

PATRICE MANDENG

**Auswirkungen der deutschen Kolonialherrschaft in Kamerun: Die Arbeitskräftebeschaffung in den Südbezirken Kameruns während der deutschen Kolonialherrschaft 1884—1914**

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The apologists of colonialism and imperialism are gradually losing their monopoly of scholarship and are being forced to contend with views diametrically opposed to theirs. More and more of the victims of colonial domination are beginning to examine the whole colonial enterprise and as may be expected, the account presented by those who suffered economic exploitation and racial injustice is different from that given by those who organized the system or profited from it. Patrice Mandeng, professor of history at Bremen University, is himself a Cameroonian and is concerned in this book with the recruitment of labour in Southern Cameroon during the German colonial rule. Mandeng's main thesis is that the recruitment of labour for the colonial economy was the decisive factor in the disintegration of the subsistence economy and the traditional social structure in Cameroon. The author examines in the first part of the book the motives for Germany's colonial conquests and comes to the conclusion that despite the importance of other factors, the economic motive was the predominant factor in the colonial enterprise.

After the creation of the German Empire in 1871, there was an economic boom but this was soon followed by the serious crisis of 1873—74 which inaugurated a period of stagnation lasting for almost twenty years (p. 7). But Germany's industrial production was developed still further. External trade became therefore more and more important for German economy and Germany had to ensure for herself markets abroad. A section of the German bourgeoisie contended, using Britain as an example, that Germany must have colonies if she were to continue her economic development. The capacity of the colonies to absorb industrial products, as experience would later show, was fairly limited but the colonies had an even more important role: to provide the raw materials needed by the expanding industrial economy. The more industrialized the capitalist state became, the greater became its need for raw materials and this in turn meant a more intensive exploitation of the colonies for raw materials such as cotton, rubber, wood, cocoa, tobacco etc. The importance of the raw materials for the German economy furnished the motive for securing control over the colonies which produced them.

Now, the economic explanation of the colonial domination is generally rejected by many authors, especially Europeans and when it is presented, as Professor Mandeng does, with support from Lenin's theory of imperialism, then many find it easy to reject because they do not accept some other theory of Lenin and his followers. Yet it would appear that no other theory is sufficient to explain the European colonization of Africa. Certainly, nobody can pretend today that the Europeans went to Africa in order to spread their culture or religion or to help their unfortunate African brothers in their struggle with nature. Mandeng examines some of the non-economic motives for colonization but on closer look they all turn out to be mere justifications for economic exploitation (pp. 16—24).

'The methods used in recruiting labour in Cameroon under the German colonial rule show colonialism in all its greed and cruelty. Mandeng illustrates these methods by examining the ways in which labour was secured for three sectors of the colonial economy: transportation of goods, plantations and construction of railways.

Traditional subsistence economy did not provide sufficient labour for the projects which interested the colonialists. The African who worked on his own farm in order to provide for the needs of his family did not feel any compelling need to work for the newly arrived strangers whose behaviour could only be described as devilish. The new "masters" therefore decided to resort to force if this was the only way the African could be made to work for the Europeans. After all, they had not travelled all the way from their home in order to look at the Africans and their way of life. Labour was necessary if they were to obtain the profit which had attracted them to these strange areas. In this endeavour, the colonial administration and the plantation owners worked hand in hand. The former sent troops to capture the required number of workers and the latter paid the agreed commission (pp. 76—77).

The most brutal methods were used in obtaining labourers. For instance, soldiers or persons dressed as such would seize women in a village and keep them until some men were found to be exchanged for the poor ladies (p. 86). Sometimes, an official would go to a locality, recruit persons ostensibly for carrying goods to the coast. Once these men reached the coast, they would be arrested and put on a boat and sent to work on plantations (p. 87). A German missionary, stationed at Buea had this to say on the methods used in recruiting labour:

„Nicht selten wurden sie (die Männer) durch Soldaten zu allen Tages- und Nachtzeiten in ihren Hütten, auf dem Feld, unterwegs, überhaupt wo man ihrer habhaft werden konnte, eingefangen, oft tüchtig durchgeprügelt und den Pflanzungen als Arbeiter zugewiesen“ (p. 88).

The inhuman methods used in obtaining labourers led to more and more resistance on the part of the Cameroonians, and above all, to the realization that they had been reduced to objects which served only to increase the profit of the plantation owners whose interest were not the same as those of the Africans.

The inhuman methods of recruitment naturally resulted in inhuman working conditions on the plantations. One had to work from six in the morning till six in the evening. Added to this, was the cane which was used to "stimulate" workers in order to achieve stated production norms. The sanitary conditions on the farms were so bad that epidemics frequently broke out. Death was also a frequent visitor to these plantations. Women and children were not spared forced labour on the European farms (p. 95).

