



**A GUERRA E  
AS GUERRAS  
COLONIAIS  
NA ÁFRICA  
SUBSAARIANA**

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**COLONIAL OFFICE POLICY TOWARDS  
BRITISH WEST AFRICA IN WORLD WARS**

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**Resumo:** O contacto entre grupos diferentes é uma característica imutável da existência humana, que pode conduzir a tentativas de domínio de alguns grupos sobre outros o que, inevitavelmente, conduz a conflitos. A Primeira e a Segunda Guerras Mundiais, bem como as guerras coloniais, constituíram-se como um verdadeiro desafio ao poder estabelecido de alguns países europeus, cuja sobrevivência dependia, em grande parte, da contribuição das respetivas colónias. As colónias britânicas da África Ocidental, tal como outras, tiveram que participar no esforço de guerra com recursos humanos, financeiros e materiais, de tal forma que se pode afirmar que a sua exploração e o seu desenvolvimento corresponderam a uma verdadeira «Luta pela Independência» por parte da Grã-Bretanha. Lord Milner, Secretário de Estado da Guerra de 1918-1919, e das Colónias de 1919-1921, insistiu que «os bens coloniais tiveram que ser tomados e explorados em grande escala pelo governo britânico e lucros usados para pagar a dívida da Grã-Bretanha». O seu sucessor, Leo Amery, acredi-

tava que a tarefa da Grã-Bretanha era multiplicar os mercados no exterior e, particularmente, desenvolver as vastas potencialidades do continente africano. Lord Moyne, Secretário de Estado do *Colonial Office*, solicitou, em junho de 1941, aos governadores das diferentes colônias que mobilizassem todos os recursos para o esforço de guerra, o que provocou um desvio de fundos que estavam, inicialmente, destinados para o *Colonial Development and Welfare*. A mobilização desses recursos requereu a colaboração colonial; e os britânicos tiveram que fazer concessões a nível governativo a alguns dos seus domínios após a Primeira Guerra Mundial e a outros após a Segunda Guerra. Contudo, não consideravam as colônias suficientemente «maduras» para lhes serem concedidos os mesmos direitos políticos. Em 1938, MacDonald, Secretário de Estado do Trabalho (1938–1940), mostrava-se convencido de que «podia levar gerações ou mesmo séculos para que algumas colônias se pudessem posicionar sozinhas». As elites tradicionais eram subservientes. As novas elites formadas no Ocidente rapidamente passaram do reformismo ao inconformismo revolucionário. No entanto, as duas guerras pressionaram os governos a mudar a sua atitude em relação a estas últimas, da apatia (devido à sua exclusão da política e do mecanismo de tomada de decisões) para uma perspectiva de colaboração, procurando assim evitar uma espécie de resistência armada colonial. Este artigo procura examinar os contributos da África Ocidental Britânica nas duas Guerras Mundiais e a política do *Colonial Office* em relação à oposição colonial, baseando-se a pesquisa em fontes oficiais algumas delas inéditas, outras já publicadas.

**Palavras-chave:** *Colonial Office*, Guerras, Recursos, Política de oposição

**Abstract:** Contact between human groups and subsequent changes constitute immutable characteristics of human existence, resulting in the domination of some groups and subjugation and subordination of others, whose preservation and challenge and lead to and result from wars. The First and Second World Wars as well colonial wars expressed a challenge to the prevailing balance of power among some imperial European countries, whose survival depended on their respective colonies' contribution. British West African colonies, like others, had to assist with human, financial and material resources in both World Wars, their exploitation and development was the British «War of Independence». Lord Milner, Secretary of State for War 1918-1919, and for the Colonies 1919-1921, insisted that «the colonial assets had to be taken over and exploited on a large scale by the British Government and the profits to be used to pay off Britain's debt». His successor, Leo Amery, believed that Britain's task was to multiply markets overseas, and particularly develop Africa's vast potentialities. Lord Moyne, the Colonial Office Secretary of State, instructed colonial governors in June 1941 to mobilize colonial resources for the war effort causing diversion of resources aimed initially at the 1940 declared policy of Colonial Development and Welfare. Mobilisation of such resources required colonial collaboration; and the British had to concede self-government to some of her dominions after the First World War (WWI) and to others after the Second War (WWII). But they did not consider the colonies mature enough so as to grant them the same political rights. By 1938, MacDonald, Labour Secretary of State (1938-1940), was convinced that «it might take generations or even centuries for some colonial people to stand on their own feet». The traditional elites were subservient whereas the new western educated elite was initially reformist to gradually become to some

extent revolutionary. However, both wars pressed Colonial officials to change their attitude towards the latter from apathy (due to their exclusion from policy and decision making machinery) to a reconstruction of collaboration, avoiding thus a kind of colonial armed resistance. This paper attempts to examine British West African contribution in both World Wars, and the Colonial Office policy towards colonial opposition, basing the research on primary official unpublished and published sources.

**Keywords:** Colonial Office, Wars, Resources, Opposition-policy

## **Introduction**

Following 19th century rivalry for the world's material resources, Europeans' ambitious desire for domination and their subsequent colonizing process, world relations became exacerbated resulting consequently in two world wars during which their respective colonized dependencies became forcibly involved and had to contribute to the war effort. Challenge to British imperial supremacy from enemy powers, increasing United States (US) criticism and stronger colonial claims on one hand, and the mobilisation of imperial resources for the war effort on the other, pressed then the Colonial Office to adjust and reconstruct imperial relations during and after the wars. British West Africans had to face the potential threat from the German colonies of Togoland and Cameroons in WWI, pro-Vichy French colonies in addition to their being required for other African and Asian military campaigns against Italian, German and Japanese attacks in WWII, and to provide financial and material and resources as well. The paper attempts to assess such challenge, and examine the corresponding Colonial Office measures and policies with respect to British West Africa during these two world catastrophes.

## **The Colonial Office and regional machinery in the War Periods**

Wars during and after the Industrial Revolution resulted in gradual colonial establishment initially on coastal areas and then extended to the hinterland as in the case of West Africa<sup>1</sup>. Control over such vast areas logically necessitated the creation and development of either

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<sup>1</sup> Sierra Leone: Freetown Colony 1807, Protectorate 1896 – Gambia: Bathurst 1843, Protectorate 1888 – Gold Coast: Colony 1821, Ashanti 1896, Northern Territories 1902 – Nigeria: Lagos in 1860s, Oil Rivers Protectorate 1880s, Northern Protectorate 1900.

central or local machinery with a view to managing them; various bodies had been in charge of colonial affairs before 1801 when they were entrusted to the War and Colonial Office, which half a century later, was divided into India Office and the Colonial Office under its own Secretary of State, Sir George Grey, to deal with all British possessions overseas. The evolution of some territories led to the creation of the Dominion Division within the Colonial Office in 1907, developed into a separate Dominion Office in 1925 with its own Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. During WWI Dominion matters were more important than colonial ones; the membership of both the War Office, already established in 1902, and the British War Cabinet created in December 1916 and extended in the spring of 1917 to become the Imperial War Cabinet as a means of coordinating the British Empire's military policy, comprised essentially the British and Dominion Prime Ministers but not the Secretary of State for the Colonies because colonies were not regarded mature enough so as to deserve the fully recognized status of an autonomous nation of an Imperial Commonwealth with an adequate voice in foreign policy that was granted to the Dominions during the 1917 Imperial Conference<sup>2</sup>.

