to cohesion and cleavage within the society. Particular attention is given to the origins and traditions of the people who make up the society, their dominant beliefs and values, their community of interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with the national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward the social system and political order within which they live.

The contents of the book represent the views, opinions, and findings of Foreign Area Studies and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position, policy, or decision, unless so designated by other official documentation. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Such corrections, additions, and suggestions for factual or other changes that readers may have will be welcomed for use in future new editions.

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The aesthetic touches that enhance the book's appearance are the work of Marty Ittner, whose illustrations appear on the cover and the title pages of the chapters. The inclusion of photographs has been made possible by the generosity of various individuals and public and private agencies. The authors acknowledge their appreciation especially to those persons who contributed original camera work not previously published.



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Preface

Liberia: A Country Study replaces the *Area Handbook for Liberia*, which was completed in July 1964 and minimally updated in September 1971. In the two decades between 1964 and 1984 the country's political leadership has changed twice, and its economic fortunes and social structure have experienced unsettling pressures. The death of longtime president William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman in May 1971 resulted in a peaceful transfer of national authority to his vice president, William Richard Tolbert. The new chief executive administered the republic's affairs until April 1980, when a coup d'état by enlisted men of the armed forces brought about his assassination and an extended period of military rule. In 1984 Liberian political, economic, and social institutions had entered another state of transition as the military government prepared for the return of civilian rule. In light of these developments, a new examination of Liberian society is warranted.

Like its predecessor, *Liberia: A Country Study*, seeks to provide a compact and objective exposition of the country's dominant social, economic, political, and national security institutions and, hopefully, to give the reader some appreciation of the forces involved in contemporary Liberian history. In presenting this new study, the authors have relied primarily on official reports of governmental and international organizations, journals, newspapers, and material reflecting recent field research by scholarly authorities. Detailed information on many aspects of the society, however, were not always readily available, and gaps in the data as well as varying interpretations existed among some of the sources consulted. Where appropriate, these gaps and differences have been noted in the text. Should readers require greater detail on core area topics, the authors have noted the availability of amplifying materials in bibliographic statements at the end of each chapter. Full references to these and other sources used or considered are included in the detailed Bibliography.

Place-names generally have been spelled in accordance with those published by the United States Board on Geographic Names in its current *Liberia: Official Standard Name Gazetteer*, Second Edition, November 1976. Certain exceptions, however, have been made to conform to spellings commonly employed in Liberia. The authors are aware that variations exist between some sources for the spellings of the country's numerous ethnic groups ("tribes," according to many authorities). Moreover, different spellings may occur for certain ethnic groups whose mem-

bers live in more than one of the adjacent countries of West Africa. The spelling of ethnic names is consistent throughout this book, but the more important alternatives are pointed out in Chapter 2.

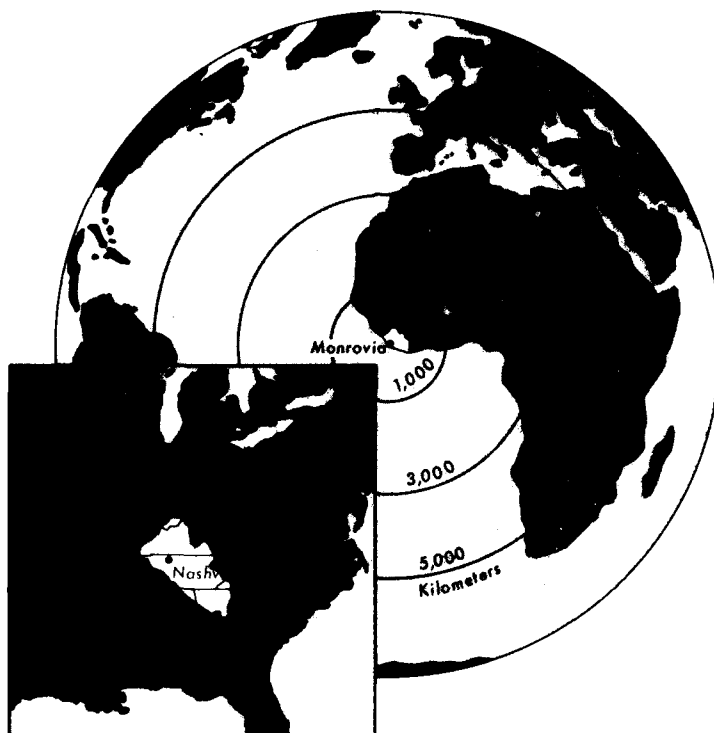
Terms deemed essentially Liberian conform to observed patterns of usage in the country. A primary example is the use in this study of the term *Americo-Liberian* to designate the coastal settlers from the Western Hemisphere and their descendants. Although the term has been officially disapproved in Liberia since the 1950s, its earlier acceptance and its continued use by Liberians and international scholarly observers provide an expedient reference to a clearly discernible and significant group of people for which no other short descriptive term is available. The authors wish to assure the reader that its use in this work does not imply pejorative intent.

An effort has been made to limit the use of foreign and technical words and phrases in this study. When this has been inappropriate, such terms have been defined briefly where they first appear in any chapter, or reference has been made to the Glossary, which is included at the back of the book for the reader's convenience.

Country Studies in the Area Handbook Series usually present all measurements in the metric system. This has not been done in *Liberia: A Country Study* because the metric system is not used in the republic.

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Country Profile



Country

Formal Name: Republic of Liberia.

Short Form: Liberia.

Term for Citizens: Liberians.

Capital: Monrovia.

Flag: Six red stripes alternating with five white stripes; in upper



left-hand corner, large white star superimposed on blue square field.

Independence Achieved: July 26, 1847.

Geography

Size: 43,000 square miles; about the size of Tennessee.

Topography: Low coastal plain backed by rolling plateau, broken by hills and rocky promontories of mountain ranges within Guinea Highlands; some elevations over 4,000 feet; much of interior beyond coastal plain rugged and forest-covered; at least nine principal river basins drain southward to Atlantic Ocean.

Climate: Tropical, marked by year-round warm temperatures, high humidity, distinct wet and dry seasons. Most rainfall between April and November; heaviest along coast, ranging from 100 to 180 inches annually; driest section of country receives average of 70 inches annually. Average daily temperature about 80°F.; warmer inland than on coast; average humidity 70 to 90 percent.

Society

Population: Mid-1984 population estimated at 2 million; more than 66 percent rural, nearly 34 percent urban; average population density about 49 persons per square mile, but considerable variation throughout country; density greatest in and near coastal urban centers. Natural growth rate about 3.2 percent.

Ethnic Groups and Languages: Until 1980 government recognized 17 ethnic categories: descendants of emancipated slaves from Western Hemisphere (once known as Americo-Liberians) who had settled in Liberia in nineteenth century and 16 "tribes" of indigenous Africans; indigenous tribal groups included Kpelle, Kissi, Gola, Grebo, Kru, Mandingo, Bassa, Belle, Dey, Gbandi, Gio, Krahn, Loma, Mano, Mende, and Vai. Anthropological investigation has indicated number of tribal categories may actually be as many as 28; study continues. More than 20 local languages and dialects; all of Niger-Congo group, including Mande, West Atlantic, and Kru branch of Kwa subgroup; some have scripts. English official language of governmental affairs, formal education, mass media.

Religion: About-half of adult population adheres to indigenous religious concepts; remainder about equally divided between Christian and Muslim faiths. Protestant denominations predominate among Christian adherents; Roman Catholicism more widespread among Kru peoples.

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muster within a time frame that will satisfy the demands of an anxious and impatient public. Moreover, the short-term prospects for a resumption of significant economic growth do not appear promising.

In consolidating his role as head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, Doe has been under ever increasing pressures. He has been obliged to absorb much information in learning how to play the role of chief executive, a position for which he had little background before 1980. He has also been forced to make decisions that have not always drawn favorable reaction from the Liberian public—or at times from his compatriots—and as a result he has had to fend off challenges to his leadership. This has been particularly true since mid-1984, when the country entered a transitional phase in preparation for the return of civilian government, which Doe has promised for January 1986. A new Constitution has been written and adopted, the PRC has been dissolved and replaced by a military-civilian body known as the Interim National Assembly, and the four-year ban on political activity has been lifted in preparation for presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October 1985.

Contrary to statements he made immediately after the coup in 1980 denying any interest in a future political role, Doe has become an active candidate for the presidency. In adjusting to this changed stance, the head of state has assumed a new image with which he hopes to persuade voters that his experience of the past five years merits their continued support. His actions in appointing many former members of the True Whig Party to positions of authority in his transitional government is believed to reflect a feeling that the republic needs the skills and experience of the educated minority. In keeping with this altered approach, Doe has increasingly assumed the outward appearance of a successful civilian executive, abandoning the camouflage fatigue uniform he had worn for all occasions in favor of three-piece, pinstriped suits. To his other titles he has added the term *doctor* (by virtue of an honorary Ph.D. granted him in 1982 by a university in the Republic of Korea).

Recurrent reports have indicated that not all of the military establishment has been reconciled to the reinstatement of civilian rule and that moves to undermine or eliminate Doe's leadership should not be ruled out. Accusations of plots against his administration have occurred with increasing regularity, and the regime has attempted to neutralize threats to Doe's plans for moving from a position of military governor to one of civilian president. The head of state needs the support of his armed forces to stay in

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requests for assistance largely because of the "special relationship" it has shared with Liberia since the early nineteenth century. Some of the American interests relate to intangibles such as the West African republic's unique Afro-American identity, the large number of Liberians who have been educated in the United States, the common use of the United States dollar as currency, and the fact that the country's leaders have always sought American assistance and guidance rather than turning elsewhere. But Washington's interests in Liberia are not devoid of more tangible foundations. The United States, for example, has long enjoyed access to Roberts International Airport and the modern port of Monrovia, a privilege affecting international security concerns that would probably be difficult to duplicate elsewhere in Africa. A large and important United States telecommunications installation is located in Liberia, and a relay station there transmits all of the Voice of America's programming to Sub-Saharan Africa. Liberia is also the site of an American-operated OMEGA navigation station, one of eight facilities in a global network that provides assistance to ships and aircraft of every country. Defense agreements between the governments in Washington and Monrovia provide a vehicle for protecting all these interests and have limited the opportunity for other countries to train, arm, and influence the Liberian armed forces. It has thus been to Doe's credit that he has not attempted to play off Soviet or Libyan offers of military aid against requests for economic and military assistance directed to Washington.

As the military regime has attempted to keep its promise to restructure the national economy, it has become apparent that the task will not be easily or quickly accomplished. The coup exacerbated problems associated with an economic situation that had been deteriorating rapidly for a number of years. The downward trend continued after the military takeover until corrective measures and extensive aid from the United States and the International Monetary Fund moderated somewhat the threat of financial crisis. But the Doe government nonetheless had entered difficult times. The public's enthusiasm for Tolbert's overthrow in 1980 began to wane as the military regime appeared unable even to manage—let alone restructure—the economy any better than had its predecessors. As one civilian official in the cabinet lamented, "The people still expect government to provide everything for them from the day they leave their mothers' wombs until they go to their tombs. We lack the imagination and the willpower for a national restructuring." The basic problem is that restructuring will require considerably more money than the Liberians can

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five-star status in mid-1981, however, he has insisted on being addressed as both commander in chief and head of state—a clear reminder that collegiality has given way to a regime bearing Doe's exclusive imprint.

Since the overthrow of the conservative True Whig oligarchy, there has been much speculation on the real meaning of the term *revolution* that the military government has bandied about. Most observers eventually have agreed that Doe and his supporters have planned to move neither to the left nor to the right, a decision that has divided the military and introduced the possibility of a counter coup. On several occasions Doe has alleged that plots against him have been discovered, and he has taken action to expose them publicly and to eliminate the accused perpetrators from their positions of authority. Some observers have suggested that Doe has deliberately used the tactic to retain support from the United States, which was expected to go to great lengths to prevent a socialist takeover in Liberia.

Probably the most conservative of the original PRC's inner-circle members, Doe has consistently rejected a radical departure from the familiar conservative Liberian way of life. Immediately after the coup it became apparent that the republic had become fertile ground for political influence by the Soviet Union and Libya. Both offered military aid in an effort to wean the new government away from the country's traditional reliance on the United States, and Moscow's overtures also included offers from its Cuban and Ethiopian surrogates. Because the PRC and its cabinet included several avowed socialists, there was much debate over the direction the "revolution" would take. After Ethiopia became one of the first African countries to offer its support to the PRC, Doe visited Addis Ababa to get a personal view of the Marxist revolution in that country. Shortly thereafter, the PRC announced that it had rejected the Ethiopian model as inappropriate for Liberia. Instead, Doe has followed the advice received from Ahmed Sékou Touré, the late president of the neighboring People's Revolutionary Republic of Guinea. Touré, who had encouraged the PRC when Liberia's other neighbors treated it like a pariah, advised Doe to retain the capitalist system he had taken over because it had been around a long time, the people were used to it, and apparently it was the best one for the country. The aging president, once West Africa's leading leftist revolutionary, confided to Doe in 1980 that if he had had the benefit of hindsight he might have done a number of things differently with regard to Guinea's own socialist development efforts.

The United States has responded to the Doe government's

led in the process. Ten days later 13 other high government officials were executed publicly after having been tried by a special military tribunal for a variety of offenses. The 17-member body that assumed control and defined itself as the People's Redemption Council (PRC) represented Liberia's first experience with military government. Led by a 28-year-old army master sergeant named Samuel Kanyon Doe, the PRC established military law and proceeded to rule by decree after suspending the constitution and abolishing the legislature. Quick to reassure the people of their intentions, Doe and his compatriots announced the immediate goals of ending the country's political and economic domination by a few Americo-Liberian families, stamping out corruption, and building a "new society" in which the republic's wealth would be distributed more equitably.

These promises were initially well received by the Liberian people, whose resentment of the Tolbert regime and its reputation for corrupt practices had become a ground swell in the months that preceded the coup. But the objectives of the "revolution" represented a monumental task for a military government composed of young soldiers lacking in administrative experience and formal education beyond high school level. Candid recognition of these limitations resulted in the early establishment of a cabinet in which key portfolios were given to qualified civilians, many of whom had played leading political roles in precoup opposition to the Tolbert regime. But even with talented assistance, the military government has faced many problems in attempting to reestablish an image of political and economic stability that was shattered by gunfire on April 12, 1980.

In the five years that have elapsed since the coup, numerous adjustments have been made in the national governing body whose members once shared collegial responsibilities. In addition to the removal of some original PRC members, the advisory cabinet has been reshuffled repeatedly to eliminate members whose political philosophies have not coincided with those of the innermost circle. As these moves continued, it became apparent that an internal power struggle was in progress—one aimed essentially at determining who was going to govern Liberia. Doe had become chairman of the PRC at the outset by virtue of his NCO seniority, and he retained his master sergeant rank long after his compatriots had promoted themselves summarily to officer grades. This stance was a mute reminder that only his rank was real and, in fact, superior to that of the others. As his position became more secure, he was referred to regularly by his title of chairman. Since his rank skyrocketed to general of the army and

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Under his pragmatic approach many of the republic's political, economic, and social policies and institutions had formed and flourished, including the Open Door Policy, which invited virtually unrestricted foreign investment, and the Unification Policy, by which he had introduced a limited effort to bring the country's tribal majority into the republic's political and economic processes.

Tubman was succeeded in office by William Richard Tolbert, his vice president of 20 years, and the pulse of the True Whig oligarchy scarcely missed a beat. During the next nine years the Tolbert presidency attempted to attain a more African image than had persisted during the Tubman era, when reliance on proper Western attire became a symbol of office and authority. Tolbert, like his predecessor, recognized that eventual full integration of tribal peoples into the politico-economic structure would be necessary for public order and political stability. Their support for these views had contributed to a moderate trend toward better representation of tribal groups in the governmental process, but other influential figures had been less willing to accept the need for change. This was particularly true of about a dozen interrelated Americo-Liberian families who operated as a network that exerted effective control over the upper levels of both the government and the economy. Their motives were self-serving, and nepotism and institutional corruption were standard practices.

The desire for material wealth that had started under the Tubman regime accelerated after Tolbert came to national power, largely because the appetite was greater, according to former cabinet officials. Rural development began during the Tubman administration, but Tolbert did little more than talk about it and could never deliver as rapidly as was required. Rising unemployment, public demonstrations over the high price of rice bought in towns and the low price paid to farmers, and the formation of political parties to challenge the True Whig system all became issues that spawned public unrest as the decade of the 1970s came to a close. But the economic depression that had left its mark on the lives of most common citizens was probably the ultimate stimulus for what some observers have subsequently referred to as Liberia's "colonial revolution."

Government of, by, and for the few came to an end early on April 12, 1980, when a group of armed soldiers of tribal origins led by noncommissioned officers (NCOs) of similar background stormed Monrovia's Executive Mansion and carried out a successful coup d'état against the Tolbert government. The president and some two dozen members of his security guard were kil-

into closer contact with the outside world largely through the assistance of the United States in building a modern seaport and an international airport near the capital city of Monrovia.

The economic system, in keeping with emulated American tradition, was founded on the principles of free enterprise, and in the 1960s and early 1970s foreign investment set in motion a wave of economic growth that saw Liberia operating in the world market as a leading African producer of iron ore and timber products as well as rubber. Its economic fortunes had also been enhanced through the flag-of-convenience system, devised in 1947-48 with United States assistance, which made the small republic the world's largest maritime registry and brought additional income to the national treasury.

But characterized as it was toward external trade, the economic system was dangerously vulnerable to changes in world commodity demands and prices, particularly to slowdowns in the economies of the industrialized countries upon which Liberia had become so dependent. These contingencies became reality in the late 1970s as the cost of oil rose on the world market and international recession reduced demands for Liberian exports. When the world price of iron ore—the republic's principal export—declined dramatically in 1977 because of deteriorating conditions in the world steel industry, the Liberian government had already launched a four-year development plan a year earlier and had committed itself to hosting a summit conference of the Organization of African Unity in 1979. Both programs had required considerable borrowing of funds, which exacerbated the country's growing indebtedness. The result was a deepening depression in a society that had placed too much confidence in its modern economic sector at the expense of improvement and support for local agriculture. Reliance on foreign imports and government subsidies had impact on both consumer and producer. Moreover, use of the United States dollar as the republic's basic monetary unit and medium of exchange deprived the government of independent fiscal action in coping with external economic forces.

The finger of blame pointed, of course, to the central government in Monrovia and the political dynasty of the True Whig Party, which had been Liberia's power broker for 103 years. During 27 years of that long period, the country's best-known president, William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman, had served as head of state and had been nominated for an unprecedented seventh term of office when he died suddenly in 1971 at the age of 74. A consummate politician and popular leader, he had been known affectionately as "Uncle Shad" and the "Maker of Modern Liberia."

the outset this increasingly elite group discriminated against the indigenous Africans, whose presence and freedom in the region dated from the twelfth century. Referred to as "uncivilized" and "aborigines" who were content to live in a tribal setting in accordance with the "primitive" traditions of their ancestors, the indigenes were treated much in the same manner as were their counterparts in neighboring African territories colonized by the European powers. Thus a void was created between the two elements of Liberia's population from the very beginning. This gap was to become a hindrance to the emergence of a sense of nationalism and would remain a latent source of social unrest and, ultimately, conflict. In surrounding countries the British and French colonizing powers withdrew during the mid-twentieth century, leaving the African majority to manage its own future. But Liberia's colonists were an integral part of the country, and they did not leave.

The Americo-Liberians, who have never exceeded more than 5 percent of the country's total population, settled in the urban centers they formed along the Atlantic coast and developed a society based on cultural models they had imported from the United States. The majority element of the population—the indigenous peoples, each distinguished by its own language and customs—was eventually classified by the government into 16 different "tribes." For more than a century, most of them were encouraged to remain in their homelands in the interior of the country, a region vaguely designated the Hinterland. Exceptions were made, however, when inexpensive labor was needed on the large estates established by Americo-Liberians in the tradition of the planter aristocracy once common in the United States. Ironically, forcible recruitment and compulsory labor practices were often reminiscent of the slavery that was so much a part of the Americo-Liberian heritage. Preoccupied with its own development goals, this select minority effectively excluded the indigenous majority from Liberia's political and economic life for 133 years.

The republic led an isolated, impoverished, and often precarious existence until well into the twentieth century. Its first 100 years often have been described as a "century of survival" because of the encroaching efforts of neighboring colonial powers. Although the American influence on Liberia's ruling minority was apparent, the impact of British interest was more pronounced before the beginning of an economic experiment in 1926 by the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, an American firm whose name would become virtually synonymous with Liberia over the subsequent 40 years. After World War II the country was brought

Introduction

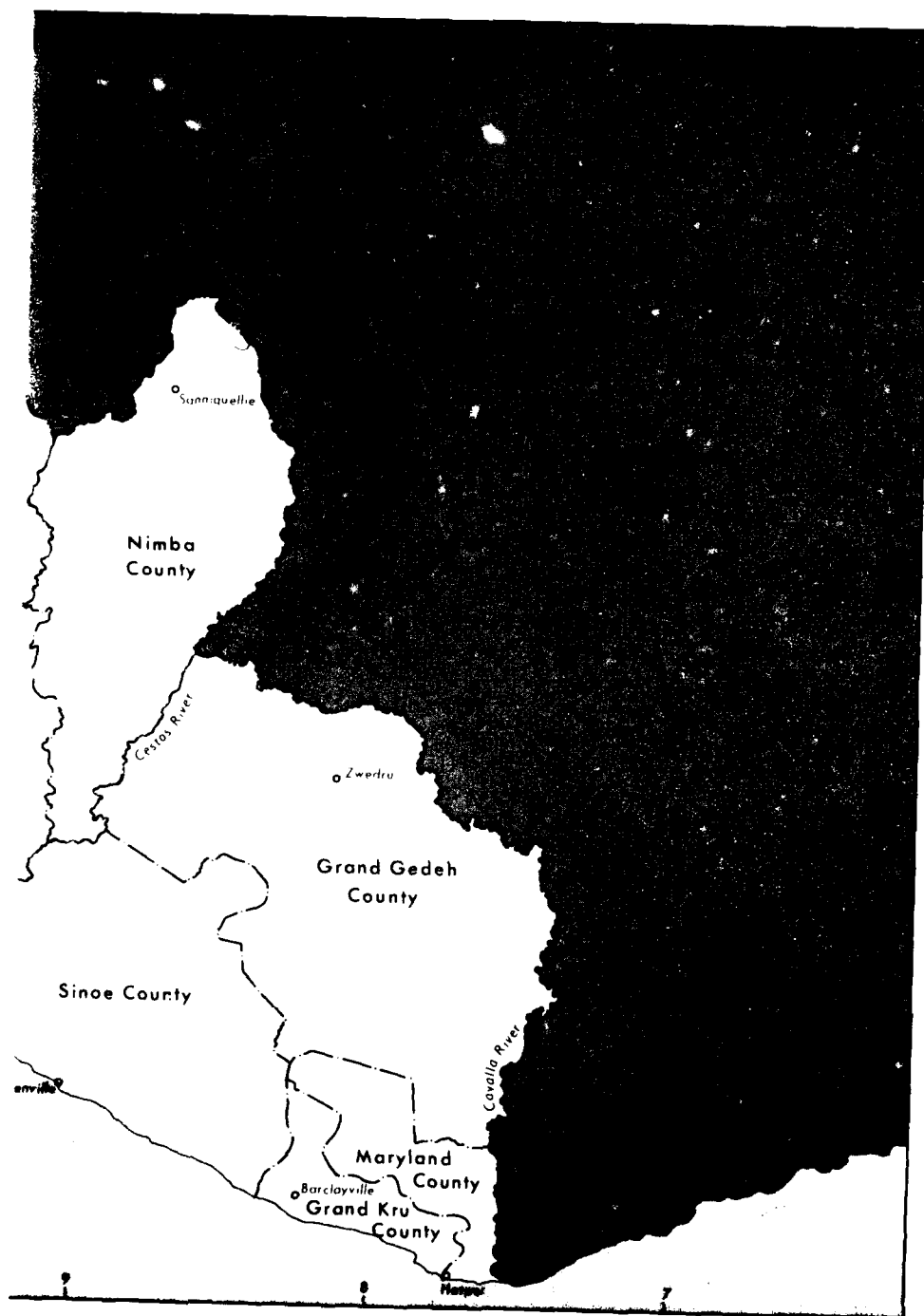
LIBERIA, AFRICA'S OLDEST REPUBLIC, also has the distinction of being older than any of the world's other black republics except Haiti. Lying a few degrees north of the equator at the southwest corner of the continent's great western bulge, the country covers roughly 43,000 square miles, an area about the size of Tennessee. Its coastline extends 370 miles along the Atlantic Ocean between Sierra Leone on the northwest and Ivory Coast on the southeast (see fig. 1). Inland the land ascends the seaward slopes of a series of highlands to an irregular border with Guinea on the north.

A sovereign state since 1847, Liberia is an anomaly when compared with the other developing African countries. All the rest share a legacy of having once been colonized and exploited by white-ruled foreign powers. Only Liberia had a "colonial era" in which a ruling minority—alien in origin, life-style, and habits of thought—was made up solely of black people. What passes for the Liberian version of a colonial experience began in the early nineteenth century with the arrival of freed American slaves sent from the United States by private colonization societies to settle along the coast of West Africa. The territory the black settlers initially acquired from the indigenous Africans living there was purchased for six firearms, one keg of gunpower, three pairs of shoes, a barrel of rum, a box of beads, and various other consumer items.

The settlers brought with them a broad range of skills and habits acquired in the Western Hemisphere, particularly a preference for the white landowners' way of life they had witnessed in the American South during their years of dehumanizing servitude. Viewed as symbols of success, attributes such as educational achievement, proper attire, and antebellum architectural style became important elements of the culture they formed in the new West African republic. A constitution modeled on that of the United States was drafted for the independent state by the dean of Harvard University's Law School, and the American pattern was followed in establishing the Liberian political, judicial, and administrative systems. The country's flag copied the red, white, and blue design of its United States counterpart, its administrative subdivisions were designated counties and, in several instances, towns and counties were given American place-names. The name chosen for the new republic declared that it was a land of the free, and the motto inscribed on its official coat of arms proclaimed to all that "the love of liberty brought us here."

But this motto was meaningful only to the settlers and their descendants, who called themselves Americo-Liberians. From

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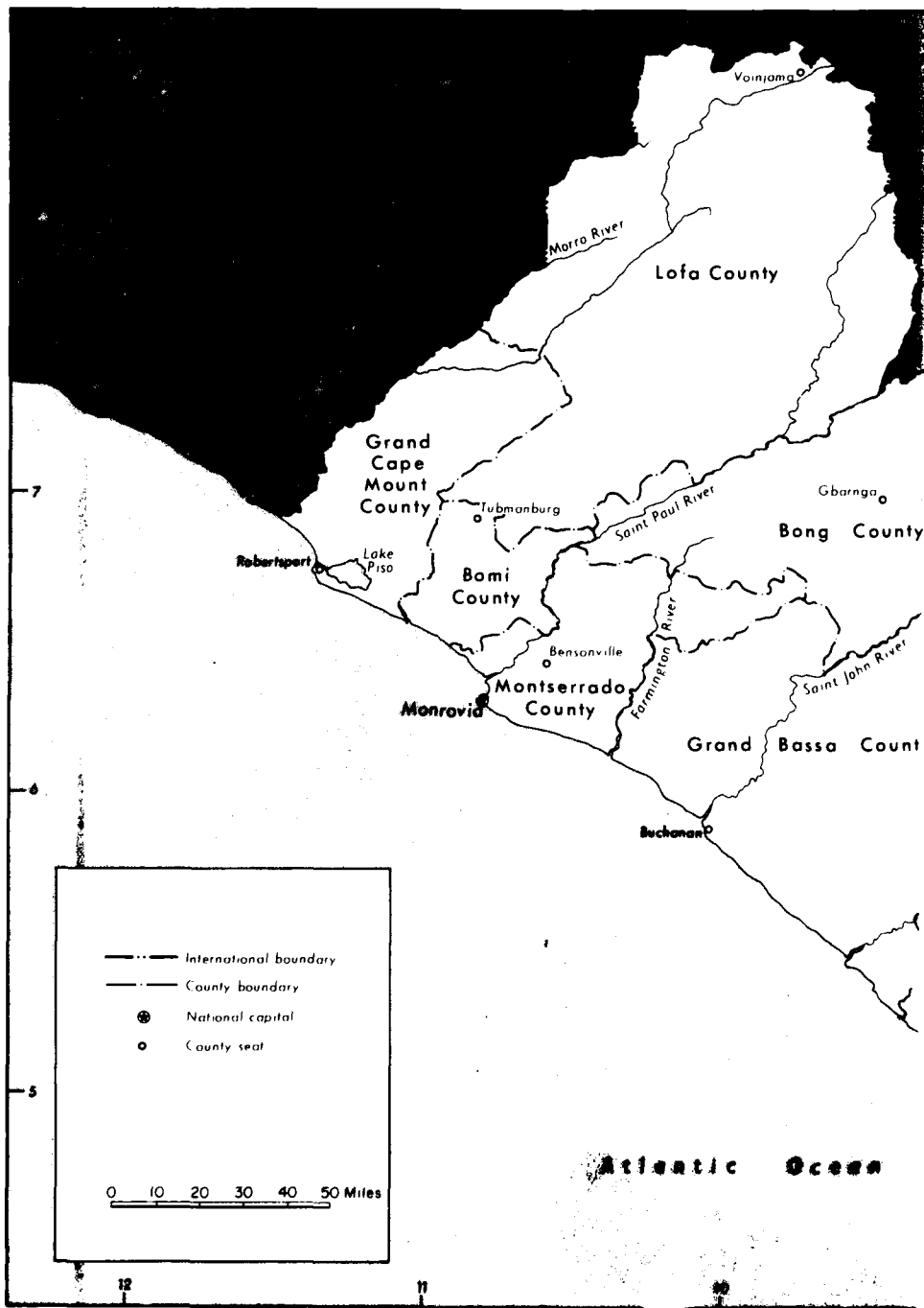


Figure 1. Republic of Liberia, 1984



tional Assembly of 58 members, as part of transition to civilian rule. Numerous politicians announced plans to form new parties; Doe declared own candidacy for president as head of National Democratic Party of Liberia.

Foreign Relations: Active in Organization of African Unity (OAU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); cooperates in development and trade with neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone in Mano River Union. Highly critical of Libyan involvement in nearby countries. Closely aligned with United States, which operates important telecommunications facilities in Liberia. Long-standing American aid, including Peace Corps activities, expanded after military takeover to alleviate economic crisis.

National Security

Armed Forces: In 1984 Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) composed of some 6,200 personnel; army, known as Liberian National Guard (LNG), about 5,700; Liberian National Coast Guard included approximately 450 officers and ratings; small aerial reconnaissance unit operated as part of LNG. Military service voluntary; no organized reserves.

Major Tactical Units: LNG Brigade, headquartered in Monrovia, included virtually all ground force assets of six infantry battalions (three considered tactical formations), one engineer battalion, one field artillery battalion, one support battalion; Coast Guard operated six patrol vessels; all equipment serviceability poor.

Foreign Military Assistance: Extensive reliance on United States as main foreign supplier of training and equipment. United States supplied nearly \$14 million in military assistance in 1984; most allocated to construction of barracks to house troops. Liberia and United States signatories to 1951 mutual defense treaty.

Defense Expenditures: From \$8.9 million in FY 1978-79, defense spending rose to \$29.9 million in FY 1980-81 (10.1 percent of total government expenditure); military spending since leveled off.

Police and Paramilitary Forces: Liberia's National Police Force, headquartered in Monrovia, included over 2,000 members; deployed nationwide to maintain law and order. Special Security Service and Executive Mansion Guard primarily responsible for protecting head of state; National Security Agency, an intelligence-gathering unit.

managed by Pan American Airways. Regional and domestic service by government-owned Air Liberia operating from Spriggs-Payne Airfield near Monrovia; supplemented by private air taxis.

Ports: Major port at Monrovia, smaller ports at Greenville and Harper; all government managed. Second largest port, at Buchanan, mainly iron ore exporting facility; managed by iron mine concessionaire.

Maritime Shipping: In 1984 about 2,000 vessels operating under Liberian "flag of convenience." Total of over 70 million gross registered tons, world's largest.

Government And Politics

Government: Military government (formed in 1980) scheduled to be replaced by civilian rule in January 1986 after presidential and legislative elections in October 1985. New Constitution approved in July 1984 referendum provides for independent executive, legislative, and judicial branches. President and vice president to be popularly elected on single ticket for six-year terms. Legislature to consist of 22-member Senate (two members from each county) and House of Representatives having maximum of 100 members elected from individual constituencies; term for senators, nine years; representatives, six years.

Administrative Divisions: Superintendents appointed by president administer 11 counties and three territories. Lesser subdivisions: districts, chiefdoms headed by paramount chiefs, clans headed by clan chiefs, cities, townships, and urban centers. Local units have limited powers delegated by central government.

Judicial System: Laws based on Anglo-American common law, influenced by United States legislative models. Justice system headed by Supreme Court; subordinate bodies include circuit, magistrate's, and other courts. In tribal communities domestic relations governed by customary law adjudicated by hierarchy of chiefs' courts.

Politics: People's Redemption Council (PRC) of 17 enlisted men under Master Sergeant (later General) Samuel Kanyon Doe overturned Liberia's republican government on April 12, 1980. Legislature dissolved, dominant True Whig Party abolished, all political activity banned. Doe and PRC ruled with help of coalition cabinet composed initially of three elements: former opposition politicians (some of whom in jail facing treason charges when coup occurred), reformist members of former True Whig oligarchy, military officers. Resumption of political activity approved by Doe in July 1984, including replacement of PRC by Interim Na-

ports single largest source of hard currency and major contributor to government revenue; production carried out and controlled by foreign interests. Only other economically significant minerals—diamonds and gold—produced by small-scale Liberian prospectors and miners.

Manufacturing: Mainly small-scale operations having one to 10 employees; few larger enterprises (mostly foreign owned) producing import-substitution items. Total sectoral contribution to gross domestic product small in early 1980s.

Energy: Domestic sources of energy: wood and hydroelectric power; no known commercial deposits of hydrocarbons; exploration for petroleum under way in 1984. Refinery at Monrovia processed imported crude oil, but substantial quantity of refined products also imported. Petroleum imports a major drain on economy. Public electric power furnished in large area surrounding Monrovia (supply not always reliable) and in county seats. Foreign concessions, industrial establishments, institutions, wealthier households had own generating or standby facilities.

Foreign Trade: Principal exports iron ore, rubber, logs, diamonds, coffee, cocoa; main customers United States, European Economic Community (Common Market), particularly Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). Principal imports food (mainly rice), petroleum and petroleum products, raw materials for processing, machinery, transport equipment; main suppliers United States and Common Market countries; in early 1980s Saudi Arabia principal supplier of petroleum products.

Currency: United States dollar legal tender, United States bills and coins circulate at par with Liberian coins issued by National Bank of Liberia. Liberian coins include five-, 10-, 25-, and 50-cent pieces, and one- and five-dollar coins; five-dollar coin first issued on April 26, 1982, as measure to stem loss of United States currency to surrounding countries.

Fiscal Year: Until 1976, Liberian fiscal year same as calendar year; subsequently, July 1 through following June 30.

Transportation

Roads: Road system estimated at 6,268 miles, including 1,474 miles of private roads maintained by concessions for own needs but also used by general public. National trunk-road network of 1,165 miles; 366 miles paved and 799 miles surfaced with laterite. In 1984 public road system generally inadequate; large areas still without roads.

Civil Aviation: Roberts International Airport serving Monrovia

Education: School attendance compulsory between ages six and 16, but low percentage of students complete prescribed courses because of limited resources available, including quantity and quality of schools, teachers, educational materials. About 66 percent of all students attend public schools, remainder in mission and private schools; percentage larger in coastal areas than in interior of country; high drop-out rate between primary and secondary levels. Government expenditure on education low compared with other West African countries. Limited availability of higher education facilities; many Liberians educated abroad, particularly in United States. Literacy rate of Liberians aged five and older about 24 percent.

Health: Major prevalent diseases and ailments include malaria, gastroenteritis, measles, upper respiratory infections, anemia, hypertension, tetanus, tuberculosis, meningitis, and infections of urinary tract, skin, and eyes. Health services based on curative rather than preventive medicine; significant health problems because of inadequate facilities, shortage of professional personnel, and low budgetary outlays. About one-third of population served by modern health care, mainly in Monrovia and other urban centers.

Economy

Salient Features: Strong orientation toward external trade and extreme openness of economy; high vulnerability to price and demand movements in international economy. Susceptibility to external trends exacerbated by official use of United States dollar as legal tender. Part of principal mining and agriculture sectors constitute enclave economy, functioning relatively independently of national economy. National system divided into large rural subsistence and increasing monetary sectors; development constrained by shortages of trained indigenous management and planning staffs.

Agriculture: About 80 percent of rural working population in agriculture and allied activities. Vast majority smallholders involved in traditional subsistence production of upland rice, cassava, maize, yams, taro, peanuts, sugarcane, and assorted vegetables, accounting for almost 60 percent of agricultural production. Commercial production mainly of tree crops—rubber, coffee, cacao, oil palm products, accounting for almost 25 percent of export earnings. Foreign concessions mainly producers of rubber and commercial forest products.

Mining: Iron ore mining country's dominant industry; ore ex-



power, and he has acted resolutely against a number of perceived threats within the military establishment. In January 1985 only eight of the 17 young soldiers who seized power in 1980 remained in the army. Five had been executed in 1981 on charges of plotting against the head of state, and four others who were capable of adversely influencing the troops had been retired from active duty with the armed forces.

In the process of permitting the Liberian people to exercise a constitutional right to choose their future leaders, Doe had found it difficult to maintain control over the evolving political process and his own effort to emerge as the successful candidate for the presidency. Action by a disgruntled military—or by a threatened Doe regime—were both regarded as latent possibilities that would have severe domestic and international repercussions. There seemed little doubt that Liberia's search for democracy once again hung in the balance.

March 1985

Harold D. Nelson

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Chapter 1. Historical Setting



THE HISTORY OF Liberia as a political entity begins with the arrival of the black American settlers—the Americo-Liberians, as they were to be known—who established a colony of “free men of color” on its shore in 1822 under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. The historical roots from which a majority of present-day Liberians derive their identity, however, are found in the varied traditions of the several tribal groups of indigenous Africans whom the settlers confronted in their struggle to gain a foothold in Africa and, later, to extend their control into the interior.

In 1847 the Americo-Liberians declared the independence of the Republic of Liberia. The settlers regarded the continent from which their forefathers had been taken as slaves as a “Promised Land,” but they did not intend to become reintegrated into an African society. They referred to themselves as “Americans” and were recognized as such by tribal Africans and by British colonial authorities in neighboring Sierra Leone. The symbols of their state—its flag, motto, and seal—and the form of government that they chose reflected their American background and immigrant experience. The social customs and cultural standards of the Americo-Liberians had their archetypes in the antebellum American South. These ideas strongly colored the attitudes of the settlers toward the indigenous African people. The new nation, as they conceived of it, was coextensive with the settler community and with those Africans who were assimilated into it. A recurrent theme in the country’s subsequent history, therefore, was the usually successful attempt of the Americo-Liberian minority to dominate people whom they considered “uncivilized” and inferior.

The founding of Liberia was privately sponsored by American religious and philanthropic groups, but the colony enjoyed the support and unofficial cooperation of the United States government. Liberia’s government, modeled after that of the United States, was democratic in structure, if not always in substance. After 1877 the True Whig Party monopolized political power in the country, and competition for office was usually contained within the party, whose nomination virtually ensured election. Two problems confronting successive administrations were pressure from the neighboring colonial powers, Britain and France, and the threat of financial insolvency, both of which challenged

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the country's sovereignty. Liberia retained its independence but lost its claim to extensive territories that were annexed by Britain and France. Economic development was retarded by the decline of markets for Liberian goods in the late nineteenth century and by indebtedness on a series of loans, payments on which drained the economy.

Two events were of particular importance in releasing Liberia from its self-imposed isolation. The first was the grant in 1926 of a large concession to the American-owned Firestone Plantations Company; that move became a first step in the modernization of the Liberian economy. The second occurred during World War II, when the United States began providing technical and economic assistance that enabled Liberia to make economic progress and introduce social change.

In 1944 Liberian president William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman introduced the Unification Policy to bring tribal Africans into the mainstream of Liberian political life. The Open Door Policy, which he announced in his inaugural address that year, invited large-scale foreign investment that further aided in transforming the economy. Wide disparities in the distribution of income and public services were continuing sources of unrest. Despite the strides made during Tubman's administration, that of his successor, William Richard Tolbert, was unable to satisfy rising economic expectations and demands for greater participation in political decisionmaking by the indigenous majority. Opposition to the Americo-Liberian elite mounted, and dissatisfaction was expressed at every level over the corruption associated with the Tolbert administration.

On April 12, 1980, a successful military coup was staged by a group of noncommissioned officers of tribal origins led by Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, and Tolbert was assassinated. Constituting themselves the People's Redemption Council, Doe and his associates seized control of the government and brought an end to Liberia's "first republic."

The African Background

The inland rain forests of present-day Liberia had been very sparsely populated until the first waves of peoples seeking refuge from the upheavals that affected the great Sudanic kingdoms on the upper Niger River began moving into the region, mainly from the north and east, between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although these kingdoms—Songhay, Ghana, and Mali among them—extended their control into neighboring ter-

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ritories, none encompassed any part of present-day Liberia. The arrival of new groups and their dispersal throughout the region continued into the early nineteenth century, when the first American settlers landed on the coast. In the competition for living space, the strong grew stronger and occupied the choice areas; the weak were either absorbed or driven into the deeper recesses of the rain forest.

The indigenous population with whom the settlers came into contact belonged to three main linguistic categories: tribal clusters of Kwa-, Mande-, and West Atlantic-speaking peoples. These were branches of the greater Niger-Congo family of languages. The Kwa speakers comprised those groups that later came to be called the Bassa and Dey on the western coast, the Kra and Grebo on the eastern coast, and the Krahn in the interior (see *Ethnicity and Language*, ch. 2). The Mande speakers were found in eight distinct tribal clusters that included the Vai on the western coast and the wide-ranging Kpelle in the interior. The Mandingo, Muslims whose tribal heartland lay farther to the north, were relatively few in number in the region, but as traders and in well-organized warrior bands they exercised considerable economic and political influence.

There were no political or social units larger than small-scale chiefdoms, which were isolated from other groups in the fragmented tribal clusters and tended to be culturally parochial. Geographical features, such as the swift-running rivers that cut through the region, were often barriers to interaction between ethnically related communities. It was not unusual for chiefdoms of one tribe to fight each other in alliance with those from other tribes. The clearest evidence of attempted state-building by conquest in the region was the Mandingo-dominated Kondo confederacy, which had its center at Bopolu in the early nineteenth century. Parties of Mandingo warriors also formed ruling elites in chiefdoms of other tribes whom they had defeated and among whom they settled. There were, however, short-lived confederacies of chiefdoms, often of different ethnic composition, in western and northern Liberia.

At least from the eighteenth century, external social control was imposed on many of the chiefdoms by the Poro, a secret society that operated independently of the local chiefs. The pan-tribal society has both religious and judicial functions, not only bringing together the peoples of different communities in ritual observances but also regulating trade among them (see *The Social Order*, ch. 2). The Poro influenced the selection of chiefs and determined whether or not a chief remained in power. It also served



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as a forum in which rival chiefs who were members of the Poro settled their differences.

The coastal people were mostly fishermen and farmers. Those who lived inland and along the rivers engaged in subsistence agriculture, but hunting and gathering was also a major activity. In the uplands, rice was cultivated and, in the dry savanna of the northwest, millet and sorghum were grown. Trade was conducted through Mandingo intermediaries, whose compounds were located near large village clusters. The Mandingo brought slaves, ivory, and forest products from the region to the caravan routes that crossed the savanna to the north, exchanging them for salt, cloth, tools, glass beads, and the cowrie shells that were used as currency.

Norman-French traders sailing from Dieppe may have set up depots to acquire spices at sites on the coast of present-day Liberia in the fourteenth century, but the first documented visit by a European to those shores was that of the Portuguese navigator Pedro de Sintra, who in 1461 anchored at the mouth of the Junk River while charting that stretch of the West African coast. Trade, which developed between the coastal Africans and the Portuguese, reversed the former orientation of commerce inland toward the caravan routes and attracted greater numbers of people to settle along the coast. During the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, ivory and melegueta pepper (a pungent seed used as a spice) were the principal items of trade that interested European merchants. As a mark of the importance of the latter commodity to them, it was from the melegueta pepper—the “grain of paradise”—that the region including the coast of present-day Liberia derived its name, the Grain Coast. By the seventeenth century, French, English, Danish, and Dutch traders had displaced the Portuguese along the Grain Coast, while slaves to supply the new plantations in the Americas had become by far the most important trade item.

Few people of the coastal tribes were ever sold into slavery, but they prospered as middlemen, selling slaves taken on raids in the interior by the Mandingo and others, e.g., the Gola, to the European traders who established posts in their territory. The coastal tribes became so dependent on the slave trade that clans formed confederacies to protect their share of it from competing clans and provoked wars in the interior to increase the supply of captives available for sale. It is estimated that about 12 percent of the slaves shipped out of Africa to the Americas in the eighteenth century came from depots on the Grain Coast.

The Founding of Liberia

The movement to repatriate freeborn and emancipated American blacks to Africa predated the American Revolution and had its origin in the efforts of the Quakers and other religious and humanitarian groups to bring an end to the slave trade and abolish the institution of slavery. American abolitionists were encouraged by the success of a similar movement in Britain, but for many years they lacked the organization, funding, and political support for such an undertaking.

In 1807 the British Parliament enacted legislation prohibiting the slave trade. The several decades of antislavery campaigning in Britain that contributed to the adoption of the measure had been spearheaded by leaders of the Evangelical movement within the church and financed by philanthropists like Granville Sharp. A suit brought before the courts by Sharp had led to a judgment in 1772 that slavery did not exist in England and that slaves who disembarked there were automatically emancipated. With the backing of the British government, Sharp had sponsored the founding of a self-governing colony at Sierra Leone in 1787. There, several hundred liberated slaves were settled. They were joined a few years later by blacks who had left the United States with departing British troops at the end of the American Revolution and who had been living since that time in Nova Scotia. A small number of free blacks had also immigrated to the colony from the United States to start a new life in Africa.

The court's decision in the Granville Sharp case had added the weight of legal precedent to arguments made in Parliament by proponents of the abolition of the slave trade. The legislation that resulted explicitly forbade only ships under British registry to engage in the trade, but the law's purpose was to end all traffic in slaves out of West African ports and was therefore applied to ships under other flags as well. To enforce the blockade, the Royal Navy detailed a squadron to patrol the West African coast. Captive blacks rescued—or "recaptured"—at sea by British naval vessels were usually transported to the port of Freetown in Sierra Leone and released there. Apprehended slave runners were tried at the West African station by naval courts and were liable to capital punishment when found guilty.

The year after passage of the British act of 1807, United States legislation went into effect, prohibiting the further importation of slaves. Several ships of the United States Navy were assigned to police the blockade in West African as well as American waters. Cargoes of slaves recaptured from American vessels, depending on where they had been intercepted, were dropped in



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Sierra Leone or brought for internment to the United States, where they legally became wards of the government. In March 1819 the United States Congress enacted legislation authorizing the government to transport slaves removed from American ships engaged in the illegal trade and appropriated US\$100,000 to cover the cost of the operation.

American Colonization Society

It was against the background of the public debate in the United States over efforts to halt the slave trade and repatriate recaptured blacks (commonly referred to as recaptives) that the American Colonization Society (ACS; formally, the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color in the United States) was founded in Washington, D.C., in December 1816. Its purpose was to sponsor the settlement of "free persons of color" in Africa. The society, whose first president, Bushrod Washington, was an associate justice of the Supreme Court and the nephew of George Washington, counted among its founding members other such luminaries of the day as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Francis Scott Key, as well as a number of eminent churchmen and philanthropists. It had also enlisted the support of the recently elected United States president, James Madison, and former president Thomas Jefferson. In association with church and other antislavery groups, the ACS lobbied effectively for legislation to suppress the slave trade that would have a direct impact on its efforts to establish a colony of free American blacks in Africa.

The ACS was motivated by a variety of concerns. Some of its white American supporters wished to correct the injustices done to blacks through the institution of slavery in the United States. Others considered the existence in American society of free blacks threatening. The society's founders expressed the belief that blacks, who had been held in submission for two centuries in America, could best achieve their full potential in Africa, where they would thrive in an atmosphere of self-government. Some also emphasized the contribution that a community of black Christian settlers from the United States could make in extending missionary activity in Africa and in "civilizing" the indigenous population.

Colonization was specifically reserved for free persons, but organizers saw in the scheme a means to bring about the eventual emancipation of large numbers of slaves. It was argued, for instance, that southern slaveholders would be encouraged to be more liberal in granting manumission if an outlet were made available for removing liberated blacks who were considered to

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constitute a threat to the prevailing economic and social system in the slave states. In 1820 there were already more than 200,000 free blacks and persons of mixed racial origin (then commonly called mulattoes) living in the South as well as in those states where slavery was illegal. In the latter, the settlement of free blacks in Africa was promoted by those who considered a multiracial society without strife impossible. Another problem addressed by the ACS was the well-being and disposition of Africans brought to the United States after having been rescued at sea from the slavers. The colonization movement therefore attracted supporters who, for a variety of reasons ranging from moral concern to self-interest, wished to reduce the number of blacks in the United States through emigration to Africa. In 1818 the ACS dispatched two agents to West Africa to seek out a suitable place for a settlement.

The Early Colony

Although its project benefited from the active support of influential public figures, the ACS never received direct financial aid from the United States government. Nevertheless, the government officially designated the ACS as the custodian for the recaptives under its protection. Against the advice of his attorney general, President James Monroe chose to interpret the 1819 act of Congress as implying that a transit camp like that in Sierra Leone must be established in Africa to accommodate recaptives before any attempt was made to return them to their own communities. The American president therefore directed that the funds appropriated by Congress be used to construct such a facility.

Early in 1820 a party of 88 free American blacks that included individuals listed as artisans and their families sailed from New York aboard the brig *Elizabeth*, bound for the Grain Coast. They were accompanied by agents of both the United States government and the ACS, but, on instructions from the secretary of the navy, who was officially responsible for the expedition, government agent Samuel Bacon disclaimed any connection between the *Elizabeth's* mission in Africa and the aims of the ACS, which had recruited the artisans. Ostensibly, they were government employees contracted to build and maintain barracks intended to house slaves recaptured at sea by United States Navy patrols, and they were guaranteed return passage.

During the crossing, however, the passengers drew up the so-called Elizabeth Compact, which was to provide the framework of government for the society's colonizing effort. After

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a difficult passage, the *Elizabeth* put into Freetown in Sierra Leone, but the prospective settlers were refused permission to come ashore by the British governor, who was apparently suspicious of the motives of the Americans in coming to Africa. Instead, they were compelled to continue down the coast to Sherbo Island, the site of an old British fort, where within a few weeks 22 of the would-be colonists and the agents succumbed to tropical fever. The survivors, led by one of the settlers, Elijah Johnson, were allowed to return to Sierra Leone. Many of the passengers of a second emigrant ship, the *Nautilus*, which reached the coast of Sierra Leone later in the year, were likewise felled by disease.

A year passed before another ship, the *Augusta*, carrying a new group of American settlers, arrived in Sierra Leone to retrieve those remaining from the previous expeditions. Escorted by a naval vessel, the U.S.S. *Alligator*, the *Augusta* proceeded down the coast to a site at Cape Mesurado, recommended for settlement by the ACS agents who had reconnoitered the area several years earlier. In the absence of Eli Ayres, the society's representative on the expedition who had remained in Sierra Leone, negotiations for the purchase of land were conducted with the six Bassa "kings" in the area by Robert Stockton, captain of the *Alligator*. Under the so-called Duker Contract, concluded in December 1821, the ACS acquired a strip of land stretching 60 miles along the coast between the Mesurado and Junk rivers in exchange for trade goods valued at US\$300. Stockton also received a pledge from the Bassa chiefs that they would live in peace with the settlers in return for his promise that the newcomers would not interfere with established Bassa trade, including their dealing in slaves. The next month a small party from the *Augusta* took possession of Providence Island in the mouth of the Mesurado, and in April 1822 the first permanent settlement was established on the mainland near the site of present-day Monrovia (see fig. 2).

Under its charter, the ACS could acquire property but could not legally exercise governmental authority over it. The settlers, as a sovereign entity, however, delegated power to the society to act as the organ of government in the colony. Operating under the Elizabeth Compact, executive authority was vested in the agent of the ACS, who also presided over a monthly court of general sessions. The vice agent was nominated by the settlers from their own number and with two other elected settlers composed a consultative legislature, the Colonial Council. Several additional officials—among them a sheriff, a secretary, and a treasurer—were approved by the agent after having been popularly elected. The incumbent ACS agent simultaneously but separately held a com-

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mission as United States agent for recaptured Africans under which he was responsible to the secretary of the navy.

When Ayres returned to the United States shortly after the settlement had been established on the mainland, he delegated Johnson acting agent until his replacement arrived. When the colony was attacked by the Kru, Johnson refused protection offered by the British in Sierra Leone, insisting that the black settlers must be responsible for their own defense. He also reasoned that, once accepted, British protection would very likely become permanent.

Jehudi Ashmun

More than to any other figure in its early history, the colony's survival was owing to the determination of Jehudi Ashmun, the young Methodist clergyman sent to Africa by the ACS as Ayres' replacement. Arriving in August 1822 with 52 settlers, Ashmun found the colony on the verge of collapse. Fever and continued attacks by hostile Africans had decimated the original group of settlers, some of whom decided to return to the United States. The new agent assigned Johnson, who was a veteran of the War of 1812, to pick and train a militia to defend the settlement's perimeter. After several bloody engagements, the settlers were forced to abandon their fields and take refuge behind a palisade. Rescue came from a passing British warship, H.M.S. *Prince Regent*, whose heavy guns broke the siege and forced the Africans to retire. Johnson's militiamen were reinforced by a small landing party from the ship, and a truce was negotiated between the settlers and indigenous Africans.

Relations between the demoralized settlers and the idealistic agent were not easy at the start. Provisions sent by the ACS proved inadequate, and there were riots when Ashmun imposed rationing on the settlement to ensure a fair distribution of food. The ACS had expected the colony to become self-sufficient quickly, but Ashmun's attempts to make each family take up farming were resented by settlers who were more intent on making their fortunes in trade with the Africans. When they complained to the ACS, Ashmun resigned as agent and left the colony, convinced that his mission was a failure. He was intercepted at the Cape Verde Islands, however, by a representative sent by the society to investigate the colony's problems and was persuaded to return to his post.

Once a tenuous peace had been restored to the colony, Ashmun laid out a town, which he called Christopolis, near the original settlement, it was to become the colony's administrative



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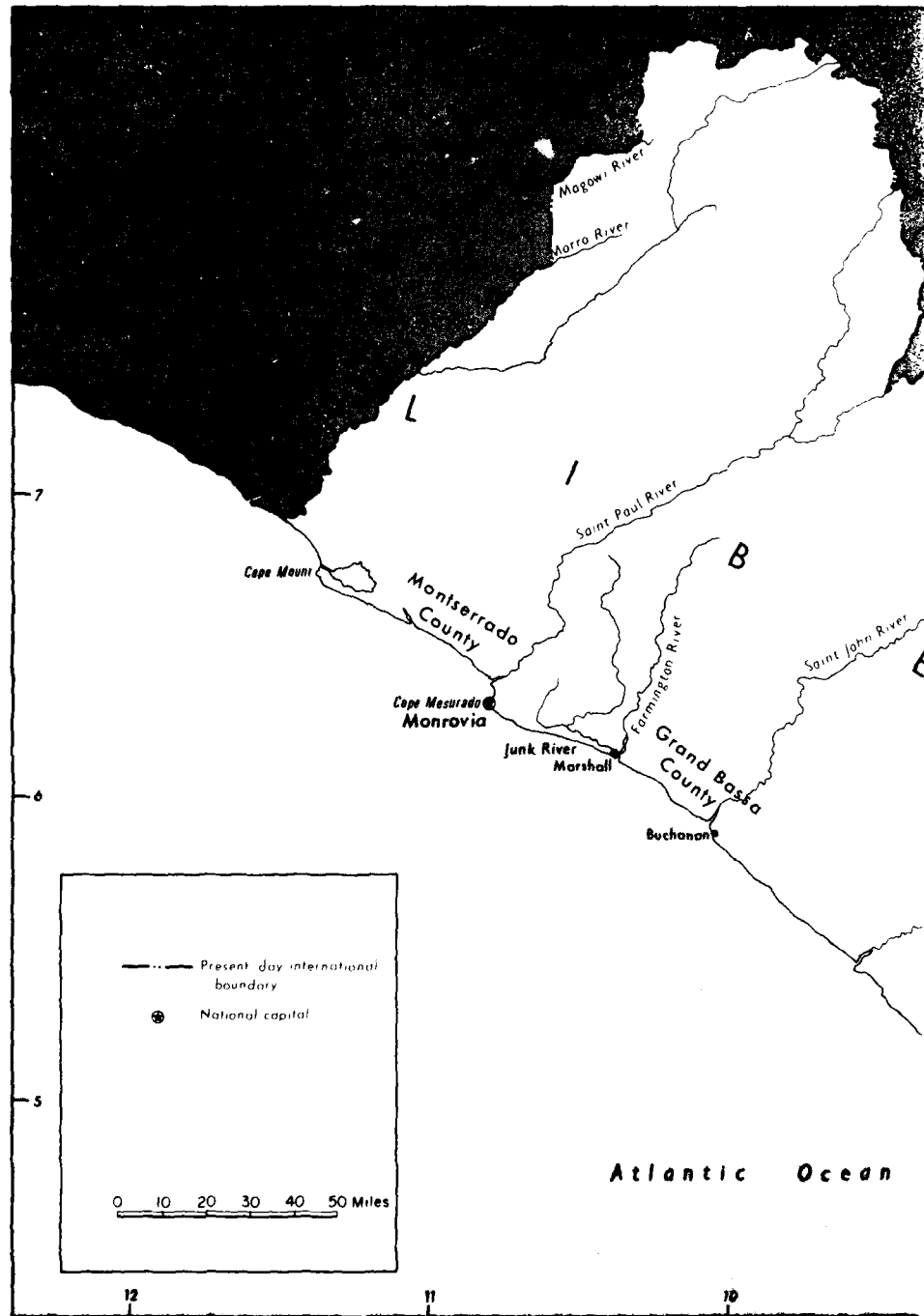


Figure 2. American Settlements and the Early Republic

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center. In 1824, on the advice of the ACS, the town was rechristened Monrovia in honor of Monroe, and the colony was formally named Liberia (the free land). A year later the Elizabeth Compact, a copy of which survived only in the form of notes taken down by Bacon, was incorporated into a broader document, entitled the *Constitution, Government, and Digest of the Laws of Liberia*, that codified all the laws then in force in the colony and contained a plan for local administration proposed by Ashmun. The constitution, which was approved by the settlers and published by the ACS, reaffirmed that the common law as practiced in the United States was to apply in Liberia where relevant, except that slavery would not be tolerated. It also confirmed that the sovereign power theoretically delegated by the settlers would continue to reside with the agent appointed by the ACS and that he was responsible for his conduct only to the society.

In the face of continued opposition from neighboring African communities, Ashmun extended the area of settlement up the navigable portion of the Saint Paul River—a distance of about 20 miles—and an outpost was constructed in 1827. Other settlements were established specifically to receive recaptives brought to Liberia by the naval patrols. Acting for the ACS, Ashmun also purchased the coastal land from Grand Bassa Point to the mouth of the Saint John River in order to control landing places used by slave traders. He repudiated the promise made by Captain Stockton in the Duker Contract not to interfere with the slave trade carried on by the Africans in the area.

The Bassa chiefs had already had second thoughts about the sale of the land, which, according to tribal usage, was communal land. Ashmun's move to stop the slave trade was tantamount to a declaration of war against both the chiefs and their European customers. The slave traders armed the Africans and encouraged attacks by them on the Liberian settlements. Ashmun, in response, led the militia in raids against the Spanish and French slavers and their African allies, usually undertaken with assistance from the United States Navy or the Royal Navy. The damage inflicted by these joint operations greatly diminished slave-trading activities along that part of the coast.

Ashmun died shortly after his return to the United States in 1828 from an illness he had contracted in Africa. He left behind a colony of over 1,200 black American settlers and a growing community of recaptives who chose to remain in Liberia. Schools and churches had been built in new settlements administered by locally elected officials. A newspaper was being published in Monrovia. Despite the conflict that existed between settlers and in-

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Administration Party antagonists in forming the True Liberian Party, subsequently renamed the Republican Party. Property qualifications for voting and the considerable political discipline displayed by the mulatto minority, on whose support the party was based, enabled Republican candidates to contest most elections to their advantage for the next 30 years.

Elements that had once composed the defunct Anti-Administration Party were brought together in 1860 by John Henry Goode and reorganized as the True Whig Party at a convention held in Clay-Ashland. Designated the "party of the people," the True Whigs built their support among recent immigrants, the Congoes, and black Americo-Liberian coffee and sugarcane growers in the upriver settlements. Resentment against social discrimination by the mulattoes, exclusion from political life, and economic policies that seemed to favor mulatto commercial interests bound the True Whig factions together. In 1869 the party's candidate, Edward James Roye, defeated the Republican incumbent, James Spriggs Payne, for the presidency. Roye, a successful businessman and former chief justice of the Supreme Court, became the first nonmulatto to hold the presidency, and his victory marked a turning point in the country's history.

Problems with Britain

Once Liberia had been recognized by Britain as a sovereign republic, the government's first order of business was to enforce the trade policies whose legitimacy the British had questioned before independence. Soon after his inauguration as president in 1848, Roberts journeyed to Britain to negotiate a treaty in which the British government agreed to accept Liberia's right to levy duties on trade in and out of its ports and accredited a consul to represent British interests in Monrovia.

Returning to Liberia with the treaty in hand and his prestige enhanced, Roberts introduced legislation restating the controversial trade policies the commonwealth government had earlier attempted to impose. All coastal trade with the tribes in the interior between the Sewa and San Pedro rivers was required to be conducted through Liberian intermediaries. Furthermore, foreign traders were later restricted in conducting their business to the six ports of entry where Liberian customs officials were stationed.

British trading companies made representations to London to protest the restrictions placed on them by the Liberians in areas where they had commercial ties of long standing with the native African people, and in Sierra Leone sympathetic British colonial

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for use as private property from which they were excluded. The chiefs with whom the colonization societies had dealt did not have authority to dispose of the land and probably did not realize the consequences of their action in agreeing to sell it. Title to land therefore became another source of conflict between the settlers and native Africans. As a way out of the impasse, the Grebo chiefs suggested that if the Americo-Liberians wanted the use of the land, they could join the tribal group.

The Americo-Liberians did very little to fulfill the "civilizing mission" that the colonization societies had proposed for them. Where assimilation did occur, it was most often the result of intermarriage or informal unions between "civilized" men and "native" women. Intermarriage forged kinship ties between local communities and Americo-Liberian families; a child produced by an informal union was usually recognized by its father and became part of his family.

Another means by which native Africans were integrated into the Americo-Liberian community was by adoption through "pawning." As practiced traditionally by indigenous Africans, an individual—usually a child or a woman—might be given as a "pawn" in security for a loan or as payment for a debt. The holder had the right to the pawn's labor or, if a woman, to cohabitation. At its worst, the custom could easily become an excuse for domestic servitude. At its best, however, young pawns were taken into prominent settler families as wards or apprentices, were baptized, educated with the children of the family, inherited the family name, and gained entrance into the Americo-Liberian community.

Growth of Partisan Politics

A two-party system had already begun to develop in Liberia during the early years of the commonwealth when John Seys, a Methodist clergyman, founded the Anti-Administration Party to protest Buchanan's refusal to allow missionaries to import goods duty free. The governor's supporters rallied around him in the public debate that ensued, organizing the Pro-Administration Party to back candidates favorable to his position in elections for the legislative council. During the constitutional convention in 1847, the Anti-Administration Party spokesman, Saul Benedict, proposed amendments that were defeated by the Pro-Administration Party majority backing Roberts. Benedict opposed Roberts in the first presidential election later that same year. The Anti-Administration Party was dissolved after the election, however, and Benedict joined the new president and his former Pro-

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framers of the constitution and of later governments, section 13 was amended in 1907 to read: "none but persons of Negro descent shall be eligible to citizenship in this Republic," thus excluding the applicant.

In making the distinction between black and nonblack Africans, however, the amenders of the constitution overlooked the continued distinction that they implied between "persons of Negro descent," i.e., Americo-Liberians, and indigenous tribal Africans, who were officially designated "aborigines." The latter were alluded to in only two articles of the constitution, one of which gave them a vague guarantee to their communal lands and another which directed the government of the republic to promote their "advancement and improvement." Nowhere in the constitution, however, was it stated whether "aborigines" could become citizens.

For at least 40 years the settlers were constantly in conflict with chiefdoms from one or another of the African tribal groups. The wars between them were small in scale but intense, and in the 1820s and 1830s the very existence of the settlements was sometimes at stake. A succession of administrators from Ashmun to Roberts tried to mediate the interclan conflicts that disrupted Liberia's trade with the interior or formed alliances with some chiefdoms against others that threatened to become too strong. Usually, the settlers could depend on the superiority of their weapons to offset the greater numbers of the native Africans. In the early years of the colony, however, the king of the Kondo confederacy, Sao Boso (called "Boatswain" by the settlers), could reputedly call up an army of 8,000 warriors armed with muskets. Sao Boso remained a serious threat to the settlers until his death around 1836, after which the Kondo confederacy began a decline.

The principal cause of resistance by native Africans was interference in their trade by the settlers who had first attempted to stop the slaving and then prevented them from dealing in legitimate goods with foreigners with whom they had commercial relations long before the settlers arrived in West Africa. The most common tactic used by indigenous Africans was to cut off trade and supplies of food to the settlements, compelling the settlers on several occasions to call on the United States Navy for assistance. In 1843, for example, a squadron of American warships, commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry, was summoned to break an embargo imposed on the Maryland colony by the Grebo.

If the native African clans had difficulty accepting Liberian regulation of trade, neither were they able to understand how title to their communal land could be alienated through purchase

der were freeborn blacks. Over and above this number were several hundred West Indian blacks, mostly from Barbados, who had arrived during the 1860s. In addition to the recaptives who had been received and integrated, as many as 3,000 Africans from local tribal groups had been "civilized" and "adopted" into the Americo-Liberian community.

Emigration decreased rapidly after the 1870s as the realities and hardships of life in Liberia became better known to potential settlers. Even at the height of enthusiasm for colonization, the response to appeals from the white-organized societies had been meager in relation to the size of the free black population in the United States. Some had actively opposed the recruitment of fellow blacks for colonization, which they equated with deportation from a country that, as one prominent critic of the movement remarked, "we have enriched. . . with our blood and tears." Typical, perhaps, of the motivation for many of those black Americans who did take the opportunity to emigrate was that expressed in a letter from an early settler to her former mistress in the United States: "It gives me great satisfaction that everything I do is for myself and for my children."

The Americo-Liberians never represented more than a minuscule portion of the population of the "black republic" that they claimed as their own. Real contact between their government and the people of the interior occurred only after the beginning of the twentieth century. Even in the coastal region where their settlements were concentrated, they were a small minority. It was ironic that in their social separateness, in the assumptions that they made about native Africans, and in the manner in which they sought to impose their authority, the Americo-Liberians were, at least until the 1940s, uncomfortably similar to white minorities that dominated colonial territories elsewhere in Africa.

Two articles in the 1847 constitution were of particular significance in the development of the definition of Liberia as a black republic. Article V, section 12, for instance, stated that "no person shall be entitled to hold real estate in the Republic unless he be a citizen of the same." Article V, section 13, originally provided that "the great object for forming these Colonies being to provide a home for the dispersed and oppressed children of Africa, and to regenerate and enlighten this benighted Continent, none but Negroes or persons of color shall be admitted to citizenship in this Republic." Subsequently, a person of North African but nonblack origin claimed the right of citizenship on the basis of long residence and, consequently, the right to hold property. Because this claim was judged to be contrary to the apparent intentions of the

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had provided a disproportionately large number of emigrants—more than one-third of the total—followed at a distance by North Carolina and Maryland.

The support of the United States government for the colonization effort had been contingent on the creation in Liberia of a refuge for Africans recaptured from the slave ships by the American naval patrols. Initially, the settlements in Liberia were seen as providing temporary shelter for recaptives until such time as they could be returned to their home regions. It was soon apparent, however, that such an undertaking would be impractical, if not impossible, because of the large number of locations from which they had been taken as slaves—even when these could be identified by naval authorities. Nor were recaptives particularly anxious to be repatriated.

As of 1843 only about 300 recaptives had been resettled in Liberia, a number small enough to be assimilated readily into the Americo-Liberian population. Almost all were baptized, took English names, adopted the dress and manners of the settlers, and were accorded recognition as members of the community. Known collectively as the "Congoes," the recaptives referred to themselves as "Americans" and considered themselves socially superior to tribal Africans.

The number of recaptives brought to Liberia increased dramatically in the 1840s and 1850s as a result of stepped-up vigilance by the naval patrols, and by 1860 more than 5,000 had been introduced into the country, a number almost equal to that of settlers from the United States then living in Liberia. Once accepted as "civilized," the Congoes enjoyed the full rights of Liberian citizenship on an equal basis with the settlers. Particularly after the founding of the True Whig Party in 1860, the Congoes assumed importance as a political constituency that was much courted by politicians.

The Congoes were also a key factor in the expansion of the frontier, where they worked in lumbering and on upriver farms. They mixed more easily with the indigenous population in settings that were probably not too different from those from which they themselves had come. Typically, they married women from a neighboring people—usually by marriage payments—establishing kinship ties with the group from which the woman came but raising their children as Americo-Liberians.

By 1870 Liberia had attracted 13,000 immigrants from the United States. About 60 percent of them were emancipated slaves, many of whom had been freed or had purchased their freedom in order that they might emigrate to Liberia, and the remain-

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ters of the order, which came to be seen as the repository of community ideals and the symbol of Americo-Liberian solidarity. The lodges offered a forum in which political discussions were carried out in a nonconfrontational atmosphere, and compromises were worked out among fellow members before being announced to the public. Membership also opened up avenues to advancement in politics and business.

Although no caste system existed as such within the ranks of the Americo-Liberians, a small number of mulattoes, mainly from Virginia and Maryland, formed an elite group set apart by their "means and education" from black Americo-Liberians. They were prominent in commerce and for more than 50 years dominated the political leadership of the country. Some of the mulatto merchants maintained close business contacts in the United States. Roberts, for instance, had a partnership in a firm in his hometown of Petersburg, Virginia, to which he exported wood, palm oil, and ivory for sale in the United States.

A report on the activities of the colonization societies prepared for the United States Congress in 1843 provided detailed information—including names, places of origin, and occupations—about those who had settled in Liberia by that date. Since 1820, according to the report, a total of 4,771 black Americans had been transported under the auspices of the societies. Of these, only 2,388 were still living in Liberia in 1843, yet less than 10 percent of the immigrants had chosen during that time to return to the United States. About 1,900 had succumbed to tropical diseases—by far the leading cause of death—although chances of survival were considered much improved once a settler had passed through the "seasoning" period, or first few years of exposure to the new and difficult environment. Nearly 100 settlers had been victims of drowning in the region's swift-flowing rivers. The rate of infant mortality was extremely high.

The settlers' early expectations of making fortunes in trade had been deflated by the time of the 1843 report. Out of 1,100 whose occupations were given, fully 700 were listed as semiskilled workers and nearly 200 as farmers. About 125 were employed as skilled craftsmen, and only 70 were identified as engaged in commerce or as practicing a profession. It was not uncommon, however, for farmers—particularly those upriver—to double as traders, for businessmen to serve as estate owners, or for employed persons to do subsistence farming on the side. It was estimated that about 10 percent of the settlers were literate, but only 42 persons were identified as being "educated." Settlers came to Liberia from almost all the states then composing the union, but Virginia

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engagement, the Grebo retired and sued for peace, which Roberts agreed to only after the Africans had paid a heavy indemnity in rice to replenish the settlement's supplies. The next year Maryland applied to join the republic and was admitted as Maryland County.

Black Settlers and Native Africans

In what came to be called the Americo-Liberian community, an early distinction was made by the settlers and others between themselves and the "natives," as they called the indigenous population. Native Africans in turn labeled the Americo-Liberians *kwi*, a term also applied to Europeans. The term was picked up by the settlers and used as a synonym for "civilized." The meaning of the term *civilized* changed through time and was characterized by a certain ambiguity; in addition to Americo-Liberians, it was applied to those recaptives and indigenous Africans who had given up their tribal identification and had assimilated into the Americo-Liberian community (see *The Social Order*, ch. 2).

From Liberia's inception there was an exclusive identification of the state with the immigrant experience of the American settlers, which was emphasized in its national symbols. The young country's motto, for example, expressed the conviction that "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here," and the seal of the republic featured the images of an immigrant ship and a settler's plow. The Liberian Declaration of Independence affirmed that "we the people of Liberia were originally the inhabitants of the United States of North America," and the early Americo-Liberians habitually referred to the United States as "our country."

Colonization had in part been conceived of as a missionary venture by the church groups that had been its sponsors. Not surprisingly, organized religion was an important factor in Americo-Liberian society. All of the major Protestant denominations in the United States were represented in Liberia. The Methodists, followed by the Baptists, were numerically the largest and were socially the most significant. The Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians all had churches in the settlements. These were Americo-Liberian rather than missionary churches, however, and missionary activity among native Africans was carried on by foreigners, who for many years were not permitted into the interior by the Liberian government.

