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Garveyism and African Nationalism

I

Nearly every work on African nationalism has asserted the influence of Garveyism on the growth of race consciousness in Africa. The nature of this influence is more often asserted than analysed. The testimonies of the King of Swaziland (who is reported to have told Mrs. Garvey that the only two black men he knew in the Western world were Jack Johnson, the boxing champion, and Marcus Garvey) and ex-President Nkrumah (who recollects that Garvey's *Philosophy and Opinions* had a profound influence on him during his student days in America) are usually cited as examples of Garvey's influence on African nationalist thought and politics.[1] As Professor Essien-Udom has pointed out in his introduction to the second edition of Garvey's *Philosophy and Opinions*, 'Garvey's influence on the Negro freedom movements in the United States and Africa, will never be fully known'.[2] Sufficient material now exists in African and American sources for a preliminary assessment of the extent and significance of this influence.

Concerning the Pan-African movement of W. E. B. DuBois, opinion in nationalist circles in English-speaking West Africa was generally a mixture of enthusiasm, mild criticism, and an attitude which implied that there was no direct rapport between DuBois' Pan-Africanism and the new pan-West African nationalism of the 1920s. It was a grand movement, to be admired and held up as an indication of a new and vigorous race-consciousness determined to assert itself in the post-war world, but was at the same time not directly related to peculiar economic and political problems of British West Africa. As far as Garvey's Pan-Negro movement was concerned, however, the position, contrary to the opinion of certain European contemporary writers, was different. As Thomas

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Race, XI, 2 (1969)

Hodgkin has suggested, the Garvey movement may have had a more significant and widespread effect on African nationalist thought than is commonly supposed.[3] Professor Shepperson has already argued the thesis of Negro American influences on African nationalism, particularly East and Central African nationalism, although the extent and significance of this influence varied somewhat, as we shall show in the West African case. Some of the radical Negro newspapers found their way into Africa; for example, the *Crusader*, frequently quoted by West African papers, wrote:

> The *Crusader* serves ... the colored people of the world. It circulates in nearly every big town in the U.S. ... It has circulation in the West Indies and Panama, in South America, and in the coastal districts of West, East and South Africa, penetrating as far as Kano on the Nigerian railway, as far as Coquilhatville on the Congo river, and in South Africa as far as Pretoria.[4]

And an American writer, describing the network of influence linking Negroes throughout the world, wrote as follows: 'Indeed, a reader in Sierra Leone writes to the *Negro World* (March 26, 1921): "We have been reading the *Negro World* for about two years. We have been reading other Negro papers, such as the *New York Age*, the *Washington Bee*, the *Crisis*, the *Colored American*, the *Liberian West Africa*, the *Liberian Register*. ..." '[5]

Even as late as 1933 there were African nationalists in South Africa who, in spite of police surveillance, were receiving copies of Garvey's *Negro World*. One James Stehazu, for example (signing himself 'Yours Africanly'), wrote to the *Negro World* editor 'to express the feeling of our African brothers towards the American or West Indian brothers'. His observations were frank and sharp:

> The Africans are now wide awake in affairs affecting the black races of the world, and yet the so-called civilized Negroes of the Western hemisphere are still permitting the white men to deceive them as the Negroes of the old régime, Uncle Tom stool-pigeons. If the 'motherland' Africa is to be redeemed, the Africans are to play an important part in the ranks and file of the U.N.I.A. and A.C.L. I have studied comments and opinions of 29 leading American newspapers (all colored) and to my horror it is only one problem that is still harassing. The 250-year-old policy, 'Please and Thank You' (Sir Kick Me and Thank You). But the lion-hearted M. Garvey has cut it adrift from the new Negro. He is now admitted as a great African leader. ... The intellectuals like Dr. DuBois, Pickens, Hancock and others are obviously put to shame, hopelessly moving like handicapped professors who are drunk with knowledge, who cannot help themselves. ... The red, the black and the green are the colors talked about by the young men and women of Africa. It shall bury many and redeem millions. Today in Africa, the only hope of our race is gospel of U.N.I.A. —is sung and said as during the period of the French Revolution.[6]

Yet another South African (E. T. Mofutsanyana) wrote criticizing the anti-communist craze in South Africa:

> These pretenders, these destroyers of happiness, these exploiters, profiteers and parasites ... under cover of justice, and religion are busy formulating a law

that they believe will lock up communism in an iron box never to peep out again .... Communism is like grass. They cannot cut it; they can burn it to ashes, but when the time comes for revolution, it will positively get up like fire. ...[7]

While Garveyism did not have any permanent influence, the available evidence suggests that it excited more interest and controversy and was a more powerful utopia among African nationalist groups than the DuBoisian movement. In both French and British West Africa between 1920 and 1923, there were a few individuals and organizations associated with Garveyism. It was in Lagos, however, that the movement was strongest where a small but vigorous branch of U.N.I.A. was actually established in mid-1920, almost at the same time as the National Congress of British West Africa came into being. In March 1920, the Rev. Patriarch Campbell, one of the Congress leaders in Nigeria, was approached by some Lagosians on the subject of the Garvey movement and with a proposal for forming a committee of the U.N.I.A. in Lagos. Campbell advised them to postpone discussion until the meeting of the National Congress of British West Africa (hereafter referred to as N.C.B.W.A.) where he would take the matter up. He thought there was something to be said for the commercial aspects of Garvey's Pan-Negroism, especially the project of the Black Star Line, but advised loyal British subjects against participation in U.N.I.A. politics 'as conditions in both hemispheres differ altogether from each other'.[8] Campbell then discussed the idea with delegates at the Accra meeting of the N.C.B.W.A. and the conclusion reached was that Garvey's politics should be ignored and the Black Star Line patronized, 'it being a Negro undertaking and its object being solely for the purpose of facilitating and giving us more and brighter prospects as Africans in our commercial transactions'.[9] The *Times of Nigeria* editorial endorsed the view of the N.C.B.W.A., dwelling almost exclusively on the economic aspects of Garveyism.