The Colonial Office had three Secretaries of State during WWI: Liberal L. Harcourt (1910-1915), Conservative Bonar Law (1915-1916), and Conservative Walter Long (1916-1919), they were assisted by a Permanent Under-Secretary of State (a post created from 1825) and a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (from 1830), in charge of six Geographical Departments dealing respectively with the West Indies, the East, Nigeria, West Africa, the Mediterranean and East Africa, together with a General Division concerned with library, print-

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<sup>2</sup> The War Office, already established in 1902 by Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, was assisted by the Committee of Imperial Defence under Lord Kitchener, comprising the British Cabinet members, the heads of the military services together with the Dominions' Prime Ministers. The Imperial War Cabinet consisted of the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, and the Prime Ministers of Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.

ing and accounts activities. Given the increasing importance of the colonies, the Geographical Departments increased by 1925 to eight in addition to one General Department, the latter dealing with establishment matters, promotion and transfer within the Colonial Service for both the Colonial and Dominion Offices. Bigger involvement in colonial affairs in the 1930s compelled the Colonial Office officials to introduce an organisation based on subject departments, and by 1940 there were three Divisions and an Accountants Department. The first division comprised seven Geographical Departments among which the West African Department under A. Dawe. The second Division dealt with personnel and comprised three departments: Recruitment & Training under C. Jeffries, P. Furse and H. Newbolt; whereas the Colonial Service Department was headed by both T.K Lloyd and C. Jeffries, the latter being also in charge of the third department, the Establishment Branch. The General Division comprised five departments: the General Department and Defence Department, both under the headship of Shuckburgh, the Economic Department under G. Clauson, together with S. Caine and J. B. Williams, the Colonial Development & Social Service Department under the responsibility of Shuckburgh working in association with Creasy and J. Keith. The fifth one dealt with Military Advisory Staff. Such organisation knew during the Second World War five Secretaries of State, heading the Office for short periods with the exception of O. Stanley: Labour M. McDonald (1938-1940), Conservative Lord Lloyd (1940-1941), Conservative Lord Moyne (1941-1942), Conservative Viscount Cranborne (1942), and Conservative Oliver Stanley (1942-1945). The Colonial Office had to readjust itself to the war conditions and the Secretary of State felt the need to create appropriate advisory committees, and proceed with the reorganisation of the Colonial Service<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> In 1925 the General Department together with those of the West Indies, Far East, Ceylon and Mauritius were under the responsibility of a Deputy Under-Secretary



Unlike in WWI, the increasingly needed involvement of the colonies in general and those of Africa in particular in the Second World War, led the British War Cabinet to create a Committee on Allied African Economic Affairs under Major D. Morton, following the landing of the Allied in North Africa in November 1942 with the object of dealing with colonial economic questions, namely securing supplies from the Belgian Congo, the French African Empire and Liberia<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, and despite the fact that the British West African Colonial Governors' Conference established shortly before the war in August 1939, was entrusted to deal with defence and civil services, difficulties of coordinating and mobilizing the military and economic resources in response to successive war conditions-potential threat from pro Vichy French colonies, the increasing American interest in the area, stronger colonial claims and colonial development policy, pressed the British authorities to think initially of establishing a West African Council (WAC). However, at a War Cabinet meeting in 1942, it was decided to create rather the post of Resident Minister as a war

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whereas the Middle East Department on one hand, and the Departments in charge of the Gold Coast & Mediterranean, Nigeria, East Africa, and Tanganyika & Somaliland on the other, were under the headship of an Assistant Under-Secretary. In 1940 the first division comprised 7 Geographical Departments distributed as follows: The West Indian and Eastern Departments under Burns, the Pacific & Mediterranean and Middle East Departments under Shuckburgh, the East African, Tanganyika & Somaliland and West African Departments under A. Dawe. As to the advisory committees, 10 more committees were created between 1940 and 1944, they included: Tropical Disease Hospital Committee 1941 – Colonial Products Research Council 1941 – Interdepartmental Committee on Locust Control 1942 – Advisory Committee on the Welfare of Colon People 1942 – Colonial Labour Advisory Committee 1942 – Colonial Research Committee 1942 – Colonial Fisheries Advisory Committee 1943 – Colonial Social Welfare Advisory Committee 1943 – Colonial Social Science Research Council 1944 – Tsetse Fly & Trypanosomiasis Committee 1944. Sources: Colonial Office List 1930, 1940, 1946; British National Archives, Kew, CO 967/16/1942 memo by C Jeffries, *A plan for the Colonial Office*, November 1942. For further details CO 967/22 R.D Furse, 26.11.1943, *Enquiry into the system of training for the Colonial Service with suggestions for its reform to meet post-war conditions*, CO 967/20 1942–1945 Draft memo, *Reorganisation of the Colonial Services*, and CO 967.22 1942–1945 War Cabinet CAB (42), 11.6.1942 *Reorganisation of the Colonial Service*, memo by the Secretary of State; and CO 967/22, C. Jeffries, *What is wrong with the Colonial Service?*, 24.2.1942.

<sup>4</sup> British National Archives, Kew, PREM 7/10 War Cabinet on Allied African Affairs.

time measure as it was in the Middle East, for such temporary post of Minister in Cabinet rank could solve problems in which a few Home Departments were already involved, namely the Ministries of War, Transport, and Food and Supply. Already by 1941 the West African Supply Centre was set up in Lagos in order to coordinate West African production and imports, and the West African Cocoa Control Board in London under the chairmanship of G. Hall, the Colonial Office Parliamentary Under-Secretary (1940-1942), to deal initially with cocoa trade, and then extended later in 1943 to ground-nuts and palm kernels when it changed to West African Produce Control Board<sup>5</sup>.