Interconnected with the churches but of even greater political and social influence in the Americo-Liberian community was the Masonic Order, established in Liberia in 1851. Five presidents of the republic, beginning with Roberts, were grand mas-

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Table A. Continued.

| Term Office | President | Birthplace | Comments |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1900-04 | Garretson Wilmot Gibson | United States (Maryland) | Completed Coleman's term, elected in own right |
| 1904-12 | Arthur Barclay | Barbados | Served two terms, presidential term extended to four years |
| 1912-20 | Daniel Edward Howard | Liberia | Served two terms |
| 1920-30 | Charles Dunbar Burgess King | Sierra Leone | Elected to three terms, forced to resign |
| 1930-44 | Edwin James Barclay | Liberia | Completed King's term, elected in own right in 1931, served eight-year first term, followed by four-year second term |
| 1944-71 | William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman | -do- | Elected four times to four-year terms, twice to eight-year terms, died in office before inauguration to sixth term |
| 1971-80 | William Richard Tolbert | -do- | Completed Tubman's fifth term, sworn in to four-year term in own right in 1972, elected to eight-year term in 1975, assassi- nated in 1980 |

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Table A. Presidents of the Republic of Liberia, 1848-1980

| Term in Office | President | Birthplace | Comments |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1848-56 | Joseph Jenkins Roberts | United States (Virginia) | Previously governor of the Commonwealth of Liberia; served five two-year terms as president |
| 1856-64 | Stephen Allen Benson | United States (Maryland) | Served four terms |
| 1864-68 | Daniel Bashiel Warner | -do- | Served two terms |
| 1868-70 | James Spriggs Payne | United States (Virginia) | First term |
| 1870-71 | Edward James Roye | United States (Ohio) | Deposed |
| 1871-72 | James Skivring Smith | United States (South Carolina) | Completed Roye's term |
| 1872-76 | Joseph Jenkins Roberts | United States (Virginia) | Two terms; formerly president, 1848-56 |
| 1876-78 | James Spriggs Payne | -do- | Second term; formerly president 1868-70 |
| 1878-83 | Anthony William Gardiner | -do- | Elected to three terms, resigned. |
| 1883-84 | Alfred Francis Russell | United States (Kentucky) | Completed Gardiner's term |
| 1884-92 | Hilary Richard Wright Johnson | Liberia | Served four terms |
| 1892-96 | Joseph James Cheeseman | -do- | Elected to three terms; died in office |
| 1896-1900 | William David Coleman | United States (Kentucky) | Completed Cheeseman's term; elected to three terms, forced to resign |

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dependent state. The society did insist on retaining title to the land purchased with its funds, but the proposal was voted down by the settlers in a referendum (which also approved the new constitution) by an overwhelming majority. The only opposition, in fact, came from some settlers in Sinoe County who stayed away from the polls as an expression of sympathy for the society's position.

The constitution of the Republic of Liberia was formally adopted on September 27, 1847. The form of government that it prescribed was modeled on that of the United States. The president and vice president were elected on the same ticket, but to a two-year term of office. The bicameral legislature consisted of the Senate, seating two members from each county, and the House of Representatives, in which seats were allocated on the basis of population. The constitution also provided for an independent judiciary. All candidates for office were required to meet a property qualification that varied according to the position. As under the commonwealth, suffrage was extended to male citizens over 21 years of age, but it was subject to a stiff property requirement that limited the number of eligible voters. The first elections under the new constitution were held in October 1847, and Roberts was chosen as the first president of the republic (see table A).

The Maryland colony remained outside the republic. A series of governors had been appointed by the Maryland Colonization Society to administer the territory it had purchased under authority that was understood to have been delegated by the settlers. Commercial development and trade were monopolies of the Chesapeake and Liberia Trading Company, which was affiliated with the society. In 1854, with the approval of the founding society, settlers proclaimed the colony a free and independent state, formally called Maryland-in-Africa, claiming sovereignty over the coastal region between the Grand Cess River in the west and the San Pedro River in the east.

Like the other colonies, Maryland had sought to bring an end to slaving operations on its sector of the coast and had also attempted to regulate the legitimate trade with the tribes in the interior. The Kru and the Grebo had responded by making war on the Maryland settlers and blockading the settlement. In 1856 the settlers appealed to Monrovia for assistance against the Grebo, who had captured several pieces of artillery and turned them on Harper. Sailing down the coast in a vessel owned by the ACS, Roberts personally led a well-equipped force of 115 handpicked men to the relief of the beleaguered settlement. After a bloody

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The British government warned further that the Royal Navy, which often in the past had protected the colonists, would be used to safeguard legitimate British commercial interests and to ensure the freedom of trade in those areas claimed by Liberia. The numerous incidents that followed the British refusal to recognize Liberian sovereignty convinced Roberts that the settlers' only course of action was to break their ties with the ACS and change Liberia's status in international law from that of a private venture to that of an independent state.

The Independent Republic

In October 1846 a plebiscite was held that showed a slight majority of the settlers in favor of independence. Three months later a constitutional convention was convened in Monrovia, and a draft constitution prepared by Simon Greenleaf of Harvard College was submitted to it for consideration. On July 26, 1847, delegates to the convention representing the three counties issued the Liberian Declaration of Independence, patterned in style as well as in some particulars after that of the United States. The document cataloged a long list of injustices suffered by blacks in the United States—even by those who were free—explaining finally that "all hope of a favorable change in our country [the United States] was thus wholly extinguished in our bosoms, and we looked with anxiety for some asylum from the deep degradation." "The western coast of Africa was the place selected by American benevolence and philanthropy for our future home," the declaration continued, pointing out, however, that the ACS had intended to transfer full control of the country to the settlers in due course. Citing the questions that had arisen about Liberia's title to sovereignty, the declaration concluded with an appeal "to the nations of Christendom . . . to extend to us that comity which marks the friendly intercourse of civilized and independent communities." Britain was the first country to recognize the new state. Most European powers followed suit, but United States recognition was withheld—as it was explained, to avoid having to accredit a black diplomat in Washington—until 1862, when that country was embroiled in a civil war over the question of slavery.

For its part the ACS was not at all unwilling to give up its residual responsibilities for administering Liberia. The directors had already begun to feel that the expense of maintaining its presence outweighed any benefit to be derived by the society, and they offered generous assistance to the settlers in setting up an in-

this consolidation was Roberts' effort to put an end to the slave trade, but by asserting Liberian sovereignty over an even larger stretch of the coast he expected to counter similar claims that might be made by Britain and France (see fig. 2).

The ACS had envisioned that agriculture would be the principal economic activity in Liberia. Promoters expected the settler communities not only to feed themselves but also to produce cash crops to earn revenue. Many of the colonists, however, were craftsmen and workers from northern cities in the United States who showed little interest in agriculture, and even those who came from the agrarian South shunned farming, which they associated with slavery. Most sought to improve their circumstances in Africa by engaging in trade or by practicing the skills that they had brought with them. Liberian shipwrights and joiners, for instance, gained a reputation for the quality of the schooners that they built to ply the coastal trade. Rice and maize were cultivated, and livestock was raised around the settlements, but the settler communities depended for their food supply largely on purchases from African growers. Typically, cash crop farming was a sideline for those whose primary occupation was in trade or administration. Sugarcane was the first such crop to generate an interest among settlers who employed indigenous labor for fieldwork. A number of small mills operated to process the cane, and a thriving barrel-making industry developed in Liberia to produce containers for shipping sugar and rum. Coffee growing gradually developed, and palm oil also became an important export.

The principal source of revenue for the administration in Liberia consisted of customs duties levied on all imports and exports. To maximize its income from this source, the Liberian government took steps to regulate trade by limiting it to those ports where customs were collected. Efforts to impose these restrictions antagonized Africans whose trade with foreigners in legitimate commodities was interrupted. More seriously, attempts by Liberian officials to collect duties from foreign traders brought on a confrontation with Britain.

Trouble began when British merchants, who for many years had been trading with the tribes along the Liberian coast, complained to their government about the customs duties being demanded of them. They were advised, in effect, that Liberia had no right to levy taxes on their trade. The British governor of Sierra Leone sent a note to Liberian authorities explaining that Britain did not recognize the right of private persons—that is, the ACS—to constitute themselves a government and exercise sovereignty.

The Commonwealth of Liberia

Although there was rivalry among the several colonization societies, they found it beneficial to cooperate in the United States, where fund-raising and the recruitment of settlers had become more difficult. Out of this cooperation came, in 1838, the merger of the ACS colony (including the Virginia settlement) and Bassa Cove as the Commonwealth of Liberia. A new constitution responded to demands voiced by settlers for greater participation in government.

The commonwealth constitution was brought to Liberia by a new governor, Thomas Buchanan, to be approved by the settlers. (Buchanan, who had been active in the antislavery movement and had once served as the governor of Bassa Cove, was the brother of the future president of the United States, James Buchanan.) It provided for the governor, who was appointed by the ACS, to act as chief executive officer and also to preside over the Supreme Court. A lieutenant governor would be elected by the settlers, as would representatives to a legislative body, the Council of Liberians. The ACS, through the governor, retained the right, however, to veto any legislation that the Council enacted. Suffrage was granted to all male citizens over the age of 21. Citizenship was specifically limited to "persons of color," but, in practice, indigenous Africans were excluded.

The commonwealth was divided for administrative purposes into two counties: *Montserrado*, comprising the original ACS colony of Liberia, and *Grand Bassa* (Bassa Cove). The new arrangement claimed sovereignty over all the settlements between Cape Mount and the Cestos River. A survey conducted in 1838 counted 2,247 colonists, 20 churches, 10 schools, and four printing presses; the ACS reported the following year that the right bank of the Saint Paul River presented an almost continuous line of cultivated farms up to the fall line. In 1842 the Mississippi colony was formally admitted as *Sinoe County*, leaving only the Maryland colony outside the commonwealth.

In 1841 a settler, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, was appointed to succeed Buchanan as governor of Liberia. A mulatto born in Virginia to parents who were themselves free persons, Roberts was a man of intelligence and vision. Within a few years his administration had consolidated the society's landholdings through additional purchases and could claim to exercise sole jurisdiction as far as the Grand Cess River, which was the western limit of the Maryland colony. Liberia also claimed sovereignty in the other direction up to the Sewa River bordering on Sierra Leone but exercised no authority beyond Cape Mount. An important aspect of

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digenous Africans, trade profitable to the colony was being carried on between them in a variety of commodities, and some headway had been made in increasing the domestically grown food supply and in introducing cash crops for eventual export.

New Settlements

The success of the ACS venture under Ashmun's leadership prompted the formation of several state colonization societies that also sponsored settlements of free blacks in Liberia. Many of those who were freed had been emancipated on the condition that they emigrate. In 1827 the Maryland Colonization Society, acting under a charter from the state legislature, established an independent settlement at Harper on land acquired from the local Africans at Cape Palmas, about 250 miles down the coast from Monrovia. That same year the Colonization Society of Virginia received its charter in Richmond, and funds were appropriated by the state legislature for planting a colony on the coast at the estuary of the Junk and Farmington rivers. Unlike the Maryland society, the Virginians did not provide for a separate government but placed their settlement at Marshall (named for the society's president, Chief Justice John Marshall) under the jurisdiction of the ACS. In 1835 the Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania, a Quaker organization, founded the colony of Bassa Cove at the mouth of the Saint John River under its own governor in cooperation with the Colonization Society of New York. In 1838 the Mississippi Colonization Society established a settlement, called Greenville, at the mouth of the Sinoe River.

There had been cooperation in varying degrees between government at the federal and state levels on the one hand and the colonization societies, church groups, and the antislavery movement in the United States on the other hand in promoting and maintaining the settlements in Liberia. Agents of the ACS, who were responsible for governing Liberia, also held commissions from the United States government to receive recaptives who had become its wards. Likewise, the United States Navy provided supplies and protection for the fledgling colonies, and a naval officer, Captain Stockton of the *Alligator*, acted on behalf of the ACS in purchasing land in Africa. Public funds were used in setting up the colonies, but the several settlements of black American colonists in Liberia were ventures undertaken by private American organizations and were never colonies of the United States.

officials turned a blind eye to activities by traders who continued to flout Liberian claims to jurisdiction east of the Sewa River. One of these traders, John Harris, had built up a substantial commercial empire in the region, where he had entered into alliances with local chiefs and incited them to attack Liberian settlements. Harris' own excesses, however, triggered an uprising among the Vai clans that spilled over into Sierra Leone. In the course of trying to calm the disturbance, the British governor declared a protectorate over the disputed territory between the Sewa and Mano rivers, justifying his action on the grounds that Liberia could not maintain order there. Tension increased over the British action and Harris' continued activities, leading to the seizure by Liberian authorities of two of the trader's schooners that tried to evade paying customs on the cargoes. A gunboat, sent from Freetown, forcibly retrieved the impounded vessels, and Harris demanded an indemnity from Liberia for the seizure and compensation for his losses as a result of the Vai uprising. Liberian president Stephen Allen Benson was unable to resolve the small republic's differences with the colonial power during a subsequent trip to London for talks. British warships once again demonstrated off Monrovia in 1869, and an ultimatum was delivered demanding payment of a large indemnity by Liberia for damage to the property and interests of British subjects.

President Roye and the British Loan

President Payne (1868–70) had no choice but to acquiesce to the British ultimatum. Because it was impossible to pay the indemnity with the assets available in the country, the government tried to arrange payments on installment. The British refusal to consider such an arrangement threatened Liberia with bankruptcy and threw the country into a financial panic. On coming to office, President Roye authorized the negotiation of a £100,000 loan from British banks that would enable Liberia to pay the indemnity in full and also make funds available for economic development, especially road building and modernization of the coastal sailing fleet. But Liberia negotiated from an extremely weak position, and, under the terms of the loan as finally approved, the government had to pay £30,000 in advance to its creditors while being forced to accept 7 percent annual interest on the principal. Customs revenues were pledged as security for the loan. Much of what reached the treasury after payment of the indemnity was misappropriated, and too little was left to carry out the planned development projects.

The Republican majority in the legislature and commercial



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interests, which were largely mulatto and Republican, were outraged at the terms accepted by Roye, who compounded his political problems when he announced that the 1871 elections would be postponed because of the economic crisis and that his term would be extended to four years. The legislature voted a joint resolution calling on the president to resign; when he refused to step down, Roye was impeached and imprisoned. He died under mysterious circumstances a short time later, apparently while attempting to escape.

The legislature turned again to Roberts, electing him to a two-year term as president to begin when Roye's vice president, James Skivring Smith, had completed the unexpired term. Roberts was reelected in 1873 and was succeeded in 1876 by former president Payne. These Republican administrations, which marked the final period of mulatto ascendancy in Liberia, attempted to extend economic penetration in the interior to compensate for rapidly declining income from cash crops, but their efforts were frustrated by the lack of funds for investment in development.

Lost Markets and Economic Decline

Liberia's indebtedness to the British banks coincided with the worldwide depression of the 1870s, which caused a sharp drop in prices and in demand for the country's exports and thereby cut sharply into the revenues from customs duties on which the treasury depended to repay the debt. One by one, during the late nineteenth century, Liberia lost customers for its cash crops to foreign competitors, as a result of changing markets and technological developments. Its sugarcane industry succumbed to competition from the West Indies and from sugar beets in Europe. A coffee boom that actually brought increased production in the 1870s was eventually undercut by Brazilian and Costa Rican competitors for the same markets. The demand for camwood ceased after synthetic dyes were perfected in the 1890s. Liberia was replaced by Nigeria as a supplier of palm oil to Britain and by Egypt as a source of cotton for British mills. Introduction of steamboats to the coastal trade ended the demand for new sailing ships. Liberia even lost its markets for piassava fiber when British and French buyers substituted raw material bought more cheaply from their own colonies to produce the raffia furnishings that were then fashionable.

Government revenues were lacking to improve the infrastructure for collecting and transporting crops to market, and government policy restricted foreign economic activity in the in-

terior. Customs revenues decreased to a point at which the government was unable to meet its obligations under the loan agreement, and the treasury was unable to meet the day-to-day expenses of government.

The private fortunes of many Liberian merchant traders had been wiped out by the decline in trade. The larger commercial enterprises were mostly German owned, and the carrying trade was in the hands of British shipping firms whose steam packets provided Liberia its only reliable access to the outside world in the late nineteenth century. Many ambitious Liberians turned from business to politics to make new fortunes.

The True Whig Ascendancy

Sidetracked by the Roye debacle, the True Whig Party reemerged in 1877 as the dominant political party, sweeping the elections that year that put its candidate, Anthony William Gardiner, in the presidency. The True Whigs carried every subsequent national election, usually without serious opposition, and would dominate Liberian political life for more than 100 years. Although there was no legal prohibition against other parties, Liberia became in effect a one-party state.

The True Whig Party was organized at the national, county, and local levels. At each level it was controlled centrally by an executive committee composed of an inner core of party and government officials—men referred to as the “Honorables” or, more colloquially, the “big shots”—who set the party’s and, therefore, the government’s agenda. The choice of the presidential candidate—the True Whigs’ “standard-bearer” nominated at the party’s national convention—was determined previously in bargaining sessions conducted by leading personalities and factions represented on an executive committee. Parallel county conventions chose candidates for the legislature who were virtually assured election at the polls. In contrast to the unanimity demonstrated at the national convention, some of these contests could be prolonged and bitter, pitting rival families and factions against one another. The resemblance of the True Whig Party to organized American politics was, as far as it went, intentional. The party, for example, was also known as the “Grand Old Party,” and its symbol was the elephant.

Electoral campaigns were active despite the lack of a real opposition. A token challenge might be offered by a faction within the party at odds with the current party leadership. Officeholders

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who were asked to step down to make way for another candidate might be placated by the offer of a government appointment or dissidents persuaded to withdraw from a race by the promise of a place on the ticket in a subsequent election. Criticism of the True Whig Party was seen as a threat to the solidarity of the Americo-Liberian community; although freedom of speech was guaranteed by the constitution, restrictions were placed on dissent, and opposition candidates were subjected to official harassment. Between elections there was little, if any, organized opposition to True Whig governments.

The leadership of the True Whig Party paralleled that of the Masonic Order, and it was as inconceivable for anyone to aspire to a political career who was not a lodge member as it was for someone who was not a member of the party. The lodges enforced social control on potential dissenters and provided the setting in which political bargains could be struck among fellow members. Government and party officials were also likely to be prominent members of one of the Protestant churches. A number of ordained clergymen were also politically active, and appointment to lay positions in the church, such as that of vestryman, was often contingent on political affiliation.

Political power was concentrated in a small number of prominent families who led factions and formed alliances within the party. A political career could be enhanced by a wise marriage. Established politicians took promising young men in "wardship," preparing the way for their advancement. If a patron fell from grace within the party oligarchy, the ward either sought out a new patron or lost his preferment. Patronage pervaded all administrative practices. Because government jobs and appointments were owed to a party connection, a portion of the salary of each civil servant and officeholder was diverted to party funds.

Under the True Whigs, personal wealth became the by-product of involvement in politics rather than entrepreneurship (see *The Social Order*, ch. 2). Those outside the True Whig oligarchy or not beholden to it were prevented from acquiring an independent source of economic influence. Large business firms were almost all foreign owned and, therefore, depoliticized, although they were expected to make "contributions" to the party and provide jobs for politically well-connected Liberians. Liberian-owned businesses were of two kinds: either small businesses run by those without political stature or larger enterprises owned but not operated by government and party officials that profited from government preferment. The brightest and most ambitious young Liberians were consequently attracted to the study of law,

which was a preparation for politics and administration and conferred social status. The political system that produced lawyers in numbers disproportionate to the need stifled incentives for entering business as a career and also diverted talent from fields such as medicine, education, and engineering. On the one hand, the undeveloped Liberian economy offered little opportunity for technically trained graduates and entrepreneurs, but, on the other hand, the lack of them contributed to Liberia's underdevelopment.

Lost Territories

Despite claims made by Liberia to territory in the interior, effective control was apparent only between Cape Mount and the Grand Cess River for a distance of about 50 miles inland. The area that stretched beyond was still the least known part of Africa—unexplored, unmapped, and unorganized by the Liberians well into the twentieth century. What the government in Monrovia could not control, it nonetheless tried to keep isolated from foreigners.

In 1869 government agent Benjamin Anderson had set out on an expedition that in six years took him deeper into the interior than any Liberian had ever gone—or would go for another 30 years after him. Anderson made treaties with local chiefs that reinforced tenuous Liberian claims in the region, and his published account of the journey aroused interest in its potential for development.

The neighboring colonial powers, Britain and France, took advantage of Liberia's weakness to detach large sections of the territory claimed but not controlled by Monrovia, and by 1911 the West African republic had been forced to surrender title to over 40 percent of the area regarded as being part of it at the time of independence. In 1883 Britain formally annexed the disputed Sewa-Mano protectorate to Sierra Leone. Liberian president Gardiner resigned from office in protest over the action, but two years later President Hilary Richard Wright Johnson reluctantly agreed to a treaty conceding the loss of the territory, which Britain claimed on the grounds that it had exercised effective control there over a period of time. Johnson, the first president born in Liberia, was the son of Elijah Johnson, who in 1822 had rejected a British offer to protect the young colony. His signing of the treaty with Britain coincided with the convening of the Berlin Conference at which the European powers established the principle that effective control must precede a legitimate claim to colonial possessions in Africa. The wording of the 1885 treaty was so vague, however, that it was variously interpreted by the parties to it, and

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the definition of the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone remained an unresolved problem. In 1903, therefore, an Anglo-Liberian boundary commission was authorized to define the border in the disputed territory, but, when a tribal war broke out involving groups on both sides of the new line, British troops intervened, occupying territory assigned to Liberia. In 1911 the border was redrawn again and, after a United States complaint on Liberia's behalf, forestland between the Morro and Magowi rivers held by the British was exchanged in return for recognition of Sierra Leone's title to land north of the Magowi.

After 1885 France had moved to establish effective control over territories in its sphere of influence in Ivory Coast and Guinea. When these claims clashed with earlier ones put forward by Liberia, the French initially made a proposal for establishing a protectorate over the republic, which was withdrawn after a diplomatic protest by the United States. Subsequently, however, France laid claim to territory in Liberia as far west as Cape Palmas. When Britain refused to sanction what it referred to as "greedy" aggrandizement, the French reduced their claims against Liberia and in 1891 occupied only the territory up to the Cavalla River.

Until that time, it had been generally accepted that Liberian territory extended 80 miles east of Cape Palmas to the San Pedro River, including territory claimed on the basis of treaties made in the 1840s by the Maryland colony with Grebo chiefs. France pointed out, however, that Liberia did not administer the territory in question and that on several occasions French troops had been compelled to enter the disputed region to quiet unrest among the Grebo that had spilled over into Ivory Coast. Because their case did not receive diplomatic backing from either the United States or Britain, the Liberians were forced to accept French annexation of the territory to Ivory Coast in a treaty in 1892 recognizing the Cavalla River as their eastern border. Like his predecessor, Johnson resigned the presidency in protest and was replaced in office by his vice president, Joseph James Cheeseman.

The 1892 treaty with France also defined the boundary in the north between Liberia and Guinea, but the demarcation based on inadequate information about the largely unexplored territory proved unworkable. The boundary was redrawn in 1907 by a special commission, but French troops soon made deep intrusions across the new line in pursuit of belligerent border clans resisting their advance in Guinea. Because the Liberian claim to the militarily sensitive region could not be upheld to the satisfaction

of Paris, the disputed territory was annexed to Guinea in 1911.

Indirect Rule in the Hinterland

In 1869 the cabinet-level Department of the Interior was created in Monrovia to administer native African affairs in the area beyond the organized counties that was designated the Hinterland. Anderson had already begun the process of securing the nominal submission of chiefs in part of the region by treaty, but lack of manpower and shortage of funds deterred any attempt at establishing effective control. Even in the organized areas on the coast, the Liberian government had difficulty enforcing its sovereignty over tribal groups that refused to accept its authority.

In the 1870s many of the Grebo chiefdoms, encouraged by foreign traders, had united in forming a "kingdom" in part of Maryland County that declared its independence from Liberia and resumed trading freely with passing foreign ships. War followed, and the Grebo overran several settlements before an American naval expeditionary force arrived to quell the uprising and expel the foreign traders. In concluding a peace treaty with the Grebo chiefs, the American commander promised to use his influence to obtain for them a grant of citizenship that would enable them as Liberians to conduct trade on their own behalf without intermediaries. Liberian authorities expressed gratitude for American aid in suppressing the Grebo rebellion but ignored the naval officer's advice on indigenous African affairs.

Movement to upgrade the status of native Africans provoked a constitutional crisis in 1900, when President William David Coleman resigned near the end of his term after the legislature rejected his plan for extending citizenship to the peoples on the Saint Paul River. Coleman had argued that the action was necessary if the government was to obtain recognition of its authority in the area. But Americo-Liberians were intransigent on the subject of admitting native Africans to greater participation in Liberian political life, fearing that they would be overwhelmed by their numbers and that the character of the country would be changed. The vice president elected with Coleman in 1895 had died, and the next in line of succession, the speaker of the House of Representatives, was acknowledged to be incompetent. The legislature therefore repealed the 1873 presidential succession law to allow Secretary of State Garretson Wilmot Gibson to be named president.

The first move to organize the Hinterland was made in 1907, when President Arthur Barclay introduced "indirect rule" in the region as a means of establishing effective control. The purpose of

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the system, which had been employed by the British in various parts of Africa, was to govern areas through familiar traditional rulers who had been co-opted into government service. In practice, however, Monrovia disregarded hereditary rulers, replacing them first with elected chiefs and then with chiefs appointed directly by the government.

Under indirect rule, 16 tribal clusters were designated, and each was put under the supervision of a paramount chief. This was an artificial arrangement that separated many related clans and created cleavages where none had existed before, but it was intended to prevent the formation of alliances that might challenge the government. Monrovia's ability to impose indirect rule and command the obedience of the chiefs demonstrated the weakness of the fragmented tribes and their traditional rulers at that time more than it did the strength of the government's military and administrative resources.

To coincide with the introduction of indirect rule, the Hinterland was divided into five administrative districts under the overall supervision of a commissioner general, who was responsible to the secretary of the interior. A district commissioner was placed in charge of each district to oversee the chiefs and to look after government interests. This officer advised the paramount chiefs, represented the government before the customary court, and decided cases where customary usage and Liberian law were in conflict. His primary tasks, however, were to collect taxes, ensure the supply of contract labor from his district, and keep out foreigners. Only a small percentage of the hut taxes collected in the Hinterland ever found its way to Monrovia but nonetheless accounted for nearly one-third of government revenues. Taxes covered administrative costs, but the government did not provide services or schools in the region.

Chiefs were expected to govern according to local customs, which were recognized as long as they were not contrary to Liberian statute law or the public interest. For instance, slavery, which in various forms had been an accepted institution among indigenous peoples, was prohibited. In 1912 a separate uniform legal code, the Hinterland Regulations, was applied to tribal Africans in the five districts as well as to those living in the counties on the coast. Under this law Monrovia recognized the indigenous political units—most of them petty chiefdoms consisting of a few villages—as legal entities. Called clans by the Liberian government, the recognized entities did not always correspond to the traditional local political grouping. In a number of cases the clans—each under a chief—were combined under larger units

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called chiefdoms and headed by a paramount chief. Clans and chiefdoms were in turn perceived as parts of a limited number of recognized tribes (see *Ethnicity and Language*, ch. 2). Indigenous Africans were regarded as corporate members of their respective groups rather than as individual citizens of Liberia. Clan land was owned communally and could be alienated only with the agreement of the chiefs, who spoke for their subjects. Several chiefs were elected to represent the interests of the tribal groups in the Liberian legislature. But indirect rule became an instrument for depriving tribal Africans of full citizenship. It was only by renouncing his tribal affiliation and assimilating that a native African could participate in the political life of the country. As it was practiced, the system thereby widened the cleavage between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous peoples.

The theory of indirect rule notwithstanding, the tendency in Monrovia was to extend direct control by the central government wherever possible. Many laws were passed by the legislature restricting the chiefs and bringing their chieftaincies under closer supervision by the Department of the Interior. Important provisions of this legislation were at times challenged and declared unconstitutional by the Liberian Supreme Court on the grounds that "aborigines" were subject to the full protection of the constitution. But few of these rulings were ever implemented by the government, and in the 1920s the treatment of native Africans became a source of considerable embarrassment for Liberia in its relations with interested foreign governments and with the League of Nations.

The organization of the Hinterland and the effort to establish effective control there through indirect rule had come as a direct response to British and French intervention in the region. Another product of Liberia's territorial disputes with the two colonial powers was the formation of the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) in 1908. The mission of the 500-man force was to patrol the border in the Hinterland but, more important, it was organized to prevent the sort of disorders that invited intervention. The LFF was placed under the command of a British officer, who recruited most of his troops in Sierra Leone. The French initially regarded the LFF as a "British army of occupation," but their demand that French officers and colonial soldiers be assigned to it as well was disregarded.

The record of the LFF was checkered. Although the LFF was effective in putting down disturbances in the border areas, its conduct was so undisciplined and its tactics were so ruthless that

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they engendered unrest. Unpaid and poorly supplied, soldiers lived on their own from what they could steal and extort. Annual hut taxes were collected several times a year, depending on the requirements of troops in a given area. Corrupt district commissioners used the LFF to raid and pillage village and steal livestock. Troops under their authority were employed in rounding up men for forced labor on roads and government farms and for portorage. Reports of abduction of women by soldiers were common. In 1910 the Grebo clans rebelled and appealed to the British governor of Sierra Leone to proclaim a protectorate over them, citing specifically the depredations committed by "this execrable force." (The Liberian government took precautions at this time against the possibility of a pro-British coup by its opponents in Monrovia.)

In 1908 a mission had been sent to Washington to request American advice in Liberia's dealings with Britain and France and to ask the United States government to use its influence with the colonial powers to maintain Liberia's territorial integrity and protect its independence. The following year, United States president William Howard Taft appointed a commission to investigate the effect of treaties made by Liberia with Britain and France on American interests there. The commission reported that European colonialism was not so much a threat to Liberia as were its own chaotic economy and inadequate public administration. According to the report, nearly everything, including food, was imported, while trade, industry, and agriculture languished. The commission recommended American investment in agriculture and development of the Hinterland and assistance in providing facilities for technical education. These recommendations were not implemented, however, nor was the Liberian government enthusiastic about inviting foreign involvement in the Hinterland, but the United States did agree to consider taking responsibility for a new loan.

Another outcome of the commission's report was an undertaking by the United States to sell arms to Liberia and to reorganize the LFF. In 1912 a black officer in the United States Army was assigned to train and command the reequipped LFF; several other black American soldiers were attached to offer their "moral comradeship." Few Americo-Liberians served in the LFF, and units were recruited on a tribal basis for assignment to garrisons outside their own areas. The LFF showed its mettle under American command in crushing the Kru revolt of 1915 in which rebel forces were decimated and ringleaders captured and hanged. A United States naval officer assigned to investigate the incident in

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which American personnel had taken part reported that the revolt by the Kru had been provoked by heavy taxation and the petty tyranny of Liberian authorities and appointed clan chiefs. His report was also critical of the Liberian government's failure to carry out promised reforms in native African affairs.

In 1919, however, it was possible for Charles Dunbar Burgess King, the True Whig standard-bearer, to run for the presidency with Henry Too Wesley, a Grebo, as his vice-presidential running mate. Wesley became the first native African in the country to be elected to high office. The King administration was also the first to offer in its platform a vision of Liberia as a nation rather than a settler community, but once in office King took few steps to improve conditions in the Hinterland.

Liberia in Receivership

In 1906 President Barclay secured another British loan of £100,000 at a slightly lower rate of interest that allowed the Liberian government to liquidate the old debt and begin new development projects. A fund of £40,000 was allocated to the British-owned Liberian Development Corporation to build roads and improve harbor facilities, but within a few years the company went bankrupt, leaving only 15 miles of road to show for the investment.

On the basis of recommendations made by a presidential commission, the United States government in 1912 agreed to be cosigner with Britain, France, and Germany in underwriting a \$1.7 million international loan to redeem the 1906 loan and other accumulated debts. The receipts from Liberian customs revenues were pledged as security for the loan under an international receivership, and an American was appointed receiver general to supervise the collection of duties. Trade with Germany, which accounted for three-fourths of Liberia's foreign commerce in 1914, was cut off because of the war in Europe, causing revenues to plummet by 1917 to less than half their prewar level. No matter how well managed, the receipts of the customs service were insufficient under these conditions to service the loan. Further credit was impossible to obtain, but an agreement was reached with the British-owned Bank of West Africa in Sierra Leone to assume the debt on the condition that all government domestic revenues were deposited in the bank, which then remitted a monthly allowance of \$9,000 to Monrovia to meet government operating expenses.

Britain and France expressed concern about the threat posed by the presence of German interests in Liberia to their neighbor-

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ing colonies, and the Allied powers complained about "anarchical conditions" existing there. At the urging of the United States, therefore, Liberia declared war on Germany in April 1918. Liberia's contribution to the Allied war effort was nominal, but physical damage was nonetheless inflicted on the country because of its involvement: in June Monrovia was shelled by a German submarine. More serious was the seizure of German assets, which dealt a devastating blow to commercial activity within the country.

As a belligerent, however, Liberia qualified to receive war relief funds from the United States under the Liberty Loan program. United States president Woodrow Wilson authorized a low-interest \$5 million loan that would have been adequate to repay the country's debts and leave ample funds for development. Calling the United States "Liberia's best friend," the Monrovia government consented to having its revenues placed in receivership to the United States, but a number of other strings were also attached to the loan, including American supervision of economic reform. The Liberian legislature considered the terms humiliating but accepted them because, as the United States explained, Liberia might be compelled to accept mandate status unless its affairs were put in order. The Liberty Loan faced opposition in the United States Congress, however, and Senator William Borah expressed misgivings in a speech on the Senate floor that, given Liberia's record of defaulting on loans, the United States might find that it would have to send a gunboat to exact repayment. The offer of a United States loan to Liberia was dropped by the new administration that came to Washington in 1921.

An unusual proposal for American economic assistance came from Marcus Garvey, the controversial leader of the Harlem-based United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Founded in 1916 as a self-help organization, the UNIA promoted a "back-to-Africa" movement among American blacks and had attracted considerable popular following in the United States. Styling himself the "Provisional President of Africa," Garvey envisioned large-scale migration as the prelude to the liberation of Africa from colonial rule and its political unification. As part of this larger scheme, he promised in 1920 to raise a subscription to pay off all of Liberia's debt in excess of \$2 million in return for being allowed to transfer the UNIA's headquarters to Monrovia. He also spoke of settling 20,000 black families from the United States in Liberia. The United States was embarrassed by Garvey's intrigues, which made the colonial powers sufficiently uneasy to complain both to Washington and to Monrovia. In 1924 the UNIA was proscribed

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in Liberia. President King condemning it as an organization "which tends to intensify racial feelings of hatred and ill will." The object of Liberian policy, he said, was the "making of a nation and not of a race."

Although Garvey had pledged funds that Liberia desperately needed, it is doubtful that its government was ever willing to put the country in Garvey's hands or risk foreign intervention, as acceptance of his conditions might have done. Garvey had challenged the Americo-Liberian elite to improve the lot of native Africans, who he said were "treated like slaves," and appealed to an African nationalism that was alien to them. This unusual episode did, however, reopen debate on the question of immigration and its potential impact on Americo-Liberian society.

On taking office in 1920, President King set an independent course for Liberia in working its way out of its economic dilemma. Recovery required investment, and investment necessarily required foreign involvement; but King was determined to keep the ultimate direction of economic and financial policy in Monrovia rather than in a foreign capital. King opened the Hinterland to development by foreign investment and applied a policy of stringent austerity to the public sector. The customs service, under the continued direction of the international receivership, had become more efficient in collecting duties. The country's economic performance began to improve by the mid-1920s, responding to better management, an infusion of fresh American capital, and the recovery of the world economy. In 1923 Liberia was able to pay the interest on the 1912 loan for the first time in eight years, and government receipts of nearly \$1 million in 1925 were the highest ever collected.

Firestone

Rubber collected from wild-growing trees in the rain forest had been brought to the coast for sale by individual traders for some years before a British firm was granted a concession in 1890 to extract it systematically from trees on publicly owned and communal tribal lands. Royalties from the enterprise were paid directly into the Liberian treasury. In 1910 the British-owned Liberian Rubber Corporation began planting rubber trees on public land at Mount Barclay near Monrovia under a further concession obtained earlier from the government. The harvest from the trees, which came into service in 1917, proved disappointing, however, and the project was abandoned.

After World War I the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company set out to find an alternative source of rubber to avoid paying the

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artificially high prices charged by British and Dutch producers in Southeast Asia, who held a virtual monopoly on the world supply of the raw material. After surveying various locations, Firestone determined that Liberia offered the most suitable natural conditions for large-scale rubber production by an American company and approached its government on developing the Mount Barclay plantation. Although President King was eager to attract foreign investment, others in the government feared the effects on the country of so large an intervention as Firestone had proposed. For his part, Harvey S. Firestone, Jr., who had undertaken the survey, also had misgivings about the poor quality of transportation facilities in Liberia and the country's financial instability. Title to land was also a question standing in the way of investment in Liberia because the constitution prohibited foreign ownership.

Differences between the government and the company were overcome, however, by King's interest in obtaining investment in his country and Firestone's interest in securing a source of rubber that was not dependent on foreign producers, but Firestone drove the harder bargain. After several years of negotiations, an agreement was finally signed in 1926 granting Firestone a 99-year lease on 1 million acres of land at an annual rent of \$.06 per acre. In addition, the company agreed to pay a 1-percent tax on gross income from its Liberian operation. (Both the rent and the tax were subsequently increased.)

At Firestone's insistence a second agreement was also concluded to ensure the company's investment against the government's going bankrupt. Firestone raised a private 40-year loan for \$5 million at 7 percent interest financed by the Finance Corporation of America (FCA), a company subsidiary established for that purpose, and the National City Bank of New York. Half of the loan went to redeem old bonds and repay outstanding foreign obligations, and half was earmarked for construction projects that would benefit both the country and the company's operations there. Liberia was left with an annual commitment of \$300,000 on the loan, serviced by customs and tax receipts that were held in receivership by the FCA. In addition, the Liberian government had to accept the services of an American financial adviser and supervisor of customs.

The effects of the Firestone agreements on Liberia were manifold. The company employed about 20,000 Liberians, providing them and their families with housing, medical care, education, and basic foodstuffs. It built roads, a rail line, and port facilities; extended telephone and telegraph services; and helped

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Despite the positive image created abroad by the Tubman administration and its popular appeal at home, criticism of the government (if it was widely publicized) and opposition to the True Whig oligarchy (if it became too overt) was firmly suppressed and in individual cases harshly punished. Nor did Tubman tolerate expressions of the new nationalism that sought to incorporate pan-Africanist sentiment with tribal consciousness in Liberia. The government was particularly embarrassed in the 1960s by signs of unrest among workers in the foreign concessions. Another source of antigovernment, antiforeign agitation was the campus of the University of Liberia, which the government identified as the seedbed of radical dissent. Discontent also surfaced in Liberia's armed forces (formerly the LFF), whose ranks were composed largely of soldiers from tribal backgrounds. Meanwhile, elements of the party's old guard, whose attitudes on some issues, such as the pace of economic development and the extent of foreign involvement in it, were similar to those of the radicals, prodded the government to take stronger action against dissident activities.

In 1961 strikers from the rubber plantations marched on the Executive Mansion to demand government action against alleged discrimination in pay and promotions. On that occasion Tubman had consented to meet with representatives of the strikers, serving them refreshments and calling in the police band to entertain them. The president promised to look into complaints that better jobs had been denied to qualified black employees but turned aside another demand that foreign concessions be phased out. Tubman cautioned the plantation workers that if the foreign companies left Liberia, the jobs they had created would go with them. The demonstrators disbanded, apparently both chastened and appeased. The government subsequently alleged that the rubber-workers' strike had been communist inspired.

A more immediate threat to Tubman came from elements in the armed forces. In 1963 and again in 1966, 1969, and 1970, high-ranking officers were implicated in plots to kill the president and overthrow the government. Concern had focused during that period on the shadowy Aborigines Liberation Movement, which, in its slogans, had attempted to link tribal consciousness and left-wing ideology with a base of support in the armed forces. All of those involved in the attempts against Tubman's life were of tribal background, but their actions were interpreted as representing discontent among small cliques of officers rather than an indication of their affiliation with a larger ethnic or political movement.

Where it existed, opposition to the regime in the 1960s had



*President Tubman (right) and
Vice President Tolbert model
tribal attire to support the
administration's Unification Policy.
Courtesy
Ministry of Information, Monrovia*

four counties, each entitled to two senators plus representatives apportioned according to population. The imbalance between Hinterland and coastal seats in the legislature was gradually rectified, but in practice the tribal Africans remained grossly underrepresented in relation to Americo-Liberians, a group that composed no more than 5 percent of the population (including assimilated Africans).

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come the focus of opposition to Tubman's policies within the party. His departure from the ticket was evidence that Tubman had definitely gained the ascendancy in party councils over conservatives attached to former president Edwin Barclay. Simpson, in stepping down, was named Liberian ambassador to Washington (and later to London), remaining out of the country for the next 10 years.

Tubman's opponent in the 1951 election was Didhwo Twe, a Kru who criticized the slow pace of unification and pointed out foot-dragging by the Americo-Liberian elite. Twe, the candidate of the Reformation Party, was forced to flee the country before the voting took place, although he posed no threat to the True Whigs. In 1955 a splinter group broke from the party, forming the Independent True Whig Party, which, together with the Reformation Party, nominated Barclay to challenge Tubman. Barclay argued that the third term compromised Liberia's democratic traditions, but the crux of his campaign was a protest against large-scale foreign investment and what he denounced as foreign influence on the Tubman government. Although clearly the loser at the polls, Barclay claimed fraud on the grounds that the number of votes counted—245,000 for Tubman against 1,200 for himself—exceeded the number of registered voters. Before the inauguration an attempt was made against Tubman's life by a supporter of Barclay, who, as the runner-up in the election, would have become acting president in accordance with the constitution in the event of the president-elect's demise. The opposition was discredited as a result of the assassination attempt, and the Independent True Whig Party was banned.

William Bright, an independent candidate, challenged Tubman in the 1959 election in order "to make it sporting" and received, according to official count, 55 votes out of more than 500,000 cast. Tubman ran unopposed in 1963 for a fifth term, which had been extended to eight years. He was likewise the only candidate in the 1971 election.

Liberia conducted its first official census in 1962, accounting for a population of just over 1 million. The findings of the census were only slightly lower than a United Nations (UN) estimate of the previous year but were half the figure of 2 million inhabitants that had usually been cited by Liberian government sources. The census also highlighted the sharp disparity that still existed in income and in representation between the coastal counties and the Hinterland districts, where the population was almost entirely of tribal background. In 1964 the inferior political status of the Hinterland was ended. The area's three provinces were divided into

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Investment by private enterprise was supplemented after World War II by United States economic assistance. By 1960 American aid had totaled more than US\$50 million, directed especially to agricultural development. The United States economic mission to Liberia also drew up plans for roads, health facilities, schools, communications infrastructure, and municipal buildings to be constructed with American funds. The privately financed Liberia Company was sponsored by Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., a former United States secretary of state and director of the War Production Board, to promote economic development in general.

Under the Open Door Policy foreign merchants, largely Lebanese, established a variety of retail and wholesale businesses in Liberia. Encountering little competition from Liberian businessmen, they also acted as middlemen in the domestic rice trade, buying crops from small farmers in the interior for resale in the towns. By the early 1960s Lebanese merchants conducted more than half of all middle-level commercial activities in the country.

Political and Economic Developments in the 1950s and 1960s

Tubman achieved a degree of popularity and stature in the public imagination that was unequaled by any other Liberian in history, even Roberts. He strictly adhered to the formalities of his office and was a skilled political manipulator in party councils. He was also ruthless in dealing with opponents who had stretched his tolerance too far. But to the masses of the Liberian people, to whom he gave a sense of dignity and equality unknown before him, Tubman's image was that of the avuncular head of an extended family, and he was known popularly—and affectionately—as “Uncle Shad.”

One of Tubman's most popular innovations in office was to throw open the Executive Mansion to petitioners. Citizens could and did arrive at his door, ask for an appointment, and be admitted. The redress of grievances by the president was in theory available and was frequently used by the president to his political advantage. On the basis of Tubman's personal standing, the constitutional provision restricting a president to two terms in office was repealed, and an unlimited number of four-year terms was permitted after the first eight-year term.

In the preconvention bargaining sessions before the 1951 election, Simpson was dropped from the ticket as vice president and replaced by William R. Tolbert. Simpson, who was regarded as heir apparent to the presidency in some party circles, had be-

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tions. As a measure of the success of the program, by the early 1960s there were 25 major foreign firms investing and operating in Liberia, compared with only one—the Firestone Plantations Company—when Tubman entered office.

Tubman prophesied that investment from abroad would “strike the rock of our natural resources so that abundant revenues may gush forth.” Liberia’s untapped iron ore reserves were among the largest in the world. In 1951 the Liberian subsidiary of the Republic Steel Corporation of the United States opened a rail link to its concession in the Bomi Hills and began shipments to the port of Monrovia. In 1963 the Liberian-American-Swedish Minerals Company (LAMCO) completed a similar connection between its concession in the Nimba Range and the port of Buchanan. Under the so-called Tubman formula, instead of paying a fixed rent on the concession, LAMCO had agreed to turn over half of its capital stock to the Liberian government, allowing it a formal role in the management of its operations. A German mining consortium had also entered into a similar 50–50 profit sharing agreement with the government in 1957. The foreign concessionaires also committed themselves to providing schools, health facilities, and housing for employees and their families.

Resistance to large-scale foreign participation in the economy remained an issue within the True Whig Party, but Liberian firms as well profited from the improved economic climate brought about by the influx of overseas capital. One of the most important of these was the National Iron Ore Company, based largely on Liberian investment, which began successful operations in the Mano River region in the 1950s.

The foreign concessions brought employment opportunities to tens of thousands of Liberians and introduced them into the modern sector of the economy. But because of the very low level of technical training available, even to better educated Americo-Liberians, few were qualified for any but lower level positions. Expatriate personnel occupied virtually all managerial and technical positions, and little effort was made to train indigenous personnel for promotion to a higher level. This remained a source of dissatisfaction among Liberian employees of foreign-owned concerns and was made an object of criticism by opponents of the concessions within the oligarchy. In 1958 a law was enacted imposing penalties on companies found guilty of discrimination in hiring and promotion practices, but until qualifications of Liberian candidates for jobs could be substantially improved, changes were seldom more than cosmetic.

possible, Tubman tried to incorporate tribal organizations into larger national associations, but on occasion he also felt required to neutralize certain groups so they could not be used as part of a nationalist movement that mobilized tribal Africans against his Americo-Liberian-dominated government.

A generation after the inception of the Unification Policy, it would have been unlikely that Tubman or any other Liberian official would have used the term "weakest pagan link" to describe the culture of tribal Africans. Indeed, the term "Americo-Liberian" was in official disfavor. Assimilation had occurred to a limited degree, but a wider acceptance of tribal African cultures on the official level was the more noticeable aspect of the unification process. Many assimilated tribal Africans had restored their African names, and it had become acceptable—even fashionable—to wear African garb on public occasions. Even some members of the old elite boasted of their kinship ties with indigenous people and sought to capitalize on them. Tubman, who had no such ties, became the formal head of the Poro (as he was also grand master of the Masonic Order) in a double gesture of gaining control over it and of wooing support from the groups that were members of it. African culture, previously demeaned as "barbaric" and "uncivilized," was officially recognized as being a genuine expression of the Liberian national experience, and the 1963 True Whig platform included a plank urging "a national cultural awakening to develop the essential African and Liberian culture."

Open Door Policy

For Tubman, economic development was a device for accomplishing political aims. The unification program would be meaningless, he believed, without economic development that benefited the mass of people, but the president was also anxious to preserve the standard of living of the Americo-Liberian elite. Foreign investment was seen, therefore, as a means by which higher incomes and improved social services—such as health care and education, could be made available without imposing austerities and heavy taxation upon the prosperous upper class.

The Open Door Policy, announced in 1944, was a bid to attract foreign capital from many sources for a wide range of projects that would also allow the economy to become more diversified. Foreign firms were guaranteed freedom to remit earnings without excessive restriction. The new policy also opened the interior to foreign investment and led to the construction of roads, railroads, port facilities, and other infrastructure to serve the concessions granted inland for mining, lumbering, and tree crop planta-

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for several days with the president and his entourage. During this time grievances were aired, and complaints against government and tribal authorities were lodged. Tubman sometimes dismissed officials on the spot in response to them. Subsequent legislation removed many of the distinctions between the coastal counties and the Hinterland districts, extending elected representation to the latter in the House of Representatives.

The necessity for a change of direction in native African affairs had already become apparent in the 1930s as a result of the League of Nations reports and as a consequence of large numbers of tribal Africans entering the cash economy through employment opportunities offered by the Firestone operation. A realization of the probable effect of the latter was an important reason why some members of the old guard in the True Whig Party had opposed the Firestone investment from the first. Without detracting from the real accomplishments of the Unification Policy, what Tubman was attempting to do was to blur the distinction between tribal Africans and Americo-Liberians without altering the rules that would permit the latter to maintain their dominant role. Integration was not interpreted as implying the recognition of two separate but equal cultures or the melding of the two into a new society, but rather it was meant to encourage the gradual assimilation of tribal Africans into an enlarged Americo-Liberian community. Tubman clearly indicated the direction of his policy when he stated in the 1944 inaugural address that "we are aiming at developing a civilized state" but warned that its "civilization. . . will be as weak as its *weakest pagan link*, if due precaution be not taken."

Tubman appointed a number of tribal Africans to government positions and was patron to others who ran for public office. After they had been co-opted into the system in this manner, they were used to advertise the advantages of assimilation through unification. Once a chief or other tribal personality had been accepted into the True Whig hierarchy and became an "Honorable," he was unlikely to be an opponent of the Americo-Liberian ascendancy, it was believed.

Members of the Vai tribal group were the most ready to take advantage of the opportunities for advancement offered by unification. Among major groups, those from the Kru and Grebo were more reluctant to respond. What had been expected to blur differences, however, served in many instances to enhance tribal consciousness of their separate identities, as groups at first vied with one another for official recognition. Later there was some recognition that there could be strength in cohesiveness. Where

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*Statue of former
President William V.S.
Tubman, attired in
symbols of the
Masonic Order, in
Harper, his hometown
Courtesy Werner Gartung*



munity and tribal Africans and opening the way for the latter to participate in the political life of the country. "Reduced to its simplest terms," Tubman explained when the policy had been in operation for some years, "unification, as I perceive it, is the practical application of thinking and living on a national rather than a parochial, benighted basis."

Legislation was enacted soon after the introduction of the Unification Policy, extending suffrage to all property holders and to all those who paid hut tax. Tubman toured the interior and met with chiefs not only to discuss local problems but also to explain the policy to them. A special unification council was formed to draw together leaders from different parts of the country every few years, and executive councils were impaneled to meet more frequently to study the progress of unification in particular localities. The councils were attended, amidst pageantry and the exchange of gifts, by chiefs, headmen, and local officials, who met



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ted his administration to evolutionary change within the context of continued True Whig rule. He spoke convincingly, as no other high-ranking Americo-Liberian official had before him, of removing class distinctions and of introducing policies that would draw tribal Africans into the political mainstream.

The biggest obstacle to Tubman's program was that many of the elite class upon whom he had to depend to carry out his policies were afraid that the proposed measures would endanger the way of life and standard of living they had come to consider their birthright; consequently, they gave the program less than full support. The uncompromising approach of the party's old guard was to resist the new forces of nationalism that were brewing in Africa by isolating the tribal population from change and allowing as little new foreign influence as possible, including economic development, that might upset the established order. Tubman was also interested in protecting the special interests of his own class and keeping the direction of the country in its control, but he argued that reform was the best guarantee of preserving the status of the Americo-Liberians. The route that he chose to prevent radical movements from emerging among young Americo-Liberians, as well as among tribal Africans, was to redress some of the more obvious grievances before they became serious issues threatening the country's stability.

Tubman's vice-presidential running mate in 1943 was Clarence L. Simpson, who had been Barclay's secretary of state and the leading contender against Tubman for the presidential nomination. Simpson was a person of liberal temperament who had kinship ties with the Vai, but he was a staunch party man as well whom the old guard saw as a counterweight to Tubman. Although the speaker of the House of Representatives and the president of the Senate were influential figures identified with the old guard, there was no real opposition to administration policies in the legislature. The old guard continued to dominate party councils, but power within the government shifted decisively to the new president and to his family network, whose members were appointed to important government positions through the patronage system. In order to cope with the large task of modernization, Tubman relied extensively on foreign advisers and technicians who were not influenced by party intrigues.

National Unification

The Unification Policy introduced in Tubman's first inaugural address was intended to prevent intracommunal conflict by breaking down the barriers between the Americo-Liberian com-

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adequate, and construction of a new runway was begun 50 miles from Monrovia at what became Roberts Field. Supplies of rubber were also flown out from the new airfield.

In 1942 Liberia granted the United States permission to construct, control, and operate bases in the country under the Defense Areas Agreement. Concurrently, it was granted the right to defend those bases and other strategic interests in Liberia. Roberts Field made possible the airlifting of supplies to United States forces during the North Africa campaign, and antisubmarine patrols were flown by seaplanes based at Fisherman's Lake (Lake Piso). About 5,000 United States troops, including engineers and all-black combat units as well as air crews, were stationed in Liberia during World War II.

Roosevelt visited Liberia in January 1943, landing at Roberts Field on his way home from the Casablanca Conference, and held talks with Barclay. Later in the year Barclay and President-elect William V. S. Tubman visited the United States on Roosevelt's invitation and signed additional agreements for the construction of modern port facilities at Monrovia and for technical assistance.

The Tubman Era

In his inaugural address in January 1944, Tubman announced an ambitious new program aimed at ameliorating the social and political differences that existed between the Americo-Liberian elite and the rest of the country. He also made proposals for developing Liberia economically and socially into a modern nation. The twin pillars of Tubman's program were to be the Unification Policy, directed toward social and political integration of all Liberians, and the subsequent Open Door Policy, designed to attract foreign capital to Liberia.

Tubman was 49 years old when he assumed the presidency. A descendant of freed slaves who had come to Liberia from Georgia in 1834, he had been raised at Cape Palmas, educated at a Methodist seminary, served in the militia during the tribal uprisings, and started his political career by being elected to the House of Representatives from Maryland County in 1922. He built a political base nationally among lower echelon Americo-Liberians and tribal Africans but also had impeccable credentials as a member of the inner circle of the True Whig Party and as an officer of the Masonic Order. Over the years he built an impressive patronage network that incorporated relatives, in-laws, and wards. During the 1943 presidential campaign, Tubman commit-

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had stuffed the ballot boxes.

With the approval of the legislature, Barclay assumed extraordinary powers. Public expenditures were slashed, and a moratorium was declared on loan repayments to the FCA until revenues improved. The debt service, which equaled 20 percent of total revenues in 1926, had increased to 60 percent in 1932. The United States Government warned that it would interpret the action as a repudiation of the debt but refused to go to the lengths urged by Firestone to force Liberia to pay on schedule.

Washington took a much more benevolent approach to its relations with Liberia after Franklin D. Roosevelt became president of the United States in 1933. The Roosevelt administration served notice that it would not tolerate foreign intervention in the country's affairs and offered Liberia diplomatic assistance in a number of matters involving the colonial powers.

Under the terms of the 1926 agreements, the American financial adviser to the Liberian government was principally concerned with ensuring prompt payment of the loan, but after revision of the terms, he became more closely involved in cooperation with Liberian officials to improve the country's fiscal management to the benefit of both Liberia and American interests there.

Special legislation in 1935, confirmed by a referendum, extended Barclay's current term to eight years, bypassing the election scheduled for that year. Prolonging the presidential term was explained as an economy measure, but the Barclay administration also feared that a disruptive election would further weaken the confidence of foreign powers and creditors in Liberia's ability to maintain political stability. Barclay was re-elected to a four-year second term in 1939. As war threatened, France worried about a coup d'état being carried out in Liberia, inspired by German nationals there, and submitted a plan for training a Liberian army of 5,000 men, which would also be essential to defending the rubber plantations. Barclay called the plan unacceptable, pointing out that Liberia could not bear the cost of larger defense forces without contravening the agreements made with the League of Nations. When war broke out, Barclay issued a declaration of strict neutrality, but in 1942 Liberia broke diplomatic relations with Germany.

At Firestone's urging, Pan American Airways had inaugurated regular trans-Atlantic service between the United States and Liberia in 1941. Pan American had also obtained a contract for ferrying aircraft that had been acquired by Britain under the Lend-Lease Act to the Royal Air Force in Egypt. Commercial facilities in Liberia that were used for stopovers proved in-

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experts appointed by the League of Nations and requested advisers to help in preparing financial and judicial reforms. In response to this initiative, the League of Nations named an eight-nation panel, including Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, and Venezuela, as well as a representative of Liberia. Liberia, the report stated, "represents the paradox of being a Republic of 12,000 citizens with 1,000,000 subjects." It deplored the lack of modern health care (except on the Firestone plantation), the high incidence of preventable disease, and the primitive sanitation conditions. The government had failed, it continued, to take even the most basic steps toward improving conditions among tribal Africans. The country's financial situation was called "tragic" and its monetary system "confusing." Included in its recommendations were the establishment of a public health service, renegotiation of the FCA loan to make more funds available for development, and a radical reform of native African affairs policies allowing elected chiefs to exercise real power in the Hinterland. It called for the abolition of forced labor and the end of pawnage. Many of the solutions proposed by the commission were unrealistic, however. For instance, at a time when the country's revenues had been reduced to only about \$450,000 a year as a result of the impact of the Great Depression, the commission expected the Liberian government to expend \$400,000 to improve public services. The Liberian president chose not to respond directly to the commission's recommendations, although improvements in social services were instituted as funds became available later in the decade. Forced labor was banned, and pawnage was phased out. Barclay stonewalled on other recommendations, however, and let time work in his favor.

The Barclay Administration

Immigration policy was an issue in the 1931 election in which Barclay faced Faulkner, who was once again the candidate of the People's Party. Already known as the champion of native African rights, Faulkner also favored unrestricted immigration by American blacks. The two positions were not unrelated because both implied that the Americo-Liberian community would have to share power with other groups. Speaking for the True Whigs, Barclay also favored immigration but would have restricted admission to American blacks bringing new skills into the country that would attract investment. Faulkner increased his share of the vote over the 1927 election and lost in Monrovia only by a narrow margin, but Barclay still won handily across the nation. As he had after his defeat in 1927, Faulkner charged that the True Whigs

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The matter was brought to the attention of the League of Nations, which appointed a commission of inquiry under the British jurist, Cuthbert Christy, to investigate the allegations made against Liberia. The commission, which included former Liberian president Arthur Barclay and Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University in Tennessee, spent several months in Liberia observing conditions and conducting interviews. In its report, published in 1930, the Christy Commission accused high-ranking Liberian government officials of complicity in procuring involuntary labor by impressment and of other practices illegal under international law. It also defined pawns as a form of slavery and condemned the LFF for brutality in suppressing resistance to forced labor. When the United States government added its voice to the chorus of complaint, King assured Washington that his government would abide by the recommendations of the League of Nations to regulate the export of labor, but he characterized the commission's accusation that slavery existed in Liberia as "malicious propaganda" used by the colonial powers to discredit the republic.

The United States was not satisfied with King's response, and Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson wrote a sharply worded note repeating charges made against government officials and calling for punishment of the guilty parties. Under pressure from the United States, King named a Liberian commission to look into the charges against government officials. When evidence was presented that linked Liberian vice president Allen B. Yancey to the syndicate, both he and King resigned from office, and Edwin James Barclay, the secretary of state, was sworn in as president.

Barclay was concerned about the implications for Liberian sovereignty if the League of Nations chose to act upon the Christy Commission's recommendation that the league involve itself further in the country's internal affairs. Despite the purge of the administration, the new president still had reason to fear action taken by the colonial powers. Britain, for example, had suggested consideration of appointing an Anglo-American commission to oversee reform, and imposition of a League of Nations trusteeship was also mentioned. Early in 1931 Britain and Germany, in conjunction with the United States, delivered an ultimatum to Liberia, calling on it to accept an international commission to carry out reforms that, the document declared in patronizing terms, the government in Monrovia neither desired nor had the capability to carry out.

Although Barclay categorically rejected the joint ultimatum, he said that his government would accept the findings of a panel of

to develop the country's hydroelectric potential. Firestone subsidiaries in Liberia—the United States Trading Company and the Bank of Monrovia, which at one time was the only bank in the country—contributed to development of rubber production by Liberian landowners and stimulated investment in other areas as well. Furthermore, the company made a valuable contribution in sponsoring research in tropical medicine.

Liberia and the League of Nations

Liberia's constitution prohibited slavery, and Liberians had cooperated in bringing an end to slave trading along the Grain Coast. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the export of native labor, procured by dubious means and contracted out under appalling conditions, became a lucrative business for the Americo-Liberians who were engaged in it. Cacao plantations on the small Spanish island-colony of Fernando Po needed a dependable flow of workers that was not available legally or as cheaply from the British and French colonies that were closer at hand. In 1905 Liberia agreed to supply workers on contract, and German ships were chartered to carry them to Fernando Po. The agreement was formalized in a treaty between Liberia and Spain signed in 1914. Under its terms Liberian contractors were paid a fee for each worker sent to Fernando Po, and wages accumulated over the two-year period of the worker's contract were deposited in gold in Monrovia to be paid in local currency when he returned to Liberia. Most of the workers were Kru, supplied to contractors by their chiefs or headmen in consideration of a fee per head.

Demand for plantation workers increased sharply in the early 1920s at a time when Liberia was virtually bankrupt and welcomed the opportunity to earn revenue through the sale of labor. To exploit the potential of an expanding market in contract labor, a syndicate was formed that included a number of highly placed government figures. During the 1927 presidential election campaign, Thomas J. Faulkner, the American-born former mayor of Monrovia who was the nominee of the reformist People's Party, made the abuse of contract labor an issue. For the first time since the True Whigs had returned to power in 1877, the People's Party offered a credible alternative to voters that was based on real differences in policy rather than on a factional dispute within the ruling party. Faulkner polled 9,000 votes, losing to King, who received 24,000, but his performance was far better than that of any previous opposition candidate. After his defeat, Faulkner made public charges of exploitation of contract labor and implicated members of the syndicate in illegal activities.

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been poorly organized and was uncoordinated. Claims of conspiracies and subversive plotting among ethnic groups, the military, labor, and students were made by the government. In most cases its evidence was vague; the purpose seemed to be to discourage incipient dissident activity. In 1968, however, a distinguished diplomat, Henry B. Fahnbulleh, was arrested on his return to Liberia from four years as ambassador in Nairobi and was charged with leading a tribal movement aimed at overthrowing Americo-Liberian rule. Contacts with communist embassies in Kenya and Guinea were alleged. The evidence against him was contrived, and some observers saw Fahnbulleh, an assimilated Vai, as a scapegoat offered to those in the old guard who were expressing alarm at the growing political influence of the tribal elements. Many were jealous of Fahnbulleh's rise in the government hierarchy under Tubman's patronage, and testimony against him emphasized that he had betrayed his benefactors in the Americo-Liberian establishment. In a well-publicized trial, Fahnbulleh was convicted of treason, sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, and his property confiscated. The trial placed all assimilated indigenous Africans in high positions under a cloud of suspicion, and in the months that followed, a number of local officials of tribal background were removed from their positions.

By the mid-1960s Liberia had achieved a modest prosperity based on iron ore and rubber production, which accounted for about 90 percent of exports. Another important source of revenue was derived from the Liberian merchant fleet, whose "flag of convenience" carriers in 1965 surpassed ships of American and British registry in total deadweight tonnage (see *Maritime Shipping*, ch. 3). Liberia profited from good commodity prices during the period and enjoyed a favorable balance of trade as a result, but the surplus was sufficient only to keep up with payments on a mounting public and foreign debt, the latter attributable in part to large food imports. Increased agricultural production was therefore deemed essential for easing the debt burden and improving living standards. Accordingly, agriculture was given priority in economic planning.

Operation Production was launched by Tubman in 1963 as a corollary to the Open Door Policy and was the core of the five-year plan for economic development introduced that year. The program focused on making the country self-sufficient in rice production. In addition to its aim of growing as much rice as the country consumed, the government's promotional campaign also stressed reliance on private initiative and the efficacy of self-help and hard work. Operation Production underscored the econ-

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omy's commitment to free enterprise. Tubman hammered away at these themes for some time in appearances across the country.

Operation Production also sought to stimulate Liberian-owned business that produced the sort of indigenous commercial middle class that had earlier been discouraged by the True Whigs. This change in direction was in part the result of animosity toward the Lebanese commercial community in Liberia that had been voiced even by government spokesmen. At the time of the 1964 inauguration, when Tubman had been feted in a series of receptions given by the Lebanese community, the president expressed admiration for their energy and ability but indicated that he expected them to ease their way out of their near monopoly of middle-level commercial activity. "I want the Lebanese to train the Liberians how to trade," he told the merchants.

The government had expected steady progress to be made as a result of projects included in the five-year plan. The debt problem worsened in the late 1960s, however, taking the bloom off prospects for rapid development. Falling commodity prices reduced the amount of revenue that was available to service the debt and also made it difficult to fund social programs that had been introduced at a time when economic conditions were better. Government expenditures were cut, and periodically, salaries in the public sector went unpaid. Anticipated growth in food production and in the Liberian-owned private sector was disappointing as well. Incentives offered to investors attracted little new industry because of the small size of the domestic market for manufactured goods, and at the end of the decade it was still necessary to import 25 percent of the country's rice requirements.

Liberia in Africa

Liberia's foreign policy had been directed toward maintaining good relations with the United States and the principal European powers that were its primary trading partners and sources of investment. Tubman's only allusion to Africa in his second and third inaugural addresses in 1952 and 1956 came as part of sweeping references to Liberia's solidarity with the teeming millions of the underdeveloped countries. They were as yet unprepared for self-determination, he stated, but should be made ready as soon as possible. A year after he delivered the third inaugural address, however, Ghana achieved independence from Britain, starting a trend that called for a reappraisal of Liberia's foreign policy objectives.

The fact was that Americo-Liberians were psychologically isolated from African elite groups in the rest of Africa. They did

not share an interest in concepts of "African personality," or negritude, nor did the settler mentality still prevalent among them find much value in defining Liberia's "African heritage," the unification program notwithstanding. They were deeply suspicious of the nationalist ideologies and movements emerging in the rest of Africa that had the potential of mobilizing tribal Africans against their privileged position just as it had galvanized African opinion elsewhere against continued colonial rule.

Even before the independence of Ghana in 1957, Tubman appeared to have understood that Liberia would have to fashion a wider role for itself in Africa. Liberia, he said, "must be the pride of a race, the emblem of hope and aspiration as well as the trail-blazer in an emerging concept of human relations distinctively African." But as the nationalist movements grew in strength and it became apparent that they would be successful in achieving their aims sooner rather than later, Tubman and other Liberian leaders were surprised to discover that their country was not held in great esteem elsewhere in Africa. Other African leaders were either embarrassed by Liberia or were condescending toward it. They did not regard it as a model for their own future development or simply failed to take its presence into account.

Liberia reacted with a flurry of diplomatic and public relations activity. Officials attended conferences, participated conspicuously in the celebration of each new African nation's independence, and espoused African causes in the UN. In 1960 Liberia and Ethiopia were cosponsors of a suit brought before the International Court of Justice in The Hague aimed at finding South African administration of South West Africa (Namibia) illegal. That same year Liberia led the way in extending recognition to the Algerian provisional government in exile.

Generally, Liberia's relations with other African states in the 1960s were cordial, whether or not there was concurrence on political objectives. Tubman's approach to the question of African unity was flexible and conservative, urging steadily improving political and economic ties between nations that retained their individual sovereignty. Arguing that point, Liberia played a key role in several multilateral conferences that led eventually to the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on terms similar to those advanced by Tubman.

The first of these was convened at Sanniquellie, a small town in northern Liberia near the border with Guinea, in July 1959 at a time when two other participants, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea, were actively working toward the political union of their countries. The important result of

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the conference was a formal statement that embodied Tubman's definition of African unity. All independent countries and those with approaching dates of independence were invited to attend a conference the following year in Addis Ababa for the purpose of discussing the establishment of the "Community of African States," within which each member would "maintain its own national identity and constitutional structure."

The Addis Ababa conference in 1960 failed to resolve differences between the governments of those countries seeking speedy political unification and those, like Liberia, that viewed African unity in terms of greater cooperation within a community of independent states. Consequently, two separate constellations orbiting in different directions emerged from the conference. The so-called Casablanca Group adhered to the Nkrumah-Touré line advocating political union. The so-called Monrovia Group was an alignment of 20 countries in the "moderate" camp incorporating the well-knit Brazzaville Group of former French colonies, which met in 1961 in Monrovia to lay the groundwork for future cooperation. The key principle agreed on at the conference was one of "unity of aspirations and of action considered from the point of view of African social solidarity and political identity," rather than political integration.

The opposing groups managed to settle their differences at the Lagos Conference in 1962, adopting a formula presented by Liberia under which they met again in Addis Ababa the following year to reconsider the basis for forming a comprehensive inter-African organization. At the Addis Ababa Conference of 1963, members of both the Monrovia and the Casablanca groups, which included governments of very different political and social orientations, reached agreement on forming an organization of all independent African states (excluding South Africa). In the form accepted, the OAU was intended to provide the framework for closer cooperation short of political integration. The organization held out the promise of eventual unification, but its structure was sufficiently flexible to allow acceptance by Tubman and the other moderates. Tubman himself conceded more authority to the OAU at Addis Ababa than he had been ready to accept at earlier conferences. Its charter set forth the purposes of the OAU as promoting African unity and cooperation on the international level by coordinating the political, diplomatic, economic, social, and defense policies of member states.

The Liberian Senate ratified the charter in August 1963. Tubman pointed out to his countrymen that a large part of the initiative for founding the OAU had come from Liberia and that 90

percent of its charter, as adopted, had been taken from that of the Monrovia Group.

The Tolbert Presidency

On July 23, 1971, Tubman died of postoperative complications in a London hospital, where he had been admitted for treatment three weeks earlier. His death at age 74 after 27 years as president marked the end of an era in Liberian history. The nation went into mourning for the man who had been called the "Maker of Modern Liberia."

Tolbert's accession to the presidency after 20 years as Tubman's vice president was quiet and orderly. He served a six-month interim term as "provisional president" and in January 1972 was sworn in as president after enactment of special legislation that enabled him to begin a four-year term in his own right instead of completing the unexpired term to which Tubman had only recently been elected.

The son of a former slave from South Carolina who had become a well-to-do coffee planter in Liberia, Tolbert had served in the Senate for eight years before being chosen as Tubman's running mate in 1951. Trained for the ministry, he had continued to function as a Baptist clergyman while in office and for five years (1965-70) had been president of the Baptist World Alliance. At age 57 Tolbert was still an unknown quantity, having filled the office of vice president in relative obscurity under Tubman's expansive shadow. He clearly did not possess his predecessor's exceptional forcefulness or charismatic personality, and he seemed to lack the old leader's common touch with the people; but the new president was an amiable and resourceful politician who over the years had built his own patronage network in the government and the party. Without any real enemies in the ruling circles of the True Whig Party, he could count on the support of leading figures and their factions at the outset of his administration. Pledged to continue Tubman's policies and to respect the prerogatives of the True Whig oligarchy, he nonetheless brought a new style to the presidency and soon embarked on a course that put his own stamp on the government and, in the process, alienated some of those in the old guard who had regarded him passively when he took office.

Abandoning the formal attire in office favored by Tubman for open-collar shirts and traditional African garb, Tolbert attempted to create a more modern, streamlined, and distinctive African



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image for his administration and for Liberia. Presidential power was centralized through the creation of the National Security Council, which put cabinet officers more directly under the president's personal supervision. Several ministers identified with the old guard were dropped from the cabinet. Younger and better qualified individuals were given key government positions. Reforms were undertaken in the civil service, and Tolbert pledged that he would act vigorously against corruption.

The practice of public employees remitting a portion of their salaries to the True Whig Party was ended. Although property qualifications were retained for voting, a constitutional amendment was approved lowering the voting age to 18. Tolbert encouraged women to become involved in politics and appointed the first women to the national cabinet. Fahnbulleh was released from prison and "rehabilitated," and the cult of personality that had surrounded Tubman was de-emphasized. In directing the lowering of the price of rice set by the government, Tolbert also abolished the monopoly for distributing rice that had been controlled by the former president's son (and his own son-in-law), William "Shad" Tubman.

Yet Liberia remained essentially the province of a tightly knit oligarchy. For all the attempted liberalization of the previous two decades, the upper levels of government and the economy were still controlled by about a dozen interrelated Americo-Liberian families. These and other influential families and their retainers in turn dominated the inner councils of the True Whig Party. Tolbert's own extended family illustrated how political and economic preferment were related to a family network. His brother, brother-in-law, and son-in-law were senators, and each was a prominent businessman. The brother, Stephen Tolbert, was also minister of finance in the cabinet and the president's closest adviser. Other relatives, in-laws, and longtime family friends held posts in the civil and foreign services, positions in the party, and directorships in foreign companies secured through political influence. By questionable methods, family members obtained monopolies in the fishing, transportation, and food catering industries and on the sale of charcoal used by the urban poor for cooking and heating. In addition to unbridled nepotism, the Tolbert administration failed to bring corruption under control. High officials committed fraud in the letting of government contracts, involved themselves in questionable real estate acquisitions, charged personal expenses to government accounts, used government property for private use, evaded taxes and customs fees, and engaged in other illegal practices.

