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COLONIAL REFORMS, DECOLONISATION PROCESS AND POLITICAL CONFLICT IN SIERRA LEONE:

A Study of the Period between 1938 and 1967

Doctoral thesis

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Dedications

To my mother

To the memory of my father

To my little family: my gentle wife and little son

To my brothers, friends, colleagues and all those I have known

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Abbreviations

APC: The All People's Congress

CDWA: The Colonial Welfare and Development Act

CEA : Committee of Educated Africans

KPM: The Kono Progressive Movement

NCBWA: The National Congress of British West Africa

NCSL: The National Council of Sierra Leone

PNP: The People's National Party

SLIPM: The Sierra Leone Independence Progressive Movement

SLOS: The Sierra Leone Organisation Society

SLPP: The Sierra Leone People's Party

SLST: The Sierra Leone Selection Trust

SLYL: The Sierra Leone Youth League

UNF: The United National Front

UPP: The United Sierra Leone Progressive Party

WAYL: The West African Youth League

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INTRODUCTION

Though it is not the task of historians to predict the future,[1] historical research may certainly allow the avoidance of fatal mistakes. All fields are concerned. Mistakes committed in the economic, social, or political spheres serve as lessons for the future generations. Meanwhile, positive experiences can inspire and encourage them to draw appropriate genuine plans in the right direction. Both negative and positive aspects can bring about self-confidence, a condition very necessary in any process of a nation-building. The history of Europe, for example, is certainly different from that of Africa in a variety of ways. However, they essentially deal with the human being and his human experiences whether in Europe, Africa, or elsewhere. All human beings, who are in fact the actors of history, possess similar innate mental and psychological characteristics in a way that makes their historical human experiences similar when considered from a wider view.[2] Thus, the study of history of any country or people has benefits. Eventually, constructive historical research alone allows the future generations to discover the positive as well as the negative aspects of their history.

Within this outlook, the study of the period of decolonisation and the consequent long-lasting political conflicts in Africa rises as an important area of

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[1] - There is a traditional view widely endorsed by historians that "Historians do not claim to know anything about the future. They deal only with the past. Their periodisation of schemes aim at classifying historical phenomena without any presumption of forecasting future events." Ludwig Van Mises, *Theory and History: An Interpretation of Social and Economic Evolution* (USA, Yale University Press, 1957) p. 169.

[2] - This is the field of macro-histories. "Macro- histories are comparative studies of cultures and civilizations through time and across the globe. They often attempt to explain how the modern world came into existence, and they also often utilize an evolutionary perspective." Book Review of Stephen Blaha's *The Rhythms of History: A Universal Theory of Civilizations* by, Auburn, New Hampshire: Pingree- Hill Publishing), by Mark Hall, *Human Nature Review,* Volume 3, 38, .2003,

concern whose discovery would undoubtedly eliminate some dark points in one's understanding of African history. Such a proper understanding of the real political grounds is usually seen as a prerequisite for good governance, which contemporary African leaders consider as an inevitable condition for the continent's progress. Yet, true research in this field is unfortunately not enough. As one Japanese scholar has recently observed,

> Few looked into the dynamics and conflict that comprise the political reality of sub-Saharan African states. Scholars must now examine how the current political system has developed, how it functions, and its interaction with various social subgroups. Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa have extremely complex political systems.[3]

Thus, the study of such complex political systems requires extensive scholarly efforts to understand them. Yet, African scholars have been usually concerned with reacting to Western writings in an attempt to present what they consider a true image of African cultural, social, economic, and political heritage. With an absence of democratic expression in most countries, many scholars have found it difficult to put forward objective, though sometimes hurting, explanations to African political plight different from their rulers' judgement.[4] Research itself on the histories of some important, though tiny, countries is unfortunately very scarce. For example, Sierra Leone, which was the main gateway to British colonial penetration in West Africa, is very timidly tackled as a case study, leaving students with very rare historical material. It is within this scope that this work has come to fulfil two main objectives. First, it hopes to contribute to the understanding of the present political difficulties in

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[3] - Sadaharu Kataoka, *The Plight of African States and Good Governance.* The Japan Institute of International Affairs, htlm p. 04.

[4] - In his *Heterologies: Discourse of the Other Michel* (1984), de Certeau clarifies that "if the procedures of science are not innocent, if their objectives depend on a political structure, then the discourse of science itself should acknowledge the function allotted it by society: to conceal what it claims to show", quote from Ian Buchanan, " Writing the Wrongs of History: de Certeau and Post-Colonialism", *Journal of the South Pacific Association forCommonwealth Literature and Language Studies*, N° 33, 1992, p. 07.

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Africa that are, without doubt, a real obstacle in the face of its development. It will attempt to expose and analyse the underlying origins and causes of conflict in modern African states, because political conflict has everywhere created crises that annihilated Africans' progress.[5] Second, this work hopes to enrich students and researchers' historical material on this tiny country that, nonetheless, played a prime role in British colonial policy in the region. An effort has been made to collect as much original information as possible to equip the interested readers or researchers with a minimum understanding of Sierra Leone politics during the period of the transfer of power. The use of primary sources certainly renders information more reliable.

Sierra Leone experienced recently a terrible civil war that shattered its state, population, and resources along nearly a decade beginning from 1991. The human atrocities of the war were a strong shock that made even researchers unable to discern its real causes.[6] Consequently, a number of historians and research groups, interested in the Sierra Leone case, have made extensive efforts in an attempt to find possible answers. Some of them referred to the issue of diamond exploitation and the interrelation of local and outside interests as a major force behind the quarrel.[7] Other researchers used sociology to suggest that social change and its consequent impact could be behind those hostilities. Others preferred to go back as far as to colonial

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[5] - As Antonio Gramsci has warned, "The crisis creates situations which are dangerous in the short run, since the various strata of the population are not all capable of orienting themselves equally swiftly, or of reorganising with the same rhythm". Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quitin Hoare and Geoffrey Newell Smith (International Publishers, 1978), p. 210.

[6] - For example a researcher in Sierra Leone's civil war noted the following: "Nothing in Sierra Leone's history since it gained independence from the UK on 27 April 1961 has suggested that it would endure nine years of brutal violence, and in many ways, total and uninterrupted war between state and society", Comfort Ero, *Sierra Leone's Security Complex,* The Centre of Defense Studies, King's College, University of London, 2000, p. 15.

[7] - Sierra Leone's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ibrahim Kamara, told the UN Security Council in July 2000: "The root of the conflict is and remains diamonds, diamonds and diamonds". David Keen*, Greedy Elites, Dwindling Resources, Alienated Youths: The Anatomy of Protracted Violence in Sierra Leon,* Http *p.* 02.

times to explain the nature of traditional rule and its role in shaping the minds of the actors of the civil war.[8] Meanwhile, observers argued that the limitations of British colonial policy were a major force behind in that it maintained unsolved problems dormant until they came eventually to the surface.[9] In addition, a number of historians insisted on the post-independence political complexities and S. Stevens's one-party regime with its widespread corruption in the ruling system.[10]

What is certain is that this war was an indication of extended and unsolved conflicts in the country since the days of the transfer of power from the hands of the British to Sierra Leoneans. Like Sierra Leone, political conflicts had everywhere in Africa accompanied the planting of those African states during the time of decolonisation. Therefore, the grounds of decolonisation on the principles of which the modern African states were constructed, and within the confines of which politicians were to play the political game, might without doubt explain why political conflict characterized the decolonising process and the post-colonial period that eventually led to serious impasses. Decolonisation was not only a process that led African colonies to become independent, but was also a set of grounds that produced political systems, political rulers, opposition parties, and political ethics. Therefore, political conflict in Africa can hardly be studied in isolation from decolonisation.

The concept of political conflict as used in this thesis can be clarified along the following guidelines. Political conflicts were disagreements between groups of African politicians aspiring to power. Their differing social, ethnic, ideological, and personal backgrounds were toughened by new clashes over state-related interests. In

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[8] - See for example a recent work about the issue by Richard Fanthorpe, "Neither Citizen nor Subject? *Lumpen* Agency and the Legacy of Native Administration in Sierra Leone", *African Affairs* (2001), 100, 363-386.

[9] - Comfort Ero, op. cit., p. 16

[10] - A writer has concluded: "The civil war that began in 1991 did occur in a vacuum, but was the culmination of the process of decay enunciated by poor from the time of Sir. Milton Margai to the present". Laurence Juma, "The Human Rights Approach to Peace in Sierra Leone: The Analysis of the Peace Process and Human Rights Enforcement in a Civil War Situation", *The Denv. Journal of International L. and Pol'y,* Vol. 30:3, 2003, p. 138.

the early phases of African rule, political conflict was a non-violent competition to secure comfortable dominant positions in the ruling system. Yet, it later turned to political violence in a number of territories.

Political conflict opposes political factions who seek power, but it is usually only a facade of other low-levelled conflicts. Political conflict is habitually fuelled by non-political backgrounds. Economic interests, social stratification, ethnic loyalties, and cultural or religious affiliations all may play decisive roles in the emergence and evolution of political quarrels. Going deeper, these lower-levelled conflicts are often situated in a wider historical context that goes beyond the current historical situation itself, like decolonisation in Africa.

A distinction will be made between conflict that oppose groups of different national identities, like the struggle between coloniser and colonised, and conflict between groups who belong to the same country or nationality[11] and share the same political system. The latter notion is adopted in the present thesis. Second, although conflict for power had existed long before, it was not until the emergence of nations[12], and hence nation-states, that political conflict took its clearest shape. Thus, any talk about political conflict in modern times is dealt with in relationship to the emergence of nation-states in Europe as fixed sovereign political entities exercising authority over limited geographical areas, and in which political groups conflicted for power.

In Africa, the background of political conflict originated in the early colonial attempts to replicate the European-type nation states in the African setting,

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[11] - Scholar Ludwig Von Mises puts forward that "if we wish to gain insight into the essence of nationality, we must proceed not from the nation but from the individual. We must ask ourselves what the national aspect of the individual person is and what determines his belonging to a particular nation. We then recognize immediately that this national aspect can be neither where he lives nor his attachment to a state. Ludwig von Mises, *Nation, State, and Economy: Contributions to the Politics and Historyof our Time,* Translated by Leland B. Yeager *1919, 1983,* p. 34.

[12] - Nation as a word is an old term, but the concept *nation* belong completely to the modern sphere of ideas of political and philosophical individualism; they win importance for real life only in modern democracy.
Ibid.

though with a major absence of the necessary foundations of nation-states.[13] Since political conflict results from attempts to dominate the ruling system and monopolise power, political conflict that concerned colonised Africans emerged only when the coloniser had made strong signs in the direction of a coming transfer of power. Before that, political affairs were strictly under colonial control. Therefore, it is safer to talk about political conflict with the start of the road towards self-government. Before that the prerequisite condition, the framework of the nation-state, was beyong the reach of Africans aspiring to power.

Nation-states were implemented at the end of colonial rule in Africa. Colonial rule in Africa extended along a very short period compared with the Continent's long history. The decline of colonialism was "fast -indeed, faster than anything the West had imagined; never before had such a complete reversal occurred with such rapidity".[14] However, it has done much to shape modern Africa in social, economic, and political spheres. Its legacies are expected to live far longer than it itself lived in Africa.

It is common knowledge that European powers, and the British in particular, became convinced of the inevitability of a coming transfer of power to Africans in the immediate years following the Second World War. The majority of colonial powers found that colonial rule was costly and that local elements should bear responsibility. Europeans, thus, began a serious quest for a proper protection of their economic positions in the colonies without bearing the burden of direct rule.[15] Therefore, the end of colonial rule was, on the one hand, the result of pressure on

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[13] - Martin Kilson views that without the new form of state "it is doubtful whether a colonial situation could exist…. The Establishment of a colonial state is the beginning of both modernization and political change, and the proper analysis of African political change must accordingly commence here". Martin Kilson, African political Change and the Modernisation Process, *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* N° 1, Vol. 4, 1963, p. 428.

[14] - According to one Historian, "colonialism was a very unstable system, marked by uncertainty and fear and maintained by violence and brute force." Tatah Mentan, op. cit p. 20.

[15] - There is a conviction among contemporary African historians and others that the main history of Africa "is a history of domination by western political economy, which created and now dominates and operates the modern world system". Ibid., p. 02.

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colonial rule, and on the other, a conviction among Europeans. In the words of one writer:

> As the costs of direct colonialism became too great for the colonising powers to bear, it required the conversion into formally sovereign independent states of areas that had previously been identified only as local administrative regions under overall imperial control – a process which, obviously enough, substantially increased the local element in their composition and management.[16]

Pursuing their strategic, economic, and cultural interests, Europeans had drawn new geographical borderlines regardless of social, ethnic, or cultural criteria. Huge differences were suddenly forced to temporarily co-exist under one central authority. Those differences were masked during the struggle against colonialism but they emerged within the structure of the nation-state that was completed by the process of decolonisation and led to inevitable political conflict. Consequently, post-colonial Africa witnessed a wave of military coups that showed the bitterness of political conflicts in the countries concerned.[17] The situation was worsened in a number of independent African countries into terrible civil wars.

As for the British after 1945, self-government was but a question of time. Consequently, they began thinking about what should they do before devolving power to Africans.[18] The African nationalists, in their turn, became aware that

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[16] - Christopher Clapham, *Sierra Leone: The Global-local Politics of State Collapse and Attempted Reconstruction,* Failed States Conference, Florence, 10- 14 April 2001, Lancaster University, p. 03

[17] - By 1989 more than sixty coups d'état were committed by African armies. Tatah Mentan, *Exiting The Whirlpool? Pan- Africanism Caught In The Crossfire Of Identity and Globalization,* Paper prepared for CODESRIA's 30 th Anniversary Conference, Dakar, 08- 11- 2003., p. 25.

[18] - Official declarations, like the following excerpt from a secret report, clearly attest on that conviction: "it is certain that there will be a rapid development of local self-government in all the principal colonial territories. Public declarations and actions by the members of all political parties in the United kingdom, coupled with the example of the more advanced countries and the criticisms of international public opinion, have set in motion aspirations of virtually irresistible force…the direction can hardly be altered, and we must assume that perhaps within a generation

independence would come within a foreseen time, and started thinking on how to rule the inherited regimes and even perhaps how to divide power among themselves. The British had already begun reforms before and during the war; reforms that were the real seeds of the consequent wave of decolonisation in the 1950's and the early 1960's. Hence, colonial reform that led to the transfer of power had played more or less an important role in giving form and content to political conflict in African countries. Decolonisation and political conflict were closely related phenomena.

Sierra Leone as an ex-British colony is an example that can illustrate the relationship between the basics of decolonisation policy and political conflict that led to state failure. In fact, inter-African conflict had been experienced long before the coming of the British. The different kingdoms and tribes that lived in those areas used to fight each other for economic, religious, and ethnic ends. Inside the one tribe or kingdom, there were conflicts over political, economic or religious leadership. After the establishment the Sierra Leone Colony beginning from 1787,[19] conflict between the new comers and the natives was inevitable. Both sides sought to secure their economic and political interests through direct clash when necessary. Yet, all these cannot be classified as political conflict. During the period of colonial rule, that is when the British declared a Protectorate on the Sierra Leone hinterland in 1896, and the borders of modern Sierra Leone were established with one central power, the situation began to be clarified. Political conflict now opposed Africans not to other Africans but to colonial expatriate rulers. At first, Sierra Leoneans like the other Africans felt deprived of their sovereignty, and hence decided to fight to regain it. However, the colonizer was quick to subdue them to colonial authority. Then began

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many of the principal territories of the Colonial Empire will have attained or be within sight of the goal of full responsibility for local affairs". CO 847/36/47228, *General Political Development of Colonial Territories*, 1947.

[19] - Sierra Leone began as a settlement in 1787 for the freed slaves in England and the loyal blacks during the American war. After a short experience of company rule, the settlement was declared a crown colony in 1808.

another period in which there was often opposition between educated Creoles and chiefs. Yet, the ruling system was closely in the hands of the British and there was absolutely no talk about who, from among the Africans, would dominate the ruling system. The question was merely what subservient role could either of the African groups play. Even when the British granted in 1924 a constitution that allowed representation for a limited number of Sierra Leoneans, political conflict was out of talk. Africans had a very little share in power, and could not think of a quarrel over power.

Real political conflict in the Sierra Leone context appeared when the British showed a sure intention to begin a transfer of power to Sierra Leoneans. In 1947, the British introduced constitutional proposals that promised Sierra Leoneans a majority, in the two key areas of the executive and legislative powers. Although such constitutional proposals were not enough to suggest complete independence, Sierra Leoneans conceived them as a start of the transfer of power that would be accomplished one day in the near future. Thus, political conflict came as an attempt to secure comfortable positions in the future system.

Unlike other colonies, Sierra Leone did not experience a major clash between colonial rulers and African nationalists. Sierra Leone's nationalism was so weak that it contributed very little to the coming of independence. It is particular to the case of Sierra Leone that it was the British, not Sierra Leoneans, who pressed for the advance of constitutional reform. This does not mean that Sierra Leoneans made no effort in the direction of reform, but their efforts were hardly considered when compared with larger colonies like Nigeria or the Gold Coast. The reason is that the Colony was too tiny to influence general colonial policy and had only to wait for the repercussions of developments in other colonies. Sierra Leone, therefore, appeared going slowly and peacefully towards a tranquil future.[20] However, the Colony was

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[20] - In the words of a scholar, "In short, if you were looking for an African state with the physical, social and economic infrastructure appropriate to success as an independent state, you would have had difficulty finding a better candidate than Sierra Leone". Christopher Clapham, op. cit., p. 03

torn along historical, social, ethnic, and cultural lines that were only dormant during colonial rule. In these conditions, the British were at ease to direct the transfer of power in the way they wanted and on principles that suited colonial interests without too much challenge.

Although the political situation seemed tranquil during the transfer of power, it was gradually leading to the collapse of one of the most promising examples of colonies in the whole British Empire. Sierra Leone was more than a tiny territory thrown in a remote part. It was the place from where the whole British policy in West Africa began. For the British, it was from the Colony of Sierra Leone that the torch of Anglo-Saxon civilisation, Christianisation, westernisation, and democratisation began to enlighten Africans. Logically therefore, Sierra Leone's political experience could be a bright example for the rest of Africans to follow. However, this simply did not happen.

This particular situation in Sierra Leone leads to a main question that constitutes the nucleus of the present thesis. How did colonial reforms that preceded the decolonisation process lay the foundation for the emergence of political conflicts in Sierra Leone that led eventually to the collapse of the project of state, parliamentary democracy, and economic development? Other further questions: what were the basics of British decolonisation policy, and with what ends? How did they affect the formation of Sierra Leone's political system and politicians? How did they affect the already existing sectional, social, and ethnic disparities? In which direction did they lead political action during the process of decolonisation and after?

To approach answers to such questions, the historical period chosen for the study extends from 1938 to 1967, which represents roughly the period of reforms and then decolonisation process in Sierra Leone. The period selected as well as the case study, Sierra Leone, are chosen in an attempt to trace the seeds of actual political conflict in the colonial reforms that paved the way to the decolonisation process and to discern the relationship between these and the nature of political conflict that

eventually led to a collapse of the established norms of the system. Throughout this period of political decolonisation, the African political mind, represented in the conflicting political factions, was blinking between endorsement of the western type of political systems and refusal of the project.

The year 1938 represents the beginning of colonial reforms in the African colonies as a whole and the fixation of self-government as a long-term project. It was the date when the Colonial Office saw a revolution of ideas concerning the colonies. Although not explicitly advocating decolonisation, the British found themselves, after 1945, in an anti-colonial post-war atmosphere and were compelled to act towards it. 1947 is a date that marked the beginning of Sierra Leoneans' serious thinking about what roles they should play in the future ruling system, after the introduction of the first step towards self-government. The second date, 1967, represents the official point that marked the failure of the implemented British state system and democracy in Sierra Leone. The military coup that took place in 1967 crowned the last step in the Africans' quest for complete political decolonisation. As they hurried towards disconnection with the British Crown through the establishment of a republican regime, they arrived at a political crossroad. The coup demonstrates that Sierra Leoneans' experience in ruling themselves through a British-made political system proved unsuccessful. From then onward, the polity started its gradual march towards decay. In this period of time, political conflict in Sierra Leone was peaceful and conflicting groups acted within the confines of the inherited parliamentary democracy and were committed to democratic means of conflict. Hence, the study of political conflict in the context of decolonisation would show the extent of Sierra Leoneans' success or failure to adapt with the principles of western democracy. It is also an opportunity to examine the suitability of a foreign political type in the African context, especially that Africans had usually refused foreign rule.[21]

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[21] - African states are mostly the product of the colonial experience, together with local particularities. This idea is hardly controversial because historians agree that the new states were all formed along European-style systems. Christopher Clapham confirms that: "African states,

The point to be shown is that colonial reforms and the consequent decolonisation policy contained the seeds of political conflicts right from its initiation because it failed to harmonise, and sometimes enhanced, the already existing sectional, social, and ethnic conflicts within the intended framework of the Sierra Leone nation-state.

While seeking to investigate into the details of the present thesis topic, research becomes an exacting task. Dealing with history is not merely an account of narrations. Neither is it a simple telling of a story that happened in reality.[22] Approaches to interpret historical events especially in the field of colonial history are many. The most obviously used are those classical Marxist theories, about the dialectical conflict between coloniser and colonised, hegemony or oppression and resistance, and the master slave relationship. After being for long widely employed by African as well as Western historians to interpret the colonial phenomenon, it was now superseded by the so-called post-colonial theory.[23] Post-colonial theory has imposed itself in recent years as a basis for interpretation in a variety of disciplines including historical studies. Originally, it was developed as a literary theory, but was

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like those in much of the non- European world, may be regarded in the broadest perspective as the product of the combination of global and local influences that resulted from the attempt to replicate European- style state systems throughout the world. Initially, this goal was achieved through colonial conquest and administration". Christopher Clapham, op. cit., p. 03.

[22] **-** Here is a definition of History: "History deals with human action, that is the actions performed by individuals. It describes the conditions under which people lived and the way they reacted to these conditions. Its subject are human judgements of value and the ends men aimed at guided by these judgments, the means men resorted to in order to attain the ends sought, and the outcome of their actions. History deals with man's conscious reaction to the state of his environment, both the natural environment and the social environment as determined by the actions of preceding generations as well as by those of his contemporaries". Ludwig Van Mises, op. cit., p. 158.

[23] - The origins of Post-colonial theory are traced back in the work of Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* that was published in 1978. It was later reinforced by the works of a generation of post-colonial theorists like Homi Bhabha, Chakravorty Spivak, De Certeau and Anthony Appiah.

later taken out of its traditional confines to the area of post-colonial politics, notably by Pal Ahluwalia.[24]

According to some scholars, earlier anti-colonial criticism, as an approach, might have foregrounded western constructions of coloniser and colonised, of centre-periphery, and challenged dualisms that shaped western knowledge in areas like history. They might also have inverted this structure to place the coloniser or the periphery as the centre of study, but usually without questioning the validity of that dualism itself.[25] Post-colonial theorists, by contrast, attempt to revise the whole western philosophy that produced modern history, and often problematise the very notions produced by that philosophy such as democracy, nationalism and the nation-state. It also takes as a task the understanding and criticism of the "link between the structures of knowledge and the forms of oppression of the last two hundred years".[26] Overall, the post-colonial theory, in one of its areas of interest, urges the historian to rewrite and understand history on new grounds without being attached to previously established notions. This approach seems, in spite of the difficulties facing its employment, safer than being absorbed by pre-established lines of interpretation that makes the researcher merely reproducing previously stated ideas. On the contrary, it urges him to count carefully for every step he makes when interpreting history. Yet, the researcher in the field of history is not to be confined within a sole approach, since theories and approaches themselves are the products of historical evolution.[27] Then, a student of history must listen to all voices of theorists while being careful about the limitations of theories.

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[24] - In his recent work, *Politics and Post-Colonial Theory, African Inflections* (London and New York, Routledge, 2001), Pal Ahluwalia shows the relevance of Post-colonial theory particularly to African politics after the decolonisation.

[25] - Padimi Mongia (ed.) *Contemporary Post-colonial Theory (*London, Arnold, 1996) p. 05.
[26] - Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, Rout ledge, 1991), p. 02.

[27] - Critics like Arif Dirlik and Ahmed Aijaz had exposed some weaknesses of the post-colonial theory. Among the charges raised against it is that it carefully avoided conflicting world capitalism and neglected Marxist theories. It has also been constructed by writers whose majority lived and theorised in the West.

In reality, it is not easy for a researcher from a particular historical and cultural setting to get rid of his background in order to introduce purely objective interpretations, because "we all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific".[28] Still more, Michel Foucault's insistence that the way Man thinks is related to his society, politics, economics, and history[29] should not compel us to see African history from a narrow angle that usually leads Africans to blame European colonialism of their contemporary miseries.[30] It is also not tolerable to reduce in importance Europeans' responsibility in the failures Africa had witnessed. Therefore, researchers had first to purify their interpretations from possible overlaps related to their particular cultural background and deal with their own history with constructive, objective approaches. Hence, it is perhaps this duality between the power of subjectivity and the need for objectivity that both complicates, but at the same time, deepens the analysis of a historical phenomenon.

The conclusion after all is that any research should aim at an honest contribution to the existing historical knowledge that generations of historians had erected. It is true that Africans had suffered the most from the domination of European imperialism, in every aspect of their life, with heavy legacies that still strike them until the present day. Yet, historical research should never distort reality.

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[28] - Stuart Hall in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1990). P. 223

[29]- "Man is a thinking being. The way he thinks is related to society, politics, economics, and history and is also related to very general and universal categories and formal structures.*" Truth, Power, Self*: *An Interview with Michel Foucault* - October 25th, 1982. From: Martin, L. H. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London, Tavistock, 1988) pp. 9- 15.

[30] - A contrary view, for example, significantly is introduced by E. Saïd: "The extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European imperialism still casts a considerable shadow over our own times … This pattern of dominions or possessions laid the groundwork for what is in effect now a fully global world. Electronic communications, the global extent of trade, of availability of resources, of travel, of information about weather patterns and ecological change have joined together even the most distant corners of the world. This set of patterns, I believe, was first established and made possible by the modern empires. Edward Saïd, *Culture and Imperialism,* (London:, Chatto & Windus, 1993) p. 04.

In the words of Tatah Mentan, "such a distortion of history may make the moral case against European imperialism seem sharper, but it does nothing to aid the understanding by Africans of a critical period of their history".[31]

Following all that, the thesis neither stands to defend the Africans' failures, nor does it value the ethics of European democracy.[32] It is an attempt to epistemologically follow up what happened, simply what happened, to understand objectively the acts of both Europeans and Africans, and then to attempt to infer their roles in that historical context. The thesis adopted chronology as a clearer method of development to examine the relationship between colonial reforms as the basics of decolonisation and the emerging political conflicts. Yet, it analyses the range of relations between the different issues that concerned decolonisation and politics. For this reason, other methods of comparison and contrast, cause and effect are often very useful to clarify particular points in the course of discussion.

More specifically, the thesis undertakes an exploration of the thoughts of those actors who composed that historical scene, with their consistence in some times and contradictions in other times. Simultaneously, it examines the reflections of their thoughts in practice that may match or differ from what thoughts may expect. To achieve that, two sources were used: general and specific literature about Sierra Leone as reported by other writers, and original sources and archives. The former served to establish the general framework of the thesis subject, while the latter helped to give originality to this work. The examination of archives allowed an original interpretation that might, perhaps, correspond to, or differ from, other previous interpretations.

The study of political conflict in the context of decolonisation dictated organisation of the present work. The introduction attempted to point out the importance of the thesis subject, its scope, its purpose and the approach. Chapter One

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[31] - Tatah Mentan, op. cit., p. 13.

[32] - I am saying this because the writing of history constructs history. In other words, "writing as praxis is active in its construction, it does not merely record history by putting events into words, and the words themselves manufacture history". Ian Buchanan, op. cit., p. 07.

deals with the interwar pressure on colonial Britain and the changing situation in Sierra Leone. The chapter attempts to discover the background of British policy of reform that began around 1938. Chapter Two tried to specify the basics of this policy as foundations of the coming process of decolonisation and its reflections in Sierra Leone. This chapter attempts to see how it set up the main pillars of the political scene within which Sierra Leoneans' were to act politically. Chapter Three starts to examine political conflict after that the transfer of power seemed inevitable. It looks at the first phase of political conflict in Sierra Leone (1947-1951) that was inspired from sectional differences between the Colony westernised community and the Protectorate traditional natives. Chapter Four is concerned with the second phase of political conflict that took place along with the process of the transfer of power (1951-1961), a conflict that was inspired from the politics of decolonisation and a changing social and ethical atmosphere. Chapter Five deals with the post-independence era that saw the final phase of political conflict within the implemented norms. It was a conflict based on ethnic and regional grounds. This last chapter ends with the 1967 military coup that represented the failure of the state system and the ideal of democracy in Sierra Leone. The conclusion is an attempt to situate the Sierra Leone experience of political conflict in its historical significance and draw parallels between the roles of the coloniser and the colonised in that end.

CHAPTER I

INTERWAR SIERRA LEONE AND
BACKGROUND TO BRITISH COLONIAL REFORM POLICY

The study of the history of colonial rule in Sierra Leone in the interwar period serves to determine the general setting in the political scene before the beginning of colonial reform policy in 1938. The analysis of this setting is closely related to the examination of British policy in West Africa as a whole. The British usually regarded West African colonies in this period as one block and designed policies on the ground of that vision. Political developments in a given colony were generally echoed in the rest of colonies.

By the end of the First World War, British rule was well established in West African territories. The latter had been effectively brought under alien rule about twenty years earlier, in which all forms of armed resistance were liquidated. Britain's victory in the War showed to British rulers, and even to Africans, that the latter's destiny was to be maintained in the colonialists' hands for other coming generations. On the other hand, the war revealed the value of colonies as a useful source of support for Britain's war effort. Therefore, the prevailing official thought was that the colonies were to be kept dependent for a longer time, if not forever. However, from a historical perspective, the situation did not mean a continued slumber for the Africans. The latter's reaction in the 1920's, and later in the 1930's and the 1940's,

were to generate a colonial policy of reform that was to redirect wholly the fate of British presence in Africa. This chapter will therefore explore the interwar circumstances that led to that colonial reform policy by the outbreak of the Second World War, with reference to the social, economic, and political developments in Sierra Leone.

I- BRITISH POLICY IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD AND ELITE NATIONALISM IN SIERRA LEONE:

In the 1920's, Europeans were rooted in the view that Africans were uncivilised and unable to stand alone to rule themselves. They continued in the belief, crystallised earlier, that they had a duty in such a wild world surrounded by powerful nations and Empires, to protect those whom they saw as uncivilised and weak peoples.

1- Paternalism and the Consolidation of Colonial Rule

A deep sense of superiority led the British to continue to think of themselves as protectors and leaders of the African peoples. Regarding themselves as a civilised race, they thought that they had a strong moral obligation to bring backward peoples to the benefits of their own civilisation. This view was certainly strengthened by the fact that Africans were actually weak and backward compared to Europeans. Thus, the British endorsed the ideal of trusteeship (or what is named as paternalism) as a basis for their rule in Africa.[1] This ideal was based, in its turn, on the "Dual Mandate", which appeared as a European philosophy during the years of colonial expansion in the 1880's and 1890's. The Dual Mandate is a principle composed of

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[1] - In 1949, Dr. I. C. Greaves, Colonial Lecturer and Research Worker, wrote: "the policy of trusteeship meant that what these territories [in Africa] could not do for themselves, they did without. Economically, they were as safe from progress as from exploitation. In consequence, the mandated territories in Africa remained mere economic museums". *West Africa*, May 21, 1949.

two parts. On the one hand, it provided for the obligation of the British to lead Africans towards civilisation through the medium of education, Christianity, and economic development. On the other hand, Britain had the right, to exploit the dormant African resources for the benefit of both the British and Africans. Since the latter were unable to exploit their own resources alone, they had to accept, and were forced to accept when necessary, the more advanced nation's help.

At the level of ideals, the British considered that the main role of their rule was to lead Africans towards progress. They saw that the Africans' state of backwardness could be ameliorated only through their supervision and control. Progress in the social, economic, and political spheres was a task that should be completed solely by the British and not Africans. It was, therefore, up to the coloniser to decide the nature and pace of this progress. In fact, there seemed no precise plans or timetable to fulfil this objective. Thus, the ideal of trusteeship only expressed a state of mind prevailing among the British political leaders, with no clearly stated objectives of self-government.

The dual mandate was put into practice through the medium of Indirect Rule. Sir Frederick Lugard, the first Governor of Nigeria, was the one who embodied Indirect Rule and made it a system. His experience in India allowed him to suggest that the coloniser should not demolish local social, cultural, and political institutions. These, Lugard saw, were more suitable to local people than the imported norms of Western Europe. Africans, in his view, were best able to cooperate through their own institutions rather than others. Consequently, Lugard maintained many of the political institutions inherited from pre-colonial times as a base for his system. The traditional rulers like Emirs and chiefs would continue to rule their people in the same way as they had been used to, along lines of the traditional system. Nevertheless, those chiefs had to be supervised by British rulers. That Lugard wished to protect local heritage did not mean that he walked out of the general thought of a coloniser. He, too, considered that Africans were unable to introduce a proper system

to rule themselves. He insisted on British supremacy over Africans and designed for Britons the role of correcting and directing.

Indirect Rule, which was first applied at a large scale in Nigeria, then extended to the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, did not intend merely to protect Africans' heritage. It also did not only express a desire to lead Africans towards progress. Rather, Indirect Rule was considered secondary to the overall political and economic objectives of colonial rule.[2] Once put into practice, the system allowed other interpretations to come onto the surface. Unlike it had been declared, this system served to protect colonial interests above all. First, ruling through chiefs secured one important principle: law and order. Instead of wasting British time and money in keeping law and order, it was far more useful to make the chiefs responsible for this key task. Stability, as the experience had shown,[3] was an essential factor for any economic exploitation. In the second place, the chiefs fulfilled another imperative role. They were very useful in the collection of taxes. The British always wanted to avoid direct confrontation with the people about this sensitive issue because Africans were completely resentful to the colonisers' demand for money. In Sierra Leone, for example, the British had already faced a serious rebellion against colonial authority because of the imposition of the Hut Tax in 1898. Africans, on the other hand, were used to local forms of taxation and showed less resentment to chiefs' demand for tribute or money.

Colonial rulers also used Indirect Rule as a means to annihilate Africans' political ambitions. The chiefs were naturally conservative and showed little challenge to their colonial overlords as long as they controlled local affairs and

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[2] - Mathieu Deflem, "Law Enforcement in British Colonial Africa: A Comparative Analysis of Imperial Policing in Nyasaland, the Gold Coast, and Kenya." *Police Studies,* 17(1), 1994, p. 46.
[3] - In Sierra Leone and elsewhere, the prime objective of the British was the establishment of peace for the sake of better circulation of trade between the coast and the interior. For example, the British began their interference through punitive expeditions in the Sierra Leone hinterland because of instability caused by the Trade Wars (1884-85) between the coastal Creoles and the interior chiefs.

maintained their privileges. Moreover, they posed no serious threat to the colonial system because the greatest chief's ambition was usually limited within the boundaries of his chiefdom.[4] His aim was to be the master of his local people rather than challenge the government in the centre. The chief, thus, rarely hoped to be installed in national institutions. In any case, he was neither prepared nor qualified to play such a role.

On the other side of the African reality, there were emerging western educated groups who gradually began to gain importance in the colonial society. Though these members were essentially the product of the European presence, they began to pose serious challenge to the ideals of trusteeship, especially as they started to demand a participation in the ruling system. Here, Indirect Rule was a means to cut the road in the face of the educated minority. By strengthening the position of the "natural rulers" of the people, the British hoped to thwart the ambitions of the western educated people. In Sierra Leone, for example, colonial rulers shifted their admiration from the enlightened community of the Creoles that they had created, to the chiefs, whom they had previously attacked as savages. Chiefs in Sierra Leone, like in other colonies, became a strong weapon to frustrate the ambitions of those who wanted to parody the British.

The idealistic assumptions of British colonial policy in Africa did not take the originally drawn course. The bulk of Africans were frustrated to see other results of the colonial presence. They did not see any remarkable amelioration in their lives, as has been promised. They did not even see symptoms for future progress. On the contrary, only the colonisers benefited from the exploitation of African resources. For example, officials lived in very prosperous conditions. They had the best houses,

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[4] - The principle of trusteeship, which was exemplified through Indirect Rule, had permitted African chiefs some room in ruling local affairs. Thus, they could be said to be learning the early notions of local self-government, Roland Oliver and Anthony, *Africa since 1800* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 190.

gardens, servants, and sundry privileges. In addition, the other Europeans (missionaries, merchants, civil servants…) were also a privileged class surrounded by the necessities of a comfortable life. The Africans felt themselves, and really were, citizens of a second class.

2- Impact of the First World War and the Rise of Elite Nationalism:

The impact of the First World War intensified dissatisfaction and frustration. West Africans participated in the war with their lives and resources. About one thousand (1000) people from Sierra Leone were recruited in the British Army to fight against the Germans in Togo, the Cameroons, and East Africa. About nine hundred 900 were recruited to serve in the Water Transport Service.[5] Other Sierra Leoneans also contributed to the logistic effort in the service of the British Navy in Sierra Leone. In all, about five thousand (5000) Sierra Leoneans were included in the task of expelling the Germans from the territories they used to possess in Africa.[6]

Participation in the War led West Africans in general to expect some reward from the colonial power through the amelioration of their socio-economic conditions and more political freedom.[7] However, the contrary happened. Economic hardships and social difficulties shocked those African expectations. A number of workers in Sierra Leone found themselves jobless after the end of the War. Sierra Leonean Creole traders were facing unfair competition from the well-established Syrian traders. Severe shortages in the main food, rice, were recorded leading to an increase of prices with about 300 per cent of the pre-War price.[8] The situation was worsened

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[5] - A. D. Roberts, *The Cambridge History of Africa, 1905-1940* Vol. 7 (London, Cambridge University Press, 1986) p. 424.

[6] - E. Isicheï, *History of West Africa since 1800* (London, Macmillan, 1977) p. 259.

[7] - As historian Bazil Davidson expressed, " there came a new feeling that if West Africans were good enough to die for the British cause of freedom, then they were good enough to live for their own". B. Davidson, *Africa in Modern History: the Search of a New Society* (London, Penguin Books, 1978) p. 179.

[8] - D. Fashole Luke, "The Development of Modern Trade Unionism in Sierra Leone", Part One, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, N°03, 1984, p. 429.

by the failure of the rice crop in Sierra Leone because of the heavy rains that destroyed it. Therefore, the ordinary people could hardly afford for their living. In 1919, Sierra Leoneans particularly in the Colony area, but also in the interior areas, went out rioting in protest against rulers who were unable to improve their situation. Such a protest was an expression of an inner refusal of the situation, though not necessarily an expression of an anti-colonial feeling. Similar feelings against the failure of the colonial rulers to create better lives for the natives were existent in the other colonies. Hence, the post-war hardships created widespread discontent in West Africa, and produced a suitable background for the birth of early West African nationalism.

In the immediate years following World War I, British colonial assumptions of paternalism began to be challenged. Views that Africans were ignorant of the modern ruling systems or the norms of political action were dismantled by the emergence of a new wave of western educated Africans who explicitly raised political claims. In West Africa, where political consciousness had already developed, educated professionals and merchants, who sought to have a better role in the colonial society, initiated this awakening. Being the elite of their society, they were the best that could undergo the dominated status in which they were. They were also the direct group who felt the colonial rulers' oppression. They had already been suffering after the extension of colonial rule by the end of the 19th century.[9] Then again, the educated Africans were seen as a threat to the careers of white rulers. Because the former were deprived of many of their former privileges, they seemed now determined to ameliorate their status within the colonial society through

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[9] - In Sierra Leone, for example, the rate of educated Africans serving in government posts was reduced from 18 out of 40 in 1892 to only 15 out of 92 in 1898. A. C. Kup, *Sierra Leone: A Concise History* (London, David and Charles, 1975) p. 257.

representation in government.[10] The attempt of elites to improve their status was an important force behind the launching of early African nationalism.

However, this could not be the only major explanation. Their conviction that they were the leaders of their people and the best who could rule Africans by virtue of education and civilization was another strong motivation. The educated Africans had been used to imitate the civilized race, and now they came to imitate the whites' strong patriotism and defence of the interests of their own European nations. The educated Africans could see the sense of pride among the British towards their country, culture, and people. Thus, they could certainly have wondered why this should not be the case with them. If the educated Africans were educated, civilized and as qualified like the British, why should not they rule, or participate in ruling themselves and their people? Therefore, the awakening that occurred after World War I was due as much to the external factors surrounding Africans as to the internal troubles that swept the minds of the educated people.

3- The National Congress of British West Africa and Sierra Leonean Participation

The colonial assumption of a long-term paternalist approach, especially as far as political progress was concerned, was seriously challenged by the birth of a political movement embodied by the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA). The latter was the result of extensive moral and intellectual mobilisation of West African educated elites. The NCBWA was officially born in Accra (the Gold Coast) in 1920[11] as an organisation that bore the hopes and aspirations of those

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[10] - G. A. Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900-1945* (London, Oxford University Press, 1974) p. 161.

[11] - Historian Akintola Wyse argues that the idea of a West African conference emerged for the first time in 1914, after a discussion that took place on board of a ship between three West Africans: the Gold Coast lawyer Casely Hayford, the Nigerian doctor of Sierra Leonean descent Dr. Akiwande Savage, and the Sierra Leonean barrister F. W. Dove. Akintola J. G. Wyse, "the

considered by historians as the first African nationalists. Sierra Leoneans were represented by three of their best-educated people: F.W. Dove, L. E. V. McCarthy and Dr. H. C. Bankole-Bright. All three became Congress principal speakers, and F. W. Dove served as secretary.[12]

The NCBWA supporters formulated social, economic, and political grievances and sought to realise them. First, they claimed for the introduction of elective representation so that the educated elements would have the possibility to participate in the ruling system. They also demanded that the doors of the civil service be opened for the qualified Africans without racial discrimination. In addition, they claimed for an extension of educational opportunities at the level of quantity and quality to enhance consciousness among the different categories of people. Finally, the Congress worked out to secure more opportunities for local African businessmen in the colonial economy.

When these Africans could organise themselves in a movement that put forward clear political grievances, this meant a turning point in the history of the West African political progress. It was the first time, since the advance of colonial rule, that the newly born Western elites put into question the colonisers' absolute right to rule. Often being racially arrogant, colonial rulers did not admit that members of a backward race would challenge their authority. On the contrary, they expected Africans to continue in slumber for a longer time before thinking of political power. This state of mind was reflected in the officials' immediate hostility to the Congress. In Nigeria and the Gold Coast, the local governments attacked the NCBWA leaders and supporters and accused them of being a narrow minority without popular credibility. The governors of the two territories, Hugh Clifford and Gordon Guggisberg respectively, denounced the Congress activists of having no

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Sierra Leone Branch of the National Congress of British West Africa 1918-1948", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies"*, Vol. 18, N° 4, 1985, p. 677.

[12] - I. Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement* (London, Methuen, 19745) p. 286.

right to speak on behalf of the people with whom they had very little in common,[13] as if the two governors had more in common with Africans than the NCBWA nationalists did.

Though the Sierra Leone branch in its first years faced less hostility on the part of the Governor, the local leaders could hardly expand beyond the Colony area since the colonial authorities exercised complete control over the interior, and prevented easy communication with the interior people. In fact, the educated Creoles could not reach the people in the Protectorate, most of whom illiterate peasants, except through chiefs. Yet, the latter were fully directed by colonial authorities and were always made suspicious of the Creoles' real intentions. The Congress leaders in Sierra Leone sought to show their interest in unity between the Creoles and interior people through the inclusion of tribal leaders in Freetown or men with experience in the Protectorate, such as the educated Sierra Leonean J. A. Songo Davies.[14]

Perhaps the most effective action the Congress leaders achieved was when they sent a delegation to Britain in 1920. The Congress leaders in the four territorial branches managed to select the members of the delegation from the best-educated community. Eventually, nine delegates were sent to London to hand a petition to King George V and to influence the Colonial Office to order political reforms in the West African colonies. Two of the delegates were Sierra Leoneans: F. W. Dove and Dr. Bankole Bright. The delegates were hanging strong hopes that the home officials would accept their demands. They based their optimism on the fact that the British had usually expressed their objective of leading the colonial peoples ultimately to rule themselves. Therefore, the delegation insisted on reminding the London officials of the old advice put forward by a Select Committee in 1865 that recommended self-government for West Africans.

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[13] - Langley, op. cit., p. 161.
[14] - A. Wyse, op. cit., 686.

The Colonial Office, however, saw things differently. Its officials did not give importance to the Delegation and ignored its demands. The London officials preferred to listen to the colonial governments, which insisted that the Congress was unrepresentative and irresponsible. Although the delegation failed in its mission for a while, the Congress succeeded in the long run.