Effectively, the choice for Philip Cunliffe-Lister known as Viscount Swinton as Resident Minister was obvious because of his experience as President of the Board of Trade before holding the post of Secretary of State for the Colonies (1931-1935). It was clear that the creation of this kind of post had no long-range political significance, it was not to involve any constitutional change in the British West African colonies; all normal questions of colonial administration would continue to function as heretofore under the authority of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Swinton's prerogatives and duties were clearly expounded in the Prime Minister's directive dated June 8, 1942, in which the latter urged him to settle the problems arising from the growing American influence and interest in the region, to supervise propaganda work, to deal with the needs and resources of

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<sup>5</sup> The West African Council (WAC) was composed of the Secretary of State as chairman, the British West African Colonial Governors as members, but no formal representation of the Three Fighting Services was envisaged, except for their attendance when appropriate. The WAC was to be provided with a permanent secretariat and a senior Civil Servant from the UK as Chief Secretary. British National Archives, Kew, CO 554/121/33599/1939, proceedings of the West African Colonial Governors' Conference, Lagos 1939, and PREM 8/2 from Secretary of State for the Colonies: appointment of Resident Minister and (PREM 3- 502/2). The West African Cocoa Control Board comprised G. Hall, the Colonial Office Parliamentary Under-Secretary (1940-1942), as chairman, Colonial Office officials, the West African Colonial governors and representatives of the cocoa trade as members.

the territories and ensure the most effective use of these resources for the war effort through progressive reduction of demands on Great Britain for supplies urgently needed there<sup>6</sup>. In order to ensure effective cooperation in the prosecution of the war, Swinton was to preside over both a War Council, which he would have to establish, and the West African Governors' Conference. In December 1942, six months after his appointment, both the Civil Member's Committee and the Service Members' Committee of the West African War Council (WAWC) were established under his chairmanship comprising respectively the four British West African Colonial governors and the Chiefs of Staff. By May 1943, the Supply and Production Committee, which was to assume supervision of planning and action in these areas, was added to the WAWC.

### **Defence measures and mobilisation of West African military resources**

As far as WWI is concerned, the response of the West African Colonial governments to the challenge of the war was prompt and decisive. A number of war defence measures were taken so as to ensure the safety of the colony, secure forcibly at varying degrees the recruitment of the colonial people for military purposes, and provide finance for the war effort. In the Gold Coast, few ordinances provided for restricting, deporting aliens and suspected persons, and taking their possessions, namely Bremen and Basel missions in 1916 and 1917 respectively. Other ordinances concerned the entry of immigrants not born in British West Africa and labour immigration, especially the 1914 Regulation of Immigrants Ordinances which

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<sup>6</sup> British National Archives, Kew, PREM 3/502/2. Printed for the War Cabinet June 1942, W. P. (42) 245, June 8 1942. Secret from W. S. C., WAR CABINET: the Minister Resident in West Africa, Directive by the Prime Minister.

provided for the control of Afro-Americans who planned to resettle in the Gold Coast under the leadership of Chief Sam. On the other hand, the Immigration of Labourers Restriction Ordinance of 1916 empowered the government to exercise control over the immigration of indentured foreign labourers who were neither of West African descent nor of European origin or descent. As to Nigeria and the Gambia, the few ordinances enacted prohibited trading with the enemy and enabled the Colonial governor to impose restrictions on aliens<sup>7</sup>.

Troops had to be mobilized for successive campaigns against German colonies: Togoland August 7-26 1914, Cameroons until February 1916 and East Africa July 1916–November 1918. By July 1914, the total military and police forces available to the colonial authorities in the Gold Coast numbered nearly 3,000 under the command of Captain Frederick Carkeet Bryant; and after the Cameroons campaign, Acting Governor, R. Slater together with the Assistant Director for Recruitment in West Africa, Col. Haywood, conducted a recruiting tour in the colony and Ashanti with a view to providing reinforcement for the Gold Coast Regiment on active service in East Africa. The Gold Coast Regiment consisting of 1,423 effectives including fifty one Europeans sailed to East Africa in July 1916 followed by a volunteer contingent in November and four infantry battalions in December of the same year. Given the importance and difficulties in the East African campaign, some 1,000 natives voluntarily enlisted in 1917 as motor drivers. In fact, of the Gold Coast Regiment, 215 were killed in East Africa, 270 died of disease, 725 were wounded, 13 missing

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<sup>7</sup> Gold Coast: «Trading with the Enemy Ordinance, 1914» imposing penalties for trading with the enemy and «The Aliens Restriction Ordinance, 1914» enabling the Governor, in time of war or imminent national danger or great emergency by Order in Council to impose restrictions on aliens and make such provisions as appear necessary or expedient for carrying such restrictions into effect. Gambia No. 16 – An Ordinance to prohibit Trading with the Enemy.

and 567 became invalid<sup>8</sup>. Besides the Gold Coast African troops, about 30% of the British administrative and technical staff enlisted for service between 1914–1917, the European Establishment of the Colony and its Dependencies which numbered 613 officers in 1914 had been reduced to only 430 available in 1917 for duty in the Gold Coast and its Dependencies<sup>9</sup>. With regard to Nigeria, the Cameroons campaign involved the mobilisation of 350 officers and non-commissioned officers together with 4,000 native soldiers, one hundred leading natives, and the contribution of a contingent from both the Marine and Railway Departments. The East African campaign saw the involvement of 3,253 African soldiers in 1916 increasing to 6,605 in 1917 while a number of 1,800 still waiting in training centres, in addition to 3,975 carriers and a contingent from the Nigerian Marine Department<sup>10</sup>.

During WWII, the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF), which had already served in the Togoland, Cameroon and East African campaigns against the German armies during WWI was by 1939 under War Office control and under the command of General George Giffard, Commander-in-Chief of the West African Command. Intensive recruitment was organised in each of the West African colonies; in September 1939 the Gold Coast formed the 2nd Battalion with 920 volunteers from the Northern Territories, and one year later, three battalions sailed to East Africa known as the 24th Brigade, which was part of the 12th African Division. With the introduction of the compulsory service regulations in 1940 and 1941 for Europeans and Africans respectively, successive enlisting comprised 20,000 recruited formed the Ashanti Infantry Battalion in 1941, further 11,000 were

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<sup>8</sup> KILLINGRAY, David – «Repercussions of WWI in the Gold Coast». *Journal of African History*, XIX, I, 1978, p. 39 and AJAYI, J. F. A. et alii. – *History of West Africa*. Vol. II. Longman, 1974, p. 492-493.

<sup>9</sup> Gold Coast Colonial Annual Report 1917, no 998, p. 78

<sup>10</sup> Compilation from the annual colonial reports.

enlisted in 1942 while Reserve and Civil Defence Forces reached a total strength of 2,300. By 1943, further 10,000 were recruited, and a further contingent of Gold Coast troops proceeded to Burma. In 1944, the West African Air Corps was formed in 1944 with 1,589 in African ranks. On the whole, the annual colonial report of 1946 mentions a total of Gold Coast armies that took part in WWII exceeding 65,000 including the pre-war force of 1,470. In Sierra Leone, Defence Corps formed in October 1939 comprised 800 men, increasing to 17,700 four years later, 7,000 of whom had been involved in the Far East and few in the Middle East. On the other hand, its West African Navy comprised 4,000 in 1944 while its West African Air Corps had 700. As to Nigeria, the 1st West African Infantry Brigade consisted of 1st, 2nd and 3rd battalions of the Nigerian Regiment, 52nd (Nigeria) Light Battery West African Artillery, and 51st (Nigeria) Field Company of West African Engineers<sup>11</sup>.

