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Source: *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 19, No. 1, World War I and Africa (1978), pp. 39-59

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/180611>

Accessed: 04/03/2014 05:43

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## REPERCUSSIONS OF WORLD WAR I IN THE GOLD COAST\*

BY DAVID KILLINGRAY

THE first British military operation of World War I was launched from the Gold Coast against the neighbouring German colony of Togoland.<sup>1</sup> Apart from this short and successful campaign, which increased the administrative responsibilities of the Gold Coast, the territory was on the periphery of the war. However, in a conflict of global scale that dislocated international trade and involved minor campaigns elsewhere in Africa the war had an economic and political impact on the Gold Coast. The war impinged on primary exporting economies and West Africa inevitably felt the backwash effect of the European war. And along with other colonial territories the Gold Coast was subject to the direct policies of the imperial power in its wartime search for sources of raw materials and manpower.

Throughout the war years the internal condition of the Gold Coast was relatively peaceful.<sup>2</sup> In 1913 Clifford, the newly appointed governor, reported the territory as pacified. Rejecting a French suggestion that the population be disarmed he declared that 'throughout the length and breadth of the Gold Coast Colony and its Dependencies there is no section of the population which . . . can be described as "under suspicion"'.<sup>3</sup> The last punitive expedition had been a small-scale affair in the Northern Territories in 1910-11. Although that area remained under semi-military government regular troops were withdrawn in early 1914 when the population was described as of 'sheep-like docility'. At the outbreak of war the total military and police forces available to the colonial authorities numbered nearly 3,000 for a population of about 1.6 millions.<sup>4</sup>

\* This is an amended version of a paper presented to the conference on *Africa and the First World War*, Centre of African Studies, University of London, in March 1977. The paper is based on documentary sources available in the United Kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> The Colony mobilized its military forces on 31 July 1914 four days before the British declaration of war on Germany. See Eric J. Grove, 'The first shots of the Great War: The Anglo-French conquest of Togo, 1914', *Army Quarterly*, July 1976.

<sup>2</sup> This was in marked contrast to neighbouring French territory and Nigeria. See J. Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa 1900-1945* (London, 1971) ch. V; A. Osuntokun 'Disaffection and revolts in Nigeria during the First World War, 1914-1918', *Canadian J. Afr. Stud.*, v, 1971. On West Africa and the Great War see M. Crowder, 'West Africa and the 1914-18 War', *Bulletin d'IFAN*, 1968; and also the essay by Crowder, 'The 1914-1918 European War and West Africa', in J. F. A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa*, II (London, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, London: C.O. 96/534/32098, Clifford Conf. No. 627 to Harcourt, 25 Aug. 1913.

<sup>4</sup> The Gold Coast Regiment of the West African Frontier Force numbered 1,500 men (2,020 in 1904). Other para-military forces were the 320 troopers of the Northern Territories Constabulary, mainly ex-servicemen, 330 volunteers and 790 police.

During the war the colonial government was careful to pursue policies that would minimize the chances of unrest. Thus they avoided conscription, the forcible expulsion of immigrants from neighbouring French territories, and demands for tighter control over the quality of cocoa produced.<sup>5</sup> Certain groups among the population were loyal to and closely identified with the war aims of the colonial authorities. The educated élite of the Colony and the conservative Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, already in decline by 1914, supported aircraft funds and the recruiting campaign in 1917.<sup>6</sup> In return they hoped for greater political opportunities once the war was over.<sup>7</sup> Traditional rulers who offered their active support did so for a variety of reasons. Some attempted to strengthen their position with the authorities, supplying carriers or military recruits as a demonstration of loyalty. Those rulers of peoples divided by the Anglo-German frontier—Anlo Ewe, Dagomba, and Mamprussi—expected a British victory to bring about a unification of their territories divided by the first partition. Even in Asante, the area watched most anxiously by officials with memories of the rising of 1900, most chiefs were loyal, although *passive* is perhaps a more accurate term. At the same time many rulers, as well as ordinary people, saw the war as of little concern to them while the wartime demands and impositions of the authorities came as annoying disruptions to normal economic life bringing social changes which threatened the existing political order.<sup>8</sup> The colonial

<sup>5</sup> In 1918–19 Clifford resisted the demands of the Department of Agriculture for stronger legislation to control cocoa farmers on grounds of 'political consideration'. See G. B. Kay (ed.), *The Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana: a collection of documents and statistics, 1900–1960* (Cambridge, 1972), 13–15.