In spite of colonial harassment, the NCBWA played a historic role in promoting West African nationalism. While the colonial officials were doing much work to isolate those nationalists, they continued determinedly to press for change, especially in the political field. Thus, they did not cease to demand the right for representation through direct elections. To reach their objectives, the Congress tried to publicise its principles and objectives among the people in the four territories[15] through the press they owned and in public meetings where they clarified the rightness of their demarche. They also attempted to convince the home officials in London of the legitimacy of their demands through direct dispatches or minutes to the Colonial Office. For instance, the Sierra Leone branch of the Congress sent a secret dispatch containing a petition signed by a number of educated elements, including Lawyer Beoko Betts and Chief Fofana as a representative of the tribal community in Freetown.[16]

The fierce opposition to the West African nationalists' demands suddenly transformed into friendliness, apparently in an attempt to manipulate the threat. Only one year after the failure of the Congress delegation to London, the Governor of Nigeria convinced the Colonial office to accept a new constitution. The latter endorsed the principle of elective representation for the benefit of the educated

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[15] - These are Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Gambia.

[16] - Chief Fofana and other tribal leaders were invited to participate in the Congress in an attempt to give a broader image of nationalist work. It was a way to give the impression that the traditional sections of society were also represented. Langley, op. cit., p. 161.

people.[17] The example of Nigeria was followed by new constitutions for Sierra Leone in 1924, and the Gold Coast in 1925. In Sierra Leone, three educated representatives could be directly elected to participate in the debates of the Legislative Council. On the other hand, representation of the interior was to be done through three nominated chiefs.

These political reforms continued to make the happiness of the Congress nationalists throughout the inter-war period as a big nationalist achievement. In spite of the small number of seats granted to those early nationalists, this step had several positive effects. Elective representation established a direct link between those early nationalists and the people[18] and set up a future tendency to expand among them. The representatives could hardly influence colonial decisions, but they had a room to criticise, denounce, and reflect the people's concerns. Above all, those political reforms indicated that political reforms became no longer a taboo and that Africans' participation in power was very possible. Thus, there was a conviction that other important political reforms in the future would come if the nationalists succeeded to exercise greater pressure with the help of certain circumstances. Yet, elite nationalism of the 1920's and the political reforms they obtained were far from satisfying the majority of the people.

4- The Decline of Elite Nationalism:

By the early 1930's, and after the death of the Congress leader Casey Hayford, the NCBWA started to wane. Though the Sierra Leone branch continued to exist until 1948, the NCBWA that saw its heyday in the 1920's ceased to play a major role in leading African opinion. The Congress nationalists had a number of weaknesses

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[17] - The Nigerian Constitution put into effect in 1923 allowed four educated representatives to sit in the national Legislative Council.

[18] - Of course, the number of electors was very limited, but the principle remains that the electorate is part of the people.

that made them leave their position in favour of other movements to come. The decline of elite nationalism is seen from its inability to bring about real political reforms in the direction of self-government.

In dealing with the weaknesses of elite nationalism, analysis should cover both the mistakes committed by the elite nationalists themselves and the actual circumstances that might curb their acts. Although the NCBWA was successful to start up nationalist work, it was nevertheless unable to push forward effectively towards self-government. The circumstances in which those early nationalists campaigned did not favour a demand to rule instead of the British. What they were aspiring for was only participation in the ruling system and the amelioration of the people's socio-economic situation under colonial rule.[19] Early nationalists' lack of experience, the manipulations of colonial rulers, and the lack of popular consciousness all contributed to a failure to enact real changes. Added to that, the then African politicians themselves were reluctant to think of ruling a nation-state alone without guidance.

Elite nationalism could not expand among the illiterate masses to found a true nationalist movement. Having very little political consciousness, the popular masses did not form a useful backing. Education as an indispensable factor for political consciousness was poorly available for ordinary Africans. Most of them were living in rural areas far from the educated elites. Therefore, the gulf between the elite nationalists and the masses was a real handicap for the evolution of successful nationalism. In Sierra Leone, the Congress ideals rarely went beyond Freetown. Consequently, as one of the then West African nationalists Obafomi Awolowo put it, "the illiterate masses have little or no confidence in the educated few, for the simple

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[19] - Some historians might view that the NCBWA nationalists were motivated primarily by their own political, economic and social concerns, regardless of the interests of the people. However, it is not easy to prove that.

reason that the latter, in their political activities, are completely out of touch with the former".[20]

The Congress leaders in Sierra Leone attempted to publicise their line among some sections of the labour force, but faced a radical reaction on the part of the Colonial Government. The railway workers who had a good tradition in trade union activity launched a general strike in protest against the discrimination applied in promotions.[21] The Creole community as a whole felt the need to support the strikers. On top of them, there were the two Congress leaders and legislators, Bankole Bright and Beoku Betts. A fund was raised, to which some interior citizens had participated, and the two figures assumed leadership of the civil disobedience. The Government was quick to condemn the Congress leaders and the Creole community. The colonial officials even proposed the suspension of the constitution itself that allowed the election of Creoles to the Legislative Council. Moreover, the authorities dissolved the Freetown City Council as a collective punishment.[22] This incident was decisive in that Congress nationalists in Sierra Leone burnt their fingers and were to remain fearful to repeat the mistake until the last days of the Branch.

On the other hand, the Congress activists were handicapped by their conflict with the traditional rulers. With the backing and orientation of colonial officials, the chiefs in most cases rejected the Congress political line and managed to block the advance of political awareness among the people. The colonial authorities granted the right of representation of the interior Protectorate in Sierra Leone exclusively to chiefs. Therefore, they decidedly hew an unbridgeable gap in the face of Congress nationalists to establish political ties with the interior. The situation was even worse. The colonial authorities applied plans to prevent the rise of independent educated

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[20] - M. Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule* (London, Evanston University Press, 1968) p. 454.

[21] - In 1925, the railway management imposed a series of examinations on black skinned workers as a precondition for promotion. Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 432.

[22] - A.J. Wise, op.cit., p. 691.

classes in the interior areas. In the interior of Sierra Leone, education was limited to the sons of chiefly families, and the educated elements were encouraged to follow traditional lines rather than hang to modern attitudes.[23] In political matters, the Governor of Sierra Leone insisted that the interior educated elements should not join the educated Creoles, but should ally with their natural rulers instead. The few interior educated elements formed a quasi-political organisation called the Committee of Educated Africans (CEA) in 1922. The CEA refused cooperation with the Creoles until the Protectorate would "literally march with the Colony in every sphere of life", and preferred representation by chiefs or chiefly-connected educated elements.[24]

A rather surprising factor that weakened elite nationalism was the responsive reforms made by the colonial authorities. After the introduction of new constitutions to the West African colonies, the NCBWA nationalists were expected to continue their pressure for more successes. On the contrary, they seemed to be satisfied with this achievement. After having worked along a united West African perspective, their strategy had been forced to change into a focus on single territories. In fact, the collective work that characterised the Congress activities was quickly broken after the said reforms. Each territorial branch occupied itself with local priorities, and to certain extent, neglected cooperation with the other branches. Hence, the Congress saw a slow decline until it waned.

Complete loyalty to the Empire damaged the cause of elite nationalism. They hardly ever put into question the rightness of the general laws and regulations established by the British. The NCBWA leaders and those elected to represent the people repeatedly affirmed their complete respect to the colonial laws and

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[23] - The colonial authorities in Sierra Leone used to send back students attending at Bo School to their villages to prevent their detribalisation. J. F. Ajayï and M. Crowder, *History of West Africa* (London, Longman, 1974) p. 461.

[24] - Ibid., p.579.

regulations. Thus, in spite of the injustice that characterised the other categories' lives, those nationalists did not radically object to the system that was responsible for that condition. Though some of them sometimes criticised colonial policies, they did so within the confines of constitutional limits. The exceptional and most courageous nationalists in Sierra Leone were muted through intimidation.[25] Overall, elite nationalism did not seek confrontation with colonial authorities and preferred to reduce the tension by neglecting the real concerns of the masses. As stated by some historians, they seemed unwilling to push forward for decolonisation because they felt inability to rule alone larger illiterate masses. All they wanted was an amelioration of their position within the colonial society.[26]

Although such a conclusion might be subject to controversy, the fact is that elite nationalism in West Africa failed to advance towards self-government. The colonial governments in Sierra Leone and the other colonies seemed relaxed from upheavals. But in the 1930's pressures were to come more intensively.

II- SIERRA LEONE IN THE 1930'S AND PRESSURES ON COLONIAL RULE

Things started to change in the 1930's, especially by the approaching of the Second World War. Britain was to face a growing tide of criticism of her rule. Meanwhile, several social and economic changes in the colonies were gradually leading to protest movements that indicated a growing mass political consciousness.

1- The Position of Colonial Britain in the 1930's:

In the inter-war period, colonial Britain faced various kinds of pressure. Internationally, frustrated European countries like Germany and Italy continued to

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[25] - This was reflected, as has been seen, in the case of the two Sierra Leonean Congress activists who supported a railway men strike in 1926. The colonial authorities denounced them as agitators, abolished the Municipality of Freetown and restricted public liberties.

[26] - T. O. Lloyd, *The British Empire, 1558-1983* (Great Britain, Oxford University Press, 1989) p. 309.

call for a re-division of the African colonies. Both nations were looking forward to build empires that would guarantee them a better position in the world. Italy had already expressed her intention by the occupation of Ethiopia in 1935. None of the colonial powers could stop the Italians from having a foothold in Eastern Africa, leaving their international reputation in continuing degradation. The Germans were also declaring publicly that they would build a strong racial power, and finally undertook their plans in September 1939 by attacking Poland. Imperialism appeared to be at the roots of the world's curse.

On the other hand, internal pressure on colonial rule was represented by fierce criticism on the part of newly formed radical movements. The latter were the outcome of the social and economic changes that took place in the African colonies particularly during the 1930's. In part, this was due to the results of the World's economic crisis, following the 1929 disaster. After the failure of colonial rulers to meet their promises to the native peoples, and the failure of elite nationalism to bring changes, political consciousness began to spread among wider sections. Throughout the multi-racial Empire, troubles became an ordinary chronicle to deal with. The situation reached an alarming stage first in the West Indian colonies where riots and disturbances had shaken colonial policy at a sudden. In Africa, similar movements succeeded to attract the support of the popular masses and posed a non-neglected threat on the future of colonial presence. In West Africa, the threat of Communism was taking sure steps exploiting social, economic, and political unease in the colonies. These international and internal pressures on colonial Britain were crowned by the outbreak of the Second World War that, in its turn, formed a great challenge to the existence of the Empire as a whole.

The study of the changing situation in the Sierra Leone of the 1930's will be an example that would clarify more the nature of pressure on colonial rule. Colonial reforms in Sierra Leone were partly the result of this changing social, economic, and political situation. The discovery of new economic resources, the emergence of new

classes with new concerns, and the rise of new political movements were the main forces behind reform in the country.

2- Economic Change in Sierra Leone: the Discovery of Mineral Wealth

In Sierra Leone, the 1920's saw a number of clashes between the people and the colonial Government. The most serious of these was the trade unionists' challenge through a major strike in 1926. Popular unrest, especially among the wage owners and the unemployed, was toughened after the world crisis to the extent that Russian Communists started to penetrate among the angry workers.[27] The already difficult life that Sierra Leoneans had been witnessing was worsened by the repercussions of the 1929 crisis. This was leading to tension between the people and the colonial authorities

During the 1930's, mineral discoveries in Sierra Leone suggested that a radical change would occur. From the Sierra Leoneans' point of view at least, mineral wealth would certainly add more income to the country, and hence, reduce their hardships and better their lives. Moreover, this wealth was discovered in the interior, an area that had always been characterised by backwardness and lack of development plans. Overall, Sierra Leoneans hanged strong hopes of improvement on the new era.

Economic change in Sierra Leone began remarkably with the discovery of large quantities of important minerals. Iron-ore, gold, platinum, and chromium were discovered at the beginning of 1930's, and immediately the mines were opened to exploitation.[28] Nevertheless, Sierra Leone's major economic change was to be caused mainly by the discovery of diamonds, which became an issue that was to shape a great part of the country's political future.

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[27] - This point will be discussed later in this chapter.
[28] - Richard Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (London, Croomltelm, 1978) p. 61.

Diamonds were discovered for the first time in Sierra Leone in 1930 by Dr. N. R. Junner and J. D. Pollet of the Sierra Leone Geological Survey, who had earlier started activities in the Gbogbo Stream in the Kono District for the sake of the precious stones. In 1932, more stones were found in the gravels of the Kenja Stream in the Kanema District.[29] A team of experts from the Consolidated African Selection Trust (CAST), which had already been active in the Gold Coast,[30] confirmed the possibility of mining diamonds in the regions in which the mineral was found. In 1934, the British authorities gave the company an exclusive license to explore, mine, and market diamonds for a period extending for 99 years.[31] Following that, a subsidiary company, named the Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST), was established to exploit diamonds on the Sierra Leone territory in return for 27% of the net profits to be paid to the colonial government. Thus, having one company was intended to ease the collection by government of its share of profits, customs duties, and other proceeds.[32] The enterprise of diamond mining grew rapidly with the discovery of new sites containing diamond stones. Meanwhile, the Selection Trust was using its most sophisticated techniques and equipment to maximise its production. Hence, by the beginning of the Second World War, Sierra Leone became the second largest producer of diamonds in the world, after South Africa.[33]

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[29] - Van Dar Laan, "The Sierra Leone Diamond Rush", *Sierra Leone Studies*, N° 18, January 1966, p. 79.

[30] - The company had rapidly become one of Africa's largest diamond- mining houses soon after its establishment in 1924.

[31] - *Chaim Even- Zohar,* Sierra Leone Diamond Sector: Financial Policy Constraints*, Prepared by Management Systems International Under USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 636- A- 00- 03- 00003- 00, June 2003, p. 32.*

[32] - The Government drew its authority from the 1927 Mineral Ordinance, which vested control over mining rights in the Crown. Ibid.

[33] - Van Dar Laan, op. cit, p. 79.

Exploitation of all minerals was reserved for expatriate companies. While the Selection Trust was exploiting diamonds, iron mining, for example, was reserved exclusively for the Sierra Leone Development Company owned by William Baird of Glasgow.[34] Therefore, most of the profits were transferred outside the country, with the exception of marginal sums paid to the Colonial Government, to be expended mostly on the salaries of colonial rulers. On the other hand, Sierra Leoneans were denied any right of enterprise in those fields. They were Rather to be employed most of the time as unskilled workers in the mines and the activities connected to mineral exploitation. Thus, mineral exploitation did not contribute to economic development, except in the areas containing minerals. Sierra Leoneans did not feel any remarkable improvement in their lives in spite of the wealth discovered in their own country.

3- Social Change in Sierra Leone: The Birth of New Social Classes

The economic change that took place in the 1930's was one important factor that contributed to the emergence of new social classes. The other important factor was a relative expansion of education. The new emerging social classes were the workers and the average educated people.

The rapid expansion of the mining sector created a need for large numbers of workers. In addition to labour in the mines, the sector needed workers in some related activities such as drivers, road constructors, servants, shopkeepers…etc. The diamond sector alone employed by 1938 about 6,000 workers in the mines, in addition to about 13,500 in areas connected to diamond exploitation.[35] The other sectors also had similar needs for workers. Added to that, this category included the unemployed who failed to secure jobs, but many of them remained in the mining areas waiting for occasional work. Most of those workers were illiterate or with very

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[34] - R. Cartwright, op. cit., p. 34.
[35]- Catherine Coquery-Vidrovich, *Afrique Noire* (Paris, Harmattan, 1992) pp. 323-4.

low level of education. They had to rely on their physical effort in order to earn their living, and were paid the lowest wages.

These people were conscious of their common status because of the new and common experience they had. The workers in the mining sector and in the areas connected to it were living a new experience that made them feel as one social group. These workers met people from many parts of the country different from them in ethincity, language, and character. Contact between these workers was to bring about what seemed to be a working class consciousness that united them in spite of their differences in background. Moreover, these people were liberated from different social restrictions, especially in the chiefdoms. They became receptive to new ideas more than those who stood in the home areas. They were also in direct contact with expatriates and were often critical of them as well as of colonial authorities. Little by little, the members of this group developed anti-colonial sentiments, and hence, the new social group turned into a potential reservoir for political action.

Another emerging social class in the 1930's was the average educated people, or the sub-elite as Martin Kilson names them. They were individuals who occupied a position less than the elite and better than the working class. They usually possessed a primary, or a post-primary, level of education[36] that permitted them to occupy some government posts or free occupations independently from the Creole and the chiefly elites. Thus, these people were skilled workers, clerks, elementary teachers, letter-writers, middle-size traders and the like.[37] People of this type were a new category in Sierra Leone for they were the outcome of the expansion of primary and post-primary education especially in the interior, which was well behind the colony area.

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[36] - One can make a distinction between "the educated" and "the literate" in that the former were those who achieved post-primary and higher education, while the latter were those whose education was stopped at the primary level. P. C. Lloyd, *The New Elites of Tropical Africa* (London, Heinemann, 1978) p. 139.

[37] - A. Boahen in L. H. Gann and P. Duiguan ed.s, *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960* (London, Macmillan Press, 1974) p. 389.

These men were not like the former Creole elite and differed from the workers. Their aspirations were also different from both social groups. Unlike the workers, the average educated men were interested in political issues because they were able to read and write, and hence seemed more able to understand politics. However, they were not able to erect political careers or even make their voice heard politically like the educated elite. This is because they lacked the right of representation that was limited by property and literary qualifications, or restricted to the chiefly system. Thus, the members of this group had political aspirations but lacked the means to voice them.

The average educated groups in Sierra Leone were interested in a major issue that united them. Expatriate exploitation of the country's riches at the expense of the Sierra Leone people was a current concern round which criticism towards the Colonial Government was formulated. Anti-colonial sentiments developed quickly as they were seeing profits gained from Sierra Leone's minerals going outside the country without any remarkable change in favour of Sierra Leoneans. For example, elementary teachers were receiving very little as compensation for their work, and got only 10d per day without any allowances for accommodation or transport.[38] Thus, their status that allowed them to be politically conscious and the practical hardships they lived in made them more hateful of the colonial system than did the Creole educated elite or the chiefly group. As Fashole Luke puts it, "although these men and women had kinship relations with individuals of Freetown and rural elites, they were beginning, unlike the latter, to develop a solidly based nationalist consciousness".[39]

The rise of new social classes with more critical attitudes against the colonial system was paralleled with an important social transformation in Sierra Leone. Each

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[38] - A. D. Roberts, *The Cambridge History of Africa from 1905 to 1940,* Vol. 07 (London, Cambridge University Press, 1986) p. 459.

[39] - David Fashole Luke, p. 435.

of the new classes, the average educated people and the workers, succeeded to a certain extent to erect social ties regardless of the old gap between the Colony area and the interior. Members in the former group moved in both directions for work. Colony Creoles could go to the interior for the sake of jobs, in European firms, the mines or government posts, while interior natives could go to Freetown to work in retail trade or European firms. Unlike relations between the Creole elite and chiefs, members in the new social group had little animosities for each other. Contact between them was easier as their concerns and aspirations were identical, and had no political grounds of quarrel. Similarly, the workers from both sections of the country had contacts in the mines, road construction, public works, and in the port of Freetown. Members of this group were far less concerned with the Creole/native gap since it had no significance upon their situation. More importantly, the two new social groups were near to each other and the borderline between the average educated people and the working class was not easy to draw. The socio-economic hardships and their anti-colonial sentiments created a line of solidarity between them. After they had hoped to benefit from Sierra Leone's new wealth, their hopes "were quickly and cruelly dashed".[40] Therefore, the average educated people and the workers were able to build ties as Sierra Leoneans and felt more united thanks to their common situation.

The economic and social transformations that took place in Sierra Leone during the 1930's led to a rejection of the colonial situation and a broadening of political consciousness. This atmosphere was a fertile ground for the seeds of radical ideas. The new social groups represented a potential force with obvious anti-colonial sentiments and seemed ready for political action. What they needed was "a coherent political organisation and the organisational skills of a leader experienced in the art

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[40] - David Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 434.

of demagogy".[41] This leader was Wallace Johnson who led radical nationalism in Sierra Leone.

4- Wallace Johnson and Radical Nationalism in Sierra Leone:

Until the 1930's, the educated elites were the main and only nationalist groups in West Africa. Although they tried to voice the peoples' concerns and attempted to broaden the base to West African nationalism, its discourse was not convincing. It could not attract the ordinary people and could not spread among the lower masses. By contrast, the economic and social changes that took place in the decade helped the emergence of radical nationalism that was able to mobilise larger categories of the people.

Radical nationalism indicates the attitudes of political leaders in the colonies to seek complete change of the colonial system.[42] It principally stands against the roots of economic, political and social wrongs, and presses for immediate and sweeping changes to wipe them.[43] Thus, radical nationalists are those who adopt positions that are more critical of the colonial system, and seek to bring fundamental changes in the social, economic and political spheres. In West Africa, this type of nationalism was taken on by new organisations known as "youth movements", which rejected elitist nationalism and its lack of achievement. Unlike the earlier nationalists, these new movements did not seek gradual reform through cooperation with the colonial authorities. Rather, they were aiming at a complete overthrow of the colonial system so that Africans would be the masters instead of the British.[44]

Radical attitudes towards colonial rule also originated from the Italian aggression against Ethiopia in 1935. The emerging radical nationalists were seeing

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[41] - Ibid., p. 435.

[42] - *The World Book Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 16 (U.S.A. Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1975) p. 77. Radicalism is derived from the Latin term "radix", meaning "root".

[43] - Ibid.

[44] - M. Crowder, op. cit., p. 470.

how Europeans did not react against the violation of an old African kingdom. They saw that the European powers in reality had divided the continent for a share of its resources rather than for its protection and civilisation. The Ethiopian issue was widely publicised so that the new wave of nationalists were able to rally much larger support than the earlier nationalists had done. The importance of radical nationalism here is that it generated colonial reaction that went towards social, economic and even political reforms.

Radical nationalism was fuelled to a considerable extent by communism as an ideological support against colonialism. Communists had always argued, and succeeded to convince many Africans, that colonial rule had been responsible for the hardships that the African masses suffered from. They publicised that Europeans were exploiting Africans' resources with no returns for the natives. Communist Russia presented itself throughout the interwar period as a defender of those oppressed peoples against colonial capitalism. Thus, activists in the colonies were showing their eagerness to use the opportunity of the Second World War to overthrow colonial rule. An expression of the objectives of radical nationalists is depicted in one of the pamphlets seized by the authorities that read:

> Our task is not only to defend the Soviet Union, which is the only friend and champion of all the oppressed peoples in the world, but we must be prepared to take advantage of the next war when it breaks out to join with the armed forces and use the guns which the Imperialists will be forced to put in our hands, as they did in 1914-1918, to strike a final and decisive blow for the freedom of the Negro peoples of Africa, the West Indies and America, and for the emancipation of a toiling humanity from the fetters of the capitalist slave system.[45]

The history of this organisation is almost completely linked to I. T. A. Wallace Johnson. He was a Creole, born in 1885 in Freetown, where he acquired his primary education. He was later recruited in the British armed forces, to serve during

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[45] - M. Crowder, op. cit., p. 470.

the First World War. Then, he worked as a seafarer. During the 1920's, he entered the field of trade unionism that became his main area of action. He joined the Railway Workers' Union, and was one of the organisers of the 1926 strike. When the authorities found out that he was one of the agitators, he left Sierra Leone for Britain.[46]

In Britain, Wallace Johnson had his first direct contact with communism. There he met a number of Russians particularly the activists of the Russian Communist Organisation named the *COMINTERN*. The latter was working out to spread communism among the African peoples, seizing the opportunity of social and economic hardships in the colonies. The organisation was in need of a number of African activists as spearhead preachers for its ideology among the workers. Wallace Johnson was welcome by the *COMINTERN* and was expected to fulfil the role successfully in West Africa. He was then invited to Moscow where he learnt more about communists' plans and strategies. His stay as a student at the University of Moscow enhanced his admiration to the Soviet Union and toughened his abhorrence to capitalism and colonialism.

In 1931, Wallace Johnson returned to West Africa with a strong energy to fight against the evils of colonialism. With the help of the local radical nationalists, who were dissatisfied with the Congress nationalism, he started his activities first in Nigeria where he began to organise the workers into unions in different sectors. He also encouraged the workers, especially in the port of Lagos, to claim for their rights through strikes that were often accompanied by disturbances. Johnson's stay in Nigeria did not make him forget his native colony's workers. From there, he attempted to call Sierra Leonean workers to act on similar lines. He wrote them an article on the pages of the *COMINTERN*'s paper, the *Negro Worker,* prescribing at length the methods that should be adopted for an effective organisation of the

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[46] - E. T. Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa before World War II* (New York, Holmes and Meir Publishers, 1974) p. 217.

workers in Sierra Leone. Thus, he recommended that workers from different occupations, like seamen and dockers, should join unions at the model of the Railway Workers' Union. He also emphasised the unity between the employed and the unemployed, and between the Colony and Protectorate workers. For this purpose, he called for a committee to be established whose role was to organise the rural peasants who usually came down to Freetown on market days.[47]

The colonial authorities in Nigeria did not wait for long to end Johnson's activities. He was suspected and accused of executing a communist plan to cause instability in the colonial economy. He was considered a foreign agent in the hands of a hostile power. Consequently, the police raided his headquarters in Lagos in 1933 and seized a number of seditious papers and pamphlets that confirmed his implication with communists. Following that, Wallace Johnson moved to the Gold Coast where he led a more effective movement. With similar methods of agitation, he managed to attract the support of many people, especially the workers, and succeeded to organise them into unions. Yet, this time Johnson decided to enter the field of politics through the foundation of the West African Youth League (W.A.Y.L.). The latter was supported not only by the workers but also by a number of frustrated politicians in the Gold Coast. The League was so successful to obtain an important political position that in 1935 it could seize a seat in the Legislative Council from the four open to election.[48] In spite of this success, the activities of the League were to be ended in the Gold Coast like in Nigeria. The colonial authorities had already maintained an open eye on Johnson's doings since his arrival to the Colony, waiting for an opportunity to neutralise his effect. Eventually, they did it and raided his headquarters. They once again found a number of communist papers and seditious pamphlets that were considered as a threat to the Colony's stability.

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[47] - E. T. Wilson, op. cit., p. 218.
[48] - Ibid., p. 246.

After his second experience, Wallace Johnson opted for action in his native country, Sierra Leone. He arrived at Freetown in April 1938 and immediately established a section of the WAYL, the Sierra Leone Youth League (S.L.Y.L.). The League's whole political line, with its principles and objectives, was to be made according to his personal views and attitudes. Wallace Johnson is an example of a radical political rebel who rejected the colonial system categorically, and sought to harm it though not claiming independence explicitly at that time. Using his unionist and political experience, he was able to bring much dynamism to Sierra Leone's politics thanks to the widespread popular support he could attract. His success was due partly to his total devotion to politics, being the first career politician in Sierra Leone, whose salary was paid from the League's own fund.[49]

Wallace Johnson was a man who wanted to transform the old type of colonial politics based on a subservient role played by elite politicians into one in which Sierra Leoneans would decide for themselves. For that purpose, he adopted a twofold strategy. On the one hand, he focused on political action to influence colonial decisions. Therefore, the SLYL was established as a political party to contest elections and obtain seats in the existing Legislative Council. It was also used as a forum that gathered anti-colonial trends. On the other, he sought to exploit the workers' discontent politically to maintain a wider popular base. This could be done easily if the workers were to be organised into trade unions with the support of the League.

The first line of Johnson's strategy meant that the SLYL should attempt to gather all frustrated politicians around a radical discourse that denounced colonial practices and rejected old nationalism. The sensitive issues of expatriate exploitation of the country's riches, the lack of development, economic difficulties and others were all driving to convince different social categories of the evils of colonial rule. Though the former nationalists had preceded the League in putting forward claims

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[49] - A. J. Wyse, op. cit., p. 692.

around these issues, radical nationalism innovated in using demagogy to go beyond the confines of the elite members and reach the popular masses. The League leaders criticised the colonial authorities without maintaining much margin for compromise, and were thus able to mobilise nationalist sentiments of Sierra Leoneans regardless of class or region. This is obvious in the League's supporting base that included members from the working class, the average educated people, and even members from the educated elite.[50] Therefore, Wallace Johnson's movement attracted workers, unemployed persons, farmers, teachers, tradesmen, lawyers, and businessmen. Moreover, the League's supporters were to be found in both parts of Sierra Leone especially among the workers and the average educated members.

While concentrating on the political field, the League's leaders were thinking to organise social categories to back them politically. Hence, they regarded that the working class was the core of the lower strata of society that should be modelled to fulfil a useful political role, particularly that Wallace Johnson had had a helpful experience in the field. Workers in different sectors were organised into unions in both the Colony and Protectorate. Consequently, in addition to the reconstruction of the old Railway Workers' Union, new ones were set up: the Public Works Workers' Union, the *Mabella* Coaling Company Workers' Union, the Seamen's Union, the *Bonthe* Amalgamated Workers' Union, the *Papel* and *Marampa* Miners Workers' Union, and the Motorists' Union. In the meantime, Wallace Johnson was preparing to set up a united body of unions named the Sierra Leone Trade Unions Congress.[51]

Since strikes were seen as the best means to educate the illiterate masses politically,[52] the workers were encouraged to use this method and face the authorities to claim for their rights. Although the workers were primarily concerned with their

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[50] - Although Wallace Johnson's League in general was regarded as an opponent of old elite nationalism, its leadership included members from the elite. Its Central Committee, for example, comprised four lawyers, eight businessmen and seven senior clerks. Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 435.

[51] - Wilson, op. cit., p. 373.

[52] - A. C. Kup, op. cit., p. 200.

social conditions and economic situation, the League leaders were able to drive them to politics through the politicisation of the workers' concerns and the trade unions. The latter worked in close collaboration with the League and coordinated in organising a number of strikes, not only to defend the workers' interests but also to spread anti-colonial sentiments among the discontented people. For instance, Wallace Johnson himself attended a number of those strikes and offered his moral support. The rising number of strikes and the intensifying workers' sense of challenge against the colonial authorities led the latter to be worried. The Governor of Sierra Leone, Sir Douglas Jardin (1937-41) was forced to recognise that "in the event of a strike at one of the mines, he [Wallace Johnson] would be a potential danger to the peace and good order of the country".[53]

The results of the League's radical line were quick to appear. Within less than one year, Wallace Johnson's movement succeeded to overthrow the former elite from the leadership of nationalism when for the first time the NCBWA lost all three seats in the 1938 legislative elections in favour of candidates near to the League's line. Perhaps the greatest success to be achieved by radical nationalism in Sierra Leone was the bridging of the old gap between the Colony population and Protectorate natives. With the atmosphere created by Wallace Johnson, that gap seemed politically insignificant as the League was able to unify both Creoles and interior individuals around one national struggle. Thus, although the SLYL was Creole-based, it was concerned with the interior population and reached some remote zones in the area. Branches representing it were opened in a number of towns like Bo, Lansar, Bonthe, Moyamba, Mano, and Papel.[54]

In an attempt to win the confidence of the interior people, the League manifested their social and economic sufferance under colonial rule. Hence, it revealed many cruelties and misdeeds committed by administrators. In Bonthe, for

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[53] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher (eds.), op. cit., p. 85.
[54] - Ibid.

example, the SLYL publicised the issue of the people whose houses were regularly demolished on the ground of sanitation measures. More importantly, it led its own enquiries on the acts of abuse and corruption that usually characterised the collection of taxes. The excesses of those officials were exploited politically to attack the Government, and the issue reached Britain and succeeded to engender parliamentary questions, and a debate in the British press.[55] Therefore, the League succeeded considerably to bridge that old gap between the two parts of Sierra Leone to the extent of alarming colonial officials. One of the higher officials in the Colonial Office, after his return from a visit to Sierra Leone, was quick to confess that:

> Night after night the *Wilberforce Memorial Hall* had been crowded to the doors and windows by those assembled to consider and foment grievances, and though the subjects of protests and demonstrations have by no means always been well chosen or well founded, the ventilation of constitutional or labour grievances has begun to bridge the old deep gap between the Creoles and the people of the Protectorate.[56]

The outbreak of the Second World War quickened the end of Wallace Johnson's movement. The colonial authorities found it easy to imprison Wallace Johnson and neutralise his League on the ground that he posed a threat to Britain. Yet, radical nationalism succeeded where the early elite nationalists failed. It succeeded to force the officials to review their strategies of the future of colonial rule and made them believe that reform became a necessity rather than a choice. The experience of radical nationalism in Sierra Leone was a short-lived story, but it was, like other experiences in West Africa and elsewhere, among the important factors that led the Colonial Office as well as colonial officials on the spot to design plans to face the economic, social, and political changes that took place in colonial societies.

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[55] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher (eds.), op. cit., p. 85.
[56] - M. Crowder, op. cit., p. 474.

On the one hand, the Colonial Office was to study the data collected from the colonies to design future plans to solve the Empire's crisis. On the other, officials in Sierra Leone, like in other colonies, had to design plans for reforms to solve the colony's crisis, taking into consideration the requirements of general policy and local particularities.

CONCLUSION:

Colonial policies in the interwar period followed a paternalist vision since they presumed that Africans were still in a great need for European supervision. The British themselves were rooted in the idea that their colonies were completely beyond any possibility of standing alone. However, the aftermath of the First World War saw the rise of social and economic problems that quickened the rise of early elite nationalism with a West African scope. Sierra Leoneans had an active participation in the National Congress of British West Africa, formed in 1920 to manifest West African elites' grievances.

The Sierra Leone of the 1920's was led by elitist nationalism that succeeded to achieve some political success for the elite, but was without great importance if measured from the perspective of real reforms. The movement was confined to the educated Creole elite while the bulk of the popular masses remained outside the political game. In addition, the Congress nationalists in Sierra Leone were unable to spread their political thought in the interior Protectorate. They were unable to build strong relations with the interior people not only because of social and cultural reasons, but also because of colonial rulers' desire to maintain a gap between the two sides of the country. Hence, although elite nationalism contributed through pressure to the introduction of a limited electoral representation, it was not to make real steps towards self-government. Representation did not mean participation in decision making. Nonetheless, the situation started to change during the 1930's socially and

economically leading to political upheavals that were to push the British to think of reforms.

By the beginning of the 1930', early nationalism started to wane as it failed to reach the popular masses and to achieve satisfactory results. As an imperial power, Britain faced a growing home, international, and colonial criticism for her general policies and her government of the colonies. Like the case of many other colonies, social and economic change was taking place in Sierra Leone after the discovery of mineral wealth and the emergence of new social categories, namely the average literate elements and the workers in the sector of mineral exploitation. These categories were, to a considerable extent, dissatisfied with their conditions within colonial society, things that made them adhere to the rising radical youth movements. Wallace Johnson, who had already started his experience in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, found suitable social, economic, and political grounds to establish a nationalist line based on radical attacks on colonial rule. He succeeded to popularise his anti-colonial sentiments and to initiate a nation-wide movement that alarmed the colonial authorities. Such events were not confined to Sierra Leone, but were taking place in different parts of the Empire. Consequently, the Colonial Office as well as officials on the spot agreed on the necessity of reform as an inevitable path if colonial interests were to be maintained.

CHAPTER II

COLONIAL POLICY AND REFORMS IN SIERRA LEONE
(1938-1947)

Pressure on colonial rule in Sierra Leone is an example of greater pressures throughout the Empire. The idea of colonial reforms was an urgency aiming at protecting the Empire from the threats it was facing. The confused internal situation needed insistent changes, not only to calm the Africans, but also to secure their loyalty during the war. The international situation and public opinion necessitated a colonial policy that had to go hand in hand with the world's aspiration for freedom. Therefore, colonial reforms that had started slowly just before the Second World War was a forced responsive policy that aimed at saving the Empire. The coming of reformist views meant in the long run important social, economic and particularly political changes in the colonies. Thus, this chapter deals with the crucial period extending from the eve of the Second World War (1938) with the early stirrings of reforms up to the immediate years after the war with the drive of colonial policy towards decolonisation, and with the early stirrings of the transfer of power in Sierra Leone (1947). The aim is to cast light on the basics of the reformist policies pursued by colonial Britain in this period, and the practical reforms in Sierra Leone which constituted the real ground of the consequent political conflict that accompanied the decolonisation process.

I- THE COLONIAL OFFICE AND THE NEW REFORM POLICY

Understanding the nature of British reform policy is necessary to understand the nature of the general political situation that accompanied the decolonisation process in the post-war period. In the case of Sierra Leone it was in this period of time that the British implemented the main grounds of the future decolonisation process and the general framework of political action, though not necessarily aiming at decolonisation itself.

Yet the nature of reforms in Sierra Leone can be hardly understood without examining British general policy of reform in terms of objectives and principles. Thus, this section tries to consider why the British, in particular the Colonial Office officials, thought of reforms and how they saw the future of their colonies from a political perspective through examining the Colonial Office thinking when it began to emerge by the start of the Second World War.

1- Objectives of the New Policy:

When a new colonial secretary was appointed at the head of the Colonial Office in May 1938, a new policy towards the question of colonies was put into effect. William Mac. Donald who remained in office for about two years was the one who set off a revolution in the Colonial Office and pushed forward in the direction of reform. Few days after his nomination, MacDonald revealed his longing for more forward attitudes concerning the colonies. Though he had introduced no specific timetable or clearly stated ends, he asserted that the time had come to start effective steps to lead colonial subjects towards self-government. In one of his conferences in London, he declared the following:

> What is the main purpose of the British Empire? I think it is the gradual spread of freedom amongst all his Majesty's subjects, in whatever part of the earth they live…The trend is towards the

> ultimate establishment of the various colonial communities as self-supporting and self-reliant members of a great Commonwealth of free peoples and nations.[1]

The Colonial Secretary's reference to the term Commonwealth revealed that he certainly had in mind the experience of the White Commonwealth whose members became completely sovereign states. Hence, he meant a status for the African colonies near to that of the former white colonies, though he put no limited period to fulfil this aim. However, he became one year later clearer in his views as he conditioned the realisation of the aim of self-government to necessary social and economic reforms to precede it. He pointed out that Britain's policy should be to enable the peoples of the colonies and protectorates "to partake in ever larger measure of the benefits of modern education, of economic well-being, of wealth and a full enjoyment of life. We must repay their loyalty by giving back to them the best that lay in our power, the gift of self-government and freedom".[2]

Although some critics tend to judge that colonial officials were merely producing statements for international and internal consumption, the statements and facts that followed did show a desire to advance towards real reform. Yet, Colonial officials inside the Colonial Office and outside it were anxious to act before events would surpass their will. The educated and literate groups were increasingly growing and explicitly pronounced anti-colonial sentiments because of the actual social and economic hardships. Therefore, reform meant an attempt to avoid possible threats by taking the initiative from the hands of radical African groups. This concern was expressed by one of the most known reformers in the Colonial Office during the war, O. G. R. Williams. He warned the colonial governments through these words:

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[1]- J. Flint, "Planned Decolonisation and its Failure in British Africa" *African Affairs*, Vol. 82, N° 328, p. 398.
[2] - Ibid., p. 399.

> The small but increasing groups of educated Africans are likely to become more politically-minded as time goes on, and it would be more satisfactory if the Governments concerned were to some extent prepared in advance so that they might be in position to initiate changes in the right direction (whatever direction may eventually be decided to be the right one) rather than allow themselves to be forced into a position of making concessions to the clamour of demagogues.[3]

The Colonial Office was actually planning for the post-war period. Its officials seemed concerned with the possible effects of the war on the minds of African politicians in the way that would incite them more and more to press for freeing the political field. The former feared that demand for political freedom would lead to a process that might go beyond their control, particularly the threat of losing ground for radical nationalists instead of the more moderate traditional elites or chiefs. Particularly, the traditional system was being regarded as the prize that would harmonise between the two contradictory ends: political freedom and the preservation of the interests of the Empire. In this course, the Secretary of State, W. Mac Donald, made the following remarks:

> It may be that one of the results of the war will be to stimulate the political consciousness of Africans and to give emphasis to the demand for a quickened pace of development towards more representative and liberal institutions of government. In any case, it seems very desirable, from the standpoint of high policy of His Majesty's Government, to clarify in their own minds the important problem of future development of unofficial African representation in legislative councils in relation to the evolution of indirect rule and the future development of the native administrations.[4]

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[3] - R. Pearce, "The Colonial Office and Planned Decolonisation in Africa", *African Affairs*, Vol. 80, N° 330, January 1984, p. 79.

[4] - J. D. Hargreaves, *The End of Colonial Rule in West Africa* (London, Mac Millan Press L.T.D, 1979) p. 27.

The aspirations of the educated people for political reform were not the only threat; the deteriorating social and economic situation in the colonies was also a danger that the British had to remove. The 1930's experience of radical nationalism had shown how successfully nationalists could exploit the hardships that Africans lived in to attack the colonial system. The lower categories of the people in the colonies were always concerned with the improvement of their life conditions. They were, in fact, not interested in politics except when their situation was evoked. Therefore, colonial officials thought that the amelioration of the socio-economic sides of colonial life meant the elimination of the "*raison dêtre*" of radical nationalism.

In general terms, the policy of reform was the outcome of colonial views that the situation in the colonies ought to be redirected after several severe shakings. It started around the year 1938. The aim was to realise stability of colonial rule through two stages. The first was based on reforms in the social and economic areas. The latter were seen as an urgent necessity on the agenda to erase the rising popular discontent. The second was based on political and constitutional reforms that were to take place along an extended period.

What matters more is the view towards political progress since it is here that the future political systems and rulers were to be moulded. Though a clear expression of decolonisation was absent, it was the basics of the strategy of political reforms that were to make the reality of the political troubles during the years of decolonisation.

2- The Basics of the Strategy of Political Reforms

After having fixed the objectives of reform, the British had to fix the nature of this reform. Though the British had thought initially to redress social and economic grievances, political reform was inevitable. Even more, reform in the two former areas needed political cooperation with Africans. Political reform also came out of a

colonial zeal to isolate the anti-colonial radical nationalists and bring about collaborating groups able to win the confidence of people, and at the same time serve under British direction. The collaborating groups were expected to use the sums of money made available by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (CDWA) to win the support of their peoples. Hence, such collaborating groups had to meet two conditions: colonial acceptance, in that they should act under official direction, and their own peoples' satisfaction, in that they should be able to bring social and economic welfare. The choices open to the British were two. First, they could opt for a particular group from those available i.e. the traditional rulers, the old educated elite, or the new group of radical politicians. Second, they could decide on the creation of a new group containing selected elements from the three groups with well-defined duties.

The general British assumption was that the old educated elites and the radical nationalists should not be the sole and central collaborating groups. The former were unable to reach the people since they always remained a small isolated minority, though they were still loyal to the British Empire. The new radical politicians, at the example of W. Johnson in Sierra Leone, were explicitly anti-colonial and were not to take any major role although they could win the support of large sections of the people. Meanwhile, the traditional rulers were always seen as the natural rulers of their people, especially that the majority of Africans were respectful to them. Moreover, the chiefs had always been the most obedient group who showed continuous readiness to act under official direction. However, the traditional system had been subject to criticism from the old and new nationalists, like the NCBWA and the Youth Movements, because it stood unable to change simultaneously with the other social, economic, and political changes in the colonies. That is why a number of officials inside the Colonial Office and in the colonies thought of modernising the traditional institutions to make them able to adapt to the new colonial situation. Thus,

the British finally opted for the traditional rulers as the best collaborating groups in condition that they should be modernised.

Colonial officials were worried that attacks made by the educated elements on the system of Indirect Rule would destroy it completely. Hostility towards the chiefs was no longer confined to the educated elite. It gradually extended to other sections of society. The average educated people, the workers, and the peasants, in Sierra Leone and other West African colonies, began to see their chiefs as inefficient rulers and subservient agents of a disliked colonial regime. This led the Colonial Office Legal Advisor to warn colonial officials that the present situation could lead to a complete destruction of the chiefly system on which colonial rule rested because of the growing group of conscious educated and literate Africans. In his words:

> My own belief is that, given sufficient inertia, the system will, sooner in one place or another, come to an end. … On the other side of the picture, there appeared, in an ever-growing progression, the educated African [who] views with extreme distaste the primitive, inefficient, and in many cases corrupt institutions of Indirect Rule.[5]

Other officials responded by insisting on the necessity of reforming the chiefly system to meet the Africans' expectations. Indirect Rule, according to them, became incompatible with the quick social and economic changes that took place in African societies.[6] The Secretary of State for the Colonies thought that reform was a necessity because some emerging groups from outside the chiefly establishment were able to participate in the development of their societies. He saw that African societies "were producing more and more of their own doctors and nurses, their own teachers and agricultural officers, their own civil servants and lawyers, their own leaders in

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[5] - J. Flint, op. cit., p. 395.