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Tolbert's leadership of the True Whig Party was never as secure as Tubman's had been. Ultimately, it was necessary for him to bargain with the old guard, which was led by Speaker of the House of Representatives Richard Henries. Reportedly, Henries, whose approval was needed for any measure to be carried in the lower chamber, kept a book on government officials and resorted to blackmail when it served his purposes. The death of Stephen Tolbert in an air crash in 1974 was a political as well as a personal loss to the president that deprived him of support in his dealings with the old guard.

Criticism of the administration was tolerated within the context of the party, but elsewhere free expression was curbed. The police employed a large ring of informers to report on suspected dissidents. Outspoken opponents lost jobs or suffered from public defamation and, if they persisted, were arrested, imprisoned, and tortured. The first serious challenge to the regime, however, came in 1973 from within the government when the assistant defense minister, Prince Brown, attempted to stage a coup d'état in collaboration with army officers. The effort failed, and Brown and his co-conspirators were tried for treason and hanged.

Tolbert was reelected without opposition to an eight-year term in October 1975. In an atmosphere that was troubled by the economic recession and social unrest, he set the tone for the administration in his inaugural address, demanding "strict discipline and sacrifice" from the country. The vice president, James E. Green, died in 1977 and was replaced by Methodist bishop Bennie Warner after a special election.

Social and Economic Problems in the 1970s

Under Tolbert, Liberia continued to move along a road to development that relied on private enterprise. The open door that had been offered by Tubman to foreign investors was maintained, but pressure was put on foreign-owned companies to be more responsive to the needs of the country. In 1976 the Firestone Plantations Company concluded a new agreement with the government that made it subject to the full range of tax laws. New concessions negotiated with other companies contained similar provisions. Tolbert also insisted on a bigger role for Liberians in the foreign-owned companies, as well as in such areas as commerce and transportation but, because economic development had far outpaced domestic reserves of trained manpower, it proved difficult to take meaningful steps in that direction.

A new and optimistic four-year development plan went into effect in 1976, but the world recession took a heavy toll on



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Liberia. As foreign markets abroad and prices for Liberian commodity exports declined, the cost of imported energy rose steeply. Liberia was barely able to maintain a positive growth rate in the late 1970s, when a drop in the output of iron ore was offset by rising ore prices. By the end of the 1970s Liberia's foreign debt stood at \$744 million and the budget deficit at more than \$100 million, the latter largely the result of extravagant public works projects.

The dramatic expansion of the Liberian economy after World War II had provided the means for improving hitherto neglected social services and had greatly enhanced the employment opportunities for a large segment of the population. But it had also created social problems, particularly those associated with the movement of people into the towns, with which the country's government was not prepared to deal. Despite impressive economic development—some analysts contended because of it—Liberia did not feed itself, although it was not lacking in the physical resources to do so.

It had been a long-standing government policy to subsidize cash crops—rubber, cocoa, and coffee—that were produced for export typically by Americo-Liberian planters. By contrast, rice, which was mostly grown on small, low-income farms tended by tribal Africans for domestic consumption, was for the most part unsubsidized and sold to dealers at prevailing market prices. In the marketplace, however, rice prices were heavily subsidized to keep food affordable for the urban population. Prices were fixed in this manner for home-grown and imported rice alike. Companies imported large quantities of rice for sale at reduced prices to employees. This practice and low producer prices depressed farm profits to the extent that there was little incentive for smallholders, who made up the bulk of the rural population, to grow more rice than was needed for their own subsistence. Some farmers switched to cash crops. Production was also affected because many men went to work for wages on the plantations or in the mines. Others left the countryside for the towns in hope of finding jobs there.

The latter were frequently disappointed in their search, and Monrovia became home to large numbers of unemployed. A vagrancy law had been enacted in 1963 in conjunction with Operation Production, under which unemployed adult males in the towns were liable to be sent back to the countryside where, it was supposed, they could be productively occupied in raising rice. Another and perhaps more serious motivation for the law, however, had been to break up the growing detribalized underclass of

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"back street boys" who inhabited squalid quarters of Monrovia, where they contributed to the city's high crime rate and were a potential source of social unrest. As a result of the influx from the countryside, the capital had burgeoned from a sleepy seaside town of 12,000 in 1940 to a crowded, chaotic city of more than 166,000 in 1974 where housing was inadequate, sanitation was poor, and public facilities were ill-maintained.

Even the privileged class of students, whose political consciousness had been raised along with their expectations by having access to education, saw their opportunities dwindling in the 1970s. There was a local saying that every occupation was part of a monopoly: the Lebanese monopolized shopkeeping, the Guineans cab driving, the whites management and technical positions, and so on. The only monopoly left to the Liberians, it was said, was the one on poverty. It went without mentioning that the True Whig Party had a monopoly on government jobs.

Opposition Movements

Open opposition to the political establishment—and specifically to the Tolbert administration—was manifested in the 1970s through student associations, self-help groups, and organizations of Liberians resident or studying abroad. The two most influential of these were the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA), founded by Togba Nah Tipoteh among students at the University of Liberia in 1973, and the Progressive Alliance of Liberians (PAL), organized in the United States in 1974 by Gabriel Baccus Matthews.

Tipoteh, who had been dismissed earlier from a government planning post after a disagreement on policy objectives, regarded the MOJA as a "vanguard party" preparing the way for social and political change in the long term, but he avoided becoming identified with radical programs based on class struggle. Pan-Africanist in its orientation, the MOJA established links with nationalist groups outside Liberia. Among his allies on the Monrovia campus were H. Boima Fahnbulleh, the son of Henry B. Fahnbulleh, and Amos Sawyer, both members of the university faculty (see Organization under the Second Republic, ch. 4).

The PAL, which drew support from disaffected students and expatriate Liberians who were beyond the reach of their government, was more political in its rhetoric and demanded more immediate action, but it was committed to working through the democratic process. Matthews took his inspiration from the brand of "African socialism" practiced in Tanzania by Julius Nyerere but advocated the reform of existing Liberian institutions rather than

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revolution. The PAL opened an office in Monrovia in 1978.

Although the two movements differed in their ideological underpinning, methods, and aims, they were not in direct competition as opposition groups, and a measure of cooperation developed between them. Both engaged in political education activities that were intended to radiate from its elite members to the broader masses. The MOJA set up its own cooperatives for the production and marketing of rice, emphasizing labor-intensive methods. It was closely linked with an enterprise known as Susukuu, which organized small Liberian businesses and craft shops into self-reliant companies.

The Rice Riots

Early in 1979 Tolbert's minister of agriculture, Florence Chenoweth, made a proposal to the cabinet for increasing the subsidized price of rice from \$22 for a 100-pound bag to \$26. She rationalized the increase as an inducement for rice farmers to stay on the land and produce food for themselves and for sale instead of leaving to work for wages in the cities or on the rubber plantations. Political opponents noted, however, that Chenoweth and the Tolbert family were large-scale rice farmers and stood to profit handsomely from the price increase. To protest, the PAL called for a peaceful demonstration in Monrovia, and on April 14 about 2,000 activists were assembled to march on the Executive Mansion to protest the proposed price rise. They were joined enroute, however, by more than 10,000 "back street boys" who quickly transformed the orderly procession into an orgy of destruction. Widespread looting of retail stores and rice warehouses occurred during the so-called Rice Riots, and damage to private property was estimated to have exceeded \$40 million. Troops were called in to reinforce hard-pressed police units in the capital. In 12 hours of violence in the city's streets, at least 40 demonstrators and rioters were killed by ill-trained policemen, and more than 500 were injured. Hundreds more were arrested, and police were ordered to storm the PAL headquarters. Neighboring Guinea, whose president, Touré, had signed a mutual defense treaty with Liberia only three weeks earlier, dispatched several hundred troops to assist in restoring order in Monrovia.

Holding the PAL responsible for the destruction done by the mob during the Rice Riots, Tolbert rounded up PAL leaders and many other political dissidents. The old guard in turn blamed Tolbert for his earlier leniency toward political opponents of the regime, charging that he could have acted sooner to check unrest by cracking down on their subversive activities. Under pressure

from hard liners in the True Whig Party, Tolbert closed the university and suspended due process. Chenoweth was replaced as minister of agriculture after admitting publicly that she had erred in proposing the price rise. Tolbert reassured the country that the subsidized price of rice would be kept at \$22 per 100 pounds and subsequently reduced it to \$20.

In June on the eve of the OAU meeting in Monrovia that was to mark the opening of the new conference center, Tolbert granted amnesty to those who were still held in connection with the April rioting and reopened the university. His government, however, had clearly shown itself to be vulnerable both to hard-line critics within the party and to the growing opposition movement that was forming outside it. The political consciousness of Liberians appeared to have outstripped institutions fashioned in another era. Tolbert's efforts at reform, impeded by traditionalists within the party, were insufficient to stem the growing momentum of the opposition forces.

The Regime on the Defensive

In the months following the Rice Riots, the regime tightened its grip to stifle potential sources of unrest. A new ministry responsible for internal security was set up, operating under extraordinary powers granted by the Sedition Law. Labor legislation was enacted in October 1979, making workers involved in illegal stoppages liable to prosecution and loss of employment. Managers were made responsible for reporting offenses punishable under the law and were prohibited from making unauthorized agreements with employees. Expatriate managers not complying with these regulations were to be expelled from the country.

The Tolbert administration was particularly sensitive about the mayoral election in Monrovia, where the True Whig candidate was being challenged for the first time in 20 years. The popularity of Sawyer, who was running as an independent, disconcerted the government, which first tried to invoke the largely neglected property qualifications for voters and then rescheduled the election for June 1980, purportedly to let tempers cool. Overcoming resistance by hard-liners, Tolbert subsequently succeeded in persuading the legislature to approve a constitutional amendment abolishing the property clause.

In January the PAL formally registered as a political party under the label of the People's Progressive Party (PPP). According to the Constitution, there was no prohibition against forming political parties, but the PPP was the first to apply for recognition since the Independent True Whig Party had been banned in

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1955. A Supreme Court ruling had to be obtained, however, disallowing government efforts to block the party's registration.

In March the PPP launched a dramatic but ill-considered offensive against the administration, calling for a general strike to reinforce its demands for the resignation of the president and vice president. The MOJA distanced itself from the proposal, which Tipoteh characterized as "at best infantile and rather ridiculous," but some army personnel were reportedly sympathetic. The PPP leaders, including Matthews and Chea Cheapoo, the onetime protégé of Minister of Justice Joseph Chesson, were arrested under the Sedition Law, and a trial date was set for April 14, the first anniversary of the Rice Riots.

Tolbert also came under unremitting pressure from his own party. Younger, reform-minded True Whigs issued a report after the Rice Riots that was scathing in its criticism of the administration's methods. Members of the president's family and administration urged him to repeal the Sedition Law. Meanwhile, rumors abounded that the old guard intended to overthrow the administration and seize power while Tolbert was on a state visit to Zimbabwe planned for April.

The April 12 Coup

Early in the morning of April 12, 1980, a successful coup d'état was staged in Monrovia by a unit of the National Guard loyal to a group of 17 noncommissioned officers and other enlisted men who had constituted themselves as the People's Redemption Council (PRC). Led by Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, they entered the Executive Mansion, where they killed Tolbert and 27 members of the president's security guard. The bodies were disposed of unceremoniously in a common grave. A curfew was imposed on Monrovia, and the borders of the country were closed.

Acting as chairman of the PRC, Doe ordered the Constitution suspended, banned political parties, and released political prisoners from jail. Doe pledged that the PRC would respect private property and reassured foreign-owned businesses that commitments previously made to them would be honored. Justifying the action taken by the PRC, Doe cited the political oppression practiced by the Tolbert regime as well as the corruption, unemployment, and the high cost of living that burdened the poor. The coup was greeted in the capital and throughout the country with popular approval (see People's Redemption Council, ch. 4).

Vice President Warner, who had been in the United States at the time of the coup attending a conference of Methodist bishops,



*Master Sergeant Samuel Canyon Doe
shortly after the coup of April 12, 1980*



*Minister of Justice Joseph Chesson (right), one of
13 Tolbert cabinet officials executed after the coup,
appears before the military tribunal on April 20, 1980.*

Photos courtesy Werner Gartung



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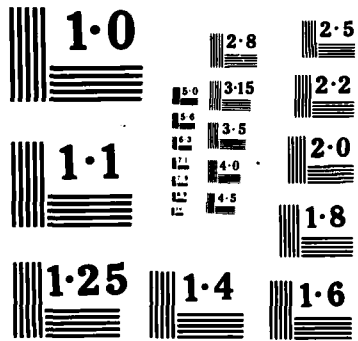
returned to Ivory Coast, where he proclaimed himself the legal successor to the presidency, but resistance to the military action was isolated and ineffective. An attempted countercoup failed for lack of support. Some National Guard officers suspected of being unsympathetic to the coup were arrested, and several were shot by their troops. Others who had fled were hunted down or captured trying to escape across the border.

Several hundred government officials, politicians, and leaders of the True Whig Party were rounded up and were either detained or placed under house arrest. Many others were advised to make themselves inconspicuous. Fourteen of the most prominent members of the old regime were immediately brought to trial before a military tribunal and found guilty of a variety of offenses. The tribunal recommended the death penalty for four of those convicted: House Speaker Henries, the president of the Senate, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, and the chairman of the True Whig Party. Despite an appeal from the OAU for clemency for the four, Doe ordered the execution of 13 of the convicted men, including the former ministers of justice and foreign affairs. The sentence was carried out on April 22 before television cameras by a firing squad on a Monrovia beach. The fourteenth official was sentenced to life imprisonment. Although the tribunal continued to sit in judgment of others who had been arrested, Doe refrained from further executions.

Executive authority in the new government installed after the coup was vested in the PRC, which was assisted by a cabinet of 17 members, of whom 11 were civilians. These included representatives of both the PPP and the MOJA as well as three members of the former Tolbert government. Among those named to the cabinet were Matthews, who became foreign minister; Cheapoo, who replaced his onetime patron Chesson as justice minister; Tipoteh, who was placed in charge of planning and economic development; and H. Boima Fahnbulleh, who was appointed minister of education. Reforms to reduce social disparities and the economic hardships of ordinary Liberians were promised. The military rulers, however, made no immediate commitments to an early return to normalized civilian rule.

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J. Gus Liebenow's *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* and Martin Lowenkopf's *Politics in Liberia: The Conservative Road to*





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Development offer a survey of the country's history while focusing from different perspectives on the Tubman and Tolbert years. A concise, scholarly review of contemporary political history is found in Christopher Clapham's *Liberia and Sierra Leone: An Essay in Comparative Politics*. Charles Henry Huberich's two-volume *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia* is an exhaustive documentary constitutional history covering the period from the founding of the colony to 1944. Tom W. Shick's *Behold the Promised Land* and *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869*, edited by Bell I. Wiley, provide readable accounts of the early history of Liberia and the migration of the Americo-Liberians. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

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Chapter 2. The Society and Its Environment



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A rural Liberian woman pounding cassava, a staple she will feed to her family

THE LIBERIAN SOCIETY, which had long been characterized by a conspicuous cultural gulf between the descendants of nineteenth-century black American settlers and the Africans of indigenous descent, had undergone significant changes by the mid-1980s. In the decades after World War II during the administrations of President William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman and President William Richard Tolbert, the growth of the foreign-dominated modern sector of the economy served as a catalyst in breaking down the barriers that had isolated one group from another for so long.

During this period new social categories based on occupation, education, and income rather than ethnicity emerged. A relatively small group of Americo-Liberian families had continued to constitute the elite, but its dominance was ended abruptly by the military coup d'état of April 1980. At the time, some observers thought that Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe and his fellow enlisted soldiers of indigenous African descent would seek to expand their overthrow of the True Whig regime into a revolution that would completely restructure the society. By 1984, however, the reemergence of certain Americo-Liberians as important officials in the government and as respected members of the society indicated that the effects of the coup on the republic's social development, while not insignificant, were less sweeping than originally perceived.

Although Liberians inhabiting some of the remote rural areas had been exposed in varying degrees to economic modernization, the traditions of tribal society appeared to have continuing significance for them. According to the Liberian government, there were 16 recognized ethnic categories of indigenous peoples. Some ethnologists, however, have defined as many as 28, all of whom were grouped as part of the large Niger-Congo ethnolinguistic family. None of these groups, which between them spoke some 20 different languages and dialects, was numerically preponderant.

In the 1980s there did not appear to be any obvious conflict nor any manifestations of a social hierarchy among the indigenous ethnic groups. Given the Americo-Liberians' loss of a dominant position in the society since the coup, however, the possibility of future ethnically based conflicts and cleavages could not be ruled out.

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Physical Setting

Liberia's territory of 43,000 square miles lies a few degrees north of the equator on the great western bulge of Africa. At the country's southeastern extremity, the shoreline of West Africa turns eastward and faces the Gulf of Guinea. From that point to the western border with Sierra Leone, the coast stretches some 370 miles along the Atlantic Ocean. Liberia ascends the seaward slopes of the Guinea Highlands to a very irregular border with Guinea. From the sea to that border, the width of the country varies from about 100 to 200 miles.

Behind a low coastal plain much of the country consists of rolling plateaus and low-lying hills rising to the higher elevations of 600 to 1,000 feet that constitute almost half of Liberia's terrain. In the far northwest and north central portions of the territory are the outliers of the Guinea Highlands. The land is well watered, and a number of narrow, roughly parallel river basins run to the sea at right angles to the northwest-southwest trend of the belts of relief (see fig. 3).

Most of the country lies in the heaviest rainfall zone in West Africa. Precipitation, however, decreases progressively inland, and rainfall belts, like relief belts, run roughly parallel to the coast. There is normally some rain during every month of the year, but most of the country is characterized by wet and dry seasons. The climate is warm and humid, and the annual temperature variation is quite small.

Terrain

The coastal region is a belt of gently rolling low plains extending from a rather straight, sandy shoreline 10 to 30 miles inland. Its deepest extensions lie along the watercourses. The shore is broken by river estuaries, tidal creeks, swamps, and a few rocky capes and promontories that appear as landmarks from the sea. Except for those promontories and capes and an occasional small hill, the altitude of the coastal region rises no higher than 30 to 60 feet. The mouths of the rivers are so obstructed by shifting sandbars and submerged rocks that there are no natural harbors. The surf is normally heavy all along the coast but is worse at the height of the rainy season (see Climate, this ch.).

Behind the coastal plain a belt of low rolling hills rises to an average of 150 to 300 feet. At the northern edge of this belt, a steep rise indicates the southern edge of a range of low mountains

and plateaus that constitutes nearly half the country's interior. The average altitude of this belt lies at 650 to 1,000 feet. Several ranges and mountain complexes, however, rise to more than 2,000 feet.

The long ridges and dome-shaped hills that constitute the northern highlands are part of the Guinea Highlands and occupy those sections of Lofa and Nimba counties that thrust much farther north than the rest of Liberia's boundary with Guinea and Ivory Coast. These mountains—mainly the Wologizi Range in Lofa County and the Nimba Range north of the town of Sanniquellie—rise to altitudes above 4,000 feet. Mount Wutivi, the highest peak in the Wologizi Range, reaches about 4,450 feet, and the Nimba Range's Guest House Hill is, at 4,540 feet, the highest point in Liberia.

Drainage

Major rivers, with one significant exception—the middle reaches of the Cavalla River and its largest tributary, the Dube River—flow generally in the direction of the mountain ridges, i. e., from northeast to southwest at right angles to the coast. Inland, the gradients are fairly steep and irregular; falls or rapids are frequent in the belts of hills and low mountains and plateaus, particularly at the points at which one terrain belt gives way to another. Near the coast, however, the gradient becomes gentle, and the strong tidal currents prevent the streams from removing sand accumulations. Many rivers therefore flow parallel to the coast for several miles before they can enter the Atlantic Ocean. Of the 15 main river basins, the six most important (from the Sierra Leone border to that with Ivory Coast) are the Mano, the Lofa, the Saint Paul, the Saint John, the Cestos, and the Cavalla.

All the major rivers carry a good volume of water year-round, but the rainfall pattern and the rapid runoff in the watersheds lead to substantial variations in flow. Most streams overflow their banks after the heavy downpours that mark the rainy season. Even at their highest, the rivers are not navigable for any appreciable distance inland. Rock-strewn rapids, tortuous channels, and small islands prevent much use of the rivers for travel. Only near the coast is some river transport possible. The rivers, however, have been used to generate hydroelectric power (see *Energy Sources*, ch. 3).

Climate

The outstanding characteristics of the climate are sustained heat and rainfall heavier than that in most regions of West Africa.

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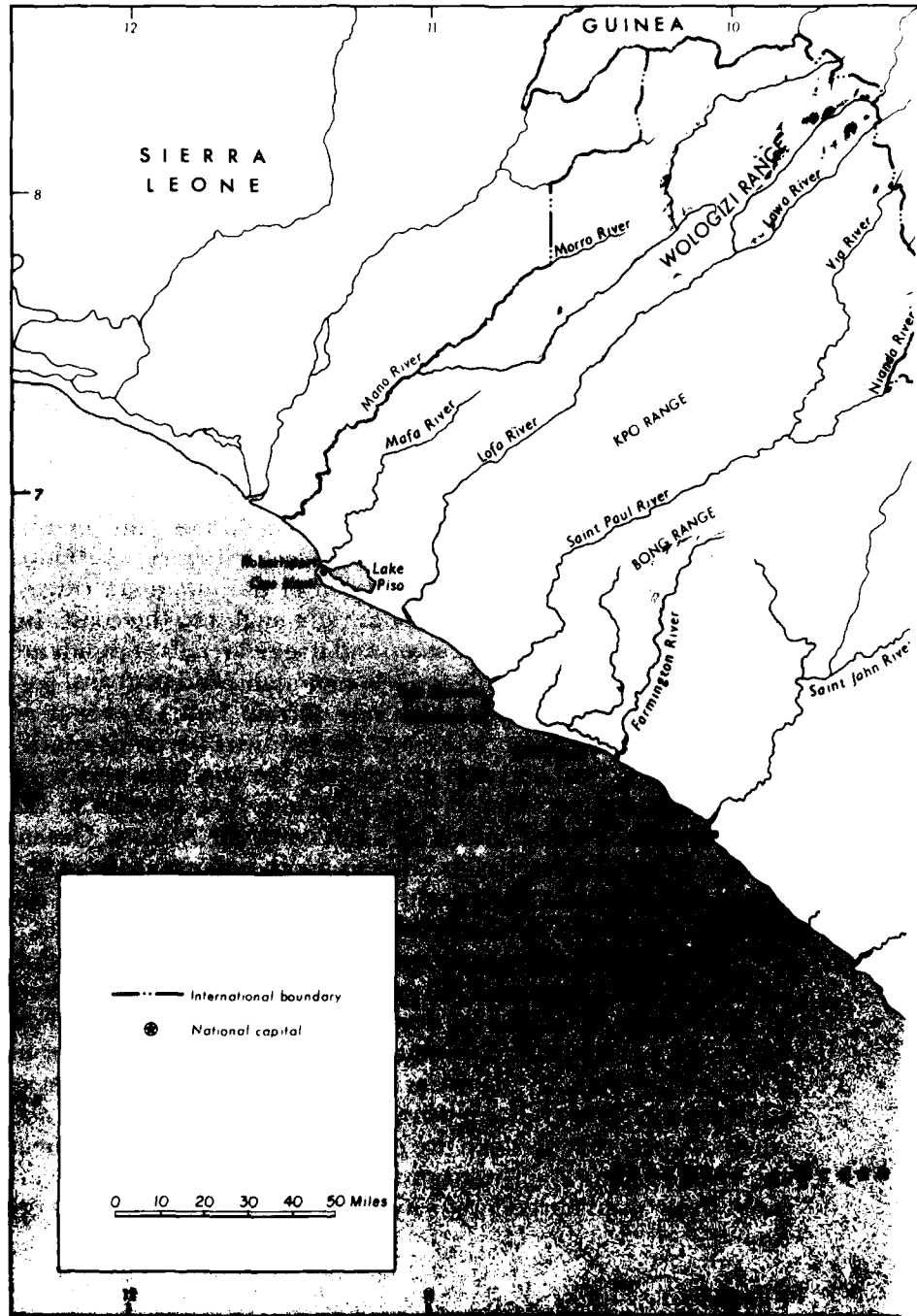
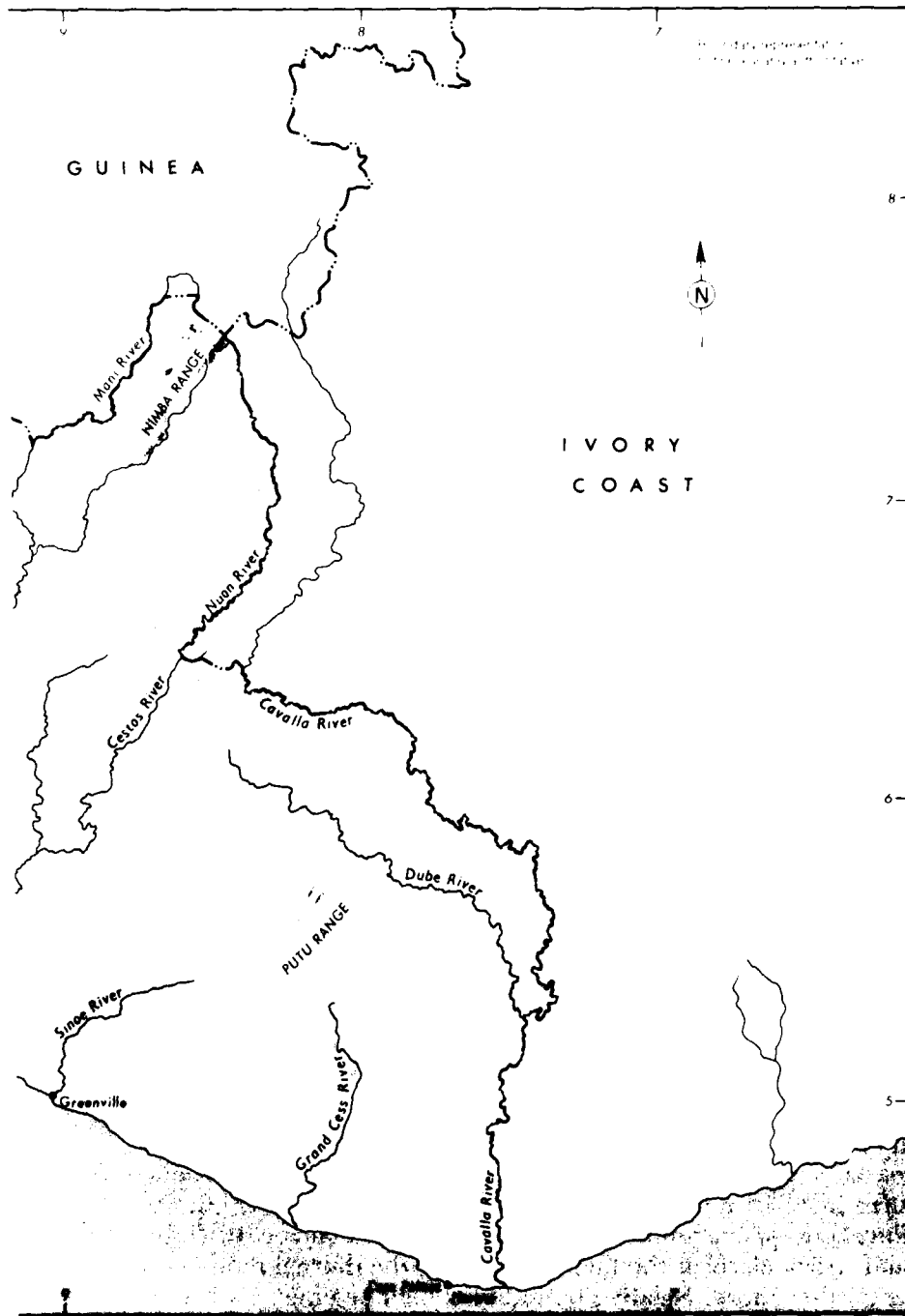


Figure 3. Terrain and Drainage



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Because Liberia lies well south of the Tropic of Cancer, days vary little in length, and solar radiation is relatively intense and uniform. The alternating north to south movements of continental and maritime air masses bring periodic differences in rainfall to distinguish the seasons.

The coastal region has the heaviest rainfall, ranging from between 155 and 175 inches annually in the west to nearly 100 inches in the far southeast. Monrovia and its immediate vicinity receive an average of more than 180 inches of rain annually. Generally, precipitation diminishes inland, i.e., toward the north, but rainfall increases again in the highlands of the northernmost portion of Liberia. The driest section of the country is a relatively narrow strip that lies to the south of the eastward flowing portion of the Cavalla River, but even that zone receives an average of 70 inches of rain.

Except for a small portion of the country in the southeast, the single rainy season begins in April or May, rises slowly in May or June, reaches a peak in July or (more often) August and September, and tapers off in October (but may continue into November). A few stations along the coast, particularly Monrovia and Buchanan, and their immediate hinterlands receive very heavy precipitation earlier and may then experience a slight reduction in rainfall for several weeks—called the “middle dries”—before heavy rain returns in August and September. Farther to the southeast the “middle dries” may be somewhat more marked and last a little longer, but their duration and intensity are not great enough to make the period a true dry season. In the southeasternmost portion of the country, the rainy season begins in April, lasts for two or three months, and is followed by a drier period of two or three months; a second rainy season begins in September and lasts into November.

Temperatures are warm throughout the country and vary little from season to season. Mean annual temperatures (Fahrenheit) range from the 70s to the 80s. Generally, mean monthly maxima decline from the low 90s to the mid-80s during the height of the rainy season. Mean monthly minima range from the low 60s in the highlands of the northwest to the low 70s in coastal stations such as Monrovia. Broadly speaking, temperatures inland are warmer than they are along the coast, but the diurnal range at a number of coastal stations is a narrow 10°F. Inland, particularly at the higher altitudes, the diurnal range may be 30°F or more. Relative humidity is high, averaging 70 to 90 percent—especially along the coast.

Demography

Liberia's population, estimated at a little more than 2 million in mid-1984, was roughly two-thirds rural. Of the country's towns, only Monrovia was of substantial size and was characterized by true urban diversity. Migration from the rural areas or small communities to the capital city and other large urban centers was a significant aspect of Liberia's population dynamics. Many of the places to which Liberians migrated were single-industry (rubber, iron-mining) communities established by or in connection with foreign-operated enterprises. The population, having grown at a rate of 3 percent or more since 1970, was young, i.e., about 44 percent was under 15 years of age in the early and mid-1980s.

Population Growth and Age and Sex Structure

The second national census, held in 1974, yielded a total population of 1.5 million. That figure reflected an upward adjustment of 11 percent by the Liberian government after a post-enumeration survey had indicated an undercount. The United States Bureau of the Census, on the basis of its analysis, suggested a further upward adjustment that raised the population total to 1,556,000. That figure and its age and sex components have provided the basis for the bureau's projections for later years. The estimate for the last year projected—mid-1981—was 1,960,000. In that year and in the preceding two years, the annual rate of growth was estimated to be 3.2 percent (it had been 3.1 percent in the late 1970s and 3.0 percent in the early 1970s). Assuming that rate to have persisted, the estimated population in mid-1984 would have been 2.15 million. In late 1983 a Liberian government document referred to an upcoming 1984 census, but there had been no public reference to it as of September 1984.

The annual growth rate of the Liberian population increased in each five-year period between 1950 and 1980, and the population more than doubled in that interval. The mounting rate of natural increase was a function of continuing high fertility and a declining mortality rate owing to some success in dealing with endemic diseases (see Health, this ch.) The estimated infant mortality rate—153 per 1,000 live births in 1984—remained high, however, and exceeded the average for 16 West African countries and the rates of nine of them. Should Liberia succeed in diminishing the infant mortality rate significantly, it appeared likely that the

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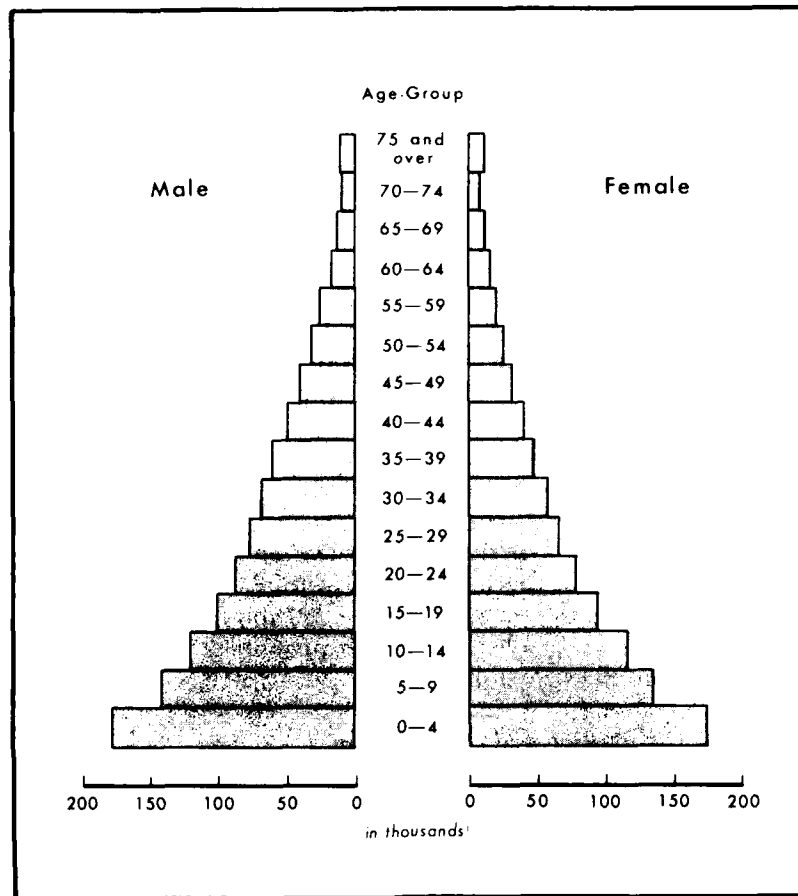
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rate of natural increase would go even higher before the birth rate declined. As the United States Bureau of the Census' demographic profile notes, "considerable momentum for further population growth is built into Liberia's age-sex structure. Women of childbearing age are projected to increase from an estimated 353,000 in 1974 to a projected 577,000 in 1990. Such a large increase in the childbearing segment of the population will contribute to rapid population growth even if a substantial reduction in fertility were to occur."

Through the early 1980s Liberia's population increased slightly owing to net immigration. According to the 1974 census, about 4 percent of the population (59,458 persons) had been born outside Liberia, mainly in the bordering states (Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Ivory Coast) but also in Ghana. Most came in search of work, but some of the very large number of Guineans (26,337 persons) in Liberia may have gone there because of their opposition to Guinea's late ruler, Ahmed Sékou Touré. His death in 1984, followed by a change of regime, may induce many Guineans to return to their native land.

The high rate of natural increase coupled with a relatively low life expectancy (in the early 50s at best) generated an age structure in the late 1970s and early 1980s that was marked by a large proportion of persons under 15 years of age (44 percent of the total) and a small one of those aged 65 and older (about 3 percent). About 53 percent therefore fell into the 15-to-64 age bracket usually reckoned to comprise the economically active people. About 46 percent of the total was between 15 and 49 years of age (see fig. 4).

The official Liberian figures indicated differences between the age and sex structures of the rural and urban segments of the 1974 population, but adjusted figures for the two segments were not available. By and large, the urban population was younger than the rural population and consisted of more males than females. In 1974, of the total reported population (1,503,100), 40.9 percent was under 15 years of age, 55.4 percent fell between ages 15 and 64, and 3.7 percent was age 65 or older. Those in the presumably most productive bracket (between ages 15 and 49) constituted 48 percent of the population. Of the urban population (then 29.1 percent of the total), the proportion of the population under age 15 was 41.1 percent; the proportion in the rural population was 40.9 percent, the same as that in the population as a whole. It was probable, however, that the undercount that led the United States Bureau of the Census to adjust the 1974 census upward occurred chiefly among rural children. Older people.



Source: Based on information from United States, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Country Demographic Profiles: Liberia*, March 1982, cover.

Figure 4. Structure of Population by Age and Sex, mid-1981

i.e., those over age 65, made up only 1.6 percent of the urban population as against 4.6 percent of rural inhabitants, an expectable variation in countries like Liberia. By contrast, persons between ages 15 and 64 constituted a greater proportion of the urban population (57.3 percent) than of the rural population (54.5 percent). The contrast was more marked for those falling between ages 15 and 49; this category constituted 53 percent of the urban population but only 46 percent of the rural. It may be noted that

were mainly cultivators.

The relationships between communities of similar language and culture and those of different language and culture (before the Americo-Liberians established fairly firm control over indigenous peoples) varied considerably. Such relationships were, however, changed by the imposition of these controls (see Indirect Rule in the Hinterland, ch. D). In western Liberia particularly, groups of two or more ethnic or linguistic communities often coexisted within a single political order under the chiefly lineage of one of the ethnic groups. Moreover, familiarity with two or more languages was common, and intermarriage was not uncommon. The larger the scale of a politically organized group, the less likely it was to be ethnically homogeneous. Only ephemerally, if at all, were communities of the same culture and language organized into one political body. Indigenous polities were seldom more centralized than confederacies of quasi-autonomous chiefdoms. In the southeast, peoples speaking the same language and sharing a common culture were politically even more fragmented, and the boundaries between one ethnolinguistic category and another were hard to discern and were often ignored. The imposition of indirect rule did, or tried to do, two things: on the one hand, it attempted to disentangle what were thought to be ethnically separate communities and to link political or administrative organization to ethnically homogeneous groups; on the other hand, it attempted to keep the ethnically homogeneous categories from becoming politically unified in a single system.

Nontribal Peoples: Americo-Liberians and Others

The core of the country's nontribal population is constituted by the descendants of the early settlers and augmented by those indigenous Liberians who have been biologically and culturally assimilated by them. Until the mid-1950s the term Americo-Liberians was commonly used for these people, but it came into disfavor with the Americo-Liberian elite in part because it implied that the elite lacked real roots in the country. No term acceptable to the members of this group and to others has emerged; the older name therefore may be used to distinguish a historically important ethnic category.

A second element in the nontribal population is made up of descendants of Africans who had been brought to Liberia in the nineteenth century from captured slave ships. These people, called Congoes, originally had a separate identity, but over the years most have been absorbed into the Americo-Liberian group. Observers writing in the latter half of the twentieth century

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McEvoy's].” The development of Kru ethnicity (and even the name) occurred largely in connection with the wage labor migration characteristic of members of coastal *dakwe* from the early nineteenth century on. That migration and consequent temporary or permanent settlement in coastal towns led to extensive and intensive relations with other Africans that tended to underline the similarities among *dakwe* rather than their differences.

In these circumstances and given the government's view that those of presumably similar ethnic background should be administered as a unit in the towns, Kru ethnicity developed. Even in the towns, however, *dako* membership was taken into account in the structuring of interpersonal relations.

In the era before World War II, it was not uncommon for Kruan-speaking Liberians in the towns to be called Kru or even to refer to themselves by that name as a matter of self-interest. For example, Europeans and others in a position to hire ship or port personnel preferred what they called the Kru, and those seeking jobs were happy to accept the designation if it brought them work. The name itself has been traced to corruptions of a term for some coastal *dakwe* and of the English term *crew*. It then came to be used in urban communities along the coast (in and out of Liberia) in which Kruan speakers settled. Some members of *dakwe* who were later to be called Grebo accepted the Kru designation (or declared themselves Kru) in order to be taken on as crew members by recruiters who were convinced that only the Kru could be good shipping workers.

The problematic status of Liberia's ethnic categories notwithstanding, it is possible to use them to provide an initial description of the indigenous peoples. Except to the extent that they have become involved in urban or urban-connected occupations, most of Liberia's peoples are cultivators, although their concern with and dependence upon agriculture varies. Broadly, the Kruan speakers (Kru, Krahn, Bassa, and Grebo) are considered inferior agriculturists and may in fact have come to it rather late. Even after the mid-twentieth century, these peoples, particularly the Bassa, continued to rely heavily on hunting and on the gathering of forest products. The coastal Kru were long seamen and fisherfolk, although the Kru of the interior were hunters, gatherers, and slash-and-burn cultivators. By the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, more than one-third to nearly one-half of the Kruan-speaking coastal peoples were urban, exceeding the average for the country as a whole. The Kru working at sea, or (more often) on the docks, were thus largely urban. The rural Kru still in the home territories, including those living on the coast,

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grouping marked by shared culture, language, name, and (usually) myth of common origin, but that larger grouping was a cultural entity rather than a political one. In the northwest, where Mande, Mel, and a few Kruan peoples came together, multiethnic chiefdoms were not uncommon, but ethnic differences did not necessarily generate conflict. Elsewhere, especially in the southeast, ethnic similarity of neighboring political units did not preclude armed conflict over the control of resources, such as land and trade routes.

The case of the Kru is perhaps the clearest instance of the disjunction between externally imposed categorization and tribal name on the one hand and the significance of the traditional maximal political and ethnic unit on the other. (In general, the observations on the Kru hold also for the Grebo and the Krahn.) Among the Kru the largest political unit was the *dako* (plural *dakwe*), each composed of a set of villages. Membership in the *dako* and in one of its villages was usually inherited patrilineally. Each *dako* had a name that was in effect an ethnic designation for its members. Anthropologist McEvoy summarizes the situation for the Kru and other southeastern peoples: "The evidence is increasingly conclusive that among the Kru-, the Grebo- and the Krahn-speaking peoples, a great many rural or political communities [*dakwe* or their equivalents] *each* separately claimed linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, separate historical or ethnic identities, and social and cultural autonomy."

With respect to the situation in the north, d'Azevedo notes that "for at least two centuries the area around Bopolu was a polyglot complex of Vai, Dey, Mandingo, Kpelle, Bandi, and other peoples periodically organized into aggressive confederacies and constituting a supreme example of cultural pluralism that is characteristic of the entire region." People were aware of their differences, but they were prepared to tolerate ethnic pluralism and ethnic ambiguity in specific political units and local communities. Ethnicity and loyalty were not identical, nor did ethnic difference preclude a wide range of social interaction, including intermarriage.

A combination of interaction among persons of widely differing backgrounds in new social, political, and economic contexts and redefinition of the nature of ethnic boundaries and tribes by government converted hitherto nonexistent or comparatively unimportant categories into significant units. Thus, McEvoy points out, the Kru and later the Grebo came to constitute "real ethnic groups but usually in *ecological* situations occurring for the *most part outside the Kru and Grebo homelands* [emphasis

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Islam precluded their participation in those peoples' central institutions, Poro and Sande (male and female secret societies).

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the Mandingo who had functioned as traders could no longer make a living in that way and persuaded the government to establish a small chiefdom in which they could farm the land. Mecca chiefdom was carved out of largely uninhabited territory formerly held by nearby Gola, and it, as well as adjacent territory stretching north to Bopolu, is home to a number of Mandingo. Most Mandingo remain traders, however, and occupy quarters of varying size in towns throughout Liberia. Large Mandingo quarters are found in the larger towns, e.g., Kakata and Gbarnga, along the main road from Monrovia to the Nimba Range.

The history of all of the recognized ethnic categories has been marked by the movement and mingling of communities carrying different cultures, by varying adaptations to local ecological circumstances, and by the differential impact of processes such as urbanization, wage labor, education, and other twentieth-century phenomena. Therefore, few if any of the government-defined tribes were culturally homogeneous in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, nor have they become so. Moreover, two communities on either side of an ethnic boundary drawn by the government might well be culturally more similar than either would be to a geographically more remote community officially classified as belonging to the same tribe. This seems to have been the case among some of the southeastern Kruan-speaking groups.

In addition to the fact that communities and traditional political units often cut across ethnic boundaries, including people of different origin, almost all of the Mande and the West Atlantic peoples shared such central institutions as Poro and Sande. Indeed, several Kruan-speaking peoples—the Dey, the Belle, and some of the Bassa—enclaved or abutted by and often intermingled with Mande and West Atlantic peoples had also adopted versions of Poro and Sande. These societies not only existed within communities of various ethnic groups, but they also acted in some circumstances to regulate the relations of political units of different ethnic affiliation.

In the period preceding firm governmental control over indigenous communities, none of the sets of communities that were to make up an officially recognized category was organized into a single inclusive polity. The maximal political unit with which an individual usually identified and to which he or she gave loyalty was much smaller than what the government called a tribe. In a few instances there was an awareness of belonging to a larger

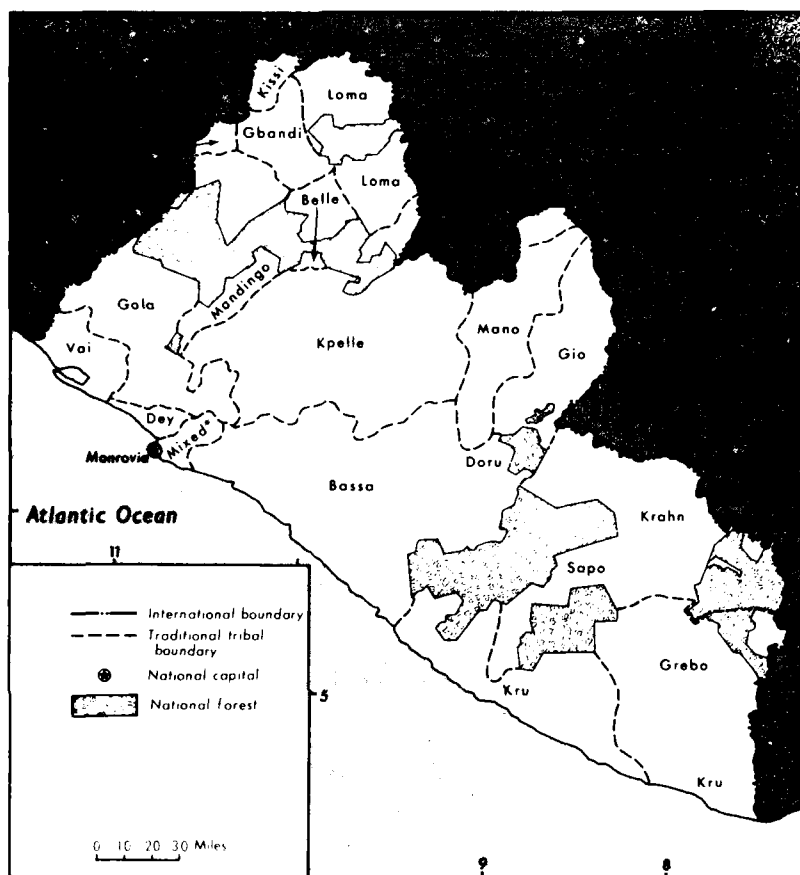


Figure 6. Location of Liberia's Indigenous Peoples

seventeenth century and continued to enter the territory as late as the twentieth century. They came not as whole communities settling the land but to establish chieftainship over segments of interior peoples, such as the Loma and the Gbandi, or to engage in trade, moving southwestward to open and control a trading corridor to the coast. Typically, they settled among other peoples as traders and rulers, often taking women from them. Some of the earlier Mandingo were culturally absorbed by the people they ruled, but by the late nineteenth century, most of the Mandingo were Muslims, and their religion and occupation set them apart from the people among whom they lived. Among other things,

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The mother tongues spoken by various sections of a government-established ethnic category were often thought to be dialects of a single language. Research completed in the 1960s and 1970s, however, has shown that this is not always the case. Moreover, dialects of communities assigned to different ethnic categories may be closer than dialects of groups assigned to the same category. For example, the dialects spoken by one cluster of communities constituting the interior Kru differ so markedly from those of the coastal Kru that linguists consider them different languages, as do the Kru themselves. The dialects spoken by the interior Kru may well be closer to the dialects spoken by some Bassa, Grebo, and Krahn communities. The latter ethnolinguistic categories seem to demonstrate a degree of linguistic heterogeneity similar to that of the Kru.

The languages of most other ethnic categories of any size are divided into at least several dialects. For example, the Kpelle, largest of the categories, have five. Linguist William Welmers notes considerable differences among them, e.g., the Kpelle speaking the northeasternmost and southwesternmost dialects have difficulty understanding one another. Nevertheless, these variants are still considered dialects of a single language. It is also possible for two groups recognized by both the government and themselves as separate to share a language; thus Welmers thinks Mande and Gbandi are so close that they may be dialects of the same tongue.

Except insofar as portions of them have become urbanized, the communities constituting a recognized ethnic category occupy contiguous territory (see fig. 6). The boundaries between categories, however, do not necessarily divide distinctive and internally homogeneous entities. The decision to lump the southeastern Kruan-speaking communities into three categories (Grebo, Kru, and Krahn) was arbitrary, as was the location of the boundaries between them. In many cases the geographical contiguity of specific communities is historically recent. Small groups of people have continued to move, mixing with or displacing others. Furthermore, the names that were applied to sets of Kruan-speaking communities when they were lumped together as "tribes" were not names used by the communities concerned, although they occasionally resembled a name used by a component segment, e.g., the category called Grebo includes a section calling itself Glebo.

There is only one significant instance of geographical dispersion of a recognized ethnic category—that of the Mandingo. The first small bands of Mandingo may have arrived as early as the

thropologist Warren d'Azevedo, these criteria are a common language, occupation of a recognized territory associated with a people who refer to themselves by the same name, a distinctive culture, a sense of "belonging" or consciousness of kin, and some form of political or social cohesion (not necessarily a centralized political order). The work of d'Azevedo in western Liberia, Frederick McEvoy in southeastern Liberia, and other anthropologists indicates that few of the officially recognized categories met two or more of these criteria at the time of their contact with the Americo-Liberian-dominated government. The formal establishment of these categories and their interaction within a national framework have changed the situation in some respects and may change it further, but reference to the recognized tribes as if they were firmly fixed, historically rooted actors on the Liberian political scene may be misguided. For example, shortly after the coup some observers stressed Doe's membership in the Krahn tribe and noted that those closest to him were of the same group. The communities making up the Krahn, however, were historically among the most politically fragmented in the area, were not firmly fixed territorially, did not share a name, and spoke different but closely related languages. It was possible that a sense of Krahn ethnic consciousness might develop, but there was little of it beyond an awareness of the name imposed by outsiders.

Language usually provides the criterion by which outsiders initially define a group and which insiders use as a significant boundary marker between themselves and outsiders. Similarities and differences have been used in this way in Liberia, but they have by no means been unambiguously related to officially recognized groups. Nor has language been clearly linked to other characteristics relevant to the definition of ethnic groups.

Except for English, which is the official language of the country and the home language of Americo-Liberians and perhaps a few others, the mother tongues of Liberians have been grouped into three linguistic families, all part of the greater Niger-Congo language stock. That stock encompasses a substantial proportion of the 1,000 or so languages spoken in Sub-Saharan Africa. The three language families—Mande, Kwa, and West Atlantic—represented in Liberia are also represented in one or more countries to the east as far as Nigeria (Kwa languages) and to the west and north as far as Senegal and Mali (Mande and West Atlantic languages). Each of these language families is further subdivided into clusters of more closely related tongues, i.e., subfamilies or branches (see table 2, Appendix).



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class of Africans vis-à-vis the Americo-Liberians. They had come to reject the continued political and social hegemony of the Americo-Liberians and their own dependence upon them for access to political and economic opportunities. In the last decade of the first republic, these indigenous Liberians identified themselves with opposition to the pre-1980 sociopolitical order. Some had played a role in the postcoup government and in formulating the new Constitution.

The 1980 coup's effect on interethnic relations was still not clearly understood four years later. Memories of ancient strife existed, but conflict and competition phrased in tribal terms had not been a salient feature of Liberian social and political life in the precoup era and did not seem to be so in 1984. Some observers have suggested, however, that the ousting of Americo-Liberians from power might eventually lead to the development of competition and conflict based on tribal loyalties.

Ethnic Categories: The Tribal Peoples

Estimates of the number of ethnic categories adequate to the classification of Liberia's indigenous communities have ranged from 28 to the 16 officially recognized tribes. The variation reflected shifting and uncertain notions of what constituted an ethnic group and a lack of systematic knowledge of many of the peoples of Liberia. As that knowledge has been accumulated, it has become clear that few if any of the ethnic categories arbitrarily established and named by the government authorities were characterized by the elements usually considered in defining an ethnic group. In these circumstances sections of the recognized categories have deemed themselves (or have been regarded by various observers) as separate entities. One of the clearest instances of this has been the Sapo, a cluster of communities officially included with the Krahn for statistical and other purposes but which has sought independent status as a tribe.

In addition to the recognized indigenous ethnic categories, one foreign group, the Fante, was singled out in the 1974 census. A coastal people originating in Ghana and constituting a substantial proportion of that country's population, the Fante in Liberia roughly matched the size of each of the three least numerous indigenous peoples. Well established in Liberia, they were overwhelmingly urban (located mainly in or near Monrovia), and many held jobs requiring literacy.

Several criteria are relevant to the ethnic categorization of communities in Liberia and the processes of lumping and splitting associated with that categorization. According to an-

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Table B. Population by Ethnolinguistic Category, 1974

| Category | Number | Urban | | Total | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| | | Percentage of Category | Percentage of Urban Population | Number | Percentage |
| Kpelle | 43,676 | 14.6 | 10.0 | 298,532 | 19.9 |
| Bassa | 80,084 | 37.4 | 18.3 | 214,143 | 14.2 |
| Gio | 18,898 | 14.5 | 4.3 | 130,300 | 5.7 |
| Kru | 55,230 | 45.5 | 12.6 | 121,414 | 5.1 |
| Grebo | 41,185 | 34.3 | 9.4 | 119,985 | 8.0 |
| Mano | 22,128 | 20.0 | 5.1 | 110,770 | 7.4 |
| Loma | 29,687 | 33.6 | 6.8 | 88,351 | 5.9 |
| Krahn | 16,730 | 23.5 | 3.8 | 71,177 | 4.7 |
| Gola | 14,764 | 21.8 | 3.4 | 67,549 | 4.5 |
| Mandingo | 23,094 | 39.5 | 5.3 | 58,414 | 3.9 |
| Kissi | 14,758 | 28.8 | 3.4 | 51,318 | 3.4 |
| Vai | 19,519 | 39.4 | 4.5 | 49,504 | 3.3 |
| Gbaudi | 7,480 | 19.4 | 1.7 | 38,548 | 2.6 |
| Mende | 3,333 | 38.4 | 0.8 | 8,678 | 0.6 |
| Belle | 1,565 | 21.2 | 0.4 | 7,369 | 0.5 |
| Dey | 1,444 | 22.7 | 0.3 | 6,365 | 0.4 |
| Other Liberian tribes ² | 804 | 25.6 | 0.2 | 3,141 | 0.2 |
| Fante ¹ | 5,773 | 87.0 | 1.3 | 6,634 | 0.4 |
| Other African tribes | 5,929 | 73.5 | 1.4 | 8,072 | 0.5 |
| No tribal affiliation ³ | 32,160 | 75.1 | 7.3 | 42,834 | 2.8 |
| TOTAL | 438,241 | 29.1 | 100.3⁴ | 1,503,098 | 100.0 |

¹These were the officially recognized "tribes" (in Liberian nomenclature) at the time of the 1974 census. There had been no indication of change in the names of these "tribes" as of late 1984.

²It is not clear which groups are referred to under this heading. Several peoples claimed to be independent but were not officially recognized as such.

³These people (or their ancestors) originated on the Ghanaian coast but have been in Liberia for some time.

⁴Includes persons called Americo-Liberians and others.

Figures do not add to 100.0 because of rounding.

Source: Based on information from Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, *1974 Population and Housing Census of Liberia: Population Characteristics of Major Areas*, Monrovia, 1977, 84-86.

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tury, e.g., in the censuses of 1962 and 1974, the Liberian government had come to recognize 16 ethnic categories—"tribes" in local terminology. In 1974 these categories ranged from the nearly 300,000 Kpelle, who constituted almost 20 percent of the population, to the Dey, who, at slightly more than 6,000 persons, made up less than one-half of 1 percent of all Liberians (see table B).

Most of the rest of the Liberian population was formally categorized as having "no tribal affiliation." The core of this category—under 3 percent of the total—consisted of the descendants of the early settlers and others culturally and biologically integrated with them, a group of people commonly referred to as Americo-Liberians. The disuse of that term in official documents and public discourse after the mid-1950s reflected the disfavor into which it had fallen in the Tubman era (see National Unification, ch. 1).

In the course of categorizing the indigenous peoples, the Americo-Liberians overlooked or ignored cultural and linguistic differences on the one hand and existing political arrangements and indigenous loyalties and identities on the other. They lumped together groups that were not necessarily the same and put asunder communities that had been part of a single political grouping, whether or not culturally and linguistically similar. The ethnolinguistic categories thus generated by government action provided a condition for the formation of new sociopolitical groups based on presumed ethnicity. In some instances the governmental creation of tribes, together with other developments such as urbanization, contributed to the emergence of new loyalties and identities. Nevertheless, it was still possible for analysts to write in the 1970s that many Liberians' primary loyalties and essential sense of identity were invested in units smaller than the tribe or even the chiefdom.

Among those indigenous Liberians who did identify with a recognized tribe were urbanities who found it convenient, comfortable, or sometimes necessary to do so in order to make their way in a city, particularly one as large as Monrovia. Such identification was, in effect, encouraged by the establishment of tribal authorities in the capital city and in other towns. Nevertheless, ethnic groups in urban areas were marked by cleavages based on wealth, education, and mode of life. The depth of individual identifications with government-defined tribes varied considerably.

Other indigenous Liberians, comparatively well educated and in many instances associated as students or faculty with institutions of higher education, saw themselves as members of a



Aerial view of Monrovia, Liberia's capital city



Shoppers at a Monrovia market

Photos courtesy Firestone Tire and Rubber Company

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twentieth-century industrial and commercial developments. Others have emerged in the second and third quarters of the twentieth century, mainly as large agglomerations of workers and their families engaged in a specific enterprise. In effect, they are company towns associated with rubber plantations or iron mining and are often clearly labeled as such. These towns, dependent as they are on a single enterprise, have been subject to wide variations in population. For example, in 1962 Harbel (established in 1926 by the Firestone Plantations Company) had nearly three times the population it had in 1974. By contrast, Yekepa (formerly called Lamco) had more than five times more people in 1974 than it had in 1962. Buchanan, an old port town, became much more important upon the completion in 1963 of the railroad from Yekepa (near the iron mines of the Nimba Range) to the coast; its population nearly doubled between the two censuses.

Greater Monrovia—the capital city and its environs—continued to be the largest growing urban area. Monrovia proper, the only city of any size, more than doubled in population between the two censuses and may well have reached 200,000 by the mid-1980s. In 1974 the population of Greater Monrovia already exceeded that figure.

Some of its larger components had grown even more rapidly than Monrovia proper. Paynesville more than tripled in size between 1962 and 1974; Gardenville grew from a community of a few hundred people to a town of more than 6,500 in 12 years; and Congo Town, which did not exist as such in 1962, was the third largest town in Liberia by 1974.

The 1962 and 1974 censuses were *de jure* enumerations, i.e., people were counted as belonging to their presumed permanent places of residence. It was not altogether clear, however, that all of those counted as urban inhabitants in the two censuses were permanently so. Many returned to their rural homes at certain points in the agricultural season, and others did so to retire. That pattern may change as urban populations become sexually more balanced.

Ethnicity and Language

The settlers and their descendants who dominated Liberian government and politics until 1980 found it convenient to label the culturally varied and politically fragmented peoples they encountered (see *Black Settlers and Native Africans; Indirect Rule in the Hinterland*, ch. 1). By the second half of the twentieth cen-

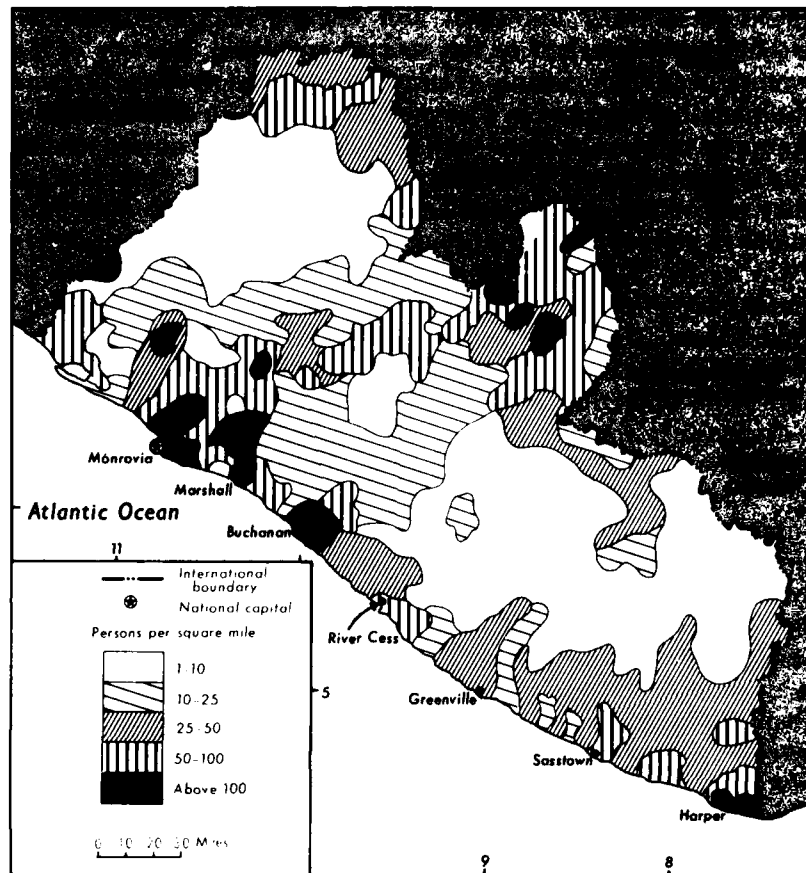


Figure 5. Population Density, 1974

sources thought it to be about 30 to 35 percent. In 1974 only 15 percent of the country's urban dwellers lived in the 23 localities that had fewer than 5,000 people, whereas about 70 percent lived in the seven largest towns—those having more than 10,000 inhabitants. The 15 urban centers that had between 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants included about 25 percent of all urban dwellers (see table 1, Appendix).

Although there were trading centers in some places on the coast and in the interior, there were no large towns before the arrival of the nineteenth-century settlers (later called Americo-Liberians) who established their urban communities on the coast, rarely venturing inland. Some of the towns these settlers established, e.g., Harper, have remained relatively unaffected by

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the initial movements of younger people either to the towns or to larger localities not quite of urban status were made in order to acquire an education. Such mobility was necessary in the 1960s and 1970s and continued to be so in the early 1980s, when educational facilities beyond the basic level were still not widespread in the rural areas (see Education, this ch.).

In 1974 there were 88 females for every 100 males in the urban population as against 98 females for every 100 males in the total population and 102 females for every 100 males in the rural areas. Urban-rural differences were not nearly as great as they had been in 1962, however, and estimates for the late 1970s and early 1980s suggested that there was very nearly a balance of the sexes in the urban areas. By the late 1960s and early 1970s the most mobile element of the Liberian population seemed to be young women, most of them workers and not merely the spouses of male immigrants. Women were also somewhat more likely than men to migrate to urban areas near their rural places of origin. Estimates offered by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs indicated that there were between 97 and 98 females for every 100 males in the urban areas in 1980 and nearly 99 females for every 100 males in 1981. The latter proportion exceeded that for the population as a whole.

Population Distribution and Urbanization

Liberia's average population density in 1974 of 36 persons per square mile had risen by 1984 to an estimated 49 persons per square mile. That density remained lower than those of neighboring states on the West African coast, all of which are larger and marked by more varied terrain and climate. Within the country, variation in densities has been substantial. In 1974 rural areas ranged from fewer than five persons per square mile, e.g., in parts of Lofa and Grand Gedeh counties, to well over 100 per square mile in areas near the coastal towns and in the northern Nimba County (see fig. 5). Large portions of the least densely settled areas were devoted to national forests or were otherwise heavily wooded. It was estimated in the late 1970s that at least one-third of the total population lived in Montserrado County, which contained not only the national capital and its environs but also several of the more important industrial or agro-industrial complexes in Liberia.

According to the 1974 census, 29.1 percent of the population lived in urban localities, defined mainly as having 2,000 or more inhabitants. In 1981 the Liberian government estimated the urban population to be a very high 37.1 percent of the total; other

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seemed unable to agree on whether a Congo remnant still existed, but even those who thought that a few were left assumed that they would disappear as a distinguishable entity before the end of the twentieth century. In the 1980s all Liberians of settler descent were frequently referred to as Congoes, a term that had pejorative connotations for Americo-Liberians.

The Americo-Liberians were able to maintain their numbers and even to increase them slightly by assimilating most of the Congoes and children of indigenous or part-indigenous origin. It was not uncommon for Americo-Liberian males, despite the official monogamy demanded by their Christian faith, to take "country wives" whose children were then treated as legitimate members of the father's family and educated as Americo-Liberians. Another less important source of recruitment to the Americo-Liberian core were youngsters of tribal origin brought into Americo-Liberian households as wards. Some were no more than servants. Others who were considered more promising often held higher status in the household and acquired more than a rudimentary education. Sometimes they became integral members of the family and, therefore, of the Americo-Liberian ethnic group. Some wards, however, especially those who were of chiefly families, retained primary connections with the indigenous group from which they stemmed.

Despite their common heritage, Americo-Liberians did not constitute a homogeneous group. No more than 1,500 to 2,000 people—about 10 percent of the Americo-Liberian population—formed the bulk of the political, social, and economic elite and subelite in the Tubman and Tolbert eras. It has been asserted that the others ranged from those who were quite poor to a heterogeneous clerical and professional stratum. But the observations and analyses of social scientists have focused largely on the elite and the near elite, and in 1984 little was known of descendants of the settlers at the lower end of the social and economic scale.

With few exceptions Americo-Liberians of whatever stratum resided in coastal towns or their immediate hinterlands. Most members of the small elite maintained a residence in or near Monrovia, although a number had roots and homes as far away as Harper in Maryland County and in other coastal counties.

Language and Communication

Of the varieties of English spoken in Liberia, the most prestigious is standard Liberian English, used in formal political speeches, in the print and broadcast media, and at all levels of the

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education system. It is like the standard English used elsewhere in anglophone Africa except that its sound system and some of its vocabulary have been influenced by American rather than British patterns. Standard Liberian English is spoken by the elite and subelite of both Americo-Liberian and indigenous origin and with varying degrees of competence by others.

Although standard Liberian English is frequently and fluently used by well-educated Americo-Liberians, it is thought to be the home (or informal) language of only a few of them. The home language of most of the elite of this ethnic group is a tongue that linguist Ian Hancock calls vernacular Liberian English. Local terms for it are not favored by people who speak it, and some Americo-Liberians attempt to suppress its use at home because it is often regarded as "bad English." It has been suggested that this vernacular is a descendant of a form of black English developed in the American south in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Brought to Liberia by the settlers, some of whom spoke standard American English, this variety of black English has been affected by standard Liberian English and by the African languages and pidgins spoken by the peoples with whom the settlers and their descendants came into contact.

Local variants of the vernacular are spoken by indigenous Liberians who have had sustained relations with Americo-Liberians. These variants are marked by the influence, especially on the vocabulary, of the African mother tongues of their speakers. In some cases, e.g., that of the vernacular called Kepama, indigenous townspeople may speak the vernacular more readily than their mother tongue, reserving the use of the latter for special situations.

Other varieties making use of English are "Congo," soldier English, Liberian pidgin, and Kru pidgin. "Congo" is spoken by the remnants of the descendants of recaptured slaves, most of whom were absorbed into the Americo-Liberian ethnic category. According to Hancock, theirs is a conservative version of the Americo-Liberian vernacular, which some Americo-Liberians claim not to be able to understand. That claim may simply reflect an Americo-Liberian sense of superiority to the Congoes rather than a linguistic barrier. Both Liberian pidgin and Kru pidgin are English pidgins in the sense that much, if not most, of their limited lexicon is based on English, even if the sound systems differ from those of standard varieties of English. Grammar and syntax, however, appear to be simplified forms based on those of one or more African languages. Liberian pidgin differs from the English-based pidgins of anglophone countries farther east and from the



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Krio of adjacent Sierra Leone to the west. Kru pidgin, however, seems to be related to Krio and may have been brought to the Kru coast in southeastern Liberia by Kru who had lived in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Soldier English seems to combine indigenous variants of vernacular Liberian English and Liberian pidgin and has been used by the military and the police. It is not clear, however, that it has been used as a language of command.

Many of the indigenous peoples of Liberia use the languages of neighboring tribes with varying degrees of competence, either because one of these tongues is a local lingua franca or simply because the inhabitants concerned live in the same or immediately adjacent communities. Learning a second language may be easier if it is in the same linguistic family or branch as the learner's first language; for example, there seems to be a good deal of bilingualism among speakers of the Kruan languages. In northern and western Liberia, however, where all three subfamilies are represented, bilingualism occurs across their boundaries. The Belle, a very small group, use Loma as a trade language, and many of them use Loma within the community. In the Bopolu area, where many groups came together in the nineteenth century under the hegemony of the Mandingo or the Gola, many individuals can speak two or more languages of a set that includes not only Gola and Mandingo but also Kpelle, Gbandi, and perhaps others. In the coastal region and its immediate hinterland northwest of Monrovia, the Gola, the Vai, and the Dey may speak each other's languages with varying degrees of fluency. In particular, the Dey, a diminishing group, may use Gola or Vai as a home language.

The greatest interest in the development of orthographies for African languages has been shown by missionaries of various churches, mainly the Lutherans, who would have liked to render all or part of the Bible and other religious materials into the local tongues. Alphabets have been developed for several Liberian languages, and a script exists for Kpelle. But no indigenous language reaches more than about one-fifth of the population. Further, it is not certain that an alphabet intended for an entire ethnolinguistic group would be adequate for all of its dialects.

Indigenous development of a script has occurred in one well-known case, that of the Vai syllabary. Sometime in the first third of the nineteenth century, Dualu Bukele, assisted by several friends, created a script adapted to the writing of the Vai language. In the latter half of the twentieth century, after minor changes, the script used about 240 separate characters, most of which stood for specific consonant-vowel combinations. The script, still in use in 1984, has been employed for a variety of pur-

poses but perhaps most often for record keeping of one sort or another. In some instances people have learned the language in order to make use of the script. Some Vai, many of whom are Muslims, are literate in three different languages and scripts: Vai, Arabic, and English. The script has been kept alive largely as a matter of pride. It is not taught routinely to Vai children but is transmitted by knowledgeable elders to youngsters who express a desire to learn it.

The Social Order

Liberia was long characterized by its division into two basic societies. One was composed of the settlers of the freed slaves, who immigrated to West Africa from the New World in the nineteenth century, and the Liberians who descended from them; the other much larger faction was made up of the tribal Africans indigenous to the area whose traditional cultures rarely if ever interacted with outsiders. This view of Liberian society, however, became increasingly inappropriate as the modernization of the economy brought Liberians of tribal background into the urban areas formerly regarded as the domain of the Americo-Liberians.

In the early 1980s, after the coup d'état by Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe and his enlisted compatriots broke the political dominance of the Americo-Liberian elite, it appeared that the traditional characterization of the social order in dual terms was no longer valid. Many Liberians of settler stock continued to hold important positions within the social framework, but this was ascribed more to their educational and technical competence than to ethnicity.

Americo-Liberians and the Indigenes

From 1822, when the first settlers arrived on the Liberian coast, until the 1950s, the basic social cleavage in the territory was defined by ethnicity. According to Liberian historians, there were four orders—or classes—of persons in the country's early history. The first of these was distinguished by its wealth, education, political power, and light skin color from the mass of immigrants and their descendants who constituted the second order. The third order consisted of all the so-called Congoes, a name given to people who were landed in Liberia after being freed from slave ships operating in African waters. The fourth order consisted of the indigenous Africans who were living in the area be-



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fore the other three arrived. Over time the association between high social, economic, and political status and power, on the one hand, and light skin color on the other, diminished in importance. A major step in this process was taken in 1870 when Edward James Roye, a black man born in the United States, was elected as the fifth president of the republic.

The Congoes were gradually absorbed by the lower strata of the Americo-Liberians. The process involved not only the social and political rise of blacks within the settler group but also a breakdown of the barriers to intermarriage within the social orders. As skin color became increasingly irrelevant in defining social status and prestige among Liberians in the twentieth century, the Americo-Liberians emphasized the differences between themselves and the tribal peoples.

The Americo-Liberians presided over the development of a social system in which they assumed superiority over the tribal peoples. The term *kwi*, first used in the nineteenth century by indigenous Africans to identify the settlers and other foreigners (including Europeans), was adopted by the Americo-Liberian community as a synonym for *civilized*. The state of being *kwi* was defined by family background, education, church membership (preferably in a mainline Protestant denomination), and certain other social relationships. *Kwi* status thus became a prerequisite for a favored position within the Americo-Liberian social setting.

In general, Americo-Liberians constituted a circumscribed set of people, and the social boundaries were permeable only on the initiative of members of the set. If tribal Africans entered the privileged preserve, they normally did so when individual Americo-Liberians acted as their sponsors by means of formal or informal adoption. The tribal people accepted through adoption or intermarriage became *kwi* by taking American or European names, by acquiring a Western education, and by adopting Americo-Liberian customs and patterns of behavior.