<sup>6</sup> The Rev. S. Attoh Ahuma, author of *The Gold Coast Nation and National Consciousness* (1911), at Winneba offered 'fervent and incessant prayers for the unqualified success of British arms'. Report from Gold Coast Methodist Synod Minutes, 1915, quoted in H. W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra, 1967), 277. Much to the annoyance of Governor Clifford, who was on leave in the United Kingdom, the Acting Governor A. R. Slater enlisted the aid of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society in the military recruitment campaign in the Fante district of Central Province in Feb. and Mar. 1917. See C.O. 445/38/17329, Slater Conf. to Long 6 Mar. 1917. Clifford called this a 'surrender' to the A.R.P.S. and a 'serious error of judgement' which 'will have had a great effect upon the native public opinion throughout the Colony. . . . There is no action that could have been taken locally which was more certain to impress the Chiefs and people with the idea that the Government was reduced to considerable straits'. C.O. 445/39/31551, Clifford to Long, 29 May 1917.

<sup>7</sup> The *Gold Coast Leader*, closely identified with J. E. Casely Hayford, in an editorial of 10 July 1915, said that now was 'not the time to ventilate grievances which might prejudice the cause of England or lead her enemies to impugn the solidarity and loyalty of the sons and subject races of the British Empire. We shall play the role of passive spectators with loyalty, determination and devotion in order to qualify for greater trust'. In a similarly optimistic vein two years later an editorial supporting the recruiting campaign challenged: '... wake up men of the Gold Coast and answer the call with fervour and enthusiasm; for the day comes, and is at hand, when if we knock at the door of opportunity, we shall not be denied admittance'. *Gold Coast Leader*, 3 Mar. 1917.

<sup>8</sup> See the account of the hostile reception to a District Officer at a recruiting meeting in Asante in early 1917 when people said 'the war was not their affair, and was not going to be'. Laura Boyle, *Diary of a Colonial Officer's Wife* (Oxford, 1968), 132.

authorities saw the changes occasioned by the war as likely to undermine the traditional political framework which in turn they attempted to strengthen.<sup>9</sup>

Wartime disorders were small and quickly controlled. Although many of the riots and disturbances between 1914 and 1918 expressed traditional rivalries,<sup>10</sup> wartime conditions provided the occasion for added unrest. The reduction of the colonial establishment by 30 per cent between 1914 and 1917, the closure of military stations in the Northern Territories Protectorate, and the withdrawal of troops and constabulary encouraged the belief that the white man's authority was about to end.<sup>11</sup> Civil and military authorities frequently pointed out the 'irreducible minimum' of troops required for internal security and possible use in neighbouring colonies. In early 1917 troops destined for East Africa were retained in the Gold Coast and at Lomé because of disturbances in the Northern Territories and Senussi threats to the northern frontier of Nigeria. During August and September 1914 there were serious riots in the Central Province and Asante which were officially attributed to the excitement caused by the outbreak of war and the invasion of Togoland.<sup>12</sup> By March 1917 the riots at Great Ningo in the Colony were reported as due to 'the prolongation of the war, the depletion of European personnel in the Government Service, and our appeal for recruits, etc., have had upon the minds of the more ignorant section of the native population . . .'.<sup>13</sup> To the authorities the most serious disturbances occurred in areas of the hinterland pacified in the last fifteen years where British administration was tenuously based on a military presence and an imposed hierarchy of chiefs who often used their positions to exploit those whom they ruled. The wartime weakening of the administrative structure in the Northern Territories increased opposition to the chiefs who were widely regarded as agents of the British. The serious riots at Bongo among the Frafra, in April 1916, originated in a land dispute but grew into a determined attempt

<sup>9</sup> On Clifford's enlargement of the Legislative Council in 1916 see David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928* (Oxford, 1963), 433-4.