### **West African financial contributions to the War Effort**

Examination of the Gold Coast colonial budgets 1912–1919 reveals the addition of three new heads of expenditure: expedition to Togoland, war expenses and war contribution to the Imperial Government (see table 1).

Years	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
GC WAFF	65,252	65,204	58,738	74,695	85,119	82,403	107,205
Volunteers	1,252	1,178	1,673	3,752	1,892	1,479	1,713
Police	40,320	48,586	54,499	54,908	60,551	58,449	65,093
War		12,995	22,364	37,273	26,218	25,016	5,521

<sup>11</sup> Compilation from the Annual colonial reports of 1946.

Togo		43,756	14,491	1,694	1,202		
Imp. govt.			10,000	30,000	20,000		
Total	106,824	171,719	161,765	202,319	195,012	167,341	175,532

Table 1 – Gold Coast expenditure on defence (£).

Source: Gold Coast Colonial Reports.

The total cost of the short Togoland expedition amounted to £61,143 distributed as follows: £43,756 in 1914, reduced to £14,491 in 1915, £1,694 in 1916 and £1,202 in 1917. As to the war expenses, a sum of £12,995 was allocated in 1914, increased to £22,364 in 1915, then to £37,273 in 1916, but it was reduced to £26,218 in 1917 and £25,016 in 1918 and down to £5,521. As far as the contribution to the Imperial Government is concerned, the Legislative Council offered £60,000: £10,000 in 1915, £30,000 in 1916 and reduced to £20,000 in 1917.

The Nigerian Colonial government's financial contribution in WWI comprised an annual average expenditure of £222,000 allocated to the WAFF, a total expenditure of £454,452 for the Cameroons campaign, and £484,000 for the East African campaign. On the other hand, the native administrative authorities contributed with £143,361 to the war effort in addition to another contribution of £151,300 to the Imperial Government. The Emir of Sokoto offered £1,000 in 1914 and the Government decided of a war bonus of £73,000 by 1918. Above all these, the Legislative Council offered to take over £13 million of the war debt as Nigeria's own liability<sup>12</sup> (see table 2).

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<sup>12</sup> Compilation from the annual colonial reports and colonial report 1915, p. 29.

		1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Total
Colonial Gvt	Cam-paigns	136,000	155,981	153,295	8,546		453,822
	East Africa			350,000		134,000	484,000
	Imp/ Govt.		3m+3m				
	War bonus					73,000	73,000
	Sailors				1,500		1,500
	North. Prov.	36,000	45,320	53,041		9,000	143,361
	G.B			50,000	50,000	51,300	151,300
Private	Emir	1,000					1,000
	Public		16,420	26,200	49,546		92,166
Total		173,000	217,7 21	632,536	109,592	267,300	1,400,149

Table 2 – Nigerian financial contribution to the war effort 1914-1918 (£).

Source: Compilation from the annual colonial reports.

With regard to WWII, Sierra Leone total war amounted to £261,500 out of total expenditure of £1,684,500 in 1944, £265,000 out of £1,912,000 the following year and still £227,500 by 1946 (see table 3).

	1944	1945	1946
Military <sup>2</sup>	55,500	57,000	53,500
War <sup>3</sup>	206,000	265,000	174,000
Total war expend	261,500	272,000	227,500
Representing % of	15.52	14.22	12.48
Total govt. expend	1,684,500	1,912,000	1,833,500

Table 3 – Sierra Leone expenditure for war purposes (£).

Source: Sierra Leone report 1946, p. 18.

As to the Gold Coast, it lent £500,000 and £300,000 in 1940 and 1942 respectively to the Imperial government as loans free of interest, and in 1941 the Legislative Council voted an outright gift of £100,000 to the Imperial Exchequer. Furthermore, the Colonial Governor



informed the Colonial Secretary about the Colony's willingness to place the whole of its reserves at the disposal of HMG, «to assist in the Imperial war effort, should such a course appear necessary». Compilation from colonial report of 1946 shows the following expenditure for war purposes compared to total expenditure (see table 4).

	1941-1942	1942-1943	1943-1944	1944-1945	1945-1946
Total govt. expenditure	3,598,778	4,153,883	4,560,274	4,534,612	6,039,855
Military	176,118	173,273	203,797	182,623	183,343
Pension+gratuities	257,991	272,918	2,999,221	329,577	349,586
War expenditure	446,945	492,719	320,010	226,639	349,971
Total war expenditure	881,054	938,910	3,523,028	739,839	889,900
% out of govt. expend	24.48	22.68	77.25	16.31	14.73

Table 4 – Gold Coast War expenditure 1941–1945 (£).

Source: Gold Coast Report 1946.

In Nigeria, private subscriptions amounting to £6,216 were collected by the Sultan of Sokoto besides the campaign for saving certificates in 1941. Besides, an amount of £931,127 was collected as gifts in West Africa for the war effort divided as follows: Gambia £11,478, Gold Coast £361,496, Sierra Leone £148,698, and Nigeria £409,255. It was estimated that economic help to the UK from June 1943 to the end of the war in raw materials was valued at £31,351,000, and about £22,556,000 were shipped from British colonies to the USA, enabling Great Britain to earn dollars<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> British National Archives, Kew, CO 96/772/310/80/1942 GC 86 March 5 1942 to Viscount Cranborne, and in the Colonial report p. 128 – CO 96/765/31080/1940 Governor

## **War material requirements, control over trade and Colonial Development Policy**

Undoubtedly the war effort was not to be confined only to the mobilisation of the human resources or financial contributions but they were also to cover the material resources of the West African colonies and control over their trade whether for wartime purposes or long term integration into the imperial production pattern. The First World War produced a strong imperialist feeling, one important manifestation of which was the formation in 1916 of an Empire Resources Development Committee under the Auspices of Lord Milner, Secretary of State for War (1918-1919), and for the Colonies (1919-1921). The Committee was of opinion that the Empire assets were to «be taken over and exploited on a large scale by the British Government, and the profits to be used to pay off Britain's national debt<sup>14</sup>». Control over producing, trading and exporting certain special products under some kind of monopoly was a characteristic of mercantile capitalism that was to affect West African agricultural produce; the immediate commercial effect of WWI was the loss of the German market and shipping facilities; accompanied later by world market fluctuations in the demand for West African products. The bulk of palm kernels exported from the Gold Coast Colony to Germany amounted to 14,628 tons in 1912 for a value of £205,365 but decreased to 4,064 tons for a value of £50,512 in 1915. Palm oil dropped from 1,444,482 gallons for a value of £112,885 to 330,990 gallons for a value of £25,769 in 1912 and 1915 respectively. Actually, Gold Coast products exported

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to Colonial Secretary about Legislative Council on March 20, 1940. For Nigeria, as to West African gifts see Cmd 7167, *The Colonial Empire 1939-1947*, quoted in AJAYI, J. F. A. et alii. – *History of West Africa...*, p. 610. For economic help, Idem – *Ibidem*, p. 115.