The social, political, and economic distinctions between these two segments of the population were associated with major differences in values and ways of life. The settlers from the New World and their descendants possessed a completely different culture—one rooted in American customs and values—from those of the tribal African peoples. Until the change in economic structures and official attitudes highlighted by Tubman's Unification Policy in 1944, the settler element of the population had not achieved a sustained interest in developing relationships with the indigenous inhabitants beyond what was necessary to obtain needed domestic labor and to maintain public order. For their

part the tribal Africans were largely concerned with preserving the autonomy of their own social structures. These attitudes were reinforced by an inadequate transportation and communications system that limited even superficial acquaintance and social interaction between the Americo-Liberians living in the coastal region and the peoples of the Hinterland. Moreover, there were few enterprises of any kind that entailed direct, permanent relations between the two factions. Some tribal people worked as agricultural laborers or domestic servants for Americo-Liberians, and some engaged in a limited amount of trade with them. But the great mass of tribal people were cut off from any contact with the settlers and their descendants in the coastal area of the country.

Governmental processes such as tax collection and adjudication were colonial in character in that they were administered by those considered to be outsiders by members of Liberia's tribal societies. In effect, most of the country's inhabited areas in the interior consisted of largely autonomous tribal units whose tenuous political and economic ties with the Americo-Liberian authorities were mainly of a coercive nature—the hut tax, compulsory labor, and restrictions on movement. In addition to the tribal people who were recruited to work in the Americo-Liberian community, there were tribesmen, especially on the coast (Bassa, Kru, Grebo, Dey), who lived in settlements close to or surrounded by those of Americo-Liberians. Some of them were thoroughly dependent on relationships with the Americo-Liberians for their livelihood. Nevertheless, local tribal people in Monrovia and other centers of Americo-Liberian population lived largely in their own neighborhoods and in terms of their own somewhat modified cultures.

Economic differences between Americo-Liberians and tribal people lay not so much in occupational and income disparities within the same system as in a diversity of systems. Americo-Liberians were involved in a market economy and had access to the lifestyle associated with it. Yet most of the tribal people were active primarily in a subsistence economy. Some participated in the market economy to the limited extent possible before the 1960s, but the little wealth they acquired in that way was often pumped into their local systems of exchange, e.g., as payments for wives.

Before the 1980 coup, political power, social status, and economic affluence were clearly linked and clustered in about a dozen Americo-Liberian families. Many of these families were interrelated by marriage, and by the mid-twentieth century intermarriage with tribal Liberians was common. Tolbert's mother, for example, was a Vai, and his wife was the daughter of the president

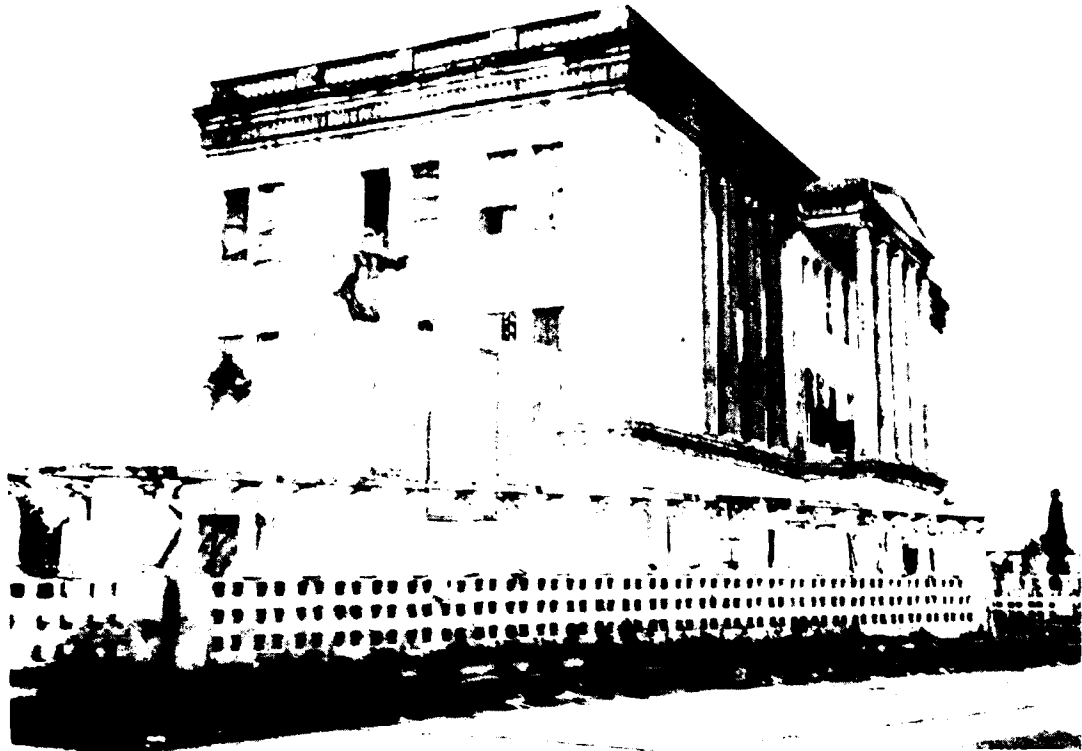
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of neighboring Ivory Coast. It was thought that of the 20,000 or so descendants of nineteenth-century settlers, fewer than 2,000 constituted the political, social, and economic elite and near-elite. Genealogical considerations were important, but they were not the sole determinants of status. Education and political adeptness apparently permitted some families to gain degrees of social and political standing but caused others to lose status. Although economic opportunities were provided in good part by social and political status, some families took better advantage of them than others did.

It has been observed that virtually all members of the upper class knew each other, whether they were kin or not. This was partly because the elite were few in number and concentrated in Monrovia and the coastal counties. But their familiarity could also be attributed to their shared membership in the churches, clubs, and fraternal orders that dominated their lives. Americo-Liberians—both men and women—were usually members of at least one, and often several, of these organizations.

The most important of the fraternal orders was the Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masonic Lodge of Liberia. Founded in 1867, it encompassed 17 subordinate lodges in the mid-1970s. Before the 1980 coup almost all important social leaders and True Whig Party officials were Masons; many of them held high office in the Grand Lodge, as the chapter in Monrovia was known. It was generally believed that important decisions regarding national affairs were made in the confines of the Masonic lodges, a situation that contributed to resentment on the part of nonmembers, most of them of tribal background. In the 1970s the Masons were a dominant force, but their role was reportedly called into question by some younger members of the Americo-Liberian elite and by persons of tribal origin who had attained membership in the Masonic Order by virtue of their education and upbringing as wards of Americo-Liberian families.

Other large social and fraternal organizations included the Order of the Eastern Star of Africa (the women's auxiliary of the Masons), the United Brothers of Friendship (and its female counterpart, the Sisters of the Mysterious Ten), the Odd Fellows, and the International Order of Good Templars. In addition, there were other groups and social clubs of more limited range. These included the so-called crowds—Crowd 12, Crowd 13, Crowd 15, and Crowd 18—which were an outgrowth of groups that had attended secondary school or university at about the same time and whose members maintained their friendships in semiformal "old boy networks" throughout their adult lives.



*The Grand Lodge in Monrovia, a symbol of Americo-Liberian chauvinism to Liberians of tribal background, became a home for squatters after the 1980 coup.
Courtesy Frederick Ehrenreich*

The social order dominated by Americo-Liberians was shaken by the military takeover in 1980. The young enlisted soldiers of tribal background who assassinated Tolbert and other high officials of the True Whig Party regarded themselves as "redeemers" who were claiming their country from the control of a "minority clique." The government was taken over by uneducated soldiers of tribal background and by educated civilians, most of whom had made their reputations as radical critics of the Americo-Liberian-dominated socioeconomic system. Hundreds of prominent Americo-Liberians were arrested, and unknown numbers of others fled into exile. Property belonging to the elite faction was looted or confiscated. The imposing Grand Lodge that overlooked the capital city of Monrovia—a symbol of Americo-

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Liberian chauvinism—was sacked and partially burned; squatters soon made it their home. Masonic meetings were banned by decree of the military government, and all but one of the lodges were reportedly destroyed in the wake of the coup.

At the time of the 1980 tumult, it appeared that being *kwi* and connected to the Liberian elite—once a prerequisite to high social status—had suddenly become a social liability. Instead, for a time it seemed that the highest social status was conferred upon the members of the People's Redemption Council who had carried out the coup, on soldiers in general, and on Liberians who had long been vocally opposed to the rule of the True Whig Party.

Within less than two years, however, it was clear that Americo-Liberians—many of whom had been considered part of the elite through their positions in the Tolbert or Tubman administrations, the True Whig Party, the churches, and the Masons—were again playing a prominent role in the government (see *Transitional Politics, 1981–82*, ch. 4). It was generally thought that the reemergence of Americo-Liberians and the renewed social status accorded many of them was a reflection of the technical training, managerial competence, and experience of those appointed to high office. In other words, it appeared that the Americo-Liberians and others who constituted a technocratic-bureaucratic elite had achieved their prominence not because of their ethnic background or membership in the Masons but because facets of their *kwi* condition made them valuable members of Liberia's modernizing society.

Society and the Growth of the Modern Sector

Technological advancement has, in Liberia as in other similar societies, brought about an erosion of its tribal culture. Among the most important of the factors responsible for social change has been the development of the country's rubber plantations and mining sector by foreign companies operating with government approval as concessionaires. These industries began developing in the 1920s, although they reached full productive potential only in the 1950s and 1960s (see *Economic Growth*, ch. 3). With the Firestone Plantations Company's development of rubber growing, tens of thousands of indigenous Liberians participated as wage earners in the market economy for the first time in the country's history. Economic developments, in combination with considerable United States investment during World War II, stimulated the construction of roads into the Hinterland, allowing large elements of the rural population to come into contact with coastal Liberians. Accompanying the access afforded by improved trans-



*An Americo-Liberian home
in Clay-Ashland near Monrovia
Courtesy
Frederick Ehrenreich*

portation facilities, schools were built throughout the country by missionaries, the government, and the foreign concessions. Thus, many Liberians of tribal background were provided access to a Western education (see Education, this ch.). Enriched by economic growth, the small Americo-Liberian enclave for the first time had something significant to offer rural Liberians, and migration to the urban centers, the plantations, and the mines increased. In this way, the restructuring of the economy stimulated by Tubman's Open Door Policy helped to encourage the fulfillment of goals set forth in his Unification Policy.

As the social order was reshaped by the forces of economic modernization, the Americo-Liberians continued to be the weal-

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thiest, most favored group in the country. The elite of the Tubman and Tolbert years benefited from their control of the state system through which the revenues from the foreign commercial concessions passed. The incomes of many prominent Americo-Liberians were also augmented by successful private business ventures that prospered during the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s. The prominent members of the Americo-Liberian elite were known colloquially as the "big shots" of the country and were characterized by their generous patronage and conspicuous consumption. The concept of the "big shot," however, was not confined solely to the society of the Americo-Liberians. In most of the tribal cultures, a man's status had long been determined by the number of people who were dependent on his generosity or who were otherwise under his influence (see *Tribal Structures*, this ch.). But on the national level, the wealthiest and most influential "big shots" in the country were members of the Americo-Liberian elite.

After the 1980 coup the Americo-Liberians were displaced as the country's "big shots" by the enlisted men who had overthrown Tolbert. Although they lived less ostentatiously than their predecessors, Doe and his colleagues engaged in the same public displays of power and generosity that the leading True Whigs once had. Doe, for instance, was well known for his contributions of medicines to hospitals and for his cash donations to schools, charitable organizations, and individuals (including Tolbert's widow). In the early 1980s other wealthy Liberians, including some Americo-Liberians, may have had the resources to be "big shots" (even if they did not have access to the national treasury), but none displayed their wealth in a manner that could be construed as a political challenge to the Doe regime.

Developments within the national economy and the expansion of secular and religious educational opportunities contributed to the growth of a new class of educated, technically trained Liberians. Educated for employment as managers in the burgeoning bureaucracy or, in some cases, as officials with the foreign concessions, they soon constituted a class of bureaucrats and technocrats that was valuable to the national leadership.

The ethnic backgrounds of people within this stratum revealed less homogeneity than had been present in the country's elite. Many of the new order had a least one Americo-Liberian parent, some had been wards of Americo-Liberian families, and a few were of tribal background who had managed to acquire most of their education without Americo-Liberian sponsorship. These Liberians, including some of those linked to the erstwhile old



*The message on this young
Liberian's T-shirt reflects
some of the changing social
values of the 1980s.
Courtesy
Frederick Ehrenreich*



*Hovels in the
slums of Monrovia
Courtesy
Werner Gartung*

guard elite, remained prominent in the national life after the 1980 coup. Serving as senior administrators, engineers, managers, high-level health specialists, educators, and ranking officials in the security forces, this educated stratum had become something of an elite group in postcoup Liberia. Few of them were considered to be "big shots," but that could change, depending on future political conditions.

Growth of the modern economy led to the development of a wage-labor force whose members were unskilled or semiskilled. These laborers—plantation hands, mine workers, enlisted soldiers, dockworkers, and unskilled office workers—included Liberians who received regular salaries but who had few skills and little or no education. The overwhelming majority of this group was of indigenous background, although in the early 1980s a few

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who might be classified as Americo-Liberians or Congoes also were included. The number of Liberians working in the monetary economy was estimated to be about 160,000 in 1977. This contrasted with the 1950 figure of 30,000, of which 20,000 worked for Firestone. Until the mid-twentieth century the Kru, the Vai, and the Bassa were the only tribal people who involved themselves in the national economy, but the development of the mines and plantations and the growth of Monrovia spurred the entrance of people from every ethnic group into the monetary economy.

Sociologists, as well as managers at the Firestone rubber plantations, noticed a change in the attitudes of workers at the concessions during the 1960s that may have reflected changing perceptions regarding wage labor in the country at large. In the early part of that decade, Firestone was hampered by a large turnover of its unskilled wage-labor force. Laborers were migrating to the plantations and were working only long enough to achieve a certain level of remuneration before quitting to return to their home areas. Increasing their wages, it was noted, only hastened their day of departure. By the late 1960s, however, the turnover at the plantations had slowed considerably, and something akin to a permanent wage-labor force was developing. Moreover, larger numbers of relatives were living in or near plantation housing and sharing the salaries of the workers. The growing popularity of steady wage labor may also have been demonstrated by the increased passivity of the workers. After serious worker-led strikes in 1963 and 1966, observers noted a subsequent lack of labor disruptions. This was probably the result of a realization by laborers and managers that there was a large pool of jobless people, both unskilled and semiskilled, eager to take the place of dissatisfied employees.

The urban centers, particularly Monrovia, attracted a steady stream of migrants from the rural areas. From a population estimated at 12,000 in 1940, the capital city grew to some 82,000 residents in 1962 and to over 200,000 in the early 1980s. Most of these tribal Liberians were younger males. The migrants were faced with the need to adapt to social patterns radically different from those to which they had been accustomed. On the one hand, they found themselves freed of traditional social responsibilities and patterns of behavior that some had felt stifling. On the other hand, they were forced to adjust to the unfamiliar rhythms of urban life—an environment where English had to be mastered; property was owned, wages were paid, status was accorded on the basis of occupation and education; strict work schedules were enforced; and codified rather than customary tribal law governed so-

cial behavior. Attractive consumer goods were widely available, but everything had a purchase price, and little was shared. Even if they had some education, new immigrants—especially if they were unskilled—found jobs difficult to obtain in an economy that by the mid-1970s was stagnating.

The phenomenon of urbanization led to the establishment of voluntary tribal associations that helped to protect these members from the general insecurity of life in Monrovia. One of the earliest of these organizations was the Kru Corporation, formed in 1916, which served to mediate disputes among the Kru and to act as a sort of union in the interests of Kru dockworkers. By 1959 there were approximately 200 of these voluntary associations in the national capital that were organized for the mutual aid of their members. Most of these groups, such as the Organization of Grebo Market Women, attracted members from specific elements of the population and served as political and economic interest groups. Not all of the bodies organized around common interests were tribal in character. Members of these multiethnic associations usually consisted of persons higher on the socioeconomic ladder and those who had been living in Monrovia for a number of years. Membership in one voluntary association usually did not preclude attachment to others; consequently, many people joined several of them to cope with personal needs.

The urban savings cooperative, usually referred to as *susu*, constituted another kind of tribal association. It appeared to be an outgrowth of a practice common among rural societies where the members of a clan would periodically gather to donate their combined labor to the needs of each member on a rotating basis. In the Monrovia savings groups, the savings of *susu* members were invested or lent at interest; at the end of the year the money was divided among the entire membership. Another arrangement called for all members to contribute regularly a small amount of money into a fund established by the group, and the entire amount was then given to each member in turn.

Tribal Structures

By the early 1980s modernization efforts had served to break down the autonomy of the indigenous social structures but according to observers, the lifestyles, beliefs, and social organizations of the rural areas continued to influence tribal Liberians everywhere. Rural social structures were organized around kin-based groups of several kinds. These were localized, either in a village or a village quarter. A group of villages—often a town and its satellite villages—constituted a chiefdom. In many cases, the

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The Society and Its Environment

women, i.e., ancestral spirits, and those that have never been living human beings, although human characteristics are sometimes attributed to them. These entities may be termed nature spirits insofar as they are identified with natural elements or features of the landscape. Generally, the spirits of ancestors who have died recently are the most potent. Remoter ancestors are undifferentiated and are lumped together as "old ones" who are no longer active. Typically, ancestral spirits are relevant for their descendants who perform rituals that are necessary to keep them happy or placated. There are exceptions to both of these patterns. Tribal heroes—those who were great warrior chiefs or founders of Poro, for example—may be remembered long after death and may be approached ritually, particularly in Poro rites. Other important people, perhaps not of the same stature but significant for members of the community in their lifetime, may also be worshiped by those who are not descendants.

Some nature spirits are unique in that they are named entities found only in or near a specific community and are identified with a particular feature of the landscape. A spirit may be held responsible for the good or ill fortune that befalls an entire community, and that community may periodically sacrifice to it. Other spirits are also identified with (or are believed to reside in) features of the landscape. But there are many of the same kind, and they may turn up in different places. Such spirits usually appear to specific individuals who benefit or suffer from their activity, depending upon the individual's ability to deal with the spirit.

Indigenous religions also take account of the possibility that men or women may make use of the extraordinary power they believe is available in the universe to achieve socially acceptable or unacceptable ends, either on their own behalf or for the benefit of the community. This power and the objects in which it is located are often spoken of as "medicine." Any man or woman may use "medicines," but it is normal for specialists to prepare them and supervise their use. Included among the substances used as "medicines" are materials known, by scientific standards, to have a therapeutic value. Other "medicines" are clearly toxic, and some are reportedly made by using human flesh, bones, and organs.

Belief in witchcraft and the powers of "medicine" is most common among rural indigenous persons and is scorned by most educated, urban Liberians. Members of the elite, however, have been linked with the practice on rare occasions. Most notable was a case in 1978 in which seven Liberians, including a former member of the House of Representatives and a former county

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economic, or social institutions or on specific members of the elite, nor did it appear that these churches were foci of antiregime political mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s. In a sense they helped indigenous Liberians, who had access to few of the rewards of the society, to value themselves by rejecting the values of the elite. They did not, however, strive to change the society. Further, the churches were small and ethnically fragmented, conditions not conducive to the formation of politically relevant groups. To the extent, however, that membership in such churches has reflected, among other things, a sense of alienation from the status quo of the first republic, it is possible that a change in the political and social order will lead to a change in the orientation and membership of some churches.

Indigenous Religion

The details of religious ritual, organization, and belief vary from one ethnic category to another and even from community to community, but the outlines are broadly similar. The universe perceived by many Liberians of tribal background is inhabited by a variety of superhuman entities who must be appeased or placated. It was thought that spirits thus satisfied would allow men and women to achieve certain ends, such as a good harvest, and may assist in preventing or putting an end to illness or other personal or familial misfortune. Sometimes these superhuman entities are concerned with the welfare of an entire community and are therefore addressed by the community as a whole or by its representatives. The universe is also pervaded by power, manifested sometimes in medicines, sometimes in other potent material objects, such as amulets, which men and women can use to achieve such ends as the love or destruction of another. The relationship between living people and spirits or deities is played out and has its consequences in this world, a condition that may make spiritualist and healing churches more attractive than those that insist on belief in a single God and rewards in the hereafter.

In many indigenous systems the ultimate source of the power of spirits, deities, and medicines is explicitly said to be a high god. In other local religions, the relation of the high god to other spirits is not always clear. Sometimes the high god is conceived of as a creator, sometimes as one who has sent various elements into the world. Typically, the high god is benign and remote. No specific cult is addressed to this deity, although prayers may be.

In addition to the high god, there are usually at least two other kinds of superhuman entities: those deriving from men and



*The United Methodist Church in Clay-Ashland, a scene
reminiscent of sights in the South of the United States
Courtesy Frederick Ehrenreich*

filiation with a *kwi* church is part of their commitment to a *kwi* way of life, often associated, under the first republic, with a devotion to success in politics and in the economy.

There has been a tendency for the educated elite to perceive the spiritualist or apostolic churches as the churches of the uneducated. Although a few of the highly educated and upwardly mobile Liberians attended churches of this kind, minor officials, clerks, and skilled craftsmen were members. If such people dominated a congregation, its style tended to be somewhat more formal and restrained than that of a rural or uneducated working-class population.

Referring to Pentecostal and similar churches in the mid-1960s, anthropologist Merran Fraenkel made the point that "these are congregations of the underprivileged, and the sermons are, more often than not, against the wickedness of the 'world,' the materialism, the corruption, the immorality, the greed, and the hypocrisy of the rich and influential." This approach also characterized the kind of church that appealed to an Americo-Liberian who was not a member of the elite. This protest, however, rarely took the form of direct attack on specific political,

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them were not in a position to be critical of the social and political order. Often, in fact, the clergy of prestigious churches depended for a living on government jobs dispensed by the elite.

The 1980 coup also affected the churches that had been the bulwarks and symbols of the old regime. Political scientist J. Gus Liebenow noted in early 1981 that "those churches in which the clerical and lay leadership were synonymous with political leadership...were found to suffer at least diminished status." Clearly, the synonymy of church leadership and political power no longer held after 1980. How members of the erstwhile elite have related to their churches since that time has not been clear. Also uncertain was the extent to which the churches of the elite have lost status in the eyes of indigenous Christians of the same and other denominations. There were indications that some very active Christians had questioned the spirituality of the elite churches even during the era of the first republic.

The Christianity of Indigenous Africans

Broadly speaking, the churches to which indigenous Liberians belong have been of two kinds—those thought of as *kwi* and those that are not. In this context being *kwi* is not necessarily more highly valued but is simply a characterization of the style of the organization, a style marked by relative formality and decorum. Services in churches that are not *kwi* tend to be more ebullient; dancing and occasional street processions in colorful costumes are features of their practice. Many emphasize the possibility of direct experience of the Holy Spirit. In some, prophets, who interpret dreams and visions and prepare amulets containing Biblical inscriptions, play a leading role. In most of these churches, some form of spiritual or faith healing is practiced.

These churches are characterized by the congregation's active participation in services as well as in organizational and other activities. Usually, there is such a proliferation of offices within each congregation that as many as one-third of the members have specific roles within the hierarchy at any time. This pattern of involvement may be a major reason why these churches tend to split, thus doubling the number of available offices.

No clear distinction can be drawn between the adherents of *kwi* and other churches. Methodist and Roman Catholic (or other *kwi*) churches have been attended in the rural areas by nonliterate villagers and in the urban areas by barely literate unskilled workers. The latter, having been converted in their home territories, retain their memberships in *kwi* churches because these are, in a sense, their traditional churches. For many, however, af-

more than 90 percent) and the Vai (at least 75 percent); some of the remainder were Christians. The Christian churches among the Kru ranged from Roman Catholic and Methodist to several varieties of Pentecostals, and it was likely that more than half of the Kru were affiliated Christians. It was highly probable that most of the urbanized Kru (more than 45 percent in 1974) were so affiliated.

Religion, Status, and Power

In the era of the first republic, one's membership in a specific denomination or church was related to one's social status, which was acquired by birth, achieved, or maintained as a goal. The Protestantism of most early settlers was conservative, evangelistic, and emotional. Evangelical fervor and informality of worship characterized Baptist and Methodist church meetings in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the revival meeting was the preferred form of service. Even the more formal Episcopalians stressed evangelism during that period. By the late 1950s the services in the churches of which the Americo-Liberian elite were members were more formal and conservative and less well attended, changes that apparently reflected a secularization of the outlook of the postwar generation of the educated elite. At the same time, however, membership in a recognized church continued to be relevant to social position. In 1959 the United Christian Fellowship Conference, a group made up of a small number of the elite concerned about the place of religion in Liberian society, charged that the typical Americo-Liberian tended to regard the church as if it were an exclusive club rather than a house of worship. The conference claimed that regular church attendance was sparse and that "with the passing of threats to existence, the church became a less significant force in the lives of its communicants and more instrumental as a means of assuring advancement in other aspects of life."

Observers of the social and political elite of the 1960s and 1970s have indicated that this pattern persisted and was perhaps intensified. A church or denomination was not, however, an autonomous locus of power. It was more likely that lay offices in a church would accrue to those who were already politically important than that church membership would provide an avenue to power and status. Indeed, there were instances when loss of political office led almost immediately to loss of lay office in a major church. In view of the close connection between the political and social elite and certain denominations, the clerical leaders of those denominations and the ministers of specific churches within

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quite small—has been largely indigenous. Even if these churches have done work in several areas and have attracted adherents from more than one ethnic group, each congregation has tended to be ethnically homogeneous. This homogeneity has come about partly because the response to religious messages has been affected by the particular culture of a group and partly because the language used in every service is an indigenous one. English, however, has sometimes been used in portions of a service under some circumstances, especially in urban congregations.

A fairly significant exception to the largely indigenous character of small Pentecostal or spiritualist churches was the Lighthouse Full Gospel Church, more commonly known as Sister Blatch's (or Mother Blatch's) Church. It was founded by an American black who intended it to bring the Pentecostal idea of baptism to Americo-Liberians. When its American founder died, the church was taken over by Sister Blatch, of Kru origin but long linked to Americo-Liberians. Its services were in English and most of its members spoke vernacular Liberian English rather than the standard variety used by the elite in public situations. Most of the members of the church were Americo-Liberian women who were not of elite or subelite families, but there were some who were socially prominent and simultaneously members of more conventional and prestigious churches.

All but a few of Liberia's Muslims are of the Sunni branch (sometimes called orthodox), by far the larger of Islam's two main branches. The Shia branch is not represented in Liberia, except among a few Lebanese. A version of Islam called Ahmadiya (considered heretical or altogether outside Islam by most Muslim authorities) was brought to Liberia in the mid-1950s and has made a few converts. Two groups have been heavily influenced by Sunni Islam—the Vai and the Mandingo. Many of the latter (who are traders) have been proselytizers for Islam. Although no other ethnic categories have been wholly or even largely Islamized, some individuals and families in most categories have become Muslims, and there are some communities in the northwest—among the Gbande, the Mende, the Kissi, and the Gola—that have been almost wholly Islamized.

In the mid-1970s it was estimated that at least half the members of all but a few tribal categories were adherents of indigenous religions. Between 80 and 95 percent of half a dozen tribal groups were adherents of such religions and were least influenced by either Christianity or Islam. These included the Kpelle, the Gio, the Mano, the Loma, the Krahn, and the Gbandi—all in the Hinterland. Most influenced by Islam were the Mandingo (probably

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others by virtue of the work of members of the monastic Order of the Holy Cross among the Gbandi in the far northwest. There have also been a few conversions of individuals and families among the Vai in the Cape Mount area who became part of the educated elite and have been associated with politically dominant Americo-Liberians.

The Roman Catholic church had its heaviest representation among the Kruan-speaking people in the southeastern portion of the country, principally among the Kru and to a lesser extent among the Grebo and the Krahn. There were Roman Catholic missions elsewhere, but the greatest concentration outside the southeast in the 1980s was in the Monrovia area, a consequence in part of the heavy Kru and Grebo migration to the capital city.

Lutheran activity and its missionary work have occurred in areas inhabited by the Kpelle and the Loma. Information from the mid-to-late 1970s suggested that the denomination was growing fairly briskly. It remained largely a rural church but had followed some of its converts into the city.

The Liberian Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World also had their strongest representation among the Kru. Both groups had sent missions to the indigenous peoples in their rural homelands, but a large number of their members were urban Kru.

The Church of the Lord (Aladura) was brought to Liberia from Nigeria, where it had originated. A spiritualist church emphasizing healing and characterized by highly emotional services, its congregations were found among the Kpelle, the Bassa, and the Kru. It was more likely to exist in the urban centers than in the rural areas.

Of the remaining churches, whose membership comprised less than 3 percent of all affiliated Christians, few were Americo-Liberians. These were the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, both originating among American blacks and brought to Liberia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In addition to acquiring a following among nonelite Americo-Liberians, these denominations also engaged in missionary work among indigenous people of the coast. Much smaller than these was the Presbyterian church, which came to the Greenville and Monrovia areas with the early settlers in 1831. It seems to have retained a following among Americo-Liberians but, despite minor missionary effort, to have achieved little among indigenous Liberians.

With rare exceptions the membership of other churches—some fairly large, such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, but most

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Church of Liberia, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, and the Church of the Lord (Aladura) each had between 3 and 4 percent of the total.

The many other groups ranged in magnitude from single churches having a few hundred members to others that were made up of a number of congregations; all were very active in education and health care and had 2 percent or more of all church members. Among the larger of these were the African Methodist Episcopal church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church, and the Seventh-Day Adventists. Among the many smaller ones were the Presbytery of Liberia in West Africa, mainly of the Pentecostal, spiritualist, or healing variety. Some of these were still under mission control in the mid-1970s, but many others were indigenous African churches.

Of the 114 denominations and independent churches in Liberia in 1970, the eight largest included more than two-thirds of all affiliated Christians. More than 100 groups accounted for the rest. Although most of these groups had very few members, their existence reflected a widespread trend in Africa—the proliferation of African independent churches characterized by a strong orientation toward some combination of healing and the possibility of direct experience of the Holy Spirit.

The two largest denominations—the United Methodists and the Liberian Baptist Convention—came with the settlers and were still heavily represented among them in the latter half of the twentieth century. President Tubman was a Methodist, and President Tolbert was an ordained Baptist minister. Although Americo-Liberians of these denominations did some missionary work among coastal Africans, most such work among indigenous peoples was accomplished by foreigners, white and black. By the mid-twentieth century, most Methodist and Baptist congregations had come together in these two denominational groupings. Specific churches, however, had separate Americo-Liberian or indigenous congregations, even if their members lived in the same general area, e.g., Monrovia.

Of the six other large denominations, only the Episcopal church had significant representation among Americo-Liberians. Tubman's Methodist connection and Tolbert's Baptist affiliation notwithstanding, the Episcopal church was the most prestigious among the elite of that ethnic group. More than 10 percent of the membership of the Episcopal church was affiliated with the cathedral in Monrovia. A number of persons of indigenous origin along the coast had become Episcopalians, some as a consequence of their attendance at Cuttington University College.

culturally conservative Americo-Liberian enclaves. Passion and commitment were more likely to be shown by Christians of tribal origin, especially, but not exclusively, by those who were members of indigenous African churches (of which there were more than 50) and other fundamentalist groups.

In its preamble, the new Constitution, accepted in a nationwide referendum in July 1984, acknowledges Liberians' "devout gratitude to God" for the country's existence as a free and sovereign state and asserts Liberia's reliance on "His Divine Guidance" for its survival. The nature of the deity is left unspecified, however, and Chapter 3 ("Fundamental Rights") of the document entitles all to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. It explicitly denies preference for any denomination or sect, forbids religious tests for any civil or military office or for the exercise of any civil rights, and insists that the republic shall not establish a state religion.

Religious Affiliation and Ethnicity

The lack of precise information on religious affiliation and commitment in Liberia is reflected in the conflict between a statement in the *World Christian Encyclopedia* that "traditional religions are the living faith of well over half the population" and a table in the same source showing that just under one-half of the population adhered to tribal religions in 1970. The text is likely to be more accurate than the table. In the same table, 31 percent of the population is said to consist of professing Christians, but that includes two categories: affiliated Christians (about 19 percent of the total population) and nominal Christians (about 11 percent). Because it was not uncommon in some situations for indigenous people to say that they were Christians, many in the category of nominal Christians may be said more accurately to be adherents of indigenous religions. In its table of religious adherents, the encyclopedia gives the proportion of Muslims in 1970 as 19 percent but as 8 percent at one point in its text. Some observers claim, however, that Muslims were increasing in the 1970s and 1980s at a faster rate than Christians and may, in fact, outnumber them.

The Christian denominations most strongly represented in Liberia were the United Methodist church and the Liberian Baptist Missionary and Education Convention (more commonly, the Liberian Baptist Convention). The members of each denomination constituted roughly 17 percent of affiliated Christians in 1970. Next in size were the Roman Catholic church, the Lutheran church, and the Liberian Assemblies of God, each having between 7 and 8 percent of the affiliated Christians. The Episcopal

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parently still fairly important among the Gola and the Kpelle but had been undermined by Islam among the Vai. Changes in the tribal political structure, the growing importance of formal education and of nontraditional ways of making a living, and the influence of Christianity and Islam were all conducive to the weakening of the Poro and the Sande. Sometimes these organizations have been adapted to modern goals. For example, the Sande was used to inculcate modern conceptions of maternity and infant care. In other cases, especially in the Poro, there was resistance to such uses. It was widely thought that these societies, which on the whole were conservative and tradition oriented, were stabilizing elements whose religious and social control were conducive to maintaining public order.

Religion

In the mid-1980s more than half of all Liberians adhered to indigenous religions or to concepts and practices largely rooted in such beliefs. Of the rest, there were thought to be roughly as many Muslims as Christians. The latter were divided among a large number and wide variety of denominations.

Until the end of the first republic, official and semiofficial documents and statements referred to Liberia as a Christian state, a reflection of the Protestantism of the largely Americo-Liberian elite and the members' understanding of what it meant to be civilized. The early settlers and their descendants were divided among several Protestant denominations, however, and the constitution of the first republic stipulated that no specific church would be given preference by the state. It also provided for the free exercise of any religion. Despite the Protestant affiliation of virtually all the elite and subelite, the political leaders of the first republic noted its "appreciation" of Roman Catholicism and its contribution to the country. They also made a point of formal friendliness to Islam, a dominant or significant religion in several neighboring states and important in Liberian ethnic groups (the Vai and the Mandingo) deemed to be advanced by Americo-Liberians.

Despite the social importance of membership in mainline Protestant denominations notwithstanding, active participation in and commitment to the official values of Christian churches was thought to have diminished substantially among many of the elite. Church attendance and other indicators of devotion were still important among older Americo-Liberians and in isolated or

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ranking members in their political and judicial deliberations were secret. Moreover, when decisions required execution, the Poro often acted in secret.

The decisionmaking power of the Poro rested exclusively with a council of high-ranking elders. Where the decision involved relations between chiefdoms or even between tribes, the high-ranking members of different local Poro societies met. Each chiefdom had its own Poro and Sande head. But, for the Poro at least, there was usually an all-tribal head who played an important ritual role, although it is not clear how great his political power was.

The organization of the Poro was independent of the secular political hierarchy. Chiefs, other officials, and council members were always members of the Poro, sometimes high-ranking, but a chief was rarely head of the Poro; its leader was rarely a high-ranking secular official. The priest chief of the Dey constituted an exception; he was head of its Poro. This was an adaptation to the religious importance of the Dey ruler.

The internal organization of the Poro varied from one ethnic group to another, but some features were common to all tribes. The first of these was the inclusiveness of the organization. The second was some degree of internal hierarchy. The Poro among the Vai was said to have had 99 degrees, but it is unlikely that most tribes had so elaborate a hierarchy.

Three factors seem to have governed the achievement of high rank in the Poro and the Sande. Apparently high rank—particularly the headship—was restricted to members of certain families among the Gola, the Mano, and the Vai and probably in other tribes as well. One did not automatically move to high rank by virtue of birth; seniority and some ability to acquire the esoteric knowledge characteristic of these societies were also relevant.

Generally, the Poro and the Sande regulated conduct that pertained specifically to their operation as religious and educational societies. They also controlled the activity of indigenous medical practitioners. Beyond that, however, the Poro—through its senior members—often judged disputes between high-ranking members of the community, and it either gave or withheld support for the chief in policy matters affecting the community as a whole. A chief who had the support of the Poro ruled with a strong hand. One who did not had difficulty in carrying out his policies.

It was difficult to assess the social, political, and religious significance of the Poro and the Sande in the 1980s. They were ap-

quired men to labor in his fields but also gained supporters in his intracommunity squabbles and persons who showed him formal deference. Wife borrowers, in turn, were given the opportunity to cultivate a piece of land, the help of a woman so necessary to that cultivation, and the protection of an important man in the community. The *to nuwai* and their dependents together constituted a relatively small proportion of the Kpelle population in which the vast majority were ordinary men who cultivated their own land and had their own wives. Although the pattern of dependency based on wife lending was widespread in tribal Liberia, it was not known to what extent the Kpelle pattern was characteristic of other tribes in the 1980s.

Formally organized associations were characteristic of the tribal social structures of this part of Africa. Some were organized to further a specific religious or magical cult or practice. The Snake Society, involving the ritual handling of snakes and the curing of snakebites, was one such group. The Leopard Society, whose members were reputed to have powers over life and death, was another. Others were essentially craft guilds, consisting of smiths or other craftsmen. Such societies were specialized and limited in membership.

Peculiar to northwestern Liberia and adjacent Sierra Leone were Poro and Sande, societies that served political, religious, juridical, and educational purposes. These organizations dated back to at least the eighteenth century. Of the country's 16 major ethnic categories, 10 (including a good deal more than half the tribal population) were wholly or substantially organized into Poro and Sande. All the Poro tribes but the Mano were northwest of the Saint John River. Of the remaining six, segments of the Bassa, the Gio, and the Kru were affected to some extent by elements of the Poro complex.

The Poro and the Sande were distinguished by their inclusiveness and comparative lack of specialization. In principle, all men—at least all free men—in the community were initiated into the Poro and all women into the Sande. Even in the mid-twentieth century, those who had not been initiated were not considered fully men and women and could not engage in the whole range of political and ritual activity characteristic of their tribe.

The Poro and the Sande have often been referred to as secret societies in that nonmembers were barred from societies' meetings and rituals. The lore and practice of the Sande were kept secret from members of the Poro and vice versa. Lower ranking members of each society could not acquire the esoteric knowledge of higher ranking members, and the meetings of the higher

the difference between more and less traditional ways of acquiring status and authority.

The mid-twentieth-century pattern of defining the status of individuals in most tribal communities was in some respects an outgrowth of—in others a departure from—an earlier one. In the past as in the present, status was linked to wealth, defined largely as control over persons. The earlier pattern was based in part on domestic slavery and in part on the custom of pawning. In the practice of pawning, an adult could, in return for money or some object of value, deliver himself or a dependent (usually a child) into the hands of the lender for an indefinite period. The individual thus pawned worked for the lender without compensation until he was redeemed. Often a chief or other wealthy person would demonstrate his wealth through the accumulation of a number of pawns.

Pawning seems to have been widespread in Liberia. The Americo-Liberians adopted it, and many of the tribal children raised by Americo-Liberian families had been placed with them as pawns by their parents, who received some compensation. Slavery and pawning were outlawed in the early 1930s but, at least for a time, some slaves and pawns remained dependents of former masters who had provided the wherewithal for their bridewealth payments. In tribal society marriage was a contract between two lineages whereby the bridegroom's kin paid bridewealth to the bride's family. Bridewealth represented a transfer of—and compensation for—rights over a woman's sexuality, her children, her productive work and, in general terms, her presence.

Another mechanism for establishing relationships between persons of high and low status has been well described by observers of the Kpelle. In Kpelleland, a category of men called *to nuwai* (singular, *to nuu*) included chiefs and other esteemed persons. A *to nuu* was a rich man whose wealth was manifested by having many wives, a few cattle (in a country where there were not many large livestock) and, above all, by his having as many dependents as possible. A *to nuu* was expected to be publicly generous; he fed people and helped them when they were in need. Often his living conditions were a cut above those of the ordinary man. A Kpelle speaking English would refer to him as a "big shot."

The most important source and symbol of a *to nuu*'s wealth and prestige were his wives, largely because they were important as a means of acquiring dependents. A *to nuu* attached clients to himself by lending his wives to them. In this way he not only ac-

relationship between the local communities of a chiefdom was thought of in terms of the common ancestry of at least some of the families in each community, usually the families that provided the chiefs. In many tribes, specific clusters of chiefdoms were also considered to be related in terms of common descent. Such clusters did not, however, correspond to unified political entities. Chiefdoms had joined in relatively short-lived confederacies from time to time, but such alliances often ignored ties of kinship and even ethnic boundaries.

Chiefdoms were small in scale. Except for the short-lived confederacies, the maximum autonomous political unit usually corresponded roughly to the administrative unit called the clan (headed by a clan chief) in the Liberian usage. Most of these traditional chiefdoms had fewer than 5,000 people, and many were much smaller than that. With the consolidation of these units into paramount chiefdoms, the size of the maximum tribal unit increased, but most of them had fewer than 15,000 members, and some were a good deal smaller.

In a number of tribes, such as the Gola, lineages were ranked, and certain offices were allocated to members of high-ranking lineages. The lineage stemming directly from the founding ancestor of a set of related lineages was normally the highest ranking. Lineages whose founders were most closely related to the ancestor of the set ranked next and so on.

In most tribes political or ritual office and social status were closely linked and, with important exceptions, were often defined in terms of membership in a specific kin group and age set. Thus, in principle, the eldest living male in the most senior lineage of a cluster of related lineages was likely to be the chief of a group of local communities constituting a chiefdom. There was flexibility within this pattern; succession was not automatic. The elders of the chiefdom or of the lineage were selected on the basis of competence, not seniority alone.

More significant deviations from the pattern occurred in some of the northwestern tribes—those most involved in the slave raiding and trading characteristic of that area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There, warrior adventurers established chiefdoms, which they dominated by virtue of their wealth and military prowess. Their followers or clients were given authority over local communities as rewards for their loyalty and effectiveness, rather than because of their age or membership in specific lineages. In some tribes (for example, the Gola) a good deal of effort was expended to validate power and status in genealogical and historical terms, but the people were aware of



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superintendent, were tried and found guilty of ritual homicide in what was called the most publicized Liberian murder trial of the century. Despite the defendants' prominence (one was the son of the national chairman of the True Whig Party), they were executed, and Tolbert subsequently declared that he was determined to stamp out ritual homicide in all parts of the country. Reports of similar killings resurfaced in mid-1983, when approximately 12 disappearances and deaths were ascribed to the activities of "heartmen"—those responsible for collecting the ingredients necessary to make "medicine." Some observers linked the upsurge to candidates for the Constitutional Advisory Assembly who sought to use magic to enhance their candidacy, but no instigators were specifically identified.

In a world full of active spirits and human users of superhuman power, nothing occurs by chance; every event is caused either by spirits acting on persons or by persons using spirits or medicines. In these circumstances a variety of magico-religious specialists have emerged. Such a specialist (usually called a *zo*) may act as an official of a secret society or as a private professional selling his services to individual clients. In most cases the right to become a *zo* is inherited, but a prospective *zo* must be trained. In Poro tribes a boy who is to become a *zo* forms a special group of initiates and undergoes special training. Sometimes an individual without an inherited right may be chosen by a diviner as a prospective *zo*, often after an illness having causes or symptoms that would be considered psychological by Westerners.

The Poro, Sande, and other secret societies that are sometimes affiliated with the Poro are quite important in the religious life of the community. A leading authority on the Poro has suggested that "the Poro may be thought of as an attempt to reduce the all pervading spirit world to an organization in which men may participate." Poro and Sande provide a way to interact with the spirit world but also represent that spirit world (or specific powerful spirits) to the community at large.

The spirits of the Poro are usually its founders or other important figures who are something more than ancestors; they have been elevated to the level of nonancestral spirits, perhaps of deities. These spirits reside in the sacred grove and reveal themselves in masks that are stylized representations of them. The masks are not worshiped; the spirits in them are. When a member of the Poro wears a mask and the clothing that goes with it (a mask wearer is always completely covered), he is invested with the spirit; it is the spirit who acts. These masked figures have been called "bush devils" or "country devils" by Americo-Liberians and

missionaries. They are manifestations of spirits and, as some authorities have suggested, might better be called sacred personages. The chief sacred personage rarely appears outside the sacred grove and must be avoided by all the uninitiated when he does. Usually, the wearer of the mask is a *po*. Not all masks and masked figures are engaged in religious activity or represent the supernatural. Whatever their original function, some masks are used by entertainers.

In their activities as educators of young people or judges and executors in matters of public and private behavior, the secret societies have been effective because they have been believed to represent the supernatural and to wield supernatural sanctions. A number of peoples, especially in southeastern Liberia, however, have never had Poro and Sande but maintain specialized guild-like societies for medicine men. The Kru, the Grebo, the Bassa, and the Dey have officials, sometimes called chiefs or kings but who are essentially priests. The Dey, in constant contact with the Poro tribe, have assimilated the graded Poro system to the priest-king pattern, and the latter has become the Poro head. With the growth of the government-imposed system of chiefs and the effect of Christian missions on the coastal people, the priests and their guilds have lost their importance.

Education

Despite improvements in educational facilities, increases in their number, and expanded school enrollment during the era of the Tubman and Tolbert administrations, the educational system at the time of the 1980 coup was marked by significant inadequacies in the quantity and quality of schools, teachers, and educational materials. In the early 1980s primary education was still far from universal, and secondary education reached only a small proportion of those between 12 and 20 years of age. As a result, the literacy rate for the population aged five years and older was estimated at about 24 percent.

Although few people who settled in Liberia in the nineteenth century had much formal education, many were convinced that the success of their venture and the personal success of their children required it. Public primary and secondary schools for Americo-Liberians were therefore established early, as were church-sponsored schools and institutions of higher education. Generally, these schools were expected to provide a primary and secondary education that would permit the recipients

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ultimately to work in offices or to study for professions such as law and theology. In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, little attention was given to the education of Liberia's indigenous population. Americo-Liberian governments were not financially in a position to consider educating the entire country, and their control over the indigenous peoples on the coast—let alone the remoter portions of the Hinterland—was nonexistent or precarious. Moreover, schools would have had to contend with Poro and Sande training classes and other "bush schools," which was not an easy task under the conditions of the pre-Tubman era. There were a few mission schools in the nineteenth century and several more in the first third of the twentieth, but only a limited number of indigenous Africans benefited from them. Of the few local Africans who were educated in the first century of the republic, most were wards of Americo-Liberian families.

In 1912 a centralized educational system under a cabinet-level official was established. It encompassed only the five coastal counties, however, and chiefly served the Americo-Liberians living there. Beyond the establishment in 1929 of the Booker Washington Institute (a vocational school) and a teacher training college—by a combination of both American philanthropic and religious interests—little else of significance in education occurred until the World War II era and Tubman's inauguration. Before the war private and mission schools accounted for more than three-fourths of the educational facilities in the country. Mission schools, more numerous than they had been at the turn of the century, provided whatever education Hinterland Africans (other than the wards of Americo-Liberian families) obtained. For the most part, formal instruction at mission schools was limited to the primary level. In the pre-World War II period and later, children of the Americo-Liberian elite (and some of the more promising wards) were sent to neighboring African territories or to Europe or the United States for secondary education, partly because of the prestige of doing so and partly because Liberian schools were not highly regarded. There were exceptions, however, one of which was the College of West Africa, a Methodist secondary school long established in Monrovia.

In the post-World War II era, economic growth and an awareness of social developments elsewhere in Africa stimulated government involvement in the education of indigenous Liberians and with it the reorganization of the school system in 1961. That reorganization, which included mission and private schools, established a structure that persisted into the 1980s. At the base was preprimary education for children aged four and five; six

years of elementary schooling for children aged six to twelve; junior and senior high schools, each level having a three-year curriculum; and postsecondary education (see fig. 7).

By the early 1960s more than half the primary and secondary teachers and students were in government-operated schools. That shift having taken place, however, there were no major changes in the proportion of government schools until after the coup, despite the growth in absolute numbers. In 1980 a little more than 58 percent of students in the primary and secondary grades were in government schools. Of the remainder, the pupils in mission schools slightly exceeded those in privately managed institutions. Government-managed schools were particularly prevalent at the primary level. At the secondary level the missions were more active; there were nearly as many mission-managed senior high schools (tenth through twelfth grades) as there were government-operated counterparts, although the number of students in the latter was substantially greater than that in mission schools.

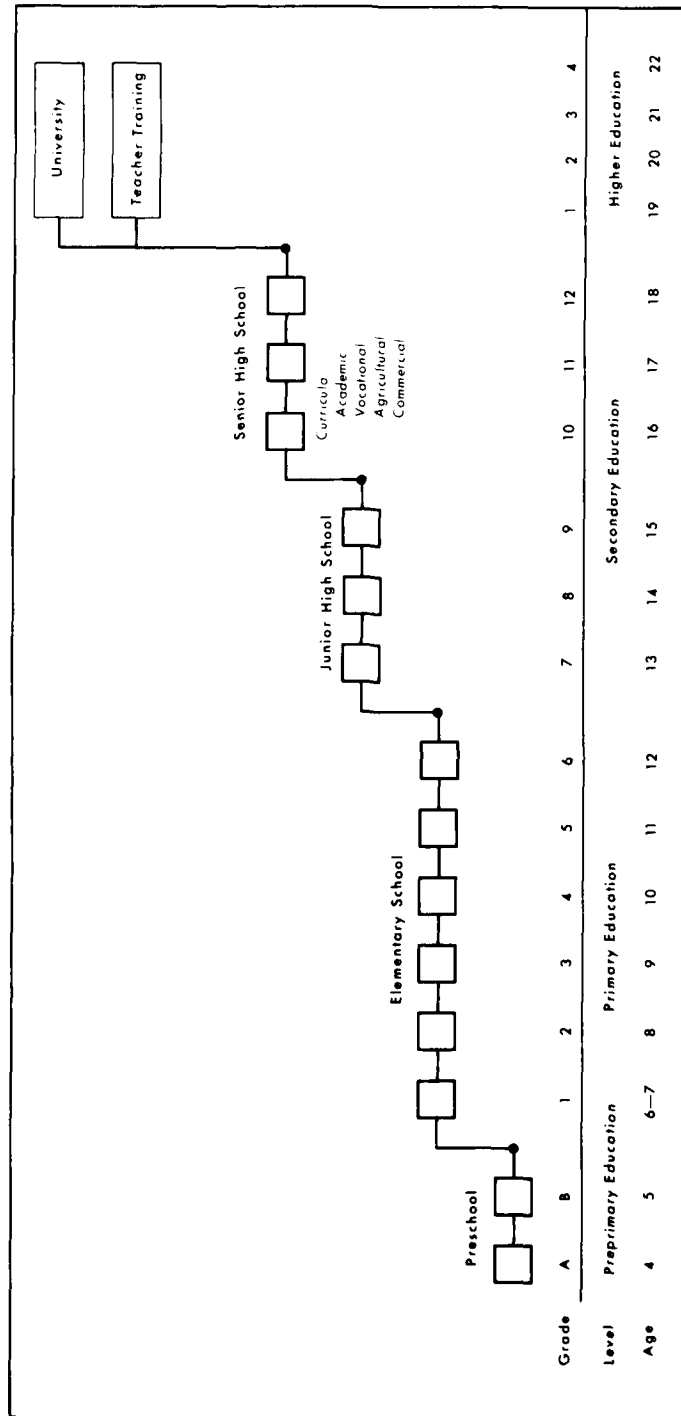
In 1981, the first full year after the coup, the number of students increased slightly, but the proportions shifted markedly. About 66 percent of all students were in public schools, and the remainder were divided between mission and private schools; the proportion in the former was a little greater than in the latter (see table 3, Appendix). The proportional change was a function not only of the increase in the numbers attending public schools but also of a decline in the numbers attending both mission and private schools. The change reflected the elimination of fees for public school attendance and a promise to lower the cost of textbooks.

The expansion in facilities was soon reflected in the growth of enrollment. In 1963 fewer than 70,000 pupils were in the pre-primary and primary grades; by 1980 that number had more than tripled. The increase in secondary school pupils between 1963 and 1980 was eightfold, a consequence of the growth in the number of schools and in the pool of primary-school graduates. In that period indigenous Liberians had come increasingly to accept the utility of an education, and the societies that controlled the bush schools had adapted to the change. Where the initiation period had once lasted for several years, it had diminished in many communities to less than a year.

In the early 1980s there were still significant differences in school attendance between certain coastal counties and some of the rural ones. Despite the growth in Liberia's total enrollment, only a little more than one-half the six- to 12-year age cohort was in primary school in 1980, a proportion smaller than that common



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Source: Based on information from *International Yearbook of Education*, 32, Paris, 1980, 72.

Figure 7. Structure of Education System, 1980

in other West African countries. Moreover, only about one-fourth of those who started in kindergarten completed the sixth grade; still fewer went on to junior high. Between 15 and 20 percent of the 12- to 20-year age cohort were in secondary school. Only about half of those who finished junior high completed senior high, however.

The drop-out rate at the primary level has reflected the teachers' inadequate training in both substance and teaching skills—especially those teachers in the rural areas—and the unavailability of materials, including textbooks. Furthermore, the use of English as the language of instruction from the beginning has been a major hurdle for those whose mother tongue was a local African language and who were the first members of their families to attend school. Those enrolled in secondary school have managed to surmount these difficulties. Nevertheless, the quality of their education has been so poor that remedial work, especially in mathematics and science, has frequently been necessary.

A further obstacle to attendance at secondary schools has been their sparse distribution, especially in the rural areas, and the lack of dormitory accommodations for those who must come from afar. Local arrangements have often not been available, they have been too costly, or students may have been required to perform so many chores for the household in which they lived that school attendance and studies were hindered.

Smaller ratios of girls to boys occurred in the upper levels of primary school and continued throughout junior and senior high schools in both urban and rural areas. Although changes have been taking place, indigenous Liberians have often been less than enthusiastic about sending girls to school. Moreover, Liberian children often did not start school at the age of six, as educational authorities preferred, but much later. Girls may therefore be at the marrying or childbearing age by the time they have reached fourth grade, and they leave school.

All pupils through the ninth grade (junior high school) have, in principle, the same educational experience. Preprimary schools are intended to introduce children aged four and five to a school environment but have also been opened to older children who do not have English as a mother tongue in order to introduce them to that language before they enter primary school. The curriculum in primary and junior high schools has been a general one; all students take the same courses. A little more than half of school time has been devoted to general studies, about one-third to science and mathematics, and the remainder to "work-oriented" courses, presumably agriculture, domestic science,

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and the like. At the junior-high level, additional attention was supposed to be paid to science and mathematics, but much of this work was remedial.

In addition to a standard academic course, vocational, agricultural, and commercial instruction has been offered in the senior high schools. The oldest of the vocational schools is the Booker Washington Institute; but others have been established, and some of the mining companies offer training in mechanical and electrical work to small numbers of students. This service has reflected the need for trained workers that was not being met by other schools. Data for the early 1980s on enrollment in the several alternative paths in senior high school were not available, but the bulk of senior high school students, having made it that far, tended to choose the academic curriculum, hoping to find either white-collar work or an opportunity for postsecondary education upon graduating. In the 1970s and early 1980s, there was much official emphasis on manpower planning and related training, but the effects of that activity on secondary school courses were not clearly discernible in mid-1984.

Government expenditures on education were low compared with those of other West African countries. Moreover, much of what was spent went to postsecondary education, leading to improvements in its quality but leaving primary and secondary students lacking materials and adequate teachers. Most of the funds for primary and secondary education were expended on salaries for teachers, but these were so low that the best educated of them went on to other jobs as soon as they could. Much was made in the 1960s and 1970s of the textbooks often imported from the United States, which contained material that had little relevance for life in Liberia. Whatever the validity of that criticism, a problem at least as great was the sheer lack of textbooks. It was estimated in the late 1970s that 60 percent of the students had none. Also widely lacking were such simple teaching materials as blackboards and erasers. Even scarcer were laboratory facilities for secondary-school science classes.

There were plans and programs in place in the early 1980s to deal with these problems. Teacher training and the development of adequate textbooks were given particular priority. The teacher training institutes established in the 1970s were turning out far more teachers than had been the case a decade earlier. Nevertheless, the number being trained annually in the late 1970s and early 1980s was not enough to meet anticipated requirements for an expanding school system or to replace the many inadequately trained teachers. Moreover, programs for in-service teacher



*A classroom in a school for children of employees of the Firestone Plantations Company at Harbel
Courtesy Firestone Tire and Rubber Company*

training had not been developed. The effects of the textbook program were not discernible in mid-1984.

In 1984 there were three significant postsecondary institutions in Liberia: The University of Liberia, a government institution in Monrovia; Cuttington University College at Suakoko, which was administered and financially supported by the Episcopal church with help from a government subsidy; and the William V.S. Tubman College of Technology, a government institution founded in 1978. The largest of these institutions was the University of Liberia, which in 1981 had more than 3,300 students. Established after World War II, it incorporated Liberia

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College as the college of liberal arts. Other faculties included business, science and technology, agriculture and forestry, medicine, and law. Business attracted more than one-third of all students, followed by science and technology and liberal arts; most graduates in 1981 took degrees in business. There were more graduates in liberal arts than in science and technology, however.

Cuttington University College, reestablished in 1949 after having been closed in 1928, had between 500 and 600 students in 1981. They were enrolled in fields of study that ranged from economics to theology to nursing. The largest number of students studied economics and, slightly fewer, business, education, and nursing. Together, these four programs accounted for nearly 70 percent of all students. The fewest number of students majored in such subjects as history, theology, languages, and literature.

Only three years old in 1981, the Tubman College of Technology then had fewer than 200 students, most of them in the first year of study. The institution was expected to award associate degrees in engineering technology, and it offered specialization in civil, mechanical, electrical, and electronic engineering and in architecture.

Until the Tolbert era—the early 1970s—the University of Liberia offered little more than a secondary-school education and not a very good one at that. In contrast, Cuttington University College had higher standards for admission and for graduation. Moreover, because it drew upon the indigenous population for most of its students, the college had a student body that did not regard a higher education as a right conferred by social status. Many children of Americo-Liberians went to the University of Liberia as a rite of passage, however, and graduation in a given year was often the basis for the formation of social clubs that played a significant role in political life.

In the decade before the coup, the Tolbert administration apparently encouraged the university not only to grow but also to improve its standards. Much of the improvement involved the participation of indigenous Liberians who had acquired graduate degrees abroad—often in the United States—as faculty members. By the mid-1970s a substantial proportion of the student body was of tribal origin. The improvement in the quality of the faculty and the student body and the change in the social and ethnic background of many students led to sustained questioning of the social and political orders in the Tolbert era as well as the generation of opposition movements (see *Parties, Associations and Factions*, ch. 4).

Health

Although expenditures on health care in the last years of the Tolbert administration and the initial postcoup years were comparatively high in relation to both gross domestic product and the government budget, the facilities and personnel available in the early and mid-1980s were not able to cope with Liberia's significant health problems. Most of the outlay for health care reached only about one-third of the population—those in and near urban areas, especially Monrovia, and in the concession areas where the rubber and mining companies provided care to workers and their families.

The limited available data strongly suggest that the diseases responsible for most illness, debility, and death in the country were malaria, various forms of gastroenteritis, measles, upper respiratory infections (including pneumonia), anemia (including the sickle-cell variety), and hypertension. In addition, tetanus (including a neonatal form), tuberculosis, urinary tract infections, skin and eye infections, and meningitis appeared to be common. Infants and very young children were particularly susceptible to diarrheal diseases and measles as well as neonatal tetanus.

Many of these diseases, especially those affecting the young, are preventable by immunization, improvements in environmental sanitation, provision of clean water, and adequate nutrition. The health services in place in the early 1980s stressed curative rather than preventive medicine, but the government seemed to have been persuaded that a change in emphasis was necessary and would be more effective in improving the health of the population than a continued focus on dealing with illness after it had erupted.

The widespread unavailability of water that is safe for drinking and other purposes has contributed to the very high incidence of diarrheal diseases, which afflict infants and children under the age of five and, because of dehydration, may lead to death. Unsanitary water supplies have also been linked to the onset and exacerbation of skin and eye infections. Ideally, the provision of clean water in all communities would solve the problem, but the cost has been prohibitive. It is more likely that efforts will be made to educate the people of rural communities to follow modern hygienic practices. Immunization for measles, tetanus, and other diseases would have an immediate impact, but these measures, like changes in environmental sanitation, require rudimen-

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tary facilities and at least minimally trained medical personnel in the rural areas. All were in short supply in the 1980s.

The role of malnutrition, particularly protein calorie deficiency, in the susceptibility of Liberians to disease has not been thoroughly investigated, but prolonged malnutrition of the kind suffered by African populations frequently afflicted by drought does not seem to occur. A 1976 study carried out on children and lactating women did indicate, however, that 60 percent or more of children under the age of six suffered from anemia. Furthermore, many infants under one year received no food other than milk; conversely, many over one year of age received no milk at all, in part a consequence of minimal intervals between pregnancies. Acute protein calorie deficiency was not pervasive but did occur. From one-fifth to one-fourth of all rural children were either underweight or suffered impaired growth. Milder forms of malnutrition were more common, and the occurrence of acute diarrhea could convert such mild forms into a more acute variety.

Of the relatively small number of health facilities in the mid-1980s, many were understaffed and often lacked basic equipment and medicines. The greatest concentration of facilities, particularly of hospitals, occurred in Montserrado County, locus of Greater Monrovia (see table 4, Appendix). Even more concentrated were highly qualified professionals such as physicians and medical personnel of the kind ordinarily associated with hospitals and modern medical care, e.g., laboratory technicians (see table 5, Appendix). Where these occurred outside the Monrovia area, they were often associated with facilities provided by the companies holding concessions.

The apex of the health care system in 1984 was the John F. Kennedy Medical Center near Monrovia, dedicated in 1971. As Liberia's central facility for medical treatment, it was also the major teaching hospital for health personnel, including medical and nursing students who were working for degrees at the University of Liberia, as well as paramedical personnel and technicians of various kinds. The center was allocated 45 percent of the country's total recurrent expenditure for health in the early 1980s. Considering Liberia's financial constraints, some observers have questioned whether it will be possible to continue to give the center so high a proportion of the health budget and to expand rural health care simultaneously.

Shortly after the 1980 coup the government committed itself to providing modern health care to the rural areas; the expansion of facilities and staff was to take place at such a rate that 90 percent or more of the population would have access by the year 2000.



*Medical personnel outside the Firestone Plantations Company hospital in Harbel
Courtesy Firestone Tire and Rubber Company*



*A waiting room in Phebe Hospital near Gbarnga in Bong County; the facility was built and is financed by contributions from the European Economic Community and the Roman Catholic Church.
Courtesy Werner Gartung*



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The kind of care envisaged would put heavy emphasis on preventive medicine, i.e., on action and education with respect to immunization, environmental sanitation, and nutrition. Preventive medicine would be combined with curative treatment and disease management in health posts and health centers staffed by paramedicals of varying degrees of training and qualification. In principle, health centers were to be referral points for health posts. They would provide services midway between those received in health posts and those offered by hospitals. Physicians' assistants were to be in charge of health centers, presumably under the supervision of physician-nurse teams stationed at county hospitals. The hierarchy of responsibility and qualification under the developing system was not clear, however, and may well have changed to meet local contingencies. For example, some of the health centers in existence in the early 1980s were not staffed by physician's assistants, as they were supposed to be.

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For an overview of Liberia's social dynamics in a historical context, Martin Lowenkopf's *Politics in Liberia: A Conservative Road to Development* and J. Gus Liebenow's *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* are especially recommended. Liebenow's subsequent reports in the American Universities Field Staff series provide insight into social developments set in motion by the 1980 coup. Articles by Svend E. Holsoe and Frederick McEvoy deal with problems of ethnic identification. Important studies on particular ethnic groups include those by Warren L. d'Azevedo on the Gola, Beryl L. Bellman and Caroline H. Bledsoe on the Kpelle, and Lawrence B. Breitborde on the Kru. Stephen S. Hlophe views the development of class structure and other social formations from a Marxist perspective in *Class, Ethnicity, and Politics in Liberia*; his work is particularly valuable for its analysis of the Americo-Liberian oligarchy. *Tribe and Class in Monrovia* by Merran Fraenkel is a classic study of social stratification and adjustment in an urban African setting. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 3. The Economy



ern practices; and privately owned Liberian farms that encompassed a range of activity from the cultivation of tree crops, vegetables, and rice to raising pigs and poultry. Their use of modern techniques and management practices varied widely. In 1981 a number of communal farms sponsored by the government were organized. They apparently functioned as commercial undertakings, but details on operations were not available in mid-1984.

The principal food crops were rice, mostly of the upland variety, and cassava. These were grown throughout the country in the traditional sector, but cassava cultivation was more heavily relied on in the southeastern coastal region, where rainfall and cloud conditions were less favorable for rice. A variety of vegetables were also grown to supplement the two main staples. Climate and soils were variously well-suited to tropical tree crops, including rubber, coffee, cacao, oil palm products, and coconuts. Tree crops have been a major source of export earnings; in the period 1979-81 rubber, coffee, cacao, and oil palm products accounted for almost one-quarter of export receipts (See Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments, this ch.).

With the exception of a small area in the northwest bordering Sierra Leone, the narrow coastal zone, and a region in the southeast, all of Liberia was considered ecologically suitable for commercial production of rubber (see fig. 8). The area potentially usable for coffee cultivation was also large. In general, cacao could be grown throughout the same area; but soils required for satisfactory tree growth were less extensive, and rainfall factors placed some restrictions on profitable commercial cultivation. Oil palms grew naturally and were widely distributed, but for commercial planting the southeastern one-third of the country offered the greatest future possibilities.

Land Resources

More than 80 percent of Liberia's soils can be used for agriculture. About 75 percent of all soils were formed on the extremely old, largely granitic gneisses and other gneissic and schist bedrock that underlie most of the country. Classed as latosols, they have been intensively leached by the heavy tropical rainfall and are of only medium to low fertility. These are the soils on which upland rice, the largest single food crop, is grown. Their limited amount of plant nutrients requires, without the use of fertilizer, a constant shifting of cultivation to new fields in order to maintain subsistence production levels. Large areas of these soils also support the country's major tree crops (see Commercial Crops, this ch.). Of the remaining soils, an estimated 17 percent,

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was also anticipated in estimating current government savings available to finance the plan. However, more than three-quarters of total investment was to continue implementation of uncompleted projects from the first plan.

The deterioration of the economy in the early 1980s, evidenced by the negative growth of GDP for four consecutive years (1980-83), adversely affected government budgetary resources for the second plan to the point that available external loan amounts could not be fully utilized because of shortages in domestic counterpart funds. It became obvious that the plan could not be completed as laid out in the original time frame, and it was extended in 1983 to six years, ending on June 30, 1987. In 1983 estimated per capita personal consumption in real terms was about 20 percent lower than the 1974 level. The desired growth in the extended plan period, if achieved, would still raise total GDP in 1987 to a level only slightly higher than that achieved in 1978.

Agriculture

Agriculture, including forestry, fishing, and other related sectoral pursuits, accounted for the largest share of GDP, contributing in constant terms some 31 percent of the total annually from 1977 through 1981. About 80 percent of the working population in the rural areas was engaged in agriculture and allied activities. Agricultural production was carried on along relatively distinct subsistence and commercial lines. A vast majority of agriculturists were smallholders employing age-old cultivation methods. Officially labeled the traditional sector, this category of agriculturists produced the majority of its output for family use. Considerable numbers of smallholders, however, sold some products, including certain crops grown specifically for cash income. Although money was invariably used in the transactions, such trade has been consistently treated as nonmonetary in economic statistics. Throughout the 1970s and in 1980 the traditional sector accounted for an average of about 58 percent of total agricultural value added.

Production in the commercial sector was almost entirely marketed. Within the sector three distinct operational and ownership patterns were prevalent. They included foreign-owned enclave concessions (mainly rubber and forestry) that were operated by highly trained managerial and technical staffs using modern production techniques; government-owned plantations (oil palms, cacao, and coffee) that in different degrees followed mod-

plan appeared in 1976. In 1962 the National Planning Council, an overview body, and the Office of National Planning were established; in 1966 the latter office became the Department of Planning and Economic Affairs and later a ministry. Government development continued to be carried out on a project-by-project basis, however, and the larger undertakings were handled by the foreign donors, notably the United States, which furnished grant aid as well as substantial loan capital through the United States Export-Import Bank (Eximbank), later supplemented by large amounts of development aid from West Germany.

Much of the rapid growth in GDP recorded in the 1950s and 1960s had been accounted for by the enclave sector; insofar as this had an impact on the rest of the economy, it had largely been confined to the modern sector, leaving the traditional economy only marginally affected. The income gap between it and the modern sector had progressively widened; in 1970 per capita income was estimated at about \$273 but that of the agricultural subsistence population at \$50 or less. Government-promoted economic development had centered on the formulation and implementation of isolated projects without relating them to the achievement of sustained economic growth. Although basic infrastructure had been expanded, this increase again had not been linked to a broad development strategy to benefit all segments of society. This approach was corrected in the National Socio-Economic Development Plan, July 1976-June 1980, which set out a highly ambitious public sector investment program totaling \$415 million over the period. A supplemental amount of \$85 million was used largely for projects associated with the 1979 OAU summit conference.

A cornerstone of the new effort was integrated rural development projects in the traditional sector. One such scheme had been undertaken before work outlined in the plan started in Lofa County. It was continued, and additional projects were started in Bong and Nimba counties (see Traditional Agriculture, this ch.). By the end of the plan's third year, about 31 percent of the budget had been spent in rural areas and 63 percent for urban projects. Much of the difference in the rural and urban amounts was owing to large expenditures for roads, public utilities, communications, and construction projects in the Monrovia area.

The second socioeconomic development plan, delayed a year after the military coup, covered the period July 1981-June 1985. An optimistic 3.3-percent real annual growth rate in GDP was projected. Total expenditures called for over the four-year period amounted to \$749 million, including net resources from new external loans of almost \$192 million; substantial grant aid

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cial institutions, also resulted in the rescheduling of about \$27 million in payments on the government's commercial debt that were due by mid-1983. These actions postponed the problem only temporarily, however, and the government remained faced with the overwhelming job of finding a way to continue payments of interest and principal on an overall external debt that by April 1984 had reached about \$810 million.

Economic Planning

In conformity with the principles and philosophy of a free enterprise system enunciated in the Open Door Policy, development planning in Liberia has been restricted to public sector investment programs. Over time these programs have grown in importance and have become the major element in the expansion of Liberian commercial agriculture in the non-enclave economy, the development of the traditional sector, and the growth of the country's physical and social infrastructure. But there has been a continuing reliance on private investment and individual initiative as the major instrument for broad economic advancement. In general, the government's attitude toward planning from President William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman to Doe was expressed by the former in the introduction of an early plan:

We are not proposing a plan that calls for a fully planned economy or overcentralized economic decisionmaking. Rather, we are proposing a plan that, on the one hand, will present in some detail the development allocations in the public sector designed to assure that the resources channelled through the budget make the greatest contribution possible to achieving our national goals and, on the other hand, defines policies with respect to the private sector designed to be most conducive to the maximum contribution by the private sector, domestic and foreign, to the rapid growth of a healthy national economy.

Participation in development by the private sector has been encouraged by various incentives and by the implementation of specific policies, e.g., farm pricing. But the government has generally refrained from setting quantitative targets in the belief that other elements besides government policy also were involved in the nature and timing of private investor decisions.

The first government plan was announced by Tubman shortly after the end of World War II. Early planning procedures were elementary, however, and the subsequent development of trained staff, institutions, and data bases took place only very gradually; 30 years elapsed before the first fully comprehensive

ment tax that had long been levied on rural households until repealed by the military government as a burden on the rural population. At the time of the coup this tax had been \$20 per hut. The reinstated tax amounted to a levy of \$10 on the head of the hut, \$7 on the spouse, and \$3 on each child. According to government spokesmen, the new revenues were to be used mainly to carry out rural development projects.

The External Debt

Government external borrowings through the mid-1970s had been generally conservative and consisted mainly of loans on concessional terms—low interest rates and for extended periods—from other governments and the multilateral agencies. At the end of 1975 the outstanding debt was \$219 million, equivalent to about 30 percent of the monetary GDP. Over 90 percent was on concessional terms; the remainder consisted of suppliers' credits and loans from private financial institutions. A major shift in this position began in 1977 as the government sought funds for preparations and financing of the 1979 OAU summit conference to be held in Monrovia. Some part of the loans was reported to have been used to offset lower government receipts because of declining iron ore exports and to meet higher expenditures for petroleum imports. In contrast to the earlier period, a substantial amount of the new loans came from private commercial sources. Interest rates ranged above 10 percent—some almost double that figure—and repayment terms ranged from one to 10 years.

After the military coup budgetary requirements for rice imports in particular and for funds to cover the large pay increases given the military and the civil servants led to rapid use of available credits. At the end of 1980 the external public debt had risen to \$537 million, a sum equal to 48 percent of GDP. A debt service crisis arose, and the government sought relief from creditor countries. In December 1980 an agreement was reached with the members of the Club of Paris (a group of representatives of the Western industrialized nations and Japan). This resulted in the rescheduling of commercial credits and loans guaranteed by member governments that had been accepted by the Liberian government before January 1980. Although the relief was substantial, it proved inadequate under the depressed condition of the Liberian economy, and a further rescheduling occurred in December 1981, covering the 18-month period between January 1982 and June 1983. The two reschedulings reduced debt service demands by an estimated \$44 million. In December 1982 a meeting of the Club of London, a group of commercial creditor finan-

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in the 1979-81 period in manufacturing output, construction, and utilities. In 1982 GDP was down by another 9.2 percent. Statistical data for 1982 and on the economy thereafter remained generally incomplete in mid-1984.