The idea of establishing a line of steamers owned and controlled by Africans is a great and even sublime conception for which everybody of African origin will bless the name of Marcus Garvey.... The inclusion, however, of such a tremendous political plan, as the founding of a pan-African Empire, is too obviously ridiculous to do aught else than alienate sympathy from the whole movement. We do not suggest that our brethren in America ought not to aim at political autonomy. Liberty is man's highest right ... particularly in the case of our American brethren, for whom the hardships and disadvantages under which they exist in the land of their exile make it desirable to have some portion of their ancestral land, where they could unmolested shape their own destiny and spread culture among their less enlightened brethren—'De ole folks at home'.[10]

The *Times* went on to argue, in a manner reminiscent of present Pan-African disagreements, that the N.C.B.W.A. concept of independence was incompatible with the U.N.I.A. concept of a Pan-Negro Republic: 'If at all the day should come, and come it must in the process of evolution—when Africa shall be controlled by Africans,

each distinct nation, while having the most cordial relations with every other sister nation, will infinitely prefer remaining as a separate political entity to being drawn into one huge melting pot of a Universal Negro Empire.' The N.C.B.W.A. was cited as an example of a movement working towards the gradual independence of British West Africa within the British Empire, and Garvey was told that what Africa needed was banks, schools, industries, modern universities, and the Black Star Line, not 'wild-cat schemes' like a Pan-African Republic.[11]

Towards the end of 1920, with the Government taking a serious view of the unrest in the Garvey movement could cause in the colonies, the majority of the Lagos elite dissociated themselves from the U.N.I.A. branch which was being run by Ernest S. Ikoli. The conservative *Nigerian Pioneer* wrote on 26 November: 'We advise the Police to keep an eye on the Garveyites in Nigeria.' Some of the leading members of the U.N.I.A. Lagos branch included the Rev. W. B. Euba and the Rev. S. M. Abiodun. At the unveiling of the U.N.I.A. branch charter on 26 November at Lagos, the Rev. Euba, whilst insisting on their loyalty to Britain, made it clear that 'co-operation among Negroes is the first necessity without which it will be futile to try to co-operate with other peoples'. The *Lagos Weekly Record* condemned Garveyism because of 'its aggressive and militaristic tendencies' but said of the Lagos branch: 'To us they are neither traitorous nor revolutionary, neither fantastic nor visionary.'[12] The objects of the Lagos U.N.I.A. branch were:

(1) To establish a universal Confraternity among the race and reclaim the fallen; to administer to and assist the needy, and to assist in civilizing the backward tribes of Nigeria.

(2) To establish technical and industrial institutions for boys and girls. To conduct local commercial and industrial enterprises on co-operative lines, and to work for the moral and social uplift and betterment of Negro Communities (in compliance with our loyalty to the Crown under the protection of the laws of the country).

(3) The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League is undenominational. Meetings were to be held on Saturday evenings at St. Peter's Schoolroom, Ajele Street, Lagos.

If the middle-class nationalists were opposed to U.N.I.A. politics, there were a few Lagos radicals like J. Babington Adebayo who mercilessly criticized the Lagos branch of the N.C.B.W.A. and the conservative Lagos press. He criticized the Rev. J. G. Campbell for accusing Garveyites of sedition and disloyalty and for concerning himself with conservative bodies like the Peoples Union, the Lagos Anti-Slavery Society, and with such institutions as the inter-colonial cricket match. Adebayo went on to attack the criticisms the *Nigerian Pioneer* made of the Garvey movement—criticisms like: 'The thousands of tribes in any section of Africa never at any time regarded themselves as one people or one nation'—the standard argument of

the conservatives who were also opposed to the N.C.B.W.A. According to Adebayo, his fear was that the trouble with most Africans, especially those with the mentality of the *Nigerian Pioneer*, was that they clung too closely to 'the best traditions of British rule', forgetting that sometimes these 'best traditions' were not always in their own interests: 'It is this we consider and believe the greatest obstacle and one that can scarcely be annihilated. We need not be reminded that the best traditions had not always been upheld among us without a break', and drove home his point by quoting Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poem about the oppressed yet eternally forgiving African. It was this attitude, he said, that constituted 'the greatest obstacle to the materialisation of this glowing Utopia' (i.e. Garvey's utopia).[13] As for the Lagos branch of the N.C.B.W.A., Adebayo thought that though its leaders were sincere, their methods were dictatorial, publicity poor, and internal struggles disastrous; office-holders were far too numerous, 'chairman came over chairman, officers galore as lieutenants in the Haitian Army'.[14]