[6] - Martin Kilson considers that "the mode of adjusting indigenous holders of authority and power to the colonial state, whether direct or indirect, represented a key feature of African political change". Martin Kilson, "African political Change and the Modernisation Process", *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* Vol. 4, N° 1, 1963, p. 428.

every walk of life".[7] Therefore, Sir Arthur Dawe, the Assistant Under-Secretary, criticising the old type of Indirect Rule, came to the conclusion that:

> It is absurd to erect what is an empirical expedient into sacrosanct principle. Things are moving so fast in Africa that the doctrinaire adherents of the Indirect Rule principle may find themselves out-moded much quicker than any one would have thought possible a few years ago.[8]

The Colonial Office, therefore, became determined that the chiefly establishment should be modernised and made more acceptable if it were to make a basis of any future political progress. Yet, there remained to find out what practical measures and concrete plans should be adopted to start those intended reforms. For that purpose, the Colonial Office chose Lord Hailey, an experienced man in the field who served as governor in India for a considerable time, to investigate into the reality of the chiefly system and to consider its actual readiness for reform. Lord Hailey was commissioned to undertake a careful examination of data in a number of African colonies, and then to advise the Colonial Office on the suitable improvements to be adopted.[9]

The Secretary of State for the Colonies, W. Mac Donald, was not concerned only with reforming the native administrations; he also seemed anxious to plan for other following steps. Thus, the objective of reform was not to be confined within a minimal change in the traditional system. On the contrary, it was only a beginning for other constitutional reforms in the future. Just before Lord Hailey left for Africa, W. Mac Donald held a meeting with his under-secretaries in which he put the question as follows: "It was time that we got our minds clearer as to the objects of our native policy in Africa. What exactly were we driving at in our policy of Indirect

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[7] - J. Flint, op. cit., p. 395.
[8] - Ibid.
[9] - - Hargreaves in W. H. Morris-Jones and G Fisher, op. cit., p. 78.

Rule? What was the next step in advance after we had set up efficient local native administrations?"[10]

Answers to such questions and others were embodied in Hailey's report *Native Administration and Political Development (1941)*. After two years of investigation, he came to a number of conclusions. He confirmed the view that social and economic reforms were to be an essential part of "the policy to which we stand committed of fitting them to achieve a self-governing status".[11] On the other hand, he did not advise a particular system to be adopted. Thus, he did not consider the chiefs as indispensable rulers and opted for efficiency of the native administrations. In his words: "the organisation of native authorities now follows an almost infinite variety of forms and the only standard by which their relative value can be judged is the success with which they operate".[12] Hailey reported that the educated Africans did not show hostility towards Indirect Rule where it had been effective. Thus, he concluded that they were not necessarily anti-chiefs and saw that they could provide positive contribution to the modernisation of the system. He recommended a gradual integration of those progressive elements into the chiefly system in a way that seemed to assure British control over their political ambitions.

Hailey's observations and recommendations confirmed and clarified the general basics of the then colonial policy. His remarks on the necessity of social and economic reforms before any political step reflected the Colonial Office concern to eliminate the roots of popular discontent that pushed towards the politicisation of purely socio-economic issues. Meanwhile, his suggestion to drive the educated elements towards the traditional system that the British easily controlled reflected a hope to release the educated Africans' political ambitions in an amicable direction. Lord Hailey's position was once again reaffirmed when, in 1941, he was appointed

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[10] - Flint, op. cit., p. 405.
[11] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 78.
[12] - Cited in R. Pearce, op. cit., p. 81.

head of a Colonial Office committee for post-war reconstruction in the colonies. The Committee made provisions for the social, economic, and political problems that they expected to follow the end of the war, and prepared a recommended plan of about fifty items. The plan focussed primarily on social and economic measures as a basis for reform, while urgent political reforms were still not seen as a priority.[13] Therefore, although some colonial officials might have thought of self-government as an objective of British policy in Africa, many of them considered that the time had not yet come to begin that process and did not speak about decolonisation or independence.

II- COLONIAL POLICY AND THE GROUNDS OF REFORM IN SIERRA LEONE:

The Colonial Office hurried since 1938 to apply a long-term vision of colonial reform that aimed to lead Britain's dependencies to eventual self-government. The British built their strategy of reform on two grounds: the amelioration of the social and economic situation in the colonies and the introduction of cautious political changes to increase the number of Africans in the ruling system.

Reform in Sierra Leone, in all, followed this general policy designed by the Colonial Office. However, the particularities of the country imposed some modifications. The reform policy pursued by officials on the spot sought first to eliminate the seeds of popular discontent represented in the social and economic hardships and to reorganise the labour sector. Second, the colonial authorities worked out to reduce the power of the Creoles as a potential group able to impose themselves as indispensable political collaborators. Finally, the policy of reform in Sierra Leone went towards the modernisation of the native administrations to prepare alternative collaborators for a gradual political progress. In the meantime, the grounds of a future political system were being worked out.

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[13] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 78.

The strategy of reform in the social and economic fields was built upon the existing data on the ground. The first issue of great concern for the colonial authorities was the isolation of the emerging potential labour class from politics. Hence after analyzing the situation in West Africa as a whole, the Colonial Office decided on a general strategy to be adopted there.[14] This strategy aimed at preventing the politically motivated leaders to manipulate the masses aspiring for socio-economic improvements. A twofold policy was worked out: labour reforms and improvements of infrastructure.

1- Labour Reforms:

The strategy of labour reform required that the labour force should be kept away from the communist influence. The importance of this issue for the Colonial Office was reflected in 1938 when it reinforced its staff with a Labour Advisor, Major G. St. J. Orde-Brown.[15] The latter's task was to help the Colonial Office to collect data from the colonies and draw proper plans to deal with the labour question. In this regard, the Colonial Office took the decision to assist the colonial governments with specialised labour advisors, especially in colonies where the labour force had manifested political concerns. Those labour advisors, who were usually ex-trade unionists from Britain, were expected to advise the local governments on appropriate policy towards the working classes and to inform regularly the Colonial Office on the actual labour situation.[16]

By the end of the 1930's, the workers in Sierra Leone had established themselves as a strong category able to affect political affairs in the country. The workers became a nation-wide force that included urban labour, miners, and unemployed people. The social and economic difficulties that they experienced made

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[14] - R. Pearce, op. cit., p. 78.

[15] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and G Fisher, op.cit., p.79.

[16] - An example of labour reforms in the colonies will be demonstrated in the next section with a case study in Sierra Leone.

them easy targets for manipulation by radical nationalists, especially when the drum of patriotism was beaten. Though it cannot be denied that the workers could have anti-colonial, and even, nationalist sentiments, they were primarily concerned with the amelioration of their living conditions rather than concerned with politics. Thus, reform in the labour sector started from this truth in that it aimed to reduce the vulnerability of the labourers to political discourse. The colonial authorities sought to dry the sources that fed Wallace Johnson's strength by cutting off his ideological links with the working class.

Labour reforms in Sierra Leone started effectively in June 1939 by a series of measures against the Sierra Leone Youth League's activities. The colonial Government managed to pass through the Legislative Council a number of ordinances that restricted the circulation of seditious papers used by the League for propaganda. Hence, Wallace Johnson's followers were deprived of an imperative means of access to the labour world.[17] On the other hand, the colonial Government passed other ordinances to win the workers to its side. These ordinances legalised existing registered unions and set up a principle of peaceful picketing as a legal means to solve the workers' problems. The authorities also decided to encourage suitable processes of arbitration and enquiry in addition to the adoption of the principle of the workman's compensation.[18]

In July 1939, the Colonial Office sent H. A. Nisbet as a Labour Secretary in Sierra Leone. The latter's duty was to advise the local Government on the proper policy to deal with the labour question in order to take the initiative from the League's hands and bring the workers under the control of the authorities. Therefore,

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[17] - Wilson, op. cit., p. 18.
[18] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 87. Those ordinances succeeded, to a certain extent, to restrict the League's activities. Nevertheless, it was the coming of the war that gave the authorities enough justification to end the movement of Wallace Johnson. The latter was imprisoned on the ground that he could pose a threat to the colony's security.

Nisbet quickly went towards cooperation with the unions that had been formed recently in 1938-39.[19]

Following the condition that the Home Government would grant the CDWA aid only where proper labour legislation was made, the Sierra Leone government hurried to reinforce labour reform. In 1942, a Labour Department was created to give more consideration to the labour sector. The new institution was expected to bridge the gap between the authorities and the workers through the setting up of better channels of communication. Still more important, an experienced ex-British unionist, Edgar Parry, was sent in 1942 as a Labour Advisor to the Sierra Leone Government. Parry was asked to continue the path in the direction of purifying the workers' protest from political tones. Parry came with the idea that Sierra Leone's labour question should be developed on the model of the successful British home experience to promote social democracy. Thus, after he had completed a tour round the main labour centres, he wrote in the Colonial Office paper, *Corona*:

> The creation of trade unions is itself a fairly simple matter. To fit them into a comprehensive system of industrial relations is a much more exacting task…Since we have always encouraged the colonies to follow our example, we can only hope that the workers there will eventually arrive at a more orderly method of running their affairs.[20]

To fulfil this aim, he brought with him a strategy built on two principles: industrial unionism and institutionalised protest. The first meant that labourers' problems should be treated from a social and economic angle far from politics. The workers were to be encouraged to think only about their social and economic situation rather than link them to political aspirations. The second meant that the workers should protest or claim for their rights through specific institutions set up for the purpose by the authorities. The workers were led to see trade unions as channels

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[19] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 87.
[20] - Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 436.

that should have pure objectives of solving the workers' problems rather than being political formations.

Edgar Parry and the Labour Department sought to secure peaceful means to solve problems between the workers and their employers. Wages Boards and Joint Industrial Councils were created to resolve disputes on the principle of collective bargaining instead of strikes or stoppages. Parry considered that this method was a better means for promoting the workers' status as well as their standard of living. Moreover, he searched for the cooperation of moderate union leaders to keep an eye on the workers' real concerns and to help the authorities maintain control on the labour sector. Thus, a Joint Consultative Committee embracing Government officials and workers' representatives alike was set up to advise the government on the economic, social, and labour policies.[21] The Government went even further in satisfying the workers. Between 1940 and 1945, it fixed an annual cost of living allowance for every registered worker in order to reduce part of their burden to win their support.[22]

By the end of the war, the Colonial Government seemed successful in isolating the working class from the influence of radical nationalists. Though W. Johnson was still faithful to his line after the war,[23] he had little hope of rebuilding his glorious unionist past. The colonial authorities had apparently reached at least two goals. On the one hand, the workers' claims had been purified from political tones thanks to Parry's strategy of industrial unionism and institutionalised protest, and the success of the Government to reduce the social and economic hardships. The workers themselves preferred immediate interests rather than those complex political hopes. On the other hand, new moderate union leaders were created to replace those

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[21] - Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 440.

[22] - Ibid.

[23] - As Sierra Leone's Delegate to the conference organised by the World Federation of Labour, he declared: "In countries where the people are ruled by a foreign race, whose economic exploitation is supported by the political forces of Imperialism, politics and economics are inseparable". Ibid., p. 441.

radical and politically motivated organizers. The former were introduced as the labourers' real heroes since they were able to bring better results. Eventually, the colonial authorities could eliminate an extremely crucial ground for building a Sierra Leonean nationalist movement.

2- Reforms in the Socio-economic Field:

In the same direction of reforms in the labour sector that began before the war, the British Government launched in 1940 the Colonial Welfare and Development Act. It came to reinforce labour reforms and granted considerable sums of money to help the colonies initiate social and economic developments. It was stated that the Colonial Development and Welfare Act had perforce to be used for the purpose of basic social services, public works, and utilities.[24] Thus, money should be destined, for example, to build schools, hospitals and roads. It was also recommended that the CDWA aid should contribute to reduce unemployment, and the Home Government conditioned the release of its money by a proper labour legislation in the colonies.[25] At a time of war, Britain wanted to avoid her colonial subjects' resentment and hoped to reduce popular tensions. As J. Flint has observed, by doing so the colonial officials hoped to rally support from the colonies for the British cause against Nazism.[26]

While seeking to eliminate the grounds of popular anti-colonial sentiment, the colonial authorities were looking ahead for a more effective economic exploitation of the available resources in Sierra Leone, especially at wartime. The extension of educational opportunities aimed first to satisfy colonial needs of trained personnel for a much more effective exploitation of minerals. This policy aspired to produce workingmen who would be able to adapt with the technological developments used in the mining sector in particular. Equally, the extension of sanitation returned with

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[24] - PREM 8/457, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies,* 06/06/1947, p. 01.
[25] - J. Flint, op. cit., p. 397.
[26] - Ibid., p. 402.

obvious benefits on the working force. The improvement of the means of transportation was to reinitiate a stronger pace of exploitation of agricultural and mineral riches. Therefore, the economic and social reforms that were embodied in the CDWA realised a twofold goal: to eradicate popular discontent and deprive the radical nationalists of their *raison d'être,* and to further the opportunities for a better economic exploitation of the Colony. Yet, social and economic reforms were not to be complete without concentrating on the labour sector, which proved to be an important source of political turmoil.

The sums granted to Sierra Leone were employed in this general perspective. The social and economic transformations in Sierra Leone had produced popular discontent, which dictated the necessity of state intervention. Thus, the primary objective was to overcome those grievances that led to the people's anti-colonial sense, clearly reflected in their support to the SLYL. Projects were planned and financed by the Colonial Government to reinforce the educational, health, and housing sectors especially in the interior. In addition, the transportation and public works sector saw extensive Government investments, particularly the construction of roads that linked the small towns and mines in the interior with the capital Freetown. In an attempt to popularise such projects, the colonial authorities sought to implicate the chiefdoms in a number of activities that concerned the people directly such as school and road constructions.[27] It was such a need to realise social and economic projects that partly urged the colonial authorities to seek ways to implicate the natives in the political process more appropriately. Political reforms were to come automatically, but at the logic of colonial officials.

3- The Exclusion of the Creoles as Future Collaborators:

The short experience of radical nationalism led by Wallace Johnson showed that there could be a possibility of building up a nation-wide political movement in

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[27] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 89.

spite of the existing differences between the Protectorate and the Colony. The rising educated and literate people had given little importance to their ethnic or regional differences when supporting the SLYL. None of the colonial officials in Sierra Leone had wished to see this. A strong national political movement was threatening to go beyond control, and hence, political reform seemed an urgent necessity. It was perhaps this fear (in addition to other local particularities) that made the policy towards political change in the colony a rather different matter. It was based on the assumption that the two parts of Sierra Leone should stay separate when developing politically. Therefore, political progress in Sierra Leone depended as much on the Colonial Office theoretical plans as on the desires of local officials, and Sierra Leone's particularities.

In spite of the great advantage of Sierra Leone in education and attachment to western norms, future political developments seemed at first ambiguous. In its section about Sierra Leone, Lord Hailey's report suggested that political reform in the colony was not promising. The reason, he viewed, was the Creoles' irresponsibility and inability to act as leaders of the Sierra Leone people. He explained that "their attachment to European institutions is unfortunately not supported by their economic situation and their apparent capacity for improving it".

Officials in Sierra Leone had extremely radical views about the future role of the Creoles politically. The experience of radical nationalism and the Creoles' mass support to the SLYL made the colonial authorities cease to expect that this community could be kept under control and lost hope to prepare future collaborators from among them. Now hostility towards the Creoles among colonial officials intensified. For example, Governor Douglas Jardine had revealed in 1939 his opinion that Creoles' political demands were rooted in sentiment rather than in reason. His hostility towards the Creoles was best expressed by his extremist suggestion to suspend the right to vote since the latter allowed them to elect radical elements to the

Legislative Council.[28] Lord Hailey himself became more explicit concerning why the Creoles should not become the basis of political development. He declared after a visit to Freetown in 1941, that the 1938-39 events had shown how easily this community could be "swept away by movements led by persons with low standards of responsibility and lacking in any sense of political restraint".[29]

Other reasons lying behind the rejection of the Creoles as collaborators in political progress were various. In spite of their known attachment to western principles, they had several times showed their willingness to break British paternalist attitudes. They were people who were encouraged by their education to overcome the blacks' sense of inferiority to a considerable extent. They sometimes had the courage to see themselves equal to the white race. Though their position owed a lot to the British, they did not want to stay forever regarded as children acting under control. Yet, the white officials, particularly those serving on the spot with a sense of superiority deeply rooted in their minds, resented educated blacks who sought to become like whites.

The educated Creoles, on the other hand, had always been a real threat to the careers of the whites thanks to the formers' educational qualifications. The growing pressure of the Creoles in different sectors, especially administration, annoyed colonial rulers and the European staff in Sierra Leone alike, and made them alarmed that pressure would turn to be directed to political demands, such as active participation in the ruling system. Despite being a minority, the Creoles had always pressed for direct representation for all Sierra Leoneans. In addition, they usually claimed to be the representatives of all the people of Sierra Leone. Many officials who wanted to keep the two parts of Sierra Leone separate abhorred such claims. More than this, some arrogant officials disliked that blacks challenge their white masters in the ruling system. Therefore, the Creoles' endorsement of Wallace

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[28] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 89.
[29] - Quoted from ibid., p. 87.

Johnson's radical nationalism was the straw that broke the camel's back. Those officials became more than irritated to know that many members of the NCBWA had supported the SLYL, or at least they did not show opposition to it. Only Dr. B. Bright stood against the League and helped the Government to restrict its activities. Yet, he was quickly asked to resign from his vice-presidency because he was accused of acting against the Congress line.[30] Thus, once again the colonial rulers realised the impossibility of making the Creoles submit to their authority, and eventually decided to reject them as possible collaborators.

Another point of particular importance in the case of Sierra Leone was the relative success of radical nationalism to bridge the social fissure between the Colony and the Protectorate peoples. The colonial authorities seemed worried that a strong line of solidarity of progressive forces in both parts of the country was being established. The only choice open to the British was to break down that threat by the isolation of the Creoles. Therefore, as scholar J. D. Hargreaves observes, underlying the rejection of the Creoles was a deep desire to strengthen the social and cultural differences between the two communities.[31]

The Creoles, however, could not deny the fact of being actually a minority though they retained an important place in the colonial society. Moreover, the other strong group of chiefs, who monopolised representation of the interior, fiercely opposed them. Meanwhile, the colonial rulers insisted that the Creoles had no right to be the basis of national political development. Since no strong group existed in the interior, there was a view that Sierra Leoneans had to wait for another time until the interior could vie with the Colony in matters of education, and then think of self-government. It was an alternative choice for the colonial officials on the spot, though the Creoles were still to play a role in Sierra Leone's political future.

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[30] - Akintola Wyse, op.cit., p. 697.
[31] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 83.

   4- **The Colonial Office Constitutional Reforms and the Modernization of the Native Administration in Sierra Leone**:

Talking about the authorities' alternative choice in Sierra Leone necessitates a general view of the basics of general colonial policy towards constitutional progress. Sierra Leone always followed change that was caused by events elsewhere and by the plans made in the circles of the Colonial Office.

Up to 1941, the Colonial Office was closely attached to the policy of modernising the chiefly system as a basis for any future political development in the colonies. However, the course of the War that urged the United States to enter it brought important changes to British views towards constitutional advance. When the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, signed the Atlantic Charter with the American president, he compelled Britain to accept freedom of peoples to develop politically. Ever since, the Americans whose backing during the war had been crucial began an intensive pressure for the acceleration of the pace towards self-government in the colonies. In addition, the size of political consciousness was spreading quickly thanks to Africans' participation in the war against world dictatorships. Hence, it was perhaps this combined pressure that made a number of officials in the Colonial Office and in the Colonies think of escaping American pressure and absorbing local discontent through controlled and cautious constitutional reforms.

The first important step towards constitutional reform concerned the Executive Council. In 1942, the Governor of the Gold Coast, Allan Burns, who had served as one of the under-secretaries in Hailey's Committee on Post-war Reconstruction, proposed the nomination of two or three Africans to his Executive Council. Explaining such a significant proposal, Burns argued:

> I believe that the rising tide of anti-British resentment, and the disturbances which in recent years have been symptoms of this resentment are due to the policy of differing constitutional concessions until it is too late for them to be appreciated by the

> people. The Negro people, both in the West Indies and in West
> Africa, are learning that the colonial administrations take no notice of
> popular feeling until this feeling is manifested in disturbances.[32]

Burns's proposition was, at first, opposed by a number of officials in the Colonial Office. Lord Hailey was at the head of the opponents as he considered that the time had not yet come to apply such an advanced reform. Although he had already recommended in his earlier report some changes in the centre of government, he insisted that reform should follow a slow and cautious process. Other officials hoped at least that those proposed to sit in the executive councils would be selected from the more controllable group of chiefs. Chiefs like Nana Affori Atta, an educated traditional figure from the Gold Coast, or the Ashantihene, king of Ashanti, were thought to be the best choice.[33] However, Allan Burns eventually succeeded to pass his proposition with the support of the Governor of Nigeria, Bernard Bourdillon. Later in all three territories, the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, Africans, including educated people, were appointed to the local executives.

The colonial officials in Sierra Leone severely resisted the proposal of nominating Africans to the Executive Council on the ground that the colony was not yet ready for such a major advance. For example, Governor Hubert Stevenson (1941-1947) rejected the idea and said that it would have no positive effects in Sierra Leone. This reluctance indicated at least that colonial officials on the spot were not ready to accept the entry of Creoles in the centre of government. They were afraid that Creoles' appetite for more concessions would grow. But some officials saw that the step was to cut the road in the face of radical nationalists, though they agreed that Creoles should be carefully restricted within the limits of their Colony. Finally, it was in this sense that the Sierra Leone colonial rulers accepted the nomination of a

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[32] - Hargreaves in M. Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p.79.
[33] - R. Pearce, op. cit., p. 83.

Creole, Barrister J. Fowel Boston, and Chief George Caulker to the Executive Council.[34]

Following this major and perhaps surprising constitutional advance, the way lay open for pro-reform officials in the Colonial Office. With the appointment in 1943 of a new Secretary of State, Oliver Stanley, it seemed that the pace towards more constitutional reform had been accelerated. While preparing to undertake a visit to Africa, he presided a discussion of a paper prepared by O. G. R. Williams, entitled *A Tentative Plan for Constitutional Development in West Africa*. Williams was a major reformer inside the Colonial Office who had carefully examined Hailey's Report on the Native Administrations to prepare his tentative plan. This plan rested on the view that Africans were not yet ready for self-government, but they should be trained for such an eventual end. Like Lord Hailey, Williams retained the view that constitutional development should be preceded by social and economic reforms. Yet, he hoped that these reforms would serve to bridge the gap between the educated people in the urban areas and the rural illiterate masses in order to facilitate the path towards self-government.[35]

Williams's tentative plan for constitutional development was built on five stages to achieve eventual self-government. The first stage recommended increased representation for Africans in the urban municipal councils and the creation of advisory regional councils in the rural areas based on the tribal authorities. The legislative councils should be more representative of African interests through the augmentation of the number of elected and nominated African members. Even more, Williams's plan proposed that Africans should occupy such posts like heads of departments and seats in the executive councils.[36]

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[34] - Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 435.
[35] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 79.

[36] - Originally, this is Hailey's proposal. He explained that the appointment of Africans to those posts was a way of educating them in responsibility. It was also a means of eliminating the

The second and third stages of Williams's plan were an elaboration of the first stage. The municipal and advisory councils at the local level were to be granted more prerogatives and functions. These councils were to be made able to take decisions concerning the social and economic spheres in a way that resembles the British system of local government. It was also expected that a number of measures were to make representation in the municipal and legislative councils based on direct elections. The fourth stage in the plan foresaw the possibility of introducing unofficial majorities in the national legislative councils. Finally, Williams labelled his fifth stage "Towards Self-government", and stated that in this stage the previous reforms would automatically lead to eventual self-government. However, he introduced no specific timetable for the realisation of that eventuality. On the contrary, it was stated that self-government would not be achieved within the near future. Yet, Williams's plan had created a suitable framework that served the colonial officials in Sierra Leone to prepare their future collaborating rulers.

While decolonisation was completely out of colonial official thought, concern about collaborating groups came strongly to the front during the war. Collaborators were to be drawn from both the traditional rulers and the educated Africans who were still loyal to the Empire. None of the new rising educated groups were accepted as sole collaborators either because they showed less allegiance to colonial rule or simply because they were seen as unrepresentative minorities. One of the officials in the Colonial Office, G. Seel, stood against the acceptance of the existing independent educated elites as future collaborators to the British. He pointed out that "Africans who would take part in the deliberations of the national assembly [must be] sufficiently representative of the mass of their fellow Africans".[37] On the other hand, cooperation between the educated elites and the chiefs was not an easy possibility because of differences in principles, and the mutual suspicions that the British

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grounds on which the educated Africans might play the role of "charted opposition". Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 79.

[37] - Flint, op. cit., p. 404.

themselves had always sought to reinforce. Thus, most officials opted for the spread of education among the traditional rulers to bring more efficiency to the native administrations. In 1941, the Colonial Office expert on educational matters recommended the education of chiefs, members of traditional councils, sub-chiefs, and other leading members of the tribal authorities. He said the end of this operation would be the formation of a ruling class of educated chiefs.[38]

Modernization of the Native Administrations in Sierra Leone started effectively during the early years of the Second World War. However, the early colonial attempt to reform the chiefly system came in 1937 when the British brought to the colony a similar system of Indirect Rule that was applied in Northern Nigeria. Thus, the chiefdom was to be the basic and smallest political unit. Originally, local power was vested in the hands of chiefs. In each chiefdom, there were, paramount chiefs, sub- chiefs and section chiefs, in a descending order of hierarchy.[39] The Chiefdoms were to have tribal authorities responsible for running the day-to-day affairs. They were also given local treasuries and were granted prerogatives to raise taxes and enact by-laws in social and public matters.[40] Yet, these reforms did not work well. Many paramount chiefs and other traditional rulers proved unable to go fast in modernization. Some of them preferred to maintain the former situation out of fear to lose their privileges. In addition, colonial plans of reform were themselves inadequate. Therefore by 1941, only 73 chiefdoms out of 216 had been reorganized, and it was this situation that the colonial authorities wanted to change.[41]

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[38] - R. Pearce, op. cit., p. 82. About the same time, Lord Hailey wrote: "we are justified in looking forward to a progressive advance following the emergence of a younger generation of chiefs and elders". Ibid.

[39] - Linda Edgeworth, Joshua B. Forrest, and Andrew Scallan, *Sierra Leone: A Pre- Election Assessment Report,* International Foundation for Election Systems, Washington, D. C., December 1991, p. 04.

[40] - Kup, op. cit., p.0 199.

[41] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 88.

Williams's Tentative Plan and Hailey's recommendations seemed to have received admiration in Sierra Leone as officials there started to apply their views about modernizing the native administrations.

Colonial officials in Sierra Leone were looking for an alternative group in the interior, after having worked out to eliminate the Creoles as future political collaborators. The Native Administrations now introduced better opportunities for a preparation of a more acceptable group of political leaders who would be the centre of political progress. Because modernisation[42] was going on slowly in the interior, there was enough time for the British to decide the nature of political change that should preserve the interests of the Empire. However, although the Protectorate was seeing a slow change in the economic and social spheres, it needed a modernised effective political system. Thus, modernisation of the Native Administrations came to fulfil a number of goals.

The first of these was the substitution of the Creoles by a Protectorate group embracing the strength of the chiefly system and the benefits of education. Colonial officials had always rejected the Creoles' dream to rule the Protectorate though they were educated and attached to European institutions. They insisted that the future rulers should be formed from among the people who composed the majority in the country. Such a choice was justified by the fact that an interior political group led by the chiefs composed a more obedient block of collaborators. The chiefs had usually shown acceptance of colonial policy provided that their traditional privileges were guaranteed. Unlike the Creole elite, the group of chiefs in Sierra Leone was comparatively weaker politically in front of colonial officials. They possessed neither an appropriate political experience nor an outstanding economic position in

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[42] - Modernisation is used here in the sense of a western-type change in the political system, economic development, social structure and even political and cultural awareness, especially when compared with the Colony.

the colonial economy.[43] It was then easier to direct future political progress in the country without serious checks.

Moreover, it was quite logical to give a proper consideration to the larger number of the interior people in terms of representation. Since the interior population composed about ninety per cent of Sierra Leoneans, it was natural that interior leaders should overpower the Creoles in national institutions. Though they were not yet qualified for the role, the British thought that power should not be devolved to Creoles. Otherwise, colonial policy was to face a deadlock because of the surely expected chiefs' stern opposition.

A number of colonial officials were actually enthusiastic to prove to the Creoles, who had deceived colonial expectations, that an alternative could be found. Thus, although no group in the interior was ready to inherit power, they thought that they had enough time to prepare one. The Colonial Secretary in Sierra Leone, Hilary Blood, showed his dream that reforms in the interior, particularly in the political field, would demonstrate "what can be done by people who are regarded by the intelligentsia of Freetown as still being in the most savage state".[44] Officials in Sierra Leone were not willing to see any bridge of cooperation being built between the Creoles and the Protectorate educated elements. The latter were encouraged to apply their progressive views through modernisation of the chiefly system. Overall, the Creoles were depicted in the interior as a dangerous group trying to grab the country from its real owners. Colonial rulers had always warned both the chiefs and the limited number of educated elements that the Freetown politicians were politically

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[43] -For example, unlike neighbouring countries (like Ghana) where tribal chiefs held the concessions in the mining sector, mining rights in Sierra Leone were vested in the hands of the colonial power, which was the virtual architect of the mining regime. Chaim Even- Zohar, op. cit., p. 32.

[44] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 88.

dishonest and had the power to trick them because they lacked political experience. Hence, the interior political group, to a certain extent, accepted the Government's views, and seemed to admit colonial plans without objection.

The second main objective out of the colonial tendency to modernize the Native Administrations was to maintain the hegemony of the chiefs on the people. The experience of radical nationalism had shown that many individuals or social groups in the interior could be easy targets for manipulation because of the inefficiency of the existing political structure. Those who entered the mining sector and the growing literate people, for example, started to challenge the taboo of the chiefs' arbitrary rule. Some of them began to see that their rulers should be subject to their people's judgment, and hence had to be effective rulers. Therefore, the colonial officials sought to render the chiefly system more flexible and efficient as a means to do away with popular dissatisfaction. By doing so, they put into practice a key principle that "rulers can only win the devotion of the ruled by serving them and sharing power with them".[45]

The new tendency of reform was based on the integration of the educated elements into the chiefly system. The pre-war incident of radical nationalism showed how dangerous these people could be if they were left outside the political game. Being outside the ruling system meant a growing frustration without known ends. But integration into the system meant absorption of their discontent and a release of their energies within a controllable sphere. Moreover, incorporation of those elements could lead to less criticism of colonial rule since they would be partly responsible if the colonial authorities were criticised. On the other hand, colonial rulers had been always worried that those educated people in the interior would join hands with the Freetown educated Creoles. Thus, the interior progressive elements were given an alternative to release their political ambitions.

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[45] - G. V. O. Bulkeley, "Colonies from Three Angles" *African Studies*, Vol. 3, N°3, p. 143.

Both chiefs and educated people were encouraged to go forward towards modernisation as a means to bring social and economic welfare to the Protectorate. Thus with the help of the Government, a series of annual conferences embracing the Protectorate chiefs, educated elements, and officials was initiated to discuss interior matters. The Government hoped that such meetings would enhance awareness among the interior leaders and create more harmony among them.[46] Chiefs increasingly realised the importance of backing their rule with the educated people, as the latter were able to bring useful advice. The attempt of integrating the educated people in the chiefly system could have quick results. A number of projects for social welfare were achieved. For example, the colonial health service cooperated with the traditional authorities and the educated elements to promote traditional health institutions. Equally, there were projects to extend education to a number of interior areas and to allow more children to be enrolled in primary schools. This success made by the combined effort of chiefs and educated elements encouraged colonial officials to go forward in modernisation.

Following the recommendations of O. G. R. Williams, plans were being made to create more effective local administrations and regional councils. Therefore, the tribal authority in the chiefdom was reorganised so that it could be accessible to educated people. The latter could serve as clerks, speakers, advisors and fill other posts in the administration. Moreover, they were able to stand in elections to be chiefs. The tribal authority in the chiefdom became an electoral college in charge of selecting two representatives into the thirteen advisory regional councils,[47] named the District Councils. The District Council was a platform where the chiefdoms concerns were discussed, and a body that could issue by-laws for the local matters.

The other duty of the District Councils was the election of representatives to the Protectorate Assembly. The latter was in fact a Protectorate legislature which

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[46] - Kup, op. cit., p. 199.

[47] - The number of districts was reviewed after the war and by 1951, the Protectorate was composed of twelve districts.

comprised 42 members. The District Councils elected 26 members, two from each District, while the interior educated class had the privilege of sending two members. The Assembly included 11 officials, a representative of the Creoles living in the interior, a representative of European commercial interests, and a representative of the missionaries.[48]

While Sierra Leone seemed going ahead seriously, though slowly, with political progress, the question of the administration of the colonies started to take an international dimension by the last days of the War. A number of states in the world, on top of them the United States and the Soviet Union, began to call for international supervision of the colonies' affairs. Britain stood against any interference in her colonies and maintained that British administration was working well in the direction of the colonial subjects' interest. While presenting a speech in the United States in 1944, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Colonel Stanley, manifested his country's rejection of international administration of the colonies, and declared that it would bring no good to the colonial subjects. He also said: "I think the policy of international administration of British colonies has very few adherents nowadays either here or in the colonies themselves. I myself think it would be disastrous".[49]

Other politicians in Britain from outside the Colonial Office rejected the idea of international administration of British colonies. In 1944, an advisory committee from the Liberal Party, which included ex-colonial officials like Bernard Bourdillon, showed in a report about the future of British colonies its dissatisfaction with the principle of internationalisation. The members of the committee were determined to stand against any attempt to reduce "British responsibility", and resented any kind of international interference in the affairs of the Empire. They argued, "Africans' status as British colonial subjects is a matter of pride among them. We do not believe that

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[48] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 89.
[49] - *West Africa*, February 1944.

they would wish to alter, even though they may well wish to improve, this status".[50] British negative response to the demand of internationalisation of the question of colonies derived partly from a thought that colonies were economically and strategically important.[51] On the other hand, British businessmen operating in the area had considerable trade interests that they were not ready to lose for the benefit of others. Therefore, those operators were pressing for a quick return to the pre-war situation in which they acted freely under colonial protection. They explained that Britain now "could not consume all that West Africa will want to sell (oil seeds, for example) and we should plan to make the United Kingdom the great distributing centre, the great transhipment zone in the Northern Continent".[52] It was within this scope that further reforms became to be seen as a necessary means to avoid internationalisation of the question of colonies.

The talk of internationalisation worried the British to a point that urged them to determine what they exactly needed from the colonies. Since the issue of international supervision surprised them, they seemed to convey that their attachment to the colonies was based on the will and interests of the colonial peoples themselves. That is why the British kept talking about the right of the latter to achieve self-government, but without limiting a clear time-table for that objective. The end of the war came without a clearly-stated objective of British policy towards the colonies. Although there was a talk about self-government, this was depicted as a utopian dream that one would wait for generations to see. Representing the official line of colonial policy, O. Stanley, spoke about such a dream to which the present generation could contribute very little. In his words:

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[50] - *West Africa,* September 1944.
[51] - Oliver Stanley, the Secretary of State, told the British people in 1944: "about 40 per cent of our fat rations are coming from West Africa, and nearly half your soap comes from there". Ibid.
[52] - *West Africa*, January 1945.

> It is a dream to which I can make only a transient contribution. A dream the complete fulfilment of which I may never live to see, but it is a dream that, in the end, I know will come true. It is a dream of a British Commonwealth of Nations in which these colonial peoples will have their proper place; a commonwealth which, in time of peace, will enshrine the fundamentals of life on which you and we agree; and which, in time of crisis, will give its whole resources of men and material to a world organisation for the defence of right.[53]

III- POST-WAR PRESSURES FOR DECOLONISATION

The Second World War was a turning point in the history of colonialism in Africa. The effects of the war paved the way towards the decolonisation of most British colonial possessions so that by the 1960's most African countries had become independent. It was also in this period that the early foundations of those countries' political future were laid down. Because Sierra Leone was a case to be dealt with in a general colonial context, it is necessary to understand the shift in Britain's imperial policy from a focus on reforms in the colonies to decolonisation. The discussion of the impact of the war on colonial Britain will reveal why and how colonial reforms turned into a process of decolonisation. This section will, therefore, examine the post-war circumstances that directly forced the British to go ahead with decolonisation as the best policy, after having paved the way for it through previous reforms.

Britain's main preoccupation was how to rebuild her devastated economic and social infrastructure. However, the British still had an open eye on their

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[53] - *West Africa*, September 1944.

dependencies all over the world. Possible changes in their colonial policies were determined by how far they and their colonies had been affected by the war. As for British, though still having a great colonial power, they were facing immense pressure that was forcing them to rearrange their attitudes towards the imperial question. Therefore, the post-war years saw a quickening pace of change towards the devolution of political power to local groups. Only two years after the end of the world hostilities, Britain found herself deprived of her ex-brightest jewel of the Crown, India. Quickly afterwards, British authority in other Asian colonies fell apart like a domino game. The African situation was not to be isolated from those big changes, in spite of differences in backgrounds between the two continents. Therefore, within only ten years of India's independence, the African colonies started to follow a similar path towards political independence.

In the few years following the war, there began a wider serious talk about self-government, though many officials regarded that it would be reached within generations. More unexpectedly, the start of decolonisation had begun very early at the surprise of many previous colonial planners. Thus, what made this quick and radical change in Britain's imperial policy that hastily brought the phenomenon of decolonisation into effect?

1- International Pressures for Decolonisation

The international scene saw several changes that were all pressing in the direction of forcing Britain to revise her imperial policy. In fact, international pressure had existed before, yet post war pressure was so strong that it became irresistible.

By the end of the war, Britain found herself in a world different from that which had existed before. She had already lost her place (with France) as a super power. Now The United States and the U.S.S.R took the leadership of the world.

More importantly, the two powers became strongly anti-colonial and advocated the oppressed peoples, though with different motives.

The United States exercised the greatest part of this pressure. Britain and France were indebted to the Americans whose help during the war was vital to victory. Thus, American pressure could easily obtain results. The main motives lying behind this American attitude were related to the war on communism, which threatened American economic expansion in the Third World. The Russians, who abandoned their pre-war isolation, became active and energetic to spread Communism, seizing the opportunity of post-war hardships in the colonies. In fact, Russia had already been moving westward to the heart of Europe, and in Africa, and was trying to revive her older dreams to have a foothold there. The general ground was favourable to penetration in that there were already dissatisfied African nationalists who showed adherence to Communism. Overall, African nationalists after the war reacted positively to the Russians as a means to express hatred to colonial capitalism. The Americans were face to face with the threat of a quick spread of that ideology among colonial peoples. Therefore, they were willing to see independent African states non-hostile to capitalism, and hence, could form peaceful markets for her growing economy.[54]

Americans explicitly called for the right of dominated peoples to decide their own destiny by themselves. Although by the end of the war Prime Minister Winston Churchill was declaring that the principles of the Charter did not concern the Africans, the Americans continued to insist on the generalization of those principles for all colonial peoples. The United Nations' Charter reaffirmed the Americans' claims after the war. The Charter maintained the right of all peoples in the world to choose their own future government. Then, United Nations' sessions became splendid forums for American attacks on colonial rule. Americans also used their

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[54] - A. Mazrui, *Nationalism and New States in Africa* (London, Heinemann, 1984) p. 12.

diplomacy as well as behind-the scenes activities to convince the worldly opinion of the necessity of liberating colonial subjects. Anti-colonial members in the UN, who overwhelmingly outnumbered the pro-colonialists, made more pressure. The Americans' view was strengthened thanks to similar anti-colonial positions by Russia, the newly independent Asian countries, and Latin American states.[55] It was then that the British realised that it "should be stressed that [the colonies] cannot be considered as apart from the rest of the world".[56]

While the Americans exercised a direct pressure on Britain, the Russians exercised indirect pressure through their considerable influence on colonial peoples. Nationalists who were frustrated by the colonial situation particularly felt this influence. Communist leaders in Russia provided the colonial peoples with an ideology that was based on a critical attack on capitalism and colonialism. Beginning with Lenin and others, the communists advanced theories, which inflamed the hearts of dominated peoples. Communist theories depicted capitalism and capitalists as the curse that caused the sufferings of those peoples, because the former had been driven by the desire of exploitation, and that they were seeking to enrich themselves at the detriment of the native inhabitants. Before World War II, the Russians were attempting to gain support for their ideology in Africa. For example, they tried to use trade unionism as a spearhead for penetration into Sierra Leone. Pan-Africanism was another channel through which attempts were made to reach the minds of the African intelligentsia, particularly during the leadership of George Padmore. After the war, African nationalists had every reason to back themselves with a powerful friend at the size of the Russians, especially that the latter declared their full support for the colonial peoples' struggle for independence.

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[55] - The independent African states (Egypt, Liberia, Ethiopia and South Africa) could hardly influence world politics at that time. They themselves still suffered from different forms of imperial control.

[56] - CAB 134/65 *Colonial Implications of President Truman's "Fourth Point"*, Draft Report to the Official Committee on Economic Development by the Committee on Colonial Development, 05/04/1949, p. 02.

The Russians, on the other hand, constituted an example of success, which the Africans could only admire. The communists began in 1917 as an oppressed group against the Kaiser royalist regime, but they could achieve great success within a short time. They quickly showed that Socialism was a viable alternative as it transformed a backward agricultural country into an industrial power able to vie with European powers. They also could spread education and social organisation at a large scale. The strength of the communists lied in their ability to provide an alternative to Capitalism. In addition to that, the Africans, who had been used to a sense of inferiority, found refuge in the Socialists' sense of determination to oppose their opponents and to reach their objectives. Africans, therefore, were given confidence to let away their sense of inferiority and adopt a defying line to Capitalism and colonial rule. The Russians' readiness to support radical means of resistance, especially armed revolutions, could encourage the sense of challenge among Africans. For the British, this was the worst to be expected and a reason that made them think of reforms through controlled constitutional progress.[57]

In the same way as the Russians were seen as a model, Indian nationalism had always been seen as an example of successful movements since the 1920's. In West Africa a parallel organisation to the Indian Congress Party was formed. Thus, the National Congress of British West Africa, which was launched by the West African intelligentsia, partly reflected an admiration of Indian nationalism.[58] After the war successful Indian nationalism, which could achieve independence in 1947, was an interesting experience to follow.

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[57] - As Martin Kilson points out, "absence of physical force in African hands left the colonial oligarchy comparatively free to determine to which type of African power would be transferred". M. Kilson, op. cit., p. 432.

[58] - A Nigerian paper asserted in 1920 that ''West Africans have discovered today what the Indians…discovered 35 years ago that placed as they were under the controlling influence of the foreign power, it was essential for their well-being that they should make a common sense and develop national unity''. Mazrui, op. cit., p17.

The Indians' influence was completed by an anti-colonial lobbying exercised inside the halls of the UN. After 1947, India became a full member in the United Nations where the Indians gave a useful backing to anti-colonial and pro-independence trends. Having known British domination for long, they were easy to show a strong support for a complete release of Africans from foreign control. Therefore, the Indians often joined hands with the lobbying work done by the new powers, the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R. For Britain, all three factors that sprang from Indian nationalism (India's independence, her lobbying work in the U.N., and her influence on African nationalists) meant that she had to prepare herself for a similar experience in Africa, and particularly in West Africa.

Though British colonial philosophy was somewhat different in its view to events in each of Asia and Africa,[59] political leaders could calculate that African nationalists would soon follow the successful Indian example. It was only a matter of time. Priority was now given to how Britain could avoid similar clashes to those done against Indian nationalism and to preserve her interests with minimum losses. The prevailing trend among officials went towards the suitability of partnership rather than conflict.[60] It was also a conviction that the British would cease to prepare collaborators and would seek to bring existing nationalists to collaborate on accepted grounds. In this way, the Indian example could be said that it had done much to

[59] - The British were holding the view (as they had always done) that India and the other South East Asian countries were better qualified to be granted independence. Africans, however, were not. The reason was that the former countries and their peoples were better educated with thousands of university graduates, whereas in Africa only a narrow minority could boast of university degrees. In addition, people in Asia had been under British influence for a longer time, things that allowed them to get more experience. Therefore, as a historian put forward, "it did not seem [to the British] that there was any essential contradiction between withdrawing from South East Asia and continuing for another half a century to govern her African colonies", R. Oliver and A Atmore, *A History of Africa since 1800* (London, Cambridge University Press,1996) p. 193.

[60] - In 1949, Dr. I. C. Greaves, Colonial Lecturer and Research Worker, wrote about the term saying: "Some future historian may find it interesting to discover just when and why 'partnership' replaced 'trusteeship' as the governing principle of British colonial policy." *West Africa,* May 21, 1949.

influence both the British, as well as Africans. Britain was keen to understand African claims rather than being humiliatingly forced to quit. Summarising the situation, a historian rightly commented that by the loss of India, "the British… had lost much of their former prestige and self-confidence".[61]

Pan-Africanism becoming an African affair was another factor pressing towards decolonisation. Before World War II, the Africans had been playing a smaller role in the Pan-African movement. The latter was largely controlled by Afro-Americans with greater concern for Negroes in the New World. However, the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, in 1945, saw an important shift at the level of leadership and orientation of the movement. It was then that African activists' views were given heavier weight than those of Afro-Americans. The situation in the African colonies, especially British colonies, overwhelmed the discussions. "Africa for Africans" was adopted as an African commitment showing enthusiasm for self-determination. For the African activists, independence was the ultimate dream that should be pursued.

After lengthy discussions, the delegates resolved: "we demand for black Africa autonomy and independence, so far and no further than it is possible in this one world for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation"[62]. The 1945 Congress crystallised an essential conviction among African Pan-Africanists that was to shape the line of the movement in the future. They eventually put forward that the struggle should be transferred from activities in the European capitals towards the colonies themselves. The new trend attempted to promote cooperation with the local nationalists for the sake of educating the people of the necessity to throw off colonial rule and get independence as an absolute right.. In this regard, the Sierra Leonean representative W. Johnson told the representatives: "African students in Britain should not go back to their home in Africa assuming a

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[61] - C. Cross, T*he Fall of the British Empire* (London, Paladin, 1970) p. 263.