In mid-1980, faced by a domestically unresolvable economic situation, the military government had sought new external aid. From then through September 1983 the United States, the major donor, provided almost \$208 million in economic assistance, of which over \$150 million was in the form of grants. Another \$34.3 million in military assistance (about \$14 million in grants) was also furnished, which helped indirectly to reduce budgetary requirements; part of the aid also benefited the economy in the form of major construction projects (see *The Military and the Economy*, ch. 5). Of particular significance to the restoration of economic viability were the stabilization programs negotiated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—the first in September 1980—and arrangements for an IMF standby financing fund. These arrangements, renewed annually thereafter through September 1983, set forth stabilization measures to be carried out by the government as requirements for continued IMF support.

At the end of April 1984, outstanding drawings from the IMF totaled over \$204 million. Considerable progress toward stabilization had been made in accordance with the mutually agreed lines recommended by the IMF. These included new tax measures, reduction of budgetary expenditures, some improvement in tax collections—particularly of import duties, which were the single most important domestic revenue source—and other steps. In a politically sensitive move, the subsidy on imported rice was discontinued in late 1981. Strong efforts were made to reduce government wage costs. A freeze on new employment was ordered; certain technical and specialized personnel were retained, however. In January 1983 a salary readjustment plan was instituted that cut the salaries of government employees as an alternative to large-scale dismissals. The reductions were based on a scale descending from 25 percent for higher paid employees to 16.6 percent for the lowest. The plan was expected to decrease the government's annual wage bill by about \$27 million; near the end of 1983 the minister of finance stated that the savings had been substantially greater. During the latter part of 1982 salaried public servants had not been paid regularly because of insufficient funds. They apparently fared better in 1983, but reports in early 1984 indicated new pay delays.

The new revenue measures also affected the traditional sector directly in the reinstatement of the hut, progress, and develop-

growth rate (see *Population Growth and Age and Sex Structure*, ch. 2).

At the time the military government assumed power in 1980, the country's economic situation was rapidly deteriorating. The usual current budget surplus, a considerable part of which was used for public investment projects, had declined by almost 93 percent between 1979 and 1981. There were pressing obligations for imports of rice and oil, as well as large interest and principal payments due on the foreign debt. The developing political instability of the Tolbert period had already resulted in a flight of capital; after the coup the flight accelerated. Restrictions had also been placed on government and private offshore credit by foreign commercial institutions. In spite of this, the military government doubled minimum wages for public servants to \$200 a month and raised the pay of the military (see *Morale and Conditions of Service*, ch. 5). Public sector employment was expanded, and the size of the armed forces was also increased.

Large withdrawal of funds by foreign owners depleted the deposit base on which the banking system operated by 40 percent between 1979 and 1981 and brought on a severe liquidity problem. The National Bank of Liberia's external assets declined from \$55 million in 1979 to \$4 million in 1980, and the bank was unable to make payment on government imports and the debt service. Nor could it cover currency purchases from the United States to meet public sector wages and salaries. Capital flight (largely personal deposits) also greatly affected the commercial banks, reducing their lending base substantially and limiting credit availability to the private sector.

The GDP declined in 1980 by 4.7 percent in constant prices and by 5 percent in 1981. In 1979-81 there was an upturn in iron ore production, stimulated by slightly higher prices, to over 19 million tons, but that was still almost 5 million tons less than in the mid-1970s. Output leveled off in 1981, dropped by 10 percent in 1982, and declined further by 18.4 percent in 1983. The 14.4 million tons produced in 1983 was the lowest level since 1964. In 1980-81 rubber's contribution to GDP was moderately better, but this was mainly because of higher world prices rather than output increases—in 1980 production was lower than in 1973. A drastic overall decline occurred in monetary agriculture's contribution to GDP, however, because of a drop in the production of logs. That drop resulted from a weakened world market and, to a considerable degree, from the uncertainty in the forestry sector caused by government reacquisitions of various Liberian-owned forestry concessions after the coup. Declines were also reported

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In the early 1970s iron ore and rubber production continued to show some increase. The growth in iron ore output was at a substantially slower pace, however, as capacity operations (roughly 23 million long tons) were approached. Nevertheless, Liberia became the world's eleventh largest producer. Terms of trade also improved, and during 1970-74 the overall monetary economy expanded by some 4 percent annually. In 1974 the estimated per capita GDP for the enclave economy was about \$2,400 and nearly \$900 for the national monetary economy. (In that year traditional sector per capita GDP was under \$120.) From 1975 rising oil prices and the effects of a growing world recession on iron ore and rubber exports slowed growth. This trend was offset in the late 1970s by expenditures of the public corporations, whose numbers increased considerably during the decade. Moreover, large government outlays were made in 1978-79 for construction of facilities to accommodate the summit conference meetings of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in Monrovia in July 1979 (see Africa, ch. 4). The latter projects, however, added little to productive capacity.

Monetary GDP was estimated to have increased between 1974 and 1979 at a real rate of only about 1 percent. That low rate mirrored an overall image of spreading economic stagnation. Individual sector performance, however, had varied widely. During that period agriculture recorded average annual gains of almost 6 percent; both the concessional and the national monetary sectors contributed. A large decline in rubber production, averaging 4.6 percent a year in 1974-79, was more than offset by the spectacular growth of the forestry concession subsector—almost 29 percent during the decade and over 20 percent between 1974 and 1979—and increased output of coffee and cacao by Liberian farmers. Because of lessened demand, however, there was a cut-back in iron ore production, which declined at an average rate of over 6 percent a year. Other mining activities also dropped. Growth in manufacturing averaging about 12 percent annually continued in 1970-74 primarily because of government encouragement of investment in import substitution industry. The sector remained relatively small, however, contributing only 9 percent of total GDP at the end of the decade, and after 1974 growth slowed as the development of excess productive capacity reduced investor interest in Liberia. The traditional agricultural economy had expanded at a 5.6-percent annual rate in the early part of the decade, but from the mid-1970s growth averaged only 3.1 percent—a figure barely equal to the country's estimated population

cent of total wage earners in the modern sector. The growth in revenues during the decade permitted the government to invest in limited productive and social infrastructure, but much of the development accomplished resulted from United States aid projects that were directly administered by American personnel.

As the 1950s progressed, wages earned in the enclave economy were reflected in larger consumer imports and some development of the commercial sector. Concession purchases of foods and timber encouraged a certain amount of growth, including the establishment of several Liberian-owned transport enterprises. In 1960 Liberia's GDP was estimated at some \$190 million, which was substantially greater than it had been 10 years earlier. But an inordinate part of GDP was attributable to enclave activities, and much of the latter's contribution was sent out of Liberia. There had been no proportionate induced complementary growth in the national monetary economy or distribution of gains among the non-enclave population.

During the 1960s the monetary economy grew in real terms at an estimated annual rate of more than 6 percent. Most of the investment in iron ore mining was in place by the middle of the decade, and output increased substantially from 3.1 million long tons in 1960 to 15.2 million long tons in 1965 and to 21.2 million long tons in 1969. Rubber production by the concessions also rose (as did that by Liberian commercial operations), and there was an increase in output by the timber concessions; these two industries accounted for a major part of agricultural growth. In the late 1960s estimates indicated that the enclave sector was generating about 38 percent of total monetary GDP. In the national monetary economy, manufacturing began to show substantial growth, especially in the latter part of the decade, when the average annual rate was estimated at over 17 percent as large foreign investments brought construction of cement and explosives plants and an oil refinery. The statistically high reported growth rate, however, was mainly the result of the large investment in the refinery rather than a broad expansion of the manufacturing sector. Public sector investment further improved the road infrastructure, which was complemented by three major additions to the still-rudimentary national road system that were built by the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). One stretch from Greenville to Zwedru opened the country's entire southern region. Electric power generation was greatly increased late in the decade by construction of the Mount Coffee Hydroelectric Plant, financed and constructed mainly by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (see *Electric Power*, this



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Markets and Economic Decline, ch. 1). Mistrust of foreign investment (which continued largely unrestricted in adjacent African colonial territories) and the lack of domestic capital, skilled manpower, and leadership to reorganize the economy along modern lines brought economic stagnation that lasted more than 50 years.

The advent of the Firestone Plantations Company in the 1920s introduced an element of modernity. Its enclave operations provided wage employment to many Liberians. Liberian growers were also encouraged to produce rubber commercially. The decade before World War II was a difficult economic period for the company. Its wage outlays were low, and because of depressed world rubber prices, the company was committed to payments under the concession agreement that averaged less than 4 percent of government revenues annually. Overall, Firestone's impact on the development of a broad-based modern sector outside the concessions was limited.

Demands for rubber during World War II brought rapid expansion of Liberian output. This was reflected in increased employment and expansion of Liberian commercial rubber production. The company's contribution to government revenues remained low, however, and little stimulus was given to the growth of the national monetary economy. More significant for the latter were the large-scale United States wartime and postwar construction projects, which provided some of the basic transportation infrastructure needed to encourage economic development—notably the port at Monrovia, local roads, a main paved road to the interior, and Roberts International Airport.

From the early 1950s the modern sector, viewed from the standpoint of total gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary), began to grow rapidly, stimulated by the large investments of international corporations in iron mining and new rubber plantations. After 1951 a new agreement with the Firestone Plantations Company resulted in substantially greater income for the government. After 1954 this was augmented by proceeds from the growing iron ore industry, and during the decade the concession share increased to an annual average of 40 percent of government revenues. The industry became the dominant sector, but iron mining was capital intensive and had few linkages with the national monetary sector. Initially, during the construction period there was substantial employment of indigenous labor, but as projects ended large numbers were let go, such as the 6,000 who had worked on the iron ore export port at Buchanan. By the mid-1960s the industry's regular labor force consisted of only a few thousand Liberians; in 1981 it was under 9,000, or less than 5 per-

cluded production for both local consumption and export, increased employment, and the supplementation of government revenues. Only a few attained profitability, and by the early 1980s the entire sector was in serious trouble and a major drain on government finances. Eventually, the military government decided to sell certain units to interested private buyers, to seek joint private equity participation in others, and to retain those having special functions in the public sector. By mid-1984 a number of the confiscated enterprises had been returned, but only preliminary action appeared to have been taken to dispose of others.

Overview of the Economy

Economic Growth

The natural resources on which Liberia's modern monetary economy was founded included a large amount of agricultural land well-suited for the growing of export-oriented tree crops, particularly rubber, coffee, cacao, palm oil, and coconuts. In mid-1984 the land-to-population ratio of the subsistence economy did not provide a threat to expansion of the commercial tree crop area. Additionally, forest resources, both for internal needs and for export, were extensive; with proper management they were considered capable of sustained harvesting for a relatively indefinite period.

Of major importance were the country's iron ore deposits. These are a nonrenewable resource, however, and although a number of still-unexploited deposits remained in 1984, concern existed over depletion of higher grade ore bodies. Other minerals played only a minor role; their value and any from the possible discovery of commercially exploitable hydrocarbons (for which exploration was under way in 1984) could not be counted on to give a significant impetus to economic development in the near future. Untapped hydroelectric resources, however, constituted a factor of considerable importance.

Development of Liberia's modern sector, which has been integrated into the world system, started only in the late 1920s. Much of the long delay stemmed from the ascendancy of the True Whig Party a half-century earlier and the negative attitude toward change and the parochial interests of its governing elite. Changes in the world economy associated with the expanding industrial revolution, growing trade competition, and depressed commodity markets virtually destroyed the Liberian plantation economy and outward-looking commercial activities (see Lost

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the enclave sector was vital, however, to development of the national economy in the form of the budgetary revenues it contributed and the wage employment it provided.

The economy was characterized by a strong orientation toward external trade, an extremely open economic system that placed virtually no restrictions on foreign trade and international payments, and a general absence of distinction between domestic and foreign-owned enterprises. It was vulnerable to changes in world commodity demands and prices and particularly to any slowdown in the economies of the industrialized nations. The susceptibility to external forces was heightened by reliance on the United States dollar; owing to the lack of currency-issuing powers, the Liberian central bank was prevented from implementing effective countercyclical monetary actions.

These features led to a deepening depression in the late 1970s as the cost of oil rose and international recession reduced demands for Liberia's exports. The situation was worsened by actions of the government of President William Richard Tolbert that saddled the economy with heavy foreign debt service requirements. The military coup of April 1980 was followed by a further marked deterioration as business activity declined. A drop in foreign investor confidence had already led to a substantial flight of capital, and early wage and personnel policies of the People's Redemption Council, headed by Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, greatly increased public expenses. The council quickly stated its intention to maintain the free enterprise system, however, and policies adopted up to mid-1984 had upheld this commitment. The downward trend in the economy continued to accelerate in the first years of the military government, but during 1983 the cumulative effects of extensive aid from the United States and the International Monetary Fund, as well as corrective measures undertaken by the government, appeared to have slowed somewhat the rate of decline. Nonetheless, the short-term prospects for a resumption of significant economic growth did not appear promising in mid-1984.

Although private enterprise was the predominant form of economic activity, over time—and particularly during the 1970s—a variety of public corporations and autonomous government agencies were established. Ranging from intended profit-making commercial operations to regulatory activities and social capital development, the agencies increased in number after the military coup by the takeover of certain enterprises that had belonged to ousted government officials. The public enterprises were planned to support certain national objectives, which in-

IN 1983 LIBERIA'S ECONOMIC HEALTH reached the lowest point it had experienced in over two decades. External factors had contributed in a major way to the development of this situation, and they were expected to exert a continuing influence over any revitalization of the economy during the 1980s. Much of the underlying cause stemmed from historical features that had led, with the cooperation of the Liberian government, to the development and virtual control of the modern sector by private foreign capital. In addition, for various economic and political reasons, there had been a failure over an extended period to develop competent, knowledgeable economic planners and managers and effective indigenous institutions through which they could function. Although somewhat improved, this condition still prevailed in 1984. Not until late in the 1970s had there been a realization that improvements in living standards would not occur by the diffusion of benefits from foreign-dominated economic activities. More vigorous efforts were being made to participate in economic decisions affecting Liberia, but by then world economic conditions were rapidly deteriorating. The government's struggle to cope with their effects in Liberia was not successful, and the plight of the economy by the end of the decade had reached a crisis stage. Formidable obstacles to recovery still remained in mid-1984.

Structurally, the economy exhibited a major division into traditional and monetary sectors. The former, mainly an agricultural subsistence economy comprising a majority of the population, followed traditional patterns of production based largely on upland rice culture. The monetary economy was further divided into an enclave sector, consisting primarily of foreign-owned concessions that functioned relatively independently, and a Liberian-managed national sector. Overall, the monetary economy accounted for roughly 80 percent of the gross domestic product.

The modern economy rested—as it had since its emergence in the decade before World War II—on a narrow base of production and export of commodities by the enclave sector, which in 1984 consisted of iron ore, rubber, and forest products. Direct production and consumption linkages between the sector and the national economy were limited, the operations in the enclaves being mostly vertically integrated with those of the international companies of which they were subsidiaries. The performance of

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A rubber plantation worker tapping a rubber tree

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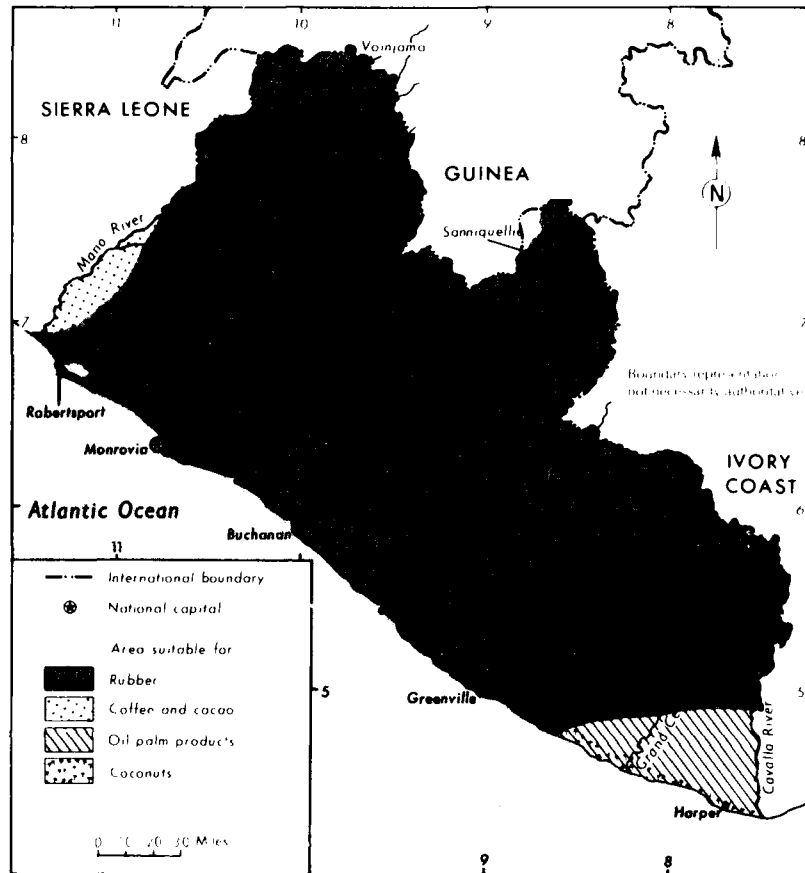


Figure 8. Areas Generally Suitable for Commercial Tree Crop Cultivation

found mostly in hilly and mountainous areas, are lithosols (soils that are characterized by imperfect weathering and low humus and mineral nutrient content). Although they support tree and other woody vegetation, these soils have little value for agriculture. Other soils include sandy varieties (about 2 percent) found along the coast that are generally infertile (although they support large numbers of coconut trees, as well as oil palms), alluvial soils in the river bottoms, and swamp soils. The alluvial soils, when drained and fertilized, are well suited to growing swamp rice and other crops. Swamp soils, especially those known as half bog soils, are naturally rich in humus, and when drained they provide ex-

cellent conditions for swamp rice.

Although there have been some local soil surveys, countrywide data were insufficient in mid-1984 for a broad evaluation of soil potentials and agricultural suitabilities. For the near future, however, cultivable land to meet the needs of the subsistence population, as well as for expansion of export tree crops, was quite satisfactory. According to estimates of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in the early 1980s, only about 1,430 square miles of the country's total land area (roughly 3.9 percent) were used for cultivation. Permanent tree crops, such as rubber, coffee, and cacao, occupied 946 square miles, or two-thirds of the cultivated area; short-life crops, mainly foods, were produced on about 485 square miles. FAO also calculated that more than 21,000 square miles of additional land was in temporary bush and tree fallow—much of it at a stage available for agricultural use (see Forestry, this ch.). There was little pressure on the fallow areas in the less heavily populated rural regions, and about 80 percent of the subsistence farmers in those regions were reportedly using for crops new land on which the age of the tree or bush stands was seven or more years. The situation was different, however, in heavily peopled areas near the towns where the fallow cycle on good land has been found to be as short as four years, a period generally inadequate to allow the replacement of natural soil nutrients.

Land Tenure

In 1984 almost all land was the property of the state. The principal exception consisted of a relatively limited amount held in freehold, located almost entirely in urban areas; some plantation and other commercial farm operations were also privately owned. Under the Constitution approved in 1984, private property rights did not include the rights to any mineral resources on or beneath the land or on land beneath the sea and the waterways of the country. Moreover, where land was held in fee simple, it could be held only by Liberian citizens. An exception to the latter proscription allowed ownership by noncitizen educational, missionary, and benevolent institutions as long as the holding was used for the purposes for which it was acquired. Property no longer so used reverted to the state.

A considerable part of public land was statutorily held by subsistence agriculturists under a system of tenure based on traditional customary law. The traditional principles and practices of land tenure differed in detail among various ethnic groups, but all were based on the fundamental concept of communal rather than



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individual proprietorship. The land itself was under the control of the chief or headman, who held it in the form of an ancestral trust and administered it as the legal representative of the community. With the permission of the chief or headman, each household selected an area to be farmed for its own needs. The size of the area depended on the size of the household and the labor requirements that it could meet. In the early 1980s the average subsistence household, estimated to consist of five to seven people, cultivated about three acres of upland rice and one to two acres of other crops.

Subsistence farmers in general were secure in their tenure under customary law, but the lack of a registered title in some cases acted as a disincentive to land improvement because of the inability of the farmer to obtain credit for its development. The expansion of roads in rural areas has reportedly resulted in the speculative securing of titles to land by nonfarmers. In the areas encompassed by the government's major agricultural development projects, project authorities were assisting farmers to obtain title before infrastructure improvements attracted outside land buyers.

Acquisition of public land by foreigners was possible through leasehold; some Liberians also acquired land on that basis. Leases were ordinarily for 20 years, but exceptions were permitted by law (the concession held by the Firestone Plantations Company, granted in 1926, was for 99 years). Other government land was acquired by Liberians under regular titles for plantations and commercial farms. These organizations used hired labor, and limited use of wage workers was made even by subsistence farms experiencing labor shortages because of the migration of family members to urban areas. Tenancy, sharecropping, and other systems of nonownership cultivation, however, did not appear to be generally practiced in 1984.

Traditional Agriculture

The traditional small agriculturists produced most of the country's food crops. Estimated to number about 160,000 households in the early 1980s, their total production and related economic activities accounted for about 18 percent of GDP. About 90 percent of the households cultivated rice, and about 70 percent also grew cassava. Other crops included maize, yams, taro, okra, sugarcane, peanuts, and assorted vegetables. Bananas and some citrus fruit were also grown around farmhouses. Additionally, one of every four to five households had a small section of land, averaging between about one-half an acre and one acre, on

which coffee or cacao trees were grown to provide cash income. Rice, which constituted more than 90 percent of the smallholder output, was grown under rainfed conditions. The generally low fertility of soils and the nutrient needs of the rice plant to produce a reasonable harvest forced farmers to clear new land each year for their rice crops. In the new area most of the large trees were cut down and burned; the ashes returned to the soil minerals that, along with organic materials accumulated during the fallow period, furnished sufficient nutrients for one crop of rice. If the soil was then not too infertile, it was used for a second or third year to grow cassava and peanuts, after which it was left to return to bush fallow. The system of short cultivation periods and the succeeding fallow term of usually eight or more years appeared to maintain an environmental balance without noticeable erosion and destruction of the soil.

About 10 percent of the rice production was swamp rice. The principal difference between traditional cultivation practices and those used in the growing of upland rice was the pre-germination of seed, which was then broadcast over wet freshwater swamp soils. The higher nutrient content of swamp soils permitted rice to be grown for four or five years, followed by a brief fallow period of only one or two years. Improved upland rice strains have been introduced in the integrated agricultural development projects (ADPs), and increased yields more than 25 percent above the average of 1,000 to 1,100 pounds per acre, using traditional varieties, have been reported. Many farmers, however, were reluctant to switch to the new strains because of concern over their ability to produce adequate crops as against the known certainties of traditional varieties. In swamp rice culture, efforts have been made to introduce irrigated cultivation using Asian-style hand technologies. An average of about 2,360 pounds per acre was achieved in the ADPs compared with about 1,400 pounds by the traditional method. But certain disadvantages have acted as disincentives to any great shift to swamp rice cultivation. They included factors such as danger from waterborne disease, inability to intercrop the rice in flooded fields with vegetables or other edible plants—a usual practice with upland rice—and a reported preference for the taste of upland rice. Lack of experience with water controls has also adversely affected results. In particular, the disruption to long-established family living patterns closely related to the upland rice culture cycle has tended to discourage change.

The Rice Supply

Until after World War II and the start of urban growth, domestic production satisfied most of Liberia's demand for rice. But the local output was gradually affected by the movement of labor from subsistence farms to mining, agricultural wage employment, and construction jobs, and imports of rice became an inescapable requirement. Rice was purchased from domestic farmers by the Liberia Produce Marketing Corporation (LPMC), an autonomous government entity, but the farmer was free to sell on the private market. Efforts by the LPMC to buy rice were affected by the official price offered, which for a long time was largely based on the government objective of providing cheap food to urban areas. The low purchase price was generally unattractive to the farmer, who was further dissatisfied with the LPMC's handling procedures. LPMC producer price-support schemes were tried to encourage production for the market, but the overall results were not especially significant. In general there have been no restrictions on rice imports. Private traders have engaged in the business, but by far the larger quantity has been imported by the LPMC. LPMC policies have had little impact on domestic production, but the large amount of rice the corporation imports has had a major effect on prices throughout the country, mainly by adjusting import duties to maintain low urban prices.

Rice imports in 1965 totaled over 35,000 tons. With a rapidly growing urban population, they rose to 59,000 tons in 1971—a high to that point. Concern over the increasing outlay for rice imports led the government in the period 1973–74, when world rice prices were rising, to allow prices in Liberia also to go up. This action was followed by a decline in urban consumption and a drop in imports to 34,000 tons in 1975. The higher domestic price was maintained through import tariffs, even after a decline occurred in the world market, thereby producing substantial additional revenues for the government. Subsequently, prices in the international market again rose beyond the earlier high, but the LPMC maintained the domestic level. In doing so, the corporation was finally selling rice at a considerably lower figure than it paid for the commodity—in essence, providing a substantial consumer subsidy from government resources. In 1978 almost 68,000 tons were imported, and in early 1979 consideration was given to raising the domestic price. Reports of a large price increase spread in Monrovia, leading to the destructive so-called rice riots in April (see *The Rice Riots*, ch. 1). The government's reaction to the latter was a further reduction in the rice price, and in fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) 1979–80 a further cost to the government was

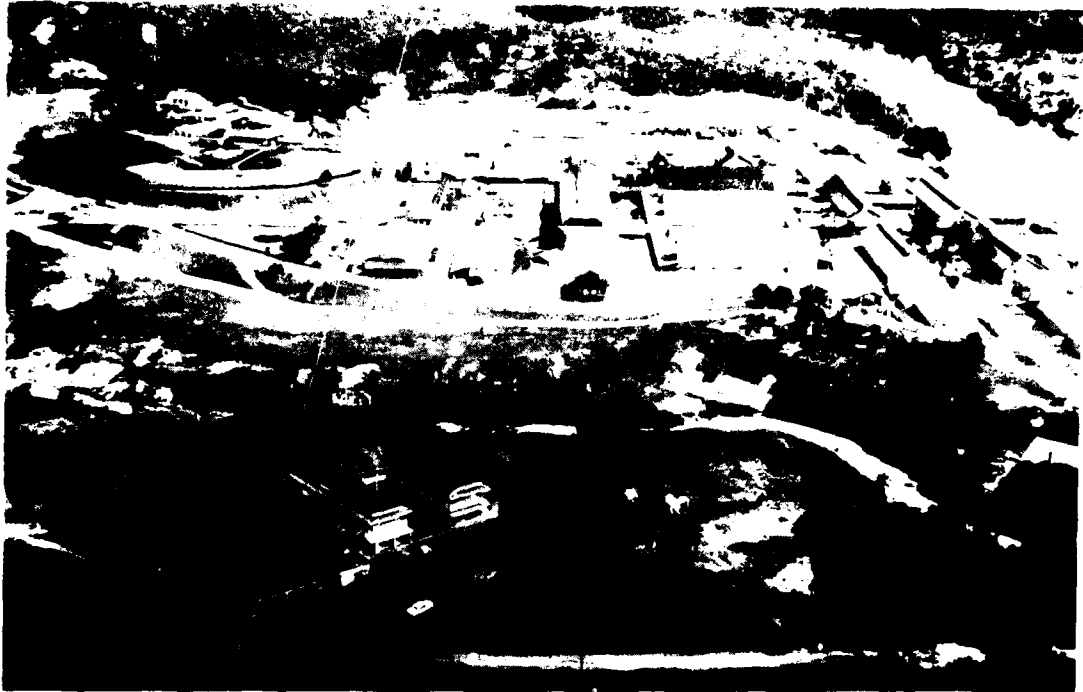
estimated at about \$3 million. Apparently for political reasons, the People's Redemption Council continued this subsidy program, which cost almost \$5 million in FY 1980-81. Liberia's worsening financial situation, however, led finally to a major increase in the domestic rice price in September 1981 sufficient to cover import costs and to provide some revenue for the state. The government declared its intention to raise the price again if world prices increased, but as of mid-1984 further action had not been reported.

In the early 1980s imports averaged over 100,000 tons annually. They accounted for about 70 percent of the country's total marketed rice. The growth in the imported quantity appears in part to have been caused by the higher pay scales introduced for the military and public employees and the further increase in buying power that resulted from the personnel added to the military and civil service payrolls. Estimates of consumption in the early 1980s placed the annual per capita average close to 275 pounds. The total may be somewhat lower than that, however, when reduced by the unknown amount of rice shipped illicitly from Liberia to Guinea and Sierra Leone.

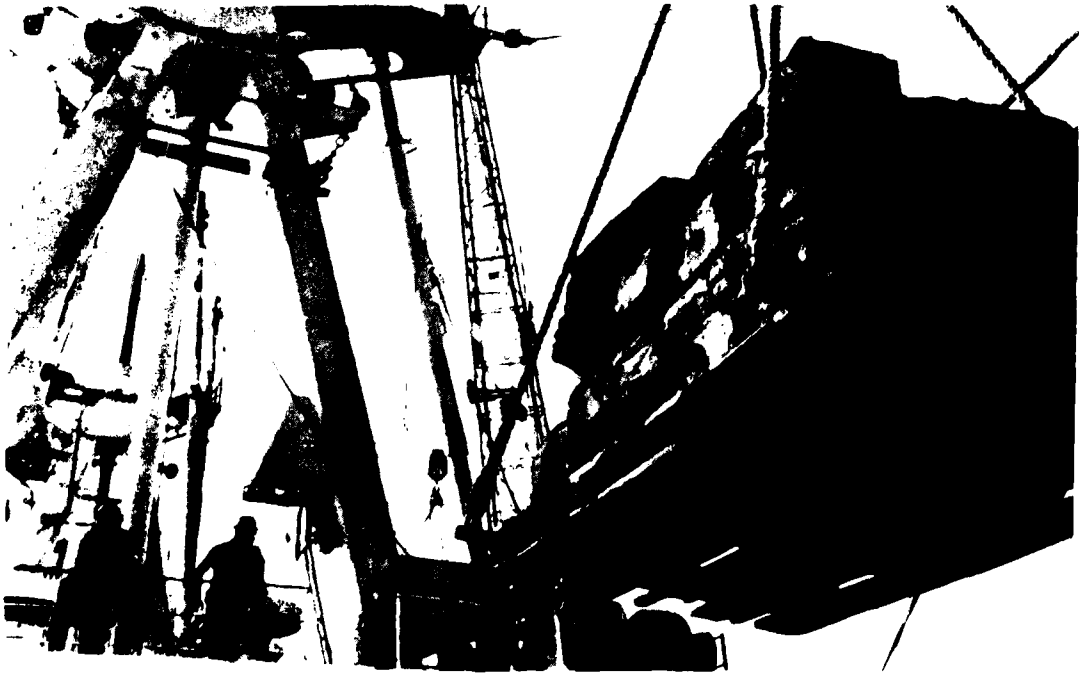
The United States has been the principal supplier of rice, usually accounting for roughly three-quarters of the imported amount. Part of the amount has been provided since 1980 through the United States Food for Peace Program (Public Law 480) at highly concessionary rates. Imports under the program that year totaled almost 15,000 tons, and in 1981 they were over 33,000 tons. In 1982 the United States Congress approved a \$15 million PL480 allocation for Liberia, and the same amount was authorized for 1983.

Commercial Crops

Rubber has been the dominant cash crop since the start of production in the 1930s by the Firestone Plantations Company. In the early 1980s rubber accounted by value for some 70 percent of all agricultural exports, and the industry employed almost 30 percent of all Liberian wage earners. In 1983 rubber was produced by five large foreign-owned concessions, one large Liberian concession under government control, and about 5,000 private Liberian commercial plantations and farms, which ranged in size from five acres to 1,000 acres. The foreign concessions, operating under individual agreements with the government, used generally capital-intensive production methods and modern agricultural practices and inputs. They were run by highly trained, mainly expatriate managerial and technical staffs. They possessed



*Aerial view of the Firestone Plantations
Company operation at Harbel*



*Baled rubber is loaded on chartered ships
for transport to foreign markets.*



Tankers deliver liquid latex from field stations to a processing plant.



A rubber worker spraying young rubber trees in preparation for replanting.



Tapping a rubber tree demands great skill as a thin, precise incision is made in the bark.

Photos courtesy Firestone Tire and Rubber Company

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well-developed infrastructures that benefited not only employees of the concessions at all levels but also the areas adjacent to the concession. These concessions, however, were also characterized by generally high overhead costs that affected their operational profits, most markedly during periods of low world prices for rubber.

In 1984 rubber concessions in Liberia were dominated by American companies. The most important of these was the Firestone Plantations Company, which held concessions of 130,000 acres at Harbel, east of Monrovia, and another of 20,000 acres near Harper, in southern Liberia; together, Firestone had about 84,000 acres planted on these concessions. The Liberian Agricultural Company (LAC) was established in 1959 by Italian interests but was subsequently taken over by Uniroyal. Its concession consisted of 600,000 acres east of the port of Buchanan of which some 22,000 acres were planted. Another American concern, the B.F. Goodrich Company, acquired a 600,000-acre concession north of Monrovia in 1954 and eventually planted about 18,000 acres in rubber trees, but Goodrich sold the operation in 1981. A fourth company, which included American shareholders, was the Liberia Company. Established in 1949, the company had a concession of 100,000 acres, of which about 6,200 acres had been planted.

Large concessions held by other than American interests included those held by the Salala Rubber Corporation, a joint Dutch-German venture begun in 1959, and by a privately owned Liberian firm, the African Fruit Company. The former had planted some 6,200 acres on a 100,000-acre holding. The latter's concession, dating from 1952, consisted of 600,000 acres located near Greenville in Sinoe County, but less than 6,000 acres had been planted at the time of the 1980 coup. The African Fruit Company's concession was confiscated in 1981 by the military government, and there was little information available about subsequent operations there. In April 1984, when Doe announced the decision to return confiscated properties to their owners, he excluded agricultural land, explaining that such property had been contracted out "in the interest of government."

Operating on a much smaller scale, Liberian-owned commercial rubber farms first appeared in the early 1900s, when the rubber tree was introduced into the country from South America. The industry became important commercially at that level, however, only after the start of Firestone's large-scale operations and mainly as a result of the American company's encouragement of outgrower farm development through the provision of planting

materials and technical assistance. Liberian participation in the industry was given a further stimulus by high prices for rubber after World War II. By 1950 some 460 privately owned rubber farms existed. A decade later the number had risen to almost 2,400 farms, and it reached 5,000 in the 1970s. Larger, more efficiently operated farms were the primary beneficiaries of the assistance furnished by Firestone and other companies, and by the 1970s their yields paralleled those of the concessions.

The numerous small rubber farmers, most of whom cultivated holdings of less than 10 acres, received little or no assistance from the concessions. Their stock was of generally poor quality, grown mostly from unselected seedlings, and management and production standards were low. Beginning in 1978 the government undertook a program aimed specifically at helping farmers having holdings of less than 150 acres. This has been carried out by the Liberian Rubber Development Unit (LRDU), established that year as a semiautonomous agency within the Ministry of Agriculture. The LRDU's principal aims have been to furnish extension services; provide financial assistance for replanting with improved seedlings; rehabilitate old trees that have tapping potentials; improve on-farm processing; and train workers in modern techniques. The project in 1984 covered Montserrado, Bong, Nimba, and Grand Bassa counties. The accomplishment of LRDU's replanting and rehabilitation targets was set originally at five years from 1979 but was subsequently altered to eight years. The delay in implementation has been attributed to the farmers' slow initial response to the program but appears in some degree to have been affected also by lower world rubber prices in the early 1980s.

Total rubber production in 1960 was 47,400 tons, of which the concessions accounted for 40,450 tons (about 85 percent) and Liberian farms for about 6,950 tons. In 1970 the total reached 85,650 tons; 70 percent (25,350 tons) was produced by Liberian commercial operations. Growth in output during the 1970s was relatively slow, and total production stood at about 90,000 tons in 1980 and 1981. In the latter year the concessions accounted for 73 percent and Liberian farms for 27 percent. In the early 1980s, lower world rubber prices and declining producer returns acted as disincentives, to both the concession and the small farmers, to expand planted and tapped areas or to replant with higher yielding strains. At least one-fourth of all rubber trees were believed to be past the peak production period, and another one-fourth would reach that stage before the end of the decade. Eight years would be required for a newly planted tree to reach producing

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age. However, substantial numbers of trees on Liberian farms were not tapped—over 60 percent on farms under 125 acres (in 1974) and about 20 percent on the concessions (in 1980).

Coffee is native to Liberia. Consisting of a distinct species (*liberiaca*), it soon became a cash crop for the early settlers who sold coffee to foreign trading vessels. By the 1840s more than 21,000 trees had been planted, mostly in Montserrado County. The coastal counties remained the principal scene of coffee cultivation until after World War II, when the robusta variety was introduced, and widespread planting occurred in Nimba and Lofa counties. These two counties have since become the largest areas of coffee growing; in 1982 Nimba County accounted for about 31,500 acres and Lofa County for 36,700 acres out of a total area devoted to coffee, estimated that year at some 92,000 acres.

Coffee production was overwhelmingly in the hands of Liberian smallholders, both commercial and traditional. Most of the commercial growers cultivated areas of coffee trees under 25 acres and the coffee holdings of the traditional cultivators averaged less than two acres. A large part of the existing coffee trees were grown from run-of-the-mill seed, were mostly planted in the 1950s, and have produced low yields. In the mid-1970s the government established the parastatal Liberia Coffee and Cocoa Corporation (LCCC) to assist coffee growers. The program has included the establishment of nurseries to provide improved seedlings. Under the program, proposed new planting were set at about 5,500 acres for the period 1977–82. But less than 25 percent of the goal reportedly had been reached by the latter year.

The amount of coffee produced in Liberia was not definitely known because undetermined quantities regularly entered the republic's trade channels from neighboring countries. In the early 1980s exports ranged from about 9,000 to 11,000 tons, and roughly 700 tons were consumed domestically. Liberia has been a member of the International Coffee Organization (ICO), which in the early 1980s set an export quota on Liberia's sales to member-buyers of approximately 9,600 tons annually. Some coffee was also sold to nonmembers. Libya, a nonmember, had reached an agreement with Liberia to purchase some 2,200 tons annually from 1981 through 1985. But Liberia was unable to meet the goal in 1981 and 1982, providing during that two-year period a total of less than 2,800 tons.

The cacao tree, whose seeds are the source of cocoa, cocoa butter, and chocolate, is believed to have been first introduced in the early 1900s by Liberian Kru and Grebo laborers who had worked on plantations on the island of Fernando Po in the Gulf of



*Processing oil palm kernels at a
commercial plant near Greenville
Courtesy Werner Gartung*

Guinea. It was grown in the coastal area occupied by those ethnic groups in southeastern Liberia, but production remained relatively limited. After World War II a large foreign-owned plantation was started in northern Liberia, where ecological conditions were considered better. The area proved less than ideal, however, and the plantation eventually was converted to rubber. Subsequently, the production of cacao beans, like coffee, has been a smallholder activity. Existing trees were mostly planted in the 1950s through the use of unselected seeds. Yields have been generally low, and many trees by the late 1970s were past their peak production period. The LCCC nurseries were also producing hybrid cacao seedlings that were expected to improve future output materially.

In the early 1980s most cacao was produced in Bong, Lofa,

and Nimba counties, which together accounted for about three-quarters of the 85,000 acres in Liberia devoted to this tree crop. Few cacao products were used in the country, and the volume of cacao produced was related primarily to world market prices. In the late 1970s exports were under 5,000 tons annually, but government figures showed a rise to over 7,000 tons in 1981, apparently stimulated by world demand. The acreage in cacao trees was reported to have expanded from 63,900 acres to 85,000 acres between 1977 and 1982. The expansion has been attributed mainly to the growth in number of agricultural smallholder households.

In contrast with rubber, coffee, and cacao production, a large part of the palm oil produced was obtained from wild trees. The oil palm grows throughout Liberia but is particularly abundant in the coastal savanna, where areas of oil palms have been estimated to average 30 trees per acre. Inland the trees grow in fallow areas, and groves are found around villages. Palm oil is a principal item in the Liberian diet, and a large number of agricultural households make their own oil from wild fruit. A number of private Liberian and joint Liberian-foreign commercial operations were engaged in growing oil palms in the early 1980s. In addition, several parastatals, including the LPMC, the LPPC, the Buto Oil Palm Corporation (BOPC), and the Decoris Oil Palm Corporation (DOPC), had ongoing programs to expand formal plantings of oil palms. The BOPC and DOPC operations, which in early 1984 appeared to be functioning satisfactorily, were based on plantations that were supplemented by production from the groves of smallholder contractors. As of 1983 the parastatals, principally BOPC and DOPC, had almost 15,000 acres in oil palms. The major private operations had close to 5,000 additional acres.

In the early 1980s production of palm oil was estimated at over 27,000 tons, of which roughly 22,000 tons were consumed domestically; the remainder was exported. Little palm kernel oil was used in Liberia, and exported production declined in the 1970s from about 4,500 tons in 1976 to 2,100 tons in 1980. It was anticipated that exports of palm oil and palm kernel oil would increase during the 1980s as existing plantings under the parastatal projects reached bearing age and acreage increased.

Ecological conditions in Liberia's sandy coastal zone offer an important potential for the commercial cultivation of coconuts and the production of copra, an exportable item in world demand; eventually coconut oil would also be exportable. Individual households in the coastal zone regularly planted coconut trees, but in the early 1980s purely commercial operations consisted of

only a few plantations and an LPPC project in the Greenville area of Sinoe County. The latter project included the provision of hybrid seedlings to smallholders for some 20,000 acres; about 700 acres were reported to have been planted by 1981. Domestic consumption of coconuts was estimated at 6,500 to 7,000 tons in the early 1980s.

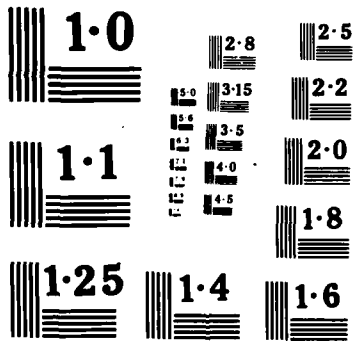
Communal Farms

The communal farm system has been in existence only since 1981, when so-called producer cooperatives were established by a proclamation of the head of state; few operational details were available in mid-1984. The counties and the several territories were directed to set up cooperative farms, which were mainly to grow upland rice. Figures for 1982 indicated that each county was responsible for starting farms that would occupy a total area of 3,500 acres. Thus 31,500 acres within the nine counties would be involved in the producer cooperative program. The farm area for each territory was unknown but appeared to be at least 1,500 acres. It was not clear whether sociopolitical views were a motivating factor, but increased food production and the generation of jobs were stated aims. Also believed to be a possible objective was the generation of funds for public works in the counties and districts that would replace the revenues lost when the military government abolished the hut, progress, and development tax after the coup. (This tax was restored in 1983.) Farmers living within the area of a communal farm were required to contribute labor for the new undertaking, amounting to three days a week at one of the communal farms during the harvest season. A farmer was apparently subject to a fine or imprisonment if he failed to comply.

Livestock

In 1984 the livestock sector of agriculture occupied a minor position in the monetary GDP. Its most important contribution was in poultry raising, egg production, and a generally limited output of pork and beef. Goats and sheep were found in the traditional economy, and there were usually some chickens around the villages. Horses were virtually absent because of the presence of the tsetse fly. Although cattle were found in various parts of the country, their raising was also seriously hampered by the same disease vector; moreover, there was also a shortage of good grazing areas. Substantial expenditures of foreign assets were regularly made to satisfy urban requirements for imported beef.

The most common cattle in Liberia are a native West African



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shorthorn breed. Brown or black in color, they are relatively small animals that forage on the natural vegetation and are generally resistant to tropical diseases. Each of them attains a maximum weight of about 500 pounds. A slightly larger animal of the Ndama strain has been introduced from Guinea. This breed is particularly resistant to sleeping sickness (trypanosomiasis) transmitted by the tsetse fly. The Ministry of Agriculture, after considerable experimentation with different breeds and strains for adaptability to Liberian conditions, has recommended raising the Ndama. Herds are found in the coastal savanna in the area of Monrovia, where they provide a source of beef for the city.

Sheep and goats are found throughout the country; they are small breeds kept primarily for meat. In the mid-1980s there were also about 100,000 hogs. Some pig farms operated on a commercial basis near the large urban centers, but they were relatively small, hampered by the lack of proper domestic feeds. The government had promoted hog raising, and efforts have been made to improve the small native animal, which seldom exceeds 100 pounds in weight. In 1984 an American-owned flour mill in the Monrovia area had proposed construction of a feed mill that would use residue from its flour milling operations, together with other domestic materials and some imported grains, to produce feeds for commercial pig farms.

Chickens, which are kept by rural families throughout the country, are of native breed, small in size, and poor layers, producing only about 50 eggs a year partly because of feed deficiencies. During the 1960s a number of Liberians established commercial chicken farms with government aid to supply meat and eggs to urban areas. By the end of the decade, egg production was reported to meet urban requirements. Most commercial operations in 1984 were located in the vicinity of Monrovia. The price of chicken meat was high—in early 1984 well over \$1 a pound for whole birds. A major problem in raising poultry commercially was the cost of feed, most of which had to be imported. The proposed feed mill at Monrovia would reduce the dependence on imports and presumably encourage expanded production of broilers.

Forestry

In 1984 Liberia's forestry resource remained one of its most important assets. Situated south of the Tropic of Cancer, in the moist belt along the coast of West Africa, more than 75 percent of the country's land area was covered by forest and woodland. Included in this cover were some 3,500 square miles of virgin pro-

ductive forest. Commercial exploitation of forest areas for logs and timber for export began in a small way in the early 1960s. Early operations were hindered by a lack of access roads in commercial forest areas and by the high cost of new road construction. In 1963 about 4 million board feet of timber were exported. Ten years later the reported total was 105 million board feet. During the 1970s the annual total varied considerably, but in the latter half of the decade exports averaged well over 100 million board feet a year, reaching a high of 166 million board feet in 1980. The increasing importance of the forestry sector was apparent in its growing share of GDP, which rose in constant terms from 1 percent in 1970 to 5.2 percent in 1980. During this period the value of logs and sawn timber exports in current dollars increased from \$5.9 million to \$72.5 million, accounting in 1970 and 1980 for 2.5 percent and 12 percent, respectively, of total merchandise export earnings. The situation changed drastically in 1981, however, when earnings declined to a little more than \$41 million. A substantial drop in production that occurred that year has been attributed in considerable part to economic uncertainties after the change of government in 1980. But a decline in international prices and the effects of the increasing value of the dollar on market competitiveness were also important factors.

The country's forests consisted of two predominant kinds, which, with the transitional mixed forest between them, accounted for all but a minor part of the total tree vegetation. Evergreen hardwood rain forests, whose trees exhibited no marked seasonal leaf fall, occupied large areas in a wide zone paralleling the coast in which the annual rainfall was over 80 inches and there was no pronounced dry season. Beyond this zone, in the more northerly and northwestern parts of the country, the forest consisted of moist-climate semideciduous species. This vegetation resembled the rain forest in general appearance, but leaves were lost in an annual pattern, although not all species shed their leaves at the same time; thus, trees were bare for varying periods. The remaining tree vegetation included the mangrove forests of the brackish lagoons and the edges of some rivers in the coastal area. The coastal area was also characterized by a strip, roughly 10 miles in average width, consisting mostly of wooded savanna that had arisen as the result of the clearing of the original rain forest by cultivators, subsequent burnings, and deterioration of the soil. In 1984 the vegetation was mainly scattered low trees, oil palms, bush, and occasional patches of remnant rain forest. Similarly, in a relatively extensive area of the far northwest and in a small part of northern Nimba County, heavy cultivation over a long period

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accompanied by consistent burning had also degraded land that formerly had been covered by semideciduous forest to a savanna of scattered fire-resistant trees and high grasses.

The species of trees in the present-day high forest and other evidence, including ancient burial sites, indicate that a large part of the forest area had at one time been exploited for agriculture. Early in the second millennium A.D., shifting cultivation, in which upland rice was a main crop, spread through the area. Much of the then-virgin forest was cut over by a population that is believed to have been substantially larger in the middle of the millennium than exists in present-day Liberia (see *The African Background*, ch. 1). From about the sixteenth century, however, this population was greatly reduced by slave trading, disease, and warfare. A large part of the land temporarily in tree fallow reverted to high forest, although the latter was of a secondary character, having trees that differed from those of the original forest.

Under forestry legislation enacted in 1953, areas of national forests were established in various parts of the country. They were largely uninhabited regions, and agriculture—especially of a shifting nature—was prohibited in them; some encroachment, however, has been reported. Varying in size from about 17 square miles to 1,985 square miles, they encompassed in the late 1970s over 6,400 square miles, or 17 percent of the land area. About 61 percent was located in the rain forests of southeastern Liberia, another 36 percent consisting of both rain and semideciduous forest was in the northwest, and the remainder was in the northern part of the country. Cutting of trees in the national forests and other high forests was regulated by the government. Exploitation has been effected through a system of leased concessions, the first of which was granted in the 1950s. In the early 1980s about 75 percent of the high forest was in the hands of such concessionaires, approximately three-quarters of whom were foreigners (in 1982 foreigners held 33 concessions in all). Of the other concessions, 10 percent were Liberian owned, and Liberians held majority interests in another 15 percent.

There were about 235 tree species suitable for timber, but only about 150 of these were found in sufficient volume for economical exploitation. In 1984 fewer than one-third of the latter were generally known in world markets. A handful, including species classified as West African mahogany, redwood, and walnut, had intrinsic values that made them readily marketable, but other exploited species faced strong competition.

The country's large forestry resources have tended to di-

minish interest in reforestation and tree plantation development. Some experimental plantings of exotic species were begun in the early 1960s by the Forestry Experiment Station of the University of Liberia. In the early 1970s concessionaires under leasing agreements began some reforestation, and during the decade the government initiated a program with foreign aid. A main objective of the program has been the establishment of industrial plantations. In the early 1980s reforested and plantation areas totaled about 16,000 acres (25 square miles), according to the Forestry Development Authority, an agency set up under 1976 legislation to administer forestry matters.

Fishing

The fishing resources off the Liberian coast in 1984 were believed to be considerable and included such well-known food fish as croaker, grunt, sea bream, mackerel, snapper, sole, grouper, tuna, and various sardines. Shrimp, rock lobster, crab, and oysters were also caught. Until 1955 commercial fishing had been carried out solely by Kru fishermen living along the coast and by the Fante from Ghana, whose enclave settlements were found in all larger towns and in some smaller coastal villages. Fishing was mainly by hand lines and small nets from dug-out canoes, some of which had outboard motors. Estimates of the total catch vary widely but have been as high as 5,000 tons a year.

The best fishing grounds lie a considerable distance off the coast. In 1955 exploitation began by the new Liberian-owned Mesurado Fishing Company, which used a fleet of small trawlers. By the early 1960s the company had established a number of cold storage facilities throughout the country, including at the Firestone plantation at Harbel, the iron mine at Bomi Hills, and the towns of Buchanan, Gbarnga, Nimba, and others. It also acquired refrigerated trucks. The modern commercial fish catch, largely by Mesurado, rose from about 1,180 tons in 1960 to almost 11,000 tons in 1975. Nearly 600 tons of shrimp were also taken that year and were quick frozen in a plant built by the company. The total catch, including that by Kru and Fante fishermen, met a substantial part of domestic demands until 1980, when output by Mesurado ceased because of financial constraints that prevented maintenance of its fleet in operating condition. The company continued to supply local demands, however, through imports, which amounted that year to 14,400 tons. Three new fishing companies began operations in 1982, and in mid-1983 Mesurado entered into a joint fishing venture with American interests. Details on Mesurado's subsequent operations were not available in 1984.

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Inland subsistence fishing was carried on in the lagoons, swamps, streams, and rivers throughout the country. Rough estimates placed the catch at about 4,000 tons a year. The construction of fish ponds began after World War II, and in the early 1960s fish farming had received encouragement from the government. The extension of the frozen fish supply network by Mesurado appears to have reduced the market for pond fish. There was also the likelihood that the ponds had not been properly maintained, resulting in reduced output, and by the early 1970s many ponds were reportedly out of operation.

Mining

The mining sector has been the single largest contributor to GDP since the mid-1960s, when iron ore became the dominant industry. During the early 1970s it accounted for some 31 percent of total GDP. Its share declined from the mid-1970s, however, to about 21 percent when value added by iron ore (about 95 percent of the sector total) fell. Mining's share again rose to almost one-quarter of total GDP in 1980 and 1981, but drastic declines in iron ore production occurred in 1982 and 1983. Only three minerals—iron ore, diamonds, and gold—were economically significant in 1984. A considerable number of other minerals had been located, and some deposits had a possible economic potential. Included were barite; bauxite; clay; ilmenite, rutile, and other heavy sands minerals; quartz sands; and phosphate. There were also varying deposits of chromite, copper, lead, zinc, columbite-tantalite, manganese, tin, and tungsten; but in mid-1984 it appeared that none could be profitably exploited.

Iron ore exports have been the principal source of hard currency earnings. In the early 1970s, when iron ore exports averaged 23.4 million long tons a year, they accounted for approximately 65 percent of export receipts; at the middle of the decade they accounted for over 70 percent. During the second half of the 1970s, however, the effects of the world depression on the iron and steel industry resulted in a drop in exports of ore to an average of 18.9 million long tons, and the share of earnings fell to about 57 percent. The impact of lower exports was lessened somewhat by better unit prices for the ore that averaged \$15.70 per long ton in 1975–80 compared with \$8.10 per long ton in 1970–74.

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, iron ore profits had provided annually about 18 percent of the government's tax revenues; in FY 1976–77 the amount rose to 21 percent. Sub-

sequently, the profits of the iron mining companies dropped drastically, and losses were experienced after 1979 as a result of greatly increased production costs occasioned by the rise in the price of petroleum fuels, higher costs for equipment, supplies, and freight, and lower export earnings. Government receipts from profit-sharing arrangements with the companies dropped steadily; FY 1981-82 receipts, almost entirely from royalties, accounted for only 1.5 percent of total government revenues.

Major deposits of iron ore have been found in various parts of the country. Four of these—in the Nimba Range, in Bomi Hills, in the Bong Range, and at Fono on the Mano River—have been mined on a large scale. Among unworked deposits in 1984 were ore bodies in concessions or leased areas in the Bea Mountains and in the Putu and Wologizi ranges. Surveys and studies of these deposits had been made, and foreign interest in their development existed; but the international iron and steel situation had apparently delayed action. The country's first commercially exploited deposit was in the Bomi Hills northwest of Monrovia, where American interests had received an 80-year concession in 1946. The major shareholder in the Liberian Mining Company (LMC), which exploited the deposit, was Republic Steel Corporation of the United States. The first ore was shipped over an LMC-built railroad to the port of Monrovia in 1951 (see Railroads, this ch.). By 1960 annual production had risen to 3 million tons and was generally maintained near that level during the decade. Output declined in the early 1970s as ores were exhausted and operating costs mounted. In 1977 only 393,000 tons were produced, and the mine closed that year.

By 1965 three additional mining concerns had commenced production. The National Iron Ore Company (NIOC), holding an 80-year concession on the Mano River some 90 miles northwest of Monrovia, started ore shipments in 1961. These were sent to Monrovia over an NIOC-constructed rail line and via the Bomi Hills line. NIOC shareholders included the Liberian government (50 percent), LMC (15 percent), and private Liberians and Americans (35 percent). Until the mid-1970s NIOC produced well over 3 million tons of ore a year, but output declined thereafter because of marketing, technical, and financial problems to 1 million tons in 1981 and 1982 and 830,000 tons in 1983. The mine reportedly still had substantial reserves, but its facilities needed rehabilitation to make operations viable. In 1982 the World Bank (see Glossary), the African Development Bank, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and a consortium of foreign commercial banks provided the equivalent of \$57.7 million for

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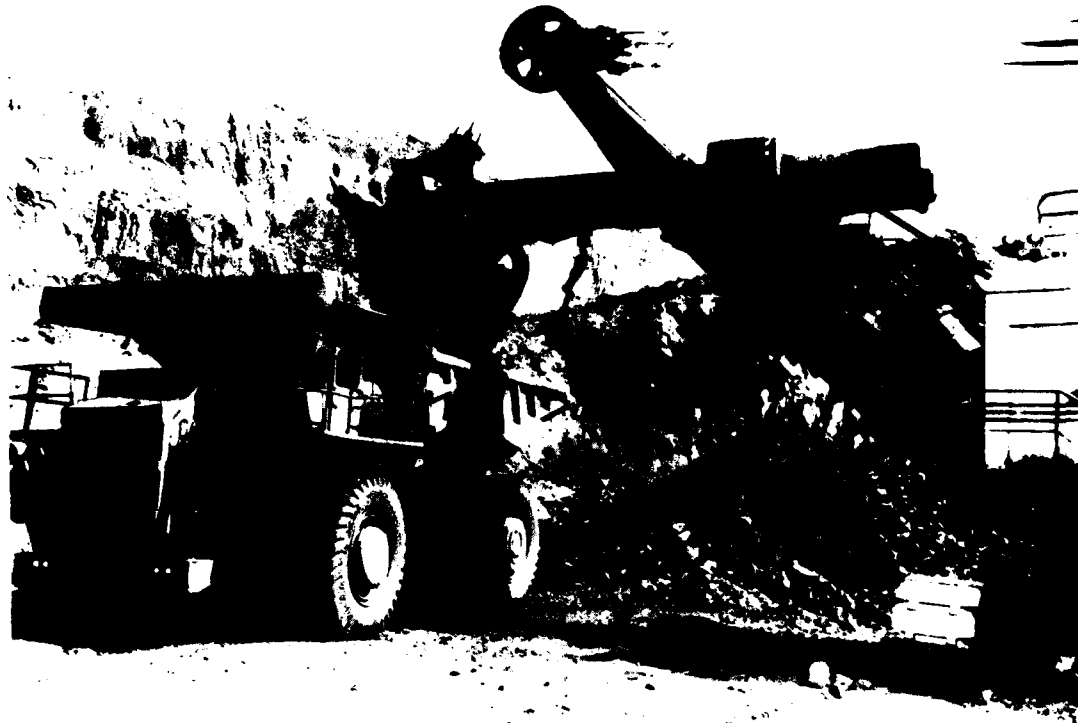
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this purpose. The project, which included raising the ore concentration plant's capacity to 3 million tons a year, as well as restoration of the railroad and other facilities, was being carried out by a subsidiary consulting firm of United States Steel.

The largest operation in early 1984 was the Liberian-American-Swedish Minerals Company (LAMCO), a joint venture that accounted for about half of Liberia's annual iron ore output. Seventy-five percent of the company was owned by a consortium in which the government held a 50-percent interest; a Swedish consortium held 37.5 percent; and Liberian and foreign private interests had 12.5 percent. The remaining 25 percent of LAMCO was owned by the Bethlehem Steel Company of the United States. In June, however, Bethlehem's holding was acquired by the Liberian government, and the company committed itself to buy 2 million tons of iron ore annually for the next three years. LAMCO was granted its concession in the Nimba Range near the border with Guinea in 1953 but began shipping ore only in 1963, when the port of Buchanan, which the company had constructed, opened for traffic (see Ports, this ch.). The mine's capacity was about 12 million tons of ore a year from a deposit at the start-up of operations having a proven reserve of some 250 million tons of 60 to 70 percent iron content. In the late 1970s output dropped to about 9 million tons, and American and European ore demands declined.

The LAMCO ore deposit under exploitation was nearing depletion in the early 1980s. Feasibility studies on opening another major deposit in the concession were carried out, but a substantial investment estimated at about \$300 million was required; the project remained in abeyance in mid-1984. There also were proposals to move the potentially large output from ore deposits across the Guinean border via the LAMCO rail line to Buchanan if they were developed. In 1983 LAMCO's production had declined to 6.6 million tons. The company reported losses, but its exact financial situation was unclear in mid-1984.

The second largest iron mining operation was in a 30-square-mile concession located 50 miles north of Monrovia that had been granted in 1958 to the German-Liberian Mining Company. The firm was owned jointly in equal shares by the government and a consortium of German steel companies. Actual operations were carried out by the Bong Mining Company (BMC), some two-thirds of whose shares were owned by the German consortium and one-third by Italian steel interests; the ore was shipped to the plants of these two shareholder groups. The ore body had an average iron content of about 38 percent, which was increased to



*Heavy equipment used by the
Bong Mining Company in its
recovery and transportation
of iron ore north of Monrovia
Courtesy Werner Gartung*

about 65 percent by concentration. Pelletizing, which required a high energy input, was also carried out. The profitability of the mine slumped as the 1970s progressed because of rising petroleum fuel costs. The production from the mine, which began in 1965, was shipped to the BMC pier at Monrovia port over a company-built rail line. By the early 1970s the output was over 5 million tons a year. From 1974 through 1978 output was generally over 6 million tons, and from the late 1970s to 1983 it averaged more than 7 million tons. At that rate reserves were expected to last to the mid- or late 1990s.

The existence of diamonds was reported in Liberia in the late nineteenth century, but the first confirmed discoveries were in 1906, when stones were recovered from alluvial deposits that were being panned for gold. Since then they have been found in

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various parts of the country, but the major locations have been in Lofa and Nimba counties. Most mining was carried out on a small scale using crude equipment. Output remained quite small until after World War II. In 1950 finds in the lower parts of the Lofa River, as well as subsequent discoveries, resulted in mass diamond rushes that involved tens of thousands of potential prospectors. Many of them were from the rubber plantations, and their departure caused serious disruption in rubber collecting. In 1958 the government passed legislation to control prospecting, mining, and trading in diamonds. At the same time substantial fees were established for licenses.

Data on diamond production have not been considered reliable. Liberia's use of the United States dollar as its unit of currency and domestic factors in neighboring Sierra Leone, where substantial quantities of diamonds were also produced, were believed to result in extensive smuggling of the precious stones into Liberia. Published production figures are for the quantities exported. Both gem quality and industrial stones are found, and annual export earnings vary depending not only on world price fluctuations but also on the relative quantities of each category. In 1970 some 800,000 carats having a value of \$5.7 million were exported. In 1976 only 320,000 carats were exported, but earnings totaled \$16.6 million, or 3.6 percent of the value of all exports. Prices soared, and in 1979 the value of diamond exports reached a high of \$39.6 million, or 7.4 percent of total export receipts. In 1983 some \$17.2 million was received from the sale of 330,000 carats of diamonds.

Gold, mined almost entirely from alluvial deposits, was the only other mineral producing export earnings in 1984. Mining began in 1881 with the establishment of a Liberian-owned company. Other operators and individual miners exploited gold-bearing alluvial deposits in the early 1900s, but the total amount of gold recovered before War World I was quite small. Subsequently, gold was found in numerous river and stream deposits throughout Liberia, and placer mining became widespread. Output varied greatly, however; many deposits were small and were soon exhausted. In 1938 some 2,080 ounces were exported. In 1943 a new discovery of the mineral in Grand Cape Mount County led to a gold rush; that year almost 31,000 ounces were exported, and nearly the same amount was exported in 1944. A decline in output subsequently occurred, but in 1950 exports still were above 12,000 ounces.

Available data on gold for the 1950s and 1960s were based on purchases by the Bank of Monrovia, to which by law gold had to

be sold. During the two decades the amount bought in most years was under 2,000 ounces. Until the late 1970s purchases continued to remain small because the fixed purchase price was \$35 an ounce at a time when open market prices were substantially higher. Gold mining had also been restricted to Liberian citizens. These regulations were altered by the Gold-Diamond Act of 1979, which revised the earlier 1958 legislation on diamond prospecting, mining, and trading to encompass gold as well. The law permitted foreigners to participate with Liberian owners of gold claims in developing the deposits. Approval was also given brokers and dealers to purchase and export gold, and a gold appraisal office was established in the Ministry of Lands and Mines to facilitate exportation. Provision was also made to adjust the local price of gold regularly, depending on world prices. A thriving open market reportedly developed. From 1,086 ounces exported in 1979, the amount rose to 7,243 ounces in 1980 and to almost 19,200 ounces in 1981. A substantial drop occurred in 1982, but nearly 15,400 ounces were exported in 1983. The revised law had apparently resulted in some foreign investment, and one company was reported to have introduced mechanized digging equipment.

Manufacturing

The development of modern manufacturing in Liberia began in the mid-1940s. With the exception of the Firestone rubber concession, the economy had been closed to foreign capital until Tubman enunciated his Open Door Policy in 1944 (see Open Door Policy, ch. 1). Opportunities for investment were limited, however, by the small domestic market, the lack of infrastructure, and the underdeveloped financial system. A decade and a half later, the manufacturing sector still was quite small, consisting of a few scattered industries that produced items such as bricks, cement blocks, tiles, wooden and metal furniture, some daily-use household goods, and articles of clothing. Acetylene and oxygen were bottled, and a few other industrial items were manufactured. Well over 70 percent of the manufacturing establishments were in Monrovia or its environs. Most of them were small, a fact brought out by a 1963 survey in the Monrovia area, which found that more than 86 percent of the manufacturing enterprises had 10 or fewer employees. Of the 779 establishments counted, 407 were operated by one person. Manufacturing employment in modern industries at the time was between 1,500

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and 2,000 workers.

During the 1960s a number of larger industries were established, including a brewery built by Swiss interests, a paint factory, two tire retreading plants built by American rubber concession subsidiaries, a plastics factory, and a shoe factory (the latter by a Swedish chain that had plants in other African countries). A large chemical and explosives factory was opened in 1964 by American and Canadian interests. A 125,000-ton capacity cement plant, whose construction was financed mainly by Lebanese, began operation in 1968. In the same year an oil refinery built and owned largely by an American oil company also started production (see *Petroleum*, this, ch.). Smaller factories included oil and rice mills, an aluminum parts plant, and a confectionery factory.

Investment in manufacturing was given a new impetus by provisions of the Investment Incentive Code, enacted in 1966, which established very favorable customs and tax benefits for investors. Until the early 1970s government policies on manufacturing were aimed principally at the promotion of import substitution industries, and various tariff measures were adopted to protect domestic producers. A major result of this policy was the establishment of plants that were capital intensive and highly dependent on imported raw and semiprocessed materials. Many plants had production capacities greatly excessive for the small domestic market, but the virtual monopoly granted individual industries still permitted reasonably profitable operations. The resulting benefits to Liberia itself were relatively modest. The structure and operations of the plants did not materially promote employment. The cost of the imported materials, expatriate staff, and the freedom to remit profits and earnings abroad resulted in a comparatively low return to the Liberian economy. In 1973 the code was changed to encourage the use of local materials, production, and assembly of products for export and the development of small-scale, labor-intensive manufacturing. These objectives were subsequently incorporated in the country's National Socio-Economic Plan, 1976-1980. They continued to be main policy aims in the early 1980s, to which the military government added the goals of increased skills and training and the greater participation of Liberians in management.

During the early 1970s the manufacturing sector grew at an average annual rate of well over 12 percent. New industries included the manufacture of batteries, tobacco processing, biscuit making, and the production of cardboard boxes, detergents, foam rubber, small tools, and vehicle trailers. In 1976 the parastatal Liberia Rubber Processing Corporation opened a new factory.

and the government-owned Liberia Sugar Corporation, an integrated sugar complex constructed with the help of funds and technical assistance from Taiwan, started production. When Liberia subsequently recognized China, Taiwan withdrew its technical personnel, and in 1977 personnel from China replaced those from Taiwan. The sugar company suffered persistent losses, however, and closed down during FY 1981-82.

From the middle of the decade, investment slowed, and manufacturing growth was reported to have averaged only 5.3 percent a year between 1974 and 1980. The size of the domestic market continued to be cited as a major reason for lack of investor interest. Regional expansion of the market through economic integration was a desired solution. Liberia was part of the Mano River Union, which in 1984 included Sierra Leone and Guinea, and also of the members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Both sought to establish customs unions to improve trade and mutual development. As of mid-1984 their achievements remained slight for Liberia in terms of inducing investment in manufacturing (see Africa, ch. 4). Under legislation enacted in 1975, the government also established a free trade zone at Monrovia. Managed by the Liberia Industrial Free Zone Authority (LIFZA), the facility was underused in 1984.

Despite the growth achieved by manufacturing during the preceding 20 years, at the start of the 1980s the sector's contribution to GDP remained small. Available data for 1980 showed that manufacturing accounted for 7.8 percent of GDP, in current prices, compared with 4.3 percent in 1971; in constant 1971 prices, its 1980 share was 5.8 percent. The sector contained more large enterprises, but the domination of small operations was still evident in another survey conducted in the Monrovia area in 1981, which found that of the 852 enterprises enumerated, almost 94 percent had 10 or fewer employees; 541 plants (63.5 percent of the total) employed one to four persons, and only 11 had more than 100 workers. Employment in manufacturing had risen to nearly 7,600, but this constituted only 1.6 percent of total wage workers. Liberian-owned establishments numbered 537, and 293 others were owned by foreigners; the rest had mixed ownership.

After the 1980 military coup many manufacturing enterprises experienced major difficulties as a result of interference by government and military personnel in their operations. Equipment was destroyed, and supplies and manufactures were stolen. Intimidation and harassment by soldiers reportedly continued for a considerable period of time. Labor problems also arose from worker indiscipline and demands. Various plants closed, and

which roughly 98 percent went to ECOWAS states (mainly Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone). Imports in about the same amount from the continent also came mainly from ECOWAS.

The open nature of the economy and the absence of controls over foreign assets have made the compilation of reliable balance of payments statistics difficult. Bolstered by large foreign asset earnings from iron ore, rubber, and other commodity exports, the trade balance was positive throughout the 1970s (except in 1977) and through 1981 (see table 10, Appendix). During the decade service payments became an increasingly negative influence, mainly as a result of remittances abroad of profits by the concession sector, wages by expatriate personnel, and government interest payments. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the trade surplus, in addition to transfers—mainly grants from abroad to the public and private sectors and receipts from shipowners using Liberia's flag of convenience—appear to have approximately offset the deficits elsewhere; the current account seems to have been in balance.

More complete balance of payments estimates from 1974 showed a substantial drop in the trade balance from 1975 through 1979 and a growth in service payments. Net transfers, which ranged from \$25 million to \$35 million from 1974 to 1980, met only a small part of the deficit. The current account negative balance (reported at \$46.4 million in 1974) increased markedly during this period, reaching a high of \$158.2 million in 1978. Improvement in merchandise trade receipts from 1979 to 1981 helped to lower the deficit to \$65.4 million in the latter year. The favorable inflow of foreign investments that had highlighted capital movements through 1978 turned negative in 1979, and capital outflow increased after the military coup; the net decrease in foreign investment in 1981 alone was \$42.9 million. The outflow was reported to have continued through the early 1980s, but figures were unavailable in mid-1984. The country's foreign assets imbalance was reflected in a growing negative reserve position in the banking system (\$150.5 million in 1981) and in the foreign assets crisis experienced by the government from the late 1970s. As a result there arose an inability to pay for imports of petroleum and rice or to meet service payments on the external debt.

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Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments

Foreign trade has been of major importance to the economy, as evidenced in its relationship to GDP. Between 1978 and 1981 export earnings accounted for an average, in current prices, of 63.5 percent of monetary GDP and 47.5 percent of total GDP, a far greater share than was found in other African countries within the World Bank's oil-importing, middle-income group. The principal exports were limited to a small number of commodities (iron ore, rubber, logs, diamonds, coffee, and cocoa), thereby making the economy highly sensitive to the vagaries of the world market. In 1984 the future of the economy appeared linked inextricably to the performance of its foreign trade sector. Iron ore was the largest foreign assets earner and together with rubber and logs accounted for about 80 percent of total export earnings (see table 6, Appendix).

The range of imports was substantially greater than that of exports, reflecting the economy's great dependence on raw materials and consumption goods in particular, together with machinery, parts, and transport equipment (see table 7, Appendix). Crude oil and fuel costs increased dramatically as the result of rises in world prices—from \$14.7 million in 1973 (13.6 percent of raw materials imports and 6 percent of total imports) to \$152.1 million in 1980 (50.5 percent and 28.5 percent, respectively). Food was the principal element in consumption goods imports and rice the main item; the latter, at \$42.9 million in 1981, accounted for 53.3 percent of food imports and 9 percent of total imports. The requirements for increasing expenditures on fuels and rice had in the early 1980s substantially reduced imports of capital goods for productive projects.

The United States and members of the European Economic Community (EEC—also known as the Common Market) were the principal customers for Liberia's exports (see table 8, Appendix). The United States' share was over 20 percent. Within the EEC, West Germany accounted for about 24 to 25 percent. The dominance of the two countries was related to shipments of iron ore and rubber by American- and German-controlled subsidiary companies in Liberia. The United States and the EEC countries also provided the greater amount of Liberia's imports (see table 9, Appendix). The United States furnished the largest single amount, averaging about 25 percent of the total from 1971 to 1981. In 1981 the United States share was 29.8 percent; Saudi Arabia in 1981 provided 19.1 percent, consisting of crude oil and petroleum products. Liberian exports to African countries were small, amounting in 1979–81 to between \$10 and \$13 million, of

between Buchanan and Yekepa. In effect, the total railroad contribution to public passenger and freight transportation had been virtually nil. Railroad construction, however, had necessitated the building of parallel service roads. These opened new transport routes to the interior that subsequently became part of the national road system.