Whereas the *Times of Nigeria* took a sympathetic view of the Garvey movement, the *Nigerian Pioneer*, representing conservative opinion in Lagos, was openly hostile to any such Pan-African movement; one example will suffice:

> The scheme presented by Marcus Garvey is wrapped up in oratorical setting and persistent appeal to the emotions of the American Negroes. On the surface there is nothing more alluring than the force and solidarity of one nationality running from one end to another in Africa as a basis of political union. But is such a scheme possible in Atrica today? Was it ever possible in Africa? The thousands of tribes in any section of Africa never regarded themselves as one people or one nation. . . . To speak, as Marcus Garvey speaks in flamboyant language, of a 'United Africa' driving out the alien usurpers of Africa, is to add fuel to the fire of racial hostility.[15]

The *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, perhaps representing the majority view on Garveyism, took a very constitutional view, confusing Garveyism with revolution and socialism:

> We, as British subjects, may be opposed to any novel line of policy which administrators of his Majesty's Government may elect to pursue and recommend, and which we judge may hamper our racial progress and deprive us of our civil liberty, but in seeking redress we are not prepared to confound maintenance of rights with disloyalty to rulers . . . with a declaration of racial independence which may sound well in words, but has no meaning in reality. . . . We want no gospellers to lead us into the whirlpool of revolutionary Socialism. . . .[16]

The Colonial Office, aware of the unrest Negro American activity had created in other parts of the continent, took the Garvey movement seriously, for in 1922 it sent a secret despatch to Sir Hugh Clifford, inquiring about U.N.I.A. activities in Nigeria, especially the operations of the Black Star Line. Sir Hugh in turn furnished the reports of two lieutenant-governors on the subject, indicating

that the Lagos Garveyites were harmless. According to him, the movement appeared to be 'inspired mainly by a not unnatural desire on the part of Marcus Garvey and his associates to obtain money from natives of Africa for which it is not proposed to make any very adequate return'.[17] According to his source of information, financial contributions and subscriptions had in fact been made in some cases and sent to America by 'mal-content Africans living in Nigeria and in the employment of the Government'. Sir Hugh, however, had little to fear from Garveyism because, he said, from what he knew of the West African, he felt certain that his 'notorious ability to take care of himself where money is concerned' would provide a powerful check on any commercial exploitation by Garvey or others. H. C. Moorhouse, Lieutenant-Governor of the Southern Provinces, added that a Negro American called Cockburn, formerly employed by the Nigerian Marine, was rumoured to have been given command of one of the Black Star ships, and that Garveyism 'has made very little headway here and if as appears probable the association becomes discredited in America, it will . . . gradually die out here'.[18] According to W. F. Gowers, Lieutenant-Governor of the Northern Provinces, investigations in early 1921 in the north had shown that copies of the *Negro World* were being circulated among Africans and West Indians 'to a very small extent in some Provinces, among them Kano, Munshi, and Illorin', but that there was no evidence of U.N.I.A. propaganda. He added: 'There is no likelihood at all of the principles of the Marcus Garvey movement finding any encouragement outside a very limited class of native, not indigenous to the Northern Provinces . . . there is even less interest taken in Marcus Garvey and his movement than there was last year.' So far as he knew, there could be no question of Pan-Africanist activity in the north.[19]

The Nigerian Deputy Inspector-General of Police then outlined the aims of U.N.I.A., and dwelt a little on the Black Star Line, stating that a number of West Africans had bought shares. Branches of the U.N.I.A. had been formed in Africa, America, and the West Indies, and in Nigeria its headquarters was at 72 Tinubu Square, Lagos, the president of which was Winter Sohakleford, a clerk to S. Thomas & Co. The secretary was Ernest S. Ikoli, editor and manager of the 'African Messenger', but he had been succeeded by the Rev. Ajayi of the C.M.S. in 1922. Membership was around the 300 mark, but paying members amounted to a mere twenty-eight—heavy subscriptions and levies ensured a rather lukewarm support. There was also a brass band which the movement owned; official instructions from headquarters in New York stated that the African National Anthem ('Ethiopia, Land of My Fathers') was to be played on all public occasions. It was also stated that the Nigerian agent for the industrial wing of the U.N.I.A. was a Mr. Agbebi, but no

shares had been sold in Lagos though there was some interest in the matter. According to the police, Mr. Ikoli had resigned as secretary of the local branch 'on the grounds he was opposed to its political aims, though he approved of the Industrial scheme'.[20] He (the Deputy Inspector-General) had also seen a private letter from Herbert Macaulay when the latter was in England, to a friend of his in Lagos, 'warning him to be very careful in having anything to do with this Association as it is perilously near the border line of treason and sedition'.[21] In conclusion, the report noted: 'The movement is not meeting with much local success and with the exception of the leaders, the members are lukewarm and the public generally are not in favour of it. They recognise they are much better off under British Rule and have no desire to change . . . for American Negro rule. . . .'