<sup>14</sup> FOX, Wilson – «Payment of War Debts by Development of Economic Resources». *United Empire*, January 1918, p. 175. Quoted in GEORGE, Meredith David – *The British Government and Colonial Economic development with particular reference to BWA 1919-1939*. Ph. D. Exeter University, 1976, p. 23.

to Germany which represented 18% of the total value of exported goods in 1910–1913 declined to 12% in 1914 and 0% during the war period. In fact, following the loss of the German market in 1914, some interest in the manufacture of the raw product started in the UK, and by 1918 practically all exports were shipped to the metropolis. The same conditions affected palm oil, the exports of which increased from 450,360 gallons for a value of £38,299 in 1916 to 938,595 gallons for a value of £140,163 in 1919. Gold Coast exports to the UK remained above 65% of total exports in value until 1918 when they dropped to 47% while in Nigeria they increased in both value and percentage from £3,615,600 representing 49% of Nigeria's total exports to 12,497,054 accounting for 83,98% in 1919 (see tables 5-6).

Country	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
Exports							
Value (£)	3,416,637	3,028,997	4,370,377	3,453,888	3,588,743	2,628,450	4,951,110
	68%	68%	75%	62%	65%	47%	46%
Imports							
Value (£)	2,468,604	2,660,682	2,734,099	3,860,765	3,235,938	2,125,002	5,292,821
	70%	74%	79%	75%	69%	73%	74%

Table 5 – Value of Gold Coast exports to and imports from UK and % out of total.

Source: Gold Coast Annual Colonial Reports.

	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
Total Exp. (£)	7,352,377	6,610,046	5,660,796	6,096,586	8,602,486	9,511,971	14,880,000
To UK (£)	3,615,600	4,008,000	4,338,000	5,612,000	5,612,000	8,791,994	12,497,054
	49%	70%	76.32%	92.05%	83.64%	92.43%	83.98%

Table 6 – Value of Nigerian exports to UK 1913 – 1919 and percentage out of total exports.

Source: Compilation from Nigeria annual colonial reports.

Imports from the UK to the West African colonies increased during the war period as well; Nigerian imports rose from 61% in 1910 to 83.6% in 1915 and remained as high during the war period whereas in the Gold Coast, they increased from 70% in 1913 to reach 79% in 1915 and to remain above 73% along the war period. In both cases, imports consisted of unnecessary consumer goods like tobacco, spirits, which represented above 60% of the imports while means of production or investment goods amounted to almost 30% (see table 7).

	1910-1914	1915-1919		1910-1914	1915-1919
	%	%		%	%
A. Consumer goods			B. Investment goods		
Tobacco, food, drinks	34	30	Construction	10	12
Cloth, textile	14	15	Fuel	3	4
Other consumer goods	19	16	Machinery	6	7
			Transportation	11	11
Total	67	61	Total	30	34

Table 7 – Gold Coast imports from the UK 1910–1924 (% of total value).  
Source: HOWARD, R. – *Colonialism* (table, 3.3:79) and KAY, G. B. – *Political* (table 20b).

Like in the First World War, the shipping difficulties during WWII affected both colonial imports and exports of foodstuffs and raw materials to Britain and her allies. The situation was made even more difficult with the imposition of import controls, introduction of taxes, increase in customs duties, and depreciation of the sterling in terms of the American dollar. There was hence a need for greater economy of hard currency and gold. In the Gold Coast, and as a result of war conditions on its revenue, Governor A. Hodson, writing to the Secretary of State, expressed confidence for the people's

acceptance of additional taxation as a contribution to the defence of the Empire, which was fixed at 5% on all import duties, in addition to 50% increase duty on gold, together with an export tax on cocoa and an export duty on manganese.

The Colonial Secretary, Lord Moyne (February 1941-February 1942), sent a circular in June 1941, stressing the war time priorities and the need

To regulate the use of resources in the interest of both the general war effort and the well-being and development of the colonial empire; to reduce consumption by taxation direct or indirect; to save actual material resources in personnel; to organize propaganda for various schemes, and to encourage various gifts and free interest loans<sup>15</sup>.

The whole basis of this circular or economic policy was the need to increase the flow of colonial supplies for war purposes and to reduce to minimum colonial demands on the general resources of labour and materials. Since neither the annual colonial reports nor the Colonial Office List could be printed during the war years, the 1946 Colonial Office List contains data as regards each colony for the war period. In fact, colonial exports to the UK from Nigeria rose from 59.48% in 1939 to remain above 80% during the war period, those of Sierra Leone from 61.14% in 1939 to 82.87% in 1945, and from Gambia from 30.61% to 91.82% respectively, but in the Gold Coast, they fell from 75.88% in 1939 to 31.71% in 1941 before rising back to 79.38%

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<sup>15</sup> Cmd 6299: Circular from the Colonial Secretary to Colonial Governors regarding aspects of colonial policy in wartime, June 1941. 14. Cmd 6174, 1940: Statement of Policy. The emphasis was rather on the improvement of the economic and social conditions and on the amelioration of the means of their achievement. This involved the need to increase revenue through taxation, to improve government machinery, to reinforce the personnel for the development services altogether for a balanced development and proper standards in the administrative, technical and social services.

the following year. UK monopoly over the West African export market was obvious, for it could enable Great Britain to sell to hard currency zones and increase her dollar earnings. With regard to imports from the UK, Gambia's imports rose from 46.96% in 1939 to 58.09% in 1941 and then decreasing to 49.33% by 1944; similar decreasing trend characterized Sierra Leone and Gold Coast imports from the UK: 74.11% in 1939 down to 56.63% in 1945, and 67.75% in 1939 to 59.44% in 1944 respectively. In Nigeria, imports were almost above 55% for Nigeria during the war period<sup>16</sup> (see tables 8, 9, 10 and 11).

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Exports							
Total	320,504	307,298	290,087	133,264	205,614	377,993	773,734
UK	98,137	300,119	282,148	122,032	166,014	335,857	710,450
% to UK	30.61	97.66	97.26	91.57	80.77	88.85	91.82
Imports							
Total	197,075	278,369	428,303	895,239	1,241,839	1,052,718	
UK	92,559	123,283	248,830	369,335	700,223	519,381	
% from UK	46.96	44.28	58.09	41.25	56.38	49.33	

Table 8 – Gambia exports and imports in value (£).

Source: CO List 1946, p. 105.

