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WARTIME EDUCATION IN OTHER LANDS

CHINA

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NEWS AND COMMENT

BOOK NOTES

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UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

EDUCATIONAL OUTLOOK

EDUCATION AND NATIONALISM IN AFRICA

By FRANCIS NWIA-KOFI NKURUMAH
African Student Association of United States and Canada

HUMAN history has been dominated by two things: the quest for bread and the quest for human rights. Today we hear the deep strong voice of Africa in this quest for human rights. And for the first time in American history, Africa is no longer the land of mystery. Africa is likened to the golden sun that, having sunk beneath the western horizon, still plays her part in the world which she helped enlighten. This has been brought about by a global war which has eliminated the distance between all continents and made the people of all countries neighbors. With the enactment of the Lend-Lease Bill the first direct contact with the people of Africa became an actual experience in the lives of the American people. But nothing worthwhile was known of this land, hitherto believed to be a place of hot jungle swarming with snakes and wild beasts, and the home of naked and uncivilized savages.

What is Africa? Who are its people? What are their political, social, and economic aspirations? Why is Africa so important in this gigantic and critical struggle of world forces? And what, after all, are the political and educational trends and potentialities in this continent? These are some of the questions which the American people have been forced to ask. Ours is the humble task of setting down the facts as they come to us and to interpret them so as to promote an intelligent understanding of African politics and education, its problems, trends, and potentialities. It must be made plain at the outset that the masses of African peoples are rising in consciousness and solidarity, and are struggling for a more balanced development of Africa's economy on the basis of the political, economic, social and educational needs of the African population.

Every people seeks to preserve its existence by passing on to posterity the things which it has maintained itself. West African

education has been able to carry over its culture chiefly through secret societies and initiation ceremonies. These societies and ceremonies have acquired their nature out of the mysteries of the African peoples, and have been the modes of their education. I mention, for example, two principal ones in West Africa—the Poro society which is exclusively for boys, and the Bundu society which is exclusively for girls.

It has been four hundred years since the first attempt was made to introduce Christian education into West Africa. The Roman Catholics came first. In 1481 the King of Portugal sent ten ships with five hundred soldiers, one hundred laborers, and a complement of Jesuit priests as missionaries to Elmina on the Gold Coast, West Africa. The Jesuits founded missions which lingered on for a period of 241 years, till at last, in 1723, that of the Capuchins at Sierra Leone was given up. The missions thus disappeared altogether from West Africa. They made no impressions except upon their immediate dependents, and what impressions they made on them were soon totally obliterated. Protestant Missionary attempts were begun by the Moravians in 1736, and continued until 1770. Five such attempts cost eleven lives and were not followed by visible results. The Wesleyans came next. In the minutes of the Conference of 1792 we find Africa for the first time included in the list of Wesleyan missionary stations, Sierra Leone in West Africa being the first port occupied.

The Church Missionary Society sent out its first missionaries in 1804. They established and attempted to maintain ten stations among the aborigines, but they could make no progress owing to the hostility of the natives, who appeared to have preferred to be left free to their native tribal religions. The missionaries were forced to take refuge in Sierra Leone, the only place where at that time they could labor with safety and hope.

The Basle Missionary Society, which was one of the most successful in West Africa, had its attention directed there as early as 1826, but it was not until 1828 that its first company of missionaries reached Christianborg, near Accra, now the capital of the Gold Coast. The Moravians had attempted to occupy this city more than thirty years previously. The United Presbyterian Synod of Scotland began a mission on the Old Calabar river in the Gulf of Benin in April 1846. Later on, five denominations

of American Christians—Baptist, Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Lutherans—were represented on the west coast of Africa. American Presbyterian missionary enterprise had its beginning on the island of Corisco. The first American Mission was established in West Africa in 1822.

At the present time, it can roughly be estimated that outside of Mohammedan influence here and there in Africa, nearly nine-tenths of all the schools are under missionary or colonial government auspices. The mission elementary schools are financially assisted with government grants-in-aid paid from direct or indirect taxation to those schools which represented a certain scholarship and efficiency, and are under accredited, certified teachers. With the secondary schools there is generally a European principal and a group of European and African teachers. In these institutions the standards and forms approximate those of junior and senior high schools in the United States.

Among the institutions of higher education the following may be mentioned: Mfantsipim (Richmond) College under the auspices of the Methodist Missionary Society; St. Augustine College and St. Theresa's Seminary under Roman Catholic supervision; the St. Peter's Grammar School under the aegis of the English Church Mission; and the Prince of Wales College at Achimota under government auspices. These institutions are situated in the Gold Coast of West Africa: Fouray Bay College (affiliated with Durham University) in Freetown, Sierra Leone; and Yaba College in Lagos, Nigeria. French West Africa has an institution of the Lycee type in Dakar. Belgium and Portugal are especially backward in matters of African colonial education. To the European governments in Africa education is planned colonization.