Apart from Lagos, Garveyism attracted considerable attention in Liberia, where its activities inevitably involved Liberian–American and British relations, and the interests of the Firestone Rubber Company.[22] Apart from Liberia and Lagos, the U.N.I.A. does not seem to have had much impact on other parts of West Africa. Between 1920 and 1923 copies of the *Negro World* entered Dahomey via one of Quenum's sons in Paris, probably Kojo Tovalou Quenum who was associated with radical African groups in Paris.[23] In the Senegal, Gambia, and Sierra Leone, governments introduced immigration restriction bills against 'undesirables'. Agents of U.N.I.A. appeared in Dakar (Senegal) but were expelled, as were those in Liberia. In the latter territory, U.N.I.A. made serious but abortive efforts at a colonization and trading scheme; their representatives arrived in Monrovia in January 1924, amply provided with funds to put before President King a scheme for the settlement of 3,000 Negroes from the United States. It was planned to establish six settlements of 500 families each, four on the French border and two on the British border. The Liberian President offered them an initial trial concession of 500 acres, but not on the border. The mission, however, failed, principally because of Garvey's intemperate attacks on the Liberian Government and his tactless criticism of the colonial powers. In the Senegal, a small group of Sierra Leoneans led by Francis Webber, Farmer, Dougherty, H. W. Wilson, and John Camara were preaching Garveyism. The British Consulate General in Dakar reported that the French authorities were 'engaged in watching with some uneasiness the activities of a small group of men, natives of Sierra Leone, who were believed to be local representatives of the Universal Negro Improvement Association of the United States'. The homes of these men were raided and documents seized; it was alleged that they had established at Rufisque 'an active branch of the Association, provided with the usual elected officers, which branch was engaged in spreading the objects of the

parent body and in collecting subscriptions for the furtherance of its schemes'. John Camara was mentioned in the document as the U.N.I.A.'s 'Travelling Commissioner' who visited most of the U.N.I.A. branches in West Africa in 1922, and in Dakar 'meetings were held which were addressed by him in most violent language exhorting his hearers to spread the revolutionary movement which would, in the end, cast the white man out of Africa'.[24] In 1923, shortly before Garvey was imprisoned in the United States, an application by him to the British authorities for a passport to visit East Africa as part of his 'speaking tour' of the world (to correct misrepresentations of the aims of U.N.I.A.) was refused by the Colonial Office on the ground that his visit might lead to more unrest. A Colonial Office despatch observed that 'Marcus Garvey probably has a larger following in West Indies than he has in West Africa, but it is in Africa that he wants to institute his Negro State: consequently his object must be to stir up trouble and to incite sedition in Africa. What he wants from the West Indies is money. Probably that is his chief want so far as Africa is concerned as well; but if his movement is ever to achieve anything he must also create a spirit of unrest in Africa. . . .'[25] Members of the Nigerian Executive Council unanimously advised against his visit, and importation of the *Negro World* was prohibited 'as coming within the category of seditious, defamatory, scandalous or demoralising literature'; besides, his visit would be used 'to collect further sums of money on false pretences from the most ignorant and gullible sections of the semi-educated Africans of the West Coast'.[26]

II

The admirers of Garvey, however, were not all 'semi-educated', 'ignorant and gullible'. As M. Labouret argued in the 1930s, there were a few of the nationalist intelligentsia in British Africa who had studied Garveyism closely and had related it to nationalist politics.[27] And it certainly comes as a surprise that the most outspoken and eloquent commentator on the Garvey movement among this intelligentsia was 'that remarkable Cape Coast lawyer (as Thomas Hodgkin rightly describes him), William Essuman Gwira Sekyi (or Kobina Sekyi), Gold Coast philosopher, nationalist, lawyer and traditionalist. A controversialist and prolific writer, Sekyi was one of the most interesting personalities in Gold Coast public affairs, and an example *par excellence*, of the African intellectual in nationalist politics.[28] Sekyi devoted two interesting chapters to the Negro question in America in his violently anti-colonial book which recommended as little contact as possible between Africans and European colonials.[29] Writing in defence of the Garvey movement he argued that any manifestation of solidarity between Africans

and other Negroes was generally regarded with great suspicion by the white man who had 'got so hopelessly alarmed by the *necessary spade-work* that Marcus Garvey is doing towards the erection, in the not very remote future of [an] abiding edifice of racial collaboration, that he has further overlooked the truth of the well-known remark: "Abuse is no argument".' He went straight to the main point in his pan-African thesis when he asserted:

> The present attitude of a section of the white writing public, coupled with certain somewhat questionable, though legally authorised, acts of interference with the freedom of the press . . . has made it essential that we in Africa should dispassionately . . . register our own opinion on this Garvey scare and therewith set down our considered views on the subject of our brethren in America. The recent official outburst against the Congress movement may have been closely connected with the white eruption against Garveyism . . . we should do well to guard against any further white propaganda against the Congress, now that it is well known that the Congress stands for the unification of British West Africa, and therefore is bound ultimately to consider seriously the question of co-operation with our brethren in French West Africa, for example, then with those in other parts of Africa, and finally with those abroad. . . . It is therefore necessary, in fact, vital, to our future development as a race, that we should *now* inaugurate a period of systematic observation of our brethren not only in America but also elsewhere abroad.[30]

Unlike the majority of the Pan-African utopians, however, Sekyi was able to perceive that the African diaspora, for various historical and sociological reasons, had ceased to have any of the attributes of a nation and that West Indians and black Americans, in spite of the new race consciousness and Pan-Melanism, had inherited Anglo-Saxon prejudices against the African and were *ipso facto* disqualified from assuming any political leadership in the African continent:

> From Marcus Garvey's announcements regarding Africa, it is clear that he does not know even the level of acquaintance with Western ideals and of capacity to assimilate and adapt whatever comes from or is traceable to the modern world. What is much more important is that he does not understand how we Africans in Africa feel about such matters as the Colonial Government; neither can he and his set . . . realise that republican ideals in the crude form in which they are maintained, in theory, at least, in America go directly against the spirit of Africa, which is the only continent in the whole world peopled by human beings who have in their souls the secret of constitutional monarchy. . . . What Marcus Garvey and any other leader of Afro-American thought has first to appreciate before he can present a case sufficiently sound for Africa to support in the matter of combination or co-operation among all Africans at home and abroad, is the peculiar nature of the African standpoint in social and political institutions. *The salvation of the Africans in the world cannot but be most materially assisted by the Africans in America but must be controlled and directed from African Africa and thoroughly African Africans.*[31]

Sekyi's other strictures against the Pan-Africanism of black Americans and West Indians merit quotation not only because they indicate a different concept of Pan-Africanism on the part of the West African nationalist intellectuals but also because they illustrate

the dilemma posed by the black American 'double consciousness'. To the black American, Africa in the abstract was both a romantic illusion and a sharp reminder that he was an American first, and this dichotomy, in Sekyi's view, meant that political leadership of Africa must come from within Africa:

> If there is anything now that militates or is likely to militate against any American Negro movement towards Africa, it is the Americanisation of the American Negro. So long as he remains an American in ideal, his sphere of usefulness in Africa, if and when he gets there, will be very much circumscribed, in fact so restricted as to become a hindrance to his own happy existence. . . .
>
> Even now in the West Indies and in America will be found people who think we are in such a condition that the only part we can play in the prevailing endeavour on the part of the darker races to attain a better place since the Great War than they had before it, is to be led by them. That is a very serious mistake which ought to be corrected as early as possible. We in Africa can, and do, claim to be the only persons qualified to keep the tone of the present spirit of unrest at the proper pitch, because we are in possession and charge of the great and glorious traditions of our ancestors and the peerless social and political institutions which our ancestors perfected long ago, and which it is our sacred duty to preserve from the inroads of European irresponsibility as regards things non-European. We claim that we should be the architects, and that our brethren in America and those in the West Indies should be among the builders of the structure of racial oneness. . . . We admit that we are behind in steady acquaintance with the mechanical devices of the Western world . . . but we contend that we have the controlling forces in our hands, and we in Africa alone understand these forces and can direct them aright for the good of the whole Negro race.[32]

Chapter 3 of Sekyi's manuscript, entitled 'Our Brethren Abroad', dealt with Liberia and Haiti and was a vigorous defence of these symbols of Negro emancipation. Like Alexander Crummell[33] (Blyden's contemporary), he argued that the failure of these states was not due to any inherent inability of Negroes to rule themselves, as European critics maintained, but to a wrong concept of the state on the part of the Negro. He anticipated modern Pan-Africanists by arguing that these states had failed in the task of nation-building precisely because they were 'artificial' states created by 'artificial means and maintained by methods equally artificial'. Here for the first time perhaps one finds the germ of the 'Balkanisation' idea[34] in Pan-African theory and a rejection of the European concept of the state:

> The South American and the Balkan states, particularly the new state of Albania as it was before the Great War, might as well be taken as proof positive that the Southern Europeans are not capable of self-rule in a state. The white thinker on the theory of the state has hitherto based himself on the ground that the state can be created only by force, so that in the last resort force or war . . . is the only means to the end of creating and maintaining a state. On the other hand, when there are enough African thinkers to impress the world with their essentially African theory of the state, it will be found that they are seeking to get the world to accept the view that there is another kind of state, so called

patriarchial, which is not based on or kept by force in the artificial shape of war; and such states can be found to be the units in confederations such as the group of small states in the Gold Coast. . . . In other words, the sort of force that is applicable in the national African state differs from the sort of force applicable in the artificial state, whether African or non-African which is based on force in the sense of war . . . the latter is such that every subordinated or subdued state feels it its most sacred duty to itself to overthrow it as soon as it is able so to do without danger to itself [i.e. people under alien rule based on force must do all in their power to regain their freedom].[35]

The inference from Sekyi's argument was that 'artificial' states like Haiti and Liberia lacked the 'impulse to remain truly sovereign in a world dominated by Europe; even the Balkan and South American states, he said, were weak and unstable in that environment. Had Haitian and Liberian leaders learnt the secret of African democracy, he argued, they 'would have learnt a great deal to make them unique among the present day states, for . . . the African who, in addition to his being African, has attained to the knowledge of things European, is at any time more than a match for any European who thinks himself of outstanding ability. . . . Therefore Liberia and Haiti being primarily African and only secondary [*sic*] Americans, *should* have sought to Africanise America instead of Americanising Africa.'[36]