<sup>10</sup> T. Johnson, 'Protest, tradition and change: an analysis of Southern Gold Coast riots 1890-1920', *Economy and Society*, 1, 2 (1972); and also the comment and critique in *ibid.* III, 1 (1974).

<sup>11</sup> In 1921 over 50 per cent of the Gold Coast political staff were in their first two years of service. M. Staniland, in *The lions of Dagbon. Political change in Northern Ghana* (Cambridge, 1975), divides the colonial administrators of the 'northern interest' by the war—those who worked in the Northern Territories before 1919 and those after that date who had served in the war: see pp. 48-9. In the Northern Territories Chief Azure of Nangodi was reported as saying: '... people were always saying "now the white has gone!" It was a common saying. It commenced shortly after the Company of Constabulary was withdrawn from Zouaragu'. C.O. 96/570/47495, report by T. W. Breckenridge Prov. Comm. N.E. Province Northern Territories, 16 Nov. 1916, Encl. 1A in Acting Governor Slater conf. to Long, 3 Jan. 1917. See also Kimble, *A Political History*, 489.

<sup>12</sup> An official analysis of the Aug.-Sept. riots is in C.O. 96/557/23490, Clifford conf. to Harcourt, 1 May 1915.

<sup>13</sup> C.O. 96/580/43012, Clifford to Long, no. 477, 27 July 1917.

to resist chiefly rule and alien administration.<sup>14</sup> Conversely the disturbance in Gonja in March 1917 was largely because a chief attempted to assert his power and refused to continue playing the role of a 'mere sergeant-major' to the British authorities. Initial resistance was against attempts to secure recruits, but local official incompetence and high-handedness set off a scare that a widespread rising against the whiteman was imminent, causing a detachment of troops to be hastily rushed north.<sup>15</sup>

The war dislocated West African commerce; the barter terms of trade, improving up to 1913, declined due to shortages and the consequent rise in the price of imports. The Gold Coast was self-sufficient in foodstuffs and war demands and a measure of import substitution encouraged an increase in internal economic activity.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to measure the effect of the war on the prosperity of the Gold Coast. The contraction of trade, especially of cocoa in 1914-16, hit local producers, middlemen and merchants but in overall terms they seem to have emerged from the war in a state of relative prosperity. This was certainly the view of the revenue-conscious government and is in part borne out by the substantial sums of money spent by cocoa farmers on building roads and by middlemen on the purchase of lorries. But the war also brought a marked rise in the price of imports, many of which had become essential to ordinary Africans, while taxes on exports such as cocoa were passed onto producers. Despite the unpredictable revenue income the Gold Coast government by 1916 had paid the total cost of the Togoland operation (£60,000), met the increased costs of the forces in the Cameroons and East Africa, and begun to contribute from revenue £500,000 in gifts and loans to war funds. Private contributions to miscellaneous war funds were in the region of £100,000.<sup>17</sup>

Gold Coast exports were arrested by the war with the exception of the major export crop, cocoa, and also kola nuts. Rubber exports had a slight and short-lived recovery while some African and European capital was put in to rubber and oil plantations in expectation of increased wartime export demands. On the outbreak of war cocoa exports slumped due to price uncertainty, decreasing demand and the loss of the German market. By the end of 1914 cocoa prices were half those of late 1913. Clifford proposed to the Colonial Office a government fixed minimum price to aid growers in an attempt to save the industry from what he saw would be

<sup>14</sup> Roger G. Thomas, 'The 1916 Bongo riots and their background: Aspects of the early colonial administration of Eastern Upper Ghana', to appear in A. Adu Boahen (ed.), *Studies in Memory of Kwame Yeboa Daaku* (forthcoming, 1978). I am grateful to Roger Thomas for a copy of his paper. Governor Clifford, an energetic and tetchy man, denounced the 'maladministration' of the Northern Territories in a vituperative despatch of over 100,000 words, pillorying the northern officials for incompetence, brutality and indifference: C.O. 96/570/47495, Clifford conf. to A. Bonar Law, 18 Sept. 1916.