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Exports							
Total	2,207,892	2,147,816	1,592,608	1,333,171	994,642	1,446,003	1,635,281
UK	1,350,026	1,971,511	1,406,186	923,088	922,043	1,305,532	1,355,251
% to UK	61.14	91.79	88.29	69.24	22.70	90.28	82.87

<sup>16</sup> British National Archives, Kew, CO 96/765/31080/1940, secret from Government House, Accra, Governor, Hodson 25 October 1939 to Malcolm MacDonald Colonial Secretary. And CO 96/772/310/80/1942, Gold Coast Governor to Viscount Cranborne, 6 March 5 1942, and Colonial Office List of 1946.

Imports							
Total	1,666,890	2,502,631	3,814,391	4,954,774	6,227,100	5,484,203	3,718,162
UK	1,235,395	1,865,826	2,450,181	2,789,254	4,144,513	3,010,536	2,105,683
% from UK	74.11	74.55	64.23	56.29	66.55	54.89	56.63

Table 9 – Sierra Leone exports and imports in value (£): total and from UK.

Source: CO List 1946, p. 199.

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Exports						
Total	16,235,288	14,323,842	13,548,409	12,550,174	12,631,282	12,314,200
UK	12,320,235	6,450,817	4,297,377	9,963,505	9,738,101	7,884,109
% to UK	75.88	45.03	31.71	79.38	77.09	64.02
Imports						
Total	10,626,284	7,631,283	6,268,606	9,877,298	10,167,566	9,828,094
UK	7,199,842	4,640,607	3,739,084	5,787,290	6,391,034	5,841,938
% UK	67.75	60.81	59.64	58.59	62.85	59.44

Table 10 – Gold Coast exports and imports in value (£): total and from UK.

Source: CO List 1946, p. 118.

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Exports							
Total	10,468,732	11,603,687	13,782,579	14,523,814	15,151,562	17,189,289	18,050,873
UK	6,227,127	9,289,546	11,340,122	12,116,020	12,484,125	13,986,035	12,859,377
% to UK	59.48	80.05	82.27	83.42	82.39	81.36	71.23
Imports							
Total	6,757,136	7,478,818	6,505,116	10,489,502	12,418,239	15,747,755	13,583,118
UK	3,648,021	4,328,731	3,695,241	4,923,297	7,436,562	7,958,142	7,935,057
% UK	53.98	57.87	56.80	45.93	59.88	50.53	58.41

Table 11 – Nigeria exports and imports in value (£): total and from UK.

Source: CO List 1947, p. 262.

The evident British monopoly over West African trade can indicate a stronger integration in the imperial production pattern in which the West African colonial economies would remain subordinated to that of the UK, and their development would considerably depend on the productive and absorptive capacities of the British market in the difficult post-war years. Such integration had already been conceived in the framework of colonial development and welfare, for which machinery had to be established for the elaboration and implementation of development plans.

The policy of Colonial Development and Welfare of 1940 elaborated before the War as a revision of Colonial Development Fund of 1929, and whose announcement was made in February 1940, could be regarded as strategic for imperial purposes. The 1929 policy, which provided for the spending of £1m a year, actually allocated only £8,875,083 out of an estimated expenditure of £19,284,536 until 1940, out of which £1,149,699 for West Africa, spent exclusively on schemes most relevant to metropolitan industrial interests<sup>17</sup>. This could but only comfort the Treasury's narrow conception of the scheme as being exclusively a means to provide financial return on investment, which would guarantee both uninterrupted supplies of raw materials and soft markets for British manufacturers. Though this 1940 Act could be regarded as an expression of a change of opinion in the

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<sup>17</sup> Colonial Office Colonial Development Advisory Committee: *Eleventh and Final Report*, Chairman: Alan Rae Smith, 14 October 1940. By 1929, the Colonial Office Secretary had to declare in the House of Commons that such investment «will contribute not only to the welfare of the inhabitants of the colonies concerned, but also, both directly in orders for the equipment of railways and other public works, and indirectly in the general expansion of trade and to the creation of much needed employment in this country», Hansard, July 12, 1929, cols. 1299, 1300 quoted in NICULESCU, Barbu – *Colonial Planning. A comparative Study*. Lisbon: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1958, p. 59. Hansard, May 21st 1940, col. 41, Debates at the House of Commons in 1940 by the Secretary of State who admitted that «those, whose are familiar with the debates of 1929, will remember that even then, the primary purpose of our legislation (Colonial Development Fund) was not to help colonial development for its own sake, but in order to stimulate that development, mostly to bring additional work to idle hand in this country. It was devised as part of our scheme to solve our own unemployment problem».



official circles, a departure from *laissez faire* and adoption of Keynesian principle of state intervention, it did not indicate any expressed intention to grant self-government or independence to the colonial people; the emphasis was rather on the improvement of the economic and social conditions and on the amelioration of the means of their achievement as a precondition to the transfer of power. This involved the need to increase revenue through taxation, to improve government machinery, and to reinforce the personnel for the development services. Again, the new arrangements of 1940, which increased assistance to colonial governments up to a maximum of £5 million a year for development and welfare work, and an annual sum for colonial research up to a maximum of £500,000, could not be entirely spent. Actually the total expenditure spent from 1940 CD&W sources for all the colonies until 1945 amounted to £2,860,000 out of the £20m which the Act would have permitted<sup>18</sup>. At the regional level, a Development Adviser, Noel Hall, former Director of the British National Institute of Social Economic Research, was appointed in 1943 to work under the supervision of the Resident Minister; he was to advise the colonial governments on coordinated planning in West Africa as a whole. The Resident Minister regarded the primary producers as constituting the chief interest or first priority in the development programmes because of their role in the export production and local consumption and of their being the backbone of the social and economic structures<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> NICULESCU, Barbu – *Colonial Planning*, p. 62 quoted from Hansard January 24th 1945, col. 2153.

<sup>19</sup> British National Archives, Kew, CO 554/132/33718/1943, memo by Resident Minister Secret, West African Council (CM), 4, 42 Feb 1943.

## **Propaganda policy and control over Colonial Students**

Unlike WWI, WWII was more complex in that besides considerations for military, economic, and financial resources to meet the war effort, propaganda work had to be elaborated and directed at counteracting the enemies' hostile propaganda and increasing US criticism of British imperial domination and at securing the colonial peoples' loyalty and assistance as well as counteracting the prevailing sense of defeatism among British intellectuals and convincing them of the necessity of assisting in the development of the colonial people in the post-war period. Winston Churchill reminded Swinton of not allowing any US Office of War information outposts maintained in British colonies to engage in internal propaganda except at the request of the Colonial government, and that on external propaganda, US officers would have to work in association with, and under the direction of British propaganda authorities to avoid misunderstanding of false rumours<sup>20</sup>.