Civil Aviation

In 1984 two Liberian airports served international traffic. The principal one, Roberts International Airport, located about 50 miles southwest of Monrovia, was able to handle all modern aircraft, including wide-bodied jets. This airport was built early in World War II by the United States (see *The Barclay Administration*, ch. 1). It was improved in 1961 to accommodate jet aircraft, and its operation was taken over by Pan American Airways under contract with the Liberian government. The runway was lengthened and widened in the 1970s. During the decade international passenger traffic had increased at an average annual rate of 11 percent—from 51,797 passengers in 1971 to 117,779 in 1979. A significant drop occurred in 1980, attributed mainly to effects of the military coup. With the gradual restoration of confidence in the economic and political situation, passenger traffic increased to 97,150 in 1981. In 1984 international service was provided by Pan American and several other large carriers.

Spriggs-Payne Airfield on the outskirts of Monrovia provided regional air service. The airfield was also the base of government-owned Air Liberia, which provided service in mid-1984 to eight other domestic airfields. Air Liberia's passenger traffic had increased steadily from 1976, when it totaled 28,771, to 83,220 in 1979. The coup resulted in a drastic drop in passengers, but the airline has also been affected by financial problems caused in part by higher fuel costs and a resultant cutback in flights. Inadequate funds to purchase spare parts, a decline in use as a domestic mail carrier, and other factors also contributed to the situation. The total number of passengers declined in 1980 to 65,662 and in 1981 to 36,444.

A considerable number of other small airfields and airstrips were scattered through the country. They included airstrips maintained by the concessions, some of which had their own aircraft. Small planes provided private air taxi services to various parts of the country.



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Robertsonport, capital of the latter. Most of these roads were still laterite-surfaced in 1984.

Despite the achievements in road development, the network remained generally inadequate. Many agricultural areas had poor, roundabout connections with markets and the ports, and large areas of the country, especially in the southeast, still did not have any roads. Lack of government funds had also resulted in inadequate maintenance; in the early 1980s about 27 percent of the unpaved public roads were reported as no longer usable, and another 55 percent required laterite resurfacing to maintain their usefulness. In early 1984 the International Development Association (IDA) approved a credit equivalent to \$11.4 million to improve road maintenance. USAID was providing a grant of \$3.1 million for the project, and the Liberian government was contributing another \$4.9 million. A three-year routine road maintenance program was being carried out over the entire public road system, including periodic maintenance work on about 450 miles of laterite roads.

Railroads

Although proposals for the construction of rail lines to carry passengers and freight dated back as far as 1912, no construction had taken place by World War II because the estimated costs had far outweighed the expected economic return. The postwar development of iron mining resulted in the building of lines to four mines by the concession enterprises. The first, a line having a gauge of three feet six inches, was constructed in 1951 by the Liberian Mining Company (LMC) to connect its mining site at Bomi Hills with the port of Monrovia, 42 miles away. In 1961 a branch from this line was extended 48 miles to the mine opened by the National Iron Ore Company (NIOC) on the Mano River. In 1963 a standard-gauge line (four feet eight and one-half inches) 166 miles in length was built by LAMCO from its mining area in the Nimba Range to the company's newly constructed port at Buchanan. A third line was completed in mid-1964 by the Bong Mining Company from Monrovia to a mine in the Bong Range. This line, 48 miles long, was also of standard gauge. The mining concessions were given the right to furnish services to the general public, but they have been at most only minimal and incidental to the transport of ore and concession supplies. LAMCO, however, was required by its concession agreement to provide limited common carrier service. In the early 1980s the LAMCO line carried small amounts of general cargo, rubber, and timber on a contract basis and 100 to 200 people daily on a regular passenger service

ing use of them was also made by the general public. Development of a public road system designed to encompass the entire country began only in about 1950. At the beginning of World War II there were only some 100 miles of roads usable by motor vehicles and only slightly more than double that amount in 1949; most were in the Monrovia area. By 1964 substantial investment in roadbuilding, including direct construction by foreign aid donors, had increased the extent of public roads to 1,750 miles. About 160 miles of these transportation arteries had asphalt surfaces; another 980 miles were of laterite. Work on the road network intensified during the latter half of the 1960s, resulting in the establishment of the present-day trunk road system. In 1971 the primary roads that formed this trunk system totaled 1,144 miles, including 203 miles of paved surfaces and 941 miles covered with laterite. Little change had occurred since then other than upgrading.

At the beginning of 1982 the trunk roads had a combined length of 1,165 miles, of which 366 miles were paved, and 799 miles had laterite surfaces. The main emphasis during the 1970s was on the construction and improvement of secondary and feeder roads to provide access to rural areas. All-weather secondary roads increased from 487 miles in 1971 to 1,285 miles in 1981, and feeder roads were expanded from 1,270 miles to 2,344 miles. Most of the private road expansion also took place during this same period; these totaled 1,270 miles at the end of 1971.

In 1984 the trunk road system centered on Monrovia, from which primary roads radiated to the northeast, the southeast, and the northwest. Northeastward, the trunk road ran through the more heavily populated rubber belt to Yekepa near the LAMCO iron mine in the Nimba Range. From Gbarnga a major branch ran northward to the populous northern part of Lofa County and Voinjama, the county capital. From Voinjama the road proceeded west to a connection with a main road in Guinea. Another major branch, running southwestward from Ganta, traveled by a circuitous, divided route to the ports of Greenville and Harper. As of mid-1984 the main trunk road to Yekepa had been paved as far as Ganta. Most of the other primary roads in this northeast trunk network had laterite surfaces.

The remaining two trunk systems were less extensive. One to the southeast went to Roberts International Airport, Harbel, and the port of Buchanan; it was mostly paved. The northwest trunk road ran to the Mano River iron mining area and connected with the road system of Guinea. Branches tied into towns in Montserrado and Grand Cape Mount counties, including

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the International Trust Company, an American corporation, whose New York City office in 1984 continued to handle ship transfers and registrations for Liberia.

From five ships in 1949, the Liberian registry grew by 1958 to 975 ships having a combined gross registered capacity of 10 million tons. Two decades later the registry had over 2,500 vessels totaling 80 million gross registered tons. A large part of the world's super tanker fleet was included; at the end of 1982 registry figures showed 850 vessels having a combined 108 million deadweight tons. Since establishment of the registry, international opposition of varying nature and degree to flags of convenience has been encountered. The principal advantage for American shipowners is that they can avoid paying wage rates imposed by maritime unions by hiring seamen from Third World countries. The shipowners and operators maintain that this enables them to compete successfully for ocean traffic and to innovate and modernize. Major opposition has come from organized labor. The general public has also objected because of massive oil spills attributed to unqualified officers and to safety violations arising from unsatisfactory equipment. Liberia does, however, inspect all vessels for loading levels, mechanical soundness, navigation equipment, and crew conditions. At the beginning of the 1980s the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was in the forefront of the effort to abolish the flag of convenience process, and a large number of countries associated with UNCTAD attempted to persuade Liberia to phase out its registry. This call was rejected by the West African republic in January 1980. Assurance was quickly given by the military government after the coup in April that no changes would be made in the existing maritime structure. Only a few ships left the registry after the coup.

Revenue from the registry has been a continuing source of income for the government. The amount obtained annually has varied, declining from a high of \$16.5 million in 1975, when it constituted 13.2 percent of total revenues to \$10.7 million, or 4.8 percent, in 1980. The effect of the world recession on shipping was a significant factor. In 1981 Liberia increased its registry charges, and in 1981 revenue rose to \$20.1 million (9 percent of total revenues).

Roads

Liberia's road network at the beginning of 1982 was estimated at 6,268 miles, of which 1,474 miles, or 23.5 percent, were private roads. The latter had been constructed and maintained by the concessions to meet their own infrastructure needs, but vary-

the result of infection by Panama disease, and rubber tree cultivation was undertaken instead. A breakwater and a 590-foot pier were finished by the end of the decade, but storage and cargo-handling facilities were not in place until late 1964. Although some rubber has passed through the port, the principal export has become logs from the interior. From a total of 153,000 long tons of cargo handled in 1975 (of which 92 percent was logs) total cargo passing through the port had increased to almost 332,000 in 1980. Most of the timber companies in the area, however, ceased or reduced operations after the April 1980 coup. Low timber prices in Europe, the principal market, also played some part, and total cargo handled in 1981 amounted to only 175,000 long tons. A modernization of the port, with the help of West German funds, was reported to have been completed in 1983.

The port at Harper was also expected to bring improvement to the local economy by providing facilities to move rubber from the Firestone concession in the area as well as timber exports. A breakwater between the mainland and an offshore island, as well as a pier, were constructed in 1959. Rock used in building the pier, however, lowered the island's elevation, and at times flooding of storage facilities occurs. The government had proposed rehabilitation of the port, but this action has remained contingent on the receipt of foreign assistance to fund the work. In the late 1970s and in 1980 total traffic through the port averaged about 54,000 long tons and declined to less than 47,000 long tons in 1981. Logs constituted over 50 percent of the total.

Maritime Shipping

The Liberian-owned merchant fleet in 1984 consisted of only a handful of small oceangoing and coastal vessels, but some 2,000 other ships, which were foreign owned, sailed under Liberia's "flag of convenience." In terms of the number of ships, the Liberian registry ranked third in the world after Greece and Panama, but its more than 70 million gross registered tons (almost 137 million deadweight tons) put Liberia in first place.

The origin of Liberia's flag of convenience dates from 1947, when the procedure was promoted as a source of revenue for the government by former United States secretary of state Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., in conjunction with other plans for private investment in Liberia. In 1947 and 1948 the Liberian Maritime Code was fashioned under Stettinius' direction—essentially in line with the wishes of American shipowners—and was adopted by the Liberian legislature in December 1948. Under the code's provisions, management of the ship registry was placed in the hands of

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sored foundation, which would use them in Liberia for educational and cultural purposes. In 1972 management of the port was assumed by the National Port Authority (NPA), a financially autonomous public corporation.

Facilities at Monrovia Free Port included a 1,150-foot general cargo pier capable of berthing three large ships and three specially equipped ore-handling piers constructed by the iron mining companies. In 1984 the LMC pier was no longer used for ore exports and was under consideration for conversion to a container facility. Privately owned installations included a dry dock, jetty, and pipeline for discharging oil tankers; petroleum tank farms; and storage tanks for latex rubber; port-owned facilities included transit sheds, cranes, and other cargo-moving equipment. In the late 1970s and in 1980-81, total cargo through the port ranged from 9 to 11 million long tons annually, of which 85 percent or more was iron ore. Petroleum products, the second largest category, constituted about 4 to 7 percent of the total. There was a marked increase in containerized cargo from a mere 2,700 long tons in 1977 to some 85,000 long tons in the years 1978 through 1980 and 590,000 tons in 1981.

Liberia's other deep-water port is at Buchanan, some 100 miles by road southeast of Monrovia. It is also an artificial port, formed by two breakwaters. It was developed by LAMCO in the early 1960s from a small coastal settlement to provide facilities to ship iron ore from the company's mine in the Nimba Range. Opened in 1963, the port has two quays, one 875 feet long to handle ore—a conveyor belt permitted ship onloading at the rate of 6,000 tons an hour—and a 1,000-foot quay used for general cargo. The latter accommodated relatively small quantities of log exports as well as imported petroleum and other supplies and equipment for LAMCO. The total volume of cargo handled has varied depending largely on the world demand for iron ore. In the early 1970s annual ore shipments were more than 11 million long tons, about 98 percent of all cargo loaded and unloaded. In 1983 the exports totaled only 6.9 million long tons, according to LAMCO. Buchanan port came under the purview of the NPA but, in agreement with the government, was operated by LAMCO.

The two other modern ports at Greenville and Harper accommodated only shallow-water vessels. Construction of the port at Greenville was undertaken in the late 1950s, at the government's behest, by the African Fruit Company, at that time a German-owned concession, as a step toward improving the economy of the southern part of the country. The company had established a banana plantation originally on its concession; the effort failed as

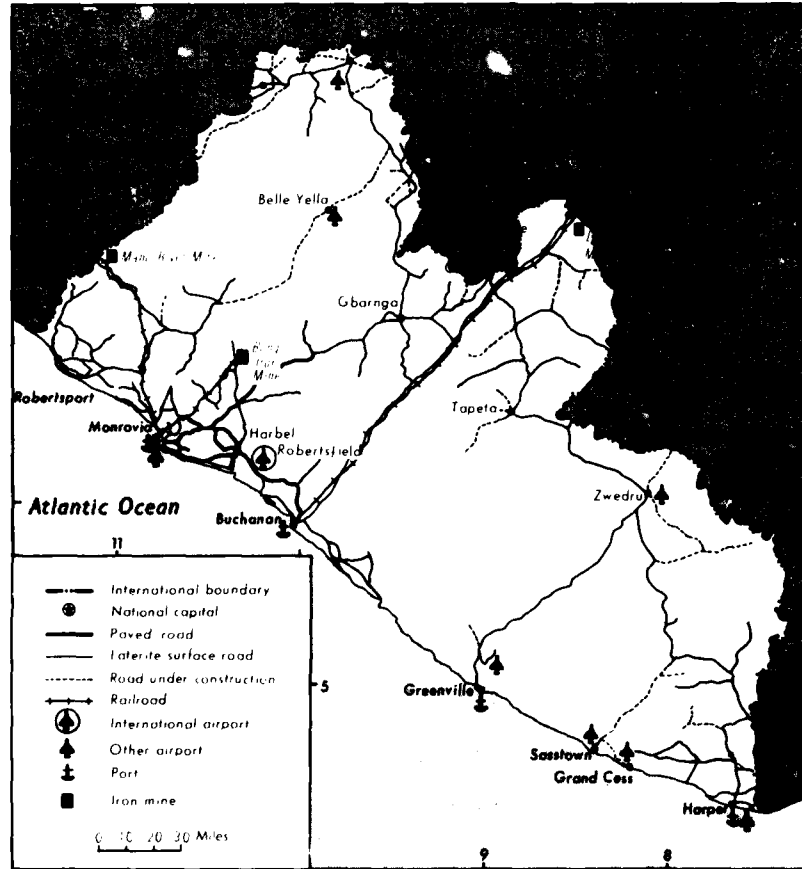


Figure 9. Transportation System, 1984

ment of duties as long as the goods are reexported. The port was originally operated by the Monrovia Port Management Company, an American corporation whose shares were held by United States shipping interests, concessionaires in Liberia, and the Liberian government. In 1964 the government became full owner under a new agreement. At the time, \$19 million in construction costs remained outstanding. Liberia was to pay these over a 35-year period, and the funds were to go to a jointly spon-



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In March 1983 widespread shortages of gasoline, among other things, led to the dismissal of the head of the LPRC. In August Doe issued an executive ordinance abolishing LPRC's monopoly on imports and establishing a free market. The National Energy Committee appointed earlier by Doe had recommended closing the refinery and noted that direct importation of all refined products could save as much as \$20 million a year. Information was unavailable in mid-1984 on the status of the refinery, but LPRC was one of the public corporations being considered for sale to private interests.

Transportation

Liberia's domestic transport infrastructure in 1984 consisted of distinct public and private elements. A public road network of about 4,800 miles radiating from Monrovia connected the different parts of the country; but in some areas the link was tenuous, and in others roads were still virtually nonexistent (see fig. 9). This system was connected to substantial mileage of privately developed roads whose main purpose was to serve the concessions. The railroad system comprised three separate lines totaling some 300 miles. These lines were private and were used almost exclusively to meet the needs of the iron mining concessions. Four ports provided facilities for oceangoing traffic. Three—the major port at Monrovia and smaller ports at Greenville and Harper along the southern coast—were government-owned and operated. The country's second largest port, at Buchanan, was privately owned but also handled some general traffic. The fourth principal transport mode—internal air services—was especially important in Liberia because of inadequate ground transportation. These services were provided mainly by government-owned Air Liberia and were supplemented by private air taxis.

Ports

Liberia's main harbor is at Monrovia. An artificial deep-water port formed by two breakwaters, it was constructed between 1944 and 1947 with the aid of financing from the United States wartime lend-lease program. The facility is operated as a free port under the agreement for its construction between the Liberian and United States governments. In accordance with this provision, a large area on Bushrod Island (where the port is located) is usable for storing, processing, or repackaging foreign merchandise as well as for manufacturing—all without the pay-

supply was interrupted daily, usually from about 7 or 8 P. M. to 8 A. M. According to LEC spokesmen, a lack of trained personnel to operate the plants properly was a major problem. The LEC also lacked the financial resources to supply the fuel for all gas-turbine units when operational or to carry out necessary repairs and updating of equipment. A substantial amount in unpaid electric bills was owed the company by government units and the public corporations, as well as by the general public. Power losses were also reported to be substantial; in 1979-81 they averaged 33 percent of total production. Many of the losses resulted from the theft of power through illegal connections.

Petroleum

Foreign oil companies have been interested in exploration along the Liberian coast since the late 1960s, when surveys showed possible petroleum deposits. Subsequently, a number of American companies conducted preliminary explorations, but no petroleum was located. Unsuccessful attempts to find oil were made again in the mid-1970s. In 1980 the World Bank approved a \$5 million loan for a large-scale seismic survey, and renewed interest in exploration led to the granting of a concession to a Canadian petroleum company in 1981. During 1983 the AMOCO Oil Company also entered into an exploration contract with the government that included the drilling of two offshore wells. Additional seismic surveys were undertaken by AMOCO, and the first well was to be drilled sometime in 1984.

From 1969 to 1982 most of the petroleum products used were produced by a refinery at Monrovia. Based on a 30-year concession granted in 1961 to American oil interests operating with local Liberian Lebanese participation, the Liberian Refining Company began construction of the facility in 1967, and operations began in January 1969. The refinery's rated capacity was 15,000 barrels of crude oil per day. Products included gasoline, diesel oil, kerosene, jet fuel oil, bottled gas, and asphalt. The government soon acquired ownership and established the Liberia Petroleum Refining Corporation (LPRC), which was given a monopoly on the importation of petroleum products. By 1982 deterioration and inadequate maintenance of equipment had forced production to be cut to one-half of the plant's capacity. There was a refining requirement of over 10,000 barrels daily to meet local demands. In December 1982 the refinery ran out of crude petroleum because of the inability of the government to pay for imports. In January 1983 Doe called on the corporation to collect outstanding bills for its products amounting to over \$43 million.

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four units—the final two provided with World Bank aid—having a total installed capacity of 69 megawatts. In that year the LEC was established as a subsidiary of the PUA specifically to handle the public power sector. The only major addition to LEC generation facilities since then has been the construction of the Luke Plant on Bushrod Island, which was funded by some \$29 million in loans from the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and Arab development agencies. Started in the late 1970s and completed in 1982, the plant was equipped with three diesel generators of 13.5 megawatts each. In April 1984 a small power plant equipped with a 237-kilowatt diesel generator was opened in the town of River Cess in Grand Bassa County. The facility, which will meet the needs of the some 3,000 residents, was a joint undertaking between the town, which provided funds for construction, and the LEC, which furnished the generator and technical staff. Other similar projects were also under way.

The LEC's Monrovia System served an area from Buchanan to Totota as well as the former LMC iron mining district in the Bomi Hills. The LEC also had a power line to the NIOC iron mine near the Mano River border with Sierra Leone. After completion of the Mount Coffee Hydroelectric Plant, the LEC had a surplus of power during the rainy season and sold power to the I MC, NIOC, and BMC mines. This reliable power source also permitted the supply of power to industrial consumers who previously had used their own generators. The rapid increase in power demand necessitated the installation of gas turbines, which were available to provide power for long periods when hydroelectric output was low, and the Luke diesel facility. By the late 1970s, however, the gas turbine units needed rehabilitation. They had also become expensive to operate because of the steep increases in fuel prices since the mid-1970s. Because of the high cost of LEC power, arrangements were made in early 1980 by the BMC mine to exchange power; the LEC provided electricity during the rainy season, and the mine furnished it in the dry period or when shortages occurred in the LEC system.

During the early 1980s major operational problems arose in LEC's gas-turbine and Luke plants. In mid-April 1984 only one gas-turbine unit and one diesel unit at the Luke Plant were in operation. At the same time, only one generator at the Mount Coffee plant was being used. Of the installed total LEC capacity of 176 megawatts, 24 megawatts were being generated. This was supplemented to some extent by power from the BMC mine, but the total fell far short of the 60 megawatts required for steady service. Reports from Monrovia at the time stated that the power

depending on the availability and reliability of public power, were similarly equipped. Many wealthier households had small auxiliary units. According to the LEC, in early 1984 it had a total installed capacity of 176 megawatts in its Monrovia System, of which some 68 megawatts were hydroelectric. About the same amount was available in gas turbine units, and some 40 megawatts were provided by diesel units. LEC also furnished electricity through local plants in the county seats except Buchanan, which was directly connected to the Monrovia System. These were all diesel generators, which together had an installed capacity of about eight megawatts. Total private generating capacity was estimated in 1982 at about 165 megawatts.

A small, privately owned electric plant serving Monrovia was in a deteriorated condition by World War II. Contractors constructing the port in the mid-1940s installed diesel equipment on Bushrod Island to furnish needed power. This equipment was subsequently taken over by the Monrovia Port Management Authority (later the Monrovia Port Management Company) and, with government authorization, was also used to furnish service outside the port area (see Ports, this ch.). In 1959 public power was placed in the hands of the Monrovia Power Authority (MPA) by the national legislature, and the Bushrod Island facilities were turned over to it. During the 1950s power demand had increased, and several feasibility studies were carried out on the construction of a hydroelectric plant on the Saint Paul River at a point about 15 miles northeast of Monrovia. In 1962 the MPA was succeeded by the Public Utilities Authority (PUA), an autonomous agency having much wider powers. Using a loan from USAID of \$24.3 million (84 percent of the project's cost), the PUA began construction of the Mount Coffee Hydroelectric Plant. The plant opened in 1966 with two 17-megawatt generators of the planned six. With World Bank assistance, two additional units were added in the early 1970s, raising installed capacity to 68 megawatts. The remaining two units were not installed when it was discovered that during the dry season—owing to the low water level behind the dam—only about 20 percent of the already-installed capacity could be used. The preconstruction studies apparently did not provide a full picture of the river's regular seasonal water-volume variations or their cyclical extremes. In 1984 consideration was being given to constructing a new holding dam farther upstream on the river, but the project would be highly dependent on external financing.

In 1969 the first unit of a new gas turbine plant was added to the Bushrod Island facilities; by 1972 it had been equipped with

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some others were able to operate only on a part-time basis. Capacity utilization decreased to well below 50 percent, and an already low productivity rate declined. Manufacturing was also affected by the new regime's takeover of various enterprises belonging to former high government officials; the management of most of these plants was reported to have deteriorated.

Virtually no new investment had occurred after the coup through 1983, although the government announced its intention to maintain the Open Door Policy and a free enterprise economy. In early 1984 it was reported that a major revision of the Investment Incentive Code had been completed that would increase guarantees to foreign investors, including strong assurances against nationalization and any interference in operations by the government. Export-oriented industries were to be given special tax breaks, as were plants producing certain goods for the domestic market. These enterprises would also receive protection through import tariffs. Under the new code, enterprises involved in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries would receive preferential treatment, and special consideration was to be given labor-intensive industries and those that were established in the LIFZA industrial park.

Energy Sources

Wood Fuels

A large but undetermined share of Liberia's basic energy needs has been satisfied by firewood and charcoal. Most people cooked their food using these two sources; firewood was abundant in the rural areas and provided almost all the energy used. A limited survey conducted in late 1979 and early 1980 by the Ministry of Lands and Mines in Monrovia, Bong Country, and Gibi Territory on firewood and charcoal use found that in most small towns firewood made up about 98 percent of the fuels used. In Monrovia charcoal constituted 48 percent of fuel use, but energy requirements for cooking were met mainly by kerosene.

Electric Power

In 1984 electric power for sale to the public was generated and distributed by the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC), a government-owned company. A large amount of power was produced by the iron ore and rubber concessions, primarily to meet their own needs. Other large industrial enterprises also had self-sufficient or standby generating facilities, and many institutions.



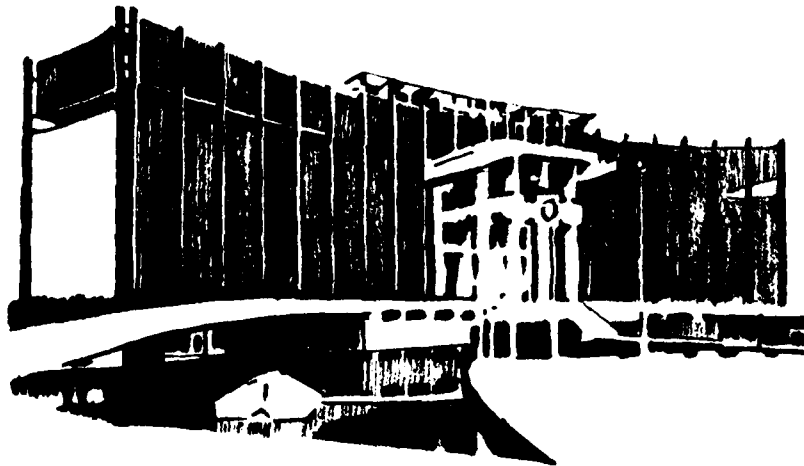
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The Liberian economy's modern period began only within the last few decades. In 1984 little comprehensive analysis was generally available, and at least part of the published statistical data remained subject to verification. Earlier economic overviews of value for background are *Growth Without Development: An Economic Survey of Liberia*, edited by Robert W. Clower and others, Willi Schulze's *A New Geography of Liberia*, and Jerker Carlsson's *The Limits to Structural Change*, which deals with foreign investment and its effect from 1950 to 1971. *Dependence, Underdevelopment, and Persistent Conflict: On the Political Economy of Liberia*, edited by Eckhard Hinzen and Robert Kappel, discusses in detail the impact of the foreign enclaves. Rodney Carlisle's *Sovereignty for Sale* provides an excellent description and history of the development of Liberia's "flag of convenience" position. *Country Economic Memorandum*, prepared by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs for a donor meeting in late 1983, takes up at length the economic situation in 1983, its causes, and government efforts to stabilize the economy. Other useful government documents include the annual economic surveys of the ministry and of the National Bank of Liberia. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

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Chapter 4. Government and Politics



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The Executive Mansion, official residence of Liberia's head of state

UNDER THE EYES of a transitional military regime pledged to the restoration of civilian rule, the outlines of Liberia's second republic were taking shape in late 1984. If hopes for the new government were realized, it would be far more democratic than its predecessors, which since the mid-nineteenth century had functioned as instruments for the perpetuation of a political aristocracy drawn from Americo-Liberian settler families.

The end of the first republic had come on April 12, 1980, when a group of soldiers of tribal origins broke into the Executive Mansion and killed President William R. Tolbert. The military coup d'état was initially popular with the majority of the public. Discontent among the indigenous population had been building for many years over the inequities of Liberian society and political life. During the modern era under William V.S. Tubman (president from 1944 until 1971) and Tolbert (president from 1971 until 1980), some efforts were made to integrate native Africans into the political fabric of the nation. Few meaningful changes resulted, however. The ruling elite remained indifferent to the plight of ordinary people, especially the rural poor. Economic hardship and outrage over corruption in the Tolbert administration were transmuted into demonstrations and rioting in 1979 that left the old regime shaken and in disarray. Efforts to reform itself did not go far enough to meet the insistent demands for fundamental change before the coup occurred a year later.

The toppling of the Tolbert regime brought to an end one of the most durable governmental systems in Africa. The Liberian constitution, in existence since 1847, had been among the oldest of the world's political charters still in force. Although modeled after the United States system of three separate and coordinate branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial—the dynamics of the system as practiced in Liberia involved a concentration of power in the presidency. Approval of the president's program by the bicameral legislature was pro forma. Political expression was generally conducted within the framework of the True Whig Party, of which the president was titular head. Opposition was sporadic, weak, and liable to suppression by the government.

The ringleaders of the coup, all young enlisted men lacking experience beyond their military service, suspended the constitution, did away with the normal instruments of government,



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and formed the People's Redemption Council to carry the revolution into practice. The council had no defined political orientation. Its chairman, Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, became head of state and presided over a predominantly civilian cabinet of ministers. Included in the cabinet were representatives of two groups in opposition during the first republic as well as several former True Whigs. As time passed, the former opposition figures—all socialist in outlook—were found to be incompatible by Doe and were dropped from the cabinet. Representation of former True Whigs, by contrast, was strengthened.

A year after coming to power, the military government responded to domestic and international urgings by taking the first steps to restore civilian rule. A 25-member commission was formed to draft a new constitution. After careful work with input invited from all segments of the public and revision by an elected advisory group, the new Constitution was overwhelmingly approved by popular vote. Registration of new political parties followed, preparatory to presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October 1985 and the installation of the new government in January 1986. The launching of parties and the revival of political partisanship under rules imposed by the military regime became the initial test of Doe's and the nation's readiness to accept the restraints and compromises of a truly democratic system.

A further stage in the process was completed in July 1984, when the People's Redemption Council was replaced by the Interim National Assembly. Not surprisingly, Doe himself was to become one of the candidates for president. Other political notables formed new parties to compete against Doe.

The new Constitution offered a solid framework for the introduction of representative government and political opportunity for all citizens. The difficult transition from autocratic military rule to constitutional democracy, if successful, promised to be among the most important achievements of Liberia's history as an independent nation. Nevertheless, Doe's extreme sensitivity to criticism and his harassment of rival politicians raised doubts about the pledge to allow free elections and to respect their results.

Constitutional Development

The constitution of 1847, drafted by American law professor Simon Greenleaf of Harvard College, served as the basis and ideal

for the government of Liberia until its suspension in April 1980. The constitution was patterned largely upon United States systems, that of the federal government and of several states. It embodied three distinct and coordinate branches of government, a bicameral legislature, a stringent amendment process, and a Bill of Rights.

Although eighteenth-century French and American political theories served as the foundation for the Liberian venture in self-government, the practical circumstances of the settlers' lives were ill-adapted to the kind of democracy their formal instruments envisaged. The actual structure and practices of government evolved in a manner that differed markedly from the theoretical model. The executive branch became dominant over the legislature and the Supreme Court. Power was centralized in the national government; all local officials were appointed from the top, and opportunities for local initiative were almost nonexistent. Individual protections embedded in the Bill of Rights had little reality for anyone, least of all the tribal majority.

The choice of centralism rather than federalism has been entrenched in the history of the country. Although the United States model was indeed federal, the several state constitutions that contributed ideas and wording, especially the Massachusetts Constitution, were not. Moreover, the conditions faced by the settlers demanded, so they felt, the utmost cohesion for a small group surrounded by unknown and often hostile people who were native to the place.

Decree No. 2, imposed by the military authorities on April 24, 1980, suspended the constitution of 1847 and the three branches of government. The decree provided that all legislative and executive power would be vested in the People's Redemption Council (PRC) but that other laws of the republic would remain in force. Subsequent decrees reconstituted the court system, confiscated the property of certain citizens and organizations associated with the former government, prohibited labor unrest or strikes, and outlawed all political activity.

One year after the imposition of military rule, the National Constitution Commission, composed of Liberian citizens representing a broad spectrum of political and social interests, was appointed to draft a new constitution. Its chairman was Amos Sawyer, a dean at the University of Liberia and an opponent of the prerevolutionary government. The commission traveled throughout Liberia, holding hearings on the shortcomings of the former government and gathering suggestions for the form of the next civilian government. The provisions adopted by the commis-

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sion were widely publicized, translated from English into each of the 10 major tribal languages, and exposed to extensive public debate over radio and television. A revised version of the draft constitution was issued in the fall of 1983 after review by the Constitutional Advisory Assembly of 59 community leaders elected on a proportional representation basis from all parts of the country. The revised Constitution was approved in a nationwide referendum on July 3, 1984, and was expected to come into effect with the inauguration of a new civil government in January 1986.

The revised Constitution preserves the basic principles of separate and coordinate branches, checks and balances, independent judiciary, and delegated local authority contained in its 1847 predecessor. It assigns specific powers to the executive and legislative branches and contemplates competitive elections supervised by an independent electoral commission. The new Constitution does little to alter the outward shape of governmental institutions. Nevertheless, its purpose is to transform the nature of Liberian politics. All Liberians over the age of 18 are to be allowed to vote without qualification. The lower legislative house should reflect more faithfully the ethnic and population distribution of the country. The one-party system is declared to be unconstitutional. Conditions for registration of national political parties are codified, denial of registration being subject to review by the Supreme Court. Precautions against parties organized along ethnic or regional lines have been introduced. The president's authority, while reduced, remains considerable. He retains appointive powers over local officials and may exercise an item veto over bills passed by the legislature.

The new Constitution includes a chapter on fundamental rights that expands on those personal guarantees affirmed in the constitution of the first republic. The rights of petition and assembly and the privacy of the person, the home, and correspondence are expressly provided for. All Liberian citizens are to be given equal opportunity of employment without regard to sex, creed, or ethnic background and are to be entitled to equal pay for equal work. The previous constitution acknowledged the blessings of the Christian religion but provided for the free exercise of religious beliefs according to the dictates of conscience. A corresponding provision in the new Constitution prescribes that no denomination or sect shall have any exclusive privilege or preference over any other and that no state religion shall be established.

The previous constitution had restricted Liberian citizenship to "Negroes, or persons of Negro descent." It had also restricted to Liberian citizens the holding of real estate, with the ex-

ception of colonization, missionary, educational, or other benevolent institutions (see *Black Settlers and Native Africans*, ch. 1). Subsequent proposals to rescind the limitation have been rejected because it was feared that it would lead to increased influence by the Lebanese commercial community and Western corporate enterprises in the country. The issue of citizenship for nonblacks was one of the most widely debated questions surrounding the adoption of the new Constitution. The prohibition has been retained, although a modern formulation was adopted, stating that "in order to preserve, foster, and maintain the positive Liberian culture, values, and character, only persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent shall qualify by birth or by naturalization to be citizens of Liberia." Any person having at least one parent who is a citizen of Liberia is to be regarded as a citizen, provided that any other citizenship is renounced upon reaching maturity. The conditions and procedures for naturalization are to be prescribed by the legislature. The restriction on the ownership of property solely to Liberian citizens is to be retained.

Articles of the Constitution providing for amendment are similar to those of the previous constitution. Proposed changes must have the concurrence of two-thirds of the membership of both houses of the legislature, followed by ratification by two-thirds of the registered voters in a referendum that may not be held sooner than one year after action by the legislature. A total of 12 amendments had been enacted subsequent to the introduction of the constitution of 1847. Among the most important of these—intended to implement the Tubman policy of assimilating the indigenous African people into political life—was the eighth amendment in 1948 that provided for universal suffrage by all citizens over 21 years of age who possessed a dwelling for which a hut tax had been paid. In 1975 the voting age was reduced to 18 years. Immediately prior to the 1980 coup, another amendment abolishing the property qualification for voting was passed by the legislature and scheduled for referendum.

Structure of Government

The Liberian governmental system was founded according to the principles of representative institutions; free elections; balance of power between executive, legislative, and judicial branches; and limited local autonomy delegated by the central authorities. Although there were no legal restrictions against a multiparty system, the government effectively suppressed attempts



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to create an organized opposition to the True Whig Party. As a result, elections were little more than formalities to endorse officially approved candidates. Representation in the legislature was skewed in favor of the coastal counties, where the Americo-Liberian elite families were in firm control. The requirement that voters possess real estate (construed as owning a hut and paying hut tax on it) further reduced the significance of the ballot to indigenous citizens.

Reforms beginning in 1964, when the so-called Hinterland was reorganized into counties with gradually increasing legislative representation, moderated to some extent the inequities of the system. Although places were found in politics for persons of indigenous background, the monopoly of power by leading members of the Americo-Liberian community working within the True Whig Party foredoomed hopes that a truly democratic system responsive to the interests of all classes of citizens would be allowed to emerge.

Executive Branch

During the early stages of the first republic, the preponderance of power had gradually accrued to the executive. Contending with internal and external threats to control of the land it had settled, the struggling coastal community increasingly put its reliance on the single executive rather than on the legislature representing more localized interests. Several constitutional amendments lengthened the term of office of the president from the original two years to eight years. An amendment passed in 1949 (during Tubman's first term) permitted an unlimited number of terms in office, provided that after the first eight-year term, elections were to take place at four-year intervals. A subsequent amendment introduced by Tolbert in 1974 limited the presidential office to a single term of eight years. To be eligible for the presidency, a candidate had to be at least 35 years old, a citizen by birth or a naturalized citizen with over 25 years of residence in Liberia, and had to own real estate worth at least \$2,500.

The successor to the executive branch after the military coup of April 1980 was the PRC, designated as the highest decision-making and governing body. The original 17 members were all from the enlisted ranks of the Liberian army. By virtue of his status as chairman of the PRC, Sergeant Doe assumed the role of head of state. As of early 1984, about half of the original members of the PRC remained in office, but the body had been expanded to an executive committee of six individuals and 17 ordinary members together with five advisers (see fig. 10). In July 1984 it was

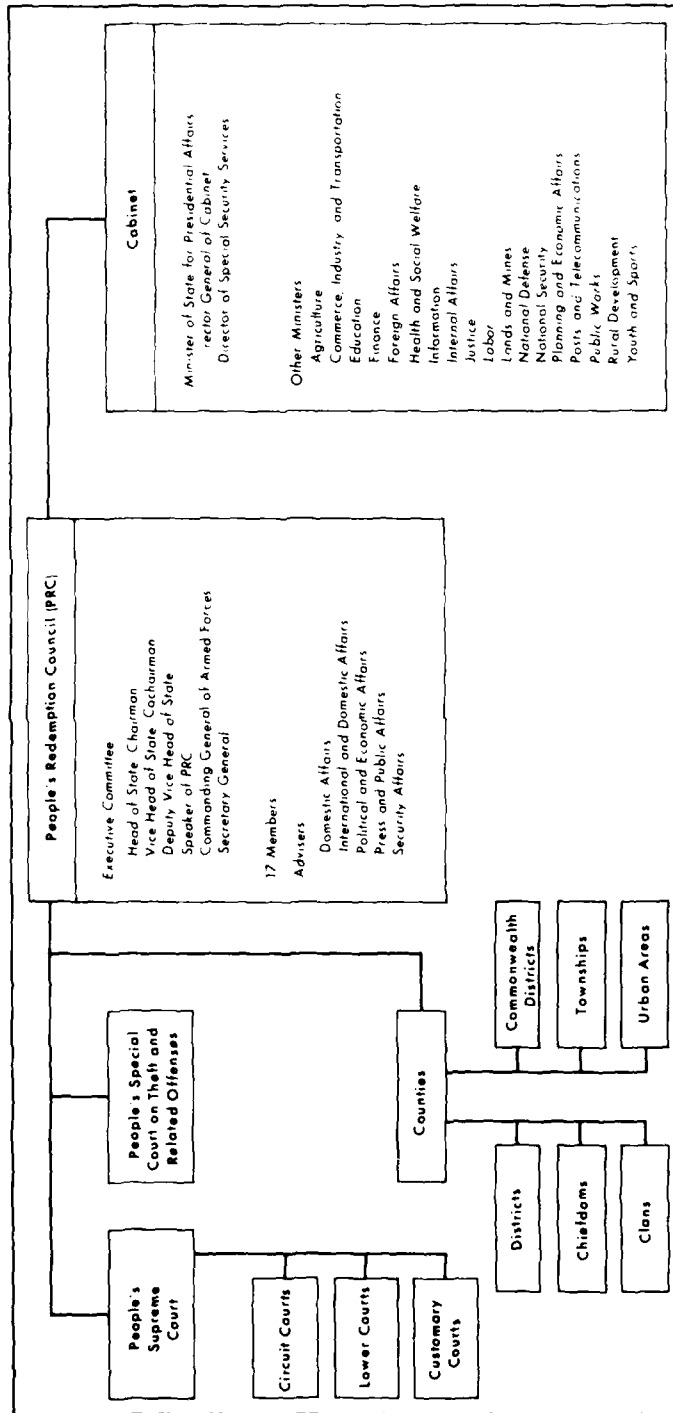


Figure 10. Government Structure under the People's Redemption Council, Early 1984



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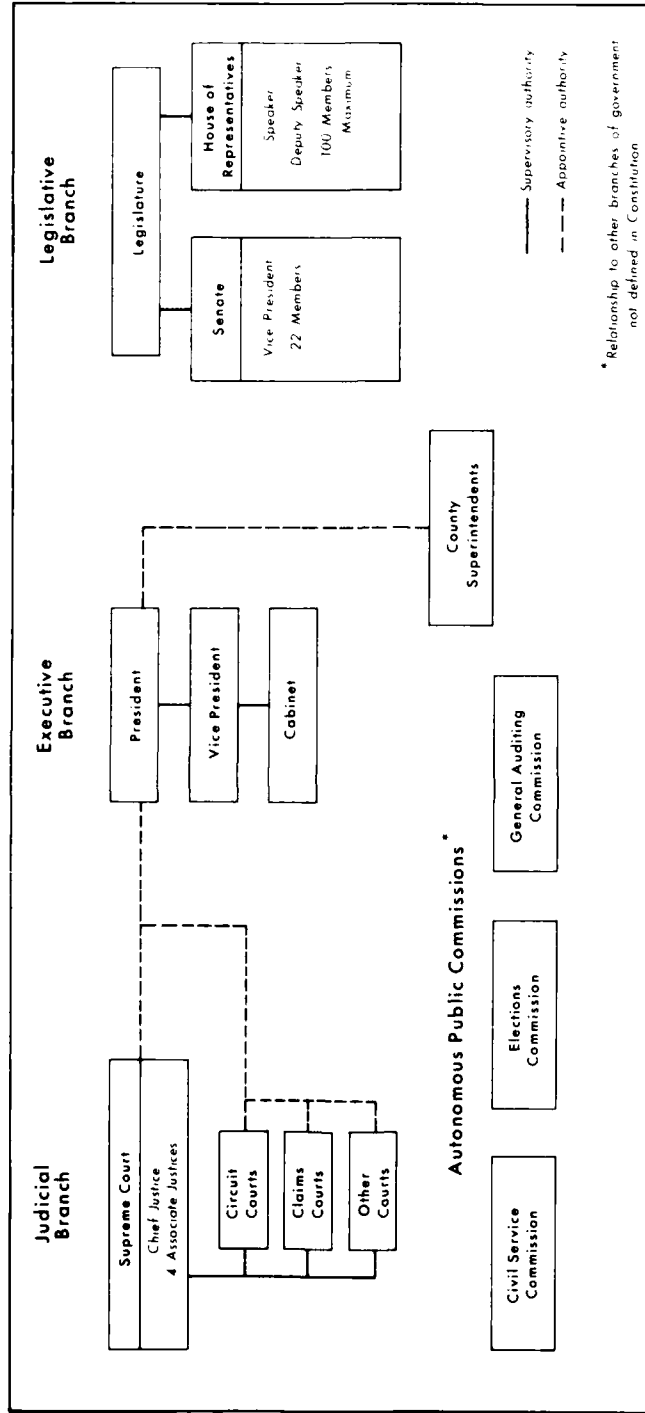
announced that the PRC had been dissolved and replaced by the Interim National Assembly, a body of 57 members, including former PRC members and appointed civilians.

Very little information became public about the manner in which the PRC carried on its functions or the extent to which authority was shared with the head of state. At first, each member of the PRC was assigned to several of eight standing committees ranging across the spectrum of government business. During the early days of military rule, there were many instances of individual members of the PRC engaging in harassment and interference against officials, private individuals, and businesses. Decisions were sometimes made without the involvement of the appropriate minister. Doe gradually gained full control, although it was assumed that he acted with the advice and counsel of certain trusted cabinet ministers and the five other members of the PRC executive committee. Doe reportedly kept the entire PRC membership informed of actions that were contemplated but did not encourage the body to act as a forum for discussion of policy alternatives and did not offer it an opportunity to reject a proposed course of action.

A new cabinet was also announced immediately after the coup. Composed of individuals chosen to head the various ministries of the central government, 11 of the 17 ministers were civilians. As of mid-1984 only three were from military backgrounds. Several of the ministers appointed in 1980 had been well-known opponents of the Tolbert government; some were in jail awaiting trial on treason charges when the coup occurred. Doe had a propensity for shuffling his cabinet with great frequency, and by 1984 only two of the 19 ministers then in office had been retained from the first postcoup cabinet.

The various advisory and support staffs directly responsible to Doe in the areas of economic, foreign, and military affairs, as well as public affairs and press matters, were incorporated within the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs. The director general of the cabinet was attached to this ministry, as was the director of the Special Security Service, who was charged with protecting the head of state. The ministry was headed by John G. Rancy until he was shifted to the labor portfolio in early 1984 and was replaced by J. Bernard Blamo. Both Rancy and Blamo were regarded as being among Doe's most trusted advisers.

Under the Constitution scheduled to come into effect in 1986, executive power will be vested in the president, who will be head of state, head of government, and commander in chief of the armed forces (see fig. 11). The president will hold office for a six-



Source: Based on information from Liberia, Constitutional Advisory Assembly, Approved Revised Draft Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, Washington, 1984.

Figure 11. Constitutional Structure of Government, Approved July 1984

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year term and may not serve more than two terms. A vice president will be elected on the same ticket with the president. Both must be natural-born citizens not less than 35 years of age and must have resided in the republic for 10 years prior to the election. They must be the owners of real property valued at \$25,000. The president and vice president may not come from the same county. Other than presiding over the Senate and exercising the right to vote in case of a tie, the vice president will have no specific duties except those designated by the president.

With the consent of the Senate, the president will have the authority to appoint his own cabinet ministers and their deputies and assistants, as well as ambassadors, justices of the Supreme Court, subordinate judges, superintendents of counties, and other local officials. He will be authorized to commission military officers. The president will be empowered to conduct foreign affairs and to enter into treaties subject to concurrence by majority votes of both houses of the legislature.

The president will be required to present his administration's legislative program to the legislature near the beginning of its session in January of each year and to present an annual report on the state of the republic, including an assessment of economic conditions and a record of expenditures and income. The president will have authority, in consultation with the presiding officers of the two houses of the legislature, to declare the existence of a state of emergency when there is a threat of outbreak of war or serious civil unrest. The president will be empowered to suspend certain constitutional rights and guarantees and to exercise other emergency powers; he cannot, however, suspend the Constitution. If the legislature is not in session, it must be convened and, by joint resolution supported by two-thirds of the membership of each house, give its approval to the emergency proclamation.

Civil Service

A serious handicap to the effectiveness of government in Liberia has been the weakness in public administration. Unlike most African countries, Liberia did not experience a stage of colonial rule that would have enabled a formal administrative system to be set in place and a class of civil servants to be trained. Officials were appointed on a patronage basis, their qualifications being loyalty and service to the True Whig Party. The haphazard conduct of government business became a major problem during the 1950s as a consequence of the expansion of government operations after the discovery of iron ore and the resultant economic boom.

In 1960 a Special Commission on Government Operations was established to strengthen administration of government agencies, but progress in effecting reforms was slow owing to Tubman's waning interest and resistance by the operating departments. After Tolbert took office in 1971, renewed priority was assigned to strengthening the civil service, and in 1975 the Civil Service Agency was revitalized, its head reporting directly to the president. New legislation in the same year was directed at introducing a merit system, a uniform classification plan, security of tenure, and recruitment by competitive examination. In-service training and instruction in rural development to counteract weaknesses among county-level middle managers were instituted.

Actual implementation of the reforms lagged, however. In spite of improved salary structures, civil service professionals continued to supplement their incomes through outside work. Salary plans were not fully adhered to; this, together with weaknesses in performance evaluation and absence of reward for undergoing training, blunted motivation. Decisionmaking was concentrated in the hands of ministers and those deputies and assistant ministers who were presidential appointees; nonpolitical civil servants had little authority in day-to-day operations and were not trained to take initiative. Thus, many officials were apathetic and poorly prepared to transact government business effectively. Rapid turnover among appointive officials and their replacement by others ill-acquainted with the problems of a ministry gave rise to discontinuity in policy formulation and decisionmaking. Some decentralization of ministerial operations to rural areas did occur, but this was not accompanied by sufficient delegation of authority; as a result, more civil servants were found at the county level but lacked the power to deal with local problems.

The civil service has remained the leading source of employment for the elite and the educated. Bribery and gratuities for the rendering of ordinary services have been endemic. Doe has been a zealous critic of abuse of office and occasionally has acted sternly against aggravated instances of corruption. At the highest levels, corruption was reportedly not as pervasive as under the Tubman and Tolbert governments, but it had by no means been eradicated at middle and lower levels. Diversion of funds from development projects, padding of payrolls with nonexistent employees, sale of government-owned supplies, and bribery in connection with tax liabilities continued to be widespread.

The total number of government employees, exclusive of the armed forces, was given officially as 33,600 in 1980. Roughly

laboration with Libya and the Soviet Union produced divisions within the military council. After an initial period of hesitation, Doe and Quiwonkpa firmly rejected socialist or communist economic doctrines and turned to reestablishing good relations with the United States and the Western financial community on whose assistance Liberia's economic future rested. In keeping with the policy of nonalignment, Libya had been permitted to open a people's bureau (embassy) in Monrovia in March 1981, and cultural and other agreements had been concluded with the Soviet Union. The question of a Libyan presence in the capital brought into the open the breach within the PRC. The people's bureau was ordered to close after two months; at the same time, the Soviet embassy was directed to reduce its staff from 15 to six persons. The vice head of state and cochairman of the PRC, Major General Thomas Weh Syen, dissented publicly from these actions. In August 1981, as the apparent climax of a power struggle within the PRC, Weh Syen and four other members of the council were executed after being charged with plotting to assassinate Doe and other senior members of the PRC. Four alleged civilian accomplices were sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Charges that the plot was supported by Libya were made only later by officials. Earlier, in June 1981, as the result of another purported plot against the government, 13 lower ranking soldiers had been condemned to execution.

In July 1981 the civilian members of the cabinet and other high officials were inducted into the army, ministers being commissioned as majors and assistant ministers as captains. The ostensible purpose of the induction was to gain firmer control over the civilian element and to instill a greater measure of cohesion in the upper levels of government. Doe nevertheless found it expedient to dismiss a number of his ministers, in most cases on grounds of maladministration or misconduct. Doe clearly had declining confidence in the more socialist-oriented figures among the former followers of the PPP or the MOJA, although his record of appointments and expulsions was not along strict ideological lines. The former leader of the MOJA, Togba Nah Tipoteh, resigned as minister of planning and economic affairs in August 1981 while at a meeting abroad, claiming that he had been maligned and discredited by "enemies of the revolution."

A former member of the PPP, Local Government Minister Oscar Quiah, was dismissed from the cabinet on suspicion that he was implicated in the coup attempt by Weh Syen but was acquitted by the military tribunal for lack of evidence. The former

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itary were also criticized.

Business confidence in Liberia, already eroded by the 1979 rice riots, was severely shaken by the coup. Many individual businessmen, both foreign and Liberian, left the country. Investment stagnated, and the capital flight intensified. The salary increases dictated by Doe contributed to the near bankruptcy of the government. In November 1980 Doe acknowledged that the country was confronted by a financial crisis, which he ascribed to borrowing at high rates by the Tolbert government. Doe conceded that Liberia's iron ore companies were operating at a loss because of worldwide depressed conditions in steel and that government revenues were far below projections. Because the economy was based on United States dollars, covering the debt by printing currency was out of the question. To bring the budget deficit under control and to meet service payments on foreign credits, government commitments had to be reined in. A freeze on hirings was imposed, and government employees were forced to accept part of their pay in savings bonds. To curb harassment of private citizens and undisciplined conduct, Doe rescinded irregular actions taken by individuals on the PRC and expelled and imprisoned one member for especially vicious behavior. As a demonstration of his intention to restore civilian rule, Doe announced in December 1980 that a commission would be appointed to draft a new constitution.

Transitional Politics, 1981-82

Responding to criticism that the PRC was dominated by the Krahn, the military governing council was enlarged to add 10 members to the original 17. The Krahn remained the most heavily represented group. Ten of the posts were held by persons from Grand Gedeh County, where the Krahn were dominant. An additional five members came from Sinoe County, where most of the Kru originated; seven were from Nimba County, locus of the Mano and Gio peoples; and four were from the more mixed Lofa County. Montserrado County, where Monrovia was located, and neighboring Grand Bassa County were not represented on the enlarged PRC. Doe's personal authority had been reinforced with the backing of the popular commander of the armed forces, Brigadier General Thomas G. Quiwonkpa. Both leaders spoke out sharply against arbitrary actions by members of the PRC, conduct that damaged the military government in the eyes of the public and created an impression abroad of continuing instability.

The country's ideological course and the related issue of col-

Political Program

Early statements by Doe contained few clues about the political principles guiding the revolutionary movement, although the tone of his observations was moderate. Equal economic and social opportunity was promised, and justice was to be dispensed without regard to social position. The right to private property was to be respected. Whereas the country's own resources were to be devoted to its development, the need for foreign investors in solving a multitude of problems was acknowledged. Friendly relations would be sought with all peace-loving countries, and support was reaffirmed for the objectives of the United Nations (UN), the Nonaligned Movement, (see Glossary), and the forces of African unity. Support for the liberation of southern Africa from colonial-style rule was pledged.

Measures to relieve pressures of rising living expenses and to reduce economic distress were announced, but many of these undertakings were later modified as the realities of the country's straitened condition were recognized by the new rulers. Military personnel received a generous salary increase. Privates were paid \$250 a month, more than triple the previous figure. The minimum salary for government employees was set at \$200 a month, and rents henceforward were subsidized for employees living in government housing. Free textbooks were promised, along with an end to registration and tuition fees at public schools. A freeze on prices of food staples and rents was announced, but this could not prevent the inflation rate from rising as a consequence of the wage boosts. A less popular measure was the decree prohibiting labor unrest and strikes. Employees in the private sector, especially mining, spurred by the examples of the military and civil service, had been agitating for higher wages and fringe benefits. But the PRC was not prepared to tolerate industrial turmoil at a difficult time for the nation's economy.

Most Liberians greeted the overthrow of the Tolbert regime with jubilation, revealing the resentment that had been accumulating for an extended period against the Americo-Liberian oligarchy. The rampant elitism and nepotism of the first republic, the misuse of public office to amass private fortunes, and the suppression of the PPP and other dissenting forces were among the grievances, not to mention the nation's economic predicament and the failure to contain the cost of living. But the military regime's indiscriminate and callous actions against the former ruling group shocked many people. The arrogance, undisciplined conduct, and ostentatious living styles of the newly powerful mil-

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national strike in March 1980, was banned and its leaders were arrested on charges of sedition and treason. Two days before their trials, which were set for April 14, 1980, exactly one year after the rice riot, the Tolbert government was deposed. Although a revolt against the political supremacy of the True Whigs had not been unexpected in the inflamed atmosphere, there had been little reason to anticipate that it would originate among noncommissioned officers of the armed forces (see *The April 12 Coup*, ch. 1).

The plot was planned in great secrecy among a small number of soldiers; most were from communities classified as Krahn, one of the smaller ethnic categories. In justification of the coup, the leaders cited massive corruption by those in official positions, unemployment, wages that did not cover basic necessities, excessive food costs, and intolerable health and living standards in the interior of the country. The low pay and status of ordinary soldiers, not to mention the squalid conditions of family housing and barracks for army personnel, were also believed to have been precipitating factors.

The new leadership constituted itself as the PRC and was composed initially of seven sergeants, eight corporals, and two privates. The PRC declared a state of martial law and assumed all legislative powers, which it exercised by decree. Ambassadors, judges, magistrates, directors of public corporations, and county superintendents were dismissed, although most civil servants were confirmed in their existing positions. Assets of the True Whig Party were confiscated, as were real estate and other assets of leading True Whig politicians.

In the coalition cabinet convoked by the PRC, four of the more important ministries—justice, foreign affairs, local government, and presidential affairs—went to prominent members of the PPP. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Education went to leaders of the MOJA. Aside from Doe, who chaired the cabinet as head of state, five portfolios went to career military personnel. Four former ministers from the liberal wing of the True Whig Party were also entrusted with seats in the cabinet. Members of the cabinet were expected to administer government departments but were not to exercise policy functions. The cabinet was, however, supposed to meet with the PRC monthly to advise on the formulation of national policies. But the PRC, many of whose members were only semiliterate, was inwardly divided and incapable of coming to grips with serious policy issues.

with the receipt and disbursement of funds, and the chiefs' incomes were in some cases disproportionately high. When they were shifted to a regular salary basis, most chiefs experienced a sharp drop in income.

Most of the development expenditures in the county have been controlled and disbursed by decisions of the central authorities. The nonelective county officials have had little autonomy; the county superintendents have lacked control over most local government activities unless they have been personally influential with the president. They have not been delegated authority over the local representatives of central government agencies concerned with education, agriculture, health, social welfare, public works, and rural development, who have taken orders from their superiors in Monrovia and have received operating funds from them. The highly centralized administration has hindered local initiative and the development of a corps of experienced public officials.

In 1983 the constitutional drafting committee proposed that, as a partial measure leading toward more local responsibility, the superintendents of counties should be appointed by the president from a panel of three to five names submitted by a committee consisting of paramount chiefs and one popularly elected person from each legislative constituency. This committee would also meet at least twice each year to review developments in the county and make recommendations to the president through the minister of internal affairs. Even this tentative step in the direction of self-government was deleted from the revised draft constitution submitted for referendum. The status of superintendents was to remain wholly appointive, excluding any popularly based body to deliberate at the county level.

People's Redemption Council

The old order of Americo-Liberians that had presided over political life for a century and a half encountered its first serious signs of resistance in April 1979 in the form of demonstrations against increases in the price of rice, the country's staple food (see *The Rice Riots*, ch. 1). Although the government acted with moderation after the first bloody confrontation between the police and rioters, tensions continued to mount. Opposition to the ruling True Whig Party was mobilized by the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA). The situation reached critical proportions when the PPP, after calling for a

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The highest official at the district level is the district commissioner. Several towns, including coastal county seats, are organized as commonwealth districts of eight square miles under superintendents appointed directly by the head of state. There were 57 county districts in 1981. In addition there were 76 chiefdoms, whose highest officials were paramount chiefs. Beneath them were 295 clans administered by clan chiefs. These chiefdoms and clans did not necessarily conform to traditional or kinship groups but were territorial administrative units in communities organized along tribal lines.

Townships, whose size could range from that of a small locality to that of a district, had increased in number from 41 to 97 between 1974 and 1981. The populations of the 14 cities that elected their own mayors and city councils in 1975 ranged from as small as 2,000 to 3,000 up to Buchanan's 24,000 inhabitants and Monrovia's 166,000. It was apparently not uncommon to shift between city and township status. Urban centers, defined as communities with populations of 2,000 or more, numbered 76 in 1981.

In 1974 the procedure by which paramount chiefs were elected (by lower chiefs and elders and approved by the president) was changed to the direct election of paramount and clan chiefs for four-year terms. Voting was conducted by having supporters line up behind each of the candidates on election day. Any citizen of a chiefdom owning property on which he had paid taxes was eligible to run. Most seats were contested; each clan was likely to support its own clan chief for the paramountcy on the assumption that a paramount chief was in a position to bring economic benefits to his own clan area. Family connections with former chiefs, wealth, social status, and personal popularity were relevant factors in contests for clan chieftaincies. The election of paramount chiefs was suspended by the PRC in 1980, and subsequently they have been appointed by the head of state. It was contemplated in the new Constitution that paramount, clan, and town chiefs would be elected by popular vote for six-year terms and would be subject to removal by the president only for proven misconduct.

Paramount chiefs are responsible to the district commissioner for the general welfare of their chiefdoms and are in charge of the tribal courts for adjudicating matters of customary law. Until 1973 they received no salaries but were accorded a specific percentage of the taxes they collected on behalf of the government. The paramount chiefs were also allowed to assess a specified amount of rice annually as tribute and had other sources of revenue as well. Many abuses were reported in connection

Local Administration

The primary regional divisions of Liberia are the counties, some of which have incorporated within their boundaries separately administered tribal enclaves known as territories. Between 1968 and 1984 the country was partitioned into nine counties. In early 1984, however, two new counties—Bomi and Grand Kru—were constituted from territories, leaving a total of 11 counties and the three territories of Marshall, Gibi, and River Cess (see fig. 1).

Until a major administrative reorganization in 1964, the country had been divided into five coastal counties and three Hinterland provinces. As part of the reorganization, the provinces were turned into four counties, and the borders between coastal and Hinterland units were adjusted. The county system had been established with only the Americo-Liberians in mind, and the five counties originally extended by definition 40 miles inland from the coast. As the administrative system became more differentiated, however, it became evident that certain areas within the counties were devoid of Americo-Liberians and should be administered in the same fashion as the Hinterland, thus giving rise to territories. Each territory elected one representative to the House of Representatives and participated in the election of, and was represented in the Senate by, the two senators for the county within which the territory was located. The Hinterland provinces were unrepresented in the legislature until 1945, when each province was allotted one representative but no senators. The pre-1964 administrative arrangements between the provinces and the central government resembled the relationship between a colonizing state and a colonial territory. The anomaly of the subservient status of the provinces in a country that strongly endorsed the African independence movement induced Liberia to extend the county system to the Hinterland.

Counties are subdivided into smaller administrative units known as commonwealth districts, county districts, chiefdoms, clans, townships, and urban centers. The chief executive officers of counties are superintendents appointed directly by the head of state. After the 1980 coup the superintendents of both counties and territories were replaced, in most cases by military personnel. The superintendent is the representative of the head of state at the county level and is responsible to, and part of, the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The superintendent and his own staff concern themselves with the maintenance of law and order and administrative and development activities not assumed by other ministries of the central government.



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quired to be charged within three days, bail has been available for noncapital charges, and suspects have had access to legal counsel. Higher officials have sought to curb the practice of arbitrary arrests by police officers and the demand for bribes to secure release.

Widespread international protests followed the execution of 13 senior officials of the Tolbert government after a trial before a special military tribunal in which the defendants were not allowed counsel nor could they present evidence. In spite of popular rejoicing over the overthrow of the Tolbert regime, many Liberians felt that the executions had been badly handled and that the less guilty had not been distinguished from those more guilty. For several weeks the tribunal continued to give hurried trials to former officials without rights of counsel or appeal, although Doe announced that no more executions would result. A number of military personnel were brought before the Supreme Military Tribunal in 1980 and 1981 for summary trials (followed in some cases by execution) on charges of plotting the overthrow of the PRC government.

The judicial system demonstrated an unexpected degree of independence as the process of return to civilian rule got under way in 1984. The special theft court, often regarded as susceptible to government influence, acquitted a leading official of embezzlement charges that the Doe administration was believed to have brought for political reasons. Upon order of a Supreme Court justice, a six-month ban on publication of an independent newspaper, the *Daily Observer*, was lifted. However, Doe overruled a unanimous Supreme Court decision suspending the minister of justice from legal practice, pointing out that under the military regime the judiciary could not exercise a wholly independent role.

The new 1986 Constitution includes a comprehensive array of protections against violations of personal rights. No person is to be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Rights of appeal from court rulings and administrative decrees are to be inviolable, and procedures for appeal are to be "easy, expeditious, and inexpensive." Guarantees against seizure or search without a warrant have been introduced. Persons must be informed of the charges against them and their rights explained to them. Conditions of bail and the right to counsel are set out. The right of habeas corpus is reinstated, and preventive detention is expressly prohibited. The right to a speedy trial by jury is protected; the republic is to make available legal aid services to ensure exercise of the right to counsel.

functioned only in Monrovia, did not have appeal rights. Civilians have also been brought before the Supreme Military Tribunal, a panel of three uniformed officers, on charges of engaging in political activity.

The court system under the revolutionary authorities has been the target of considerable internal criticism arising from evidence of corruption and failure to maintain high standards of impartiality. Bribery and unprofessional conduct had also been widespread under the civilian government, although improvements had occurred as a result of appointments of more qualified jurists, higher salaries, in-service training, and curbs on jury tampering. The independence of the judiciary from the executive branch was not fully respected by either the civilian or military leadership. Rulings of the Supreme Court were simply ignored from time to time, and frequent recourse to constitutional provisions empowering the legislature to remove judges had an intimidating effect on the judicial process.

According to the United States Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1982*, "while due process procedures are respected in civilian courts, allegations exist of political influence in some sensitive cases. . . . More damaging than political interference to the impartiality of the judicial system is corruption. Reports abound of lawyers accepting fees from both parties to a case and of judges requesting and accepting bribes even in open court." Doe has sharply criticized the quality of justice found in Liberian courts and venality among lawyers and judges.

In spite of the shortcomings of the judicial system of the first republic, the right to public trial in accordance with due process was observed, although occasionally political dissidents and journalists were warned, interrogated, or detained without being charged before a court of law. In the tense political atmosphere of the final months of the Tolbert regime, student leaders and opposition figures were arbitrarily imprisoned. After the coup the military government arrested about 300 people. Many others were arrested in an unauthorized manner by individual members of the PRC but were released after brief periods, and in some cases members of the military council were disciplined for acts of harassment. By December 1980 the number of political detainees had been reduced to about 100, and all remaining prisoners were freed on Doe's orders before the end of 1981. In spite of the suspension of the right of habeas corpus, normal protection has been extended and correct procedures have been followed for persons arrested for nonpolitical offenses. Persons detained have been re-

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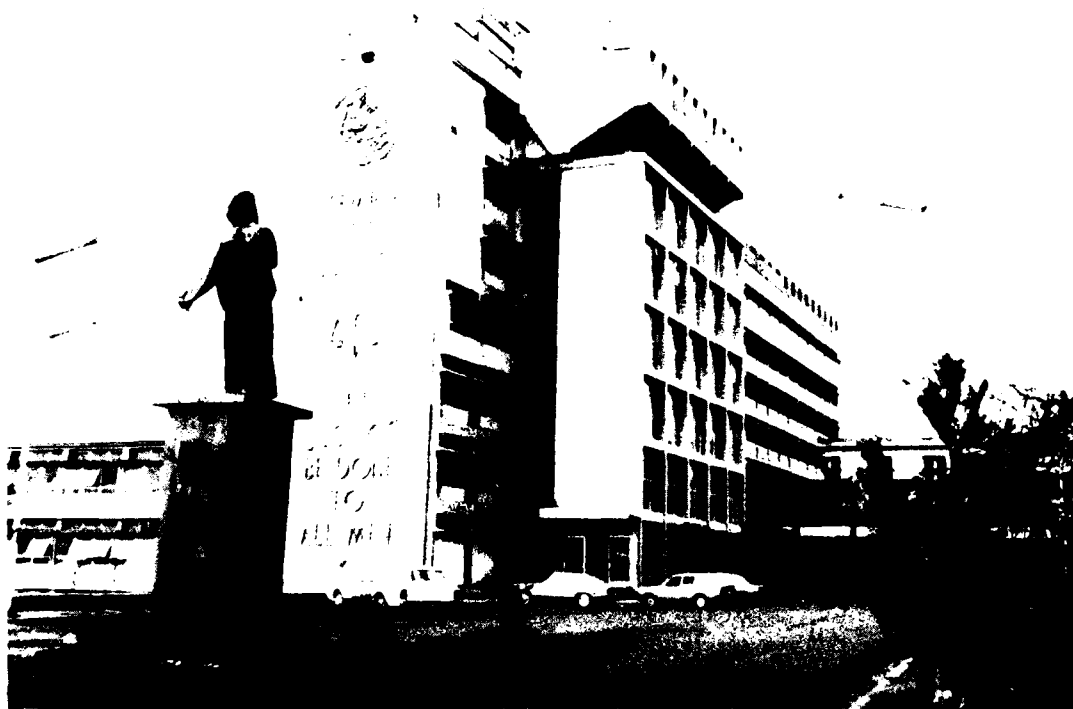
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of the counties except Montserrado County, where most of the legal business was transacted, and where separate civil and criminal circuit courts were formed. Original criminal jurisdiction in circuit courts extended to more serious cases for which the punishment might be heavy fines or imprisonment. Defendants could—and generally did—have their cases heard before juries. Lesser criminal cases and civil cases in which the claims were small were heard before magistrates in the municipalities and before justices of the peace in rural areas. In cases of felony it was required that two magistrates or justices of the peace sit together.

The legal system had as its foundation Anglo-American common law, although legislative enactments constituted the most generally applied body of public law. The criminal code was an adaptation of the New York State criminal code. A project of systematizing Liberian laws, begun in 1953 at Cornell University, resulted in the Liberian Code of Laws of 1956. All statutes enacted before adoption of the code were expressly repealed. Subsequent phases of the Cornell project were suspended after the coup. A second body of law based on traditional customs governed the adjudication of cases by chiefs in which tribal practices still prevailed. The availability of magistrates and justices of the peace in all areas of the country resulted in the tribal courts being limited to cases of family law, agricultural and game infractions, disputes over land use, inheritance matters, and questions of tribal rules and traditions. Town chiefs, clan chiefs, and paramount chiefs acted as judicial officers in addition to their administrative duties. Decisions by these customary courts could be reviewed through the hierarchy of chiefs to the county level, followed by administrative review by the Ministry of Internal Affairs or, alternatively, through the statutory court system.

A form of trial by ordeal practiced in tribal areas was based on administration to accused persons of a brew made from the poisonous bark of the sasswood tree. The practice was discouraged by the government but was still performed without interference by the authorities when the suspect's consent was obtained.

After the military coup the Supreme Court was replaced by a six-member body known as the People's Supreme Court. Martial law was brought into force, and the right of habeas corpus was suspended along with other protections embodied in the old constitution. The civilian court system, however, was reestablished to try defendants under precoup statutes. The People's Special Court on Theft and Related Offenses was set up by the revolutionary regime as an executive rather than a judicial body. Persons sentenced by the special theft court, a panel of three judges that



*Temple of Justice in Monrovia, the
site of Liberia's Supreme Court
Courtesy Frederick Ehrenreich*

magistrate's courts, probate courts, and justices of the peace. The Supreme Court consisted of a chief justice and four associate justices, all appointed by the president.

The new Constitution scheduled to come into force in 1986 provided for a judicial system similar to the one in effect before the imposition of military rule in 1980. A five-member Supreme Court was decreed. It would hear final appeals from other courts, agencies, and other authorities and would exercise original jurisdiction in cases to which a county was a party. The Supreme Court would be empowered to declare the invalidity of any law that is inconsistent with the Constitution. The legislature would have the power to establish courts subordinate to the Supreme Court and to define their jurisdictions. The president would appoint, with the consent of the Senate, justices of both the Supreme Court and the subordinate courts, who would not be subject to removal (except by impeachment) until retirement at the age of 70.

Before 1980 Liberia was divided into judicial circuits for each

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posts were also on the ballots in 1975. Tolbert, who had served as vice president for 20 years, had been filling out the term of Tubman, whose death came less than three months after reelection to a seventh term.

Contrary to previous practice, the new Constitution intended that elections would be contested by opposing political parties. It proclaimed that "the essence of democracy is free competition of ideas expressed by political parties and political groups as well as by individuals." Accordingly, it declared that laws, decrees, or other measures that might have the effect of creating a one-party state would be unconstitutional. An Elections Commission was provided for to register parties, supervise financing of campaigns, declare official results, and investigate complaints. The commission would have the power to reapportion constituencies after a national census to ensure nearly equal populations in every constituency. Political parties must have 500 members in each of six counties. Subsequently, the government added a requirement that political parties demonstrate financial strength of \$50,000 in cash and \$100,000 in securities. The parties' constitutions, which would be filed with the commission, must provide for the democratic election of officers and ensure the election of officers from as many regions and ethnic groupings as possible. Parties must be open to all citizens without regard to religion, sex, or ethnic background.

Although the Elections Commission would be autonomous, the new Constitution does not include unambiguous safeguards to prevent it from falling under the influence of the executive or a single preeminent party. Such vital features as the methods of appointment and terms of office of commission members have been left to subsequent enactments by the legislature. Registration would be denied to parties that, by reason of their aims or behavior of their adherents, seek to impair or abolish the free democratic society of Liberia or endanger its existence. Depending on the interpretation placed on this clause by the commission in particular instances, the clause could be applied in a manner calculated to neutralize legitimate opposition groups. Statements by Doe expressing antipathy to socialist or other ideologies viewed as repugnant to Liberian values heightened concern that movements unpalatable to the military authorities might be rejected.

Judicial System

Under the first republic, the judiciary had at its apex a Supreme Court, beneath which were subordinate circuit courts having general jurisdiction, and a variety of lower courts, including

emergency would be at the discretion of the president or by request of one-fourth of the body's membership. The legislature would have the power to create political subdivisions and readjust county boundaries; to raise armed forces and appropriate funds for national defense; to declare war and to authorize the executive to conclude peace; to levy taxes and duties; to constitute courts; to approve treaties; to establish citizenship and naturalization laws; and to establish laws dealing with criminal offenses. Revenue bills would originate in the lower house, and no loans would be raised by the government except under legislative authority.

All bills and resolutions passed by both houses of the legislature would be sent to the president for approval. The president could disapprove the entire bill or resolution or any item in it. A two-thirds vote in each house would be sufficient to override a presidential veto. The power to prepare a bill of impeachment would be vested in the House of Representatives, and the power to try impeachment cases would be vested in the Senate, subject to a two-thirds concurrence of the entire membership in the judgment. The chief justice of the Supreme Court would preside over impeachments of the president or the vice president.

Under the first republic, the business of the legislature was facilitated by an extensive committee system. As of 1980 there were 28 Senate standing committees and 38 House standing committees in addition to select committees to examine particular issues. Although some of the most powerful politicians in the country sat in the two houses, the legislature almost invariably deferred to the executive branch. Legislation was initiated by the president rather than by the members, and even major laws were likely to be passed without amendments and with little meaningful debate.