<sup>15</sup> C.O. 96/588/14277, Clifford conf. to Long, 14 Feb. 1918, contains the Governor's analysis of the Bole riots in Gonja. A recent interpretation is by A. A. Iliasu, 'Rex v. Yagbongwura Mahama and six others', *Universitas*, v, no. 1, Nov. 1975.

<sup>16</sup> See further N. A. Cox-George, 'Studies in finance and development: the Gold Coast (Ghana) experience 1914-18', *Public Finance*, 13 (1958).

<sup>17</sup> Sir Charles Lucas, *The Gold Coast and the War* (London, 1920), 46 ff.

its ruin.<sup>18</sup> The Colonial Office took a more sanguine view, expecting markets to recover and the war to be short. Although cocoa exports picked up and, with the exception of 1918, increased, the figures are deceptive and do not reflect price fluctuations, quality, or actual production by farmers. For example, writing in 1918 the Director of Agriculture estimated that in the 1917–18 season only about three-quarters of the crop had been gathered and half sold, the remainder being left to rot on the trees.

The war also changed the direction and pattern of Gold Coast external trade. German shipping and German markets disappeared. African trading company's such as Ocansey's, involved in the Hamburg trade, diverted capital in to new ventures such as motor agencies and cinemas. Direct trade with the United States increased.<sup>19</sup> The large British trading companies—the 'Combine' firms—and the Elder Dempster shipping line, aided by the British export licensing schemes of 1917–18, increased their monopoly role in British West African trade and fuelled the resentment of African cocoa farmers and traders who formed co-operatives and attempted to become shippers.<sup>20</sup> The colonial authorities in both London and Accra favoured increased competition rather than less. Clifford opposed the suggestion by the 'Combine' that they take over the trading activities of the Basel Mission, and in face of increasing Foreign Office hostility to the Swiss–German concern he attempted to preserve its trading role arguing that 'they are practically the only people who stand between the "Combine" and something very like monopoly. . . . They are decidedly useful to the purchasing public of the Gold Coast'.<sup>21</sup> Eventually the Basel Mission trading concerns were taken over by Werner's of Liverpool. Another aspect of the expulsion of the Missions was that its schools, which catered for about 35 per cent of all children in school, were placed under a greater measure of direct government control: in 1914 the government had been responsible for 8 per cent, of schools, whereas by 1919 the figure was 60 per cent.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> C.O. 96/548/39121, Clifford conf. to Harcourt, 24 Sept. 1914.

<sup>19</sup> Gold Coast exports *by value* to the United States in 1914 amounted to £93,383, 2 per cent value of total foreign trade; this trade increased by four times in the boom of 1918–19 to reach a figure of £3,465,699, 33 per cent of total foreign trade.

<sup>20</sup> Kimble, *A Political History*, 48–9. During the war the number of African exporters increased: see the chapter on 'Cadbury, cocoa and the First World War', in R. Southall, 'Cadbury on the Gold Coast, 1907–38: The dilemma of the model firm in a colonial economy' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Birmingham University, 1975). P. N. Davies, in his *The Trade makers. Elder Dempster in West Africa, 1852–1972* (London, 1973), 198–9, claims that in monetary terms Elder Dempster and the other British shipping companies associated with it constantly secured moderate but adequate returns on capital even after all previously non-requisitioned ships were taken over at 'Blue Book' rates early in 1917.

<sup>21</sup> C.O. 96/558/26205, minute by Clifford on desp. Acting Governor Slater to Long, 19 May 1915. In 1907 Governor Rodger of the Gold Coast had also opposed the West African shipping ring as 'an unmitigated evil': C.O. 96/458/24936, Rodgers no. 267 to Elgin, 21 June 1907.

