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# FRENCH COLONIAL POLICY

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FRANCE, the nation having the second largest colonial empire in the world, is the country bearing the largest responsibility in Africa.

The territories administered by France on the Dark Continent may be divided into two separate and distinct parts: 1—"White Africa." 2—"Black Africa."

The first of these parts is composed of three immense regions bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. The population of these is highly evolved, and numbers: 6,250,000 inhabitants in Algeria; 2,600,000 inhabitants in Tunisia; 6,250,000 inhabitants in Morocco.

"Black Africa," much larger, more extensive and thickly populated, has remained outside the sphere of western civilization. It is inhabited only by tribes whose evolution stems from the primitive Negrillo tribes (pygmies) and progresses to that of the different tribes of Bantus, people of industry and a certain degree of civilization.

Each one of the territories of North Africa, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco has a different administration.

Algeria, which is, geographically, almost a prolongation of France itself, has been organized since 1848 on the continental French plan, and divided into three departments. The French people of Algeria created an electoral body and have elected, until the present day, three senators and six deputies who sat in Parliament in Paris.

This year, Général de Gaulle in the name of the French Committee of National Liberation extended the right to vote to all Algerians, whether they be native French inhabitants or Arabs.

Tunisia is a protectorate which was entrusted to France under the terms of the treaty of Bardo, May 12, 1881. The Bey of Tunis is its political sovereign. He is aided by a French Resident General, representing the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Morocco is a protectorate entrusted to France on August 7th, 1907 by the International Act of Algezia. The Sultan is, at the same time, the political ruler and the religious leader of Morocco. France is represented in Morocco by a Resident General who is responsible to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The administration of territories under protectorate is carried on by the French in an indirect manner. This administration seeks to pro-

mote the evolution of the native population and pursues a policy tending towards its moral, political and economic progress.

The territories of "Black Africa" are composed of: French Equatorial Africa, French West Africa, Cameroons, Somaliland, Madagascar and dependencies, Reunion Island.

This immense empire has very ancient origins. French settlements were established in Senegal as far back as 1625. At the present time, that colony is composed of four communes, which elect a deputy who represents them in Paris.

French Somaliland has been a French colony since March 11th, 1862. Madagascar has been a French settlement since 1642, as has Reunion Island. Cameroons is a mandate entrusted to France by the League of Nations on August 20th, 1922.

It is hardly necessary here to recall the essential principles of French colonization, which stand for the raising of the native's standard of living, working for his progress from both the moral and economic points of view, and assimilating him into French civilization. This policy has been followed by administrators, pioneers, and missionaries sent by France to Africa.

The loyalty of the African natives to France has remained unshaken and the fidelity of these colored Frenchmen to their mother country, has been particularly impressive during the present conflict.

It is impossible to emphasize sufficiently the fact that since 1939 there has been no uprising or rebellion of any kind on the part of the native populations of French colonies.

In no French colonial territory has there been any sort of attempt to profit by the national disaster, from the loss of prestige of Metropolitan France, by the absence of a fleet and the disintegration of an army, to seize by force any local independent status. "This loyalty," Mr. Pleven, French Commissioner for Colonies, said, "never wavered nor failed in the most difficult circumstances. It persisted in spite of the interruption of communications, the stoppage of mails, the scarcity of manufactured goods, the absence of the Navy, and the reduced size of the Army. But the essential point is that this loyalty was not passive nor ignorant, fatalistic nor disillusioned; it was, and still is, anchored, rooted in an unshakable confidence in France and her future. More than that, this loyalty was never impaired by doubt, even when men were temporarily put in control whose slavery to Vichy changed them into the tools of a policy as opposed to the interests and wishes of the populations as to those of the French people."

The natives in all the Free French Territories have made a great

contribution to the war effort of the Allies. They have, under fire of disaster, manifested their unwavering desire to continue to belong to the great community of French families.

The patriotism of colored French people was particularly remarkable in the Tchad region. Governor Eboue, a Negro born in Guiana, the only Negro Governor of the French colonies, was the first, and over a long period of time, the only one to rally to the cause of Fighting France and to enter the conflict on the side of the democracies. The importance of the role played by the Tchad in this war is considerable. It will one day be recognized that, without the support of the Tchad and in turn that of French Equatorial Africa, the entire defense system of the Allies in Africa would have broken down. The Germans and Italians would have then been in a position easily to follow up their victories through to the Center of West Africa.

Governor Eboue is not only a great patriot. He is also a colonial administrator of highest order, and his ideas on the system of administration to be applied to native inhabitants of French colonies are truly revolutionary. In a most remarkable circular printed November 8th, 1941, he says:

"The native has behavior, laws, and a mother country which are not ours. We will not contribute to his welfare—either according to the principles of the French Revolution, which is our revolution, or by applying the Napoleonic Code, which is our code—by substituting our officials for his chiefs, because our officials will think for him but not like him. . . . The colony is made up of two stable elements. French sovereignty and native authority issuing from the soil itself. Administrators are the representatives of French sovereignty. Chiefs are the holders of local authority. Respect and obedience are due to the former because of their functions, to the latter because of their birth. . . . Certainly the education of the chiefs should be the principal objective of our activity. This education, guided by a clear idea of the native spirit and an exact conception of the relations which unite the chiefs and the administrators, will enable us little by little to clarify the situation and raise it to a level which will give us in return what we have a right to expect."

Of recent date, the French Committee of National Liberation held an important conference in Brazzaville, to discuss African matters.

The work of this conference started on January 31, 1944, under the presidency of M. René Pleven, Commissioner of Colonies. The first questions before the Council were: European immigration into Africa and its role in colonial territories, native labor, raising of salaries, situation of women and children, organization of a corps of inspectors to oversee native labor, the establishment of laws against the various

forms of polygamy, modification of the dowry system and the different native matrimonial regulations, accession to French citizenship by natives having reached a certain stage of evolution, functioning of native justice, establishment of a legal code—especially in penal matters.

The study of questions of social hygiene and public health was even more important, since it concerned the putting into practice of medical methods permitting the treatment en masse, village by village, zone by zone, of such African diseases as yellow fever, sleeping sickness, etc.

Finally, the last meeting of the conference was devoted to the study of a particularly important political situation. The question before the assembly was that of providing for the participation of the African in the political life of the entire French community.

Thus, the study projects may be outlined as:

1.—Representation of all the colonies in the French Parliament, on the same great principle as the representation in France proper.

2.—Creation of a Colonial Assembly, sitting side by side with the French Government and the Chambers of Deputies, called upon to give its advice on all affairs interesting the overseas territories of France, and having a purely consultative role.

3.—Creation of a larger Federal Assembly, composed of both metropolitan and colonial representatives and possessing deliberative powers on all matters of a Federal character.

The broad outlines of what will be French colonial policy were drawn at Brazzaville. They consist, above all, in decentralization in so far as administrative and political affairs are concerned and, by contrast, centralisation in economic and technical matters. The political plans brought by the French colonial Conference at Brazzaville were so advanced and so liberal that similar methods of colonial policy were generally accepted months later at the important International Labor Conference which took place in Philadelphia on April 18, 1944.

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