Sekyi then reiterated the argument frequently made by West African nationalists in relation to the Garvey movement; he supported the industrial and economic aspects of Garveyism whilst rejecting its political pretensions: 'We have little or nothing to learn from West Indian or American political institutions; but we have very much to learn from their industrial or economic organisations.'[37] He also commented on the cultural differences between black Americans and Africans, and recommended student exchanges as a step towards better understanding and as a means of freeing African students from the 'incarceration' of Achimota where they were 'under the absolute rule of white tutors without experience or inside knowledge of the complexities of the African mind and temperaments'. His Pan-Africanism thus amounted to cultural and technical cooperation with black Americans and West Indians in order to prepare West Africa 'to face England, when she shall become too arrogant to be considered our guardian, to remonstrate with her to abandon her dog-in-the-manger policy which has reduced us to our present condition of ineptitude in many respects',[38] and to a very critical assessment of Negro American and West Indian visions of liberating a benighted Africa. He commented on black nationalism in America, especially on the DuBois-Garvey controversy, adding:

In my opinion the gap between the two camps is inevitable and will itself produce the element that will bridge it. We in non-Mohammedan Africa where classes of the very low order observable in so-called civilised countries are

unknown, cannot very well understand the situation in America. It should however be noted that DuBois was opposed to certain aspects of the late Booker Washington's policy and propaganda, and rightly opposed. Tuskegee can no more solve the racial problem in America than lynching and political and social oppression can. . . . I think Garveyism is the only possible step in the United States towards the harmonious blending of the ideas of Booker Washington, the apparent materialist, with those of DuBois, the apparent idealist, into a real solution of, or a solidly progressive effort to solve, the question, if not of race, at any rate that of colour, in its operation against social and political enfranchisement in America.[39]

Turning specifically to Garvey's Pan-Negroism he commented:

Garvey may make blunders in policy, and perhaps either does not take sufficient time to study conditions before he issues out his orders or begins to formulate his conclusions, or is not aided by a sufficiently competent and painstaking staff in his efforts to deal with facts relating to Africa and Africans. . . . If the only objection to Garvey is that he sometimes makes blunders, that objection is weak if urged by Englishmen or anglicised Britishers who have nothing else to say against him. At any rate, we, who are after all those whose opinions matter as regards the American situation . . . believe that Marcus Garvey is doing necessary work, and would very much regret if Liberia is being led by braised [*sic*] propaganda to interpose obstacles which will only make the force of the Garvey movement fiercer when it overcomes its obstacles and sweeps on.[40]

Finally, Sekyi examined the idea of Negro emigration to Africa, but though sympathetic, he ruled it out on the ground that it would 'create new sources of trouble'. He repeated the West African bourgeois nationalist view that:

The question of a return to Africa from America of our brethren there is not to be encouraged by us. . . . The most we can allow is to open a way for the influx of the money of the capitalists of our own race in America and the West Indies in order that we may ourselves compete with the gigantic combinations that are being formed in England for the undisguisable purpose of establishing a sort of legal or legalised monopoly of trade.[41]

On the basis of the evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that, in spite of their objections to Garvey's concept of a Pan-African state, the majority of the petty-bourgeois nationalist leaders of the National Congress of British West Africa, on the whole, tended to be more sympathetic to Garvey's Pan-Negro nationalism and its economic goals than to the more majestic, more intellectual, but ineffective movement of DuBois. As I have shown elsewhere,[42] the leadership of the N.C.B.W.A. attempted between 1920 and 1930 to blend Pan-African idealism with a realistic consideration of their socio-economic interests.

III

Garvey's ideas not only reached nationalist circles in West Africa and South Africa; they also reached French-speaking Africans and West Indians in Paris in the 1920s though the Dahomean Marc

Kojo Tovalou Houénou who sent copies of the *Negro World* to Dahomey and founded the Pan Negro *Ligue universelle pour la défense de la race noire* in 1924. Houénou was definitely a supporter of Marcus Garvey, and visited the United States in 1924 as guest of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. His sister (Mme. Rose Elisha of Cotonou) informed the author that Houénou was a 'friend of Marcus Garvey' and that Garvey's activities were well known in Cotonou and Porto Novo in the 1920s. In fact, *Les Continents* (the journal of Houénou's *Ligue*) carried several articles on Negro American literature and politics, with reprints of Garvey's speeches and accounts of U.N.I.A. meetings in America. Houénou was himself nominated U.N.I.A. representative in France, and was so involved in U.N.I.A. affairs that he rashly attempted to 'liberate' Dahomey with some Negroes in 1925, and was promptly arrested.[43] In fact Garvey visited France in July 1928 and met French Negro groups in Paris, claiming that U.N.I.A. had 'already cemented a working plan with the French Negro by which we hope to carry out the great ideals of the U.N.I.A. My visit to France is, indeed, profitable, and I do hope for great results.'[44]

Although Garvey's movement had no direct contact with Equatorial Africa, French and Belgian officials were prone to attribute any local disturbances in their colonies to Garveyism and to the Pan-African movement in general. Between 1920 and 1923 syncretistic and prophet movements sprang up in West, Central, and Equatorial Africa, the most serious being the prophet movement in the Belgian Congo led by Simon Kimbangu and Andre Yengo. Belgian officials saw these as nationalist movements inspired by Garveyism and its Negro American missionaries. Governor-General Lippens of the Belgian Congo, for example, declared in 1922 that local disturbances in the colony were '*manifestations révolutionnaires*' inspired by a Pan-Negro movement. Negro American missionaries were alleged to have distributed copies of Garvey's *Negro World* with seditious literature and hymns in the Congo, especially around Kinshasha and Stanley Pool.[45] A few other European journalists regarded Garveyism as a bad influence on the Congo, and as a clever plot by the American Government to rid itself of turbulent Negroes by encouraging their anti-colonial activities in Europe and Africa.[46]