There are two types of secondary schools in West Africa, (1) the public schools for boys, which take boarders, and (2) similar schools for girls, the number of which is few. Some of these schools like the Prince of Wales College at Achimota are co-educational. Most of these schools combine many of the best educational features of the American high schools with cultural traditions of the English public schools. The influence of the great public schools of England, however, dominates in the British colonies. The French secondary schools in West Africa are patterned on the educational program of the Lycee and the College

of France. In the British colonies much concentration is given to the preparation for the passing of English university matriculation examinations. The curriculum is academic in nature. The scholarship, leadership, and the moral standards of most of these schools can be compared favorably with the best type of the purely academic high schools of the United States and the public schools of Great Britain. These schools, however, are open to only a small percentage of the population of elementary and secondary students. The reason for this limitation of students is that there is no system of compulsory education anywhere in Africa. Only those students whose parents are well-to-do and have the means send their children to schools get there. The experiments in mass education recently introduced in China and India are unheard of in Africa. Adult education is completely neglected.

The aims and organization of the secondary schools in Africa fall into three categories. One has as its purpose the training of teachers and religious workers. The second is represented by the Grammar schools of Sierra Leone and Nigeria and the secondary schools of the Gold Coast. In these schools emphasis is strongly laid on the classics. The third is illustrated by the government technical school at Accra and the trade school of the Hope-Waddel Institution at Calabar in Nigeria. These so-called technical schools do not measure up to the standards of the trade schools of Hampton and Tuskegee in the United States.

The elementary schools are preparatory ground for the secondary schools. The infant and the junior schools cover a period of three years with three classes, i.e., Classes I, II and III. The elementary senior schools cover a period of seven years with seven classes called "standards." The secondary schools cover a period of four years consisting of six classes called "forms." A pupil after finishing the seventh standard of the elementary school is eligible to proceed to the third form of the secondary school. If he leaves the fourth standard of the elementary school and wants to enter the secondary school, he is received in the first form. The years spent in these schools have nothing to do with chronological age. There are minimum years of training from the infant to the secondary school. The total amount of school time is fourteen years.

The subjects taught in the infant and junior schools are as follows: religion and morals,¹ the mother tongue, arithmetic, reading and writing, handwork, nature study, story-telling, singing, drawing, and physical culture (including games and drills). The number of hours spent in school per week is about thirty. The course of study in the elementary senior schools includes religion and morals, the mother tongue, English, arithmetic, history,² geography, nature study, handwork, drawing, singing, physical culture and gardening. The hours spent in school per week average thirty-four. The course of study in secondary schools includes Latin, Greek, English, history, geography, mathematics and literature.

If education is life, then the weakness of the school system in Africa is evident. The activities of these schools should be made to relate to the life of the people so as to equip and fit them to meet their varied life demands. The old conception of education as being exclusively academic still dominates the colonial school program of Africa. Such anachronistic conceptions should give way to a new process of training and educating in life and current social, political, technical, and economic ideals now in vogue in progressive schools in America, China, and Russia.

From the foregoing it may seem obvious that the entire school curriculum is hopelessly devoid of the physical, natural, and social sciences. Any system of education worth its salt should be made consistent with the changing needs of the community in which the individual personality finds expression. Under such a system of education the youth of Africa is not prepared to meet any definite situations of the changing community except those of clerical activities and occupations for foreign commercial and mercantile concerns. Were it not for the lack of this educational foresight, the mobilization of African manpower and resources in the war effort would have been an easy matter. This colonial educational problem is as serious in Africa as it was in the East Indies, Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia, and Burma where thoughtless neglect of education has brought such disastrous results for the United Nations. Any educational program which fails to furnish criteria for the judgment of social, political, economic,

¹ The religion and morals taught are Christian and European.

² The history that is taught is that of Europe. African history is woefully neglected.

and technical progress of the people it purports to serve has completely failed in its purpose, and has become an educational fraud.

The political and educational policy of Great Britain has been that of adaptation. It has presupposed to build up African culture, folkways, art, and civilization. This policy was first put into practice in India where various schools were set up under English influence. Sir Valentine Chirol in his book *India Unrest* has endeavored to show that this policy of educational adaptation is inevitably and eventually going to produce discontent and sedition—desire for self-determination and independence. He warned the British government that the introduction of a similar system of education into Africa would lead to similar results. In other words, higher education is incompatible with colonial status.

During and after the first great war a new policy was inaugurated to which the Phelps-Stokes Commission of the United States gave its whole-hearted support. This policy was formulated by the Advisory Committee on African Education set up by the Colonial Secretary of Great Britain. Its educational philosophy was based on the principle of the so-called "trusteeship." It declared that education should be adapted to the tradition and "mentality" of Africans, and should aim at conserving and improving what was best in African institutions while at the same time introducing progressive ideals in regard to agriculture, health, native industries, and the training of Africans in the management of their own affairs. Its objective, the promulgators of this educational scheme affirmed, was to encourage the African to believe that his race has its contribution to make to world progress. It was presumed that the function of education of trusteeship would be to inculcate in the African chiefs and men of influence in the various African communities a sense of their responsibility for the welfare of their people, to teach them the methods of orderly government and of the administration of justice, and to have them realize that individual responsibility would not mean diminution of the community sense upon which tribal discipline and cohesion depends, but rather that the aspiration of the educated African would be directed more to a position of influence in African community life. In so far as national and political relations and consciousness are concerned, the most important aspect of this educational policy of "trusteeship" is the training of Africans to

manage their own affairs. The question is whether the time will come when the African will be thought of as "educated" enough to "manage his own affairs," knowing full well that the exploitation motifs of the European governments in Africa will not let them leave the African alone to manage his own affairs.