[62] - C. Cross, op. cit., p. 270.

role of superiority, but should cooperate with the workers' movement for the advantage of all coloured peoples".[63] They viewed that independence was not a favour that Europeans would do to Africans, rather they would hardly compensate for the sufferings caused by the white race.[64] Therefore, the colonial powers were bearing a debt that should be paid to African peoples. They concluded that freedom for all coloured peoples "could never be achieved until they had won the battle over for political independence".[65]

Another important step forward was made in that Congress. Africans declared that they were prepared to use radical means to reach their aims. Violence was explicitly made a possibility if colonial Britain were not to show flexibility to their demands. The presence of radical elements in the Congress, like W. Johnson from Sierra Leone, was to enhance the credibility of such threats. The delegates resolved:

> The delegates of the fifth Pan-African Congress believe in peace. How could it be otherwise then, and for centuries the African peoples have been victims of violence and slavery. Yet if the Western World is still determined to rule mankind by force, the Africans, as a last resort, may have to appeal to violence in the effort to achieve freedom, even if force destroys them and the world.[66]

British policy makers had to cope with the returning Pan-African leaders to African territories. The new faces that appeared in the last Pan-African congress, like the Gold Coaster, Kwame Nkrumah, the Kenyan Jomo Kenyata, or the Tanzanian Julius Nyeréré, proved to be potential leaders able to rally mass support. Thanks to their skills, learnt partly through their activities in the Pan-African movement, they

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[63] - Cited in W*est Africa*, November 1945.

[64] - The British had the opinion that "the United Kingdom has done more than any other country to develop backward areas and bring them to nationhood and should not hesitate to say so." CAB 134/65 *Colonial Implications of President Truman's "Fourth Point"*, op. cit., p. 01.

[65] - CAB 134/65 *Colonial Implications of President Truman's "Fourth Point"*, op. cit., p. 01.

[66] - Quote from Mazrui, op cit. p. 22.

could find their way easily among the African masses. Wise and realistic officials, especially after the success of Indian nationalism, thought of avoiding clashes with this type of African nationalists. Thus, new forward reforms were perceived by colonial officials as a suitable way out to redirect nationalists' negative and harmful energies to a sort of cooperative constructive effort. "So at least", as historian R. Pearce concludes, "it might be a stake in something worthwhile".[67]

2- Internal Pressures on Colonial Rule and the Growth of African Political Nationalism

The impact of the war in the colonies themselves and the consequent reactions to them made by Africans worked in the same direction of pressing towards decolonisation. Those African nationalists who had a significant role in the coming of the process of decolonisation were aided -in addition to external factors- with a changing socio-economic atmosphere that was very hostile to colonial rule.

The social and economic situation in the colonies in the post-war years was generally characterised by a continuing deterioration. Africans' lives were not worsened only by the hardships that naturally followed the war, but also by a number of colonial restrictions. For instance, West African produce was sold at high prices in foreign markets, yet the results were disappointing for the common people. Consumer goods sought after by an ever increasing urbanised colonial society came from abroad and were both expensive and in short supply, at a time when the European importers were increasingly suspected of taking advantage of the situation at the expense of the natives.[68] The latter obviously accused the colonial authorities of being unable, if not unwilling, to intervene to improve the situation.[69] Meanwhile,

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[67]-R. Pearce, op. cit., p. 93.

[68] -Fage, A. *History of West Africa* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1969) p. 208

[69] - British officials acknowledged that "colonial peoples are demanding a higher standard of life with the amenities which that implies, and it is right that they should be enabled to attain them". CO 852/870/19294/62, *Despatch from Sir S. Caine*1947-48, op. cit.

these authorities were putting on the ground extensive plans for more exploitation of African resources, particularly mineral wealth. However, the Africans were denied any opportunity of exploitation of their own riches. Therefore, Africans stood face to face to an overt theft of their own resources while still suffering from a variety of hardships.

Although the colonial governments attempted to improve the socio-economic situation through the 1945 Colonial Welfare and Development Act,[70] they could do nothing to wipe out the people's discontent. The reason was that those social and economic reforms were a means rather than an end. The real prize was not the Africans' welfare, but the establishment of a proper ground for a better future exploitation of the available resources and a quick recovery in the declining British economy. Infrastructure projects in education, healthcare, and transport, for example, were concentrated in areas that had future perspectives for economic growth. Thus, the results of the CDWA were very modest to face the complicated effects of the war.

The social changes that happened because of the war intensified Africans' sense of frustration. During the war and the following years, many Africans in the rural areas tended to shift towards urban or semi-urban centres, especially the capitals. The reason was that people judged it would be better to live in towns rather than in the countryside, particularly that the war effort created considerable jobs there. In addition, life opportunities were better in urban centres than in rural areas where the modern facilities were hardly found. Those who were attracted to this movement were primarily the literate elements, quasi-literate young men, and some illiterates. Consequently, the great number of the new comers swept the available jobs and caused a rise in the rate of unemployment. The unemployed had to face new

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[70]-This Act, which followed that of 1940, provided £120million available during the period extending to 1956, and £17.500.000 as maximum expenditure in one year. *West Africa,* Jan. 5, 1946.

hardships against a rising cost of living, and eventually constituted a huge reservoir of malaise. In addition to that, contact with the Europeans in towns and in the rural areas revealed mutual hatred, even if not explicitly expressed. This hatred was based on race and colour bars. Africans refused whites' views towards them as inferior. Thus, those Africans who were seeking a better life increasingly saw that colonial rule was linked to those ostracises of white men. As expressed by a writer, "it is not always easy for an illiterate worker or farmer to distinguish between opposition to colonial rule and antagonism to white people".[71] Then, the peoples' involvement in direct contact with the whites generated among the masses a sense of antagonism to colonial rule.

The return of thousands of ex-service men to their colonies also contributed to the extension of popular discontent. These men acquired more consciousness thanks to their contact with other men of distant territories, and different cultures. For example, the African soldiers who took part in the war could see whites that were as humble as they were, unlike what they had been thinking about that superior white race. They also came close to other peoples fighting for their independence. Asians, for instance, taught many Africans the principles of nationalism and the meaning of sacrifice for the sake of their nations. The Africans were perhaps witnessing, for the first time, oppressed people fighting to free their territories from the tyranny of the Japanese. Therefore, the ex-servicemen returned with an enhanced self-confidence and expected the colonial rulers to weigh properly their war-effort for the sake of Britain's victory. They wanted, in a sense, to be rewarded for their sacrifices.[72]

These men, however, did not find what they had hoped for. When they came back to civilian life, many found themselves unemployed or, at best, unable to face the increasing cost of living. More importantly, most of them felt betrayed; their sacrifices were faced with indifference on the part of colonial rulers. Thus, they were

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[71] - *West Africa*, 9 December 1946.
[72] -Mazrui, op. cit., p. 20.

becoming increasingly politically committed. They became convinced that only political reforms would return them their dignity. The combination of socio-economic grievances with political ambitions led to a discontent that was often expressed through violent means. In the Gold Coast, the ex-servicemen were among the leading groups during the bloody riots in Accra and other towns, in 1948.

To conclude, the war brought its quick impact on the colonial peoples in several aspects of their life. Economic difficulties and social instability led to popular discontent, which formed a suitable ground for the growth of anti-colonial sentiments. As historian John Hatch puts it: "it was inevitable that the war should affect the political climate for it made a drastic impact on the social and economic structures from which sprang political activities".[73]

The growth of nationalist movements came as a direct result of that discontent. The post-war years saw an enhancement of nationalism that was able to affect British attitudes towards political progress and eventually compelled them to start decolonisation.

West Africans, including Sierra Leoneans, had a developed tradition in nationalist activity thanks to pioneer movements in the inter-war period. By the end of the war, many of the educated groups, particularly in the Gold Coast and Nigeria, started to recognise their inner capacities to counteract their colonial rulers. The increasing numbers of Africans taken in the colonial service, hospitals schools and other fields, strengthened Africans' sense of pride in their abilities, and incited them to be self-confident. As expressed by a writer, "the increased opportunities for technical and administrative training gave the Africans powers which resulted in a deeper self-confidence and determination to take a more active part in their countries' development".[74]

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[73] J. Hatch, *A Post-War History of Africa* (New York, Praeger, 1965), p. 223.
[74] - A. Boahen in Gann L. H. and P. Duiguan, *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960* (London, Macmillan Press, 1974) p. 300.

The educated and literate men were so ambitious that they wanted to defeat the white administrators, teachers or others whom, they saw, as arrogant and often pretentious. That task could be done only through a control over their own destiny. In addition, political consciousness sprang among wider popular groups thanks to the increased number of literate persons who often transferred their political awareness to other illiterate categories. Thus, the spread of awareness among larger popular categories created an atmosphere suitable for the African nationalists to launch their final struggle for self-government.

The British came to a conviction that they had to deal with the existing nationalists rather than prepare collaborators to hold British power after them. They eventually left the ideal of "trusteeship" and crystallised the principle of "partnership".[75] In the African context, partnership meant an understanding on the part of colonial Britain that progress towards self-government and perhaps independence was inevitable, but should occur with minimum losses. On the African part, partnership meant that the British had a variety of interests that should be maintained. Therefore, those who were expected to hold power after the British had to be accepted by the latter on the ground that they would maintain cooperation, especially in the economic field. In fact, the African nationalists did not seek to break completely from the Empire and did not seem to refuse colonial heritage. On the contrary, they were deeply convinced of the necessity to rely on the help of a great power. Nationalists themselves bore little hostility to cooperation.[76]. The African nationalists who were willing to seize power for them actually could hardly get rid of the metropolitan power. Most of the administrative, educational, and economic personnel were Europeans. The European firms and companies held a strong hand on

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[75]- *West Africa*, 9 December 1950. "Partnership" may be defined as an agreement between two or more people for pursuing a common purpose on the basis of joint contributions and joint liabilities", A. Boahen in Gann L. H. and P. Duiguan, op. cit., p. 300.

[76] - The Gold Coast nationalists, for example, wanted to obtain a dominion status but insisted to remain within the Commonwealth of Nations. They viewed that "such a state must necessarily, in the present day world, function within the orbit of a great power"*West Africa*, March 1950.

key economic sectors like the mining enterprise and the capital for investments was in their hands.

The educated people, who were becoming solidly established national elites, were the most favoured groups to fit the role of power inheritors. They were the best that could run a European-style government, thanks to their European-style way of thinking and character. Moreover, they were able to have a national characteristic thanks to the similarities they had in status across each single territory. Therefore, although there existed other elites in the colonial societies, such as chiefs, those could not outrun the new national elites. The British certainly suspected the educated elites' non-cooperation, but they did not find better alternatives. The British could place these classes in power with political, economic, and social privileges, and keep them with a heavy dependence on the metropolitan help. This together with a proper diplomacy could easily secure their loyalty.

3- The Revision of Imperial Strategy: a Return to Informal Empire:

As often in history, economic factors played a decisive role in the vision built by British policy planners about the future of colonial rule in Africa. Britain went out of the war economically weaker than before. The war effort caused the expiration of funds, and consequently, caused an "economic crisis as serious as any in her long history".[77] The United Kingdom, in particular, suffered from the depletion of its internal and external resources in the war, and from inadequate production as an aftermath of the war. During 1947, her gold and dollar reserves decreased by no less than £1,023 million.[78] These unparalleled economic difficulties were to incite British officials to arrange for accepted solutions with minimum losses. These difficulties led the British to seek a way out to keep the colonies dependent economically rather than politically. British officials at home and in the colonies realised that British

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[77] - CO 852/870/19294/62 *Outward Telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 20 August 1947.

[78] - CO 852/870/19294/62, *The Colonial Empire and the Economic Crisis*, 1947-48.

economy should be saved from decline through benefiting from the colonies in spite of the pressures in favour of decolonisation.

Britain had to face American economic domination through the rebuilding of colonial economies and keeping Americans out. The War caused the sterling to lose gradually its position to the dollar as a powerful international coin that seduced most economic operators.[79] Consequently, British economy became dependent on the dollar fluctuations. The Americans who showed a willingness to bring financial help to Britain were suspected of attempting to impose too much control on the British. What is known as President Truman's "Fourth Point",[80] was welcome with lukewarm.[81] It seemed that the British were certain that the Americans would soon seize the economic opportunities in the colonial territories.[82] Therefore, immediate action was necessary, whatever the direction would be.

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[79] -Even the Africans were leaning towards a preference of trade with the United States. Selling products in return for sterling was not as attractive as selling in return for dollars

[80] - President Truman's "Forth Point" had as its main features:- American scientific advance and industrial progress to be made available for the benefit of the underdeveloped areas; the material resources which the United States could contribute were limited; the main aim would be to help free peoples through their own efforts; the programme should be a cooperative one, i.e., all countries should pool technological resources through the United Nations Specialized Agencies; the programme would involve the cooperation of the United States business, private capital, agriculture, and labour to increase industrial activity and raise standards of living in the under-developed areas concerned. CAB 134/65 *Colonial Implications of President Truman's "Fourth Point",* op.cit., p. 01.

[81] - The British insisted on the priority of areas like communications, health, education…etc, because they were not attractive to American enterprise. Colonial Britain thought that "if the Americans really want to make an effective contribution from their side they should be thinking in terms of development and welfare grants rather than commercial loans, or of Government-sponsored corporations rather than private flotations"

[82] - An American Official, Mr. Harriman, had insisted, before the U. S. House of Representatives, "on the long-range importance of developing colonial territories belonging to participating countries and said that the development of their resources offered one of the most constructive opportunities for American investment." *Colonial Implications of President Truman's "Fourth Point"*, op. cit., p. 01.

Yet, Britain was face to face with a deteriorating financial situation in the colonies at a time of a rising popular discontent. This led the British to think of reforms that would guarantee a proper exploitation of the colonies for a quick recovery in Britain's economy.[83] The British insisted that the colonial peoples should bear their responsibilities, and were accused, especially after the war, of consuming more than producing. The following table shows the recession of colonial exports after the war.

Table N° 1: Value of UK exports from British colonies', Exports ('000 of tons decorated)

Exported items	1936	1946
Kernels	482	363
Coconut products	279	114
Sugar	840	814
Bananas	300	86
Cocoa	392	306
Coton	192	119.

Source: CO 852/875/19298/63 *Colonial Development Working Party, Colonial Production Targets,* Note by Colonial Office, 27 April 1948.

Moreover, the British had in mind that they expended on their colonies more than they benefited. In a tone that clearly reflected a sense of having colonies as a burden, the Secretary of State stated that colonial peoples should help through several means. He said:

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[83] - The Secretary of State for the Colonies, J. H. Hall, was declaring the following in 1945 : "All parts of the empire have shared in the sacrifices and burdens of the war, but the financial burdens borne by the United Kingdom have been very much greater than those which have all fallen on any part of the Commonwealth... [Therefore] the colonial dependencies will play their part in the joint effort, as it is indeed in their interest" *West Africa*, Jan 5, 1946.

> They can ensure that they do not add to the United Kingdom's difficulties by themselves importing more than they can pay for with current earnings, since that would involve using up colonial reserves and asking the United Kingdom to export goods without any return in imports…many colonial territories can help by increasing their production of goods which the United Kingdom at present has to pay in dollars.[84]

The UK was to undertake maximum exploitation of colonial resources to reconstruct her economy.[85] In a dispatch to the colonial governments, the Secretary of State insisted that the "primary requisite is an improvement of the economic position in the colonial dependencies, the utilisation of their natural resources to the greatest extent possible and the widening of opportunity for human enterprise and endeavour".[86] The latter statement and the like clearly indicated a real desire to seize every opportunity offered in the colonies.

This objective had already been put through practical steps. During the war and after, foreign trade with the colonies was restricted to the sole benefit of the British. Africans were not allowed to sell their products as they wished. On the contrary, they had to sell them to special boards created by colonial governments. The main argument introduced was that such financial boards would secure African produce from possible fluctuations in the world markets.[87] However, the prices paid to local producers were always lower than the real ones paid in the worldly markets. Therefore, the British seemed to seek the achievement of two objectives. First, the extra sums of money were to be used to recover the health of British economy and to

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[84] - CO 852/870/19294/62, *Outward Telegram from the Sec. of State for the Colonies*, op. cit.

[85] - The amount to be devoted from United Kingdom funds to the development of the resources of colonies and the welfare of their people increased to a total of £120 million. *Despatch from Sir S. Caine, 1947-48,* op. cit.

[86] - Ibid.

[87] - This was argued through the fact that extra sums taken from African producers in good times would be used to pay them the same standard price even if the price for the African produce would fall in world markets.

face the hegemony of the United States. Second, opportunities for further exploitation were being opened under the cover of "development plans".[88]

Another indication of the importance of reforms in the colonies for the recovery of British economy was the foundation of new institutions with economic priorities. For example, the Colonial Office services were enhanced by the creation of the Economic Intelligence and Planning Department, supervising nine specialised committees.[89] This department was made a cell for preparing economic plans in the colonies, on the basis of the data collected on the ground. In the same way, colonial thinkers in London sought to weaken the economic hardships through the foundation of the Colonial Development and Welfare Corporation.[90] The then Labour Government hoped to establish national economic independence from the U.S.A., after the serious shortages in raw materials and food in 1947. The Corporation, which was seen by the Secretary of State as greatly required,[91] tried to put into effect several projects in the colonies, though many of them failed. The officials' declarations were in many instances attesting on the desire for exploitation in clear terms. For example, Norman Brooks, Secretary to the Cabinet, put forward in 1948:

> At recent meetings, there has been general support for the view that the
> development of Africa's economic resources should be enhanced forward
> rapidly in order to support the political and economic situation of the United
> Kingdom … At the level of political broadcast, [this policy] might be

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[88] -Lord Swinton, a member of the House of Lords, wrote: "economic sufficiency and security in Europe and America depend on the development of colonial territories". *West Africa,* 17 January 1948

[89] -R-Pearce, op. cit., p. 89

[90] - The Secretary of State put forward that the Colonial Development Corporation is required to rehabilitate colonial economies. *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 06/06/1947, op. cit., p. 01.

[91] - *Ibid.*

represented as a policy of exploiting native peoples in order to support the standards of living of the workers in this country.[92]

Although some officials in Britain believed that the colonies were "not the only market in which our commercial interests or indeed our national interests lie",[93] there were still economic interests that had to be protected. What was important in priority, as the years attested, was not the political aspect but rather the economic interest. The colonisers were perhaps flexible as to accept sharing political power with Africans in case of necessity, but they were not ready to let away their economic interests. That is why the British thought of economic reforms before any other reforms. This view was present among the Colonial Office officials even before the end of the war, and was strengthened later thanks to the rising international and local (in the colonies) hostility towards colonial rule. On the other hand, pressure groups lobbied the colonial decision makers to work out to preserve their economic interests through convenient means, even through consent with available nationalists. Therefore, many came to believe that the interests of the Empire did not mean necessarily the maintenance of Britain's political authority, but the necessity to solve her economic problems and the establishment of long-term control on the economies of her colonies. This could be done through a gradual devolution of political power to Africans on studied grounds to escape both international and local pressures. In the course, those colonies were to be prepared to join the newly born multi-racial Commonwealth of Nations, which was expected to assure the mother country's domination in the economic field. The Commonwealth was also a useful means of preserving Britain's prestige on the international scene. In

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[92] - R-Pearce, op. cit., p. 67. Addressing the African governors meeting in a conference the Chancellor the Exchequer, Cripps Stafford declared: "the whole future of the sterling group and its ability to survive depends in my view upon a quick and extensive development of its African resources". R. Pearce, op. cit., p. 89.

[93] - CO 852/875/19298/63, *Colonial Development Working Party, Steel Supplies for the Colonies*, Memorandum by Mr. Strach.

the words of Colonial Office officials, "there is a movement on the one hand towards self-government of the component parts, and on the other towards closer economic union".[94]

After decades of direct colonial rule, there appeared to some colonial thinkers that the earlier British formula that the colonies were "millstone round our necks"[95] was true to a large extent. Responsibility of ruling peoples with explicit hostility towards foreign rulers harassed British officials on the spot and at home. In particular, the latter were increasingly feeling longing to the old order of Informal Empire when Britain was enjoying the benefits of trade without the troubles of direct responsibility.[96] The same principle was revived in the minds of some officials as a useful imperial policy.

Romantic Britons were also seeing that Imperial Britain was promoting a major human project through launching new baby nations to this world. They thought that Britain had finally succeeded to lead primitive peoples through education, economic development, and political training to create nations which the formed nationalists were seeking to rule. The creation of nations at the British model, therefore, was an achievement that the British could boast of. In his *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire,* James Lawrence best summarised the situation:

> In 1945, the gravediggers of Empire commenced work. No government before or after 1945 took a conscious decision to dissolve the Empire, but equally none was prepared to embark on an alternative course, its preservation come what may. The ministers, diplomats, soldiers and civil servants who found themselves responsible for devising and carrying out the policies of imperial disengagement did not imagine that they were parties to a funeral. Rather, they saw themselves as

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[94] - *Despatch from Sir S. Caine* 1947-48, op. cit.
[95] - A phrase of Benjamin Disraeli (Prime Minister) in 1852, cited in A. Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (London, 1959) p. 385
[96] A. Boahen in Gann and Duiguan (eds.), *op. cit.,* p.

midwives, facilitating the births of new nations which were emerging from the imperial womb.[97]

Thus, decolonisation started to be seen, especially in the long run, as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. The British did not really regret to slough themselves off from formal rule as long as the colonial resources remained under control. Consequently, decolonisation became a strategy whereby Britain intended to "sustain British influence through African agents".[98]

IV- AFTERMATH OF THE WAR IN SIERRA LEONE:

The immediate post-war years were driving Britain to decolonise, especially after India's independence. Internal social and economic troubles in the African colonies also were pushing towards important political reforms. It was in this general context that post-war Sierra Leone was positioned. For sure, the impact of the War in the colony could hardly influence the attitudes of London colonial officials. But it was nonetheless important in directing the process of political progress. Like the other West African colonies, the repercussions of the war brought a desire on the part of Sierra Leoneans' to seek self-government. Of course, local specificities must have played a decisive role in shaping the nature and characteristics of the form of decolonisation in Sierra Leone. Thus, this section will observe the Sierra Leone post-war situation in a way that would show the extent of Sierra Leoneans' readiness for the transfer of power as a case in the wider background of the British Empire. It will examine the general post-war setting on whose ground the coming political progress would stand.

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[97] - James Lawrence, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London, Brettenham, 1998) p. 542.
[98] - Pearce, op. cit., p.93.

1- General Socio-Economic Situation:

Like other colonies, the post-war period was economically difficult in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leoneans directly felt the upshot of Britain's economic calamity. Unemployment rose rapidly because of the recession of production, particularly in the agricultural sector. The extension of the mining sector had already driven a considerable number of individuals from agriculture. But it was the war effort that did more. Many better-life-seekers left the interior towards the capital to be integrated in sectors connected to the logistic aid for British troops or were recruited as soldiers. Some Sierra Leoneans had moved to join the Asian-stationed troops to fight against the Japanese, especially in Burma. Therefore, the end of the war secured two main consequences. The returning wage earners found themselves unemployed and at the same time unable to return to agriculture. Urban life even with unemployment was more attractive than rural life with its usual hardships.

The consequences of that situation were felt in various ways. First, Sierra Leone's agricultural production and exports decreased remarkably. For example, Sierra Leone exported 80,000 tons of kernels in 1936 and only 49,000 tons in 1946.[99] As for rice, the augmentation of foreign demand did nothing to stimulate an increase in production. In 1946, Sierra Leone was not able to exceed 200,000 tons, the quantity exported in 1937.[100] On the other hand, the Colonial Government restricted the producers with the establishment of fixed prices for their produce on the ground of protecting them from possible fluctuations in the world markets. Yet, the post war period was seeing a rising demand that made the prices go up. In spite of that, the extra money went to colonial funds. Such a policy frustrated the farmers and reinforced their anti-colonial sentiments.[101] In addition, consumer goods became

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[99] - CO 852/875/19298/63, *Colonial Development Working Party, Colonial Production Targets*, Note by the Colonial Office, 27 April 1948, p. 06.

[100] - Ibid., p. 11.

[101] - The Sierra Leone Government has set up a Department of Commerce and Industry whose responsibilities included supervision of the export of all products in Sierra Leone and maintenance of contacts with overseas markets. *West Africa*, December 18, 1948

scarce as the government responded to the Colonial Office directives of the necessity to reduce colonial governments' payments for export. This, too, intensified hatred among the Sierra Leone masses against colonial rulers who were expected to improve rather than worsen their lives. Therefore, the general socio-economic atmosphere was, to a certain extent, favourable to a general demand of self-government.

2- The Political Situation:

During the War, officials in Sierra Leone did not seem enthusiastic for a rapid political progress that would lead Sierra Leoneans towards self-government. They appeared as if acting to absorb pressures and criticism of their ruling efficiency. In fact, Britain herself, as a colonial power, was not thinking in terms of a quick development towards colonies' independence. Yet, the post-war period circumstances were to force the British to a quick redirection of their policy towards decolonisation. The political situation in Sierra Leone after the war saw a clarification of visions towards political development. However, it was still built on a policy of putting each of the Creoles and the interior peoples apart. On the one hand, the Creoles were to be further isolated while the chiefly system further strengthened.

As it seemed, the reconstruction of the Freetown Municipality was a reaction to the necessity of constitutional reforms urged by the pressures on colonial Britain. Yet, it also came to reinforce the line of isolating the Creoles from taking hold on national politics. Officials in London agreed with this policy and viewed that the country was not yet ready for progress towards self-government because of the differences between its two sides. While being on a visit to Sierra Leone, the Secretary of State, Oliver Stanley, pointed out that those differences did not encourage urgent steps to be taken to institute major constitutional reform.

Alternatively, he advised that the urgent step now was the reconstruction of the Municipality in Freetown.[102]

During the war, Freetown and its nearby was becoming less and less a sphere of the Creoles. Migrant labourers from the interior invaded many jobs in the public works, the port …etc. Other categories from the Protectorate like the educated and literate members preferred to live in the capital to benefit from modern life facilities. Europeans also composed an important social grouping in Freetown. Missionaries, businessmen, administrators and other Europeans were all concentrated in the capital. Hence, the old Creoles' "Province of Freedom" was increasingly becoming a heterogeneous community. Therefore, even in Freetown the colonial tendency was to limit the influence of the Creoles. The committee, set up for preparing a complete report, took into consideration those realities, and advised the Governor to consider them. When the Governor put forward the Bill in 1945 for the reconstruction of the Municipal Council, he insisted on the representation of all sections of the Colony community.

This objective was mirrored in the proposed Bill. The latter stated that the council should have an elected majority that would reflect the social composition of the Colony area. The council was to have a Mayor, three Aldermen, and nine elected councillors. However, the Governor imposed his right to nominate seven members in the council, including four representing Government departments, but more importantly three to represent interior labourers in the Colony area. [103] On the other hand, the bill also provided for the extension of the Council's powers to include municipal housing, sanitation, and transport. Yet, in spite of these advantages, the Municipality remained strongly under firm colonial control. The Bill provided that the Governor's reserve powers would allow him to disallow appointments made by

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[102] - Hailey's Report had made no recommendation for the reconstruction of the Municipal Council, which had been in a state of dissolution since 1926.
[103] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 91.

the Council and supervise its finances. Moreover, the Governor was granted the right to deprive the Municipality, in emergency cases, of its functions altogether.[104]

In the beginning, the Creoles welcomed the reconstruction of the Freetown Municipality with enthusiasm. They considered it as a major constitutional advance that was to be followed by other developments. They happily received the enlargement of the functions of the local council because it would give them a major share in ruling the Colony's affairs. However, they quickly resented the reconstruction of the local council as they realised the Government's real objectives. Most of the Creole political leaders turned against the proposals and criticised the desire of colonial authorities to soften the blow rather than initiate real reform. Some stated that the planned reforms were not sufficient to satisfy the Colony people's aspirations, nor did they meet their desire to rule their own affairs. Other political leaders criticised the nomination of three members to represent Protectorate labourers and considered that the latter did not have the right to be represented because they were not British subjects. Many Creoles, in fact, saw this measure as a means to curb their aspirations. Finally, the Creoles attacked the Governor's reserve powers that would turn the Council into merely a dependent colonial institution without any power to take decisions. Eventually, they endorsed the opinion of the Creole nominated member in the Executive Council who, by January 1945, was arguing that the new council was to be in effect a government sub-department.[105]

These arguments against the reconstruction of the Municipality led the Creole community leaders to organise an angry campaign to abort the intended reforms. Thanks to public meetings, Creole press and other means, they succeeded eventually to put down Stevenson's plan. When the Government opened registration on the electoral lists, most qualified Creoles to vote refused to apply for registration. Therefore, only 160 from about 3000 people qualified to vote responded

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[104] - Ibid.
[105] - Hargreaves in Morris-Jones and Fisher, op. cit., p. 91.

positively.[106] In such conditions, it was impossible to hold elections and the Government plan of reconstructing the Freetown Municipality failed. Yet, although the colonial authorities failed to pass their reforms and fell short of finally isolating the Creoles, they succeeded to send a strong message to both sections of Sierra Leone. Everyone in Sierra Leone understood that the Creoles should limit themselves to the borders of their colony. Meanwhile, there was a clear message to the Protectorate leaders to reject any attempt made by the Creoles to intervene in the interior.

After the war, the colonial authorities continued the policy of isolating the Creoles. Few colonial official declarations or practices suggested an intention to give them a major role in national politics. In the social field, little was done to allow the Creoles to interact with the interior people. The Colony inhabitants continued to be treated by colonial laws in the Protectorate as foreigners.[107] In particular, they suffered from the obstacle of paying settlers' fees in return for living or business in the interior. They were also restricted to purchase land on the ground that land in the interior was communally owned. The colonial Government, with some necessary time, succeeded to eventually drive the Creoles to accept a restoration of their Municipality in 1948.[108] Then, colonial policy of separation had already crossed a long way to rehabilitate the chiefly system for political development according to colonial wishes.

As the war came to convince the British that the transfer of power was nothing but a matter of time, the image of the chiefly system in Sierra Leone as the best choice was strengthened. The different organs of the native administrations were being actively established. The tribal authorities and the district councils were being installed to be crowned eventually by the establishment of the Protectorate Assembly

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[106] -- Ibid.
[107] - CO 267/698/32010/9/4, *Petition of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Sierra Leone under the Aegis of the Sierra Leone National Council,* September 1950.
[108] - Ibid.

officially in 1946. It was expected to be a body that advised the Government on the general social and economic policies concerning the affairs of the interior people. It also became a practical forum where interior local problems were raised by both the chiefs and educated leaders. But above all, it became an area for training Protectorate leaders to bear national responsibility as against the Creoles.

In addition to measures to promote local institutions, the Colonial Government was making practical steps to train the Protectorate political leadership for a larger role in national politics. This tendency had already started by the appointment of a Protectorate chief in 1942 to serve as a member of the Executive Council. Now after the setting up of the Protectorate Assembly in 1946, the colonial authorities were increasingly inciting the interior leadership to take an active part in national politics. They were encouraged to impose themselves not against colonial rulers but against the Creoles' monopoly over the colonial political scene. Colonial plans were obvious: to curb the claims of the Creole political elite to be the sole capable group to participate in national institutions. Therefore, the members of the Assembly were allowed from time to time to deal with issues of great national importance such as the issue of land purchase in the interior. The Assembly was also prepared to choose representatives to the Legislative Council, in an open attempt to mute the Creoles' claims that the nominated chiefs did not represent the people.

3- Social and Ethnic Situation in Post-War Sierra Leone

While the British were executing their own political agenda in Sierra Leone, the social and ethnic setting seemed to matter little in the making of their plans, though these count a great deal in politics. Dealing with social composition allows an understanding of the possibilities of conflict that could emerge. Social groups may clash, and then feed political conflict. Equally, ethnic groupings may quarrel and reflect their conflict in politics.

In the years following World War II, Sierra Leone's society was still largely rural. However, it was not homogeneous, and being dormant did not mean permanent tranquillity. Perceived from the angle of political conflict, diversity in an African society suggests the possibility of political clashes. Sierra Leone's interior society comprised a variety of social, ethnic, and cultural groups. There were more than ten ethnic groups, each with a different language and culture. The largest ethnic groups were the Temne in the North and the Mende in the South, each with about 30 percent of the population. Minority ethnic groups include the Sherbro, the Kono, the Koranko, the Limba, the Susu, the Loko, the Kissi, the Fula, in addition to the Creoles of the Colony area.[109] (See map below). There also existed three main religions: Islam, Christianity, and traditional paganism.

These differences inside the interior society did not pose the threat of mutual antagonism under colonial rule. They hardly did raise a serious conflict between two ethnic groups or religious sects. Yet, the real distinguishing line in the Sierra Leonean society that had been obviously seen was that which divided the Creoles and the interior people. It was the product of complex factors: historical, cultural, political and colonial. Thus, it is perhaps more convenient to consider the Sierra Leone society in the post-war period just before the beginning of the transfer of power as being composed of these two sections.

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[109] - Linda Edgeworth, Joshua B. Forrest, and Andrew Scallan, op. cit., p. 04.

Map N° 1: Distribution of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, 1963 census

Source: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/sierra_leone_ethnic_1969

(Scale not mentioned in the source)

Although the Creoles were a small group, they were composed, in their turn, of a number of ethnic groups. Initially, they were the descendents of the early settlers of the Colony of Sierra Leone. Some came from England and America after being

freed; others came from Nova Scotia; others were the Maroons, coming from Jamaica, and those slaves who were freed from slaving ships. The latter, the largest, were themselves from different regions in Africa. Among those groups were the *Aku* who came from the Yoruba region in Nigeria. However, the settlers' common historical and social experience and other factors made them see themselves, and seen by others, as one ethnic group.

Since the early days of the Colony, the Creoles worked out a strong sense of solidarity, which was able to keep them unified throughout one century and a half. That solidarity made them construct a special view about their own personality. The acquisition of European values, especially Christianity and education, pushed them to feel superior to other Africans.

This sense of antagonism was developed not only against the interior native Africans, but also in opposition to British rulers. Though they had been for long exposed to Anglo-Saxon influence, their identity remained special. They considered themselves neither Europeans, though many of them boasted of behaving like them, nor did they see themselves like native Africans. They regarded their status as being situated somewhere between the two races, a status which they usually viewed gave them the right to lead Africans. Such a strong emphasis on special character produced an obvious intransigence that characterised their attitudes towards the interior natives.

Because of the war, however, the social composition of the Colony changed. Large numbers of the interior swept the Colony, seeking a better life in the capital. The new comers were encouraged because of the absence of restrictions. Unlike the Creoles who wished to settle in the Protectorate, the latter's inhabitants did not pay any settlers' fees and were permitted to purchase land in simple fee.[110] In the course of the war years and the immediate post-war years, the Creole population was

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[110] - *Petition of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Sierra Leone under the Aegis of the Sierra Leone National Council,* September 1950, op. cit.

reduced in number compared to the non-Creoles. Therefore, the Colony area became no longer reserved for Creoles' influence alone. Consequently, pro-Protectorate feeling started to grow and had to co-exist side by side with the Creole philosophy. But there was little to gain from co-existence. The Creoles could hardly get rid of their old sense of superiority to the natives.

The inhabitants of the interior were legally protected people, and were socially, culturally and even economically, different from the Colony people. Their number was larger than the Colony inhabitants by about ten times. Obviously, this potential population could be decisive in any economic or political plans for the future of Sierra Leone. Yet, though becoming the centre of future political plans, they were not socially progressing simultaneously. The interior people were, in most, adhering to a traditional style of life in nearly every aspect of their life. Their social, cultural, spiritual, and economic life was completely different from that of the Creoles. Just before decolonisation, signs of radical changes in the interior society were still not noticeable. What historians describe as a "process of modernisation" was going on very slowly. This was due to British indifference on the one hand, and to the lack of potential groups with modernist tendencies, on the other.

CONCLUSION:

The wartime period saw the beginning of British reform policy in the social, economic and constitutional spheres. This policy did not necessarily intend to decolonise. On the contrary, it could have the objective of consolidating colonial presence. It was the outcome of radical nationalism in the 1930's. Radical nationalists everywhere in the Empire succeeded to build larger bases of popular support, unlike early elite nationalism. That is why the Colonial Office hurried to take the initiative from the hands of political manipulators. The British once again revived the objective of self-government, but they thought it would come in the far future. In an attempt to win the confidence of the colonial peoples especially at a

time of universal war, they began a number of reforms in the social and economic fields to move eventually to the constitutional field. Colonial plans of reform did not aim at decolonisation and insisted only on preparing the colonial peoples to the requirements of self-government along an extended period.

Colonial reforms in Sierra Leone followed three main lines. First, reforms in the social and economic spheres sought to reduce the people's vulnerability to political manoeuvring. The labour sector was the main area of reform since it had shown great readiness to endorse anti-colonial sentiments. Second, political reform went towards the isolation of the Creoles who had considerable advantages in the fields of educational qualifications and political sophistication. Finally, political plans of reform worked out to prepare a collaborating elite from the interior, basing on the strength of the chiefly system and the goods of education.

The point here is that while the British were attempting to solve problems to an actual situation, they were consciously or unconsciously laying the ground for a future independent state. More importantly, they put down the general rules and limits within which Sierra Leoneans would act politically. Hence, colonial reforms that preceded the transfer of power were significant in giving shape to Sierra Leoneans' political relationships and equally significant in directing the process of political conflict.

The post-war environment started pushing the British to think seriously about decolonisation. The international atmosphere had greatly changed, and the world began to see colonialism as an evil that should be ended. The new world powers and the United Nations hastily pushed for the ending of colonialism. Britain's position was reduced to a secondary status because of the hurting economic legacy of the war. Asian nationalism was leading its last steps towards independence. African nationalism was following the example and succeeded to build popular bases in the midst of post-war socio-economic hardships. Britain found herself in a remote corner, especially after the aggravation of her economic difficulties. The British

found themselves running against the course of time. To prevent being forced to uncalculated policy, the British were well aware that the transfer of power[111] to local Africans on acceptable grounds was the best that they could do in return for a preservation of their economic and strategic interests.

Colonial reforms, as designed by the Colonial Office, had set up an extremely essential ground. It set up the framework of future African political systems inspired from western notions of the nation-state and its democracy. In fact, the coloniser found it easier to copy his own understanding of government and attempt to adapt Africans to its foundations. But the Africans' political fate was decided without giving enough room for African opinion.[112] Decolonisation was to bring to existence new nation-states along British norms, to replace those old African political structures. They were to function on the principles of western democracy to achieve social and economic development. African politicians themselves were very enthusiastic to endorse the project and pressed hard for its quick application. Would this project, then, fulfil Africans' longing for strong independent states, and had they equipped their imagination to endorse it?

In the general post-war context, Sierra Leone had to advance towards constitutional reforms as a preparation for a coming self-government. Yet, socio-economic difficulties in Sierra Leone did not constitute a real ground for forward radical political movement in the direction of self-government. But advance towards self-government would be nothing but a reflection of the effects of changing international constraints and developments in other colonial dependencies beyond Sierra Leone. The political scene itself was not very favourable to a soft development

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[111] - The term transfer of power is often used interchangeably with the term decolonisation process. Both denote the policy whereby colonial powers gradually devolved power to local men in the colonies.

[112] - As a commentator has set forward, "the history of British colonialism always entailed an alien imposition of power and a mixture of political and economic interests determining the government of the conquered territory", Mathieu Deflem, op. cit., p. 03.

because of the absence of a united true nationalist movement able to bear the responsibilities of a state. Meanwhile colonial rulers seemed determined to continue their older policies of separating the two sections of the country. In all, colonial officials in Sierra Leone before the end of the war and after gave the impression that they were making sure efforts to retard any real development towards self-government through the consolidation of the Colony-Protectorate gap.[113] Thus, when they were faced with the inevitability of the transfer of power, they had to confront difficulties whose seeds lay in a policy they had been pursuing. Sierra Leoneans, in their turn, had to face a state of affairs they were not yet ready for.

Finally, did the British prepare Sierra Leoneans for decolonisation and the requirements of a nation-state rule? Did they implement democracy as a practice? The answer was determined by colonial practice itself. Sierra Leoneans' opinion was very secondary when planning for reform. The paternalistic approach in preparing political reforms put the fate of Sierra Leoneans beyond their control. The British ignored the African voice and listened to their own in order to protect interests that lay further than the political system in which Sierra Leoneans were interested. It is also true to say that Africans themselves did very little to innovate appropriate African political norms. Therefore, it should be expected that Africans would find difficulty adapting themselves to a project they had not made.

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[113] - According to B. Davidson, the guardians of tradition continued to be the agents of foreign domination and those who wanted to modernize their continent were relegated to the periphery as troublemakers. A Review of Basil Davidson's *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State*, by Derrick Grose, Grose Educational Media, October 20, 1999.

CHAPTER III

CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS AND COLONY-PROTECTORATE RELATIONS: SECTIONAL POLITICAL CONFLICT, 1947-1951

By 1947, colonial political reforms had come to a situation where Sierra Leoneans had nothing but to deal with the general policy arranged by colonial rulers. The country was clearly set up into two separate sections, each with completely different settings. The Creoles' ambitions of ruling the whole country by virtue of their Western orientation were decisively curbed by colonial rulers' isolationist policies. Meanwhile, pro-Protectorate colonial policies had quickly brought the interior illiterate majority into the front scene. However, suitable rulers were not yet found. Up to 1947, political progress in Sierra Leone did not seem to target a real preparation of Sierra Leone to self-government. It seemed only as colonial arrangement to cope with the general requirements of colonial policy and to preserve future imperial interests in the Colony. The separationist policy followed by the colonial rulers on the spot prevented the birth of a united national elite that could inherit political power within the framework of a nation state. The expected result would be a fragile political system built upon delicate politics. Therefore, if a decision in the direction of self-government were to be introduced, it would certainly have to face difficulties in its application. Were the British able to start devolving power along with the aspirations of Sierra Leonean politicians? Or, would they face

much difficulty to find even a common political base between Sierra Leoneans at a short distance from the start of decolonisation?

This chapter essentially deals with answers to such questions. It attempts to analyse the first stage of political conflict in Sierra Leone that came into sight after the decision of colonial rulers to introduce a new constitution that would give Sierra Leoneans considerable powers to rule themselves. It will also examine the range of political relations among those who were expected to take part in the decolonisation process, and between the latter and colonial rulers. The point is whether Sierra Leoneans conflicted because of their lack of skill for self-government or because of the situation laid down by previous colonial policies. The importance of this phase in the history of Sierra Leone is that the period saw the implementation of the early foundations of the future project of the Sierra Leone state.

I- ASPIRANTS TO POWER: Political Elite Groups on the Eve of Decolonisation

Talking about self-government and political conflict requires first discussing the position, characteristics, and ambitions of the existing elites in Sierra Leone who were concerned with the transfer of power. In addition, it is necessary to examine their mutual relationships and the extent of their readiness to cooperate or conflict with each other.

The composition of elite groups reflected social composition in colonial Sierra Leone. Although the presence of a dominating expatriate group could have erased differences among Sierra Leonean politicians seeking self-government, this was not the case. The available political groups held quiet different philosophies and approaches to political issues.

Generally, African politicians who were expected to play roles in the future polities were those who were drawn from the categories identified by historians as the elites. Unlike other sections of society, these were the best-qualified groups to play such a role. The understanding of an "elite" may differ from one African context

to another according to the available data in a given colonial society. However, historians agreed on a minimum definition of an "elite". They set up that an "elite" is a social group who share common characteristics that set them up from the rest of society. Members of this group should be conscious of their status as the best of the people. In addition, access to the elite should not be open to members from other social groups, except if they become able to achieve the characteristics of that status.[1]

Taking this general definition of an elite as a basis, the Sierra Leone situation may present three kinds of elites. Each of these got the requirements of an elite: the Creole elite, the Protectorate Paramount Chiefs, and the Protectorate Educated group. All three elites had different status that distinguished them from the rest of the people and from each other. The members of these groups were aware of their status within the colonial society and the three elites had their own principles and objectives.[2]

1- The Creole Educated Elite:

The first of these elites was the Creole educated men in the Colony area. In fact, they were the oldest group of their type in the whole Western African coast. Their development followed three major lines: Western education, Anglo-Saxon civilisation, and wealth. These factors transformed them into an important social group who were able to export their influence far beyond the original Colony. They also had an important role to play in the colonial economy since the Creoles dominated a large portion of the country's local trade. Their qualifications enabled

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[1]- One of the accepted definitions is the following, which was advanced by scholar S. F. Nadal "Elites...must have some degree of corporateness, group character and exclusiveness. There must be barriers to admission. The ...elite must be aware of their pre eminent position...as something which they enjoy jointly and which sets them off from the rest of the people. Above all, the pre eminent position must be regarded as belonging to the elite not fortuitously... but by right   by corporate right which is not within the reach of everyone." R. Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (London, Croomltelm, 1978) p. 79.

[2]- Ibid.

them to enter, and sometimes control, a number of sectors. For example, there were many Creoles in the colonial service, the judicial system, and the educational sector. In the political field, they possessed much more experience than any other group in Sierra Leone. Moreover, they were in close contact with politics, which they were well able to understand, especially that they were living in the capital.