The terrible story of life on the plantations was equally matched by working conditions and methods of recruiting labour for construction work on the railways. Here the colonial administration was even more interested. Villages near where the lines were being constructed were forced to feed the labourers who had been brought in from other areas. But what justification did the German colonial masters put forward for such wicked and barbarous behaviour?

The evolutionary theory, especially in its Darwinian version, which stated that there was a process of selection in nature by which only the fittest creatures survived and the weak ones disappeared, provided a convenient ideological support for the colonial enterprise. This theory would be used to justify every

barbarous act of oppression as a natural act in the struggle for survival. In the relationship between colonizer and the colonized, social darwinism took the form of racialist ideology and assumptions of white supremacy.

To the German colonialists, the African whom they (just like many present-day Germans) insultingly called “Neger” or “Eingeborener” appeared to be a creature of definite inferior qualities. One Dr. Friederich Hey who had worked in the Gold Coast and the Cameroons and therefore (like many present-day German) considered himself an expert on Africans, described the character of the African as follows:

“Sorglose Trägheit, rohe Sinnlichkeit, Eitelkeit, Prunkliebe, Leidenschaftlichkeit, Rücksichtlosigkeit, ja Grausamkeit; daneben auch Gutmütigkeit und tierische Anhänglichkeit und teilweise Unterwürfigkeit, Liebe zum Lärm, zur Musik — soweit sie diesen Namen verdient — und zum Spiel. Geistige Bedürfnisse hat der Neger nicht. Wissensdurst ist ihm fremd . . ., Sorge für die Zukunft kennt er nicht und hat er Gelegenheit Geld zu verdienen . . ., so weiß er es nicht zu verwerten. Wirklich zuverlässige Menschen, denen man ohne Aufsicht, in irgendeiner Weise eine Art Vertrauensposten überlassen könnte, gibt es unter ihnen nicht. Die sittliche Kraft geht ihnen ab, so daß sie, selbst wenn sie wollten — und der gute Wille ist manchmal zu finden — nicht könnten. Das Verantwortlichkeitsgefühl kann in ihnen, durch die Folge des wilden ungezügelten Lebens erzeugten Verhärtung und Verrohung des Gefühls nicht aufkommen.” (p. 142).

The same “expert” generously concedes that the African too has a good memory but just in case his readers run away with the idea that the African and the European have the same capacity to think, he adds that when one has to use the mind to conceptualize or to research then the African falls by the wayside; his selfishness and indolence limit his ability to think logically (p. 142). Hey’s opinion was in no way unique. Similar opinions, all describing the African as a child, as a wild animal who needs the strict control of the European have been reproduced by Mandeng (pp. 143—146).

The complete disrespect of the African, as the author correctly states, was nothing but the primitive racialism of the ruling class in Germany which determined their relations to the colonized peoples. Such crass racialism was of course in the service of the system of exploitation which had been established in the colonies. How widespread such racialism was, is shown in a parliamentary debate in 1908 where an MP, Werner could declare without any contradiction that:

“Man muß berücksichtigen, daß der Eingeborene von Grund aus ein anderer Mensch ist wie wir, ein Mensch mit Sklaveninstinkten, kein Willensmensch, sondern ein Triebmensch . . .” (p. 144).

And in the same debate, the heir to the reigning prince of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, expressed his conviction that left alone, the black race would never achieve anything worthwhile and that it needed the leadership of the white race (p. 145).

With feelings of inherent superiority and their unlimited arrogance, the German colonialists expected the Africans to be only too happy and willing to work for Europeans, the members of a superior race. When such expectations were disappointed, the African was described as lazy and in need of education by the master race about the virtue of labour.

The heavy burden placed on the traditional economy by the colonial system and the disastrous effect on the social structure by the intrusion of the Europeans were

far reaching. On the political level, the chief saw himself degraded from being a natural ruler of his people, to the level of a colonial civil servant. He no longer gave orders as of right and in the interest of his people but on the authority of the colonial regime. The German colonial administration went so far as to require the chiefs to wear German uniforms on ceremonial occasions (p. 168). Moreover, the chief was forced to ensure the recapture of workers who had run away from the harsh conditions on the plantations. In the end, many chiefs could only retain office with the help of the colonial army. The corruption of the institution of chieftaincy, which was the cornerstone of the traditional political system, was an indication of the degree of disorganization wrought by the colonial system in Southern Cameroon.