Garvey did not achieve the 'great results' he hoped for, but to argue, as James Weldon Johnson did in *Black Manhattan*,[47] that he was neither moderately successful nor successfully moderate, is to miss the point by judging him solely on the basis of immediate practical success. The political thought of great men does not have to be evaluated on the basis of the historian's success-story for its significance to be appreciated.[48] As Samuel Butler has reminded us, 'It is not he who first conceives an idea, nor he who sets it on its

legs and makes it go on all fours, but he who makes other people accept the main conclusion, whether on right grounds or on wrong ones, who has done the greatest work as regards the promulgation of opinion.'[49] And this is what, in my view, Marcus Garvey did for Pan-Negro nationalism. As Joyce Cary, a district officer serving in Northern Nigeria in the 1920s, later put it:

> The whole episode [i.e. Garveyism], at least in the white newspapers, cut a comic figure. Yet Garvey's manifesto went all through Africa. I cannot be sure, of course, that the story which came to my remote district . . . was about Garvey and his ship. I thought it nonsense . . . I was like the other whites. . . . Seeing primitive people in their isolated villages, I assumed that their ideas of the world were primitive, that they were isolated also in mind. But they were not. In a continent still illiterate, where all news goes by mouth and every man is a gatherer, news of any incident affecting the relations of black and white . . . spreads through the whole country in a few weeks. It is the most exciting of news; above all, if it tells of a black victory.
>
> To Musa[50] . . . the black steamship appeared like a startling triumph. He thought nothing of manifestoes or the rights of peoples, but he was clever enough to set great value on economic power, and the control of expensive machinery. He had not expected to hear of black men owning and driving ocean-going ships, and he was deeply moved. He felt his colour.
>
> This is a root fact of African politics: colour race. . . . His [Garvey's] declaration represented two things far more powerful than votes: a racial grievance and the moral sense of humanity. These spring from entirely different roots but they are two of the most powerful political forces in the world. They never cease their growth and pressure.[51]

References

[1] See E. U. Essien-Udom's Introduction to the second edition on *Philosophy any Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (London, Frank Cass and Company, 1967), p. xxv. For a general account of the Garvey movement see E. D. Cronon, *Black Moses* (Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1955).

[2] Op. cit., p. xxiv.

[3] T. Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (London, Muller, 1956), pp. 101–2. See also G. Shepperson, 'Pan-Africanism and "Pan-Africanism": Some Historical Notes', *Phylon* (Vol. XXIII, No. 4, 1962, p. 356). This article is most suggestive in its indications of possible fields of research in Pan-African studies.

[4] Quoted in Frederick German Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1922), p. 16.

[5] Ibid.

[6] *Negro World* (16 July 1932), p. 6.

[7] *Negro World* (3 June 1933), p. 2. See also 'An Appreciation of Garvey's "Africa for the Africans" by the Johannesburg newspaper *Abantu-Batho*', *Negro World* (7 August 1926), p. 10; Joseph Masogha, Kimberley, South Africa, to the editor of *Negro World* (14 August 1926), p. 10; ibid. (30 April 1927), p. 2; Benjamin Majafi, Liddesdaale, Evaton, South Africa, to S. A. Hayes, President of the Pittsburgh Division of U.N.I.A. in *Negro World* (30 April 1927), p. 5; 'Voices from Africa', ibid.; 'Organisation Work in Africa Growing', *Negro World* (21 May 1927), p. 4; also Mrs. Singer-Baldridge (American journalist and writer), 'What they think of Garvey', *Negro World* (18 August 1928). On the West African side see some of the newspapers quoted in 'The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League is making progress in Lagos', *West Africa* (27 November 1920), pp. 1,513, 1,496, and *West Africa* (11 December 1920), p. 1,553.

[8] J. G. Campbell to the Editor, *Times of Nigeria* (24 May 1920), pp. 4–5.

[9] Ibid. See also resolution 5 in *Conference of Africans of British West Africa, Held at Accra, 1920*, p. 3.

[10] *Times of Nigeria* (24 May 1920), p. 5.

[11] Ibid.

[12] *Lagos Weekly Record* (27 November 1920), p. 5.

[13] J. Babington Adebayo, 'The British West African Congress: Marcus Garvey's Pan-Negroism and the Universal Negro Improvement Association', *Lagos Weekly Record* (27 November 1920), p. 7.

[14] Ibid.; for the reference to the Haitian army, see Ralph Korngold, *Citizen Toussaint* (London, Left Book Club, 1945), p. 67. ('To compensate for the paucity of equipment and training there was a superabundance of general officers. There were few who confessed to any rank lower than captain, and the number of generals was bewildering ....')

[15] *Nigerian Pioneer*, quoted in *West Africa* (27 November 1920), p. 1,496.

[16] *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, quoted in *West Africa* (11 December 1920), p. 1,553.