The Creole educated elite had always considered themselves as the nearest group to inherit power. Their educational, professional, and political advantages pushed them to believe that they were the rightful future rulers of the country. They were seeing that they were neither Englishmen nor like the natives. They belonged to the African race but they felt were better. That is why they should be prepared for the task of ruling. In an article written by a Creole, R. B. Whitesly, this objective was expressed through these words:

> We are not Anglo-phoebes. We realise that our future largely depends on our own efforts, hard work, constructive thinking, unity and broad enlightenment. Above all, we must be able, as a race, to produce a steady stream of a well-equipped youth of sterling quality to man the various departments of government and public life.[3]

Yet, the Creole elite members had their own weaknesses. First, their supporters composed a very narrow base. Their natural supporters, namely the Creole population, were a humble minority of less than a tenth of the total people in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the Creole elite had always been unable to widen its base in the interior. Its members' state of mind, often characterized by intransigence and a sense of superiority upon the hinterland society, led the latter to show complete indifference about, if not rejection of, any attempt of rapprochement. But above all, it was British policy of "divide and rule" that hurt the Colony's elite. British officials were most hateful to the members of this group, seeing them as old-fashioned imitators of the Anglo-Saxon race. Ever since the occupation of the Sierra Leone

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[3] -West Africa, Jan.17, 1948.

hinterland, British policies had usually pressed to set up the Creole elite apart, not only from the Protectorate people, but also from the ordinary Creoles. Officials frequently justified that the interior society was different in type and culture and ought to be protected from Creoles' cultural and political assaults. Even in the Colony, the elite was accused of being selfish and unrepresentative.

As for the Protectorate, it had little social and political links with the Colony and can be regarded as separate. In fact, it resembled any other single colony in West Africa in that it comprised two elites: traditional and educated.

2- The Paramount Chiefs:

The paramount chiefs were an established traditional ruling group that was powerful enough to impose itself as an elite. No area in the interior escaped from the direct supervision of a chief or another. Although they were subject to British supervision, they maintained large powers at the local level and were able to keep a variety of traditional privileges that set them up in a higher status unattainable by the other social categories. The people of the interior, in most, rarely put into question the chiefs' ruling rights or privileges because society was being little influenced by European norms of life. Moreover, the traditional ruling system was characterised by the absence of a strict hierarchy. That is to say, in the majority of areas, a chief held a separate unit and was responsible, not to another chief, but to a British District Commissioner. This gave greater freedom of action and better opportunities to control local affairs.[4] The British, in their turn, were unable to rule without the traditional rulers. Hence, they closed the eye on many practices though they occasionally deposed a chief here or there. In this way, the chiefs grew stronger as they could adapt to the colonial situation, relying on obedience to their rulers in

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[4] - By contrast, the traditional ruling system was built in a vertical hierarchy in that chiefs were lower in status and were responsible to others with higher status. In the Gold Coast, for example, the Ashentehene inherited a right of responsibility over the rest of chiefs. In northern Nigeria, the Emirs were on top of a pyramid of the traditional structure.

return for privileges. More importantly, the chiefs became increasingly in the centre of British plans of future political reforms.

In spite of these advantages, the chiefly elite had its area of weaknesses. First, many chiefs were illiterate in English, hence lacking the necessary medium needed to understand and influence decisions. After the establishment of the Protectorate Assembly in 1946, most chiefs needed interpreters to translate them the bills. One of the more courageous illiterates sitting there said at the inauguration: "you have seen us sitting down today not saying anything. It is an account of the fact that we are not educated".[5] Thus, although they could have a large say in local affairs, they lacked the ability to play a national role independently. Being illiterates, most of them had to rely either on the British or on the educated elements for advice and direction. The traditional system was itself a handicap in that it limited their political experience. Their local responsibilities restricted them from getting permanent contact with national politics. Only a few of them had a chance to sit as members of the Legislative Council. Thus, chiefs could hardly understand what was being deliberated at the centre of Government, while being the centre of the political game.

On another side, the traditional rulers suffered from a heavy restrictive authority of Government officials. Under the system of Indirect Rule, the officials dictated their direct orders to chiefs. The District Commissioner could remove or depose a chief by a simple request addressed to the Governor. Therefore, the chiefs risked their position if they would think of opposing their officials' orders.[6] Officials' interference in local affairs and in the District Councils' meetings to dictate orders was disliked by the majority of chiefs because it enslaved them to the extent of feeling themselves mere servants instead of representing their people. This

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[5] - CO 267/691/32010 Albert Margai, *The New Constitution is a Farce, p. 03.*

[6] - For example, although Chief Joe Quee Nyagua of Panguma District was supported by the majority of his tribal authority, he was banished to another chiefdom after having his staff of office removed, simply because the District Commissioner had decided such a course of Action. CO 267/691/32010/9 *Memorandum by the West African Youth League sent to the Secretary of State,* 19 August 1948, p. 02.

situation incited the Protectorate Assembly, composed mostly of chiefs, to declare, "we recommend that the District Commissioner shall not be the chairman of the District Council and that the Council should elect its own chairman or president".[7] Still worse, the chiefs' position made them subject to furious attacks by the Creole elite, and even by some interior educated people, accusing them of being accomplices of the colonial regime.

3- The Native Educated Elite:

The other elite in the Protectorate was composed of the educated elements. The origins of this elite go back to the British selective education of chiefs and their sons. Thus, it was a feature that most of the interior educated elements had close connections with chiefly families. In addition, only the chiefly families were able to finance educating the few members who could follow higher education. Some of the educated elements were themselves chiefs.[8] Those educated people were greatly respected by the members of society because, though being traditional in mind, they increasingly realised the importance of education in the political and administrative sides. The Protectorate people hoped that their sons would play important roles to develop their territories. Therefore, many chiefs did not hesitate to call them for advice and guidance in questions lying beyond their mental control. Especially after the discovery of mineral wealth, the interior society expected the educated elements to be able to seize the opportunity from the Creoles' hands and contribute to the development of their areas.

The supporters of this elite, therefore, were found in the Protectorate at large. All those who were jealous of the Colony's development were looking forward to reach a similar situation for their areas. They were also aware that the future political

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[7] - Letter by A. Margai, op. cit., p. 03.

[8] - Among the outstanding educated chiefs were Chief Caulker, the first nominated member to the Executive Council, and Chief Bai Koblo, a nominated member to the Legislative Council.

developments would inevitably give them the front roles. The young men, especially the literates who were progressive in views, composed a potential support to this elite. Some supporters were also found among the non-Creole inhabitants of the Colony.

In their turn, the interior educated elite suffered from a number of disadvantages. First, they were few in number compared to the Creole elite, and were mostly concentrated in provincial towns. Some lived permanently in Freetown having, thus, little contact with their people. Second, they lacked a clear-cut independent base of support. Their supporters were many but without importance. The chiefs controlled the people as they strongly held the political structure. Therefore, though the educated elements could influence the chiefs' views, they were unable to act independently. They lacked the opportunity of direct elections like their Creole counterparts. A third disadvantage of the interior educated elite was the very little probability of cooperation with the Creole elite to build a strong national front. Their close connection to chiefs' families tied them and put them in the area of Creoles' suspects. Furthermore, many Creoles were not ready to cooperate with them simply because they were undesired rivals.

To sum up, three distinct political elites existed in Sierra Leone at the start of decolonisation and were expected to take part in the arrangements for a possible transfer of power. First, a westernised Creole elite was based in the Colony area and had political and economic advantages that allowed them to aspire for a share of power. Second, a traditional elite composed of paramount chiefs whose strong hold upon the interior local political structures made them expect to play key roles in any future political development. Finally, a group of educated elements in the interior, who were gradually gaining importance in local structures as a strong lobby able to exercise influence on chiefs, also aspired to play important roles in the future decolonisation process.

4- Elites and Colonial Strategy:

The existence of these three political groups at the start of decolonisation should bring to mind important questions: would these elites be able to transcend their differences in principles and objectives to cooperate as one front to secure better arrangements for the transfer of power? So, what were the possibilities of collective action between the one of these elites and the other on the light of colonial plans?

In practical terms, the Creole elite seemed more advantageous to lead politics, given its political sophistication and its considerable weight in the colonial society. But this depended on two decisive factors: its ability to cooperate with the interior elites and British acceptance of the role. The possibility of joining hands with the paramount chiefs was simply out of question. In no moment of the colonial era were there prospects of any cooperation between the two elites. Their relationships had always been characterised by suspicions and animosities. The British, in their turn, had usually stressed the differences between the two sides and sought to enhance them. On the other hand, the Creoles could establish links with the Protectorate educated elements given the common ground of education. Nevertheless, the Creole elite could hardly get rid of its intransigence in viewing the Protectorate people as others, inferior, and different. They failed to defeat their long sense of superiority and exclusiveness. Hence, they could not see the interior educated elements other than mere subordinates to chiefs. The British also were unwilling to see a national front built by the two sides for such a front would press vigorously for greater advantages. Thus, the colonial officials had never attempted to bring the two elites together.[9] Instead, they had usually sought to strengthen the ties between the chiefs and the interior educated people.

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[9] - Many Creoles insisted that the British were to blame to be responsible of the division between them and the interior people, in particularly between the community leaders of the two parts of the country. The Creole Legislative Councillors addressed the Secretary of State with these words: "neither yourself Sir. Nor his excellency (the Governor) was in Sierra Leone when up to 1926, the boys of Bo School were taught by their European masters that they (the boys of the

By contrast, the chiefs were being seen as the centre of any political progress. Though they could not stand for a political role alone, neither of the other two elites could act without their consent. The fact that they monopolised political action at the local level in most of Sierra Leone gave them more advantages to choose with whom they should cooperate. Lacking political experience, the chiefs had to rely on the support of one of the groups of the educated elements: the Creoles or the interior educated group. For the first choice, the chiefs were not willing to open up the interior for the benefit of the Creoles. The chiefs were still suspicious of Creoles' real intentions, especially when they recalled the memory of the earlier Creole attempts to dominate their areas. In addition, the continuous attacks against them were enough to create an unbridgeable gap of suspicions between the two groups. Therefore, the nearest probability was cooperation with the educated elite of their own territories.

As for the latter people, they were the weakest group from a political standpoint. Lacking an independent political ground, they were expected to play only a subordinate role with either the Creole elite or the chiefs. In reality, both educated groups in the Colony and the interior had personal contacts and agreed that using the chiefs as obstacles to halt political progress was a real threat to Sierra Leone's future. Yet, the prospect of coordination to form a national movement was annihilated because of several factors. The interior educated elements were closely linked to chiefly families and were not interested in antagonising the strong group of chiefs. Added to that, many of them had already had important social and political roles to play in the chiefly establishment. Furthermore, the historical fact had established the reality of differences between the two populations so that the educated members of

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School), as the sons of chiefs, were our social superiors, and in keeping with that teaching until 1916, no colony African dressed in European clothes were allowed to enter that school on a visit… the unfortunate victims of that herrenvolk culture are not yet all extinct". C.O.267/698/32010/9 *Letter addressed by the Creole members of the Legislative Council to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, July 1950.

the interior had no choice but to stand beside their people regardless of other considerations.

When introducing future political decisions, colonial officials properly weighed these realities of elites' positions. Seeing the inevitability of political reforms and self-government, the British were compelled to prepare suitable plans that would guarantee a smooth development to place power in the hands of moderate groups who should both preserve British imperial interests and secure the consent of most Sierra Leoneans. The British seemed to opt in favour of enhancing the role of the Protectorate chiefly elite right from the beginning. In spite of the Creoles' political superiority compared to the interior elites, colonial officials worked towards promoting the role of that group in order to take command of the future Sierra Leone state. This choice was made upon a number of pragmatic factors. First, the British considered that the Protectorate population was far larger than that of the Colony, and hence, should be represented more appropriately through their natural political structures. Second, they went further to add more complexities to the differences between the two parts of the country to abort any possible unity between the educated members. This course of action was the result of colonial worries that a united front of Sierra Leone's educated elites would spoil British strategy of the transfer of power. Third, concentration on the chiefly system guaranteed stability of the whole process. Unlike the Creoles, the chiefs were a group of obedient collaborators who could rarely put British decisions into question. On the other hand, the chiefs were able to anaesthetise the largest part of the illiterate population via the traditional system itself. Economically, this preference was justifiable in the growing importance of the Protectorate economy thanks to its minerals. Exploitation of those resources needed political stability that would never come except through the chiefly establishment.

The main task of the British, therefore, was to reinforce cooperation between the chiefs and the interior educated members to work together. It was to reconcile modern attitudes built on ambitious hopes for change with traditional manners built

upon a tendency to preserve the current state of affairs. A complexity that had to be solved was that neither of the two elites could easily get rid of their philosophies. Therefore, colonial officials took the issue with seriousness and repeatedly pushed the chiefs to accept a greater role for the educated members, and encouraged each of the groups to make concessions when necessary. The Acting Governor of Sierra Leone, addressing the Protectorate Assembly, best expressed such a colonial objective:

> It will be essential to adapt traditional customs and practices to modern requirements. Traditionally, the old men were the repositories of wisdom. They still are, but the younger men, thanks to education, also have wisdom. It is essential that these younger men should be given an adequate opportunity to take part in government…[I call for] patience by the older men for the novel ideas of the younger, who may seem to want to change everything in a hurry, and patience by the younger men for the ideas of the older, who may seem reluctant to change anything at all.[10]

Thus, there existed three important elites with different backgrounds, leaving the initiative in the officials' hands to decide upon the nature and pace of the transfer of power. The positions of Sierra Leoneans in the political field at the beginning of decolonisation could elevate a number of uncertainties about the future political relationships in the country. Differences in principles and goals and inability to decide the nature of the future state suggest that political conflict would be inevitable.

II- INTRODUCTION OF THE 1947 CONSTITUTION AND EARLY REACTIONS

The first real step towards self-government in Sierra Leone was made in 1947 through constitutional proposals put forward by Sierra Leone's colonial officials in response to the overall strategy planned by the Colonial Office. Up to 1947, Sierra

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[10] - C.O. 267/698/32010/9, *Enclosure to Acting Governor's Dispatch N°170*, 11 October 1950.

Leoneans' participation in the central government had been very limited. Since the occupation of the interior in 1896, only two important political steps were recorded. In 1924, three Creoles were to be elected directly to represent the Colony area in the Legislative Council. The Protectorate was to be represented by three nominated paramount chiefs. Yet, the Executive Council remained beyond access to Sierra Leoneans. It was not until 1942 that a Creole and an up-countryman were incorporated to the Council, largely as an imitation of the Gold Coast. In 1945, Governor H. Stevenson attempted to implement minor reforms in the functions of the Freetown Municipality but he failed because of massive Creole opposition. The reforms conducted in the interior chiefly administration did not reach the level of important constitutional reforms.

1- The Grounds of the Constitution:

The 1947 constitutional proposals were put forward by Governor Stevenson in a dispatch sent to the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs and then appeared in Sierra Leone officially as Sessional Paper N°2. The latter contained the Governor's wish to bring change at three main levels. First, he evoked the question of the official majority in the Legislative Council and the need to replace it with an unofficial majority. Second, he declared his motivation to introduce the principle of elections as a means for sitting in the legislature to substitute nomination. Third, he raised the question of inappropriate representation of the Protectorate and proposed an augmentation in the number of seats granted to the interior people. Originally, Stevenson's proposals about representation of both the Colony and Protectorate stipulated that the former would have four (4) seats in the Legislative Council while the latter would send nine (9). However, the Governor stated that the proposals would be open to discussion and enrichment by the political elites in both parts of the country.

In September 1947, Sir George Beresford Stooke replaced Stevenson as Governor and continued ahead with the proposals. For that objective, the new

Governor instigated consultations with the Creoles and chiefs sitting in the existing Legislative Council. Yet, the Creole Legislators refused to ratify such proposals. In a meeting held on 26 May 1948, they clarified that they acted so in accordance with their community's aspirations and put forward four points. First, they objected on the sitting of illiterates from the Protectorate in the Legislative Council. Second, they called for a Colony and Protectorate convention to make recommendations for a new constitution. Third, they insisted that ample time should be granted for this course. Finally, they kept it up that the Colony's quota in the Legislature should be equal to that of the Protectorate.[11]

After the failure of the Governor to ratify his proposals via the Legislative Council, he invited leading Creole politicians and Paramount Chiefs to select extraordinary members to serve in a Select Committee for the study of the proposals and for a preparation of tangible recommendations. Thus, three Creoles and three chiefs were chosen but soon they faced another problem. The Creole members, backed by the majority of the Colony politicians, objected to the presence of the Protectorate's Chief Commissioner in the Select Committee and conditioned their participation with his withdrawal, blaming the chiefs of acting under official direction. The chiefs, in their part, refused the exclusion of the Chief Commissioner from the Committee and argued that their lack of experience compared to their Creole counterparts would not give them much chance to defend the interests of their people. Then, once again the Creoles withdrew.

This reaction on the part of the Creoles did not bother colonial rulers a lot as the Committee met on 31 May 1948 to discuss the proposals and make recommendations. The Select Committee added some changes on the original paper that concerned the number of representatives from each part of Sierra Leone. It recommended an augmentation in the Colony's quota to seven (7) members directly

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[11] - 267/691/32010, *Memorandum sent by the Political Organisations of the Colony area to the Secretary of State* , September 1948.

elected by an electorate based on education and property qualifications. The Protectorate's share became fourteen (14) members, elected by the Protectorate Assembly, after being selected by the District Councils. The Committee also approved the point of the Governor's reserve powers that allowed him to hold extraordinary powers in emergency times. Besides, the Committee recommended that the Executive Council should include four unofficial members elected by the Legislative Councillors. These changes were embodied in the so-called Sessional Paper N° 8 of 1948, or the 1948 Constitution.

The new constitution generated different positions on the part of the existing elites in Sierra Leone, following the principles and aspirations of each group. Their reactions varied from complete rejection, a demand for modifications, to complete endorsement. Those reactions were to engender and intensify political conflict between the Colony Creole politicians and the Protectorate politicians all through the next three years.

Map N° 2: Sierra Leone's Interior Districts
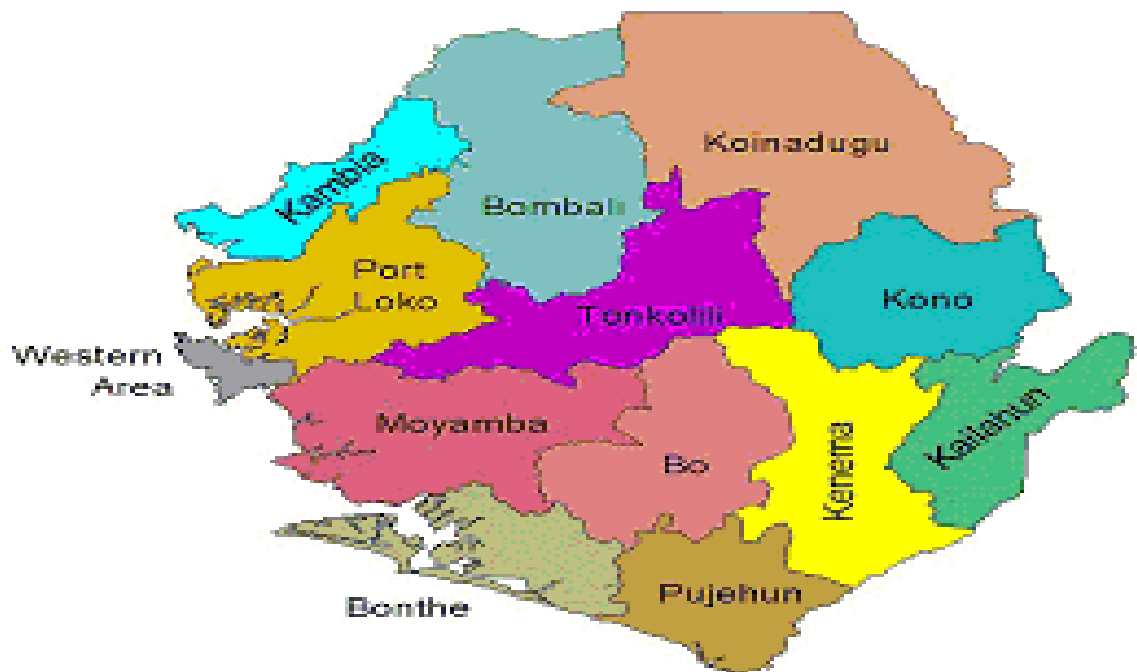
Source: www.members.tripod.com (scale not mentioned in the source)

2- The Creoles' Position: anti-Colonial and anti-Protectorate Lines

The Creoles' reaction to the new constitution reflected hostility to both colonial authorities and Protectorate politicians. The first point that provoked their detestation was the Protectorate majority in the Legislative Council. They considered that the Colony's advanced political experience qualified its political elite to lead

Sierra Leone. The Protectorate politicians, most of whom were chiefs, were indicted of illiteracy and were refused to dominate such an important decision-making body like the Legislature. Many Creoles were seeing that the enlightened people of Sierra Leone were face to face with a threat of having their destiny placed in the hands of a group of backward and illiterate chiefs. The Creoles went further by claiming that there would be no official majority in the intended council for the reason that the chiefs were in reality performing roles designed by British officials. In a satiric manner, the Creole political leaders put it that "if the Legislative Council in Sierra Leone is to be reconstructed with *Unofficial Majority* that has *well defined* duties towards Government, clearly the political evolution of the Country will be set towards democracy".[12] They accused the chiefs of being mere servants in the hands of colonial officials since they were unable to understand politics. They were also denounced of hurting the interests of the people of Sierra Leone because they were executing colonial plans to consolidate domination upon Sierra Leone's future.

In this regard, the second major point for the Creoles' opposition was the Governor's reserve powers. Major criticism was launched against those powers that enabled Governors to surpass the Legislative Council by taking decisions in some circumstances without its consent. The Creoles maintained that they did not oppose such powers in foreign affairs, but they objected on them in internal questions. The Creole political leaders clarified that "the Governor, a foreigner, simply is not in a better position to assess what is indeed *good government* than the representatives of the people concerned" and that internal issues and decisions were "very properly the business of the people and their representatives".[13] They also viewed that those powers were made to curb Sierra Leoneans' aspirations and to protect expatriates' privileges. The presence of ex-officio members of Medical Services, Education, and Agriculture in the Legislative Council was also considered as another attempt to maintain control on Sierra Leoneans. The Creole politicians argued that those

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[12] - *Memorandum sent by the political organisations of the Colony area,* op. cit., p. 03.
[13] - *Memorandum sent by the political organisations of the Colony area*, op. ci.t, p. 11.

members were not representatives of the people, and therefore, it was not necessary that they would be present in the Council.[14]

Beyond those expressed motives against the new constitution lay other unexpressed reasons. The Creole elite fiercely opposed the new constitution in particular because it threatened its longstanding privileges. The members of this group had always regarded that opening up the Protectorate for their own benefit was the ultimate dream. Being highly qualified in the economic and professional sectors, they hoped that they would make of the opportunity of Africanisation a way to enjoy many privileges in the interior. The Creoles could fill posts in the legal profession, administration, education, the mineral sector…etc. Moreover, many Creoles in fact were looking ahead to purchase land in the interior areas through proper legislation.[15] Consequently, the new constitution was rejected because it intended to place power in the hands of their old enemies, the chiefs. The latter disliked the Creoles and always sought to reduce their influence and opportunities in the interior. Thanks to the intended majority in the reconstructed Legislative Council, the chiefs would be able to curb Creoles from having a free hand in their areas.

Many of the Creole elite members still regarded themselves as the rightful representatives of all Sierra Leoneans by virtue of education. In addition, their long adherence to western civilisation made them feel rightful to lead illiterate Africans. Thus, their state of mind was not ready to accept that illiterates would rule them only because they were a majority. In their philosophy, competence that they alone possessed had to be stressed before other considerations.

3- Position of the Protectorate Educated Group: Searching a Larger Role

The educated elements in the interior were disillusioned by the complete indifference with which the makers of the new constitution treated them. As the

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[14] - Ibid.

proposals excluded their group, they shared at first similar views with the Creoles. They objected to the representation of the Protectorate exclusively by illiterate traditional rulers who were unable to bear their responsibilities of representing the people. They also sided with the Creoles' view that many chiefs would be merely executing officials' orders. In such conditions, they considered, the new constitution would bring nothing towards real political progress.

The Sierra Leone Organisation Society (S.L.O.S.) became the representative of the Protectorate educated group's concerns. The Society campaigned for the inclusion of the educated elements in the future Legislative Council. The S.L.O.S. leaders explained that they had been denied entry to the Legislature since 1924, in that the Government had never nominated progressive elements. They protested, therefore, against the continuation of that policy of exclusion since no chance was given to them in the elections. According to Albert Margaï, one of the future major political leaders in Sierra Leone, the electoral system proposed in the interior gave them no chance. He maintained that only through a long process dominated by the chiefly establishment could one get into the Legislative Council. He clarified:

> The system of political representation as set up in the Protectorate of Sierra Leone is like a pyramid, with the District Councils as the base, the Protectorate Assembly as the body, and finally the Legislative Council as envisaged by the new Constitution as the apex.[16]

The interior educated elite, thus, demanded direct representation for the members of their group. In a memorandum sent to the Governor by the Society, the educated people of the Protectorate put forward that:

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[15] - Land had been wholly consumed in the Colony area, while in the Protectorate communal ownership and chiefs opposition prevented Creoles from getting land there. Land was greatly valued by Creoles for its social, economic and political importance.

[16] - Albert Margai, *The New Constitution is a Farce,* op. cit., 1948, p. 01.

the new constitution will affect all classes of the people in both the Colony and Protectorate … It is therefore necessary that definite provisions should be made for the inclusion of progressive and literate elements into the membership of the new Legislative Council.[17]

The interior educated elements pointed out the problem of chiefs' illiteracy as a handicap in the face of good representation of the people's interests. They argued that deliberations in the Protectorate Assembly and the District Councils could give clear signs about the future role of the chiefs in the Legislative Council. It was stated that there had to be long and boring translations into several local languages to allow chiefs to understand the content of bills. Many chiefs, thus, would be sitting in the Legislature only for the sake of sitting because the Government was certainly unable to provide enough competent interpreters, especially when deliberations concerned highly technical issues. The educated group in the interior concluded that they "humbly pray that the literary qualification be imposed" for entry to the Legislative Council.[18] On the other hand, some educated elements raised the unsuitability of the chiefs' representation because they were fulfilling the role of civil servants and hence dependent on the Government. In addition, officials totally controlled the District Councils and the Protectorate Assembly through chiefs, the two bodies responsible for electing the Protectorate's representatives. Therefore, the so-called elected representatives were all to be chiefs, "men who through repeated threats and victimisation have been reduced to a status worse than civil servants".[19]

Following this criticism, the Protectorate educated members made it clear that they were determined to get a better place in the political structure. They declared that "nothing less than what is now envisaged for the Gold Coast will satisfy our aspirations" in that the educated people should have a leading position. Thus, they strongly recommended that at least two educated members from each district should

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[17] - C.O. 267/698/32010/9 *Memorandum by the Sierra Leone Organisation Society to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the New Constitution (Sessional Paper N° 8*, , 1948, p. 01.
[18] - Ibid., p. 04.
[19] - A. Margai, *The New Constitution is a Farce,* 1948, op. cit., p.03.

be elected to the Legislative Council.[20] In parallel, they demanded that opportunities should be given to progressive elements for an easy integration in the tribal authorities and the District Councils at the local level.

Although the educated elite in the Protectorate seemed to fight on the same front beside the Creoles, nonetheless the two groups were antagonised because of a major issue. This was the ratio of representation of the Protectorate. While the Creoles were seeking a number of seats equal to that of the Protectorate, the educated interior people were seeking a further increase in the number of seats for their areas seeing that the number of seats to the rate of population should be adequately considered. Thus, the latter group did not attack illiteracy, for example, on similar grounds like the Creoles. While the latter used the issue of chiefs' illiteracy as a means to strengthen their Colony's supremacy, the interior educated members were thinking about effective representation. Each of them was looking for a greater role to play in the decision-making centres. In fact, both elites began soon to suspect the other so that they remained indifferent about collective action.

4- Position of the Protectorate Chiefs: Prospects for more Strength

Contrary to the two previous elites, the traditional rulers full heartedly endorsed all the principles of the new constitution. The latter came only to add more strength to their political position. After having built themselves as a strong force at the local level, the opportunity was vastly opened to national politics through a strong presence in the legislative body.

Although they were often regarded as illiterates who were being continuously under official direction, this is not the complete truth. Many chiefs were completely aware of the opportunities presented to them to enhance their political, economic, and social positions. National politics was being conceived by a number of chiefs as an opportunity to strengthen their economic and social place in their society. The

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[20] - *Memorandum to the Secretary of State by the Sierra Leone Organisation Society*, op. cit., p. 04.

chiefly elite had already adopted education as a strategic weapon for maintaining power. Thus, a number of them were educated or at least got a primary education. Others relied on the advice of their educated sons or relatives. The chiefs themselves agreed that sitting in the Legislature required education. For example, Paramount Chief Yambasu Biriwa of Moyamba District was clear in criticising some chiefs' opportunism at the expense of good representation. He maintained that "some people [chiefs] like positions although they are not fit to them. Now they come here and would like to be elected to the Legislative Council".[21]

The chiefs also saw themselves as the rightful rulers and representatives of their people. More, they saw themselves as the fathers of their fellow men in the interior. Hence, their political and social position was considerably respected by their people, including significant numbers of the educated people. The latter had rarely challenged the chiefs' authority as the Creoles did. Thus, the chiefs were, to a considerable extent, secure from similar attacks in the interior. The educated elements there never raised any claim for excluding chiefs; all they wanted was an amelioration of their own status and appropriate representation by responsible chiefs. Therefore, the chiefs' position in Sierra Leone, thanks to the new Constitution, seemed very secure at least in the near future.

5- Government's Responses to Criticism:

One of the important conclusions British officials in Sierra Leone could draw was that the attacks against the constitution came from the educated members in both sections of the country. This was a direct threat to colonial plans. Though Sierra Leone can not be compared, for example, to the Gold Coast,[22] a similar unity between the educated Sierra Leoneans remained a possibility that pragmatic British rulers had to take into account seriously. The educated people in Sierra Leone

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[21] - Quoted from *Memorandum by the political organisations of the Colony*, op. cit., p. 08
[22] - The 1948 riots in the Gold Coast came just after the Government had proposed a similar new constitution that was vastly criticised by the educated elite and the progressive youth.

seemed to admire the example of Gold Coastal nationalism and could have thought to replicate a similar experience in their colony. This was shown in the similar attacks made in both colonies on the attempt to exclude the progressive elements from the arrangements of political reconstruction and colonial endeavour to maintain control over their countries through traditional rulers.

In Sierra Leone, colonial rulers were not ready to wait for possible upheavals. Governor Bradsford Stooke confessed in his dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that "there has been and still is an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust towards the Government on the part of the politically conscious elements, particularly in the Colony".[23] However, the Governor was more concerned with the criticism made by the interior educated members. He viewed that although this group might seem small and disorganised, it could grow in number and influence. He concluded, "it would…be a mistake to overlook their claims".[24] The British were worried about a possible division in the Protectorate itself along progressive/traditional lines that would certainly harm colonial strategy of political development. The issue of chiefs' heavy presence in the Legislative Council was recognised to be a serious problem. The Governor admitted that "it is undesirable that so large a proportion of the Protectorate representation should be composed of paramount chiefs".[25]

The urgent step that was to be taken was a search for a greater harmony between the chiefs and the educated natives to secure a tranquil transfer of power and to prevent the Creoles from exploiting this gap between the Protectorate groups of chiefs and educated elements. In this direction, colonial officials in Sierra Leone sought to bring improvements in the Constitution so that the educated progressive elements in the interior should have a better place in national politics. The numerical

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[23] - C.O. 267/698/32010/9 *Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 4 January 1949, p. 01.
[24] - Ibid., p. 02.
[25] - Ibid., p. 03.

superiority of the Protectorate upon the Colony in the Legislative Council was maintained as a means to keep the Creoles away from any attempt to approach the interior progressive members and to strengthen unity between the latter group and chiefs.

The British defended the principles of the Constitution against the Creoles' attacks on several grounds. They explained that in spite of this increase in the interior seats, Protectorate representation remained inadequate. That is, every 144,000 people in the interior were to have a representative, while every 17,000 in the Colony could elect one representative.[26] Concerning the issue of chiefs, the Government put forward that chiefs were the only representatives in several districts and "to exclude chiefs would thus be directly contrary to the best interests of the Country".[27] However, the Government was positively responsive to the question of education. The Government put the literary qualification as a necessary requirement for any candidate to the Legislative Council. This meant that some educated or literate commoners, mainly the educated members, could stand in elections to the District Councils, from where they were able to stand as candidates to the Protectorate Assembly and the Legislative Council. The traditional rulers themselves, whether in the local councils or the Protectorate Assembly, were increasingly seeing that the educated elements were able to represent the interests of the interior better than many chiefs. This view was enhanced by their willingness to counterbalance the sophisticated political experience of the Creoles' representatives. As an additional guaranty, the Government promised the educated and literate members in the interior a number of measures to facilitate their inclusion in the Native Administrations.

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[26] - CO 267/689/32010/9, *Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, dated 30 May 1950.

[27] - C.O. 267/698/32010/9, *Acting Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, dated 12th October 1950.

At another level, the colonial authorities were making useful steps to isolate the Creoles further.[28] Attempts to deprive the Creole politicians of a significant supporting reservoir in Freetown, the labour group, were taking place. Traditionally, the labour class in the Colony had been an active category that could play a role in politics. As a permanent anti-colonial activist, Wallace Johnson had shown abhorrence to the new Constitution and was expected to try a manipulation of the Colony workers' anti-colonial sentiments resulting from the social and economic post-war hardships. Yet, the Colonial Government had already started the implementation of reforms that guaranteed the isolation of trade unions and workers from political manipulation. It also started looking for "enlightened men who can easily replace" radical leaders like Wallace Johnson as symbols of the labour force.[29] On the advice of Edgar Parry, moderate leaders were selected and trained accordingly with the intended political reforms. Such leaders were to enjoy a number of privileges for their cooperation through educational and professional benefits. Consequently, two educated Sierra Leoneans, a Creole and an Up-Country man, were chosen as prototype national trade union leaders. The Creole J. Akintola Wright was made leader of the Railway Workers' Union and then was appointed a member in the Legislative Council to represent labour interests. Siaka Probyn Stevens, a Protectorate-born man who had been an ex-activist in the Sierra Leone Youth League. In his turn, he took over a number of trade union responsibilities before being sent by the Government in 1947 to London for a scholarship. Coming back in 1949, he was appointed a member in the Protectorate Assembly.[30] All these efforts were made in accordance with the overall strategy of peaceful and planned

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[28] - The Governor of Sierra Leone was with the opinion that the new conflict between the Colony and Protectorate might be advantageous in the long run. He saw that it was the first time that "the Creoles have been told so openly what the Protectorate people think of them, and how much the latter resent the assumption of superiority by the former….The debate would be to bring home to the Creoles the realisation they that if aspire to political leadership in a fully representative council they must first earn the confidence of the Protectorate". _Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies,_ 4 January 1949, op. cit., p. 04.

[29] - David Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 441.

decolonisation that sought to prepare acceptable collaborators who would continue to preserve British interests.

Following these lines, the Sierra Leone Colonial Government proceeded to apply the new Constitution as quickly as possible. The opportunity of the Colony/Protectorate antagonism was seen by officials as suitable circumstances to bring proposals into effect, before possible shaking would take place. This intelligent manipulation of the differences between the Sierra Leone elites and the incapacity of the latter to found a sound nationalist movement let the British as the sole effective player in the political scene. Governor B. Stooke was confident enough to inform the Secretary of State that in spite of fierce Creole opposition to the Constitution, especially the superior number of interior representatives, its application could take place thanks to Protectorate boys. In his words: "the Creoles can not attack the Government on this issue without attacking at the same time the Protectorate".[31] Hence, the Government and the interior political leaders went on towards the application of the Constitution against the will of Creoles.

VI - ESCALATION OF COLONY/PROTECTORATE CLASH:

The decision to apply the constitution without further delay in 1950 brought about a hot political conflict between the Colony Creole politicians and the Protectorate political group to its climax. After about eighteen months of attempts to find common grounds between the two sides, they eventually failed to agree even upon the composition of the committee that would discuss the proposals. This end opened a large door for mutual accusations that reached its hottest point during the 1950 summer.

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[30] - David Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 441.
[31] - CO 267/698/32010/9 *Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State from the Colonies*, dated 24 May 1950.

1-The Creoles: Campaign against the Interior People

The Creole political leaders began to reveal their deep hatred towards the Protectorate people and politicians. The former attempted to exploit every possible pretext to depict the interior people, especially chiefs, as backward savages who could be a major threat if authority were placed in their hands. In addition to former accusations of illiteracy, lack of legal status, and non-representation, the Creoles went back now to history in particular to further distort the chiefs' image. A number of politicians led by B. Bright were publicly denouncing the Mende chiefs as "the murderers of our ancestors" in reference to the 1880's Trade Wars.[32] The Creoles were keen to raise those past events to convince the British, including King George VI, that the Mendes' grandfathers had, in cold blood, massacred their ancestors because they were "*Black Englishmen* who were conniving with the white men to sell out the country".[33] They also averred that at several times in their history, they had to defend themselves in battles against the interior peoples, especially the Temnes, in order to protect their rights and privileges. The Creoles were in fact trying to convey that the present interior people were ready to repeat those crimes again. [34]

Meanwhile, the Creoles showed much resentment to the colonial Government. They spoke about a betrayal committed by the British in the right of a community that did so much for the good of the Empire, to find themselves alone at the end. In a letter addressed to the Colonial Secretary, the Creole members of the Legislative Council clarified that their ancestors did not come freely to Sierra Leone but were brought by the British. They claimed that those early settlers had done their best to

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[32] - These wars were the result of the growing hatred of the Mende people towards the increasing wealth and influence of Creole traders in the interior local areas.

[33] - CO 267/698/32010/9 *Petition of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Sierra Leone under the Aegis of the Sierra Leone National Council,* September 1950, op. cit., p. 02.

[34] - Ibid. p. 03.

open up not only the present Protectorate but also British West Africa as a whole. They wondered if it was

> from the nature of things that the descendents of those who had done so much for British West Africa and for the Protectorate of Sierra Leone are blamed of hastening slowly in accepting a constitution which binds them fair to swamp them in the greater number of people differing from them in race, history and who, after all, are not British subjects. [35]

The Creoles' frantic reaction represented in their fierce attacks on both the British and the interior people was a sign of their disillusionment and sense of loss. They were anxious about their position in a future self-governing country, especially that they had been a privileged community ever since its emergence compared to other Africans. The political complexities in the country left them with major uncertainties about what they really wanted. On the one hand, they were the ones who had frequently criticised the colonial authorities' unwillingness for reforms and had continuously called for more Africanisation in the polity and administration. Yet, they became now the ones who objected to such reforms. In an instance, they had opted for the maintenance of the former constitution because it guaranteed better opportunities with regard to the interior people; things that might suggest their preference of colonialism rather than self-government. Later they demanded an equal representation between the Colony and Protectorate. Some Creoles wanted a federation with two legislative councils.

The Creole political leaders used their press as a means to echo their grievances and release part of their distress. Bankole Bright sounded his attacks on Government policies via his _Evening Dispatch._ Wallace Johnson manifested his radical position towards colonial attitudes in his _African Standard._ Other Creole papers like _The Daily Mail_ also joined the anti-Constitution line, attacking both colonial rulers and the interior people.

Beside the press, the Creoles found in public meetings an opportunity to discharge their deep anger and to drum up the Creole community to abort Government plans. B. Bright and Wallace Johnson and other major figures led such meetings and were the official spokespersons of the anti-Constitution campaign. Those leaders sought to inflame the feelings of the Creoles and to enhance their solidarity through a focus on the particularity of their legal status and their historical and cultural backgrounds. Significant terms like "settlers", "British Subjects" for the Creoles against "natives", "foreigners" for the Protectorate people were usually present in Creoles' political discourse. Thus, the atmosphere among the Creoles was leading to a thought that one nation embracing the two sides on equal status was impossible. Hence, the Creoles went to the extent of demanding a status similar to that of the white settlers in Kenya.[36] This position and the like clearly revealed a sense of superiority that had developed along the years and that insured that the Creole/Interior people gap would continue for a considerable time in the future.

This campaign against the Constitution and the Protectorate politicians culminated in the formation of a new party. On 11 August 1950, B. Bright, Wallace Johnson, and Otto During organised a public meeting in Freetown, which saw the birth of the National Council of Sierra Leone (NCSL). Although the Creoles did not recognise the interior leaders' role, the new party's leaders, in a paternalistic manner, claimed to be "responsible for the prosecution of all matters relating to the national affairs of the Country as a whole, social, economic, and political".[37] In spite of its claims, however, the NCSL, never reached the interior and remained, according to the Governor, only "an association of all those who are opposed to the forthcoming constitutional changes in Sierra Leone".[38]

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[35] - *Letter by the Creole members of the Legislative Council the Colonial Secretary in Sierra Leone*, dated July 1950, op. cit., p. 04.

[36] - *Letter by the Creole members of the Legislative Council the Colonial Secretary in Sierra Leone*, dated July 1950, op. cit., p. 04

[37] - CO 267/698/32010/9, *Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 16 September 1950.

[38] - *Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 16 September 1950, op. cit.

The new Party firmly opposed the principles of the Constitution and did its best to assemble arguments against it. Its main banner was "Why bring pressure to bear on the people of Sierra Leone when they do not want this Constitution?"[39] The party leaders continued to insist that the Protectorate people were foreigners with no right to legislate for British subjects. They also clarified that it would be an abortion of the democratic ideal to permit the illiterate masses to overwhelm the advanced political elements of the Colony. They refused the argument that the Protectorate ought to have more representatives because it contained the majority of people. Then, they argued if this were true in Sierra Leone, "the English nation would be of little political importance in the British Empire".[40]

The NCSL held a number of meetings in the direction of aborting the application of the constitutional changes. In one of those meetings on 14 September 1950, the party expressed its complete rejection of the Government reforms and put forward purely Creole proposals. Thus, those present endorsed a petition presented by Executive Councillor R. B. Marke, Dr. R. S. Easmon, B. Bright, and Messrs Zizer and Pratt, all of whom were active opponents of the Constitution. The petition included a reaffirmation of the Creoles' option for separate legislatures for each section, giving the Protectorate a legal status equal to the Colony.[41] Even more significantly, there were sentiments of hatred that were explicitly shown in that meeting towards the Protectorate people. The chairman, B. Bright, addressed about one hundred people from interior origins who were present at the meeting that they had no place among the Creoles and had no right to attend. He added that only by act

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[39] - Originally this a question of MP Sorenson asked to the Government in the House of Commons. CO 554/537 *Manifesto of the National Council of the Colony of Sierra Leone* (1951 elections), p. 10.

[40] - *Petition of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Sierra Leone under the Aegis of the Sierra Leone National Council,* September 1950, op. cit., p. 07.

[41] - *Petition of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Sierra Leone under the Aegis of the Sierra Leone National Council,* September 1950. The latter claim in fact was an old hope for the Creoles, because it would permit them complete freedom in the economic and administrative affairs of the interior without legal obstacles.

of courtesy he would leave them inside the room. Moreover, the Creoles present there repeated accusations that the interior people were their enemies who had murdered their ancestors.[42]

Attacks on the new constitution were not confined to political formations; non-political associations, in their turn, joined the campaign led by the politicians. They were cultural or social associations that showed concern about the forthcoming threat of being fused in the larger numbers of natives, with whom they shared very little in social and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, they declared that they were seeking the preservation of their own Creole identity by keeping their community apart from the interior tribes. An example of such associations is the Nova Scottian and Maroon Descendents' Association, was founded in 1949 in the midst of political controversy between the two sections of the Country. It was set up originally as a friendly society concerned with cultural and social matters, and its founders denied any political intentions. However, a number of its leaders had been former members in Colony political formations. Its secretary, Edna S. Elliot Horton, had been an activist in the West African Youth League. This is perhaps what made the Government suspect that the association might have some inspiration from Wallace Johnson or other political adversaries of the forthcoming constitutional measures.[43]

The Association rejected the constitutional proposals on the ground of the deep differences between the legal and cultural identities of the Creoles and the interior people. They saw that this would prevent harmony in the new nation if the two sides were put together. Therefore, they maintained that they could not accept that Creoles would sit in a Legislative Council, a British Colonial institution, [that] is to be dominated by foreign elements of the Protectorate of Sierra Leone who differ from the Colony inhabitants in culture, outlook, and legal status".[44]

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[42] - CO 267/698/32010/9 *Acting Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies* dated 12 October 1950.

[43] - This is the Governor's view in CO 267/698/32010/9 *Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, on 6 September 1950.

[44] - Quoted from Ibid.

More interestingly, the conservative Creoles stood against even some Creoles who held different approaches to the Sierra Leone question. Moderate Creoles were rejected from Creoledom only because they saw that cooperation with the interior people could be a fruitful alternative. In their Manifesto for the 1951 elections, the NCSL leaders draw red lines that, according to them, should exclude any Creole who would not follow and actively support the party's line. In verses, the Manifesto read:

> Shame to the false Sierra Leonean
> Who lingers in his home
> While the National Council of the Colony
> Is on the march to Freedom[45]

Thus, the NCSL leaders were keen to establish a 'Fighting Fund' of £50 000 to which they expected all Creoles would contribute. The sum was to be used to meet the cost of delegations to the King, Parliament, and even the United Nations Organisation.[46] However, the fund was unable to stand since only a trivial sum had been collected.