Elections

If plans for the return of civilian rule were adhered to, elections for the presidency, the Senate, and the House of Representatives would be held on the second Sunday in October 1985. These would be the first national elections since 1975, when Tolbert was elected to an eight-year term as an unopposed candidate. It was announced that Tolbert received 868,000 votes, representing participation by over 80 percent of the electorate. If accurate, this would have meant a substantially stronger public endorsement than the 714,000 votes claimed by Tubman in the previous election. Candidates for the legislature (65 representatives and nine senators) and for mayoral (14) and city councillor (122)



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10,000 more were employed by public corporations. In spite of a freeze mandated by Doe in 1981, the government work force has mounted substantially, in part to compensate for the drop in private sector employment—54,000 people in 1984 out of a total work force of 350,000 in the monetary economy. The 1984 figure included public corporations, such as the public utilities, the Liberia Broadcasting System, Air Liberia, agricultural development and marketing companies, the petroleum refinery, and the National Social Security and Welfare Corporation. The largest category of government employees consisted of teachers, followed by health and social welfare, public works, and local government workers.

Legislative Branch

Until the dissolution of the highest civilian institutions of government in 1980, lawmaking functions were conferred upon a bicameral legislature consisting of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Seats in the House were allotted on a basis of one representative for every 25,000 inhabitants of a county; as of the end of the first republic, its membership consisted of 71 representatives. Each of the nine counties elected two senators; accordingly, its full membership was 18. Representatives were elected to four-year terms and senators to six-year terms without any limit placed on tenure.

Under the new Constitution senators would be elected for nine-year terms and representatives for six-year terms; both would be eligible for reelection. As before, half of the Senate seats would be contested in each election. Because the number of counties was increased from nine to 11 in early 1984, the Senate would have 22 members (see Local Administration, this ch.). The new Constitution stipulated that each representative would be elected by a constituency having an approximate population of 20,000, provided that the total number of constituencies would not exceed 100. Under the first republic there were no single-member constituencies; four to 10 representatives were elected as a bloc from each county. Senators and representatives would have to meet minimum age requirements of 30 years and 25 years, respectively. The earlier requirement that each member of the legislature be the owner of a minimum amount of real estate in the county of his residence (\$1,200 for senators and \$1,000 for representatives) was discarded.

The legislature would assemble in regular session once a year on the second working Monday in January. Extension of the session or the calling of a special session at a time of national



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leader of the PPP, Gabriel Baccus Matthews, whose advocacy of links with Libya as "true nonalignment" had been repudiated by Doe, nevertheless continued as foreign minister until his dismissal half a year later for antigovernment remarks. Although his removal was interpreted as part of a purge of more leftist figures from government, Matthews later held for a time the potentially powerful post of director general of the cabinet. H. Boima Fahnbulleh, the remaining MOJA figure in the cabinet, was shifted to the foreign affairs portfolio. Fahnbulleh's appointment had been unexpected because he apparently was in disfavor for sending 300 teachers to Soviet-supported, Marxist Ethiopia for training in adult literacy when he was minister of education. Doe feared that the returning teachers would infect their students with leftist ideology. Another prominent MOJA adherent, Amos Sawyer, had earlier been appointed chairman of the constitutional drafting commission. By the close of 1981 only two of the original April 1980 cabinet members—Fahnbulleh and George Boley—remained.

Doe manifested little lasting prejudice against former notables of Americo-Liberian era politics, not excluding released prisoners. One of these, Blamo, who had been one of the ministers of indigenous background in Tolbert's government, joined Doe's cabinet after his detention. Winston A. Tubman, a cousin of the former president, was named minister of justice in June 1982. Although Tubman was dismissed within a year, numerous other figures identified with the True Whig Party had been appointed to ministerial posts by Doe or were serving at subcabinet levels. In his 1981 Christmas message, in which he announced the release of all remaining political prisoners, Doe also extended amnesty to those in exile. Confiscated houses and other assets, exclusive of agricultural holdings, were returned to former True Whig officeholders, as well as to the survivors of the 13 executed officials, in mid-1984.

Toward Civilian Rule, 1983-84

After two years of effort, the 25-member National Constitution Commission submitted its results to the head of state on March 30, 1983. The commission's draft constitution was reviewed by an elective Constitutional Advisory Assembly representing all counties and territories, and a revised draft was approved in October 1983. A schedule was announced that would have led to the reintroduction of a civil government in April 1985, the fifth anniversary of the revolution, but delays in the process of



*Commander in Chief and Head of State Doe delivering an address to the nation from the Unity Conference Center in Virginia, Liberia, on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the April 12, 1980 coup d'état
Courtesy Frederick Ehrenreich*

defining electoral districts and in devising a voter registration plan prompted a revision of the timetable. The presidential and legislative elections were set back to October 8, 1985, and inauguration of the new president was postponed to the first working Monday in January 1986. The ban on politics was lifted on July 26, 1984, after which registration of political parties was begun. The eagerness of the public for an end to military rule was demonstrated when, after the authorities pleaded that a shortage of funds might slow the process, voluntary donations poured into an account established at the initiative of a private newspaper.

Having received the initial draft constitution, Doe announced that all politicians serving the PRC who planned to run for office must declare their intentions and resign their government posts. Three prominent officeholders linked to the dormant PPP heeded the call for resignation: the director general of the

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cabinet, Matthews; the former minister and later head of the National Housing Authority, Quiah; and another housing authority official, Marcus Dahu. However, in a curious reversal, Doe announced that those who had not submitted their resignations would nevertheless have the opportunity to run for elective posts. The cochairman of the PRC, Major General J. Nicholas Podier, explained that the deadline had been a ruse to uncover those who were overambitious for public office and were not putting the goals of the PRC first.

The removal of Matthews and Quiah from senior positions meant that only Fahnbulleh, the foreign minister, remained from the original group of PPP and MOJA partisans invited into the PRC government in 1980. Fahnbulleh's turn came in July 1983, when he was relieved by Doe with the explanation that his philosophical outlook was incompatible with that of the government, which was endeavoring to intensify its relations with nations having similar ideological beliefs. Fahnbulleh's more radical leanings had apparently put him at odds with the Doe faction, the precipitating factor having been Fahnbulleh's objections to the resumption of diplomatic ties with Israel (see *Foreign Relations*, this ch.).

A reshuffling of the PRC in October 1983 led to further stresses among the military leadership. Doe created the new position of deputy vice head of state, appointing the *secretary general* of the PRC, Brigadier General Abraham B. Kollie, to the office. In what was interpreted as another move to consolidate his position and suppress possible rivals, Doe named the commanding general of the armed forces, Quiwonkpa, to replace Kollie as *secretary general* of the PRC. Evidently unwilling to give up his senior military command to become a political subordinate to Doe, Quiwonkpa refused the appointment. Within a month Doe reported that Quiwonkpa had been the ringleader of a new plot against him and that a foreign embassy had been implicated. The Soviet ambassador and the Ghanaian *chargé d'affaires* were subsequently declared *persona non grata* for engaging in activities incompatible with their diplomatic status. Quiwonkpa disappeared abroad, but others found guilty of treason were granted clemency and set free. Doe announced that Quiwonkpa, his "friend and colleague," had also been given unconditional clemency and was promised that his safety would be assured if he returned home.

Unsubstantiated new charges of conspiracy resulted in the arrest in August 1984 of Sawyer and several of his MOJA collaborators. Podier, who had ranked second after Doe on the PRC,

was also implicated in the alleged plot. Doe accused Sawyer of planning to take advantage of his absence in Europe by spreading rumors to sow confusion and panic, then to march on the executive mansion to bring Doe's downfall and, if necessary, to blow up public utilities and buildings and set fire to the city of Monrovia. Little credence was given to these allegations, however, and it was widely assumed that Doe's purpose was to remove Sawyer as rival for the presidency in the coming election. Sawyer had already rejected an invitation to become Doe's vice-presidential running mate and had further incensed Doe by calling upon him to resign so that all presidential aspirants could compete on equal terms.

Doe's accusations against Sawyer triggered both domestic and international protest. Demonstrators at the University of Liberia were brutally dispersed by undisciplined soldiers, resulting in many casualties. The university administration was dismissed, and the campus was closed. Because the credibility of Doe's pledge to restore normal political life was at stake, all charges against the detainees were dropped in October. However, delays in registration of Sawyer's party by the election commission prevented the commencement of his campaign.

The timetable for return to civilian rule was little affected by these events. After the constitutional referendum was approved by a nearly unanimous vote on July 3, 1984, Doe unexpectedly dissolved the PRC. It was replaced by the Interim National Assembly of 57 individuals, including all members of the PRC and a number of civilians; each county was represented. It was reported that many of the civilian appointees had been former officials in the True Whig Party. Doe was elected president of the interim assembly, and Harry Moniba, Liberia's ambassador to Britain, became vice president. Doe also chaired the 11-member Executive Committee, the highest of 25 committees organized within the assembly.

Although Doe turned to the interim assembly to deliberate on several major economic questions, it was clear that the hand-picked body was in no position to interfere with his decisions. The inclusion of civilians could be viewed as an effort to broaden Doe's political base, particularly at the county level, where the other parties might not be well organized. More disquieting was the introduction of Decree No. 88a by the PRC just before its dissolution, making it a felony to disseminate any material construed as *injuring the reputation of officials* (including members of the Interim National Assembly) or undermining their status. Prosecu-



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tions for defamation under this vaguely worded decree could seriously interfere with the pending political campaign.

Parties, Associations, and Factions

If the stipulations of the new Constitution were observed, in 1985 Liberians would have the first real opportunity since the nineteenth century to choose among competing political platforms and candidates. For over 100 years the True Whigs had won every election, generally facing no more than token opposition by dissidents from the dominant party. By law, any group of 300 or more eligible voters could register itself as a political party. Under both Tubman and Tolbert, efforts to fashion genuine opposition movements were met with legal threats, social and economic sanctions, and other forms of harassment (see *The True Whig Ascendancy; Political and Economic Developments in the 1950s and 1960s*, ch. 1).

The suspension of all political activity mandated by the military authorities brought about not only the dissolution of the True Whig Party but also the closure of the Masonic lodges and the eclipse of other social and fraternal clubs that had helped sustain the former oligarchy. Even though many of the senior figures had been brought into Doe's military government, the two organizations opposing the old regime—the PPP and the MOJA—were also obliged to disband. The PRC's ban inhibited discussion of political matters in the press and among the public, leaving unclear the extent to which the issues of the past would be relevant in the future.

Political Organization under the Second Republic

The removal of the ban on politics in mid-1984 brought a rush of announcements regarding the formation of new parties to contest the national election scheduled for 1985. It appeared that the most important of these would be the National Democratic Party of Liberia (under whose banner Doe planned to run), the United People's Party of Matthews and other former PPP partisans, and the Liberia People's Party of Sawyer and other MOJA adherents. By October 1984 at least seven other groups had announced their intentions to register as parties, although it was not clear whether all could fulfill the strict financial conditions. A merger has reportedly been discussed by five of the parties opposing Doe, including those of Matthews and Sawyer.

The predecessor of the United People's Party, the PPP, had

described itself as African socialist, stressing cooperation over competition, respect for traditional values, and reduced social stratification. Matthews had said that he did not regard Marxism as a guide for action but accepted it as a source for understanding the historical formation of classes. The PPP had claimed that its strategy was to become established as a viable opposition to the True Whigs through lawful methods and had succeeded in becoming registered as a party in January 1980 after overcoming government obstruction. Nevertheless, the PPP had been at the core of the unrest in 1979, and in 1980 Matthews had called for a general strike to force Tolbert's resignation, presenting the government with the pretext to ban the party and jail its leadership on charges of treason and sedition (see *The Regime on the Defensive*, ch. 1).

Although both the PPP and the MOJA had their origins among university students, the PPP sought to extend its following to urban workers, the unemployed, and the peasants. The MOJA remained primarily a left-wing movement among professors and students of the University of Liberia (see *Opposition Movements*, ch. 1). It did not become a party, although Sawyer, as one of its leading members, had been persuaded to run for mayor of Monrovia in 1979. The MOJA's Pan-Africanist agenda stressed solidarity with the black liberation movements of southern Africa. It also took up nationalist themes, calling for a new cultural consciousness and symbols of nationhood and arguing that Liberia's continuing underdevelopment was related to its reliance on foreign investment, trade, and aid. The MOJA advocated radical tactics of work stoppages, mass demonstrations, and confrontations with exploitive managers and landlords. Yet it stood aside during the PPP-led actions against the government in 1979-80, regarding them as ill-timed and futile.

The popularity of the PPP and the MOJA could be traced to the restlessness among young, mostly indigenous Liberians of the academic faculties and student bodies who were initially encouraged but later disillusioned by Tolbert's promise of change. During the 1970s the campuses of the University of Liberia and Cuttington University College were scenes of demonstrations and violence. Both institutions were polarized into indigenous and Americo-Liberian student parties, although some Americo-Liberian students did join the ranks of the dissidents. The turmoil of 1979-80, spearheaded by the students and the PPP had also involved the lower and middle strata of urban society. There was little evidence, however, that socialist ideas had taken hold among

the wider public. The primary objective of the mass demonstrations was to denounce the rise in the price of rice and to reject the old style of politics controlled by a corrupt True Whig oligarchy.

In the initial stages of the 1984 political campaign, the programs of the various parties were overshadowed by disputes over fulfilling the stringent conditions for legal registration. The sensitivity of Doe to doctrines perceived as subversive dictated prudence in defining party objectives until civilian rule was again firmly in place. Matthews' United People's Party announced that it would not be ideological but would seek to build a broad consensus among former PPP and MJOA adherents, liberals from the former True Whig Party, and previously apolitical persons. Sawyer and the Liberia People's Party also sought to appeal to a broad base of people determined to restore integrity to Liberian government.

None of the new parties seemed to be expressly representative of the traditional Americo-Liberian political families. Some well-known people from the Tolbert era aligned themselves with Doe's National Democratic Party or with one of the other formations. One of these, the Liberian Action Party, had among its senior members a number of individuals formerly associated with the True Whig Party who had later served in Doe's government.

The reemergence of the True Whig Party as a vehicle for the perpetuation of the privileged Americo-Liberian society seemed out of the question. After the initial retribution and confiscations exacted by the Doe government, hostility toward the Americo-Liberians as a group had become less pronounced. Reform-minded veterans among the True Whigs—most of them of indigent stock but others, like Winston Tubman, from the former political aristocracy—had joined the military government. Their superior education, remaining wealth, and business and social connections made it likely that individuals formerly linked with the True Whigs would be among the most prominent politicians of the second republic, although they were not identified with any single party.

The True Whigs had been the only group that had a formal party structure (leading from the wards and precinct levels up through county and national organizations) as well as women's and youth affiliates and conventions and rallies based on the United States model. Efforts had been made, beginning with the Tubman administration, to integrate elements of the tribally oriented population within the party and to encourage election to the legislature of tribal officials and the more progressive chiefs from the Hinterland and the territories. The party remained

strongly centralized, however, about a dozen eminent Americo-Liberian families retaining control of national politics. Just before the coup more modern elements of the party, conscious of the rising tide of discontent, were challenging the old guard's grip over policies and candidates.

The True Whig Party had not been guided by any identifiable set of political principles. It had flourished in an atmosphere of private initiative, relying on foreign investors and local expatriate businessmen to furnish most productive economic activity, jobs, and government revenue. As it evolved under Tolbert, the system revealed many disreputable features. Nevertheless, its pragmatic approach to Liberia's problems—emphasizing growth and development by encouraging domestic entrepreneurs and farmers and by hospitable treatment of foreign capital—had been reaffirmed by Doe's military government and endorsed by several of the new parties formed to contest the 1985 election.

Interest Groups

Groupings of individuals motivated by common interests defined in ethnic or religious terms or founded for social and self-help purposes have traditionally been popular in Liberian life. In the True Whig era leadership circles were generally successful in discouraging these groups from being transformed into blocs for pressing their members' political demands. By co-optation, patronage systems, and compromise the Americo-Liberian elites were able to deter subordinate segments of society from coalescing into movements threatening their control. The increasing urbanization and modernization of the late 1960s and the 1970s contributed to periodic restiveness on the part of organized workers, students, and the military. Political action outside the Americo-Liberian strongholds of the government and the True Whig Party was regarded as seditious, particularly when framed in terms of ethnic solidarity. Through a mixture of suppression and warnings, concession and appeasement, the leadership succeeded in deflecting all of these challenges to its political supremacy.

When the military assumed power, it dissolved some of the fraternal organizations, notably the Masons, which were perceived as auxiliaries of the True Whig Party. Other civic, religious, social, or self-help associations that did not venture into politics were not restricted. The PRC did not curtail union organizing. Although it barred unions from calling strikes, its response to illegal work stoppages was restrained. A limited degree of student political expression was at first tolerated, but when Doe lost patience with student demands, it was harshly suppressed.

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Among the Americo-Liberian minority that historically dominated public life, considerable distinctions could be found, but it remained a privileged class—usually wealthy—from close-knit, socially prominent families. Overlapping memberships in professional societies, certain churches, and most of all, fraternal and friendly organizations, bound members of the class together and cemented their control over public affairs. Gradually widening access permitted talented and educated members of the 16 major tribal communities to become absorbed into the leadership network, although in the end this failed to moderate pressures by the subservient majority of the populace.

The secret societies of Poro and Sande among certain ethnic categories were of local and regional importance. Their influence was conservative, educating youth in tribal lore and controlling social behavior. They were sometimes a factor in the selection of chiefs or in mustering opposition against unpopular local officials (see *The Social Order*, ch. 2). Upon migrating to urbanized areas, indigenous workers tended to form tribally based associations. These groups had essentially mutual welfare functions, assisting newcomers in adjusting to modern city life in substitution for the familial support that had been available in the Hinterland. To the extent that these associations injected themselves into politics, it was generally to appeal for resources to support development in their rural homelands. The first republic strongly discouraged the associations from projecting themselves onto the national political scene. Divided into the many tribal segments, the associations were not in any event equipped to act on a unified or coordinated basis. Moreover, for the more gifted and ambitious persons of tribal background struggling to realize their integration into the modern sector, membership in the tribal societies was of waning consequence.

The upheaval of 1980 brought to power a group of enlisted men having roots in indigenous communities. The prevalence of the Krahn in the PRC was widely noted because it seemed to introduce ethnic criteria that had previously been kept in check in national politics. Doe sought to moderate potential jealousy and ill-feeling by later broadening the ethnic representation. The requirement in the new Constitution that national parties demonstrate that they have supporters in a majority of the counties was intended as a precaution against political formations organized along tribal lines.

The need to placate the military has long been one of the realities of Liberian politics. Conspiracies in the armed forces were reported during both the Tubman and the Tolbert adminis-

trations, in addition to at least three plots purportedly uncovered by the PRC. One of Tolbert's first actions on becoming president in 1971 was to satisfy himself of the army's allegiance. By pay boosts, equipment purchases, and generous pensions offered to superannuated officers, Tolbert sought to accommodate the interests of the military. Neglect of the needs of enlisted personnel, in particular their deplorable housing conditions, precipitated the government's fall (see *Military Development Before 1980*, ch. 5).

Having become entrenched in power and relishing its appurtenances, it seemed unlikely that the military of the PRC regime would quietly disavow political activism after returning to the barracks. Even if the soldiers refrained from interfering in the delicate process of installing a new civilian government, the temptation of renewed intercession would be present if their privileges were threatened or if they saw the new administration leading Liberia in directions strongly objectionable to them. Judging from the statements and actions of the PRC leadership, their sensitivity to leftist influence was greater than any fears of a revival of the Americo-Liberian power structure.

Few of the military leaders seemed to have the stature and popularity to become successful candidates in an unmanipulated electoral contest. An obvious exception was Quiwonkpa, who remained outside the country in late 1984 in spite of Doe's invitation to him to return without fear of punishment. Doe's own ambitions for high office seemed to explain why official statements originally giving his date of birth as May 6, 1952, were later revised to May 6, 1950. Together with the postponement of the presidential inauguration until January 1986, this meant that Doe would have reached the age of 35, the minimum needed to qualify for the presidency.

The university campus was traditionally the preserve of the political and social elites, tending to be a way station to a career within the Americo-Liberian orbit. The most prominent families, however, could afford to send their children abroad to study. Under Tubman the expansion of educational opportunity to the Hinterland and the availability of foreign study for youths of tribal origin had produced a more heterogeneous student population, less tractable and prone to dissent against the status quo. Much of the recruitment efforts by the PPP and the MOJA were directed at university youth. The PRC was initially conciliatory toward the students, respecting the autonomy of campus life. Students demonstrated their support for the PRC soon after the takeover but urged the military leadership against emulating the extravagant

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living style of the toppled civilian regime and called on Doe to set a date for the return of civilian rule.

In December 1981 Doe announced that, in order to curb unrest, all student parties and political activity in schools were to be abolished. Representatives of the student body would henceforth be selected by faculties. The Liberian National Students' Union (LINSU) appealed for reconsideration of the decision. Doe reacted with unexpected vindictiveness to what he chose to interpret as a challenge to the PRC's authority. Six leaders of LINSU and other student bodies were arrested, accused of attempting to discredit the revolution and of trying to introduce foreign and socialist ideologies. The public was shocked when five of the students were sentenced to death by the Supreme Military Tribunal on the charge of contravening the PRC decree against political activity. Doe quickly exercised executive clemency, releasing the students and permitting them to return to their studies. Later in the same year the students at the University of Liberia again violated a PRC decree by boycotting classes for three weeks to protest the shortage of buses between two campuses 20 miles apart. Although a serious confrontation with the military was narrowly averted, the PRC handled the crisis with moderation, refraining from arrests and putting scarce, newly imported buses at the university's disposal. The uproar over Sawyer's arrest in 1984 produced perhaps the most serious public protest yet faced by Doe. Brutal repression by the army quickly brought the demonstrations to an end, but even after replacement of top university officials, the reopening was delayed, apparently out of fear that the campus would become a prime source of anti-Doe activity during the election campaign.

Labor has had the right to organize in Liberia for many years, although under the Tubman and Tolbert administrations labor federations were generally headed by Americo-Liberians close to the government. The authorities were suspicious of independent trade union activity, prohibiting strikes unless a government commission determined that they were justified. Because most of the country's labor force has consisted of unskilled agricultural workers, the wage-earning component has been small. It has never been a prominent factor in politics in spite of efforts by both the PPP and the MOJA to mobilize worker support. Under the PRC most industrial and commercial workers were organized into craft unions within the Liberian Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), formed in 1980 as a merger of the Labor Congress of Liberia and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

The increased independence of the unions after the military

government assumed control enabled them to become more effective, although the PRC decree withdrawing the right to strike deprived them of an important weapon. Only about 10 percent of all workers employed in the monetary economy belong to LFTU unions. Affiliates of the LFTU include seamen, dock workers, refinery workers, mechanics, restaurant employees, and workers in the timber industry and in some mines. The largest affiliate, which includes about 8,000 members, is the National Union of Plantation, Agriculture, Forests, and Allied Workers. Liberia's largest union, the National Association of Agricultural and Allied Workers Union of Liberia (NAAWUL), represents the workers of the Firestone Plantations Company, the country's leading employer, but is not affiliated with the LFTU. NAAWUL was suspended in 1982 for instigating work stoppages in violation of the PRC strike ban. All three of the iron mines are unionized, although only one of the unions is part of the LFTU.

The new Constitution seeks to restrict labor from becoming a separate political force by forbidding unions from contributing to any party. Nevertheless, in view of mounting economic distress and unemployment, greater labor militancy seemed a distinct possibility under a civilian government.

The Information Media

Newspaper publishing got under way early in Liberia after the arrival in 1826 of a printing press donated by the Massachusetts Colonization Society. The press was used to publish the *Liberia Herald*, a four-page biweekly, which appeared irregularly under different editors until 1862. The *Herald* was succeeded by many other journalistic enterprises. Although several publications were noteworthy for their careful recording of events of public interest and the independence of their views, none of those founded before World War II survived for long. In 1946 the *Liberian Age* appeared, at first biweekly and later twice a week; in 1950 the *Daily Listener* was established as the first daily (Monday-Friday) newspaper. The *Liberian Age* was government owned and the *Listener* was owned by a close friend of Tubman. Both received government subsidies because their limited circulations (totaling less than 10,000) made financial independence impossible.

At the time the coup occurred in 1980, the main newspapers were the *Liberian Age*, which was the organ of the True Whig Party, and the *New Liberian*, produced by the Ministry of Infor-

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mation. Although the *New Liberian* was briefly designated the *Redeemer* by the PRC, it reverted to its earlier name and was being published four times a week in 1984. Its circulation was variously estimated at 5,000 to 12,000. The country's principal independent newspaper was the *Daily Observer* (Monday-Friday). It had an estimated circulation of 6,000. Several other newspapers appeared on a weekly or twice-weekly basis but suffered from weak financing. *Footprints Today* was launched as a daily in the first part of 1984. As part of a program to establish a rural press in Liberia with the help of international agencies, the *Bong Crier* was introduced as a biweekly at Gbarnga in 1982, and *Nimba Today* began publication at Sanniquellie in 1984.

The main source for domestic news was the Liberian News Agency (LINA), a part of the Ministry of Information having offices in all county capitals. LINA disseminated news on behalf of the government through a daily news bulletin provided to its subscribers. Its coverage was considered to be accurate, although certain developments were omitted at the direction of the Ministry of Information.

During the Tubman administration, the strict sedition, libel, and slander laws that protected government officials from most forms of criticism constrained the independent press. In any event, editors generally supported the government and the president and were accustomed to exercising care in the handling of delicate political matters. Nevertheless, newspapers were banned from time to time, and editors and reporters were subjected to brief jail terms for perceived improprieties in their reporting. Under Tolbert the Liberian press was encouraged to take up national issues, and it became less risky to criticize government policies and to report evidence of corruption. This tolerance stopped short of the presidency, however.

The constitutional guarantees of free speech and free press were suspended by the military authorities. A PRC decree mandated the death penalty for efforts to "control, influence, oppose, castigate, or deride [government] actions or policies." Nevertheless, the military authorities have to a certain extent respected the Liberian tradition of an unregimented press. The press has not been bound by a formal censorship regime, although it has exercised restraint in commenting on the actions of Doe and the PRC. According to the United States Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1982*, criticism of specific PRC policies or of persons in high positions is usually not direct, but lively debate over national problems is found in opinion columns and letters to the editor. The report adds that "accurate re-

porting of questionable actions by government members is allowed. Advice critical of previous or current actions or policies is freely offered to the government."

After its founding in 1981, the *Daily Observer* became the periodic object of the military regime's anger but continued to appear in spite of erratic closedowns and arrests of its managing editor, Kenneth Y. Best. Once, when the newspaper was closed by the minister of justice for articles "uncomplimentary to government," it was reopened three days later after Doe's intervention. In January 1984, however, the *Daily Observer* was closed for a six-month period after the vice head of state accused its staff of fomenting dissension and factionalism and of speculating that plans to return to civilian rule had been abandoned. Rufus Darpoh, the former editor of both the *Observer* and the *New Liberator*, was jailed without trial for six months in 1984, allegedly for writing slanderous articles for foreign journals.

The electronic media have not exercised as much latitude as the press in reporting government actions. The government operated the only television channel as well as several radio stations. Private missionary stations have tended to avoid controversy, taking their news from LINA, the Voice of America, and the British Broadcasting Corporation. There were believed to be more than 320,000 radio receivers and 60,000 television receivers in 1983. Radio undoubtedly reached more people in Liberia than any other means of communication, circulation of newspapers being largely confined to Monrovia and other urban areas.

The principal radio stations were ELBC, operated by the Ministry of Information on a commercial basis, and ELWA, operated by the Sudan Interior Mission and largely funded by Protestant churches of the United States. ELWA was noncommercial and transmitted news and religious programs via shortwave to large areas of Africa, as well as via medium wave throughout Liberia in English and in several Liberian languages. The television station, ELTV, was also a commercial operation of the Ministry of Information. It was on the air four to five hours each weekday evening and six to eight hours each Saturday and Sunday. Local programs comprised 15 to 20 percent of total program time, the remainder being granted to entertainment programs imported from the United States, Britain, and Western Europe.

Foreign Relations

From Liberian independence until well into the twentieth

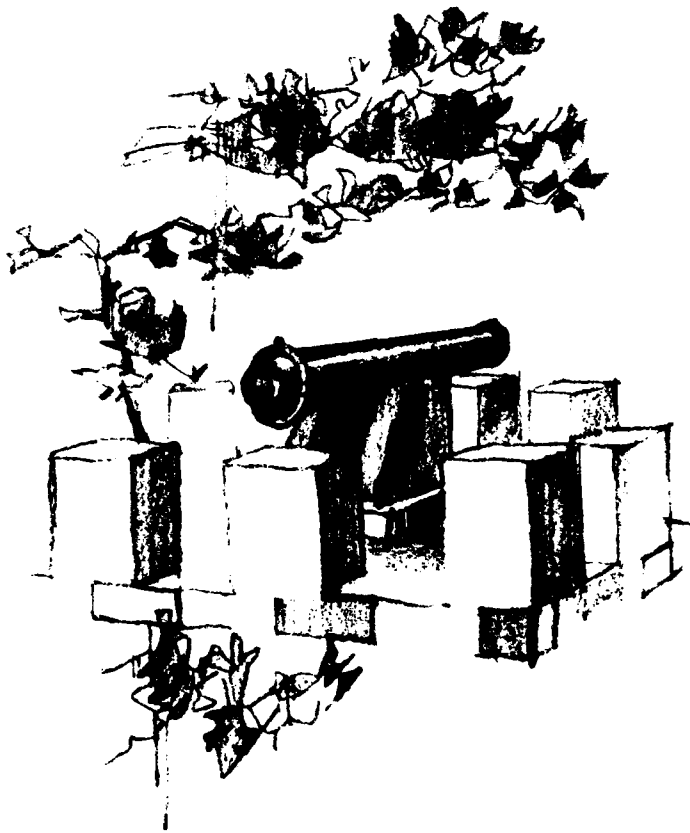
UNDER THE LEADERSHIP of a military government, Liberia in the early 1980s was moving through what was perhaps the most tumultuous period in its history. The coup d'état launched by a group of young enlisted men on April 12, 1980, had destroyed the illusion of stability built up by 133 years of statehood under the rule of an elite group composed primarily of descendants of freed slaves from the United States. At the time of the military takeover and the subsequent public executions of officials from the former regime, the country was temporarily in chaos. To restore order, Master Sergeant (later General) Samuel Kanyon Doe and his colleagues on the governing People's Redemption Council ruled by decree, imposing a host of stringent security regulations and using the army against the regime's opponents and potential enemies. The effectiveness of the armed forces, however, was initially limited because discipline had broken down in the upheavals that followed the coup. Indeed, in the first four years of military rule, several other coup attempts were linked to members of the armed forces and even to some in the ruling circle. Over time, the agitation abated, Doe consolidated his political power, and a measure of discipline was restored to the military. In 1984, however, Doe's government continued to be particularly sensitive about domestic security as it prepared itself for a constitutional transition to civilian rule.

The Doe regime also perceived threats arising from beyond its borders. Although in the wake of the coup the Liberian government had appeared to be strengthening its ties with Libya, Doe soon came to view that country with suspicion and accused the Libyans of plotting to overthrow his government. Similarly, the activities of the Soviet Union and its allies were regarded warily by the Liberian government. At the same time, relations with the United States improved, and American military and economic aid increased significantly. To protect itself against foreign and domestic threats, the government could call upon its military and police forces. These forces in 1984 included the Armed Forces of Liberia of some 6,700 members, the National Police Force of about 2,000, and other smaller protective and intelligence services.

An ancient cannon that serves as a monument overlooking the mouth of Monrovia's harbor

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Chapter 5. National Security





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sador was declared persona non grata for complicity in antigovernment plotting.

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Reports in the American Universities Field Staff series in 1980 by J. Gus Liebenow, supplemented by Mark Tessler's report in the Universities Field Staff International series in late 1983, evaluate the political record of the PRC government. In late 1984 Liebenow prepared a two-part account of the harassment of the new political parties by the Doe administration. These studies update longer analyses of the politics of the first republic found in Liebenow's *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* and Martin Lowenkopf's *Politics in Liberia: The Conservative Road to Development*. The dynamics of local politics, Liberian interest groups, and the True Whig Party are examined by Christophers Clapham in *Liberia and Sierra Leone: An Essay in Comparative Politics*. Joseph Saye Guannu's *An Introduction to Liberian Government: The First Republic and the People's Redemption Council* is a brief description, with limited interpretation, of national and local government.

Among periodicals devoted to Africa, the treatment in the London weekly *West Africa* is probably the most comprehensive on current political developments in Liberia. Additional details and official statements are available in issues of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service's *Daily Report: Middle East and Africa* and in the Joint Publications Research Service's *Sub-Saharan Africa Report*. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

accession to the presidency, a series of measures were taken to polish Liberia's credentials as a nonaligned nation by establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1971 and with other states of Eastern Europe shortly thereafter. A Cuban ambassador was accredited at Monrovia in 1976. Aside from the negotiation of a cultural agreement in 1976 that enabled a small number of Liberians to study in the Soviet Union, the new relationship with Moscow produced few tangible results. The official Soviet media, although still critical of social conditions in Liberia, praised the Tolbert administration for its willingness to undertake needed changes. An agreement with Romania in 1976 for joint industrial cooperation resulted in the construction of a rubber-processing plant that was not a commercial success.

Liberia was one of the few countries to retain its links with the Taiwan authorities, who maintained an active presence in the country, operating a sugar plantation and refinery known as Liberia Sugar Corporation (LIBSUCO) and a rice cultivation project in Maryland County. Taiwan abruptly recalled its personnel when Liberia announced the establishment of diplomatic relations with China in early 1977. Over 200 Chinese technical personnel were moved in to replace the departing Taiwanese staffs. Nevertheless, the sugar project was regarded as nonviable, owing in part to its remote location, and it succumbed a few years later. In 1982, during a visit to Beijing by Doe, agreement was reached on a loan from the Chinese to help revive the LIBSUCO operation. In addition, the Chinese donated a number of military jeeps and large-capacity buses. A technical team to carry out feasibility studies for highway rebuilding was also promised. Under a cultural agreement signed during the visit, it was agreed to promote cooperation in science, public health, sports, education, and publishing. A Chinese medical assessment mission later visited hospitals in Liberia as a preliminary to assigning doctors.

The Soviets addressed several encouraging gestures to Doe after his assumption of power. In July 1980 it was announced that relief supplies would be sent to Liberia by the Soviet Red Cross. About 40 Liberians were given scholarships in the Soviet Union. An agreement covering radio and television exchanges was signed. It was also reported that Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev had invited Doe to Moscow. Relations soon deteriorated, however, when in May 1981 Doe demanded that the Soviet embassy staff be cut by more than one-half at the same time that he announced the closing of the Libyan People's Bureau. No specific charge was leveled against the Soviet personnel other than an "unbecoming attitude." In November 1983 the Soviet ambas-

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this aid was at the highest level for any Sub-Saharan African country on a per capita basis. United States budgetary support was running at about \$35 million a year; developmental assistance added approximately \$13 million more, and \$15 million was being provided annually for the import of rice from United States stocks under Title I of Public Law 480. Before the coup economic aid had never exceeded \$20 million annually. Nearly 200 Peace Corps volunteers were involved in agricultural projects, rural development, and adult literacy programs. In anticipation of the soldiers' return to the barracks, the United States embarked on a \$43.5 million program for Liberian military housing. As of early 1984 about half of this amount had been disbursed, and more than 1,000 individual family dwellings had been completed. In addition, grants for the equipping and training of the armed forces were at an annual level of about \$12 million (see *Foreign Military Assistance*, ch. 5).

The United States also closely coordinated its efforts on behalf of Liberia with the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary), which had been lending large sums as part of a stabilization program that imposed stringent limits on spending and new borrowing by the Liberian government (see *Overview of the Economy*, ch. 3). It was seeking to broaden support from other governments and international organizations, and played a leading role in the Western donors group that met periodically to assess Liberia's needs.

American investment, estimated at \$500 million, comprised about half of the total foreign investment in Liberia. It was concentrated in the rubber plantations of Firestone and Uniroyal and in the Bethlehem Steel Company's interest in the Liberian-American-Swedish Minerals Company (LAMCO) iron mine until Bethlehem's withdrawal in mid-1984. Firestone, which had about 10,000 workers, was the largest single employer in the country. The three companies together accounted for about 5 percent of the labor force in the monetary economy. United States banks and insurance companies were also represented in the country. Pan American Airways operated Roberts International Airport under a management contract, and in October 1984 the AMOCO Oil Company was to begin offshore exploratory oil drilling under an agreement providing for production-sharing after development costs had been recovered.

Communist Countries

During the Tubman administration Liberia shunned formalizing its contacts with the communist world. After Tolbert's

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*Commander in Chief Doe,
Liberian head of state,
met with President
Ronald Reagan at the
White House during
an official working
visit to Washington
in August 1982.
Courtesy The White House*

rian economy, aggravated by the flight of capital after the coup, warranted the involvement of the United States to help the new regime face its urgent economic problems. Failure to act, he said, would risk the loss of one of America's longest standing African friendships and affect its credibility and prestige in Africa. He noted that the United States had a number of strategic assets in Liberia, among which were a Voice of America transmitter that broadcast to Africa and the Middle East, a telecommunications relay station for diplomatic messages, and an OMEGA navigation station (part of a global network enabling ships and aircraft to calculate their exact positions).

After 1980 the United States aid program was substantially augmented to assist Liberia in meeting its current financial obligations and to contribute to long-term development. As of 1984

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of the United States, but they also continued to look to the United States for moral and material support in the early difficult years of their new settlements. Official ties were supplemented by many unofficial connections of a religious, cultural, and economic nature. Large numbers of Liberians have been educated in the United States, and many American religious missions with schools attached to them have offered education at secondary levels in Liberia. The chronic financial difficulties of the African republic forced Liberia to accept demands by its creditors for the designation of a foreign receiver of customs having wide powers over the disposition of public funds. From World War I until 1951, when the loans were paid up, the receiver of customs was an official appointed by the United States government. It was largely the revenues from Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, which was granted a concession for the planting of rubber in 1926, that enabled Liberia to put its financial house in order (see Firestone, ch. 1).

The onset of World War II brought an upsurge in Liberian-American collaboration. The Defense Areas Agreement of 1942 authorized construction by the United States of a major air base known as Roberts Field, as well as other communications and transport facilities that made possible much of the subsequent economic development of the country (see *The Barclay Administration*, ch. 1). United States economic interests in Liberia continued to expand under Tubman, who pursued a policy of encouraging development by offering concessions to foreign investors (see *Open Door Policy*, ch. 1). Tubman's standing as one of the architects of the African unity movement made him an increasingly important ally of the United States, which he visited a number of times in his official capacity. These close relations were maintained during the Tolbert era and were further solidified by the brief stop in Monrovia of President Jimmy Carter during his African visit in 1978.

The savagery accompanying the overthrow of the first republic was deplored by the United States. Appearing before a congressional committee, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard M. Moose called the public execution of former government officials "one of the most shocking spectacles in recent memory." He charged that the killings had been carried out without a proper trial and in disregard of numerous forceful interventions by the United States ambassador in Monrovia. Moose, nevertheless, expressed sympathy for the goals of the revolution and reported that Doe was contemplating an early return to civilian rule. Moose declared that the critical condition of the Libe-

of objections by Ghana, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. After the healing of relations with these countries, the breach with ECOWAS was repaired in time for Doe to attend the 1981 summit meeting. During that session, Doe said that for security reasons Liberia was unable to implement the protocol on free movement of people. He endorsed, however, a strong defense agreement among ECOWAS members.

Western Europe

Since World War II Liberia has made deliberate efforts to diversify its external relations through expanded contacts with the European countries, in part to overcome the impression that it is a ward of the United States and part as an outgrowth of its widening commercial, developmental, and maritime interests. Trade with the countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) has become relatively more important, its members being among the principal customers for Liberia's first-ranked export, iron ore. In 1984 Italy, France, and the Netherlands were major trade partners, although falling well short of West Germany, which had become established as the leading importer of Liberian products. As a signatory to the Lomé Convention between the EEC and developing states of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, Liberia was entitled to virtually duty-free access for its exports to the EEC and was a recipient of aid through the EEC's financing instrumentalities.

The European Coal and Steel Community provided a loan of about \$38 million in 1977 for an iron pelletizing plant. A total of 56 million European Currency Units (about \$44 million at 1984 rates of exchange) had been allocated since 1976 in the form of grants and soft loans for development of palm oil, coffee, and cocoa production, rehabilitation of the Harper port, and rural health facilities. These programs have been supplemented by bilateral assistance from several EEC states, notably from West Germany, which have concentrated on the provision of safe drinking water in Monrovia and a number of other communities. The Bonn government has also been instrumental in assisting the Liberian information media, including the creation of LINA and the offer of scholarships for short courses in journalism in West Germany.

United States

The transaction of its relations with the United States has been an enduring preoccupation of Liberia's foreign policy. Not only did the colonizers come predominantly from the United States and pattern their formal governmental structures on those

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could help establish the Mano River Union as a more meaningful economic unit. Initially, however, Guinea's system of state control presented an impediment to its integration with the free-market economies of the other two members.

In 1976 the new Mano River bridge on the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone became the first tangible symbol of the union. Plans were being made for agricultural development on a joint basis of the Mano River basin, accompanied by power and irrigation works. Construction of a highway between Freetown and Monrovia was also in the planning stage as of 1983. Joint training facilities had been initiated for personnel of the two countries' merchant marine, forestry, postal, and statistical services.

Because President Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone had enjoyed warm personal relations with Tolbert, Freetown's reaction to the coup was bitter. Stevens' message to Doe, calling on him to ensure that accepted principles of justice and humanity were observed in dealing with arrested officials, recalled the special ties of friendship that had prevailed between the two governments. It was only after the executions, however, that the PRC made an effort to repair the damage by sending a delegation under Matthews to Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone.

Liberia's participation in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been of less tangible significance than its membership in the Mano River Union. Liberia was among the 15 founding members when ECOWAS was created in 1975, dedicated to cooperation in various economic sectors and ultimately to the free movement of goods and capital across national boundaries. Its political importance has been accentuated by its having served as a bridge between the French-speaking and English-speaking nations of West Africa. A number of joint ventures have been initiated under the ECOWAS umbrella, and timetables have been drawn up for tariff liberalization. A protocol adopted in 1980, subject to ratification by member states, provided that any citizen of an ECOWAS country had the right to visit any member state for up to 90 days without a visa. At later stages the right to residence and to establish a business would be introduced. A protocol on mutual assistance calling upon member countries to earmark units of their armed forces for joint use was also subject to ratification; it was adopted in 1981.

The ECOWAS summit held the month after the military coup in Liberia was a source of embarrassment to Doe. Although received as the Liberian head of state by the authorities in Lomé, Togo, where the meeting was to be held, he and his delegation were not admitted to the conference center, reportedly because

nous population against domination by a colonial-style aristocracy. They were fearful, however, of the mounting trend of military coups against legally constituted governments and dismayed over the negative impression given to the rest of the world by such unrestrained and barbarous behavior in an African country.

Neighboring Countries

The Tolbert government had enjoyed harmonious relations with its three contiguous neighbors—Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone. However, owing in part to poor communications and transport facilities, economic links with them had been limited. Although Guinea's radical ideology after it obtained independence from France in 1958 was sharply at variance with his own views, Tubman had cultivated cordial personal ties with Touré. Tolbert continued to foster the relationship through frequent exchanges of visits. In January 1979 a treaty of nonaggression and mutual assistance in matters of internal security was concluded by the two countries. During the rice riots three months later, Guinean troops were flown into Monrovia. They assisted in guarding government and OAU installations but were not called upon to intervene against the demonstrators.

Liberia and Sierra Leone were bound by common factors of history and the use of English as the official language. A number of Creole families of Sierra Leone were related to prominent Americo-Liberian families. Several ethnic groups were found on both sides of a border that could be crossed with a minimum of formalities. In 1973 the two countries agreed to establish the Mano River Union with the object of unifying their customs regimes and rationalizing their industrial development. In October 1980 Guinea acceded to the Mano River Union as the third member of the economic pact. By 1981 trade between Sierra Leone and Liberia in locally produced goods was on a duty-free basis (although nontariff barriers had not been entirely removed), and progress had been recorded in harmonizing customs and excise tax legislation and in adopting a common external tariff schedule. An important feature of the Mano River Union was to be the establishment of "union industries" by introducing incentives for selected new enterprises with potential viability in the combined market. Analyzing the effect of the union in 1982, Peter Robson, a specialist in economic integration, concluded that it seemed to have had little impact on trade or development. The limited exchange of locally produced goods had not been noticeably stimulated, and not a single industry had been approved for union status. Guinea's accession, by enlarging the trading area,

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French colonies in their African heritage, nor did they become fully identified with their passionate desire for political independence. Europeans and African leaders were in turn disinclined to treat Africa's oldest republic as a valid collaborator in bringing a new order to the continent.

The surge toward independence among its neighbors induced Liberia to associate itself with the aspirations of the new nations and the course of the African unity movement. Tubman's view of Africa as a community of states, each of which was to retain its own national identity and constitutional structure, prevailed over the vision of political integration held by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea when the OAU was formalized in 1963 (see *Liberia in Africa*, ch. 1).

Liberia aligned itself uncompromisingly with the cause of decolonization and majority rule in southern Africa. Although Liberia did not have sufficient resources to provide tangible aid—except in the form of scholarships—to the black nationalists from South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe), a public campaign raised over \$600,000 to be donated to the OAU's coordination committee for liberation movements in Africa. In 1975 Tolbert disregarded the OAU boycott against South Africa by agreeing to receive the South African prime minister, John Vorster, in a secret meeting in Monrovia. *Tolbert dismissed criticism of his action, saying he would go anywhere and talk to anyone in the interest of peace.* Subsequently, Tolbert announced the suspension of the dialogue in view of the intransigence of the white South African leadership.

Other African countries were at first unwilling to deal with the military government after the toppling of Tolbert's regime. Not only had Tolbert been the incumbent chairman of the OAU, but he and others of the executed officials had also been personally known and well regarded by other African notables. Appeals by the secretary general of the OAU for clemency and a fair trial, supplemented by requests of the OAU Council of Ministers meeting in special session in Lagos, Nigeria, for restraint and due process, were ignored. The new Liberian foreign minister, Matthews, sought to attend the Lagos session, but his aircraft was refused permission to land. He was, however, permitted to represent Liberia at the head of a delegation to the OAU summit in Freetown, Sierra Leone, three months after the coup. Doe's refusal to agree to the release of political prisoners prevented him from being received at the Freetown meeting. The other African countries did not dispute that the overthrow of the Tolbert government could be justified as the uprising of a subjugated indige-

the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, in addition to the United States, France, Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), and a number of African States. Doe reaffirmed the republic's faith in the UN and its support for the OAU in the search for solutions to Africa's problems and the promotion of the liberation cause in southern Africa. He said Liberia remained committed to the ideals of the Nonaligned Movement and the Group of 77 (see Glossary) and to the pursuit of regional goals through the West African bodies in which Liberia participated. In the dispute over territorial claims of the North African guerrilla movement in the Western Sahara, Liberia sided with Morocco and other "moderate" states in opposing the territory's recognition by the OAU in 1982 as the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic.

As of 1983 Liberia maintained diplomatic relations with 30 countries, of which 11 were in Africa. It had joined other countries of the OAU in severing relations with Israel after the outbreak of the war in the Middle East in 1973. When Doe assumed power, Liberia had argued in both the UN and the OAU that the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel and the return of the Sinai territory to Egypt justified a review of the OAU boycott. In August 1983, acting unilaterally, Liberia became the second OAU member to resume relations with Israel. Doe's state visit to Israel with a large delegation later that month was reciprocated by the visit of Israeli president Chaim Herzog to Monrovia in January 1984. Plans were announced for cooperation between Israel and Liberia in the fields of banking, roadbuilding, development of the power system, and rice cultivation. It had previously been reported that Israel would assist Air Liberia and help resurrect its shipping line. To protest Liberia's action, some Arab states announced a suspension of economic assistance. Liberian officials noted, however, that aid in bilateral form and from the Arab Development Bank had been extended only in moderate amounts and as loans.

Africa

The progression of African states toward independence, beginning with Ghana and Guinea in the late 1950s, brought a pronounced reordering of Liberia's foreign policy priorities. Before that time Liberia's attention was fixed on the United States and the European colonial powers. Its isolation from the rest of Africa was both physical and psychological. Not until 1960 was Monrovia connected by road to any neighboring countries. The Americo-Liberians did not share the interest of the people of British and

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century, the country's foreign policy consisted mainly of taking whatever measures were necessary to defend its independence and territorial integrity from encroachment by European powers whose colonies surrounded it. Although unofficial ties with the United States were always strong, official relations intensified during World War II and the Tubman administration. The rise of African nationalism prompted a refocusing of the country's external relations. Although not at first convinced of the wisdom of immediate independence for fellow Africans, Tubman adjusted quickly to the rapidly shifting situation on the continent, establishing Liberia as a factor in Pan-African politics. The republic also associated itself with various initiatives for closer economic collaboration with its West African neighbors.

The gradual diversification of Liberia's foreign relations proceeded under Tolbert. Diplomatic ties were initiated with the Soviet Union, the East European countries, and China. In 1978 Tolbert convened a successful conference at Monrovia to reconcile differences between two bordering French-speaking states, Guinea and Ivory Coast, as well as those between Guinea and Senegal. Emblematic of Liberia's standing in Africa was the selection of Monrovia to be the site of the summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1979, during which Tolbert assumed the chairmanship of the international body.

The death of Tolbert during the 1980 coup and the summary execution of senior members of his government resulted in Liberian representatives being temporarily ostracized by the African community. Offers of aid from Libya and Ethiopia were, however, received by the new government. Matthews, the first foreign minister of the military government, declared that a policy of nonalignment had been adopted to reverse the impression that Liberia was an errand boy of foreign interests, particularly those of the United States. The majority of the PRC, which in due course prevailed, rejected Matthews' approach and remained inclined toward the United States and other Western countries with which Liberia had well-established ties of aid, trade, and investments.

The release of most political detainees and the restraint practiced by the PRC leadership after its first tumultuous weeks in power contributed to the gradual willingness of other nations to restore more normal relations with Liberia. To assist Liberia in dealing with its economic distress and to encourage the return to civilian rule, the United States raised its aid contributions far beyond any previous levels. By the fourth anniversary of the takeover, Doe could boast that he had been welcomed to China,

State of Internal Security

The security concerns of the Liberian government were radically reshaped by the 1980 coup. Before that event, Liberian governments led by the True Whig Party and a faction of the Americo-Liberian elite were primarily concerned with the national trends in urbanization, modernization, and political disaffection that threatened their privileged position in the society. Using their control of the political apparatus, they had long been able to maintain social, political, and economic dominance over rivals in the Americo-Liberian community and over the indigenous majority that comprised more than 95 percent of the country's population. But politics as usual and True Whig prominence were suddenly terminated by 17 young enlisted men from the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), who used their weapons to bypass the established political system and assassinate President William R. Tolbert.

After taking power as leader of the People's Redemption Council (PRC), Doe was mainly concerned with solidifying his control over the government and the country. In his first four years as head of state, he ruled with a firm hand and was successful in bringing order out of the postcoup chaos, in becoming Liberia's dominant political figure, and in defending against various real and suspected plots to overthrow his regime. In 1984 observers noted that the identity of the next civilian president would, to a large extent, depend upon how Doe, as the incumbent head of state, defined who and what constituted a security threat to Liberia.

Government Security Policy

When the young soldiers of the PRC took over the government, they faced a daunting, confused security situation. They had no estimate of how many Tolbert loyalists were at large or whether they were capable of mounting a countercoup. Moreover, Monrovia and its environs were paralyzed by a complete breakdown of public order. Young soldiers told by radio-broadcasts to ignore the orders of their officers, roamed the streets armed with rifles, arresting and dispensing revolutionary justice to True Whig supporters, settling personal scores, and requisitioning property in the name of the revolution. Students likewise rebelled against authorities on Liberian campuses, and looting by soldiers and unemployed Monroviaans was widespread. It was estimated that more than 200 people were killed in the vio-

lence of the first three days after the coup.

As they established their control, Doe and the PRC ruled by decree, suspending the constitution and dissolving the executive and legislative branches of government. Martial law was declared, and the protective tradition of habeas corpus was suspended. The Supreme Military Tribunal, composed of five military officers, was appointed to hear cases in which treason was charged and those involving corruption or misconduct among security personnel. The PRC also imposed a ban on all political activity that lasted until mid-1984 and a dusk-to-dawn curfew, which was soon shortened but remained in effect for over two years. In short, according to the United States Department of State's human rights report published in 1981, "with the suspension of the Constitution, civil and political rights are exercised at the grace of the government." In the space of a few days, Doe and the PRC had established the institutional framework that they would continue to use for the next several years to still opposition and to control domestic order.

In these first few days, the PRC also used its power over the national security apparatus so ruthlessly that it acquired a reputation for brutality that continued to burden the regime in 1984. Five days after the coup, Doe ordered the public execution of four looters—three soldiers and a civilian—"as an example" to other criminals. On April 22, after 14 former True Whig officials had been tried before the Supreme Military Tribunal on charges of treason, corruption, and human rights abuses, the PRC had 13 of them executed, even though the tribunal had recommended the death sentence in only four cases. These televised executions, which were undertaken in spite of pleas for clemency from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United States, most other Western nations, and United Nations secretary general Kurt Waldheim, became the yardstick against which all of the government's subsequent security policies have since been measured.

Partly in response to the international outcry that followed the killings, Doe announced that former government officials would no longer be executed, although the Supreme Military Tribunal would continue hearings on their alleged offenses. "The executions so far," according to Doe, "are now enough to set an example about what happens to those who commit high treason." No further executions of former True Whig officials were carried out, although the government later admitted that the former director of the national police, Varney Dempster, and Tolbert's son, A. B. Tolbert, had been taken from prison and killed extrale-

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gally. The Doe government has continued to rely on capital punishment in cases of treason and murder, but it has acted with more circumspection than it did in April 1980 (see *Security Threats*, this ch.).

After the coup some 500 persons were arrested because of their connections with the True Whig Party. Most of them had been taken into custody by enlisted personnel acting on their own volition or under the orders of individual members of the PRC. Many of the prisoners had been beaten and paraded half-naked before jeering crowds. Within a month of the military overthrow, however, the PRC ordered a halt to this behavior and released approximately 200 prisoners who had been rounded up by mistake or who were judged not to pose a threat. Beginning in July 1980, the government slowly began to release the remaining political prisoners. In December 1981 Doe announced an amnesty for all political prisoners, and the approximately 20 remaining were released. Political prisoners who had been incarcerated by the Tolbert government—about 250 in all—had been granted a general amnesty by Doe two days after the coup.

On numerous occasions since then, however, the government has detained persons for violating the ban on political activities that had been imposed at the time of the coup. The spirit of the ban, which was lifted in July 1984, was succinctly defined by the head of state in December 1982, when he announced that the security forces had the right "to arrest anyone for indulging in political speeches, remarks, or acts which may affect the stability of the country." The most controversial enforcement of the ban occurred in January 1982 when six student leaders involved in protesting the ban at the University of Liberia were arrested and tried before the Supreme Military Tribunal. Five of them were found guilty of treason and were sentenced to death. The day before their scheduled execution, however, Doe intervened and ordered their release from prison. The ban, although unevenly enforced, hampered the free expression of the Liberian press (see *Parties, Associations, and Factions; The Information Media*, ch. 4).

Many arrests and detentions since the coup have occurred, not as a result of government policy but because of misconduct on the part of security personnel. It had become obvious immediately after the revolt that a major source of the lawlessness that gripped Monrovia was constituted by the young, poorly trained, and impoverished soldiers of the AFL—not excluding members of the PRC—who were using their positions and weapons to grab a share of the coup's booty. Government security

*After the 1980 coup
a soldier stands guard
behind a statue of Jesus
in the capital city's
Executive Mansion.
Courtesy Werner Gartung*



policy thus came to hinge, to an extent, upon the PRC's ability to control its own security forces. In order to limit arbitrary arrests and official harassment, the military government in May 1980 issued a decree specifying that "all arrests shall be made by the minister of justice after a thorough investigation" and took action, however unevenly, to impose discipline on its troops.

Arbitrary arrests, detentions, and harassment not sanctioned by the government continued sporadically, however. Doe issued several warnings that harassment of civilians by the military would not be permitted to continue, and on several occasions even PRC members have been disciplined for misconduct. Notably, Captain Jerry Gban was expelled from the PRC in late 1980 and sentenced to 18 months in prison for assaulting two doctors, and on separate occasions in the late spring of 1982, PRC members Colonel Larry Borteh and Major Stanley C. Tarwo were suspended for "acts unbecoming to a senior member of the Council." (All three were reinstated in 1983.) According to the United States Department of State's human rights report for 1983, harassment of civilians by government and military officials—including arrests, detentions, fines, trials, and short prison terms imposed without regard to law or due process—continued to be a

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problem despite the disciplinary efforts of some high government officials.

Security Threats

Since coming to power, Doe has been concerned about the possibility of being overthrown by domestic opponents. The head of state has perceived coup attempts arising from enemies linked to the former government, from discontented enlisted soldiers, and from members of the ruling circle. By neutralizing or eliminating those associated with these plots, Doe was able to strengthen his position as Liberia's paramount leader.

In the wake of the April 12 coup, the PRC feared a counter-coup from forces linked to the Americo-Liberian elite and in its first month in power reported thwarting two such actions. It was never established, however, whether these alleged attempts, which purportedly involved soldiers who had been officers before the 1980 coup, represented efforts by True Whig elements to regain power. The officer accused of involvement in the first of these plots had in fact been known for his anti-Tolbert sympathies. He was later killed by government forces while reportedly attempting to escape across the border to Sierra Leone. Not much was known publicly about the other plot, which allegedly involved seven Liberian officers. Their trial, held in camera before the Supreme Military Tribunal, lasted a full year before a guilty verdict was reached in July 1981. In that time three original members of the tribunal, including the chairman, had been arrested for delaying the proceedings and withholding information. Two months after their conviction, the coup plotters (as well as the three arrested members of the Supreme Military Tribunal) were released from prison, leading some observers to conclude that the entire affair had been an example of harassment by a faction in the PRC. It may be noted, however, that the fear of a counter-coup by persons linked to the generally unpopular True Whigs had receded significantly by that time. Nearly all of the old True Whig loyalists had made their peace with the Doe government—gradually reemerging in positions of power and influence—or were out of the country.

From the date it seized power, Doe's regime attempted to ameliorate the poor conditions of military service that had been a partial factor in the 1980 rebellion. Immediately after the coup, military pay was increased, and the government soon embarked upon a barracks building program to improve the living conditions of soldiers and their families (see *Morale and Conditions of Service*, this ch.). The PRC's efforts to improve the living stan-

dards of ordinary soldiers were thought by many to have limited the likelihood of further coup attempts by discontented enlisted men, but in June 1981 the arrest of a group of 15 soldiers on charges of treason indicated that trouble from this source remained a potential problem. Thirteen of those arrested were believed to have been executed after a short trial before the Supreme Military Tribunal.

Other alleged attempts to overthrow Doe have come from the ruling circle itself. The PRC, composed of young, inexperienced soldiers, soon showed itself to be a somewhat fractious group (see *People's Redemption Council*, ch. 4). Shortly after they came to power, the soldiers in the PRC demonstrated widely different levels of administrative competence and conscientiousness as well as varying ideological outlooks. Doe himself emerged as a relatively serious and sober leader, in contrast to certain other young PRC members—referred to as “cowboys”—who were known for their erratic behavior and penchant for wrecking requisitioned automobiles. The new head of state also had ideological differences with some leftist PRC members and disappointed those who hoped that the coup would usher in a socialist revolution. Doe openly professed close Liberian friendship with the United States and suspicion of socialism and communism, which he considered to be a “foreign ideology.” It is also possible that Doe's gradual accumulation of power and authority—and his desire to run an orderly administration—may have offended others on the PRC. In early 1981 Brigadier General Thomas Quiwonkpa, a PRC member and the army commander who for over three years was considered to be a close political ally of Doe, chastised others on the council for their conduct: “On many occasions Master Sergeant Doe has made decisions that have been ignored by some officials. Each member of the PRC thinks he is Head of State.”

In August 1981 five members of the PRC were executed after they were convicted by the Supreme Military Tribunal of plotting to kill Doe. The most prominent and powerful of those executed was Major General Thomas Weh Syen, who had been the vice head of state. Considered the leader of the “leftist” faction of the PRC and generally critical of Liberia's close ties with the United States, Weh Syen had emerged as something of a political rival to Doe and on several occasions had directly contradicted decisions taken by the government. Weh Syen was unpopular among many Liberians because he was known as a “hardliner” on security issues and had been linked to human rights abuses, including the illegal execution of Tolbert's son and police chief Dempster (See

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Transitional Politics, 1981-82, ch.4). Because the proceedings of the two-day trials were held in camera, no details of the alleged coup plot emerged. According to a 1982 staff report prepared for the United States Senate, "The United States still has no evidence of an organized coup plot [involving Weh Syen and his comrades]." After the execution of Weh Syen and the four other PRC members, many observers agreed that there was no longer any faction on the PRC that was likely to question or dissent from Doe's policies.

In November 1983 Quiwonkpa was accused of involvement in a plot to overthrow the head of state (see *Toward Civilian Rule, 1983-84, ch. 4*). Quiwonkpa, who one month earlier had been stripped of his membership in the army and the PRC after refusing to give up his command of the AFL and accept a lesser post, was said to have been the ringleader of a group of 13 soldiers and prominent civilian officials who were later tried and found guilty of treason by the Supreme Military Tribunal. Government sources also hinted that the recently removed director of the AFL staff had been involved in the plot but that he had been killed by mistake by guards during a nighttime rendezvous at Quiwonkpa's farm in the far north of Nimba County. According to statements that one of the accused was allowed to make to the press, the object of the plot was to return the country to civilian rule. Those who were convicted fared better than had Weh Syen and his allies. After the trial Doe freed 10 of the convicted plotters from prison. However, the three other conspirators—who had also been convicted of murdering five people during a raid in Yekepa, Nimba County, that was alleged to have been part of the coup plot—were executed. Doe also granted "unconditional clemency" to Quiwonkpa, who was believed to have fled into exile.

In mid-1984 the country entered a transitional phase as the military government prepared for the return of civilian rule in January 1986 under the new Constitution. But the period promised to be precarious in terms of internal security. Before the PRC dissolved itself in order to be replaced by the so-called Interim National Assembly, its members implored Doe to halt the liberalization process on grounds of security and to declare himself president unilaterally instead of running for office. After the ban on political activity expired, there were recurrent reports that the soldiers, upset about the reemergence of disorderly political activity, might move against Doe.

The resumption of political activity imposed on the head of state the problem of preserving the credibility of the evolving political process while seeking to ensure the success of his own

candidacy over emerging rivals. The general sense of insecurity was fueled when Doe purportedly uncovered another coup plot in August 1984, resulting in the jailing of Amos Sawyer, a leading presidential contender, Major General J. Nicholas Podier, the former cochairman of the PRC, and two other military figures. Serious disorders broke out at the University of Liberia, where Sawyer's arrest was interpreted as an attempt by Doe to repudiate his commitment to restore civilian rule. The students were violently suppressed by soldiers, but normalization proceeded with the formation of a number of new political parties.

The significance of these episodes could not be readily evaluated, but most observers were skeptical of the government's allegations of plotting. The subsequent release, without fanfare, of those detained for subversive activity reinforced the view that there had not, in fact, been a coup attempt. In late 1984 it was unknown whether opponents and potential enemies outside the military posed a security threat—in contrast to a legitimate political challenge—to the Doe regime. In view of a buildup of expectations for a revival of civilian politics, any action by a disgruntled military or by Doe himself to stall the process of returning the military to the barracks could bring about further upheavals.

External Security Concerns

Liberia is a small, poor state, and it has correspondingly small and weak armed forces. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Liberia's relative impotence vis-à-vis the European powers engaged in building and maintaining colonies in West Africa meant that Liberian sovereignty and the inviolability of its borders could not be taken for granted. During the colonial period, large amounts of the so-called Hinterland were lost to Britain and France when the government in Monrovia could not demonstrate its control over the area. The country survived, however, and eventually its boundaries were firmly established. Since the decolonization of most of West Africa between 1957 and 1961, Liberia has been fortunate to be surrounded by other small states that, although they have occasionally caused the Liberians concern, have displayed neither the capacity nor the inclination to threaten the government in Monrovia. Thus, in the early 1980s, as previously, Liberian leaders have usually looked beyond the country's immediate neighbors both for threats to national security and for allies to protect the country from those threats.

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Liberian governments have generally regarded the United States as a close ally despite the geographic distance between the two countries. In addition to their commercial and political ties, the United States and Liberia have maintained a military relationship since the early twentieth century. For a period of several weeks after the 1980 military coup, it was uncertain if these close links would continue. The Soviet Union, Cuba, and Libya—all adversaries of the United States—immediately extended diplomatic recognition to the PRC government, but Washington displayed more hesitation, in part because of the brutality displayed during the coup and its aftermath. In addition, some prominent members of the PRC and the largely civilian cabinet were known for generally socialist or "radical" ideological inclinations, indicating their dissatisfaction with the historically close relationship with the United States and a level of distrust regarding American intentions.

Over time, however, the PRC government's relations with the United States improved, and the Soviet Union and Libya came to be characterized as hostile powers. There were several reasons for the shift in the Liberian attitude. Doe's increased prominence in government decisionmaking, his close personal friendship with the late Guinean president Ahmed Sékou Touré—a longtime Marxist-Leninist who cautioned Doe against a close relationship with the Soviets—and Libya's 1980–81 invasion and short-lived merger with Chad have all been cited by observers as partial explanations for the more sharply defined Liberian attitude. Quiwonkpa, who at the time was a close ally of Doe, expressed his government's complaint in 1981 that "communist countries were supplying arms and ammunition to African countries and were quick to take advantage of military takeovers and other national disturbances." Others have noted that the United States would not have been so quick to provide high levels of economic and military assistance had Liberia strengthened its ties with the Soviet Union, Libya, or their allies.

The Liberian attitude toward the Libyan regime of Colonel Muammar al Qadhaafi continued to harden after the Libyan people bureau (embassy) in Monrovia was ordered closed by Liberian authorities. In a 1983 interview, Doe indicated that Libya had supported Weh Syen's alleged attempt in 1981 to overthrow the Liberian government. In the same interview, Doe described Qadhaafi as a man "who would like to lead the whole continent of Africa" and said that "we will do our best politically to sabotage his operations in the region." In addition to Libyan activities in Chad, Doe was reportedly concerned about Libyan

meddling in Ghana and Upper Volta (renamed Burkina Faso in 1984). When Liberia resumed official diplomatic relations with Israel in 1983 after a 10-year lapse, it was widely reported that the Israelis had agreed to supply the Liberians with intelligence on Libyan activities in Sub-Saharan Africa. The nature of relations between Liberia, Libya, and Israel was spelled out by Israeli president Chaim Herzog when he welcomed Doe to Israel in August 1983: "You come from Africa facing the new danger of Libyan colonialist ambitions which threaten the independence of many African countries."

In the early 1980s Libya was the Doe government's major external concern, but other countries were also viewed with suspicion. In May 1981 the Liberians ordered the Soviet embassy to reduce its staff from 15 to six and in November 1983 expelled the ambassador, accusing the Soviet Union of involvement in the Quiwonkpa plot. The Ghanaian chargé d'affaires was also declared *persona non grata* because of his embassy's alleged complicity in the coup attempt.

Liberia has rarely felt threatened by its immediate neighbors—Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast—although the armed forces of the latter two are individually thought by most observers to be at least a match for those of Liberia. Ivory Coast's 5,000-man military establishment is well regarded because it has been trained by the French; similar respect is granted Guinea's 9,900-strong armed service because it has been generously equipped by the Soviet Union. After the overthrow of the True Whig government in 1980, relations were complicated because Tolbert had been close to leaders of all three neighboring countries. He had married the daughter of Ivory Coast president Felix Houphouët-Boigny, and Guinean troops had been flown to Monrovia in 1979 to support Liberian forces in the wake of the rice riots. As head of state, Doe was quickly able to establish a close relationship with the Guinean president. He also worked to improve ties with Liberia's other neighbors, but potentially troublesome signs were occasionally displayed. Relations with Ivory Coast, although correct, were never close, and friction developed when it was suspected that Quiwonkpa had fled there after he was accused in the November 1983 plot against Doe. Strains with Sierra Leone were displayed quite dramatically on one occasion in February 1983 when the head of state sent a battalion of troops to the border after a Freetown tabloid had falsely reported that he had killed his wife after discovering she had been involved in a coup plot against him. Nothing further came of that incident, but it did indicate that armed conflict between Liberia and its neigh-

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bors was not wholly inconceivable.

The Armed Forces

The mission of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) has historically been to defend and guard the country's borders, safeguard national security, and protect the population from threat or aggression, although in 1980 the AFL's duties were expanded by the soldiers' foray into government. In 1984 the operational elements of the AFL included the Liberian National Guard Brigade and related units, which had a combined manned strength of approximately 6,300, and the Liberian National Coast Guard's total complement of about 450 men. These forces were thought to be gradually improving after the upheavals of four years earlier.

Military Development Before 1980

The beginnings of a national military tradition in Liberia date back to 1822, when the first settlement of Americo-Liberians was established on the site of present-day Monrovia. Before the arrival of the settlers, indigenous groups had long used force of arms as they contended for dominance among one another. To protect themselves against the local inhabitants, the Americo-Liberians established a militia shortly after their arrival in Africa. Throughout the nineteenth century, militias were established as they were needed to defend settler communities from attacks from indigenous groups. Officered by Americo-Liberians, the ranks of the militias were generally composed of lower class settlers and loyal Africans of tribal descent.

Although the Department of War had been created in 1848, Liberia's first professional military organization, the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF), was not created until 1908 under British direction. The force's original mission was to uphold the country's claims to sovereignty along its interior border, where clashes between outlying tribal groups on both sides of the frontier caused Britain and France to claim that Liberia was unable to preserve order and maintain security. The newly formed LFF undertook a campaign to pacify the Hinterland and contributed significantly to forestalling possible intervention by the European colonial powers. The LFF increased steadily in size over the years, and the militia became an inactive reserve to be called on only in emergencies. From 1912 to 1922, the LFF was commanded by United States Army officers of African descent who served at the request of Liberian authorities.

The LFF served not only as the country's army but also as a national constabulary, charged with maintaining law and order, opening up the interior, and assisting in the collection of revenues. Until 1924, when the National Police Force was organized, it was virtually the country's only police service. Its military operations were confined almost exclusively to putting down numerous tribal disturbances, the last of which occurred in 1939 among the Kru.

In its pacification role, the LFF gained a reputation for brutality, indiscipline, and corrupt behavior. Its enlisted men were poorly paid and were expected to live off the resources of the communities in which they operated. Thus, according to American political scientist J. Gus Liebenow, it was government policy not to assign soldiers to their home areas. In 1932 the League of Nations launched an investigation into the LFF's conduct of operations against the Kru, substantiating earlier charges by the governments of Britain, Germany, the United States, and France that LFF behavior had been "tyrannical." The Liberian government in response promised "progressive reforms," but it was not until after World War II that more settled conditions, better administration, and improved discipline gradually ameliorated the relationship between the LFF and the civilian population.

The LFF saw little action outside the national borders, although the country was a participant in both world wars. A few Liberian troops were sent to France during World War I, but none served in combat in either war. From 1960 to 1963, Liberia contributed an infantry unit—specially trained by United States advisers—to the United Nations peacekeeping force in the Congo. Six 250-man companies that were rotated through the Congo performed unevenly in that test of their military capability.

In 1962, to reflect the country's nonaggressive international policies, the LFF was redesignated the Liberian National Guard (LNG), and the Department of War became the Department of National Defense. (It became the Ministry of National Defense in 1972.) The national guard, along with the militia and the small coast guard, which was established in 1959, became known as the Armed Forces of Liberia and operated under a single general staff. The AFL grew steadily from a level of approximately 3,000 in 1962 to some 4,000 in 1971 and to about 5,000 in 1980 at the time of the coup.

The top echelons of the military were implicated in several coup plots against presidents William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman and Tolbert. In 1963 and 1966 the commanders of the LNG

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were removed from their positions after being linked to coup plotting (the former was jailed, the latter "rusticated"). Other reported plots resulted in the arrests of senior officers in 1969, 1970, 1973, and 1977. When Tolbert assumed the presidency, he reacted to the rash of successful military coups elsewhere in Africa and moved quickly to consolidate his control of the AFL. He began to visit military installations on a regular basis and granted across-the-board pay raises to soldiers in 1972. The following year 700 officers and enlisted men, nearly 20 percent of the AFL, were retired from active duty for "old age, tenure of service, physical disability, general worthlessness, and for the convenience of the government." Tolbert continued to promote and retire officers selectively, and he moved them frequently among units. By focusing his efforts on the potential threat posed by the Liberian officer corps, however, Tolbert was unprepared for the 1980 coup led by underpaid, poorly housed enlisted men.

The Military and the Government

Before the PRC seized power, the military was constitutionally subordinate to the civilian government. It had never played a central role in the political life of independent Liberia. Although leading officers of Americo-Liberian background were often well connected through family ties to the national leadership, they were generally apolitical and subservient to the interests of the president and the True Whig Party.