[17] Sir Hugh Clifford, *Report on U.N.I.A. Activities in Nigeria*, C.O. 583/109/28194 (27 February 1922), para. 2. The intelligence reports, on which Sir Hugh's report was based, seem to be fairly reliable, particularly when checked against newspaper material relating to the activities of the Garvey movement in Lagos.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] See G. Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* (London, Dobson, 1956), pp. 97–101; also the despatches of the British Legation in Monrovia contained in Gambia Confidential M.P. No. 727, 3/59 (21 June 1922); 'Universal Negro Improvement Association: Activities of representatives of', Francis O'Meara to H.M. Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (22 February 1924); ibid. (7 July 1924); ibid. (23 August 1924); also G. Grindle to H.M. Chargé d'Affaires, Monrovia (15 October 1924), and Edwin Barclay, Secretary of State, Liberia, to The Agent, Elder Dempster and Co., Ltd., Monrovia (30 June 1924); and 'Marcus Garvey and Liberia—An Epitome of the Liberian Government's Attitude', *African World* (1925), pp. 124–5.

[23] John Ballard, 'The Porto Novo Incidents of 1923: Politics in the Colonial Era', *Odu* (Vol. 2, No. 1, 1965), p. 66.

[24] R. C. Maugham, British Consulate General, Dakar, to H.E. the Governor, Gambia (15 June 1922), Confidential No. 384/255/22, Gambia 3/59, Confidential M.P. No. 727: 'Universal Negro Improvement Association: Activities of representatives of'; also R. Maunier, *The Sociology of Colonies* (London, 1938), Vol. I, p. 50.

[25] Nigeria Confidential 'C', C.O. 583/118/34197 (9 July 1923).

[26] Ibid.

[27] H. Labouret, '*Le Mouvement Pan-Negre Aux Etats-Unis et Ses Repercussions en Afrique*', *Politique Etrangère* (1937), p. 320; Hans Kohn and W. Sokolsky, *African Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J., Van Nostrand, 1965), p. 34.

[28] Magnus Sampson, 'Kobina Sekyi as I Knew Him', Sekyi Papers, Cape Coast Regional Archives, 716/64.

[29] K. Sekyi, *The Parting of the Ways* (n.d. 1922?). Internal evidence (e.g., his reference to 'the recent opening of Achimota') suggests that the work was published in 1925; the author came across it while studying the Sekyi papers at Cape Coast, Ghana, in 1966.

[30] Ibid., p. 23.

[31] Ibid., pp. 23–4.

[32] Ibid., pp. 24–7.

[33] Alexander Crummell, *The Relation and Duties of the Free Colored Men in America to Africa* (Hartford, 1861), *The Duty of a Rising Christian State* ... (London, 1856), *Africa and America* (London, 1891).

[34] Cf. Professor G. Shepperson, 'Pan-Africanism and "Pan-Africanism": Some Historical Notes', *Phylon* (Fourth Quarter, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, 1962), p. 357 ('5. Balkanization: How far is the fear of this in Africa which plays an important part in contemporary all-African movements ... of relatively recent introduction?') W. E. G. Sekyi's arguments are particularly relevant in the attempt to asnwer this question.

[35] W. E. G. Sekyi, op. cit., pp. 28–9. The author saw drafts of manuscripts on African political theory by Sekyi in the Sekyi papers, entitled 'An African Political Hierarchy' (Sekyi Papers, Cape Coast); there was also the draft of a thesis for the London M.A. entitled 'The Relation Between the State and the Individual Considered in the Light of its Bearing on the Conception of Duty', the first chapter being on 'The Social System of the people of the Gold Coast'. These papers are being edited by the author for the Edinburgh University African Heritage Series.

[36] Sekyi, *The Parting of the Ways*, p. 32.

[37] Ibid., p. 34.

[38] Ibid., p. 37.

[39] Ibid., p. 37.

[40] Ibid., pp. 37–8.

[41] Ibid., p. 40.

[42] See J. Ayo Langley, 'West African Aspects of the Pan-African Movement, 1900–1945' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1968), Chs. 3–5.

[43] For details relating to contracts between French Africans and U.N.I.A. see my article 'Pan-Africanism in Paris, 1924–1936', *Journal of Modern African Studies* (Vol. VII, No. 1, April 1969).

[44] Marcus Garvey in *Negro World* (4 and 11 August 1928).

[45] See Ch. Du Bus de Warnaffe, '*Le mouvement pan-nègre aux Etats-Unis et ailleurs*', *Congo* (May 1922); '*Le Garveyism en action dans notre Colonie*', *Congo* (June–December 1921), pp. 575–6; and Pierre Daye, '*Le Mouvement pan-nègre*', *Le Flambeau* (Brussels) (No. 7, July–August 1921), pp. 359–75.

[46] The most imaginative of these journalists was one R. Eaton who saw Pan-Africanism as the handmaiden of communism in the Congo, '*Le bolshevisme au Congo*', see *Congo* (June–December 1924), pp. 752–7.

[47] See James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York, 1930), p. 256.

[48] See E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (London, 1961), pp. 48–9.

[49] *Life and Habit* (London, 1910), p. 276.

[50] Musa was Cary's Hausa political agent.

[51] Joyce Cary, *The Case for African Freedom* (University of Texas Press, 1962), pp. 21–2.