The NCSL's great deception, nevertheless, was when an important Creole politician responded positively to the interior leadership's appeal for cooperation. For this, he faced every type of accusation. When Laminah Sankoh, the leader of the Freetown People's Party, accepted the invitation of the Sierra Leone Organisation Society to form one party, he was depicted as a betrayer to the Colony's cause.[47] The NCSL asked the Colony's people "without any feeling of revenge or prejudice to

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[45] - *Manifesto of the National Council*, op. cit., p. 09.
[46] - CO 554/537 *Intelligence Report January-February 1951,* p. 2.

[47] - Laminah Sonkoh was in Freetown on June 28th, 1884. He went to Fourah Bay College where he graduated with a B.A. He entered Wycliffe College, Oxford, where he read Theology and Philosophy. He then travelled to the United States where he taught at Tuskegee Institute at Alabama, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and the State College at Orangeburg, South Carolina. In 1930 he went back to Britain where he was active in the West African Students Union (WASU). He returned to Sierra Leone in the early 1940s, and began his career in political and civic activities. He founded one of the first political parties, the Peoples Party, in 1948. He is often called the Champion of integration. He died in 1964.

look carefully to the record of the People's Party leader who is bold enough to attempt lead this country".[48] He was accused of ingloriously rejecting some of the main ethical principles of the Christian Church. The NCSL leaders conceived this pretext as an indication of his dislocation from the Creole's common interest. They went even further by accusing him and others of being motivated by personal interests. Their Manifesto stated: "let those who are engaged in some political galloping manoeuvres to serve their own personal ends, and who are trying to subvert truth by being beggarly in their aspirations, proceed to their nemesis".[49]

Such a type of discourse was more or less a clear indication of the Creole politicians' actual hatred against their brethren in the interior. In spite of their previous claims that they were looking for the interests of all Sierra Leoneans, they were in fact unable to get down from their sense of superiority. Possibly this psychological characteristic prevented them from accepting other Africans to have a stronger political position. The Creoles had usually regarded themselves as a chosen group that should inherit political power. The Creoles seemed to think of themselves as Africans only to antagonise the British and press for more concessions. Although they were a very narrow minority, they regarded it was their right to rule the majority. When it became clear that the British were willing to devolve power to the non-Creole majority, they invented any good reason to refuse the new Constitution. They raised all issues like the unsuitability of chiefs' representation and illiteracy, the interior people's ignorance, legal status and Government-chiefs plots, and finally differences in cultural and social backgrounds.

Alternatively, the Creoles could proceed to build up a strong nationalist movement against colonial rule in spite of some obstacles. Given its sophistication in the educational and political fields, they could have embraced the interior elites without envy to found a national front and then press for greater concessions. Yet,

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[48] - *Intelligence Report January-February 1951*, op. cit., p. 02.
[49] - Ibid., p. 07.

the Creoles' stubbornness left them hopelessly struggling against an irreversible course of events.

2- The Interior Leadership: Attempts at Reconciliation

On the other side of the political picture in Sierra Leone, the interior political group composed of chiefs and educated elements were advancing with sure steps. In their turn, the Protectorate leaders were deranged by what they saw unjustifiable Creoles' hatred towards them. In fact, those unprecedented attacks coming from the Colony politicians helped both the chiefs and the educated elements to come closer to each other in what it came to be termed "Protectorate Solidarity". The interior leaders could certainly be aware that their Creole opponents refused them to be a majority in the Legislative Council in order to uphold their political and economic privileges. As a result, both interior groups were determined to go forward with the application of the Constitution. For that, they adopted a two-fold strategy: reacting against the attacks of the more intransigent Creole politicians and attempting to win the moderate Creoles.

The interior political leaders sometimes responded with similar levels of hostility. When the Creoles declared firmly an option for a federation or separation as an independent unit, the chiefs and the educated elements asserted that the interior people were determined to close the Protectorate in the face of Creoles. They explained that they would not allow any Creole to hold administrative responsibility or have any economic activity in their provinces and that Europeans would be instead welcome. Chief Bai Koblo addressing the Legislative Council went even further by directly threatening the Creoles. He said:

> We have in the past been trying to work hand in hand with our Colony brethren but each time we come here they say that we must not talk in terms of the Protectorate …we warn the inhabitants of the Colony that they are embarking on dangerous grounds in making any claims of independence from us, and we would urge them to reflect on what is happening between India

and Pakistan and between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine before they persist in exclusive rights…we could well depend on our treaties to reclaim our hereditary lands ceded to the British Crown now known as the Colony area and I would therefore ask our Colony brethren to locate themselves elsewhere.[50]

They knew that the Colony was heavily dependent on the interior for its economic prosperity and hence the Creoles could not survive without it.[51] Interior leaders used their pro-Constitution press to emphasise their strength of mind to go forward with the transfer of power. For example, Dr. Milton Margai's *Protectorate Observer* expressed full support for the government policy in that field.[52]

The group of Creole opponents to the Constitution, composed of politicians and journalists, was addressed with special attacks from both the educated men and the chiefs. They were presented as a selfish elite that was unwilling to share with the rest of Sierra Leoneans their privileges, so long protected under colonial rule. For example, Paramount Chief Bokhari Samba, member in the Protectorate Assembly, insisted that "the people of Sierra Leone were one nation and the present difficulties had been caused by half-backed politicians and quack journalists".[53] In his turn, S. Stevens declared that the Protectorate people would not agree with their brethren in the Colony contriving to run the country any more than they would agree to a handful of Europeans doing so.[54]

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[50] - *Petition of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Sierra Leone under the Aegis of the Sierra Leone National Council,* September 1950, op. cit., p. 04.

[51] - One might guess that from the Creole Legislative Councillors' following declaration: "We do not pray for a divided Sierra Leone. The very attempt to create it we abhor. In all our utterances in the Legislative Council, we have stressed that the country should be one and undivided", *Letter by the Creole members in the Legislative Council,* dated July 1950,. cit., p. 03.

[52] - *The Protectorate Observer* appeared in August 1949 as weekly paper financed and managed by the Doctor and other members in the SLOS.

[53] - *Enclosure to the Acting Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies N° 170*, 11 October 1950.

While being consistent in resisting Colony politicians' attacks, the Protectorate group was leaning towards moderate Creoles for cooperation. With the backing of the Government, the interior politicians attempted to inject more credibility to the new Constitution by securing some Creole support. The colonial Government was not so anxious about possible threats to come from the Creole community, but it hoped to give a national outlook to the future heirs of power. Its officials were convinced that "any delay in the new constitution at this date would forfeit the good will of the Protectorate which we now have in an exceptional degree, and which, once at least, might never be recovered".[55]

The interior leadership attempted to bring a certain unity between Colony and Protectorate politicians. In the beginning, they contacted Wallace Johnson for cooperation. Given his successful experience in breaking the psychological barriers between the Creole community and the interior people, he was expected to fulfil the same role at that critical moment of Sierra Leone's history. The interior leadership hoped to rely on his respectful position in the eyes of Sierra Leoneans to win the support of the majority of Creoles for the Constitution. Wallace Johnson was then requested to lead a national party embracing politicians from both parts with the aim of unifying views about the forthcoming Constitution. However, he completely rejected the offer and preferred to join his ex-political adversary B. Bright in his National Council of Sierra Leone. Perhaps Johnson's strong anti government sense, his certainty that the Government was directing the interior leadership, or simply his sense of loyalty to Creoledom eventually prevented him from initiating a nationalist movement that could succeed. The failure of the interior politicians to win the side of Wallace Johnson compelled them to find a leader from among them who would be able to bring unity between Sierra Leoneans. Then, Dr. Margaï came out as the new leader of Sierra Leone towards self-government

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[54] - CO 267/698/32010/9 *Enclosure to the Acting Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies N° 170*, 11 October 1950.

Augustus Striery Milton Margaï was born in December 1895 in Gbangbatok, Pujehum District, to a Mende merchant. His grandfather was a reputable Paramount chief. Milton was educated first in Freetown and then went to Fourah Bay College. He travelled to England, where he had followed medical studies until he graduated as a doctor from a New Castle college in 1926. After his return to Sierra Leone, he spent about three years as a private practitioner in Bonthe before entering the Government Service. He retired in 1949 as a Senior Medical Officer, and joined political life until his death in 1964.

The story of Milton's political career began earlier with his distinguished relations with chiefs. Being the first educated man from the interior, he enjoyed high respect on the part of the whole community, especially the group of chiefs. When the colonial authorities began to introduce reforms in the chiefly system, a number of chiefs addressed the Doctor for advice on the suitable policies in social, economic, and political matters. He was also an active participant in the annual conferences between chiefs and educated members. Milton Margaï was among the founders of the Sierra Leone Organisation Society (SLOS) that gathered a number of well-educated and average educated men. Although it was first established as a non-political formation, it frequently dealt with social and economic matters that had political dimensions.[56] When the Protectorate Assembly was set up in 1946, he was the first non-chief to enter it. After the introduction of the constitutional proposals, he was among the SLOS leadership that insisted on the necessity to give the Protectorate a major part in the Legislative Council and to enable the interior educated people a larger share in the political structure. When the conflict between the Colony Creole politicians and Protectorate leadership reached its climax, Dr. Margaï was seen as the only saviour of national unity.

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[55] - CO 267/698/32010/9 *Acting Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 17 October 1950.

[56] - For example, the SLOS criticised the Government policies in the agricultural and mineral sectors that were dominated by expatriates.

Although Dr. Margaï was known for his reconciliatory character, he was deeply affected by some Creoles' stubborn intransigence. He rejected their refusal to see that their brethren in the interior ought to have adequate representation. He considered that such a position is the result of a sense of selfishness and a fear of losing established privileges, not thinking about the larger numbers of Sierra Leoneans. He insisted that Protectorate interests, inadequately represented in the then Legislative Council, were being overridden by unfair pressure from Freetown.[57] With other educated elements and some chiefs, he transformed the SLOS into a political body fighting for the interests of the Protectorate and advancing towards the application of the new Constitution.

Milton Margaï was the hope of both the interior leadership and the colonial government to create a minimum harmony between the Colony and Protectorate. He was the one who had moved a resolution in the Protectorate Assembly in October 1950, which put forward that "we wholeheartedly endorse these proposals …and respectfully ask the Government to have the said proposals implemented as early as possible in 1951."[58] Colonial officials were with the opinion that the conservative Creole politicians, though having experience, should be prevented from playing a strong role in politics by giving chance to an alternative political alliance between the interior leadership and moderate Creoles. The Colonial Government went in accordance with Margaï's aspiration that the Constitution should be applied as soon as possible. The Acting governor in Sierra Leone wrote to the Secretary of State:

> I am convinced that the sooner the new constitution takes effect the better. This will bring to an end a nineteenth century oligarchy which has stayed far into the twentieth century, and which in the past had performed useful work. Its real use in the future should be as leaven in Sierra Leone as a whole…and

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[57] - *West Africa*, October 1950.

[58] - *Dispatch by the Acting Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 17 October 1950, op. cit.

not as a small group living on their past glories and to a considerable degree on another people's money.[59]

The Protectorate political group, led by Milton Margaï, had already started to be crystallised as a national group preparing itself for self-government. What they needed was some backing from looking-forward Creoles in order to achieve a minimal ground of reconciliation before the start of decolonisation. In fact, there had been realistic Creoles who, believed in the inevitability of the then development, though with some reservation. A number of moderate Colony politicians acknowledged the right of the interior people to be represented properly, although they were comprehensive to the Creoles' anxiety about their position. Therefore, they were expected to welcome cooperation with Margaï's group for a unified political line. On the other hand, they rejected the calls made by the Conservative Creole politicians for a massive boycott for they knew that the Creoles were so a narrow minority that they would not be successful.

Dr. Laminah Sankoh was the man who headed people of this type in a Colony political party named the Freetown People's Party. Although he shared with his Creole community worries and doubts about their future, he was one of those who saw the actual situation with more pragmatism. The fact that the other British West African colonies were developing towards self-government made it inevitable that Sierra Leone would stand in the backseat because of the Creole/Up-Country problem. He himself saw that the best future of Creoles should be within the unity of all Sierra Leoneans. Thus, he frequently criticised in his paper *The African Vanguard* his Creole brethrens' extremist attitudes against the Protectorate people. He saw that while trying to preserve their own community's interests, they were destroying the future of both communities and the future of the whole country.[60] Conversely, L.

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[59] - *Dispatch by the Acting Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 17 October 1950, op cit.

[60] - CO 267/698/32010/9, *Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies* dated 11 August 1950.

Sankoh admitted that Protectorate politicians and their people were right in their aspiration for fairer representation.

L. Sankoh's political vision encouraged Dr. Margaï, on behalf of the interior educated elements and chiefs, to get in touch with him. The two men agreed that unity between the Creoles and the Protectorate people was the best guarantee for a successful political future for the country. Both men promised to work for the purpose of national unity and a gradual progress towards self-government. For that purpose, they decided to amalgamate the Sierra Leone Organisation Society and the Freetown People's Party to form a national party that was named the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP).

According to its founders, the SLPP's objective was "to work for the political unification of the Colony and the Protectorate". But they insisted that they should be modest in political demands. Thus, they said they would be working out to reach a self-governing status within the British Empire (or the Commonwealth) and did not insist on the ideal of "self-government now".[61] In this regard, Dr. Margaï maintained that the new party aimed to gain self-government "but to aspire to it without taking a gradual step is sheer folly…we all know nations who have taken up responsibilities for which they have not had the necessary preparation and consequences have been very grave".[62] Hence, this cautious mood was to characterise the whole process of decolonisation.

In return for the positive step made by Sankoh's Creole followers, Dr. Margaï and the Protectorate leadership responded with some concessions in order to push forward the task of reconciliation. Thus, the interior politicians requested the Government to pass a District Council Bill that put forward that any resident in a given interior district was eligible for election to the local District Council, and then

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[61] - This is the banner used by K. N'krumah and his followers in the Gold Coast after the 1948 bloody riots to press on the colonial authorities for a quick start of decolonisation.

[62] - *West Africa*, October 1950.

to the Protectorate Assembly or the Legislative Council.[63] This measure permitted those Creoles who supported Milton Margaï to have a chance in standing as candidates to the Legislative Council inside the Protectorate. This step was also to cut the way in the face of the conservative Creoles' attacks on the Constitution that gave the right of interior men to stand easily as candidates in elections in the Colony while Colony citizens had no such rights in the Protectorate.

In addition to that, the interior leadership promised their Creole supporters in the SLPP the advantage of being preferred as candidates in the Colony areas with the condition that they should follow the party's line. In this regard, the SLPP issued a manifesto that stated that since it considered itself a national party, it would contest every seat in both sections of the country in the general elections that were intended in 1951. It was stated that the Party leadership would support only candidates who would give a written pledge to support the SLPP's policy of political unification, to work towards self-government within the Commonwealth, to advance education in all aspects to suit the people for self-government, and to accelerate the economic development of the country.[64]

The emergence of the SLPP was the result of the aspiration of both the Protectorate politicians and the Colonial Government to set up a minimum national outlook to start up the transfer of power. It is true that the SLPP could bring members from the three different elites together (Creoles, interior educated men, and chiefs). It is also true that it was the first time that a true national party appeared in Sierra Leone. However, the SLPP was not the result of a strong, mass nationalist movement. That is why its emergence did nothing to solve the Creole/Native gap since the overwhelming majority of Creoles continued to see the SLPP merely as a Protectorate party backed by the Colonial Government. By the advance of the intended elections, the political scene in Sierra Leone was clearly polarised into two

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[63] - CO 267/698/32010/9 *Acting Governor's Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies* dated 12 October 1950.

[64] - *West Africa*, October 1950.

political trends: the pro-Constitution Protectorate front of the educated group and chiefs represented by the Sierra Leone People's Party and the anti-Constitution Colony front of Creoles represented by the National Council of Sierra Leone.

In spite of the political tensions that preceded the elections, the latter were held at the beginning of 1951 without trouble. The Creole politicians who had called for a boycott eventually decided to contest elections in the Colony constituencies. They were, in fact, all too far cautious and had looked with a realistic eye to the future to talk openly of boycotting the new Constitution.[65] They were actually aware that participation was more rewarding than boycotting, for in case they did, the SLPP would seize their opportunities easily. Thus, it seemed better to win a minority position in the new Legislative Council than to enter a lost boycott movement.[66] Although the SLPP seemed more favourable to win, it had still to face a strong front of Creole solidarity, in addition to the weight of chiefs in the Protectorate. The results of elections showed that the SLPP was not politically at ease. The NCSL's calls to Creoles for solidarity against the interior danger succeeded to bring them five seats out of seven in the Colony areas. Meanwhile, the strong body of chiefs was able to retain eight seats from the fourteen reserved to the interior areas. Thus, the SLPP commoners in reality won only eight seats, six in the interior and two in the Colony. Without the support of the chiefs in the new Legislative Council, the SLPP would not have the power to lead Sierra Leone towards self-government. Eventually, the 1951 elections marked the eventual loss of the Creoles' political supremacy in favour of the interior men.

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[65] - *Intelligence Report,* op. cit., p. 02.

[66] - Commenting on Creoles' earlier enthusiasm for a general boycott, the Acting Governor in Sierra Leone confessed: "I have often tried to convince the Creole politicians that they are throwing away what may be their ast opportunity for leadership but, I confess, with little result", *Acting Governor's dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 17 October 1950, op. cit.

CONCLUSION:

The first obstacle that faced the transfer of power in Sierra Leone was a bitter sectional conflict that opposed the Colony Creoles and Protectorate people due to the absence of a unified national agreement. Differences between the two sides were differences between two different sets of community values: a westernised society inspired by European values against traditional native tribes taking roots in the depth of Africa culture. The colonisers had to face the results of their earlier policy that had enhanced those differences through isolating the two communities from each other socially and politically. Finding themselves situated in two different cultural settings, the two sides were incapable to overcome their authentic differences and fuse into one nation. As the British started to believe that decolonisation would be an inevitable path, they hurried to arrange suitable terms for a gradual transfer of power. Nonetheless, their policy was confronted to an ill-equipped environment.

Previous colonial policy seemed contradictory to the self-government objective. While being preoccupied with a strong upholding of the old gap between the Colony and Protectorate, colonial officials in Sierra Leone found themselves face to face with the imperatives of general policy that urged reforms in the direction of self-government. Therefore, the existence of two different legal entities, Colony and Protectorate, with two different communities made it difficult to set up a national unity necessary for the start of the planned transfer of power. The Protectorate traditional rulers and their subordinate educated members had very different aspirations from the Colony Creoles. Hence, the first type of political conflict in Sierra Leone was built upon a sectional antagonism based on cultural, social, and historical differences. The fact that the coming of the transfer of power was not the result of a strong nationalist pressure widened the gap between the two sides.

The attempt of colonial officials to create a fragile unity for the sake of starting the transfer of power did nothing to solve the problem. After 1951, the

conflict between the two groups, Creoles and interior men, ceased to be a major characteristic of Sierra Leone's political scene. However, it continued in other forms inside the polity throughout most of the period of decolonisation. Though the Creoles were a very narrow minority, they were largely advantageous in the educational and professional fields. Therefore, members from this group closely controlled most of the administrative posts in different sectors. The civil service, the judiciary, education, the legal profession, and other fields were overwhelmingly dominated by Creoles. This means that the latter had an important role to play in the process of decolonisation though being a minority.

Overall, the project of the nation state seemed to start on false grounds since nationalism, as a necessary accessory, was absent. Sierra Leoneans enthusiastically aspired to power but did not struggle to obtain it. They hoped to build a European type state but without having neither the initiative in hand nor the necessary time. For the reason of being dependent on what the British had decided, they began with disagreement about the characteristics of the project itself. Yet, the quarrel was on who should benefit more rather than questioning the foundations of the project itself. No one in Sierra Leone gave the impression to be concerned whether those foundations of the future political systems were to function efficiently.

Political conflict built on community differences in Sierra Leone resembled a number of other conflicts elsewhere in Africa.[67] Yet, its particularity was that the Creole minority that refused coexistence with the natives, though holding a quasi-European identity, were black-skinned. Although the Creoles looked like the other white communities in Africa in status, values, and aspirations, as they themselves had claimed, they were not seen so neither by the coloniser nor by the native Africans.

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[67] - In Kenya, the minority white settlers with European values conflicted with the majority of traditional black Africans. The conflict resorted to violence. In francophone Africa, Algeria is perhaps the best example. The minority white settlers with alien values too refused the project of an independent state out of fears of Muslims' domination. Conflict here also resorted to

Meanwhile, that unity synthesised by the British between the interior educated elements and the chiefs for specific purposes just before the start of decolonisation was another source of decay.   This was the divergence between the progressive attitudes held by the educated young men and the conservative tendencies held by the group of chiefs. Although both groups came together in the beginning, the nature of the process of decolonisation led them eventually to clash.

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violence. Lately in Zimbabwe, the black African community conflicted - and continues to conflict- with the white minority and violence was inevitable.

CHAPTER V

ETHNO-REGIONALISM AND THE PROGRESS OF POLITICAL
CONFLICT, 1961-1967

Before independence, decolonisation policy set up the grounds and gave birth to two types of political conflict in Sierra Leone. First, it reinforced and complicated the differences between the Colony and Protectorate. Second, it paved the way for the social transformations that were reflected in the political arena. The post-independence era witnessed another sort of political conflict related to decolonisation policy. Ethnic and regional antagonisms that were maintained at the end of a long colonial era constituted the basis of the post-independent political unrest.[1] This time, it was antagonism between the North, overwhelmingly Temne, and the South, overwhelmingly Mende that polarized the political scene in Sierra Leone.

Political conflict of this sort usually takes its seeds from the regional differences within the same country. These could be ethnic, social, religious-cultural, or economic. They directly shape the political attitudes of individuals within the political system or outside it. However, in the modern type of politics, political conflict that is built on regional differences is essentially a conflict that opposes

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[1] - An *ethnic group* refers to a bulk of individuals having a common racial origin, and usually share common cultural values whether conscious of their position or non-conscious. *Ethnicity* means the possession of this feature. *Ethnic Identity* is a consciousness of an *ethnic group* of their *ethnic identity*, and their willingness to preserve it. On the other hand, *regionalism* is also a consciousness of a group of individuals of belonging to a particular residential area, which is part of a larger state or country. Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (London, Croomltelm, 1978) p. 159.

influential groups whether inside the system or outside it and who are able to manipulate such a ground for political manoeuvring. That is to say, ethnic or regional differences are not sufficient to engender political conflict if the interests of influential groups remain untouched. Interests here do not mean necessarily material benefits; they could be religious, ideological, or even psychological. Yet in Africa, ethno-regional conflict as a whole rests heavily on the failure of decolonisation policy to reduce pre-colonial ethnic antagonism.

To determine the relationship between decolonisation and post-independent conflict in Sierra Leone, it is necessary first to analyse the nature of this conflict and origins. Next, it is required to explore the seeds of conflict in the grounds of decolonisation policy and the reforms that preceded it. This chapter starts with the origins of ethno-regional conflict in Sierra Leone, to explore afterwards the nature of the rising opposition. Then, it analyses the political relationships between government and opposition which ultimately came to a final impasse, represented in the 1967 military coup that ended peaceful democratic conflict.

In Sierra Leone, the conflict built on ethnic and regional differences was played by two major political formations and was the most serious and lengthy conflict in the history of the country. The country was divided into two blocks on the basis of ethnic and regional antagonism. The two terms ethnic or regional nearly meant the same thing in Sierra Leone. Regional denotes North against South and each of the two regions were dominated by a single large ethnic group, Temnes and Mendes respectively.

In this phase of political conflict, the SLPP was faced with a new type of opposition leadership that was able to depose it from authority for a long period.[2] The rise of the All People's Congress (APC) under the leadership of the ex-unionist

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[2] - The SLPP never returned to power until the 1996 presidential elections that brought Ahmed Tidjan Kebbah to power. However, Kebbah was a northerner chosen to counter the accusations of Mende domination over the SLPP and to attract northern votes. Victor A. B. Davies, *War, Poverty and Growth in Africa: Lessons from Sierra Leone* Paper prepared for Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE) 5 th Annual Conference *Understanding Poverty and Growth in Afric*a, St Catherine's College, Oxford University, March 18-19, 2002.

and SLPP leader, Siaka Probyn Stevens, was a real turning point in the history of Sierra Leone's political conflict. Unlike the previous opposition, the new party was no reflection of random attempts to seize some privileges in the polity. Rather, it was the product of a set of factors whose seeds lay in the pre-colonial period that developed during the late colonial period, and that were finally articulated after independence. The APC was a formation that embodied a growing Northern, mainly Temne, anti-Mende feeling, especially among the categories that were frustrated with the political legacy of decolonisation. The new party was able to exploit the previous experience of political opposition and the different sources of discontent; and then it could build a wider base of support.

I- GROUNDS OF NORTH/ SOUTH ANTAGONISM

The rise of the APC and its crystallisation as a northern articulator of regional discontent was the result of a successful political manoeuvring that exploited a favourable existing ground of discontent. The latter came out of a number of closely interrelated factors that often had roots in the pre-colonial and colonial times. This section will show the grounds that made the rise of an ethno-regional opposition possible. For study purposes, those factors leading to that situation will be grouped into ethno-cultural, socio-economic, and political.

1- The Ethno-Cultural Ground:

Differences between the North and the South, or between the Temnes and the Mendes, had always been a reality that none could deny. However, those differences were hardly apparent during colonial times due to the supremacy of Colony/Protectorate antagonism. The latter was indeed the product of a constant policy pursued by the colonial government in order to secure a united front against the claims generated by the more politically sophisticated Creole elite. Although differences between north and south existed and from time to time rose to the

surface,[3] they were ignored and often fused in the wider issue of the Creole/native gap.

The Temnes and the Mendes are originally different in ethnic and cultural settings. Before the establishment of colonial rule in Sierra Leone in 1896, clashes and wars between the two sides were frequent. Ever since the migration of the Mende tribes northwards from present-day Liberia and the beginning of contact with Temnes, the two sides entered into an era of unstable relationships.[4] The northern tribes, mainly Muslims, regarded the Southern tribes as pagans whose fight was religiously rewarded. However, the main fuel of the long wars between the two sides lay in external influences. The demand for slaves on the part of Europeans led to both Temnes and Mendes waging war for the sake of prisoners, who were to be sold as slaves. The Europeans, too, had strong interests in maintaining political instability and ensured a continuous supply with arms. By the beginning of the British anti-slave trade campaign, the whole of West Africa was witnessing an era of *jihad* wars that aimed at bringing non-Muslims under the rule of the Islamic Law. The Muslims in the north of Sierra Leone also raised the flag of *Jihad* and frequently got into bloody contact with the southern pagan tribes throughout the nineteenth century. It was not until the British began effectively exercising their influence to impose peace for the sake of their trade that troubles ceased to be significant.

The imposition of a British Protectorate with undesirable measures in 1896 seemed to unite both sides on the necessity of resistance. The Hut Tax War was a temporal end of a long Temne/Mende gap and the beginning of a Colony/Protectorate gap. This remained the case during most of the colonial era and finally was reversed into its former state after independence.

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[3] - The Temnes in Freetown, led by their Muslim religious leaders, the Alimamis, had always asserted their northern identity and usually rejected Westernisation.

[4] - The Temne had been living along the northern coast of present-day Sierra Leone when the first Portuguese navigators reached the region in 1460.Yet the Mende-speaking people began thjeir penetration into Sierra Leone only in the mid-16th century, and later established the states of Bullom, Loko, Boure, and Sherbro. Daniel Tetteh Osabu-kle, *Military Square Pegs in Round Political Holes: the Case of Sierra Leone*, Carleton University, p. 04. http….

The Temne/Mende quarrel was built, in addition to ethnic origins, on the crucial issue of the differences in religion and culture. Islam was (and still is) the religion of the northern population, though other types of religions existed.[5] The South was mostly Christian, with few pagan tribes.[6] Religion played an important psychological role in the attitudes of men during those pre-colonial wars and continued to shape the relationships between the two sides. Such a fact was reinforced by the nature of Sierra Leone's society that gave much importance to spiritual matters when forming their views. The importance of the religious aspect lay also in the fact that those who could not, for example, benefit from the state resources might view it as discrimination on religious grounds. The fact that religious matters could have mattered for the new opposition is reflected in the proposition of a prominent Muslim leader, Alhadj Gibril Seisay, to the leadership of the later formed All People's Congress.[7]

Another important factor related to the issue is western education. The nature of western education, that is its close connection to Christianity, had absorbed non-Muslims from the South more than Muslims from the North. Muslims were naturally conservative and wished not to let their children plunge into the stream of Christianity. In a later time in the colonial era, this meant that the Mendes became more advantageous in the administrative and professional sectors, thanks to their educational qualifications. However, the inadequacy of the northerners' position compared with southerners was not to be explained in this simple sense. Rather, many people in the North would see it as a privilege maintained by the Christians of the South. Although the political leadership of the northern opposition did not reflect

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[5] - Historically, Islam reached the north of Sierra Leone in the eighteenth century following the Fullani (called Fullas today) Jihad in Futta-Djalon. Daniel Tetteh Osabu-kle, op. cit., p. 04.

[6] - Estimates of Sierra Leone religious groupings today are as follows: Muslims (60%), Christians (30%), and about 10% practice local indigenous religions. Ibid., p. 05.

[7] - CO 554/2363 *Enclosure (Secret Report) to Governor's Inward Telegram to the Secretary of State*, 26 April 1961.

this religious issue clearly, they were nevertheless conscious about its existence and the desirability to exploit it. In brief, the North/South conflict in ethnic and cultural matters would easily feed political antagonism between the two regional groups.

2- The Socio- Economic Ground:

One of the important grounds for the growth of conflict between the North and the South was the remarkable imbalance in both the social and the economic situations of the two sides. The growth of opposition in the North suggests that the South was advantageous in this field and it really was. The point here is that the imbalance in the social and economic situations concerned both the masses and the elites. That is to say, a line of solidarity between the opposition political leadership and the popular categories was drawn to oppose the supremacy of Southerners in social and economic development. The importance of the socio-economic situation is that it also constituted a source of discontent that was politicised. The pre-eminence of the South in this field was often linked with other factors, particularly ethnic and regional.

During the colonial period and along the years of decolonisation, economic development in the North was well behind the Southern and the South-eastern areas. This was the result of British concentration of economic activities in the South since the beginning of the colonial period. First, purchasing African produce, like palm oil and kernels, created more opportunities for growth in the Mende areas. Although the main produce that was destined to export, palm kernels, was drawn nearly in the same quantities from both parts of Sierra Leone, the South flourished more than the North because of the introduction of new crops, like rice, in the first area.

Some figures might attest on the inequality between the two areas. The South enjoyed in 1948, for example, about 85 registered commercial vehicles against 29 for the North. The circulation of trade was more important in the first region. When diamond and other minerals were discovered and started to be exploited in the Southern and Eastern areas at a large scale, the economic situation developed more

quickly there.[8] Exploitation of these minerals led naturally to the development of infrastructure and the creation of employment opportunities to the extent that many northerners sought to make way towards the South.

Colonial rulers found it necessary to reinforce infrastructure for the sake of more effective exploitation. Transportation, therefore, developed more considerably in the South and East compared with the North. The railway road that was started by the turn of the nineteenth century also screeched more particularly in the South and the South-eastern areas with only a small line to Makeni in the North.[9] For similar reasons, roads expanded in the Mende areas more than in the Temne regions. The proportion of roads per square mile followed a decreasing line from the South, the East to the North; there was a mile of roads for each 14.8 square miles, 17.3 square miles and 18.6 square miles respectively. Between 1948 and 1957, about 522 miles of roads were constructed in the 13,609 square miles of the Mende areas against only 263 miles in the Temné 13,875 square miles.[10]

What is said about economic development and transportation services can be said about other social services. The distribution of hospitals and schools, for example, reflected a bias towards the Mende areas. Education, which was a decisive factor in the process of decolonisation, is an issue that enhanced the gap between the two parts of the country. For a number of reasons, western education developed in the Mende areas more than in the Temnes'. The availability of Koranic schools and the strong association between western education and Christianisation were the main reasons for the slow progress of western education in the Temne regions. The Mendes were more receptive to western education as missionary associations could

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[8] - As Martin Kilson asserts, "groups in the areas first colonised have an historical advantage over other groups in social change. Again, the location of the natural resources required for modernisation _ minerals, arable land, water-power, waterways_ may favour a certain tribal, regional, or religious group as against others in gaining aaccess to social change". Martin Kilson, "African political Change and the Modernisation Process", *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* N° 1, Vol. 4, 1963, p. 431.

[9] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 41.
[10] - Ibid.

penetrate more easily. The figures show that at the start of decolonisation the Northerners were well behind the Southerners in school enrolment. There were only 3,291 children in primary schools in the North against 11,446 in the Southern provinces.[11] Thus, those differences led to the fact that the first Protectorate lawyers, doctors, teachers, and administrators were overwhelmingly Mende. On the eve of independence, northerners were complaining that the situation was being worsened by the rise of education fees so that the majority of students remained outside schools.[12] As a result, opportunities in the civil service and professions were opened to Mendes more than to Temnés, since Northerners were not able to vie with Southerners in the field. Consequently, when Government posts became a source of enrichment, northerners felt frustrated more and more as they linked their situation to the Government bias toward the southern provinces.

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[11] Cartwright, op. cit., p. 42.
[12] - CO 554/2363 *Enclosure (Secret Report) to Governor's Inward Telegram to the Secretary of State*, 26 April 1961.

Map N° 3: Distribution of Economic Sectors in Sierra Leone (1963 census)
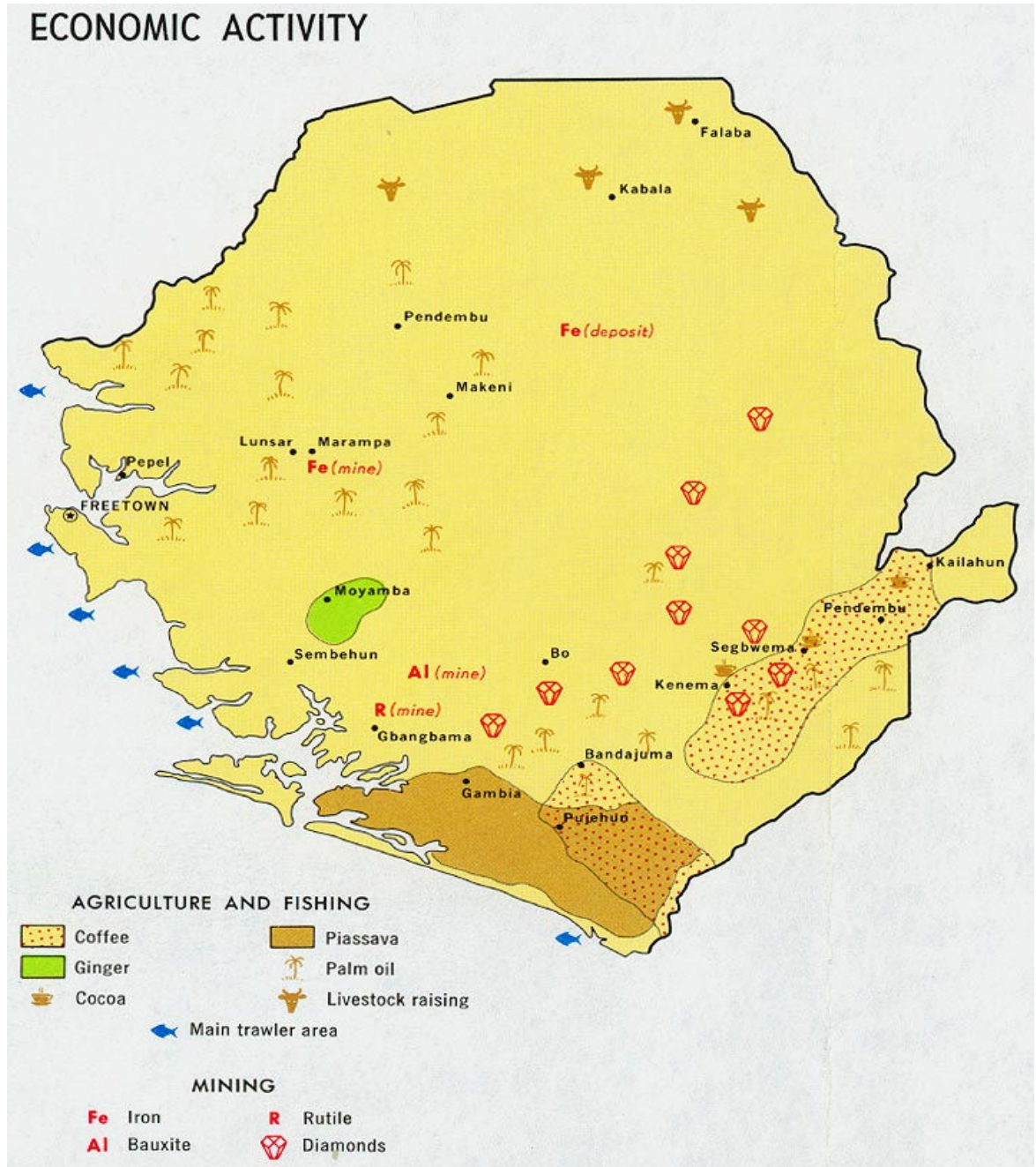
Source: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/Africa

(Scales not mentioned in the source)

3- The Political Ground:

The slow development of the North in the economic and social spheres was added to a notable lack of political opportunities for northerners. Thus, the situation was leading gradually to the polarisation of Northerners to an anti-South position. There were several factors that led to this. Political opposition based on an ethnic and regional basis was the result of a series of political frustrations among the politically ambitious northerners. The limited number of educated elements from the Temne tribes handicapped their position in the SLPP Government and administration. Since its foundation in the early 1950's, the Mendes heavily dominated the SLPP. However, the political scene was then divided along a Creole-upcountry line so that the issue passed unnoticed. The fact of being a minority compared with the Creoles and the Mendes forced them either to adapt to the requirements of the majority or be isolated. Therefore, their ability to bring facilities to their regions was very limited.

The choice of supporting the Mende-dominated SLPP was no problem in the early years of decolonisation due to the preliminary enthusiasm among Sierra Leoneans. However, after the growth of popular discontent, particularly in the poorer North, against the practices of the Mende-Government, that choice could only lead to contradiction in their political positions. They had either to satisfy the protests of their fellow population and oppose the SLPP or completely identify themselves with the dominating Mendes and slough off from their people.

The chiefs and some of the northern politicians chose to adopt the SLPP line and, therefore, secured comfortable rewards. The chiefs brought useful local support for the central Government and ensured the obedience of the common people. In return, they were allowed locally to exercise large political powers that secured them social and economic privileges. Other non-chief northerners also followed a similar path as they secured posts in the administration and other privileges, but they had to rally support for the Government through patronage or loyalties. The cost of this support, however, was a loss of the northern people's confidence. Except the beneficiaries from the distribution of patronage, large popular sections in the North

who suffered from social malaise regarded those pro-Government chiefs and administrators more as Mende Southerners than Temne Northerners. In a sense, the supporters of the Mende dominated system that deprived the majority of the people in the North to benefit from the State resources were seen as enemies, regardless of their region or ethnic origin. In fact, such a view had already started to take place in the northern areas in the early stages of the transfer of power. This was clearly expressed by the angry people at the 1955-56 disturbances who considered the chiefs and their associates as symbols of the SLPP regime that they abhorred.[13]

The second choice open to the northern politicians was opposition. In fact, opposition from the North was not born only with the birth of the APC. Rather, it was embodied in the previous opposition of youngster progressive elements versus traditional chiefly attitudes. Many northerners had developed anti-SLPP sentiments that later became anti-Mendes. At first, the northern young elements, like their counterparts in the South, suffered from oppressive attitudes on the part of the dominating group of chiefs at the lower base of the SLPP. The elders traditionally had the right to judge the attitudes of the young, and correct them when necessary. But the fact that chiefs were using their position to serve their personal interests pushed the young to revolt against the conventional authority of the chiefs. More than that, in the northern areas, the chiefs started to be seen as accomplices of the Mende-dominated SLPP Government. The politically dissatisfied elements in the North, however, accepted to join hands with their counterparts in the South, and formed the more progressive political party, the PNP under the leadership of both A. Margaï, a southerner, and S. Stevens, a northerner. The party rejected the conservative attitudes and the domination of elders within the SLPP and opted for challenge. Therefore, northerners' anti-Mende-SLPP sentiments (that began in reality as anti-chiefs' sentiments) were first channelled through the medium of anti-conservatism that was adopted by the PNP.

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[13] - See details in chapter III.

This harmonious political atmosphere between the young Mendes and Temnes did not last for long. The existence of differences in principles and objectives, in addition to a change in the attitudes of the PNP Mendes, quickly broke the alliance and rendered each group to its original strongholds. PNP Mendes and PNP northerners actually did not antagonise the SLPP Government on similar grounds. The Mendes in the PNP were more concerned with the necessity to accelerate the pace of social change or modernisation. They worked out to reduce the authority of the chiefs and open a wider door for themselves. However, the Mende elements in the PNP had less enthusiasm to uproot the chiefs from power since these chiefs were not as abhorred as in the north. In fact, the distribution of patronage in the Mende areas more than in the North made the chiefs safer from their attacks.

The northern Temnes, on the other side, started their protest afresh. After their short experience within the PNP, they became fully convinced that their future struggle would be precisely against the Mende southerners. Thus, they stood first to counteract the misdeeds of their chiefs under the protection of the Mende-dominated Government. They also protested against the latter's bias towards the South in social and economic projects. It became clear for the majority of northern politicians that they had little chance of making successful political careers within the SLPP as well as the PNP.

The division of the PNP along a North-South line was the first incident leading to the crystallisation of a regional opposition. The party started to be heavily dominated by Mende elements, especially when Stevens lost his seat in the Legislature. Meanwhile, the British-backed SLPP Government was trying to weaken the opposition and isolate the radicals for a peaceful transfer of power. The PNP, therefore, was easily driven to M. Margaï's side when he declared in 1960 the foundation of the United National Front and rewarded his Mende supporters at the

expense of Temnés.[14] Then, it started to be seen that real opposition lay in the North on a regional and ethnic basis.

The country became politically divided along its geography: Temnes in the poor North supported by a number of ethnic minorities, Konos on part of the Eastern Province, and some Creoles in the Western area, all against Mendes and other minorities in the South and Eastern Provinces.

Map N°4: Post-Independent Sierra Leone Provinces

Source: www.oneworldlink.org.uk

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[14] - Two Creoles, C. Rogers Right and Gidon Dickson-Thomas were made ministers in the UNF, while John Williams became Ministerial secretary. Cartwright, op. cit., p. 185.

II- POLITICAL ARTICULATION OF ETHNO-REGIONAL SENTIMENTS: THE RISE OF THE ALL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS

The United National Front was Milton's most important achievement for it could successfully absorb opposition parties into the SLPP's line. Sierra Leoneans' aspiration for a quick pace towards independence helped him put aside the differences between his government and the other political parties and enabled him to rally support for the purpose of independence. In the process of negotiations with the British, Sierra Leoneans were invited in 1960 to a conference in London to set up the final constitutional terms for independence. Most of Sierra Leone's nationalists, including Stevens, were present in the conference. However, views were different about the terms of political freedom. In an attempt to preserve their imperial interests, the British were successful to impose a number of conditions in return for the proclamation of independence. Sierra Leone had to join the British Commonwealth of Nations, and therefore, be subordinate to British economy. The British were to maintain their naval base in Freetown and a number of key military posts in Sierra Leone's army. In addition, Britain was to exercise direct financial control on the new independent country.[15]

The UNF nationalists tried at first to oppose these conditions, but the majority quickly accepted with the exception of Siaka Stevens and his supporters. The latter insisted on the point that such conditions would reduce the value of independence. They rejected British attempts to minimize Sierra Leone's sovereignty through imposing humiliating obligations in return for freedom. The defecting group refused to sign the treaties and was thus expelled from the PNP and the UNF.[16] Hence, Siaka Stevens returned to Sierra Leone with radical views against the UNF line.

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[15] - Braguinski, *Libération de l'Afrique* (Editions du Progrès, Moskow) p. 114.
[16] - *Enclosure (Secret Report) to Governor's Inward Telegram to the Secretary of State*, 26 April 1961, op. cit.

In addition to that, Stevens played the greatest role in the process of defection and the consequent birth of the new party. Ambitious as he was, Stevens had usually been considered, and considered himself, as a competent leader. Edgar Parry had shown his esteem to his person by choosing him as a Labour leader instead of Wallace Johnson and was rewarded a scholarship to Britain.[17] Yet, the prominence of Dr. Margaï as the first Protectorate educated man, and his command of the Mende-dominated educated group, left Stevens with no chance of leading the nationalist movement. Ever since the start of the transfer of power, Stevens, with other elements, showed disagreement with Dr Margaï's policies. He was the maker, with Albert Margaï, of the serious opposition line under the PNP. Yet, Stevens's ambition was greatly curbed by being out of the Legislature after the 1957 elections. During the negotiations on the terms of independence, he was disillusioned by the fact that he would stand out of the cabinet since he was not a legislator.[18] Therefore, the coming of independence in such circumstances did not offer him any chance to play a major role in post-independent Sierra Leone. One of those present in the 1960 constitutional conference, Gershon Collier, made the point as follows:

> Stevens found the courage to assume this posture because he was fully aware that he stood little chance of personally deriving much advantage from the agreements of the UNF. The plum of a cabinet-portfolio, as he might have seen it, was beyond his grasp.[19]

Siaka Stevens, then, left Margaï's formation and declared the implementation of his own All People's Party.