On the other hand, in order to meet challenge to their declining imperial domination in the interwar period, British officials decided to create in 1934 an institution, the British Council, similar to the French Cultural Centre, which saw its activities extended from Europe to the colonial Empire by 1941 with a view to securing effective colonial collaboration through cultural westernization and colonial socialization. Such enterprise was possible thanks to T.K. Lloyd, then Secretary of State for the colonies (May 1940–December 1940) while being Chairman of the Council as well. Subsequently, a Joint-Standing Committee was created in November 1941 under the chairmanship of Angus Gillan, Head of the Council's Empire Division with repre-

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<sup>20</sup> British National Archives, Kew, PREM 3/502/2. Printed for the War Cabinet June 1942, W. P. (42) 245, June 8 1942. Secret from W. S. C., WAR CABINET: the Minister Resident in West Africa, Directive by the Prime Minister.

representatives from the Colonial Office, the British Council and the Ministry of Information<sup>21</sup>. Given the urgency, C.A.F. Dundas, British Council officer, submitted a long report after his visit to West Africa in December 1941, in which he recommended two essential activities: informing and guiding West Africans through newspapers and institutes, and developing cultural and educational work through the production of films and textbooks. The urgency for such activities was closely related to the need to secure Britain's interest from subversive, anti-imperial and anti-British ideas that were prevalent among West African students, who, Dundas feared, «would fall into bad hands and come back to the West Coast with strong views of colour discrimination or with peculiar or dangerous political ideas»<sup>22</sup>. Such fear had already been expressed by the West African Colonial governors at their first West African Conference in Lagos in 1939, they felt the need for better control and a real intelligent propaganda as opposed to *laissez faire* both in the interest of the students and their respective country. Effectively, they recommended control over the institutions to which they were giving some financial assistance, namely the Victoria League, Aggrey House and the West African Students Union, the latter being particularly subjected to unopposed propaganda with left wing orientation.

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<sup>21</sup> British National Archives, Kew, BW 2/213/1940–1946. *Colonial Policy*, extract from report 11.5.1944. The Ministry of Information was re-established in September 1939 and abolished in 1946. The Colonial Office representatives comprised: C. M. W. Cox, K. W. Blaxter, A. B. Cohen, N. T. B. Sabine, V. H. Boyse and A. R. Thomas, while the British Council was represented by M. H. Corton, N. R. Seymour, and Prof. M. W. Macmillan; but the Ministry of Information nominated only H. V. Usill. The Secretariat was under the management of H. W. Davidson and L. Ward Price from the Colonial Office and British Council respectively.

<sup>22</sup> British National Archives, Kew, BW 77/1 1942–1945 report by Dundas or BW 2/318 CAF Dundas' Report on a tour of West Africa, November 1941–March 1942. Subsequently, Prof. Macmillan, a former member of the Intelligence Service of the BBC, and a member of the Colonial Office Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, accepted appointment as a senior representative for West Africa, with headquarters in Accra. He strongly advocated education for the colonial people, and establishment of libraries in each of the West African colonies.

In conformity with Colonial Office policy, control over West African colonial students was entrusted to local committees with the task of giving information and advice to parents and students regarding higher education abroad, but colonial students suspected their respective colonial government of trying to restrict higher education for them. Their suspicion and opposition became even stronger in 1941 when the Secretary of State for the Colonies sent a circular to the colonial governments as a measure of wartime necessities urging them to restrict granting scholarships and to prevent students from coming to the UK. The publication of the circular in Public Notices in the West African colonies caused disappointment and reaction from the public, namely the educated category. In Nigeria, a mass meeting resolution rejected the Colonial Office conditions which they regarded as «an abridgment of rights of African subjects and a grave embargo to educational progress». In Sierra Leone, the educated public found it difficult to understand why colonial officials envisaged to prevent philanthropic associations and individuals from assisting colonial students, and even to deny them admission into the UK. The Colonial Office ban was not welcomed in some religious circles in Great Britain either; the Anglo-African Committee of the Church Assembly Missionary Council formulated an outline plan for an African student centre in London under Christian auspices, which would be representative of cooperation and partnership between the Church in Africa and in Britain. For the Dean of Westminster, colonial students would be the future leaders of Africa in both Church and State and consequently, the Church should help them to go back home as friends and not enemies of the Church and the State with an anti-British complex. He argued that students with Christian up-bringing would expect at least hospitality from the country of their missionaries<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> British National Archives, Kew, CO 876/19/11002/2/1942-1947, Nigeria Colonial Governor to Colonial Secretary 20.4.1943; and CO 876/19/11002/2/1942-1943, note

Following the reaction in West Africa and in Britain, the Colonial Secretary thought it advisable to withdraw the ban on colonial students, and advised the Colonial governments to co-operate with J. L. Keith, the Director of Colonial Scholars at the Colonial Office, and the Victoria League for placing colonial students in the various university institutions. Transfer of responsibility over colonial students in February 1942 from the Crown agents to Keith and then to the Social and Welfare Department of the Colonial Office during wartime without preventing other voluntary associations from being involved, could, according to H. M. Grace, Secretary of the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain (1940–1950), be resented by colonial students, but the Welfare Department continued with such a task even after the war<sup>24</sup>. West African students in Great Britain totalled 345 compared to 213 in the institutions of higher education in British West Africa with a population of 25 million inhabitants<sup>25</sup>. The very low figure can be explained by the fact that apart from Fourah Bay College, a missionary-owned college in Sierra Leone, West Africans had to wait until 1927 to have Achimota College in the Gold Coast and 1932 to see Yaba Higher College in Nigeria, all of them providing limited university courses. University development was slow because of the prevailing *laissez faire* philosophy in education, the West African Colonial Governors' misconception and the apathy of British universities towards colonial education and their exclusive interest in the colonial school examination market, in which the 'Made in Eng-

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26.11.1943 Sierra Leone. See also British National Archives, Kew, CO 876/23/11002/11 1942-1943, CO 876/23/11002/11 1942-1943, *The African Student in England*, note by A. Gardiner and H. M. Grace.

<sup>24</sup> British National Archives, Kew, CO 876/69/11002/12/1944-1946 note by Mahonney 31.5.1944.

<sup>25</sup> Cmd 6655, 1945, *Report of the Elliot Commission on Higher Education in West Africa*, 1945, and Cmd 9515 Inter University Council report. Locally, there were 98 in the Gold Coast, 95, in Nigeria, 20 in Sierra Leone making a total of 213; In Great Britain, 17, 178, 36 respectively and 4 from Gambia, totalling 345.

land' became the hallmark for certificates and degrees, and the local degrees being under-evaluated. On the other hand, undoubtedly, British officials' conception of colonial relations and transfer of power in the very remote future, «generations or even centuries», as expressed in 1938 by the Secretary of State for the colonies, M. McDonald (1938-1940) determined the rate of employment of West African graduates and even their exclusion from colonial government senior services, affecting consequently university development. The latter became unexpectedly an urgent issue so that A. Dawe, Assistant-Under-Secretary in charge of the West and East African Departments at the Colonial Office, assured the members of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies (ACEC) set up in 1923 for the African colonies and then extended to the colonies in 1927, that Malcolm Hailey, the Secretary of State's Political Adviser, was asked to examine the question with a view to bringing it to some practical issue when he left for Africa after the outbreak of the world war<sup>26</sup>. The Education Committee resolved that it would be retrograde to shut down the West African colleges even on a temporary basis given the difficulties of the war, and considered the appointment of an authoritative commission to enquire into their development as an urgent matter. This urgency would involve the creation of an academic body of 'intellectual partnership' representative of all UK universities and the Colonial Empire, with power to award degrees in the colonies<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> British National Archives, Kew, CO 847/18/47029/1940: Education Committee meeting 12.12.1940.