The problem now is how to educate and then initiate the African into modern life without uprooting him from his home and tribal life. Thus the present-day educational problem in Africa is that of educational acculturation. This calls for correlation between African culture and that of the western world. The problem becomes greater and more embarrassing as we view a people emerging from one condition of culture and embracing a new culture which is both intricate and complex in its civilizational techniques, and at the same time see that people refused self-determination to choose its own course and manner of existence. When two cultures meet there is bound to be a crisis—a crisis which often results in the cultural dialectic synthesis of the two. Development is but the result of internal and external conflict relations. This struggle of opposites which causes development leads, at a certain point, to a revolutionary break, and to the emergence of a new thing—a new culture, a new education, or a new national life.

In the educational process of the African the best in western culture should be combined with the best in African culture. In this respect there should be collaboration between educators, sociologists, and anthropologists, whose findings should enable those who are responsible for African education to prevent the destruction of the best in indigenous African culture and at the same time to acquaint the African with the best in his own as well as in foreign civilizations. Any system of education is impossible without respect for the educand.

Whatever may be the political and educational trends and potentialities, education in Africa should produce a new class of educated Africans imbued with the culture of the west but nevertheless attached to their environment. This new class of Africans should demand the powers of self-determination and independence to determine the progress and advancement of their own country. They must combine the best in western civilization with the best

in African culture. Only on this ground can Africa create a new and distinct civilization in the process of world advancement. It is because of this basic need of social regeneration and emancipation that everywhere in Africa today, youth movements are springing up and spreading themselves throughout the length and breadth of the continent. Their aim is to raise the voice of Africa to join that of the people throughout the world for the defeat of fascism and to help build a post-war world based upon the principles of freedom as expressed in the Atlantic Charter. African leaders are convinced that every worthwhile phase of progress is accomplished by definite and determined action. The only ones who have the courage, stamina, strength, tenacity, and impulsiveness for such action are the young people. The future of Africa therefore depends upon the courage and fearlessness of its youth. The African youth is in action and very soon his voice will be heard.

To date, the partition of Africa is complete. With the possible exception of Liberia and Abyssinia there is not a single space on the continent of Africa which the African can call his own, politically or economically speaking. We shall leave the reality and the true story of the independence of Egypt to the British. But the renascent youth of Africa is throwing up a challenge to all imperialistic forces. This is what he is saying: "You may shackle the hands of men; you may shackle the feet of men; yes, you may even shackle and enslave the bodies of men, but there is one thing which even the diabolical forces of fascism and imperialism cannot do; they cannot enslave forever, the minds of determined men."

Many of us fail to understand that a war cannot be waged for democracy which has as its goal a return to imperialism. It is our warning, that if after victory, imperialism and colonialism should be restored, we will be sowing the seed not only for another war, but for the greatest revolution the world has ever seen. The youth of Africa is blazingly awake. A man put to sleep for a long time when awakened cannot be put back to sleep so easily. We are living in a powerful period of world history. Every contact of the world's progress and advancement says even to the most backward people, "If you cannot remain where you are. You cannot fall back. You must advance!"

It is indeed fascinating to read or listen to the theoretical effusions of students of international politics and the political confusions of the statesmen of the world today. They think and write in terms of suppression and exploitation—how one country or people can be used for the advantage of a so-called powerful nation. They forget that the talk of peace will continue to be an apotheosis of tomfoolery and chicanery, until the natural rights of subject people the world over—to determine and regulate their own destiny—are recognized. If this is overlooked then the greatest and most damaging revolution is yet to come,—when Africans and colonial peoples will stand together irresistibly to demand their freedom, rights, and liberties. The last war awakened the people of Asia. This war is destined to wake up the people of Africa and all the Negro people of the world, for that matter. There is a new African everywhere in the five continents and on the seven seas. This new African is neither young or old; he is just new.

Future wars will not be stopped by willful thinking, writing and talking, while at the same time conditions are being created which make freedom a mockery. Adequate organization to make all peoples free, adequate organization to stop fascism, imperialism, and all other forces of exploitation is the only effective desideratum to ensure world peace. The time for Pax Romana, Pax Italia, Pax Britainica, Pax Germanica, Pax Niponica must be let go forever. We must look for a Pax Mundana. Why talk of British commonwealth or American commonwealth or this or that commonwealth? We should create simply a commonwealth of nations in which all people have the right to determine their own political, economic, and social destinies. We are looking forward to, as a first step, a federated union of all the countries in West Africa where Africans can rule and govern themselves without outside interference.

When the practical recognition of the properly limited character of national sovereignty has come, we may then hope at last to see the end of the selfish exploitation of undeveloped nations, so provocative hitherto of the injustices within and of wars without.

—WILLIAM HEARD KILPATRICK.