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[17] - See chapter II.

[18] - A commentator put forward: "Siaka Stevens, in complete contravention of party loyalty expected of matured politician of liberal democracy, accused his own PNP members and the leaders of other parties of a sell out to Milton Margai and the SLPP in return for government appointments". Daniel Tetteh Osabu-kle, op. cit., p. *01.*

[19] - Fashole Luke, "the Development of Modern Trade Unionism in Sierra Leone, part II, *the International Journal of African Historical Affairs* (Boston University 1985, Vol. 18, N°4) p. 625.

The rise of the APC, therefore, came to crown a series of political developments that were, in their turn, enhanced by regional and ethnic differences. These differences were fuelled by a variety of cultural, social, and economic factors, things that had established a solid ground for the development of a political situation polarised into two conflicting blocks: the Temne North against the Mende South. Northerners' self-awareness was growing due to the slow social and economic developments in the North and the growth of Mende domination over the polity. The discontented "young men" who showed radical attitudes towards the SLPP-Chiefs alliance had lost hope in the previous norms of political opposition and were eager to attempt a new experience.

It remains to mention that political opposition in post-independent Sierra Leone was led by the APC, but there existed some opposition to the SLPP Government outside the APC, namely from the Kono Progressive Movement. The latter articulated the Kono people's discontent mainly over the exploitation of diamond but remained generally confined to that particular area. That is why the party could not survive in national politics without going in the APC's orbit. Therefore, it always adopted the APC's line and supported it in elections. The Creoles themselves did not form an independent opposition party. Therefore, the APC was the only national opposition party in politics, and thus, the study of opposition in the immediate years following independence will logically focus on the example of Stevens's movement.

1- The APC's Organisation and Leadership:

Like many of the first African political parties, the APC was modelled according to western norms. Its organisation did not, to a certain extent, reflect the traditional chiefly-dominated society. The APC in fact was a revolution that sought to go against the SLPP prototype of a national political party that heavily depended on the

chiefs.[20] Its insistence on the ordinary men led its leadership to overcome the traditional principles that enhanced the right of elders to decide. On the contrary, the APC was a party that came to revolt against the existing social conventions on which the existing political conventions were built.

The APC leadership was a combination of northern politicians driven from the SLPP, PNP, and UPP.[21] Its cadres differed from the SLPP ones in that it was drawn from a class different from the chiefly or the educated elites. Instead, most of its cadres belonged to what historian Martin Kilson terms as the sub-elite.[22] The latter included trade unionists, teachers, skilled workers, literate traders, and the like.

In spite of its anti-chiefs line, the APC sometimes relied on rival chiefly families hateful to other well-established chiefs. This supporting body of rival chiefs became stronger after the attempts made by Albert Margaï (as Prime Minister) to weaken his rivals through frequent interventions in local chiefs' affairs.[23] However, chiefs could be found only at the local level. The Party's national leadership was composed of a number of educated cadres and experienced politicians. The party succeeded to attract those marginalized in the SLPP and anti-Government educated Creoles who were committed to social change. For example, Dr. John Karefa-Smart was an SLPP leader who later turned to support the APC.[24]

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[20] - The UPP was not, in fact, a national party because it concentrated mainly on the Creole element, while the PNP was considerably infiltrated by chiefly views.

[21] - John Dunn, *West African States, Failure and Promise* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1978-79) p. 189.

[22] - M. Kilson describes the sub-elite as being the bulk of the literate people, beyond the elite and a little more than the illiterates. The sub-elite contains primary school teachers, clerks, urban skilled workers, small scale traders and the like. M. Kilson in Gann and Duiguan, *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960* (London, Macmillan Press, 1974)

[23] - John Dunn, op. cit., p. 202.

[24] - John Karefa-Smart was born in Moyamba District in 1915. He was educated at the E.U.B. Primary School, Rotifunk, the Albert Academy, and then Fourah Bay College. Later, he went to Otterbein College in the United States and McGill University in Canada. He worked in various parts of the world, and was Regional Medical Officer for the West Africa Region of the World Health Organisation. He was a foundation member of the Sierra Leone Organisation Society, which later became the S.L.P.P. He was active in the constitutional committees that eventually led to Sierra Leone's independence in 1961. In 1957, he was appointed Minister of Lands, Mines

The party national leadership was also reinforced by radical leaders who were able to be magnets to popular enthusiasm. Wallace Johnson left UPP after he had won a seat in the House of Representatives in the 1957 elections and joined the newly formed APC. Thus, the latter's leadership was toughened by a unique voice from inside the Legislature, but with an important number of trade unionists behind him. Until his death in 1965, Wallace Johnson remained a full-hearted activist in the party.[25] The fact that the APC was led by two main historic figures of Sierra Leone's trade unionism made other important figures in the trade unionist movement join the party without hesitation. For example, George–Stone, who was a leading figure during the 1955 general strike, adhered to the APC line and became its advocate.[26] This added more strength to the party leadership especially as trade union organisations became instruments that ensured support among the important category of workers.

2- Ideology and Political Principles:

It is not easy to define the ideology of a given political party in post-independent African countries. Unlike the western world, parties in these countries had less experience and less background since they were recently born. They were established at a sudden to fit a given political situation. In fact, it is the historical evolution of a party that crystallises its ideology not its actual views towards political, economic, or social matters. For this reason, many of the African parties in the post-colonial period did not have clearly defined and self-made ideologies. The basics of their ideologies rested on reactions to "economic stagnation, urban inflation, ossification of the party, and monopolization of the fruits of independence

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and Labour with special responsibilities for Defence. After the 1962 elections, Dr. John Karefa-Smart was appointed Minister of External Affairs.

[25] - Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 626.
[26] - Ibid.

by a politico-administrative and commercial-contractor elite, functioning as contemporary compradors".[27]

Such political parties found no embarrassment in adopting foreign ideologies, particularly socialism, which was seen as a doctrine to show their detestation of capitalist colonialism and its offspring: neo-colonialism. The situation in Sierra Leone was no exception to the general rule. The pre-APC parties, especially opposition parties, could hardly identify themselves with a well-fixed ideology. Although they had attitudes and views towards political, social, and economic issues, they were not successful to originate a constant line that could be termed ideology.

The All Peoples' Congress was always linked to those post-colonial parties that preferred to lean towards socialism as a strong sign of their radical attitudes towards colonialism and its heirs. The APC is a party that saw in Socialism a suitable expression of its refusal of the colonial-capitalist approach held by the British and the neo-colonialist doctrine adopted by the SLPP rulers.[28] The ideology of the APC can be conceived as a combination of socialist theories and local political, social, and economic realities.[29]

As concerns society and its organisation, the APC endorsed the ideal of an egalitarian society that gives every citizen his freedom. It was often seen as a party that stood to represent "the interests and desires of the subordinate strata in Sierra Leone".[30] That is to say, it represented the lower social sections that had benefited very little from the coming of decolonisation, especially the workers and the peasants. When Stevens broke away from the UNF and founded the APC, he claimed

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[27] - Roger Murray,"The Social Roots and the Nature of Military Regimes", *African Social Studies,1984,* p. 387

[28] - The Governor of Sierra Leone had written to the Secretary of State that "our information continues to be that first payment into party funds came from Moscow Cheque and I have seen Moscow envelope addressed to the APC", CO 554/2363 *Inward Telegram from the Governor of Sierra Leone to the Secretary of State*, 26 April 1961.

[29] - Yet, it is to be stressed here that the forthcoming description of the APC's ideology concerns the party when out of power as an opposition party. For, it is true, many of the opposition parties in African countries preach for an ideal ideology when out of power. Yet once in power they could no longer maintain the same line because of a variety of reasons.

[30] - John Dunn, op. cit., p. 202.

that the Margaï-led party was overly conservative and elitist and that it was still British- controlled. With the diamond riches in mind, he campaigned on a populist platform calling for a greater share of SLST's holdings for the 'common people'. He insisted that his party would stand for a welfare state based on a socialist model in which all citizens, regardless of class, colour or creed, should have equal opportunity and where there should be no exploitation of man by man, tribe by tribe, or class by class. [31]

The APC, therefore, showed concern for these lower categories of society, like the workers and rural peasants, and worked to achieve their social and economic welfare. In fact, Stevens's followers looked at these categories as a struggling class against the tyranny of the class of chiefs. Lower paid, unemployed and unpaid labourers were the categories that the APC leaders turned to with care. For instance, the unpaid labourers benefited from special self-help schemes sponsored by the party for their own welfare. The objective was stated as an attempt to reintegrate this category in society and to free them from servitude. In Port-Loko in the North, the APC activists introduced a number of social projects including a hospital, a mosque, a Baï Bureh Memorial Hall, and a luxurious lodge.[32]

Economically, the APC built its economic views upon the economic failures of the SLPP Government. Its willingness to attract the masses through populism made its economic line more or less uncertain. Yet, a number of guidelines characterised the APC's economic doctrine. The party was in favour of a popular share of the country's riches, particularly diamonds. In fact, Stevens was one of the first political leaders to call for a break up of the expatriates' monopoly over the sector and campaigned for a direct exploitation on the part of ordinary Sierra Leoneans. The Party insisted on the desirability of a state economy, without the

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[31] - Ian Smillie, Lansana Gberie and Ralph Hazleton, *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security* (Complete Report) Partnership Canada Africa, January 2000, p. 53

[32] - J. D. Hargreaves, *The End of Colonial Rule in West Africa* (London, Mac Milan Press L.T.D, 1979) p. 80.

annihilation of private initiatives. For example, the Party declared its intention to monopolise the diamond sector and use state resources for the welfare of all sections of the people. However, it denounced the growing corruption that resulted from the politicisation of economy and called for its liberation from the hold of the corrupt politico-administrative elite. In the field of agriculture, the party was in favour of encouraging the local peasants financially and technically. Yet, the party had no clear intention of limiting private ownership.

Politically, the APC seemed more progressive. Siaka Stevens, who dictated most of the characteristics of the party line, had usually been against the existing political conventions that gave the chiefs a major share in politics. On the contrary, he always emphasised the necessity to pursue the medium of elections as a means to reflect the people's concerns. The APC group did not have a clear position as regards what type of democracy they wanted. In the beginning, they welcomed the parliamentary democracy that was inherited from the coloniser as far as it gave political authority to a directly elected body. Later on, the APC followers put forward a project of a republic. But when the idea of a one party-state was publicised by Albert Margaï, the APC opposed it ferociously regarding it as a threat to democracy. However, once in power, after 1968, it managed to establish a presidential regime that was eventually developed into a one party-state, and violently oppressed opposition.

3- Base of Support:

The APC built its base of support through radicalism and populism. Radicalism was a factor that polarised Government opponents around the party; populism attracted the lower classes to support the party against the failings of the Government. In fact, the supporters of the APC were those dissatisfied with the SLPP Government policies. In a way, the new party attracted the support of the majority of those who had always opposed the limitations of the transfer of power in bringing social and economic welfare. That's why the APC's supporting base was

built thanks to the frequent attacks on the SLPP-Government's failure to satisfy the needs of the Sierra Leone people. The radical and populist discourse adopted by S. Stevens and the APC leadership succeeded to attract a number of Sierra Leonean groups, but always within a regional and ethnic context.[33] The APC supporters, as it was obvious in elections, were driven mainly in the northern areas and the Freetown province, leaving the South pre-dominantly SLPP.

The party supporters in the areas mentioned were, broadly speaking, driven on four main grounds: regional sentiments, progressive tendencies, trade union orientations, and anti-chief positions. Each supporting category sustained the APC on its specific grounds. In practical terms, the supporters of the APC can be categorised into the following: the northern and Freetown progressive intellectuals including a number of Creoles, the urban workers of the modern economic sector, and the anti-chiefs peasants in the North.

The APC found in the ethnic and regional sentiments a suitable ground to rally mass support. Although not overtly expressed, its appeal to Temnes and other northern loyalties was conveyed through the attacks against the SLPP-Government's bias towards the southern areas in social and economic facilities. Yet, this came in the context of the wider issue of monopolising the state resources for the benefit of the ruling minority at the expense of the majority of the people. Since the North had been far behind in development matters compared to the South, northerners felt more concerned with the misdeeds of the SLPP-Government. Hence, the already existing ethnic, religious, and cultural differences were toughened by a biased social and economic policy on the part of the Mende-dominated Government. It was, therefore, natural that most APC supporters were to be found in the North.[34] On the other hand, the Western Province around the capital Freetown also provided a solid base of

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[33] - Already in September 1960, the APC membership was 638, while attendance in meetings reached 1,500. *Enclosure (Secret Report) to Governor's Inward Telegram to the Secretary of State*, 26 April 1961, op. cit.

[34] - As Victor Davies views: "opportunistic politicians often cleverly arouse ethno-regional sentiments over politics, a ploy facilitated by widespread illiteracy reflected in an adult illiteracy rate", Davies, op. cit., p. 15.

support. Not only did the APC rally support there because of the existence of a strong Temne community, but also because the Creoles had usually disliked the SLPP-Government. Freetonians, in general, had always adopted anti-government progressive political orientations against the Mende-dominated government's conservative attitudes. Consequently, in the 1962 and 1967 elections, this regional aspect was clearly proven as the APC obtained most of the votes in the Western Province.

The quest remains, however, to analyse the motives of the different social categories in those areas to support the APC. The first potential group that brought useful support to the party was made of the progressive intellectuals and politicians in Sierra Leone. These were concentrated mainly in the capital Freetown and it seemed that their opposition to the Government was a matter of principle. They were the ones who had always seen that modernisation and social progress should overcome the conservative attitudes and old mentalities. Thus, they refused that elders or illiterates, especially the body of chiefs, should impose their authority on the intellectuals and the young generations, an attitude that was widely reflected in the system. Regardless of their ethnic ground, the progressive elements supported the APC line as they had usually done with the previous opposition, because the new opposition party stood to represent the power of change against a frozen social and political atmosphere. Such men included former supporters of the UPP and the PNP. Others were many of the Fourah Bay intellectuals who deplored "the elitist nature of the transfer of power" and the SLPP heavy reliance on traditional rulers and big men as a supporting base.[35] On the contrary, they hoped that the transfer of power could take a popular line led by progressive intellectuals and politicians, at the model of Gold Coastal nationalism. Intellectuals in the rich Kono region were also strong supporters of the APC. Though they might do so because of the diamond issue, also their anti-elitist views made them stand by Stevens's side. At a lower level, progressive ordinary individuals, though not necessarily educated, deplored the

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[35] - D. Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 626.

existing social conventions and were also important supporters. The progressive elements therefore were ready to give help to a party that preached for radical change and the overthrow of the existing political conventions.

The other category that potentially aided the APC was also connected to progressive views. The urban workers[36] in the modern sectors of public works, mining, transport, and in the port, benefited very little from the new African rule. Contrary to their expectations, their standard of living remained very low and comparatively decreased. The workers' anti-government attitudes were already brought to the surface during the 1955 riots and remained as a major source of political action. Trade union leaders exemplified the workers' concerns in supporting opposition parties, such as the Sierra Leone Labour Party in the 1957 elections. With the emergence of the APC, the workers and their trade union leaders were driven by Stevens's rhetoric. On the one hand, Stevens was traditionally an active unionist who was joined with such a strong unionist leader like Wallace Johnson. On the other, the workers found in the APC radical criticism of the failures of the SLPP-Government a strong motive to support it.

The other important category of workers on whose support Stevens counted was made of the illicit diamond diggers. In a large part due to his trade union background and his intimate knowledge of miners, Stevens recognized earlier the potential supporting base among the huge army of illicit dealers and miners in the diamond regions. The APC had continuously encouraged those people to think that the higher officials in the SLPP Government and their clients were seizing large profits from the diamond mining.[37] The party appealed to this group and promised

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[36] - According to Victor Davies, "Sierra Leone's labour market in the 1960s was segmented into: (i) a small formal urban sector; (ii) a large informal urban sector; (iii) an informal rural sector and (iv) a diamond- mining sector." Victor Davies, op. cit., p. 14.

[37] - After independence, the total tax burden was raised to 70% of taxable profits and, because of the vast profits that the company was earning, there was little resistance to that taxation level. At the time of independence in 1961, Sierra Leone produced (in carats) some 10% of world production; by value, its position was even more pre-eminent. Chaim Even- Zohar, op. cit., p. 32.

greater protection for them, especially that this type of mining - however illicit in the eyes of the authorities - represented 'the little man's only hope for wealth'.[38] The category of illicit miners was anxious to push the Party to power with the hope of more protection.

The northern peasants and the rural masses in general were perhaps the largest and most committed group of the APC supporters. They were the ones who suffered most in the context of decolonisation.[39] The latter strengthened the position of the chiefs in national, and especially in local, spheres. The chiefs gained importance at the expense of the peasants and the rural masses that started to be subject to a considerable size of abuse. Northern peasants had been always targets for oppression on the part of chiefs and other tribal authorities since colonial times. The coming of the transfer of power did nothing to reduce their sufferance and perhaps aggravated the situation. The climax had come in 1955-56 when the rural population, particularly in the north, rebelled against the chiefs' misdeeds.

After independence, the ruling political and administrative elite that took over the privileges of the departing colonial rulers sustained an inherited urban biased economic line that lay beyond the expectations of the rural masses. [40] In fact, such a policy was the result of the ruling elite being urban-based and with little rural interests. Yet, the situation was more complex in the North. Contrary to the southern areas, people in the northern chiefdoms were overwhelmingly illiterate, with a very

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[38] - Ian Smillie, Lansana Gberie and Ralph Hazleton, op. cit., p. 53.

[39] - In the period 1960-1970, agriculture attracted about 79% of the Labour force in Sierra Leone. Victor Davies, *Will Sierra Leone Grow Again?.* Draft final report: African Economic Research Consortium Collaborative Research Project "Explaining African Economic Growth Performance"- Sierra Leone Case Study Prepared for presentation at AERC Conference on above Project, May 23- 25, 2002, Nairobi, Kenya, p. 11.

[40] - "Colonialism exploited rural Sierra Leone to satisfy the urban colonial elite and Britain, the colonial power. The production of cheap primary exports was encouraged while manufactured goods were mostly imported, marginalizing the manufacturing sector. Modern facilities were located only in the urban areas especially Freetown, the national capital, while the bulk of production took place in the rural areas, the home of some 95% of the population." Davies, *Will Sierra Leone Grow Again?* op. cit., p. 12.

limited number of educated elements. Here the chiefs had used their powers with very little checks on their misdeeds. Later when it started to be clear that the polity was becoming dominated by Mendes, the chiefs were being seen as aliens who abused the peasants under the protection of a Mende-dominated Government. Therefore, the population of the North easily adhered to the APC's radical criticism of Government policies and the discourse of future promises. The APC was greatly welcomed by those misfortunate people who had little faith in decolonisation or independence.[41]

The APC ideology was materialised on the ground through radicalism and rupture with the system. The APC put it out of question to come to terms with the SLPP Government and rejected possible cooperation with the Mende-dominated polity. This was a difficult case for an inexperienced political regime to deal with in a newly independent country. Not only was the APC a serious rival thanks to its leadership in particular, but also it was ready to use the street as a means of pressure. It also posed the threat of a sectional division having its major support lying in the North. The Margaïs who inherited the leadership of the country found themselves face to face with a strong opposition difficult to absorb or neutralise. Perhaps they found themselves alone without British guidance in such a complex case since the colonial power had already come to end its major plans of decolonisation. Thus, what was the nature of the APC opposition in practice? What were the reactions of the SLPP-Government under both, Milton and Albert Margaï, and with what consequences?

III- MILTON MARGAÏ AND ETHNO-REGIONAL OPPOSITION, 1962-1964:

Sir Milton Margai, the first president of independent Sierra Leone, was a reconciliatory leader who had always sought to unify political formations on a common ground. He was not successful all the time, but in general, he kept on his

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[41] -- A rather different opinion states that peasants' grievances "were simply a convenient vehicle for the resolution of conflicts among chiefdom influentials, who were always the initiators of violent protest". John Dunn, op. cit., p. 20.

line in his attitudes towards his political opponents. In fact, he had more experience with opposition than did his brother Albert, and he could deal with the APC more successfully than him. However, Milton's first experience with Stevens's party was dramatic.

1- Milton Margaï's Early Clash with the APC:

During the constant hurry of most Sierra Leoneans towards independence, S. Stevens suddenly defected from the United National Front, formed his own party, and began a street battle against the Government. The starting point of disagreement was the APC's refusal of the arrangements of independence. Its leaders looked at the UNF Government as a betrayer against the national interests of Sierra Leone because they accepted to lose part of the country's sovereignty.[42] S. Stevens found in the question of national sovereignty a strong background to strengthen the image of his political formation not as a regional party but as a nationalist party that defended the interests of the whole country. Many of the dissatisfied sections, particularly the intellectuals and the lower classes, considered that the coming of independence was a mere political transaction between the ex-colonial power and a neo-colonialist regime. The APC was face to face with an excellent opportunity to seize an important position in power through the democratic means of elections and a reliance on the existing discontent among a considerable part of Sierra Leoneans. The APC leaders were anxious to have elections held before independence because they did not trust the intentions of the new rulers.[43]

The problem then was that the forthcoming elections, according to the constitution, would not be held until 1962, after independence.[44] For that matter,

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[42] - As already mentioned, S. Stevens and his followers focused on two main issues foreign financial control and the maintenance of a partly foreign military control on Sierra Leone.

[43] - CO 554/2363, (APC Resolution 19 November 1960) *Enclosure to Inward Telegram from the Governor*, 26 April 1961, op. cit.

[44] - The newly born APC was able to show its electoral strength when it won two out of the three seats that fell for re-election for the Freetown City Council, 1960. CO 554/2410 *Personal Despatch from the Governor of Sierra Leone to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 25 November 1960.

immediately after his return from the Independence Conference that took place in 1960 in London, S. Stevens embarked on calling for pre-independence elections and declared that the UNF or the SLPP itself did not really represent all Sierra Leoneans. Therefore, he considered that the arrangements of independence were unjust and unacceptable for Sierra Leoneans.   Hence, they had to be revised by a more representative government.[45] The APC leadership had to prove its claims of having large sections of Sierra Leoneans supporting them and thought of the street for a muscle show.

The APC began a countrywide campaign to claim for pre-independence general elections and the refusal of the British-SLPP arranged terms of independence. At first, the leadership tried to use peaceful political means of propaganda in an attempt to convince the people of the usefulness of the elections and to exercise greater pressure on the UNF and the British. On the morning of 22 November 1960, S. Stevens's followers started a show of force. About two hundred people organised a peaceful demonstration outside the House of Representatives that was to hold a new meeting. The demonstrators were carrying different banners among which "No confidence in Sir. Milton" and "Sir. Milton Go slow". They also chanted "We want Elections Now, Now, Now".[46]

The APC leadership thought to embarrass the Government so that it would make concessions. However, neither the SLPP nor the British were ready to accept the APC's demand. For the SLPP leadership, the APC was a threat that disturbed the country's stability and that wanted to have a greater share for Temnes at the expense of the Mende privileges. For the British, the APC was an agitator group who sought to go beyond the constitutional limits to secure political interests. Moreover, Stevens's claims turned to be a real threat that came only to disturb their plans of

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[45] - The 1960 Constitutional Conference in London provided that Sierra Leone was to have a House of Representatives of sixty-six elected members, twelve indirectly elected chiefs and a speaker.
[46] - *Personal Despatch from the Governor of Sierra Leone to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 25 November 1960.

decolonisation.[47] Thus, the APC claim was ignored and a counter campaign was launched to publicise for independence. Following an Intelligence Report (October-November 1960), the Government adopted a recommendation that Ministers should take more active steps to dispel the apprehension felt in rural areas about the coming of independence, particularly in the Northern Province.[48] Yet, the ministers were unable to have a real headway because of the lack of frequent direct contact with the people.

The Prime Minister's Office further thought of chasing away the rural people's fears planted by the APC by the mobilisation of the paramount chiefs in the Northern Province. Two of them from each District were to meet other paramount chiefs from the Southern and Eastern Provinces because the latter were considered more democratic. It was hoped therefore that with the encouragement of the Prime Minister those chiefs could go out to their people to persuade them that independence with its terms would be good for them.[49] There were also serious fears of possible involvement on the part of neighbouring Guinea that bordered Sierra Leone from the North and had direct geographical contact with the Northern Province. Sékou Touré's radical nationalism and his orientation towards the Communist block[50] were thought to have influenced the APC's radical political line and its refusal of the arrangements of independence. Eventually when Sékou Touré

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[47] - This is also the assertion of M. Kilson as he indicated: "during the phase of decolonisation, the colonial imported oligarchy employs its remaining (though declining) political power and authority to strengthen the capacity of the post-colonial state to sustain certain crucial socio-economic, financial, and strategic interests and relationships". M. Kilson Gann and Duiguan, op. cit., p. 433.

[48] - Ibid.

[49] - Ibid.

[50] - Sékou Touré is a leading African politician in Guinea and the whole French West Africa. He led the nationalist movement in French Guinea that became the first independent French colony in Africa in 1958, and became its president.

declared a visit to Sierra Leone,[51] the British and the SLPP Government felt relaxed. The visit was thought to render Guinea's president friendlier and less domineering.[52]

When peaceful action proved failure and Government determination appeared stronger, S. Stevens and his men had to call their supporters in violent demonstrations. Only two months before the ceremonies of independence (April 1961), the decision was taken to bring the peoples' discontent to the street. The APC followers quickly responded with violent riots and disturbances, particularly in the Northern regions.[53] The disturbances were widespread and lasted for several weeks, leaving injuries and material damages. The rioters were in fact expressing anti-colonial as well as anti-SLPP sentiments. They accused both the British and the Mende-dominated SLPP of a straight division of interests at the expense of the rest of people. Then, the British were unwilling to tolerate another experience of mass radical nationalism that could possibly disturb the tranquil transfer of power.

Therefore, the British and the SLPP Government were determined to put a quick ending to the disturbances, and thus, decided to stop the protest movement whatever the cost would be. A state of emergency was declared and forty-four APC leaders, including S. Stevens and Wallace Johnson, were imprisoned; hence, two of the major figures of Sierra Leonean nationalism had to celebrate the day of independence in prison.

Immediately after independence, Stevens and his men were released. The APC- SLPP Government relationship did not turn to fierce antagonism as might be expected and violence was avoided. Thus, the imprisonment of Stevens' clique was accepted as a mere preventive act rather than an expression of political intolerance. However, this incident increased the APC's popularity and added more strength to its leaders to contest the coming elections.

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[51] - News about an invitation for Sékou Touré to visit Sierra Leone had circulated for long. CO 371/147540 Despact from W. N. Hugh- Jones (British Embassy, Konakry) to the Colonial Office, 18 April 1960.

[52] - *Personal Despatch from the Governor of Sierra Leone to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 25 November 1960, op. cit.

[53] - Braguinski, op. cit., p. 114.

2- The 1962 Elections: the Test of Opposition

Stevens and his APC leaders built up a bright image of themselves as nationalists who were imprisoned for a nationalist cause. For many sections in society, the APC was the only political group that honourably stood to defend the interests of the ordinary Sierra Leonean against the privileges of the colonial power, the neo-colonialist Mende political elite, and the chiefs. The APC supporting base, particularly some intellectuals, trade unionists, anti-chief peasants, and the northern ethnic loyalties, found an opportunity to manifest their opposition to what they saw as a plot to divide the country's riches between the ex-colonial power and its neo-colonialist collaborators. The first elections in independent Sierra Leone mirrored the existence of much dissatisfaction with the terms that led to independence.

Sierra Leone's first post-independence national elections were held on 25 May 1962 and were the freest and fairest elections Sierra Leone had experienced during the post- colonial period.[54] The results of elections reflected the coming out of the APC as a major opposition party. In spite of unfavourable factors (mainly the newness of the formation and the considerable lack of means compared with the SLPP), Stevens and his followers were able to win a respectable number of seats. Thus, out of the sixty-two seats available,[55] the APC secured sixteen: twelve in the North and four in the Western Province (the ex-Colony). Its ally, the Sierra Leone Progressive Independent Movement (the successor of the KPM) won all four seats in Kono. The regionalist image of the new formation was clearly shown. All seats won by the APC were an expression of northern sentiments. Out of the nineteen seats in the North, Stevens's party took over twelve and gained no seat in the South. Because

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[54] - Linda Edgeworth, Joshua B. Forrest, and Andrew Scallan, op. cit., p. 05

[55] - R. Cartwright reports that the share of votes was as follows: independents won 42.6 per cent, SLPP 34.7 per cent, APC 17.2 per cent, the Sierra Leone Progressive Independent Movement 5.2 per cent, UPP 0.3 per cent. The SLPP formed a government only because it was an organised party that won the largest number of seats. Cartwright, op. cit., p. 156

northern feelings existed strongly in Freetown and its nearby, the party was able to get four out of the twelve seats available.[56]

It should be emphasized that the 1962 general elections brought to existence a new political scene characterised by a democratically constituted legislature with a prominent voice accorded to opposition. However, the same elections further attested on the serious divisions in the political arena. The SLPP retained control of parliament and consolidated its status as the country's ruling political party, but with strongholds mainly situated in the South. The APC also emerged with strongholds clearly lying in the North. The fact that it won nearly a third of the available seats in spite of a number of handicaps indicated that class and ethnic factors were being gradually fused in regional grounds only to widen the gap between the SLPP Government and the APC.[57]

On the eve of Milton's death, northerners had certain chances in the polity. Despite the North-South cleavage, tensions between northerners and southerners had been usually softened thanks to the heavy presence of Sir. Milton. For the latter, Albert Margaï was not the sole next man to premiership, due perhaps to Milton's long mistrust of his brother. Dr. John Karefa-Smart from the North was also a man with strong chances. He was then Minister of External Affairs and was more acceptable to the strong body of chiefs. Even Governor-General, Sir Henry Lightfoot Boston,[58] was in favour of the nomination of Karefa-Smart as a prime minister.[59] However, Albert Margaï had been doing much work to secure premiership after the death of his brother. From the time of his arrival to the key office of Minister of Finance, he pressed in the direction of infiltrating his supporters into powerful posts.

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[56] - Fashole Luke, op. cit., p. 627.

[57] - As put forward by a commentator: "political behaviour during the campaign [for the 1962 elections] and the character of the parliamentary debates after the elections showed that the alien partisan politics that was emulated by the Sierra Leonean elite had advanced further to a stage where it had succeeded in dividing the country along class, ethnic, and regional lines. It was in this general political context that Margai died in 1964". Daniel Tetteh Osabu-kle, op. cit. , p. 02.

[58] - The Governor-General was the representative of the Crown in the independent members of the Commonwealth.

[59] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 76.

For instance, he was able to secure the post of Attorney General for his close PNP colleague, Berthan McCauley, in November 1963. The latter was to exercise an immense pressure on the Governor-General to appoint Albert as Prime Minster instead of Karefa-Smart.[60]

IV- ALBERT MARGAÏ, OPPOSITION AND THE PROJECT OF A REPUBLIC:

In 1964, Sierra Leone's First Prime Minister died, and his brother Albert Margai quickly stepped to his position. What was assured is that the coming of the younger brother to premiership would radicalise the Government-APC relationships on several grounds. First, Albert Margai's personality and his lack of experience, compared to his elder brother, meant greater difficulties to deal with a steadily growing radical opposition. Second, internal transformations inside the SLPP itself, and inside the polity in general, partly incited by his own attitudes, added to the situation more complexities. Finally, particular African events were likely to influence political relationships inside Sierra Leone. Albert Margai's era saw a widespread debate about the possibility of Sierra Leone becoming a republic. The latter issue was on the one hand an ideal sought after by both parties either in government or in opposition as a sign of complete political decolonisation. On the other, tactical and interest considerations behind the project itself led to antagonism and conflict. It is also an interesting issue because it may reveal the typical African politician's real concerns and orientations in the post-independence era.

1- Albert Margaï as a Person and Prime Minister:

Albert Michael Margaï was born in Bonthe in 1910 to merchant Milton Margaï the elder. His primary education took place in a Roman Catholic school. Then, he attended St Edward's Secondary School in Freetown to enter the government medical service later on as a male nurse in 1932 from where he qualified

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[60] - Ibid.

as a dispenser. The Protectorate Educated People's Union (PEPU) granted him a scholarship to study law in the United Kingdom in 1944. There he joined the West African Students' Union and had contacts with some future African nationalists.[61] When he qualified as a barrister, he became the first Protectorate educated man to get such a degree.

Albert's political career began quickly after his qualification as a lawyer through local politics. His educational prestige pushed him to be a member of the Moyamba District Council, and then of the Protectorate Assembly. The lawyer soon built himself a reputation of a radical nationalist, in the sense that he became a fierce critic of the colonial administrators. This attracted many supporters from the young elements in the Protectorate and Freetown. This nationalist-like outlook that Albert developed made him located in a constant opposition to his elder brother's conservative views. He particularly differed in views with him about the issues of chiefs' influence on politics and the diamond exploitation. This led to the ultimate Margaïs' conflict that shook the SLPP, a climax that represented the peak of the struggle of modernising attitudes in the face of conservatism. However, Albert was unable to escape the social conventions that he himself sought to change. Although he was elected to replace Milton as leader of the SLPP in 1957, he voluntarily stepped down in favour of his elder brother. On the other hand, his alliance with S. Stevens to form the PNP did not last for long, and finally Albert submitted to the calls of his ethnic and regional background when he joined his brother's UNF.

In 1962, he managed to merge the PNP in the SLPP, and consequently moved to the key post of Minister of Finance.[62] Albert seemed, thus, to be a political opportunist rather than a politician committed to a clear doctrine, and this was later reflected in his career as Prime Minister. He did not seem in practice to hang on a clear political trend as regards a number of issues, on which he had once taken an opposite side against his brother. This is proved by his eventual acceptance to follow

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[61] - Cartwright insists that Albert was little influenced with such contacts and learnt little to develop a comprehensive critique of colonial rule. Cartwright, op. cit., p. 100.
[62] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 101.

Margaï since 1960. Socially, he did not seem committed to modernisation that he used to emphasize when in opposition. Once he joined his brother's side, he was rewarded,[63] and his criticism of conservative attitudes or chiefs' participation in politics became rarely heard. This not only weakened his charismatic influence, but also might have led some pro-SLPP politicians and administrators to a distaste of his arrival to premiership.

Albert was a politician that had always preached freedom of political action before joining his brother's line, but then he soon turned to use unfair means to achieve his objectives. He did not, for instance, hesitate to use the chiefs who supported him to harass the APC activists at the local level, though he himself stood once against such practices when he was the leader of the PNP. On the other hand, he was ready to move his followers unjustly into key posts at the expense of his opponents, using his powers as Prime Minister. Being an important SLPP leader, he could use the party power to attack opposition parties at the local level, and to offer inducements to buy the allegiance of their MPs.[64]

Albert, too, is a politician who is usually seen as a man with a strong sense of acquisitiveness. He is well known of his responsibility for setting up a system based on corruption, the taking of bribes and unjustifiable diversion of public funds, that often went to serve personal benefits. Later reports showed that he was on top of a team of ministers and other highly placed officials who had reinvested corruptly-gained capital in different sectors: land, property, transport, rice dealing, and other forms of businesses.[65] The situation was aggravated by diffusing bribery among the Lebanese businessmen in Sierra Leone who did so to secure their own business interests, particularly in the sensitive diamond sector. These expatriates gave extensive bribes, donations and gifts to SLPP politicians and chiefs, or engaged in joint ventures with such individuals.[66] Those reports were to demonstrate that the

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[63] - In particular, his appointment as Minister of Finance.
[64] - John Dunn, op. cit., p. 191.
[65] - Ibid., p. 204.
[66] - Ibid.

Prime Minister was devoting much of his efforts to enlarge his personal property through different, more often illegal, ways. Later inquiries revealed much of his private economic activities that went beyond even most serious allegations made by his opponents.[67]

Albert's belief of the rightness of his attitude of self-enrichment was rooted in his personality. He seems convinced that his political position justified his acts.[68] At one instance, he used government means to truck a large number of cattle offered to him as a traditional tribute by the poorest District in Sierra Leone, Koinadugu. When he stood in Parliament to justify his act, he did not find any wrong in doing so. Instead, he replied with determination:

> The legacy which we have inherited is that the person of the Prime Minister, or for that matter Ministers of the Government, is indivisible. ... For the time being, I am Prime Minister of Sierra Leone, and if I go anywhere, whether into Timbucktu or to Russia or to Tokyo, if I am given the whole of Tokyo, the Government shall be responsible for bringing my luggage home... When I cease to be Prime Minster the privilege will cease, but whilst I am here...it should be accepted and no words or any name will ever change my attitude towards that.[69]

These attitudes did not, however, prevent the Prime Minister to build him a brighter reputation outside Sierra Leone. His endorsement of the line of such big African leaders like Kwame N'Krumah and Sékou Touré strengthened his position inside the country and outside it. Furthermore, Albert's good relations with Sékou Touré assured that his rival, S. Stevens, would stay well behind since neighbouring

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[67] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 102.

[68] - To quote a point of view in this regard: "the divisible benefits perspective views market distortions and other inefficiencies as part of a strategy by government to remain in power by manipulating access to the divisible benefits-rents from economic distortions, corruption, individual exceptions to general rules, etc- to induce and reward loyalty and weaken and punish political opposition. On the extreme side, the predation thesis holds that government may deliberately pursue anti-developmental policies if economic development reduces the government's hold on power". Davies, War, *Poverty and Growth in Africa,* op. cit., p. 8.

[69] - Cartwright, , op. cit., p. 104.

Guinea was to stay neutral.[70] Equally, his relations seemed going well with Britain. No major issue had disturbed relations between the two countries and Sir. A. Margaï had continuously sought to strengthen those relations particularly in the economic sphere. For example, while in Addis Ababa attending the O A U in 1966, he thought of returning to Sierra Leone through London to meet the British Prime Minister and wished to discuss with him the points of Roads Development and Lungi Airport-additional loan.[71]

As far as political conflict during his era is concerned, his personal temper was to count a lot in the development of political events, and in his relations with the different organs of his government and opposition.[72]

2- Imbalance of Inter-Polity Relationships

By inter-polity relationships, it is meant the whole range of relations between the different branches of the ruling system; in the present case of Sierra Leone it is meant the Prime Minister's relations with the SLPP, the Civil Service and the Army.

Up to 1964, the weighty personality and long experience of Milton Margaï made the SLPP a relatively harmonious political group. With the arrival of the new Prime Minister, stability inside the party started to be shaken. The attempts made by Albert to dominate the party generated hostile reactions by the old SLPP group.

When Albert Margai replaced his brother as leader of the SLPP, he began a struggle to surround himself with faithful supporters. He started to move ex-PNP

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[70] - Stevens hoped to rely on the support of the radical regime in Guinea for support. However, good intentions between the two countries appeared when the Sierra Leone Government returned two fleeing Guineans who were involved in a plot against Sékou Touré. CO 371/187878 *Confidential Despatch from U. C. C. Bennett (British Embassy, Konakry) to the Foreign Office,* 19 August 1964.

[71] -JM 1051/5(A) *Telegram N° 495 from Sir. T. Bromley (Addis Ababa) to Foreign Office*, 07 November 1966.

[72]- The fate of Albert's political career was decided in the few months following the results of the inquiries. He appeared for a short time in Freetown to assume leadership of the SLPP, but soon he had to submit to party militants' pressure to withdraw in spite his position as 'Life Leader'. He retired to the United Kingdom and completely disappeared from the political scene. Cartwright, op. cit., p. 102

militants, mostly Mendes, into high offices in the party.[73] Meanwhile, he undertook another task of developing more effective party machinery that gave him central control, particularly after having managed to be elected as 'Leader for Life' of the SLPP. [74] Since Albert was never as close to chiefs as was his brother, he sought to slough himself off dependence on traditional rulers. The latter were a key structure that could bring control over a large portion of the local population, especially in time of elections. In the course of his attempts to do this, he had to face the hostility of conservative and well-established chiefs.

Albert's attitudes towards internal SLPP affairs caused the party to split into at least three factions: his own supporters, the northern clan and the eastern block of MPs. The northern elements within the party, led by Karefa-Smart, were continuously feeling marginalized as the Prime Minister was trying to monopolise authority. Regionalist sentiments were not absent. Albert's orientation to a Mende-supporting base quickly further antagonised SLPP northerners. Consequently, Karefa-Smart and his supporters defected and joined the APC.[75] As for the easterners, a similar process took place. Albert's attempts to strengthen his hold on the party committed the MPs of the East to refuse his leadership and to favour another leader, Salia Jusu-Sherif.[76] Conflict within the SLPP reduced the Prime Minister's supporters among the electorate. The main beneficiary from the situation was the APC. The SLPP's opponents increased and the Party's popularity was reduced. In brief, the Prime Minister's strategy to enhance his personal power in the SLPP brought about opposite results.

The administrative apparatus, in its turn, was one of the areas which Sir. Albert sought to bring under control. He attempted to secure a warm entourage made of his nearest supporters. Dominating the administration meant maintaining control on an important apparatus that played key roles in the stability of the political

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[73] - Ibid., p. 101.
[74] - Ibid.
[75] - John Dunn, , op. cit., p. 191.
[76] - Ibid.

regime.[77] Therefore, the key posts in the civil service were increasingly filled with loyal Mendes to increase Albert's authority on the administrative machinery. Such administrators were to assume not only an administrative role, but also an important political role on behalf of the Prime Minister. Concerning the APC supporters in the administration, the means was mainly to buy off individuals through the distribution of patronage. Naturally enough, the Prime Minister was obliged to use national resources to build up a strong loyal bureaucracy at the expense of the ordinary men who further radicalised their anti-SLPP feelings.[78] Albert Margai was also concerned with the general laws and regulations. Immediately after he became Prime Minister, he arranged for amendments of two main acts apparently to equip his supporters with greater freedom of action. First, he managed in 1965 to pass through Parliament *The Criminal Procedure Act* that seemed to strengthen warrant arrest and allow persons from outside the official corps to participate in arrest.[79] Such a measure was

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[77] - The administration was seen as a source of wealth especially "where government is the dominant employer and where the principle differential factor in the income structure is access to undeclared earnings (bribes, commissions, considerations and outright embezzelement)", Roger Murray, , op. cit., *p.* 383.

[78] - In the Words of a historian: "*Les rouages des régimes coloniaux ont initialement été conçus pour exploiter les richesses naturelles et la main- d'oeuvre productive de la colonie pour le bénéfice de la métropole. De la même façon, les gouvernements nationaux ont utilisé ces rouages hérités pour monopoliser les ressources naturelles et la main- d'oeuvre productive de la Sierra Leone, officiellement pour promouvoir le développement national. Toutefois, ces ressources ont été de plus en plus largement utilisées pour financer les opérations d'une bureaucratie sans cesse croissante, au détriment de la majorité des citoyens se trouvant en dehors des rouages gouvernementaux''.* Cream Wright, '*Réflexions sur la Sierra Leone: une étude de cas',* Research, Educational and Development Initiatives Ltd. (REDI), Freetown, Sierra Leone, Vol. 31, N° 2, Mai 1987, p. 19.

[79] - Section 11from part I read: Any person may arrest without a warrant –

   a. any person who in his presence commits a felony;
   b. any person whom he suspects of having committed a felony, if such felony had actually been committed and such private person has reasonable grounds to believe that the person arrested has committed that felony;
   c. any person offering to sell, pawn or deliver any property which such private person has reasonable grounds to believe to be stolen property;
   d. any person about to commit an act which would manifestly endanger another person's life; any person detaining or suspected of detaining any other person with the intent to kidnap or unlawfully remove him from Sierra Leone.

interestingly very useful in dealing with opposition. The second measure that apparently sought to deprive the chiefs of the power of jurisdiction was an amendment of *The Local Courts Acts*.[80]

Yet, Albert's major obstacle in his way was that the civil service in Sierra Leone was predominantly controlled by the Creoles. For historical reasons, the Africanisation of the administration meant simply Creolisation. Albert was not a politician with good reputation among the former group who had actually always been hostile to Mende rule. In all, they were not easy to overcome even under British rule. Therefore, although the Prime Minister could move some of his supporters to powerful positions, the control of the civil service as a whole remained well beyond his reach.

While the Prime Minster looked forward to bring the SLPP and the administration under control, he turned to the Army to win its support. In 1965, Brigadier David Lansana replaced the British force commander as head of the Armed forces. The fact that the latter was a Mende facilitated a close association between the two men for a uniform attitude towards northern opposition.[81] The Prime Minister was willing to purify the Army from opponents to his Government policies, and so did he with Temne officers. In the midst of the preparations of the 1967 elections, he declared that a plot of a military coup was repressed. All those who were alleged to be behind the plot were either Northerners (including the second-in-command of the army) or Creoles. After the incident, most Temne officers were excluded, things that left the army officers almost entirely Mendes.[82] The fact that no trial was ever held aroused suspicions of a possible conspiracy worked out by Albert Margaï and Lansana to establish Mende hegemony on the army.