<sup>27</sup> British National Archives, Kew, CO 885/106: Sub-committee meetings: 15.5.1943 and 20.5.1943. This body was the Inter University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies set up in 1946 following the recommendations made by the Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies of 1943. A. Burns proposed Kobina Aku Korsah, Barrister and Solicitor, member of the both the Legislative and Executive Councils of the Gold Coast; in Sierra Leone, Dr. E. A. Taylor Cummings (MBE), Medical Officer, was recommended by Sir the governor, Hubert Stevenson, because of his active interest in local education, and in Nigeria, K. Kuti, a graduate from Durham, Headmaster of Abeokuta Grammar School and President of the Nigerian Teachers' Union, was recommended by the Colonial Governor in June 1943 despite Rev. Hoover's objection.

Despite the wartime conditions and difficulties to set up a fully constituted commission on higher education in West Africa, Colonial Office officials: G. Gater, Permanent Under-Secretary, A. Dawe, Assistant Under-Secretary, and C. M. Cox, Educational Adviser, had some difficulty in choosing the right chairman, and finally after several discussions, Walter Elliot was selected among prominent political and academic figures. With regard to African representation on the Elliot Commission, and in response to the Secretary of State's request, each of the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Sierra Leone colonial governors nominated one African member to the commission. Finally, the Colonial Office approved the constitution of the Elliot Commission with 14 members two of whom overlapped with the Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, the task of which concerned the formulation of principles for colonial higher education and the means of assistance by British universities<sup>28</sup>. By 1945, the Elliot Commission submitted two reports: a Majority Report, supported by the West African members and recommending a university college in each of Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, whereas a Minority Report restricted the organisation to a federal university college in Nigeria together a regional college in each one of them supported by A. Creech Jones, future Under-Secretary of State 1945-1946, and Secretary of State from 1946-1950. The Colonial Office option for the minority report was to lead in the immediate post-war period to African reaction and official concessions due to political considerations.

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<sup>28</sup> British National Archives, Kew, CO 847/21/47029/1943: initially Colonial Office officials thought of Ormsby-Gore (later Lord Harlech) former Colonial Secretary (1936-1938), and B. Mouat Jones as chairman and vice-chairman respectively. After the former's refusal, other names were suggested: Lord De La Warr, Lord Eustace Percy, Sir E. Grigg, Will Spens and R. Lumley, Prof. Hill. For more details see FEWZI, Borsali – *The Report of the Elliot Commission on Higher Education in West Africa 1943-1945*. Laboratoire de Langues, Literature et Civilisation et Histoire en Afrique. In African Issues Décembre 2004, Oran: Dar el Gharb Editions.

## **Wars and Political Concessions**

Though British colonial officials neither intended nor were they ready to proceed with constitutional reforms towards self-government in the near future, they were pressed to make concessions as a result of US pressure for self-determination (President Wilson in WWI and Roosevelt's Atlantic Charter in WWII), and in response to pan African and colonial claims. The Allied asserted by 1919 their aim to inaugurate a new and just world order, which US President Wilson, British pacifists, socialists and colonial reformers hoped, would end the Great Powers' rivalry: it would consist in putting all colonies under international supervision, and at the same time developing new forms of administration for the backward peoples with a view to preventing colonial exploitation and establishing effective trusteeship. The change in conception was also the result of challenges from the Russian Revolution, whose revolutionary communist leaders, Lenin then Stalin strongly advocated anti-colonialism openly and actively, and incited nationalist organizations to open revolt against the colonial powers. Less strong challenge was expressed by Pan Africanists by the end of the War when they met in a congress in Paris in 1919 to draw up resolutions to send to the Paris Peace Conference; their speeches were reformist and a little bit critical of colonial rule; their resolution dealt with land ownership, capital, concessions, labour, education, health, and the possibility of associating natives in the colonial government. At the local level, the National Congress of British West Africa of March 1920 in Accra was more radical than that of the 1897 Aborigines' Rights Protection Society (ARPS); its resolutions expressed the political and economic grievances of the elite: demand for greater African participation in the colonial administration and in the colonial economy. In order to consolidate the traditional political framework on one hand, and secure stability of the colonial system on the other, the Colonial Office had to introduce



constitutional reforms immediately after WWI; while keeping a majority of officials and favouring chiefs, they initiated the elective principle for a few educated members in the Legislative Councils. During WWII, pressure was even stronger: increasing and more pressing claims for participation in the public services on the part of both of the West African Youth and Pan African Movements, under the influence and leadership of rather left wing ideology<sup>29</sup>. Colonial Secretary Cranborne conceded the right to admit Africans into the Executive Council, which was regarded by F. Pedler, Colonial Office official, as having a considerable value abroad given US pressure for self-determination. On the other hand, and though further constitutional reforms were granted in 1943 providing Accra town council with its own elected majority, Burns' suggestion to introduce an unofficial majority in the Legislative Council was met with opposition from the Colonial Office until 1946 when the Burns' Constitution made the Gold Coast the first African colony to have such an unofficial majority, one year after Nigeria had its Richard's constitution that was amended in 1947.

## Conclusion

West Africans had to fight for an ideal which was not theirs and contribute for the consolidation and defence of a declining Empire in WWI and WWII respectively. Their contributions were far beyond what the British Colonial Office and British Treasury could give in

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<sup>29</sup> In 1936 the Nigerian Youth Movement was formed with Samuel Akinsanya, H. O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli and Dr. J. C. Vaughn at its head. In 1939, a conference under the name of *African People, Democracy and World Peace* was held in London, organized by several groups: the league of Coloured People, founded in 1931 by Dr. Moody from the West Indies; the Negro Welfare Association and the International Service Bureau, founded by G. Padmore in 1937. The Conference condemned the Mandated system and stressed the right of the Colonial people for self-determination.

return. External foreign pressure and colonial claims forced the Colonial Office to reconstruct the conception of colonial relations from trusteeship to partnership, and concede some constitutional reforms while keeping the balance of power in favour of an official majority and in favour of a dominating group of chiefs among the minority of unofficial membership on one hand, and consolidating furthermore the integration of the West African colonial economies and higher educational institutions in the imperial production pattern on the other hand.

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