This situation changed completely when Doe and the PRC came to power. The young privates, corporals, and sergeants (who, with the temporary exception of Doe, were promoted to the ranks of captain, major, colonel, and general) established the PRC as both the national executive and the legislature. Military men were also appointed as superintendents of Liberia's counties and territories and as heads of certain parastatal corporations. Shortly after the coup, the PRC was expanded from 17 members to include 11 additional "co-members" in order to balance the numerical predominance of Doe's Krahn ethnic group. Although it soon became apparent that most of the day-to-day management of government affairs was being left to the cabinet members—most of them civilian politicians and technocrats—the PRC's organization and actions made it clear that the military council was the country's central political authority. Each member of the PRC was assigned to several of eight standing committees that collectively oversaw the whole spectrum of government business. Under this arrangement PRC members were, in effect, shadow ministers and could directly exert their influence over ministry

policymaking. Because this arrangement enabled some of the less responsible PRC members to interfere with and harass government officials, the PRC committees were phased out in December 1981.

During the 1980-84 period of PRC rule, the influence of the young enlisted men who had accompanied Doe into the Executive Mansion lessened as the head of state turned more often to better educated and trained civilian ministers and advisers. In 1984, before the PRC was formally dissolved, it had been largely subordinated to Doe's personal rule. Doe reportedly consulted with the other members of a five-man executive committee, but the other PRC members were by and large excluded from policymaking. The direct political influence of soldiers serving in AFL units was also limited.

On paper, at least, the Liberian government retained a military character because important civilian officials have regularly been commissioned as officers in the AFL. The practice began in July 1981, when Doe traded his master sergeant's stripes for general's stars at the same time that ministers became majors and deputy ministers were given the rank of captain. Critics charged that commissioning the ministers would make them liable to court martial charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice if they did not follow the orders of PRC superiors. Indeed, when Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs Tipoteh (who had been commissioned a major days before) resigned his post while on a foreign mission in August 1981, Doe charged him with desertion. This practice of commissioning civilian officials as officers in the AFL continued even after the 1984 disbanding of the PRC and the formation of an Interim National Assembly (which included the entire membership of the PRC plus 36 civilian members).

The new Constitution approved by popular referendum in July 1984 was designed to eliminate military influence completely from the government. It states that "all military power or authority shall at all times be held in subordination to the civil authority and the Constitution." In its original draft form, the Constitution even prohibited members of the police and the armed forces from voting in elections, but this provision was removed from the final version. According to the new Constitution, "the President . . . shall be . . . the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Liberia." The new Constitution gives the president the power to nominate and, with the approval of the Senate, to appoint, commission, and promote military officers as well as the minister of defense, deputy ministers, and assistant ministers. The president also is given the power to call the armed forces into a state of com-

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bat readiness at any time and to declare a state of emergency when there is "a clear and present danger to the Republic." The legislature is granted the power "to provide for the common defense, to declare war, and to authorize the executive to declare peace." The Constitution also gives the lawmakers authority to appropriate funding for the armed services and "to make rules for the governance of the armed forces of the Republic."

The strictly limited powers of the military under the new Constitution contrasted starkly with the reality of the PRC government and the succeeding Interim National Assembly arrangement. In mid-1984, as the country moved unevenly toward civilian rule, it remained to be seen what form the new government would take and what role the military would play. Given the precedents of political developments in Liberia and elsewhere in Africa, it seemed likely that the letter of the Constitution would be less relevant than the personnel and policies of the new civilian government—whether headed by Doe as a civilian president or by someone else—in affecting the AFL's relations with the national leadership. Any Liberian government would be aware of the possibility that, under the right circumstances, elements of the Liberian military might be willing and able, as they had been in 1980, to take up arms to oppose and replace a faltering administration.

The Military and the Economy

Liberian military spending, like much else in the country, was drastically affected by the April 1980 coup. Before that time, defense spending had been a relatively minor component of the overall government budget. Afterward, however, outlays rose dramatically as Doe's military government made improvements in military salaries, living conditions, and equipment a central priority.

During the period of PRC rule, preparation of the defense budget was a consultative process. Officials instrumental in determining spending levels included the head of state, the ministers of national defense and finance, members of the AFL staff, including the AFL comptroller, and the commanding general of the AFL. Although they were not directly involved in the budget procedure, members of the United States Military Mission in Liberia had often played an important advisory role because American military assistance contributed significantly to Liberia's overall defense effort (see Foreign Military Assistance, this ch.). This relatively closed budget process was to be changed with the onset of civilian rule by a provision in the new Constitution that calls for all

military spending to be appropriated by the legislature on an annual basis. If a democratically elected civilian government was established, it was possible that determination of the defense budget could involve the participation of a wide range of political interest groups.

The actual amount spent on the military in Liberia has been difficult to determine with precision. Available figures on defense spending from the Liberian government, the United States government, and various international organizations have been at some variance with one another. All, however, have pointed out the same general trends. According to figures attributed to the World Bank (see Glossary), military spending jumped from \$8.9 million in the 1978-79 fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) to \$15.7 million in the following year and to \$29.9 million in FY 1980-81, the first full fiscal year after the coup. During this period, overall spending on national security—defense spending plus costs classed as “public order and safety”—increased from \$17.8 million to \$44.6 million. During the remainder of the PRC interregnum, total spending on security increased only slightly as the government attempted to balance its security concerns with its need to control government spending that far outstripped revenues (see Overview of the Economy, ch. 3).

The cost of national security as a percentage of total government expenditures also increased significantly after the coup. Each year between FY 1972-73 and FY 1978-79, the overall security budget had amounted to between 7 and 8.5 percent of annual total government expenditures, and military spending generally had accounted for no more than half that amount. Security costs had even fallen to as low as 6.2 percent of the total national budget in FY 1978-79, when government spending on hosting the 1979 OAU summit conference peaked. The proportion of government spending on national security rose steadily after that to 10.1 percent in FY 1979-80 (5.6 percent was classed as military) and to 15 percent in FY 1980-81 (10.1 percent was military). At the same time, according to the World Bank's annual *World Development Report*, relative government spending on education and health fell from 30 percent of total government spending in 1977 to 23.6 percent in 1981. Other sources, however, indicate that relative government spending on education and health did not change significantly during this period.

In the FY 1980-81 budget, the first since the coup, \$22 million (some 80 percent of the budget) was devoted to personnel services, which included wages, salaries, benefits, food, and some housing costs. The amount was more than triple the \$6.5

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million spent on that item in FY 1978-79. This increase directly reflected across-the-board increases in soldiers' salaries, including the tripling of enlisted personnel salaries that was ordered by the PRC immediately after the revolt. Further costs in FY 1980-81 included materials and supplies, such as oil and gasoline expenses, and "other services"; each of these two categories amounted to some 9 percent of the total defense budget. Spending classed as "subsidies and grants" accounted for only slightly more than 1 percent in FY 1980-81, and equipment costs were negligible. Detailed breakdowns of more recent budgets were unavailable in mid-1984, but it was believed that government spending on military equipment and construction had increased.

Beginning in 1981, United States military assistance rose steadily and thus eased the burden of military spending on the Liberian economy. American assistance—which in the early 1980s was directed toward supplying training and equipment and constructing military housing—had been partially supplied on the basis of loans priced at expensive (14 to 16 percent) commercial rates, but by United States FY 1984, the entire \$13 million military aid package was presented in the form of grants. (see *Foreign Military Assistance*, this ch.).

The Liberian military, although a burden to the country's finances, was not considered to be a strain on the republic's human resources. The number of men in the AFL amounted to only 0.3 percent of the total population, and their withdrawal from civilian pursuits was not thought to have an appreciable effect on the economy. Indeed, it was thought by some observers that military service gave soldiers from rural backgrounds an education and exposure to the modern sector that would make them more productive members of society after the end of their tours of duty.

In order to offset the high cost of maintaining a military establishment, the government has sought on occasion to involve its trained and disciplined troops in civic action projects. Beginning in the early 1960s, the AFL was engaged in road and bridge construction on a limited scale, but civic duties had been virtually phased out by the time of the coup. In the early 1980s, during a time of unprecedented financial difficulty for the government, the rationale for involving soldiers in economic tasks seemed more compelling, and the PRC—with the encouragement of the United States military mission—again sought to engage soldiers in economically productive tasks. In 1983 an agricultural battalion was established and, in a pilot effort, soldiers were assigned to construction crews to build new barracks in Monrovia and at nearby Camp Schieffelin. These projects were considered suc-



*A primary school constructed by the Liberian National Guard Brigade's engineer battalion, an example of the armed forces' civic action contributions
Courtesy Werner Gartung*

cessful, and in mid-1984 plans were made to engage servicemen in other large-scale economic tasks.

Manpower

Military service in Liberia has been voluntary, and the AFL has never experienced difficulty in attracting recruits. According to United States government estimates, in 1983 there were approximately 451,000 males between the ages of 15 and 49 in the country, and some 244,000 were considered fit for military service. The AFL's manned strength accounted for 2.6 percent of the latter figure. In 1984 the AFL had over 20 percent more personnel than it had at the time of the coup and was not actively seeking new recruits.

The quality of the country's military personnel reflected a

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national literacy rate that was about 24 percent. It was thus impractical for the armed forces to require literacy in English as a prerequisite for enlistment, but the AFL did require—in addition to good health and an age of at least 16 years—that recruits demonstrate verbal proficiency in English. A variety of English dialects were spoken in Liberia, however, and it frequently was the case that soldiers who passed the English-speaking requirement had been brought up to speak one dialect of English and were unable to comprehend a soldier speaking another. The educational shortcomings of Liberian troops hampered their ability to communicate with one another as well as their ability to operate and maintain modern weapons and equipment.

No statistics were available that portrayed the ethnic composition of the AFL in 1984 or earlier. The AFL (and the former LFF) had long reflected the stratification of the society: officer ranks were dominated by Americo-Liberians, while the enlisted ranks were composed of Liberians of tribal origin. This composition changed gradually in the 1960s and 1970s, and by the time of the coup, the officer corps could no longer be considered an exclusive preserve of Americo-Liberians. Few if any Americo-Liberians, however, served at enlisted levels before the 1980 coup. Among the indigenous ethnic groups, it has been widely reported that the Loma—whose members had participated in the LFF and in the militia before that—were the most numerous in the AFL. Doe's group, the Krahn, had been prominent in the coup and on the original PRC, but they were not overrepresented in the AFL as a whole. Overall, the AFL appeared to maintain a balance among the indigenous ethnic groups, and ethnic conflict among them was not thought to be a problem.

The personnel and the recruiting standards of the officer corps were completely changed after the coup. Before 1980 there had been no standard procedure for choosing AFL officers, but the military made an attempt to maintain relatively high educational standards. During the 1960s and 1970s, most officers were college graduates or were working on degrees while they served in the AFL. Qualified candidates could join the AFL as officers or be promoted from noncommissioned officer (NCO) ranks. The Army Student Training Program, similar in principle to the Reserve Officer Training Corps in the United States, prepared students for military careers at the University of Liberia, the Booker Washington Institute, and other schools.

The officer corps was completely overhauled after the enlisted men's coup. Many long-serving officers were retired or otherwise ousted from the AFL at the same time large numbers of

enlisted men were promoted to officer grades. It was estimated that approximately 300 of the nearly 500 officers in the AFL in mid-1984 had been promoted from the enlisted ranks since the coup. Some of the enlisted men who became officers after the coup turned out to be excellent leaders. One of them, a poorly educated former NCO, was, according to observers, doing a splendid job as commander of the Second Infantry Battalion. Others, however, were incompetent and were appointed for political reasons or simply because circumstances put them in the right place at the right time.

By 1984 the officer selection process had been somewhat regularized. All officers continued to be appointed from the NCO ranks based on their performance as soldiers. Potential officers in 1984 were evaluated on the basis of demonstrated leadership as well as their level of education. By this time, the ability to read and write English was strictly required for a candidate to become a commissioned officer.

About 150 women served in the AFL in 1984. A Women's Auxiliary Corps (WAC) unit had been established in 1975 and was placed under the command of a master sergeant. The WAC unit was to administer the housekeeping function of its members as well as to supervise their training as nurses, secretaries, and administrative assistants. In the early 1980s, however, the budget of the WAC was cut, and most of its personnel were reportedly transferred to separate commands.

There was no formal reserve connected to the armed forces in 1984, although the militia had served in that role before it was disbanded in 1980. By law every able-bodied male between the ages of 16 and 45 years was to serve in the militia. This stricture was not enforced, however, and by the early 1970s the militia reported a strength of only some 4,000 poorly trained and ill-equipped men. In its later years, members of the militia met only quarterly for sparsely attended drill practice. By the time it was disbanded, the militia was considered to be completely ineffective as a military force.

Organization and Strength

In 1984 the organization of the armed forces differed little from what it had been during the last years of True Whig rule, although personnel changes had changed its character considerably. Doe, as head of state, was considered to be the commander in chief of the AFL, and the Ministry of National Defense, headquartered in downtown Monrovia, exercised direct authority over the establishment. The minister of national defense in 1984

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was Major General Gray T. Allison, whom Doe had appointed in late 1982. A staff officer at the time of the 1980 coup, Allison became the third minister of national defense appointed by the PRC. Two deputy ministers—one for operations, one for administration—served under the ministers of national defense, as did assistant ministers for the coast guard, civil works, and public affairs. During the Tubman and Tolbert regimes, the top officials in the Ministry of National Defense usually were civilians, but during the PRC era the ministry staff was composed mainly of military officers.

The General Staff and the Special Staff of the AFL comprised the top echelon of the armed forces. The chief of staff in 1984 was Lieutenant General Henry S. Dubar (who had a higher rank than the minister of national defense). Like Allison, he had been an officer before the coup. The chief of staff was assisted by a deputy chief of staff, a director of staff, assistant chiefs of staff for the coast guard and the Aviation Unit, and a comptroller. The AFL's Special Staff was made up of an adjutant general, an inspector general, a judge advocate general, and a provost marshal (see fig. 12).

From the General Staff in Monrovia, the chain of command extended downward to the commanding general of the AFL. Held in 1984 by Brigadier General Morris T. Zaza, the position of AFL commander was established after the coup and was filled for three and one-half years by Brigadier General Quiwonkpa. Before the coup the incumbent was known as the commanding general of the LNG Brigade, which more accurately described his function. Although his title indicated that he controlled all elements of the military, including the coast guard, the AFL commander was primarily responsible only for the LNG Brigade. When Quiwonkpa was AFL commander, the billet was considered to be the most powerful in the AFL, and Quiwonkpa was referred to by the press as the "strongman of the revolution."

The National Guard Brigade

The LNG Brigade—usually referred to as the army or the AFL Brigade—was the heart of the ground forces. Headquartered at the Barclay Training Center (BTC) in Monrovia, the brigade was composed of six infantry battalions, an engineer battalion, a field artillery battalion, and a support battalion. Three of the infantry units—the First Infantry Battalion, stationed at Camp Schieffelin 35 miles east of Monrovia, the Second Infantry Battalion at Camp Todee in northern Montserrado County, and the Sixth Infantry Battalion at Bomi Hills—were tactical elements designed to operate against hostile forces. Soldiers attached to the

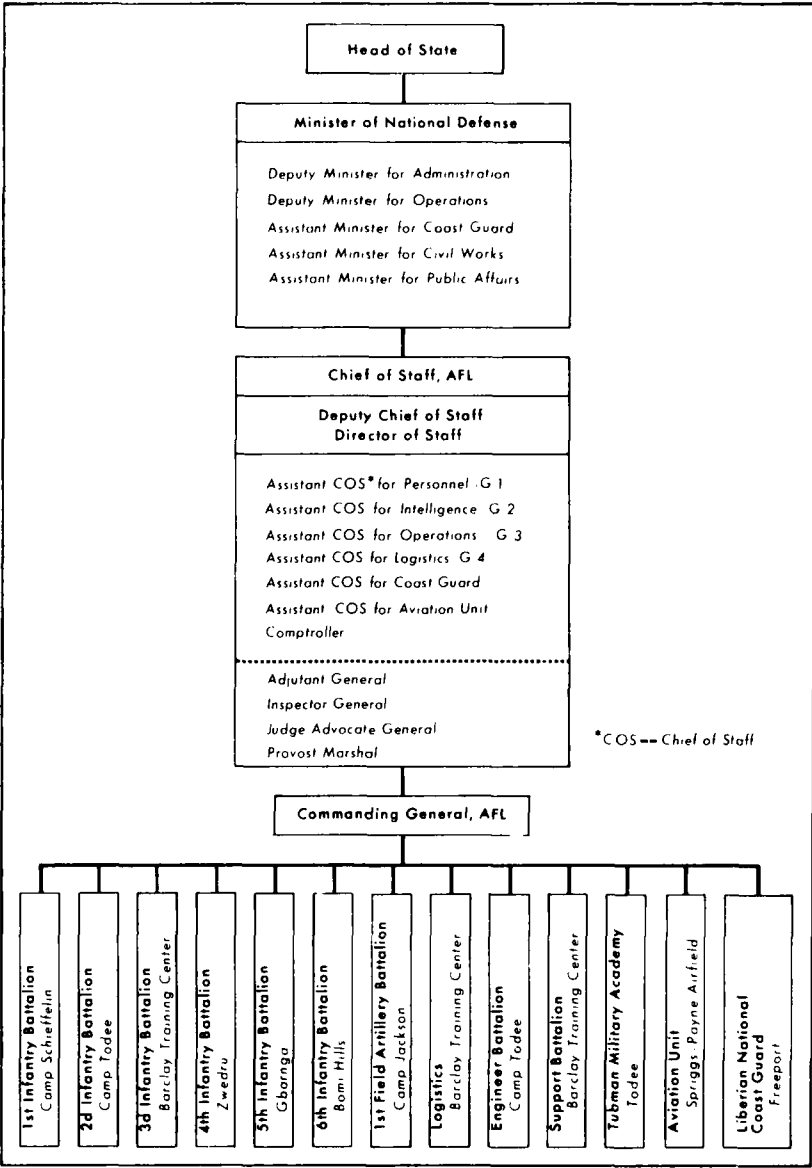


Figure 12. Organization of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), 1984

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other infantry units—the Third Infantry Battalion based at the BTC, the Fourth Infantry Battalion at Zwedru in Grand Gedeh County, and the Fifth Infantry Battalion at Gbarnga in Bong County—served mostly as auxiliary personnel. Soldiers in these units have been used extensively as policemen, customs and immigration officials, and tax collectors. In addition, many Third Infantry Battalion soldiers were used in the Monrovia area to guard installations or to serve as cooks, drivers, or aides to officers and other officials. The Support Battalion, also based at the BTC, was composed of the Medical Company, the LNG Brigade Band, the Brigade Special Unit (a parade formation), and the Military Police. In 1984 most of the LNG battalions were commanded by colonels. Exceptions existed in the Second Sixth Infantry Battalions, which were headed by lieutenant colonels, and in the small First Field Artillery Battalion, which was led by a captain.

The infantry battalions varied considerably in size and strength. The Sixth Infantry Battalion and the Second Infantry Battalion—considered by most observers to be the best fighting units in the army—each operated with 200 to 300 men. In contrast, over 1,000 personnel were attached to the more loosely organized Third Infantry Battalion. In 1984 plans had been drawn up to standardize the tactical units. It was proposed that the First, Second, and Sixth Infantry battalions would all operate at a uniform strength of 580 men (39 officers, two warrant officers, and 539 enlisted men). These units were to be equipped with trucks to facilitate their mobility, and each was to be organically equipped with weapons and other matériel to enable it to conduct sustained operations as a mechanized infantry force. By 1984 all weapons were becoming standardized in the tactical units. The Colt M-16 rifle was expected to be the basic rifle of the LNG, although the AK-47 (believed to have been delivered by Libya and Cuba shortly after the 1980 coup) and older M-1 rifles were still in use.

The AFL also included the Aviation Unit, but it could not in any sense be considered an air force. It operated three fixed-wing aircraft from Spriggs-Payne Airfield in Monrovia on reconnaissance duties and for transporting light cargo and VIPs. In emergencies the AFL could enhance its capabilities by using the aircraft operated by Air Liberia. This was pointed out in November 1983, at the time of the raid on Yekepa that was linked to Quiwonkpa's alleged plot, when Air Liberia reportedly transported 200 soldiers from Monrovia to upper Nimba County within six hours in order to squelch the possibility of a coup. The Liberian government and the high command were reportedly interested in building up the capabilities of the Aviation Unit, but it

was thought that funding difficulties would preclude a significant expansion.

The national guard in 1984 was seen by most observers to be improving from the nadir it reached after the coup. Numerous problems remained, however; some had stemmed from the upheavals at the time of the coup, and some had always affected the AFL. Military discipline was an early casualty of the coup. The revolt had been an enlisted men's affair, and one of the first instructions broadcast over the radio had ordered soldiers not to obey their officers. Over four years later, according to observers, the reluctance of most officers to impose discipline had combined with the unwillingness of more than a few enlisted men to accept it. The influx of poorly educated, former enlisted men into the officer corps had exacerbated the problem.

Military effectiveness was undercut by the fact that, since the coup, the AFL had operated almost exclusively on the basis of directives, rather than written regulations that codify standard methods of operation. The body of regulations in use at the time of the coup was generally ignored by the new officers because, depending on circumstances, the regulations were either inappropriate to new situations, they were not understood by poorly educated officers, or the officers did not know they existed. The process of making even the smallest military decisions on an ad hoc basis not only led to inconsistent policymaking but also often caused delays as minor decisions were frequently referred to superiors. In 1984 AFL officers had begun an effort to draft a new set of regulations to improve the situation.

The performance of the AFL was also handicapped because it lacked certain equipment and because much of the available matériel did not work. A chronic lack of funding (despite significant assistance from the United States) limited the purchase of new matériel and spare parts. In addition, poor maintenance combined with the region's high humidity to limit the serviceability of weapons and transport. It was reported that only five of eight 75mm howitzers attached to the artillery battalion were operational (and these had not been fired since 1979). Similarly, vehicle operational readiness was reported to be extremely low, and the tactical battalions were considered to be practically immobile.

Some of the AFL's transport shortcomings were offset by a demonstrated ability to improvise. In addition to the airlift operation to Yekepa that used Air Liberia equipment, the AFL was able to move an entire battalion to the border within 24 hours during the crisis with Sierra Leone in February 1983 by using public transport and taxis. Despite the AFL's limitations, Libe-

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rian enlisted men had a professional appearance, maintained their personal weapons well and, when effectively led, performed adequately in small unit exercises.

The Coast Guard

The Liberian National Coast Guard, the military establishment's seaborne element, began operations in 1959 after the delivery of two 40-foot patrol boats from the United States. According to the act of the legislature that created the coast guard, it was responsible for protecting lives and property at sea, preventing smuggling, aiding navigation, and enforcing pollution standards within the 200-nautical-mile limit of Liberia's territorial waters. The coast guard had law enforcement jurisdiction in Liberian territorial waters and was empowered to prevent any persons from entering the country "when it was believed that the presence of such persons would endanger the security of the state."

The assistant minister for coast guard affairs in the Ministry of National Defense oversaw the force. In 1984 this position was held by Captain S. Weaka Peters, a former commandant of the coast guard. Patrick D. Wallace, the commandant in 1984, led a force consisting of six patrol craft and some 450 officers and ratings, who were organized into three major commands: the Coast Guard Base Unit, the Task Force Unit, and the Port Security/Search and Rescue Unit. In addition, since 1977 the coast guard has also been responsible for operating the nation's network of coastal lighthouses. The Task Force Unit included three 50-ton, Swedish-built coastal patrol craft that were delivered in 1980 as well as three smaller American-built patrol craft delivered in 1976. The relatively small size of the Liberian vessels limited their use to coastal waters. The craft were usually based at Elijah Johnson Coast Guard Base at Freeport in Monrovia, but they could operate from coast guard bases at Buchanan, Greenville, and Cape Palmas.

In 1984 the coast guard was considered to be the best trained and most professional component of the AFL. It was handicapped, however, by a lack of funding to maintain all vessels in the inventory. The serviceability of the fleet was also hampered by a reluctance on the part of the Swedish government to provide spare parts for the craft it had supplied. Thus, only one of the Swedish patrol craft was operational, and the other two had been immobilized by the lack of spare parts.

Training

In the early 1980s the AFL's central training facility was the

Tubman Military Academy, located at Todee. Originally founded in the 1960s with the expectation that it would eventually be developed into a four-year military college, the academy in the early 1980s provided recruit training, basic officer training, instruction in English comprehension, advanced courses for officers, and some technical training.

Recruit training was patterned roughly on the equivalent program of the United States Army. Basic training lasted 90 days, during which the recruit advanced from physical fitness development and drill to weapons instruction. This was followed by basic combat training and advanced individual training. After the completion of basic training, the new soldiers were assigned to an infantry formation and received unit training. Officers chosen from the NCO ranks to become officers were also expected to complete a 90-day advanced course at the academy.

United States advisers played an important role in the conduct of Liberian military training. It was estimated in early 1984 that fully one-half of the AFL had received at least some instruction from American advisers in Liberia or at institutions in the United States. About 150 AFL officers—one-third of the officer corps—had undergone training at foreign military institutions, mainly in the United States. United States military training teams were frequently assigned to Liberia on a temporary basis. Observers noted, however, that after the advisers were removed, all but the few well-led units rapidly lost the skills they had acquired in training.

Morale and Conditions of Service

After Doe assumed power, his government made the improvement of the soldiers' living conditions a central priority. Early in his tenure, the head of state enjoyed taking visitors to view the roofless, decaying structure at the BTC in which he and his family had been forced to live before the coup. With their low pay, no housing allowance, and only a limited number of overcrowded, crumbling barracks available, many enlisted men lived in conditions of near squalor. Poor living facilities have frequently been cited as an important contributing factor for the move to overthrow the Tolbert regime.

Among the PRC's first acts was an announcement that the wages of all security force personnel would be increased significantly. AFL privates had their pay raised to \$250 per month; it has been reported that before the coup they had been paid as little as \$78 per month. Sergeants saw their wages increase to \$264; second lieutenants' pay went up to \$319; colonels received \$816 each

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Appendix

Table 1. Population of Urban Centers Having More Than 6,000 Inhabitants, 1974

| Urban Center | Rank | Population | | | Females per 100 Males |
|------------------------------|------|-------------------|---------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| | | Male ^a | Female ^a | Total | |
| Monrovia proper ^b | 1 | 90,690 | 75,817 | 166,507 | 83.6 |
| Buchanan | 2 | 12,506 | 11,494 | 24,000 | 91.9 |
| Congo Town | 3 | 11,397 | 10,098 | 21,495 | 88.6 |
| Yekepa ^c | 4 | 7,318 | 6,871 | 14,189 | 93.9 |
| Tubmanburg ^d | 5 | 7,419 | 6,670 | 14,089 | 89.9 |
| Harbel | 6 | 6,261 | 5,184 | 11,445 | 82.8 |
| Harper | 7 | 5,292 | 5,335 | 10,627 | 100.8 |
| Kakata | 8 | 5,223 | 4,769 | 9,992 | 91.3 |
| Paynesville | 9 | 5,202 | 4,474 | 9,676 | 86.0 |
| Greenville | 10 | 4,525 | 3,937 | 8,462 | 87.0 |
| LAC concession ^e | 11 | 4,559 | 3,684 | 8,243 | 80.8 |
| Firestone concession | 12 | 4,121 | 3,725 | 7,846 | 90.4 |
| Camp Four | 13 | 3,847 | 3,373 | 7,220 | 87.7 |
| Gbarnga | 14 | 3,533 | 3,363 | 6,896 | 95.2 |
| Sanniquellie | 15 | 3,353 | 3,337 | 6,690 | 99.5 |
| Gardnersville | 16 | 3,339 | 3,193 | 6,532 | 95.6 |
| Ganta | 17 | 3,097 | 3,259 | 6,356 | 105.2 |
| Voinjama | 18 | 3,248 | 3,095 | 6,343 | 95.3 |
| B. F. Goodrich concession | 19 | 3,605 | 2,721 | 6,326 | 75.5 |
| Pleebo | 20 | 3,109 | 3,206 | 6,315 | 103.1 |
| Zwedru | 21 | 3,158 | 2,936 | 6,094 | 93.0 |
| Congo Town | 22 | 3,219 | 2,801 | 6,020 | 87.0 |

^a Calculated at the United States Bureau of the Census and based on the total population and sex ratios (number of females per 1,000 males, as reported in Liberia Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, 1977, pages 43-66.

^b Monrovia proper and its environs, which include Paynesville, Congo Town, and Gardnersville, were referred to as Greater Monrovia (population 204,210) in the 1974 census and as the Commonwealth District of Monrovia (population 83,780) in the 1982 census. Monrovia proper consists of 11 newly designated urban communities.

^c Formerly LAMCO (Liberian American-Swedish Minerals Company).

^d Formerly Via Town.

^e LAC - Liberian Agricultural Company.

Source: Based on information from United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Country Demographic Profiles: Liberia*, Washington, March 1982, 22.



Appendix

Table

- 1 Population of Urban Centers Having More than 6,000 Inhabitants, 1974
- 2 Linguistic Affiliations of Officially Recognized Ethnolinguistic Categories
- 3 Primary and Secondary Education Indicators, 1978-81
- 4 Distribution of Health Facilities by County, 1981
- 5 Distribution of Medical and Paramedical Personnel, 1981
- 6 Value and Volume of Principal Exports, 1976-81
- 7 Value of Imports by Commodity Group, 1977-81
- 8 Direction of Exports, 1978-81
- 9 Principal Sources of Imports, 1977-81
- 10 Balance of Payments, 1975-81
- 11 Gross Domestic Product by Economic Sector at 1971 Constant Factor Cost, 1971 and 1976-80

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National Security

Yella Prison, a military facility in Lofa County frequently used to detain civilians, would never leave it alive. The facility continued to have a bad reputation, but it was reported that conditions there had improved somewhat under the Doe regime. Amnesty International expressed concern over what it considered to be very poor conditions at Monrovia's South Beach Prison and at the post stockade of the BTC, where political prisoners were held after the coup. Monrovia Central Prison, a large facility built in the early 1960s, was reported to be overcrowded but better than average in most other respects.

The National Palace of Corrections in Zwedru (Grand Gedeh County) stood out as a model correctional institution in the country. Opened in the late 1970s, it was reported to be clean and spacious. In FY 1980-81 some \$250,000—nearly one-third of the budget of the entire Bureau of Rehabilitation—was devoted to operating the facility.

* * *

Very little material on Liberia's national defense and internal security arrangements is available. J. Gus Liebenow—who has written widely on Liberian affairs, discusses the military and the rule by Doe mainly in a political context. Articles reporting on developments since the 1980 coup are also found in various issues of *West Africa* and the *Daily Observer* (Monrovia). Transcripts published in the Joint Publication Research Service's *Sub-Saharan Africa Report* are another important source of information and *Africa Contemporary Record*, edited by Colin Legum, provides an annual survey of security-related developments. For background on the internal security forces in precoup Liberia, Martin Lowenkopf's *Politics in Liberia: The Conservative Road to Development* is quite useful. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

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communication with the head of state and could warn him if personnel from the other units were involved in suspicious activity. Since 1980 there had been no reports that the loyalty of units responsible for Doe's personal security had ever been called into question.

The Prison System

The Bureau of Rehabilitation in the Ministry of Justice was charged with authority over all civilian correctional institutions and prisons in Liberia. The bureau was led by an assistant minister of justice who directly administered and supervised the system. With an annual budget of \$800,000 in FY 1980-81, the system—in theory at least—was designed to encourage the rehabilitation of inmates. In addition to the civilian system, the military maintained its own stockades for military prisoners. Under Doe's rule it was not unusual for civilians arrested for political crimes to be placed in military prisons.

Liberian prisons during most of the twentieth century were characterized by extremely harsh, even brutal, conditions. The shortcomings were pointed out as the country experienced economic growth and social modernization in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1950s authorities had officially accepted that "punishment of crimes is . . . primarily to provide for the rehabilitation of the character of the offending member [of society] if it is possible to do so." Gradually, programs to construct new prisons, upgrade old ones, and train prison personnel were instituted. In the 1980s, however, the momentum of progress appeared to have slowed.

In 1983, according to the United States Department of State's human rights report, conditions in Liberian prisons were "inadequate by international standards." In an assessment echoed by Amnesty International, the human rights monitoring group, the human rights report stated that "most prisons lack proper nutritional, exercise, and sanitary facilities." Many of the civilian prisons were old and poorly maintained. In 1983 it was reported that an aged prison building in Greenville (Sinoe County) had collapsed, causing injuries but no deaths. Beatings of prisoners by guards, widely reported after the coup, continued to occur occasionally four years later. The government did not condone such harsh treatment but found it difficult to identify and punish offending officials.

Three of the most notorious prisons were those where most political prisoners were held. It was a common (though exaggerated) saying during the Tolbert era that prisoners sent to Belle

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National Security

Special Security Service, the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), and the Executive Mansion Guard contingent of the AFL.

In addition to these formally recognized security forces, Tubman relied heavily on an extensive network of paid informants as well as those officials appointed to positions because of their political loyalty. Reportedly, his Public Relations Officer Program was the largest and best organized of these groups of informers. When Tolbert terminated the program in 1972 and pensioned off its members, he stated that the program had cost over \$1 million a year.

During the Tolbert era, the organized security services assumed the form they retained in 1984. The National Security Agency (NSA) was established as the regime's primary organization for collecting, evaluating, and disseminating intelligence—essentially the same tasks that the NISS had been designed to do earlier. With a budget of some \$825,000 in FY 1980-81, the NSA formally operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice, although it actually worked in close concert with the office of the head of state. The NSA director was appointed by the head of state and reported directly to him.

Under Tolbert the NBI was disbanded, and the Special Security Service became the preeminent body for protecting and ensuring the safety of the head of state. The service was directly responsible to the president and employed both uniformed and plainclothes officers. No reports were available on their performance during the coup; but in 1984 the security service continued to play a prominent role in protecting the head of state, and it appeared to be regarded as a competent force. In FY 1980-81 the Special Security Service was given a budget of \$2.9 million.

The Executive Mansion Guard was, as its name implies, also designed to protect the head of state and other top government officials. Staffed by some 1,000 AFL personnel and commanded by a brigadier general, the Executive Mansion Guard was sometimes considered to be part of the LNG Brigade. It did not, however, come under the operational control of the brigade or the general staff. Instead, it operated directly under the office of the head of state in 1984.

Personnel from the various forces deployed to guard the head of state were often stationed alongside one another at the Executive Mansion, in Monrovia's Capitol Hill area, and at Doe's country residence. This practice resulted in a considerable overlap of responsibility, but it was also believed to offer a certain amount of security in that each force had a separate channel of

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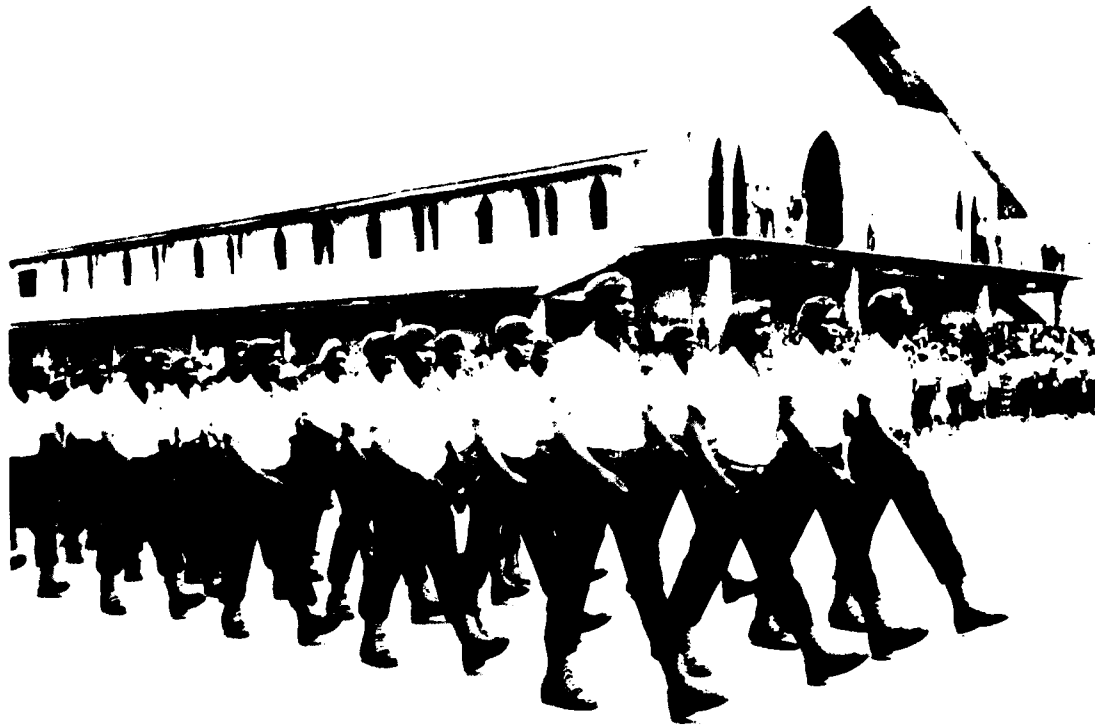
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After the coup the NPF was believed to have declined in importance somewhat as military units took over some policing responsibilities. In the early 1980s the NPF appeared to suffer from negative government and public attitudes because of the force's conduct on behalf of the Tolbert government during the rice riots of 1979. In that instance NPF units that deployed to control the demonstrators were blamed for the deaths of over 30 people when they fired into rioting crowds protesting an increase in official rice prices. Soldiers, by contrast, had generally remained aloof from the conflict and in some cases had joined the anti-Tolbert demonstrators. The NPF also suffered more than the military from a reputation for corrupt behavior.

Police performance in the early 1980s was severely hindered by funding shortages. Although the NPF budget rose from \$3.2 million in FY 1978-79 to an estimated \$7.4 million in FY 1980-81, most of the money was allocated to pay police personnel whose salaries, like those of the military, had been increased to a minimum of \$250 monthly. Scarce resources were also directed toward the building of a large, modern police headquarters in Monrovia near the Capitol Hill area. Because little funding was made available for the purchase of spare parts and because of the country's hot, humid climate, vehicle maintenance suffered accordingly, and the NPF was considered to be almost completely immobile. Likewise, the police radio network had deteriorated, and communication was reportedly difficult even in urban areas. The NPF leadership in 1984 was working to correct the force's deficiencies; but given the government's balance of payments difficulties and the lack of foreign financial or technical assistance, this would probably be a slow process.

Intelligence and Protective Services

In addition to the NPF, which served exclusively as a law enforcement agency, the Liberian government also relied on formations whose duties were oriented specifically toward intelligence gathering or protecting the regime. The development of such specialized organizations, apart from the defense and police forces, began relatively late in Liberian history during the Tubman administration. In the 1950s the government had established the Executive Mansion Special Security Police to protect the president and other government officials and the Bureau of Special Service to serve as an investigative unit. In 1961 the two forces were merged to form the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), which was placed under the direct control of the president. During the same period, the government also established the



*Members of the National Police Force on parade in Monrovia during the fourth anniversary of the April 1980 coup d'état, an occasion known locally as National Redemption Day
Courtesy Frederick Ehrenreich*

by 1971.

The development of the NPF was also aided by the activities of advisers from the Public Safety Program of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). American advisers served in Liberia continuously from 1957 until the program was terminated in 1973. During this period the force not only expanded in size but also developed a modern police training academy, established a countrywide communications net, improved mobility and vehicle maintenance, and enhanced its administration and record keeping. Because United States law since 1974 has forbidden that country to train or support foreign police or foreign internal security forces, it seemed unlikely that American aid to the NPF would be resumed. There were indications in 1984 that the Israelis might send some personnel to Liberia to assist in training the NPF.

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the police in 1982. From the NPF's headquarters in Monrovia, he headed an organization divided into three main components: the Operations Division, the Administrative Division, and the Criminal Investigation Division (CID). Each was under the command of an assistant director of police.

The police headquarters included staff and support functions, such as internal affairs, research and planning, a traffic element, a communications unit, a central records element, a maintenance section, and the Police Band. There was also the Police Academy, founded in 1961, which was placed under the direct authority of the Ministry of Justice in the early 1970s.

In the counties, police units were led by inspectors of police appointed by the Monrovia authorities. County superintendents usually wielded considerable influence over police appointments and operations in their jurisdictions. The national police also operated at the township level; there the number of policemen and their ranks varied according to the size of the township. Montserado County, which included the national capital, was the focus of NPF activities. According to the 1979 NPF annual report, 1,364 policemen out of a total strength of 1,782 were assigned to duty there.

The NPF traces its origins to the so-called constabulary that operated in Monrovia until the 1920s. Little more than untrained night watchmen, the constables were of tribal or lower class background and were generally held in low esteem by urban Liberians. In 1923 this system was abolished, and the following year the Monrovia City Police was established by the legislature as the country's first organized police system. From 15 policemen at its inception, the Monrovia force expanded to nine times its original size over the next 25 years and served as the prototype for police forces in other localities throughout Liberia.

Increased crime rates in the 1940s pointed up the shortcomings of relying on local police forces of greatly varying quality. In 1949 an act of the legislature removed the police from local control and created the NPF to police the entire country under centralized command. The military, which had long been responsible for performing police duties in much of the country outside Monrovia, continued to perform most police duties in the Hinterland during the period when the NPF was slowly growing in number and competence. In 1965 Tubman announced that police would take over law enforcement duties from the AFL in the Hinterland counties. As a result, police detachments were sent to all the counties, stations and barracks were built, and the force increased its manpower from 400 in the early 1960s to some 1,100

designed and structured to protect the country's political elite, was controlled directly by the office of the head of state. The Executive Mansion Guard, another unit formed to protect the head of state, was technically under the Ministry of National Defense, as were soldiers who ordinarily performed police and customs duties.

Coordination and control of these bodies was the responsibility of the Joint Security Commission (JSC) and the Ministry of National Security. The JSC was established in 1961 within the Department of National Defense (as the ministry was then known) to be the senior policymaking body of the government for internal security matters. It was charged with "considering potential threats to the country's security and implementing solutions to ensure national sovereignty and integrity." The JSC's role gradually changed from that of a policy formulator to a coordinator of the various organizations involved in security and police matters when specific tasks required the participation of more than one. In 1984 it was chaired by Colonel Edward P. Massaquoi, an important figure during the Tolbert era who had headed the Special Security Service until April 1980. Other members of the commission, which met as needed, included the ministers of national defense and justice and leading military commanders, as well as the heads of the national police and the Special Security Service.

In September 1979, five months after the bloody rice riots that had demonstrated the Tolbert regime's unpopularity and the weakness of its security forces, the president created the Ministry of National Security. The ministry, which did not control any operational units, was composed of a small staff that was to give advice on national security matters directly to the head of state. Tolbert chose his son-in-law as the first minister of national security. Doe retained the ministry after he came to power, and in 1984 his minister of national security was Major Patrick H. Minikon. It was not thought that the ministry exerted much influence on a government in which the head of state was as well-versed on security issues as Doe was.

National Police Force

The NPF has been a national organization designed to preserve the peace and maintain law and order in Liberia. In 1984 the NPF operated with a manned strength of slightly more than 2,000 under the Ministry of Justice and its Department of Public Safety. The force's commander, Director of Police Wilfred Clarke, had been the deputy minister for national security in the Tolbert government before being appointed by Doe to head



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States for technical training or officer education.

Military training was a large component of the United States assistance program. From the IMET program and training teams that visited Liberia, it was estimated in early 1984 that roughly 3,000 Liberian soldiers had received at least some training from United States personnel. In April 1981 a company of United States Army Special Forces personnel conducted joint maneuvers with Liberian units. These maneuvers, the first that the United States had coordinated in Sub-Saharan Africa in many years, displayed the close military ties that existed between the two countries.

The United States Military Mission to Liberia in 1984 was staffed by six officers led by a colonel. It was primarily concerned with administering the procurement and distribution of American military assistance. Headquartered in the Ministry of National Defense, it was not unusual for these officers to be called on to "advise and assist" Liberian military leaders.

In the twentieth century the United States has been Liberia's most important military partner, but other countries have also given military assistance to the AFL. In 1976 Sweden sold Liberia the three patrol craft that composed the backbone of the coast guard after their delivery in 1980. After the coup small arms of East European manufacture were supplied to Liberia, reportedly by Cuba and Libya, and in 1982 China delivered 22 jeeps. When the Doe regime agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations with Israel, there was considerable speculation that the Israelis would become an important source of military assistance. In 1983 the Liberian government was reported to have ordered four Arara light transports from Israel Aircraft Industries, including one for the AFL. When Doe paid a state visit to Israel shortly after diplomatic relations were resumed, he reportedly was interested in obtaining military equipment from the Israelis. Israeli spokesmen stated, however, that their military aid would more likely involve training soldiers and police rather than supplying equipment.

Police and Internal Security Forces

A variety of government agencies were involved in maintaining Liberia's internal security in the early 1980s. The National Police Force (NPF), the largest of these, came under the authority of the Ministry of Justice, as did the National Security Agency, an intelligence service. The Special Security Service, which was

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National Security

After the end of the war, United States military assistance declined, but in 1951 the United States Military Mission was reestablished. In 1959 the two countries concluded a mutual defense treaty that called for reciprocal assistance in the event of aggression from an outside power. In 1962 Liberia began to receive modest amounts of equipment and training on a grant basis under the Military Assistance Program (MAP). According to figures released by the United States Department of Defense, between FY 1950 and the time MAP was terminated in the early 1970s, Washington granted nearly \$3.3 million worth of military assistance under this program. The United States also sold Liberia \$8.5 million worth of equipment, the bulk of it in the 1970s, under guaranteed loans arranged through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program. During the period between FY 1950 and FY 1979, about 700 Liberian students were trained on a grant basis in the United States under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, and thousands of others were exposed to United States training by teams that rotated through Liberia periodically. American military assistance during the 1970s declined, however, as the MAP ended. In the same period inflation rose, leaving the financially strapped Liberian government unable to spend heavily on defense.

After the 1980 Liberian coup, United States military aid increased significantly as American policymakers sought to use such assistance to encourage the Doe government to honor its commitment to return the country to civilian rule. From a precoup level of \$2.9 million in United States FY 1980, only \$200,000 of which was arranged on a grant basis, United States military assistance to Liberia rose steadily. The following year \$6.3 million was sent; \$1.6 million was in grant form. In FY 1982 military aid increased to \$12.6 million; \$5.6 million of the total was nonreimbursable. In the next two years, the overall level of military assistance earmarked for Liberia did not change significantly, but in 1984 all United States military assistance was provided on a grant basis.

The first priority of United States assistance was a project, announced in 1980, to improve military housing conditions. The four-year, \$43.5 million program to assist the Liberian military in barracks building exceeded in scope all military aid programs undertaken by the United States in Liberia since World War II. In FY 1984 some \$10 million of nearly \$14 million in total military aid was dedicated to the military housing construction program. Approximately \$3 million was earmarked for military equipment, including communications gear, transport, small arms, ammunition, and uniforms. In addition, \$800,000 was to be spent in the IMET program to send approximately 40 students to the United

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Foreign Military Assistance

Leaders in Liberia, a nation without strong military traditions—or perhaps more importantly, without an arms industry—have long relied on foreign assistance to help develop the country's military capabilities. British assistance was instrumental in the original establishment of the LFF in 1908, and British Major McCay Cadall was named to lead one of the two major commands in the original force. Cadall recruited many of the personnel for his unit from the neighboring British colony of Sierra Leone, however, and the Liberian legislature dismissed him and many of his soldiers when it was suspected that they were more concerned about British interests than those of Liberia.

In 1912, while the LFF was being reorganized in the wake of Cadall's dismissal, a team of military advisers from the United States—six black American officers led by Major William Ballard—was sent to Liberia in conjunction with a loan agreement. For the next 12 years, United States officers commanded the LFF as it moved to secure the central government's control over the entire country. The United States sent additional military advisers and equipment to Liberia in 1915 to help put down a serious revolt among the Kru that, it was feared, might lead to British intervention. After Liberian officers took control of the force, the United States Army continued to be represented in the country as military attachés or advisers.

During World War II, relations with the United States improved dramatically. In early 1942 the two countries signed the Defense Areas Agreement, which committed the United States to defend Liberian sovereignty and allowed them to build, operate, and defend military and commercial airports for the duration of the war. As a consequence, Roberts Field (later Roberts International Airport) was developed by the United States military in conjunction with Pan American Airways and Firestone and became the country's major international airport. American military assistance contributed to the building of the country's first cross-country roads from Monrovia toward the Sierra Leone border and toward Ganta in Nimba County. The close ties with the United States were underscored by the presence of some 5,000 black American troops stationed at and around Roberts Field. In addition, the Officers' Training School was established in 1944 by the United States Army. Nearly 300 Liberian officers were trained at this facility, and many of them continued to serve in the LFF through the 1960s.

After the end of the war, United States military assistance

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---------------------|--|-------------------------|
| LIBERIAN NATIONAL GUARD | | General of the Army | | |
| | | General | | |
| | | Lieutenant General | | |
| | | Major General | | |
| | | Brigadier General | | |
| | | Colonel | | Captain |
| | | Lieutenant Colonel | | Commander |
| | | Major | | Lieutenant Commander |
| | | Captain | | Lieutenant |
| | | First Lieutenant | | Lieutenant Junior Grade |
| LIBERIAN NATIONAL COAST GUARD | | Second Lieutenant | | Ensign |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

NOTE: Liberian officer grades are equivalent to United States officer grades. Highest rank in Liberian National Coast Guard is Captain.

Figure 13. Ranks and Insignia of the Liberian Officer Corps, 1984.

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month; and a lieutenant general, the highest rank in the AFL at that time, earned \$1,363. Soon afterward, the financial difficulties that gripped the country caused the government to seek various ways of cutting its heavy payments to government workers. In 1984 the AFL soldiers, who had not received a wage increase since the coup, reportedly were not collecting their pay until a full month after the checks were due. The soldiers were favored by the government, however, compared with civilian workers, whose salaries had been cut by as much as 25 percent and who had not been paid for three months in early 1984.

The PRC also pledged to ameliorate the enlisted men's poor housing conditions. In radiobroadcasts during the first four days after the coup, the new government announced that various public and private buildings and compounds would be requisitioned for soldiers' housing. Shortly thereafter, the government announced that it would undertake a major program to build barracks to house soldiers. United States financial assistance and technical advice was promised in 1980 and was instrumental in carrying out the construction of over 1,000 dwellings that were nearing completion in 1984. New units had been constructed or were nearly complete at the BTC, Camp Schieffelin, at the military installations located in the Todee area, and at Camp Jackson at Naama near Gbarnga. Despite the new construction, the lack of adequate housing remained a serious problem for most soldiers stationed elsewhere in Liberia. Because of financial limitations, however, in 1984 there did not appear to be any plans to expand the effort to build new quarters.

The military was also seeking funding and authorization to construct a new building to house the offices of the Ministry of National Defense. The ministry was housed in old, often decrepit buildings scattered throughout downtown Monrovia. Given the shortage of government funds and the unwillingness of the United States to finance the construction of such a facility, it appeared unlikely in 1984 that it would be built, despite the desire of government and military leaders.

The military also suffered from a shortage of uniforms, but this problem was being redressed in 1984. Cotton jungle camouflage fatigues had become the army's standard uniform and were considered appropriate for all occasions. The system of Liberian army ranks was identical to that of the United States Army, although rank insignia in the officer grades were distinctive (see fig. 13). The coast guard uniforms and ranks were patterned closely on those of their United States counterparts.

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*Table 2. Linguistic Affiliations of Officially
Recognized Ethnolinguistic Categories
(with selected alternative spellings and names)*

Mande

Northern Branch

Mandingo (Manding, Malinke)
Vai

Southern Branch

Gio¹ (Dan)²
Mano (Man; Ma²)

Southwestern Branch

Gbandi (Gbande; Bandi²)
Kpelle² (Kpele; Kpese; Guerzé—in Guinea)
Loma² (Lorma; Buzi; Toma—in Guinea)
Mende²

Kwa

Kruan Branch

Bassa²
Belle¹ (Kuwaa)²
Dey (Dei)²
Grebo
Krahn (Kran; Wee—in Ivory Coast)
Kru² (Kra; Krao; Jiao)

West Atlantic

Mel Branch

Gola²
Kissi (Gissi)²

¹Name appears to be pejorative, e.g., Gio means slave, Belle means cannibal

²Name used by the people for themselves or widely accepted by them even if initially used or imposed by outsiders. The *a* in Ma is nasalized; the pronunciation of Loma approximates that of Lorma without the *r* sound

Source: Based on information from Svend E. Holsoe, *A Standardization of Liberian Ethnic Nomenclature*, Philadelphia, 1979, 1-25.

Table 3. *Primary and Secondary Education Indicators, 1978-81*

| Indicator | 1978 | 1980 | 1981 |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Schools | | | |
| Public | 941 | 1,077 | 1,056 |
| Mission | 293 | 334 | 308 |
| Other | <u>207</u> | <u>240</u> | <u>271</u> |
| Total schools | 1,441 | 1,651 | 1,635 |
| Enrollment | | | |
| Males | 152,339 | 178,591 | 189,653 |
| Females | <u>85,514</u> | <u>100,516</u> | <u>113,515</u> |
| Total enrollment | 237,853 | 279,107 | 303,168 |
| Percentage of eligible population enrolled | 31.1 | 34.4 | 37.6 |
| Teachers | 7,182 | 9,099 | 8,804 |
| Budgetary expenditure (in millions of dollars) | 35.1 | 46.0 | 48.7 |

Source: Based on information from Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, *Economic Survey of Liberia, 1981*, Monrovia, May 1982, 86



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Table 4. Distribution of Health Facilities by County, 1981

| County | Hospitals | Health Centers | Health Posts and Clinics |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Bong | 3 | 5 | 27 |
| Grand Bassa | 3 | 0 | 24 |
| Grand Cape Mount | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| Grand Gedeh | 1 | 2 | 16 |
| Lofa | 3 | 9 | 54 |
| Maryland | 3 | 1 | 20 |
| Montserrado | 14 | 4 | 88 |
| Nimba | 3 | 5 | 38 |
| Sinoe | 3 | 2 | 33 |
| TOTAL | 35 | 30 | 310 |

Source: Based on information from Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, *Economic Survey of Liberia, 1981*, Monrovia, May 1982, 172.

Table 5. Distribution of Medical and Paramedical Personnel, 1981

| Personnel Category | County | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|------------------------------|--------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------|----------|-------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| | Bong | Grand Bassa | Grand Cape Mount | Grand Gedeh | Lofa | Maryland | Montserrado | Nimba | Siinoe | Total | |
| Physicians | 19 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 160 | 15 | 4 | 227 | |
| Dentists | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 9 | |
| Registered nurses | 8 | 13 | 12 | 13 | 27 | 18 | 82 | 22 | 14 | 209 | |
| Licensed practical nurses | 13 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 12 | 11 | 19 | 14 | 8 | 90 | |
| Sanitation inspectors | 17 | 13 | 18 | 1 | 22 | 24 | 82 | 19 | 27 | 223 | |
| Pharmacists | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | |
| Laboratory technicians | 7 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 12 | 2 | 31 | 4 | 1 | 61 | |
| X-ray technicians | 1 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 22 | |
| Physician's assistants | 26 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 31 | 8 | 16 | 17 | 26 | 138 | |
| Assisting midwives | 17 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 28 | 4 | 39 | 10 | 1 | 111 | |
| Nurse's aides | 34 | 24 | 30 | 21 | 23 | 24 | 56 | 17 | 23 | 252 | |
| Dressers | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 1 | 7 | 19 | 27 | 68 | |
| Traditional birth attendants | 36 | 8 | 16 | 24 | 27 | 2 | 19 | 12 | 9 | 153 | |
| Village health workers | 133 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 105 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 238* | |

n.a. --not available
*Incomplete figures

Source: Based on information from Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Economic Survey of Liberia, 1981, Monrovia, May 1982, 173.

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*Table 6. Value and Volume of Principal Exports, 1976-81
(value in millions of dollars)*

| Export | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Iron ore | | | | | | |
| Value | 328.7 | 273.5 | 274.4 | 290.0 | 310.2 | 325.4 |
| Volume (millions of longs tons) | 20.5 | 17.4 | 20.8 | 19.6 | 16.9 | 20.4 |
| Rubber | | | | | | |
| Value | 53.3 | 59.1 | 69.2 | 87.8 | 102.2 | 86.7 |
| Volume (millions of pounds) | 161.5 | 153.6 | 158.0 | 165.3 | 168.7 | 169.2 |
| Diamonds | | | | | | |
| Value | 16.6 | 21.3 | 30.3 | 39.6 | 33.5 | 23.4 |
| Volume (thousands of carats) | 302.0 | 326.0 | 307.0 | 302.0 | 298.0 | 336.0 |
| Logs | | | | | | |
| Value | 32.4 | 25.9 | 46.7 | 50.1 | 65.3 | 36.8 |
| Volume (thousands of board feet) | 113,262 | 178,748 | 130,930 | 136,583 | 166,208 | 94,128 |
| Coffee | | | | | | |
| Value | 6.6 | 43.5 | 25.3 | 27.1 | 33.0 | 19.4 |
| Volume (millions of pounds) | 9.3 | 22.2 | 19.1 | 18.1 | 28.0 | 18.3 |
| Cocoa | | | | | | |
| Value | 4.1 | 6.1 | 14.4 | 11.0 | 10.5 | 13.8 |
| Volume (millions of pounds) | 5.5 | 4.5 | 8.9 | 7.5 | 8.2 | 14.8 |

Source: Based on information from Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, *Economic Survey of Liberia, 1981*, Monrovia, May 1982, 18.

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Appendix

Table 7. Value of Imports by Commodity Group, 1977-81'¹
(in millions of dollars)

| Commodity Group | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Live animals | 1,742 | 4,013 | 4,502 | 3,309 | 4,270 |
| Food | 55,062 | 62,869 | 72,891 | 82,704 | 89,515 |
| Beverages and tobacco | 10,317 | 11,723 | 11,833 | 10,929 | 8,737 |
| Crude materials, inedible | 4,827 | 4,372 | 6,091 | 5,871 | 6,432 |
| Mineral fuels and lubricants | | | | | |
| Crude petroleum | | 29,252 | 16,270 | 143,560 | 102,493 |
| Other | | 55,318 | 86,933 | 8,743 | 27,105 |
| Total mineral fuels and lubricants | 68,854 | 84,570 | 103,203 | 152,123 | 129,598 |
| Animal and vegetable oils | 2,117 | 2,909 | 2,959 | 3,805 | 3,461 |
| Chemicals | 29,556 | 31,128 | 34,129 | 29,475 | 33,088 |
| Manufactured goods | 97,040 | 91,924 | 74,625 | 71,324 | 61,253 |
| Machinery and trans- port equipment | 156,565 | 156,641 | 169,555 | 150,422 | 118,946 |
| Miscellaneous manu- factured articles | 33,978 | 26,720 | 24,052 | 21,694 | 20,076 |
| Commodities and transactions ² | 3,473 | 3,999 | 2,615 | 2,242 | 2,052 |

¹ Figures given according to Standard International Trade Classification

² Total comprised refined products only

³ Not elsewhere specified

Source: Based on information from Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, *Economic Survey of Liberia, 1981*, Monrovia, May 1982, 135.

Table 8. Direction of Exports, 1978-81
(value in millions of dollars)

| Country of Destination | 1978 | | 1979 | | 1980 | | 1981 | |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Value | Percentage | Value | Percentage | Value | Percentage | Value | Percentage |
| United States | 105.5 | 21.7 | 106.3 | 19.8 | 125.6 | 20.9 | 123.5 | 23.3 |
| West Germany | 108.9 | 22.4 | 137.4 | 25.6 | 144.4 | 24.0 | 132.4 | 25.0 |
| Britain | 14.6 | 3.0 | 21.1 | 3.9 | 21.7 | 3.6 | 20.5 | 3.9 |
| Netherlands | 28.7 | 5.9 | 37.7 | 7.0 | 51.4 | 8.6 | 27.5 | 5.2 |
| France | 47.6 | 9.8 | 59.0 | 11.0 | 75.9 | 12.6 | 52.5 | 9.9 |
| Belgium and Luxembourg | 36.1 | 7.5 | 50.4 | 9.4 | 34.8 | 5.8 | 27.6 | 5.2 |
| Japan | 4.3 | 0.9 | 5.1 | 1.0 | 7.2 | 1.3 | 5.1 | 1.0 |
| Italy | 54.9 | 11.3 | 56.2 | 10.5 | 61.7 | 10.3 | 70.3 | 13.3 |
| Sweden | 2.3 | 0.5 | 1.1 | 0.2 | 1.8 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 0.1 |
| Spain | 25.8 | 5.3 | 14.9 | 2.8 | 24.5 | 4.1 | 12.9 | 2.4 |
| Greece | 5.8 | 1.2 | 3.1 | 0.6 | 1.3 | 0.2 | 0.7 | 0.1 |
| Canada | 7.5 | 1.5 | 7.2 | 1.3 | 2.5 | 0.4 | 8.3 | 1.6 |
| Other countries | 42.4 | 8.7 | 37.1 | 6.9 | 47.6 | 7.9 | 47.2 | 9.0 |
| TOTAL | 486.4 | 100.0 | 536.6 | 100.0 | 600.4 | 100.0 | 529.2 | 100.0 |

Source: Based on information from Liberia. Ministry of Planning and Economy Affairs, *Economic Survey of Liberia, 1981*, Monrovia, May 1982, 25.

Table 9. *Principal Sources of Imports, 1977-81*
(value in millions of dollars)

| Country of Destination | 1977 | | 1978 | | 1979 | | 1980 | | 1981 | |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Value | Percentage | Value | Percentage | Value | Percentage | Value | Percentage | Value | Percentage |
| United States | 121.9 | 26.3 | 119.3 | 24.8 | 120.2 | 23.7 | 121.8 | 22.8 | 142.1 | 29.8 |
| West Germany | 42.6 | 9.2 | 52.6 | 10.9 | 56.5 | 11.2 | 50.1 | 9.4 | 48.6 | 10.2 |
| Britain | 33.3 | 7.2 | 44.0 | 9.1 | 41.1 | 8.1 | 34.4 | 6.4 | 25.2 | 5.3 |
| Netherlands | 39.9 | 8.6 | 22.0 | 4.6 | 36.2 | 7.1 | 39.7 | 7.4 | 40.4 | 8.4 |
| France | 16.7 | 3.6 | 22.9 | 4.8 | 19.0 | 3.8 | 11.1 | 2.1 | 13.2 | 2.8 |
| Belgium and Luxembourg | 6.9 | 1.5 | 9.2 | 1.9 | 5.4 | 1.1 | 6.9 | 1.3 | 7.9 | 1.7 |
| Italy | 20.3 | 4.4 | 20.5 | 4.3 | 16.2 | 3.2 | 4.4 | 0.8 | 4.7 | 1.0 |
| Denmark | 5.3 | 1.1 | 7.1 | 1.5 | 7.3 | 1.4 | 7.9 | 1.5 | 7.1 | 1.5 |
| Sweden | 29.7 | 6.4 | 11.4 | 2.4 | 12.8 | 2.5 | 6.8 | 1.3 | 13.1 | 2.7 |
| Norway | 10.0 | 2.2 | 6.7 | 1.4 | 7.7 | 1.5 | 6.8 | 1.3 | 6.2 | 1.3 |
| Spain | 21.2 | 4.6 | 14.3 | 3.0 | 4.8 | 0.9 | 3.5 | 0.7 | 1.5 | 0.3 |
| Japan | 0.7 | 0.8 | 38.7 | 8.0 | 34.6 | 6.8 | 38.4 | 7.1 | 22.6 | 4.7 |
| China | 15.9 | 3.4 | 16.5 | 3.4 | 16.2 | 3.2 | 14.2 | 2.7 | 8.5 | 1.8 |
| Other countries | 59.1 | 12.7 | 95.7 | 19.9 | 128.5 | 25.5 | 187.9 | 35.2 | 136.3 | 28.5 |
| TOTAL | 463.5 | 100.0 | 480.9 | 100.0 | 506.5 | 100.0 | 533.9 | 100.0 | 477.4 | 100.0 |

Source: Based on information from Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economy Affairs, *Economic Survey of Liberia, 1981*, Monrovia, Ma., 1982, 140.

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Table 10. Balance of Payments, 1975-81
(in millions of dollars)

| | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Merchandise trade | | | | | | | |
| Exports (f.o.b.) ¹ | 394.4 | 457.1 | 447.4 | 496.4 | 536.6 | 600.4 | 529.2 |
| Imports (c.i.f.) ² | -331.2 | -399.2 | -463.5 | -490.8 | -506.5 | -533.9 | -477.4 |
| Net merchandise trade | 63.2 | 57.9 | -16.1 | 5.6 | 30.1 | 66.5 | 51.8 |
| Nonfactor services | | | | | | | |
| Credits | 9.3 | 10.0 | 11.6 | 13.6 | 17.0 | 13.1 | 11.5 |
| Debits | -40.7 | -47.0 | -58.4 | -67.8 | -80.9 | -80.1 | -71.6 |
| Net nonfactor services | -31.4 | -37.0 | -46.8 | -54.2 | -63.9 | -67.0 | -60.1 |
| Balance of goods and nonfactor services | 31.8 | 20.9 | -62.9 | -48.6 | 33.8 | -0.5 | -5.3 |
| Factor income | | | | | | | |
| Government interest payments | -5.1 | -5.8 | -7.3 | -13.2 | -22.3 | -22.3 | -22.6 |
| Remittances | -24.5 | -25.0 | -27.5 | -32.4 | -35.0 | -32.0 | -33.0 |
| Factor payments | -122.7 | -84.8 | -69.4 | -93.5 | -79.1 | -82.3 | -58.6 |
| IMF charges ³ | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | -3.0 | -10.0 |
| Net factor income | -152.3 | -115.6 | -104.2 | -139.1 | -136.4 | -139.6 | -124.2 |
| Transfers | | | | | | | |
| Grants to public sector | 11.3 | 16.0 | 14.0 | 16.0 | 23.0 | 25.0 | 48.0 |
| Grants to private sector | 2.8 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Maritime revenues | 16.5 | 16.3 | 12.8 | 13.6 | 11.7 | 10.7 | 20.1 |
| Net transfers | 30.6 | 34.9 | 26.8 | 29.6 | 34.7 | 35.7 | 68.1 |

Table 10--Continued.

| | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Current account balance | -89.9 | -59.8 | -140.3 | -158.2 | -135.5 | -104.4 | -65.4 |
| Capital movements | | | | | | | |
| Government borrowing | 35.3 | 44.2 | 72.6 | 86.2 | 147.6 | 68.6 | 69.7 |
| Government loan repayment | -26.7 | -15.6 | -19.1 | -13.3 | -50.2 | -15.3 | -10.7 |
| Net direct foreign investment | 78.7 | 60.1 | 83.5 | 62.6 | -9.9 | -10.7 | -42.9 |
| Net capital movements | 87.3 | 88.7 | 137.0 | 135.5 | 87.5 | 42.6 | 16.1 |
| Change in reserves* | -2.6 | 28.9 | -3.0 | -22.7 | -48.0 | -61.8 | -49.3 |
| Year-end level of reserves | | | | | | | |
| National Bank of Liberia | 13.9 | 13.5 | 26.4 | 13.1 | -12.4 | -71.9 | -109.8 |
| Commercial banks | -8.5 | 20.8 | 4.9 | -4.5 | -27.0 | -29.3 | -40.7 |
| Net year-end level of reserves | 5.4 | 34.3 | 31.3 | 8.6 | -39.4 | -101.2 | -150.5 |

*Free on board

*Cost insurance and freight

*International Monetary Fund (see Glossary)

*Differences in year-end levels

Source: Based on information from Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, *Country Economic Memorandum*, n. pl., n. d., Table A10.

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**Table 11. Gross Domestic Product by Economic Sector
at 1971 Constant Factor Cost, 1971 and 1976-80
(in millions of dollars)**

| Economic Sector | 1971 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Agriculture, forestry, and fishing | | | | | | |
| Rubber | (24.0) | (24.9) | (23.1) | (21.9) | (20.2) | (21.0) |
| Forestry | (6.4) | (16.4) | (16.4) | (21.2) | (23.3) | (23.0) |
| Other | (9.5) | (14.0) | (15.4) | (16.5) | (19.3) | (19.0) |
| Total | | | | | | |
| agriculture, forestry, and fishing | 40.2 | 55.3 | 54.9 | 59.9 | 62.8 | 63.0 |
| Mining and quarrying | | | | | | |
| Iron ore | (113.7) | 103.9) | (89.7) | (58.3) | (94.2) | (106.0) |
| Other | (11.0) | (4.5) | (4.6) | (5.0) | (4.9) | (5.0) |
| Total mining | | | | | | |
| and quarrying | 124.7 | 108.4 | 94.3 | 93.3 | 99.1 | 111.0 |
| Manufacturing | 17.1 | 28.0 | 29.2 | 30.7 | 33.0 | 26.0 |
| Electricity and water | 15.8 | 8.5 | 7.7 | 7.9 | 8.4 | 8.3 |
| Construction | 14.4 | 17.7 | 19.2 | 22.0 | 20.0 | 15.0 |
| Trade, hotels, and restaurants | 15.7 | 27.6 | 29.5 | 30.2 | 31.0 | 25.0 |
| Transport, storage and communications | 34.5 | 40.1 | 41.0 | 43.0 | 44.0 | 35.0 |
| Financial and business services | 24.7 | 26.2 | 27.2 | 28.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| Government services | 27.0 | 31.0 | 35.1 | 36.9 | 39.6 | 39.6 |
| Other services | 11.5 | 19.3 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 21.0 | 17.0 |
| Imputed bank charges | -3.4 | -3.7 | -3.9 | -4.0 | -4.5 | -3.7 |
| Total monetary | | | | | | |
| economy | <u>352.5</u> | <u>355.4</u> | <u>354.2</u> | <u>367.9</u> | <u>354.4</u> | <u>366.2</u> |
| Traditional economy | <u>57.5</u> | <u>73.5</u> | <u>77.2</u> | <u>77.2</u> | <u>75.0</u> | <u>50.0</u> |
| Total Gross Domestic Product | <u>410.0</u> | <u>431.9</u> | <u>431.4</u> | <u>445.1</u> | <u>462.4</u> | <u>446.2</u> |

Source: Based on information from Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, *Country Economic Memorandum*, n. pl., n. d. Table A2; and Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, *Economic Survey of Liberia*, 1981, Monrovia, May 1982, 87.

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Glossary

- Americo-Liberian—A term used to designate descendants of Liberia's early settlers from the Western Hemisphere, particularly the United States, and their descendants. Although still used by most Liberians, the designation no longer has official governmental approval and is regarded as expressing an obsolete and divisive concept.
- Congoes—Africans landed in Liberia from slave ships captured during the suppression of the slave trade in the nineteenth century.
- descent group—A human unit whose members are commonly accepted as having descended from a common ancestor.
- fiscal year (FY)—An annual period established for accounting purposes. Since 1976 the Liberian fiscal year has extended from July 1 through the following June 30; previously it was the same as the calendar year.
- gross domestic product (GDP)—The total value of goods and services produced within a country's borders during a fixed period, usually one year. Obtained by adding the value contributed by each sector of the economy in the form of compensation of employees, profits, and depreciation (consumption of capital). Subsistence production is included and consists of the imputed value of production by the farm family for its own use and the imputed rental value of owner-occupied dwellings.
- gross national product (GNP)—GDP (*q.v.*) plus the income received from abroad by residents, less payments remitted abroad to nonresidents.
- Group of 77—A grouping of developing countries that functions as a caucus on economic matters in the United Nations and other international forums; membership has increased to well over 100 countries since its organization in 1964.
- Hinterland—Term formerly used by the Liberian government to designate the area of the country not included in the coastal counties. In 1963 the Hinterland was divided into counties, but the term is still sometimes used in an all-encompassing generic sense to describe the rural mass of the country.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)—Established along with the World Bank (*q.v.*) in 1945, the IMF is a specialized agency affiliated with the United Nations and is responsible for stabiliz-

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ing international exchange rates and payments. The main business of the IMF is the provision of loans to its members (including industrialized and developing countries) when they experience balance of payments difficulties. These loans frequently carry conditions that require substantial internal economic adjustments by the recipients, most of which are developing countries.

lineage—A descent group (*q.v.*), the members of which can, in principle, trace their descent from a common ancestor; lineages of great generational depth may include lineages of lesser depth.

Nonaligned Movement—A grouping of countries that have deliberately chosen not to be associated politically or militarily with either the West or the communist states. Member countries are expected to pursue independent foreign policies, support national liberation movements, and refrain from participating in multilateral or bilateral military alliances with the major powers. The movement's seventh summit meeting, held in New Delhi in March 1983, was attended by 97 nations.

parastatal—An autonomous, government-owned enterprise.

Poro—A tribal secret society for males that has political, juridical, religious, and educational functions. Its so-called bush schools initiate young men into the lore and disciplines of the community.

Sande—The counterpart of Poro (*q.v.*) for females.

to nuu (pl., *to nuwai*)—A Kpelle term for a wealthy man of high status.

tribe—Official and widely used designation in Liberia for an indigenous ethnic group; a group of people sharing a common culture and language but not necessarily politically unified.

World Bank—Informal name used to designate a group of three affiliated international institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The IBRD, established in 1945, has the primary purpose of providing loans to developing countries for productive projects. The IDA, a legally separate loan fund but administered by the staff of the IBRD, was set up in 1960 to furnish credits to the poorest developing countries on much easier terms than those of conventional IBRD loans. The IFC, founded in 1956, supplements the activities of the IBRD through loans and assistance designed specifically to encourage the growth of productive private enterprises in the

less developed countries. The president and certain senior officers of the IBRD hold the same positions in the IFC. The three institutions are owned by the governments of the countries that subscribe their capital. To participate in the World Bank group, member states must first belong to the International Monetary Fund (IMF—*q.v.*).

zo—Traditional magico-religious healer who diagnoses and treats illness, often resorting to divination and ritual appeasement of unseen forces that are thought to be malevolent.

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