Though the army became overwhelmingly Mende, problems were not avoided. Brigadier Lansana was not able to get into accordance with his officers over

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[80]- *The Local Courts (Amendment) Act* 1 October 1965.
[81] - J. F. Maïtland-Jones, *Politics in Ex-British Africa* (London, Weiden Feld and Nicolson, 1973) p. 114.
[82] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 80.

the extent to which the armed forces should intervene in politics. A number of apolitical officers, including Mendes, objected on Lansana's leanings towards supporting Albert's personal ambitions, and insisted on the neutrality of the army in political affairs. Frictions of that sort appeared to the surface when a popular and able Mende officer, Lt.-Colonel Ambrose Genda, who firmly opposed the army's intervention in politics, was dismissed. The incident led a number of Mende officers, and also Northerners and Creoles, to show their desire for a quick removal of the army leader.[83] These events were significant as far they weakened the unity of the army and produced uncertainty of views towards the political situation.

Through his attempt to bring control over the SLPP and the civil service, and his association with the army, Albert Margaï seemed willing to push through a one-party state. In fact, the debate about the suitability of a one-party system was not a hidden plot. Rather, it was an issue that was discussed publicly and generated different positions. However, it did eventually bring a serious shake and added to the already unstable Sierra Leonean political system.

3 - Sierra Leone's Project of a Republic and Political Conflict

The issue of Sierra Leone as a republic emerged during the rule of Milton Margaï. The early advocates of the idea who raised it in the House of Representatives were the elected members of the APC, particularly Siaka Stevens. They claimed immediately after their election in 1962 that now Sierra Leone was not yet a completely independent country. Therefore, the APC urged that time had come to consider the advisability of introducing a republican constitution.[84] The defenders of the idea saw that the head of state should be an elected African to replace the Queen's representative, the Governor-general. They also insisted on the realisation of a republic before 27 April 1965.[85] Milton Margaï then responded positively to the

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[83]- Cartwright, op. cit., p. 81.

[84] - DO *New Commonwealth*, November 1964

[85] - DO 195/366 *Statement by Sir Milton Margaï in the House of Representatives Monday*, April 6th, 1964.

request. In one of Parliament's sessions early in 1964, he stated that his Government was actively considering the question. He also promised to keep Sierra Leoneans informed about steps to be made.[86]

After the death of Milton Margaï, the new Prime Minister embarked on the continuation of the project but with less enthusiasm on the part of opposition. Albert Margaï's supporters urged for a quick pace towards a republic under the new leader, describing him as more positive and dynamic than his brother. Albert Margaï tried to keep in touch with the former colonial power concerning the project. On a visit to the UK, he managed to raise the point with officials in the House of Commons. Yet, the British were careful about the matter even when demanding that the Queen should be informed prior to any public announcement.[87] They seemed also very worried about the loss in Sierra Leone of the British type of government and its democratic principles. For example, the British High Commission hurried to express its concern about the resort of the freedom of association, independence of the judiciary and the appointment of Ministers from outside Parliament.[88] Yet, the British were increasingly feeling that they became no longer in a position to influence the course of events. Africans had to decide for themselves and be responsible for the consequences of their own choice.[89]

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[86] - In his words : « The Government has already stated that whatever steps it proposes to take in this connection it will keep the whole country informed. When a final decision about introducing a republican constitution is taken, government will ask for a referendum". DO 195/366 *New Commonwealth,* January 1964.

[87] - DO 195/366 *Brief for Secretary of State's Meeting with Sir Albert Margaï*, Thursday 1 July 1965.

[88] - DO 195/366 *Confidential Report by the British High Commission in Freetown*, 30 December 1966.

[89] - In a tone that reflects inability on the part of the British to direct things in the way they wanted, the Minister of Overseas Development, commenting about the system of recruitment, wrote "Apart from being cumbersome, the present system is unsatisfactory since we really have no standing in the matter and seem to be an unnecessary link in the chain". CAOG 13/47 *Telegram from the Minister of Overseas Development to Crown Agents for Overseas Government and Administrations*, 22 March 1966

- The Drive for a One-Party System:

Debate about the project of a republic in Sierra Leone was intensified with the appearance of the issue of a one party regime. Things started worsening when the Prime Minister showed his intention to establish a one-party-state through a White Paper published earlier in 1966. The paper contained assurances that no person in Sierra Leone would be deprived of fundamental freedoms of "conscience, of expression and of assembly, and respect for his private family life".[90] Yet, very few could trust the Prime Minister. According to the British High commission's report, there were no signs that either the opposition or the SLPP militants were going to allow the one-party state issue to drop from public attention.[91]

Why Albert and his supporters were driving towards a one party-state might be explained in a number of different ways.[92] Defenders of the idea insisted that the system was advantageous in that it would unify Sierra Leoneans' views and energies for national building. Opponents might argue that a one-party system intended to eliminate opposing views and get rid of harmful criticism. Another view might state that the attempt was a mere follow up of similar successful experiences in the continent. However, it is certain that in the Sierra Leone case (and in the African situation as a whole), a one-party system meant monopoly over the state resources that would be spent according to the rulers' will without too much embarrassment. Repression of the opposition, though the latter might be constructive, would be easily justifiable. A ruler with command of the state resources is likely to repress opposing views that would question how and why money would be used up. For Albert whose attitudes were clearly rejected by his opponents, and even in his own party, a one-

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[90] - DO 195/366 *Report by the British High Commission in Freetown*, 31 March 1966.

[91] - Ibid.

[92] - A commentator put forward: « *Les Sierra- Léonais ont eu tendance par inadvertance à transformer leurs gouvernements en dictatures. Cela est peut- être dû en partie à la tradition locale qui tient l'autorité en très haute estime. Il est plus probable cependant qu'elle est une conséquence inévitable des louanges et de la flatterie orchestrées qui sont rapidement devenues la norme puisque les associations se disputent l'influence et la faveur de chaque nouveau gouvernement. Cette tendance est ironique, les Sierra- Léonais étant également connus pour critiquer perpétuellement leurs gouvernements »*. Cream Wright, op. cit., p. 19.

party system was a guarantee that would allow him to carry on his policies without obstacles.[93] Such a system would also permit him to build up a supporting base through a quiet distribution of patronage, without a need for much justification.

Milton Margaï could secure the confidence of Sierra Leoneans about the project of a republic. He had from the start insisted that his government would never promote any measures calculated to undermine the liberal and democratic features of the present Constitution. He had emphasised that a turn to a Republic should in no way "alter the entrenched clauses protecting the fundamental rights of every citizen and every other person resident in Sierra Leone".[94] But under his brother Albert, suspicions about the latter's real intentions were quick to come out to the surface. His opponents were all entrenched in an opposing block to resist the project.

The first to show opposition right from the beginning were the Creoles. The latter had always seen, and still saw, themselves as British and did not want to break their legal and traditional links with the Crown and the United Kingdom. This was obviously confirmed during a census that was held in 1963. Most of them described their nationality as being British.[95] The Creoles, including large numbers in the civil service,[96] and the bulk of the educated population, were brought to go up against the SLPP's proposition.[97] Albert was accused of driving the country to a state of dictatorship and to a killing of the inherited parliamentary democracy.[98] The Creoles

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[93] - In this regard, a ruler in these conditions is able to employ a battery of powers of "elective president-executive instruments, rule by ordinance and decree, control over security network, foreign policy, etc." G. Murray, op. cit., p. 386.

[94] - DO 195/366 Statement by Sir Milton Margaï, Monday, April 6th, 1964, op. cit.

[95] - *New Commonwealth,* op. cit.

[96] - " Despite their initial domination of the public service, the Creoles could not gain the same political pre- eminence as the analogous Americo- Liberian community in neighbouring Liberia, but were likewise obliged to build alliances with one or other of the major hinterland parties." Christopher Clapham, *Sierra Leone: the Global- Local Politics of State Collapse and Attempted Reconstruction,* Failed States Conference, Florence, 10- 14 April 2001, Lancaster University.

[97] - John Dunn, op. cit., p. 191.

[98] - For example, the provision in the new constitution that the Prime Minister could appoint Ministers from outside Parliament was seen by proponents as a device to expand his field of choice. But there were others who suspected that it was a means to ensure that party supporters

were later convinced of their views because of government's repressive attitudes towards opposition, and its newspaper, *We Yone,* that had actively criticised Albert Margaï and his corrupt system.[99]

Though the APC leaders had been the first to raise the ideal of a republic as a sign of complete independence, now they turned to hesitation. Northerners, led by the APC, had similar objections like the Creoles, suspecting the SLPP of attempting to monopolise power for its own benefit, and expelling opponents. They also seemed worried about the fundamental freedoms of conscience and association, and about the democratic principles of the political game. They saw the establishment of a one-party regime as a consolidation of the position of the present corrupt regime and an enhancement of the privileges of the Mende South. Seeing some types of repression used by the SLPP Government, they were anxious that they would have no chance in the coming one-party regime. However, real intentions could not be discerned easily. Would Siaka Stevens have favoured this type of regime had he been Prime Minister?

Some factions within the SLPP itself, in particular the eastern block and the old guard of Mende chiefs were sceptical about their future position. Their concern was intensified when they saw Albert working to replace them with his own supporters.[100] Eventually, Albert's commitment to a one-party regime as a means for uniting Sierra Leoneans under one political umbrella led to more political tensions and rendered the SLPP less popular.[101]

The establishment of a one-party regime was possible via constitutional means. If the prime Minister could win support from two successful parliaments, he could then proceed with putting the system into practice.[102] Since Albert's own

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defeated in in an election can return to office by the back door. DO 195/366 *West Africa,* 7 January 1967.

[99] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 79.

[100] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 79.

[101] - Daniel Tetteh Osabu-kle, op. cit. , p. 02.

[102] - The then Sierra Leonean Constitution read "Parliament may alter any of the Provisions of this Constitution or any of the provisions of the Sierra Leone Independence Act, 1961, provided that … a bill passed by the House of Representatives in one session shall be deemed to be the same bill as a bill passed by the House in the preceding session if it is identical with that bill, or

supporters from the SLPP dominated the present parliament, he needed only the consent of a new parliament that would emerge after new elections. Thus, the Bill to replace the Monarchical Constitution was published on 22 December 1966 before its introduction to Parliament debate on 16 January 1967.[103] During the debate, the Prime Minister himself piloted the Bill and seemed determined to go ahead with his project. The leader of opposition, Siaka Stevens, confirmed his hesitation. He did not himself pilot the protest against the Bill. He rather chose to occupy a seat behind the Opposition front bench, leaving the task for one of his party men. This led even Donald A. R. McCauley, reporting for the British High Commission, to say "I am not sure of the significance, if any, of this gesture".[104] Perhaps Siaka Stevens wanted to secure a first passing of the Bill, hoping to pass it himself again in the coming session of Parliament.   The real concern was whether Albert's supporters would win the majority of seats in the intended elections, and then secure the new parliament's consent for a one party-regime.

Siaka Stevens was certainly observing the growing weight of his party and was eager to exploit it for the benefit of the ideal he had himself initiated. The APC had reinforced its position in the District Council elections in May 1966. In spite of a massive use of state resources for propaganda, the results dazed the Prime Minister and gave a strong coup to his attempt at the construction of a one-party regime. In the northern areas, Stevens's followers contested 95 out of the 135 seats, and secured 72. The APC was also able to make inroads into the heart of Mende land, as it won a number of seats in Moyamba, and Albert's own stronghold, Bo District.[105]

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contains only such alterations as are certified by the Speaker to be necessary owing to the time that has elapsed since that bill was passed in the preceding session". DO 195/366 *Extract from the Constitution of Sierra Leone*.

[103] - FCO 38/027 *Sierra Leone Fortnightly Summary*, 4 January 1967.

[104] - DO 195/366 *Confidential Report by the British High Commission in Freetown* 27 January 1967.

[105] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 79

V- THE 1967 ELECTIONS, MILITARY COUP, AND THE FALL OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY:

The APC leaders had never been satisfied with the nomination of Albert as Prime Minister. Since the start, Northerners showed their opposition. In the meantime, the party was making use of the different failures of the Prime Minister and his regime, and was waiting for the elections to strike heavily.

The APC's tactics to weaken the SLPP's chances in elections and to raise its own varied. The party leaders used their own press to distort the image of their opponents. Perhaps the dominant issue was Albert's misuse of government's funds for self-enrichment. For example, the APC's newspaper *We Yone* published a lengthy analysis about the growth of the Prime Minister's property since his coming to the office. It listed his different property purchases including expensive houses in London and Washington.[106]

Meanwhile, the APC was attacking the SLPP regime on grounds of economic failure. It insisted that economic inefficiency was due to the corrupt system produced by Albert's rule. The party's claims were justified by realities on the ground. The economic sector was still in the hold of the expatriates, especially the Lebanese, and Sierra Leoneans at the lower level could benefit very little from diamonds' enterprise for example.[107] Higher individuals managed to seize economic formulas only to serve their own interests rather than intend to speed up the economic machinery. The Industries Board was an example of this. Originally, it was a mechanism for promoting investments through granting loans. Yet, it had very little success, and by its suspension in 1966, it had made large sums as loans (the average loan being around £700) mostly for the benefit of SLPP leading members without concrete projects. A Similar mechanism was the Sierra Leone Investments that was

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[106] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 104.

[107] - By 1968, over 30 million carats of diamonds had been produced in Sierra Leone; the gems had generated about US $200 million for the country's economy, and provided about 70 per cent of the country's foreign exchange reserves. Ian Smillie Lansana Gberie and Ralph Hazleton, op. cit., p. 53.

established in 1961 by the UK and Sierra Leone Government to accelerate the very weak sector of industry[108] and businesses through the granting of larger loans. However, although a third of its capital had been vanished in the first four years it was able to launch only five enterprises by 1967.[109]

The failure of economic projects resulted in economic difficulties and a sense of frustration among many categories. This was reflected in the rise of unemployment, and often in the lower wages paid to workers. In other terms, the opposition, i.e. the APC, could easily convince an important reservoir of electors to vote for it as a reaction to the failure of the SLPP Government to meet their needs. The APC publicised a more promising future of equal opportunities for Sierra Leoneans, if they were to vote for its candidates. For example, Stevens promised illicit miners his support if elected.[110] In brief, the APC was able to build up a solid front based on dissatisfaction with Albert's rule. The failures of Albert as a person, as an SLPP leader, and as a state politician, were all exploited to form an anti-SLPP coalition uniting conservative Creoles, radical intellectuals and rural notables.[111]

The strategy of Albert Margaï, by contrast, was built on the SLPP position as a party in power. The SLPP was able to manoeuvre at a number of levels. Through the administrative apparatus, the party could influence elections through registration, nomination of candidates, the conduct of voting...etc. The authorities also rose the deposits a candidate should supply from 200 to 500 Leones only to handicap the opposition. On the other hand, Albert was firm enough to dismiss any who showed sympathies towards opposition. For example, chiefs who favoured Stevens's line were deposed, as was the case of Chief Gbwaru Mansray of Wara Wara Yagala in

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[108] - Sierra Leone's sector of industry accounted for 6% of GDP in the 1960s. Manufacturing establishments that employed 6- 50 workers, mainly foreign owned and managed, and operating in the formal sector, accounted for 40% of total manufacturing output, while units operating mainly in the informal sector and employing less than 6 workers accounted for the remaining 60%. Victor Davies, *Will Sierra Leone Grow Again*, op. cit., p. 21.

[109] - John Dunn, op. cit., p. 205.

[110] - Davies, *War, Poverty and Growth in Africa*, op. cit., p. 12.

[111] - John Dunn, op. cit., p. 202.

1967.[112] Even more, during the electoral campaign, Albert did not hesitate to call for a front of Mende solidarity for self-preservation.[113]

Elections were held on 17 March 1967 with no significant incidents. The results were in favour of the APC, which won 32 seats, against the SLPP, which secured 28. The remaining six seats were gained by independents. Once again, the elections showed the polarisation of Sierra Leone's politics along a North-South cleavage, which was more clear and stronger than in 1962. The APC won the 1967 general elections partly because it successfully exploited the ethno- regional divide, winning most of the seats in the North and the Western Province. The SLPP won most of the seats in the southern and eastern areas, except for Kono District in the east, home to the anti-SLPP Konos and a large immigrant diamond mining community (mainly Temnes from the North).[114]

The independents quickly sent a letter to the Governor-General, Sir Henry Lightfoot-Boston, in which they expressed their desire for the nomination of Siaka Stevens as Prime Minister. Lightfoot-Boston had attempted to convince both men, Albert and Stevens to form a coalition government, but they were two divergent to meet. Political enmity between the two parties had been explicitly demonstrated, and Stevens's earlier accusation of leaders of the other political parties for a sell-out of their cause in exchange for political appointment prevented him to accept a compromise with Albert Margaï, probably out of fears of being accused of a sell- out of his own principles for personal gain.[115] Lightfoot-Boston was impatient to wait the chiefs' elections, as provided in the Constitution. Consequently, as soon as he received the independents' readiness to support the APC, he invited Stevens to form a government.[116]

At this point, events went on worse. Brigadier Lansana, hostile to Stevens and his Temne group, seized the State House and declared Martial law. Then, he placed

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[112] - Cartwright, op. cit., p. 102.
[113] - Ibid., p. 82.
[114] - Davies, op. cit., p. 14.
[115] - Daniel Tetteh Osabu-kle, op. cit. , p. 02.
[116]- Cartwright, op. cit., p. 82.

the Governor–General and the newly elected Prime Minister under house arrest. Lansana justified his action on constitutional grounds. Thus, he accused the former of having acted unconstitutionally by inviting Stevens to form a government before waiting for the results of the elections concerning the seats of paramount chiefs in parliament.[117] However, Stevens and some of his APC leaders were allowed to leave the country into exile in neighbouring Guinea. Immediately after that, especially when it was confirmed that the *coup* attempted to maintain Albert Margaï in his office, a group of officers of a lesser rank refused Lansana's act. Three days after the first *coup*, they turned against their military commander, Lansana, in a second *coup.* Though those officers were Mende in majority, they were alarmed at a possible threat of a combined extremist policy between the two men.[118] Both Albert and his associate were arrested, the offices of governor-general and prime minister were suspended, and the House of Representatives was abolished. Instead, a Temne, Lieutenant-Colonel Juxon-Smith, was placed as chairman of the National Reformation Council.[119] Meanwhile, the military officers set up a commission to inquire into the previous elections. Therefore, it seemed that the nomination of a Temne as head of the new political ruling body and the setting up of the commission of inquiry came as an attempt to absorb a widespread discontent in the North that was likely to bring about civil war.

Just after its establishment, the NRC undertook a correcting task. The commission of inquiry began investigating into the legitimacy of the 1967 general elections' results. Shortly afterwards, the commission put it that Siaka Stevens had won the elections, and therefore recommended a return to civilian rule.

The National Reformation Council did not consider the commission's recommendations immediately. It was then openly accused, in particular by northerners, of slowness and failure to transfer power to civilians according to the said recommendations. As a result, on 18 April 1968, the non-commissioned officers

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[117] - These were to take place on 21 March.
[118] - J. F. Maïtland-Jones, op. cit., p.114.
[119] - Ibid., p. 46.

and the ranks below them mutinied to overthrew the NRC. They placed Juxon-Smith and almost all commissioned officers under arrest.[120] Stevens and his comrades in exile returned to the country within nine days, and he was again sworn in as Prime Minister. In their turn, the mutineers established the National Interim Council, and on 26 April 1968, S. Stevens became the new Prime Minister.[121]

CONCLUSION

The post-independence political scene in Sierra Leone had been characterised by a political conflict based on regional differences and ethnic sentiments. The Temnes in the North felt deprived of the advantages of decolonisation in the economic and political fields. They were increasingly seeing that the Mende South had grabbed power and pursued a biased policy towards their own region and ethnic group. This state of affairs was intensified by the everlasting African tribal heritage. However, the actual situation had been the product of years of inadequate colonial policies in the educational and economic fields. Focusing on economic opportunities, the colonial authorities had failed to foresee a future nation state able to erase regional and ethnic clashes. Conflict was between, on the one hand, holders of power unwilling to accept the foreign ideals of democracy as they sought hard to remain in power, and on the other, an opposition that aimed to reach power, and used the means of democratic action. Conflict led eventually to the refusal of the holders of power to accept opposition to step to power through democratic action. Siaka Stevens who won the 1967 elections fell under a planned military coup that finally attested on the official death of democracy in Sierra Leone.

The return of Siaka Stevens to the premiership was a great victory that crowned a long political struggle. The APC supporters could see it as their real day of independence. The different weaknesses of Albert's political leadership eventually

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[120] - Daniel Tetteh Osabu-kle, op. cit. , p. 04. When ousted by their own other ranks, these officers marched to jail through the streets of Freetown wearing nothing but their underpants – a humiliation peculiarly subversive of the authority of the officer corps. Christopher Clapham, op. cit., p. 07.

[121] - J. F. Maïtland-Jones, op. cit., p.46.

ended his career. Moreover, his ruling period witnessed policies that led to a destruction of the inherited democracy. The coup that resulted from such policies instigated a drive to dictatorial practices on the part of the new comers to power.

The post 1968 years were, thus, not so promising for a return to democracy. The political machinery was to continue on rules similar to those practised before by the SLPP and Albert Margaï. There was only a reversal of roles. S. Stevens and the APC took the position of the former rulers and began to initiate an anti-SLPP oppressive attitude. The same methods of rule usually based on authoritarian coercion were to govern the attitudes of the new rulers, especially as concerns the SLPP.[122] Stevens himself found no irony in setting up a one party presidential-republican regime that he had resisted once in opposition. Through coercive means, he eventually succeeded to materialise Albert Margai's ideal of a one-party regime in 1978, with major intimidations against the ex-ruling SLPP, and against even some northerners who had brought him back to power.

With Siaka Stevens on top of power, the APC increasingly consolidated its control over the Sierra Leonean government. First, it put forward a series of electoral petitions that led to by- elections in 1968 and 1969. Despite a great deal of violence initiated by SLPP militants, APC candidates gained control of 65 out of 78 seats of parliament.[123] By the time of the 1973 general elections the APC loyalists were utilizing a large measure of violence along with voting irregularities to assure their candidates' success. As a result of the violence and manipulations, the APC had attained control of every single seat in Parliament. Thus, Sierra Leone had become in reality a one- party state.[124] Siaka Stevens and the APC were also able to place the country's economic resources to consolidate their authority.[125] When President Siaka

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[122] - J. D. Hargreaves, "Sierra Leone de Stevens à Momoh", *Travaux ET Documents*, Série 22, Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Université de Bordeaux, 1989. p. 03.

[123] - Linda Edgeworth, Joshua B. Forrest, and Andrew Scallan, op. cit., p. 05.

[124] - Ibid.

[125] - For example in 1970, the government partly nationalized the SLST that exploited the largest part of the country's diamond. It bought 51% of company and turned it into the newly formed National Diamond Mining Company of Sierra Leone Ltd. (Diminco). SLST's owners had to turn

Stevens retired in 1985, he had done enough to establish a dictatorial regime that in part prepared the atmosphere to a civil war in 1991.

Conflict built on regional differences and ethnic loyalties was not an end in itself. Political leaders did not originally defend ethnic interests, but it was only a means to fulfil political opportunities through the seizure of power. Eventually, political conflict led to the fall of the principles of the nation state. Sierra Leoneans, whether in side the Government or in opposition, decided to get rid of the bounds of democracy and the acceptance of the other, since the latter did not serve their interests all the time. The failure of the project of the state led to endless political crisis which influenced all spheres of economic, social and cultural life. The result was the failure of the early Africa nationalist dream to establish strong states able to bring economic efficiency and social welfare to its citizens. Sierra Leone, like many other African countries,[126] found itself driven to civil war because of the failure of her political regime and her own politicians.

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over all of SLST's assets to Diminco. In return, they got a 49% shareholding in Diminco. *Chaim Even- Zohar, p.33*

[126] - Many other African countries. In some countries, conflict was so ferocious that it led to bitter civil wars opposing large ethnic entities. The first experience happened in Nigeria where the Egbos had to suffer from their strong sense of ethnicity. The civil war that started in 1965 destroyed hundreds of thousands of African lives. In Sudan, regional, ethnic and religious differences between the South and the North led the country to experience the longest civil war in Africa. Recently in the 1990's, the Rwandan civil war testified that time alone, however long, cannot erase ethnic antagonism. Such differences easily led to the worst massacres in the continent as far as the African memory is concerned.

CONCLUSION

In 1967, a military coup ended democratic politics as known in Western Europe after twenty years of ambivalent politics characterized by political conflicts in Sierra Leone. The following years were those of a consolidation of a one party system that became an African fashion at the time. Sierra Leonean politicians, like many others in Africa, arrived to an impasse, where they became unable to preserve or cope with the political norms they had inherited from colonial Britain.

The roots of this state of affairs go back essentially to colonial times where artificiality and ambivalence of colonial policies presided. British occupation of the territories making present Sierra Leone set up for the creation of a nation-state that imposed coexistence on a number of conflicting entities different at several levels: ethnic, linguistic and cultural. During colonial rule, little attempts were made to fuse Sierra Leoneans in a *melting pot[1]*. On the contrary, colonial rulers had always sought to maintain gaps between the one and the other seeking temporary political and economic interests. First, a Colony/Protectorate gap separating the Creoles from the interior people was jealously guarded through direct colonial rule for the Creoles in the Colony, and indirect rule for the Protectorate. Second, progressive attitudes were seriously annihilated through the chiefly establishment that acted as a stopper to upheaval changes that would threaten colonial rule. Third, ethnic differences were maintained unsolved, and often reinforced through inadequate economic and social policies.

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[1] - The expression clearly refers to the United States where neither time nor democracy has succeeded to erase cultural, ethnic and race differences.

From the late 1930's onward, colonial rulers found themselves increasingly forced to act in a forward direction, because of the requirements of general imperial policy and local transformations. The economic and social changes that occurred everywhere throughout the Empire in the 1930's gave birth to radical nationalist movements that succeeded to popularise its line. In Sierra Leone, economic and social change also brought radical political ideas that succeeded to attract greater numbers of Sierra Leoneans in spite of their differences. Such ideas posed a serious threat on the future of colonial rule, and led the British to seek the path of reforms as a means to save its presence. The basis of the reform policy that followed was the elimination of any possibility of the birth of a nationalist movement that could pose a threat on British rule in the country. The annihilation of nationalism was consequently an annihilation of one of the main foundations of a nation-state project.

The start was the elimination of the socio-economic grounds of discontent through direct state intervention. Priority was given to the purification of the labour sector from political orientations through a reorganization of the trade unions as pure labour bodies. However, the beginning of political reform was more important. A firm policy of separation was pursued to set each of the Creoles and the interior people well apart. The Creole educated elite no longer enjoyed the privileged position of being regarded as a future ruling group. They were definitely reduced to the limits of their own Colony area. Meanwhile, the interior natives were expected to fulfil a better role as collaborators not as real rulers. The chiefs' position was reinforced to control the ordinary men, but with a prospect of acting under official direction. With the help of the few educated elements, the traditional rulers started to challenge the old established Creole politicians in national politics. Yet, colonial policies at this phase aimed first to secure colonial interests and did neither promote a true political system nor form politicians that would respond to the real expectations of Sierra Leoneans.[2]

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[2] - As Davidson stresses, "the British had frozen the indigenous institutions at the same time robbed colonized peoples of every scope and freedom for self-development". Quoted from

Although the aftermath of the Second World War was strongly pressing for a pro-decolonisation policy in the whole of Africa, the situation in Sierra Leone seemed not promising for a near self-governing status. No true nationalist movement was born like in other territories to bear the responsibility of pressing towards it. Colonial rulers had eventually destroyed any hope for the emergence of a nationalist movement embracing educated elements from the different parts of Sierra Leone and aiming at the construction of a strong state. On the contrary, they had succeeded to set up an unbridgeable gap between the Colony Creoles and the interior people. Certainly, both African groups had played a role in that division since they failed to aim at high ideals, but in reality the situation was completely beyond control. Thus, up to 1947, Sierra Leone seemed unresponsive to self-government. Neither did colonial officials seek to do it by preparing a national leadership, nor did Sierra Leoneans raise a nationalist movement to press for it.

While being unresponsive, the British hastily introduced in Sierra Leone proposals of a constitution that suggested a greater share of the local elements in ruling the country. Then, neither colonial rulers on the spot nor Sierra Leonean politicians were ready. Every one in Sierra Leone started to ask puzzling questions. Was it possible to start that way now? Had the British done enough to prepare Sierra Leone and Sierra Leoneans for that task? Were Sierra Leoneans equipped enough to adapt themselves to a western type nation-state and democratic politics? Were they ready to accept each other within the new structure and democratically surpass their historical, social and ethnic differences? In fact, it was the following twenty years that answered all those questions and the like. Since the introduction of colonial proposals in 1947, passing by the start of decolonisation in 1951, and then independence in 1961, until the military coup in 1967, Sierra Leone's political scene was always characterized by a general atmosphere of staggering politics due to several grounds that were made out of previous colonial policies.

Derrick Grose, Review of B. Davidson, The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State. October 20, 1999 Grose Educational Media » , 1999, *Human Nature Review*.

The first phase was that which opposed the Creoles and the Protectorate people. It is certain that the two sections had historical, cultural and psychological reasons to conflict over power. Nevertheless, it was that policy of separation and enhancement of differences pursued by colonial rulers that brought the two sides to antagonize. Colonial attempts to isolate Colony inhabitants and privilege the interior people outraged the former group's feelings and radicalised their position. The Creoles, though a minority, had been always educationally and politically superior. Thus, they saw themselves as rightful rulers than the interior politicians. In the meantime, the interior people rejected Creoles' claims and, being the majority, thought it was their absolute right to take the leadership of the country.[3] Although the imposition of colonial proposals, with the success of the interior, solved this conflict politically, a hidden clash continued at other levels of government organs, particularly inside the civil service and other administrative and public areas.

However, Sierra Leoneans might have disagreed about the partition of power, but they all enthusiastically endorsed the project of decolonisation. Political conflict in reality indicated attachment to the ideal of the nation-state as moulded by the coloniser. Sierra Leoneans, like other Africans, at first regarded the project of the nation-state as introduced in western practice as an ideal that would cause their happiness. Political conflict, at the start of decolonisation, was an expression of their desire to endorse it since they accepted its game rules and had nowhere at no moment put it into question. Indeed, "the vestiges of colonisation remained locked in the African psyche, hence the intriguing nature of the process of decolonisation".[4]

The diminution of Creole/Protectorate conflict did not end the story. The second phase was just arising with the beginning of decolonisation. The politics of the transfer of power revealed other grounds of conflict in Sierra Leone that had

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[3] - In the words of A. B. Davies, "colonialism aggravated the problem in Sierra Leone by keeping the Creoles and indigenous people well apart for well over a century after its annexation in 1896, and then suddenly creating an environment for political competition between them". V. Davies, *Will Sierra Leone Grow Again*, op. cit., p 14.

[4] - T. Andrea Chimuka, "Review of Pal Ahluwalia, Politics and Post Colonial Theory: African Inflections" *H-SAfrica, H-Net Reviews*, January, 2002.

roots in the social setting and in the foundations of decolonisation itself. Access to power and state resources opened the appetite of some ill-prepared Sierra Leonean politicians at the local and national levels for the pleasures of luxury and power. Though colonial rulers had succeeded to freeze social upheavals and subdue challenging attitudes within the young elements, the arising new attitudes in the national and local politics generated a shake in social relationships and traditional ethics. If young-elder clash was postponed for a while, the attraction of power awakened that annihilated challenge against the elders. The youngster in society rebelled against the conventional authority of the elder, and the ruled rose up against the ruler as the ethics governing that relationship was destroyed. Social change had quickly effects on political relations. Political conflict now opposed those young progressive aspirants to power and those elder conservative holders of authority. Although colonial rulers had forcibly stopped the advance of progressive views, the clash with conservatism was later inevitable. The Margaï's conflict over leadership was the top of the pyramid that went down well deeper in Sierra Leone's society.

Political conflict in this phase was a facade of uncertainty and difficulty of adaptability on the part of political actors with the political norms set up as a basis for the transfer of power. Uncertainties about the project of the nation state as designed by the departing colonizer took way to politicians' minds. There was a conflict between impulsive advance to modernity embracing western ideals and more cautious attitudes attempting to consider local particularities. Political conflict here indicates the beginning of a questioning about the suitability of the whole project of the nation state in the local setting i.e whether local politicians were to succeed as captains on the ship of the nation-state taking its way inside the stirred sea of African contradictions.

The coming of independence in 1961 reduced the tension between progressive and conservative attitudes, but another basis of conflict was arising. Ethnic and regional sentiments were to govern politicians' outlooks and action. The northern Temnes felt intimidated by the Southern Mendes who dominated power thanks to

privileges going back to the colonial period. Here also previous colonial policies helped create a solid ground of conflict. In the social and economic fields, colonial policies clearly concentrated to promote the Southern areas in sectors like education, transportation, and sanitation with a view of a better exploitation of resources available there_ the lack of resources in the North left it undeveloped and beyond colonial interest. Therefore, the lack of education meant a lesser share in power, while the lack of social services meant a growing hatred to the Mende dominated Government. In addition, the failure of the British to anticipate ethnic conflict of that kind was a fatal error. The Mendes in power were eager to chase the Temnes certainly because ethnic sentiments were strong, but also the attraction of state resources was irresistible. Thus, keeping power under control turned out to be an imperative whatever the cost and means would be. Thus, the real basis of conflict went beyond ethno-regionalism, which was just a cover of a lusty conflict over power and factional interests.

Democratic principles were not to do a lot in the face of self-interest instincts. Corruption and illegal means of acquisition of wealth turned to be the main practice in the polity. The result was that those in power and the aspiring-to-power opposition sought to monopolise state resources regardless of the manners to be used. The project of a republic came only to reinforce inconsistence in political views. Rather than being a sign of confirming political independence, the politicians supported the project only when it served their interests. Thus, those in power seeking to stay permanently turned it into a one party state, while those outside cried loudly to stop it. But once those outside power came in, they pursued the same path they had already fiercely criticized. Democracy turned out to be a very weak, unhealthy, and unsuitable system in the Sierra Leone setting.

The Sierra Leone experience shows that rulers often believed in preserving power above all and rejected democracy if it would not preserve power for them. On the other hand, opposition used democracy and liked it only when asking for power. But once there, they, too, rejected it. As a result, corruption, irregular use of sate

resources, nepotism, patronage loyalties and other weaknesses characterised the state politicians' attitudes after access to power. Yet in fact, this was nothing but an expression of a long lust for the goods of Western life; life that is characterised by a selfish pursuit of luxuries and power. After a long period of deprivation, such rulers had suddenly obtained the opportunity. Hence, they lustily hurried to use state resources for constructing a luxurious life for them, their families and patrons exactly as colonial rulers had always done.[5] Political conflict between rival competitors without respecting the rules of the game was also an inspiration from the attitudes of colonial rulers who did never respect the rules of the game during colonial times.

The 1967 military coup in Sierra Leone and the following period attested that politicians were unable to cope with the system of the nation state and democracy as understood in its strongholds in the Western World. After about twenty years of political turmoil, they seemed practically and psychologically not receptive to such ideals like democracy, alternation to power and basic freedoms. The sentiments of the tribe were not easy to uproot. Though they were forced to exist in a nation-state system, their scope was tribal. Whether consciously or unconsciously there was an internal voice higher enough to urge the rejection of the ideal of the nation-state, democracy and its other accessories. It was a return to the origins, to the tribal-like project of the one-party state. The revolution against the democratic principles following the military coup in Sierra Leone indicated, like in other African countries, a desire for freedom from the chains of the imposed western framework of the nation state. The politically oppressed groups themselves opted for a rejection of the

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[5] - In his work *'The Wretched of the Eart*h' published in 1961, Franz Fanon eloquently described the character of the class that inherited power from the colonialists. It is "a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out. This get- rich- quick middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas or of inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe, but its caricature." Quoted from T. Andrea Chimuka, op. cit.,

principles of the western project. As soon as they could grab power, they soon freed themselves from those values embodied in western democracy.

Political conflict in Sierra Leone led to the failure of the project of the nation-state because, like most African territories, the new nation was hampered by a political and administrative apparatus made along colonial authoritarian behaviours and practices, a weak dependent economy, and artificial borders that did not reflect ethnic, cultural or social entities. Above all, the Africanised regime was dominated not by real and able politicians who could understand the challenges waiting their nation. Instead, they were in most interest groups, petty bourgeois nationalists acting within a limited mental scope, who had engaged in rivalry for state resources.[6] Hence, interest rivalries rather than social goals motivated the national struggle that was often fuelled by tribal, ethnic and regional sentiments. [7] This situation in Sierra Leone, as in other parts of Africa, was largely the legacy of colonial rule that not only froze the development of local political systems but more importantly froze the African political mind and rendered it incapable of thinking independently for a considerable time.

The leaning towards the one party system, or the tribal state, was a reflection of the originality and persistence of the pre-colonial political and cultural values. Though the post-independence politicians enjoyed westernisation, they still had their own values and heritage, and the political notions are part of that heritage. Though many of them, for example, rejected the chiefs' authority, the vestiges of the tribe and the social hierarchy built on respect and obedience to the ruler remained a strong

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[6] - As South African writer, Ruth First, stated in her book *The Barrel of a Gun* published in 1970, "There has been eloquent, inexhaustible talk in Africa about politics, side by side with the gaping poverty of political thought. Down there on the ground in Africa, you can smother in the small talk of politics. Mostly it is about politicking, rarely about policies. Politicians are men who compete with each other for power, not men who use power to confront their country's problems." Quoted from Tattah Mentan, op. cit., p. 26

[7] - In the words of Mentan Tattah, "The people in power and those who seek power use all means to attain their goal of capturing the state. The strategies for capturing include fostering ethnic sectarianism and political repression. Competition for control of the state, whether between the military and civilian classes or between civilian political parties, is invariably ferocious". Ibid.

ethic in politics. Exactly as the English could not go ahead with Cromwell's Republic because they were rooted in the sentiment of a monarchy, these politicians could not go ahead with western political values because they were rooted in the sentiment of African social, cultural and political heritage. They found it difficult to cope with democracy that tells them to listen to their opponents and consider their aspirations, while they had themselves experienced action under colonial over lordship. The authoritarian atmosphere was greatly consolidated by colonial rule either directly or indirectly through strengthening the position of chiefs. The bulk of the people had for long been accustomed to political authoritarianism either in per-colonial times or after colonial intrusion. Thus, the cultural and social legacies that valued hierarchical authority beginning from the family, village, tribe or kingdom made the grounds of political relations, and reflected the value of paternalism in the African tradition.

In spite of the efforts made by the British in their model Colony, Sierra Leone, the particular social and cultural settings spoiled any attempt to replicate a system similar to that in Britain. Decolonisation plans, drawn from their own experience, to failed to establish a permanent political system because of the ill-combination between the different factors that could build a successful political system, and a deep misunderstanding, or neglect, of the African setting. The success of western democracy took place where the social, economic and cultural setting was favourable. Besides, the process was long and gradual in that the development of political systems carefully incorporated the social, economic and cultural realities, and rarely was possible obstacles neglected. By contrast, British colonialism left the newly formed nation with a constitution that was drafted in London rather than Freetown. The essential government and its political institutions (the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and political parties) were modelled on those existing in the former ruling nation.[8] Depreciation of local cultural and political ethics, and the

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[8] - Tattah Mentan, op. cit., p. 25. Views now are strong that Africa perhaps possessed its own political heritage that could be useful if properly valued by colonial rulers as well as

imposing of western ethics instead, could have good intentions in that the coloniser saw it would be better for the future of Africans.[9] Yet, it destroyed without building an alternative. In fact, the situation was worsened by local politicians' inability to create alternative systems to the nation-state. After a long dark colonial period, as Sierra Leone's experience had shown, Africans found themselves in the departure line, having to start anew to build suitable political systems.[10]

In the twenty first world, Sierra Leone, like many other African states, is described as a failed state, which is unfortunately being an issue of debate in several world conferences. Although the civil war had officially ended, the hurting legacies remained, and the country fell an easy prey for expatriate diamond interests. The failure of the Sierra Leone state is a clear example of the inevitable failure of any foreign ideology or system if not adapted to local particularities. It is only the right combination between the political heritage of a people and the wise embodiment of its aspirations of present and future that is able to build strong political institutions.

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by Africans. Yet, there was very little consideration on the part of the colonial power of how an independent, modern African nation should be formed according to its own heritage, although the foundations for such a nation could have been discovered in African history. As one historian has asserted, indigenous political systems with checks and balances on power were evolving in the years before Europe intruded in Africa and could offer Africans a chance to develop grass-roots political structures appropriate to them. Pasi Ihalainen, *Early Eighteenth-century Political Literature as a Historical Source*, p. 04.

[9] - The administration the British wanted to spread "did not exist in limbo, but rather was an integral part of an on-going socio-economic system- the most advanced capitalist society of its day, in the case of Britain". Martin Kilson, African political Change and the Modernisation Process, *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* N° 1, Vol. 4, 1963, p. 429.

[10] - The failure of the European project and the resulting chaotic politics that characterized most postcolonial African had one obviously positive effect: the beginning of decolonisation of the African political mind. After decades of attempts to mould political systems in Africa along European norms, there came a general sense of disappointment that Africa is Africa and Europe is Europe. Intellectuals, rulers countries, and politicians all agree now that they had to do something to create systems that suit Africans and avoid the wide-ranging perils of political instability. Although the means are not yet lucid, there is a general conviction among the majority of African rulers that African politics should be reconstructed along African norms and expectations.

Time is also an important factor. There must be enough time to construct effective political institutions and avoid hasty reforms that serve to nothing. Otherwise, how did western countries construct their own political systems that made their remarkable success? Certainly, it was the success to adapt their political heritage to their own requirements and aspirations, taking their necessary time, which built them strong political systems.

For this reason, African intellectuals, including political thinkers, economists, sociologists, and even some sincere Western writers[11] are called to examine such cases like Sierra Leone whose state failed in spite of former expectations of success. Then, they must urge for permitting countries in Africa to draw upon their own experience to find practical solutions to the problems that plague them because of the imposition of western institutions. They should emphasize the need for African nations to be governed on the basis of their own moral principles derived from popular participation in government. The solution is not necessarily western democracy but "Good Governance", a term that is nowadays widely popular in Africa.[12]

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[11] - Writers like Basil Davidson seem to reject the original European views to Africa. They opted to go to the realities of Africa itself to try a better understanding of its problems.

[12] -It is as described by an African intellectual, "the effective exercise of power and authority by government in a manner that serves to improve the quality of life of the population. This includes using state power to create a society in which the full development of individuals and of their capacity to control their lives is possible. A ruling class that sees the state solely as a means of expropriating the nation's limited resources is simply incapable of good governance" Tattah Mentan, op. cit., p. 26.

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West Africa, January 1967

Résumé

Le sujet de la thèse traite de la relation entre les reformes coloniales étant la base du processus de décolonisation qui a vue le jour après la deuxième guerre mondiale et les conflits politiques en Sierra Leone durant ce processus. La période étudié est de 1938 à 1967. L'analyse de cette période, dans cette thèse, montre comment les reformes coloniales et la politique de décolonisation ont crée des conflits politique qui, à leur tour, ont mené à l'échec du projet de l'installation d'un état capable de réaliser les rêves de ces citoyens. Les reformes coloniales Britanniques ont commencé en 1938 dans le cadre d'une politique général qui avait pour objectif d'assurer une harmonie coloniale durant la guerre et d'éliminer aussi les voix radicales qui ont sérieusement menacé les régime coloniales. En Sierra Leone, les responsables ont mené leur reformes en se basant sur l'élimination du radicalisme politique à travers des reformes socio-économiques, une politique de séparation entre la communauté Créole au niveau de la capitale et la population de l'intérieur, et aussi sur la promotion des systèmes tribales pour jouer un rôle national actif. Après l'introduction des reformes constitutionnelles en 1948 donnant une majorité africaine dans le législative et une intégration dans l'exécutive, les Sierra Léonais sont entrés dans une longue période de conflit politique. La première phase (1948-1951) opposa la minorité Créole, ayant beaucoup plus d'expérience politique, contre les chefs de l'intérieur, ayant l'appuie des autorités coloniales. Malgré l'opposition vigoureuse des Créoles, l'application de la nouvelle constitution, qui favorisa l'intérieur, fut mise en place en 1951. La deuxième phase (1951-1961) opposa les éléments progressifs de l'intérieur contre les conservateurs du partie au pouvoir, le Sierra Leone People's Party. Au top du système, le jeune politicien, Albert Margai, défia son frère aîné, le Premier Ministre, tant sur sa politique que sur son poste même. Malgré cette opposition, et grâce au soutient Britannique, l'indépendance a eut lieu en Avril 1961. Au même moment, un autre conflit a déjà commencé: un conflit ethnique régionale. Il opposa le nord *Temne* contre les privilèges du sud *Mende*. Le partie au pouvoir, avec une majorité *Mende*, monopolisa les richesses du pays au profit de son clan et a exclue les opposants. Ce conflit mena directement à un coup d'état en 1967, ce qui a signifié l'échec de la politique de décolonisation qui consistait à construire un état nation qui pouvait répondre aux ambitions des Sierra Léonais.