The colonial economy implied the fundamental transformation, and in many cases, the destruction of the traditional economy. Where plantations were created, villages were destroyed (p. 173). Compulsory re-settlement, forced labour and expropriation were not exactly calculated to maintain or develop traditional structures. The colonial administration was interested in re-locating villages to places along the main lines of communication so that the villagers could be easily controlled and thus integrated into the colonial system. For the Cameroonians this meant clearing new fields, building new houses and, worst of all, being subject to the constant raids of the colonial soldiers. Many persons escaped and went to live in the forests where the authority of the colonial officials did not extend (p. 174).

The desertion of the villages meant that traditional farms could not be maintained. Not only were the men of the villages no longer available but also the women and children were forced to work in colonial enterprises (p. 177). The effect of this enforced absence on the family structure can be easily imagined. Often, husband and wife would work on different plantations and it was sometimes forbidden to have a family on a plantation.

The depopulation of Southern Cameroon as well as many parts of Africa may be attributed to practices resulting from the colonial economy and not only to endemic diseases as some would have us believe. Moreover, one should not forget the early direct slave trade which took millions of Africans to America.

Mandeng sees the genesis of underdevelopment in the introduction of the colonial system which transformed the traditional economy from an independent economy satisfying the needs of the inhabitants of the particular area into a dependent economy, supplying raw materials to the capitalist economy in Europe (p. 184). The author ends this interesting book with a quick look at a certain number of theories on underdevelopment. He rightly states that some of these theories mistake the effects of underdevelopment for its causes. For instance, some theories point out the enormous differences in stages of technological development between the developed capitalist states and the so-called underdeveloped states. But they do not really explain the causes of such differences. They do not mention the brakes put on the development of productive forces in these states and the consequent disorganization of their economies. As the author correctly points out, underdevelopment must be considered as a historical process and the colonial period must be given the importance it deserves in any discussion on development. To understand the process of underdevelopment, one must not consider the colonies in isolation. One must consider the whole complex of relationship between the colonies and the colonial power.

One may disagree with Mandeng's main thesis but the outstanding qualities of his work cannot be denied. He presents us with a clear exposition of the colonial economy in a simple language, with just the necessary amount of references. He makes no attempt to overwhelm the reader with superfluous footnotes and details as one often finds in books where the author has no viewpoint to express and hopes to make up for his lack of ideas by his industry in gathering materials.

The reviewer hopes that many German readers will look at the book themselves for nowhere is such a book more needed than in W. Germany where many persons, including scholars, seem to possess a fantastic ability for forgetting the colonial past and for overlooking the neo-colonialist present. Indeed, in some circles, it is considered a crime to describe West Germany as an imperialist state.

Mandeng's discussion on underdevelopment implies that we have left the period of direct colonialism for neo-colonialism. What he does not add (and this was not necessary for his thesis) is that if colonialism has changed its form, the main accompanying effects of colonial domination and slavery, i. e. racialist ideology and the notion of white supremacy, have on the other hand, remained at exactly the same level as in the period of 1884—1914. A look at the press and some scholarly works shows that there has been no visible progress since then. The same racialist arrogance and convictions of inherent superiority still prevail and the silly utterances of Hey and his like can be easily matched with statements from our contemporaries. The West German MP who on a return from a visit to South Africa declared that the smell of the African workers was not exactly that of Chanel (a French perfume) is surely not very more advanced than Werner (MP. in 1908).

The unchanged racialist ideology in many ways make it easy for many people to accept the unhealthy relations kept with the racialist republic of South Africa and the rebellious racist regime which has taken over power in Zimbabwe. In effect, both countries are carrying on what Mandeng tells us was done in the German colony of Cameroon.

Kwame Opoku

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**Legitimacy and Stability in Latin America. A Study of Chilean Political Culture**

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In der gegenwärtigen Entwicklungsländerforschung gibt es insbesondere in der marxistisch orientierten Dependenztheorie eine Tendenz zur ökonomistischen Be- trachtungsweise der Probleme der Länder der Dritten Welt. Dadurch ist bisweilen die Gefahr dogmatischer Verhärtungen insofern gegeben, als außerökonomischen Faktoren implizit oder explizit bei der Formulierung von Hypothesen, die den Sachverhalt der Unterentwicklung erklären sollen, Relevanz abgesprochen wird. Dies kann leicht dazu führen, potentiell explikative Variablen von vornherein zu eliminieren, ohne in den Begründungszwang für ihre Irrelevanz zu geraten.

Das vorliegende und zu besprechende Buch ist geeignet, hier Korrekturen anzu- bringen, indem es einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Auffüllung des heuristischen Re- servoirs möglicher Variablen leistet. Moreno intendiert die Herausarbeitung be-