<sup>22</sup> *Department of Education Reports*, 1914 and 1919. Guggisberg in the Legislative Council Debates, 4 Feb. 1918, referred to the removal of Basel Mission education work as 'the greatest blow which education in the country has ever received'. For an outline of the activities of the Basel Mission during the war see Noel Smith, *The Presbyterian*

One of the most serious wartime problems was shipping shortage which along with internal traffic bottlenecks disrupted trade.<sup>23</sup> In 1917 the United Kingdom had to husband its shipping space and therefore allocated space for various Empire products. Gold Coast cocoa was restricted to 50 per cent of the 1916–17 figure, to be controlled by licence. As shipping declined so coal imports fell with the result that firewood had to be used for the railways and mines.<sup>24</sup> In 1915 explosives for the Obuasi mines were in short supply and part of the work force was laid off. As imports fell so the government feared that customs duties, the major source of government revenue, might drastically decline, affecting railway development and other public works, but especially railways which Clifford regarded as the vital arteries for the development of the territory. Government revenue was unpredictable and loans from the London money market for such work were refused by the Colonial Office. When work on the northern railway extension from Koforidua to Kumasi through the cocoa growing region was suspended in April 1915 it was in part due to static revenue but a more important reason was the railway liabilities of £195,000 incurred owing to financial muddles.<sup>25</sup> Additional revenues came from increased railway rates in May 1915, and work was resumed on a shorter twenty kilometre stretch of the northern line in September paid for by an increase in the *ad valorem* duty on imports from 10 per cent, to 12 per cent. Clifford defending the increase said 'the natives are rolling in money'.<sup>26</sup> In September 1916 revenue for road and railway building was raised from an export tax on cocoa.<sup>27</sup> Colonial Office sanction for the

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*Church in Ghana, 1850–1960* (Accra, 1966), 145–54; and Debrunner, *A History of Christianity*, 277–90.

<sup>23</sup> Shipping tonnage on the Gold Coast declined by 50 per cent in 1913–15: *Trade Report, 1915*. In 1913, 693 ships entered Gold Coast ports, by 1918 only 256, an increasing number of them sailing vessels and U.S. ships: see Cox-George, 'Studies in finance . . .', 149.

<sup>24</sup> Firewood cutting placed an added burden on labour shortages especially in the gold mines; lack of coal for the pumps caused Accra harbour to finally silt-up. Imported foodstuffs, standard fare for most Europeans, rose in price, were harder to come by, and late in arrival.

<sup>25</sup> See C.O. 96/557/23477, Clifford desp. no. 377 to Long, 1 May 1915. Customs and railway revenue in 1914 amounted to £1,331,712 which was c. £30,000 more than in 1913; customs and railway rates for 1915 equalled £1,441,000. In his speech to the Legislative Council on 25 Oct. 1917 Clifford said that 'judged from a purely financial standpoint the year 1916 was easily the most prosperous that this colony has yet experienced . . . the revenue collected . . . was the largest ever recorded'.

<sup>26</sup> C.O. 96/560/47873, minute by Fiddes, 21 Oct. 1915, reporting on a discussion with Clifford, on Acting Governor Slater conf. to Long, 30 Sept. 1915. A year later when the export tax on cocoa was introduced Clifford suggested that the 'spending capacity of the population in the Colony and Ashanti has not been diminished . . . there is probably a larger quantity of ready money in the hands of the natives than ever before', C.O. 96/566/24852, Clifford conf. to Long, 8 May 1916.

<sup>27</sup> The war substantially altered revenue sources in British West Africa. In 1913 nearly 80 per cent of Gold Coast revenue came from import duties and receipts from government-owned railways. During the war import duties were increased and in Oct. 1916 an export duty was for the first time imposed on cocoa. The cocoa duty was one farthing per lb or 1s. 3d. per load; in Sept. 1917 this was reduced to 1s. per load, in July 1919 raised to 2s. 6d. per load. In 1919 and 1920 yield from the cocoa duty equalled about 25 per cent

continuation of the northern line was subject to an imperial preference condition that rails were to come only from surplus Nigerian stock or Canada, not from the United States. Further work on the railway was suspended in early 1917 on instructions from London that colonial development work should not be undertaken in wartime when material and labour were limited: 'All our steel is needed for killing Germans in France and Flanders and not for building railways in the Gold Coast!'<sup>28</sup>

The unpredictable nature of cocoa prices and exports decreased money in circulation and led to a coin shortage which not only hampered normal commerce but gave rise to 'the rumour . . . among the native population that this was occasioned by the fact that Great Britain and her Allies were being worsted in the struggle with Germany, and that all the money in England had been exhausted'.<sup>29</sup> Paper notes issued in 1916 helped ride over the problem but these were regarded with suspicion by many labourers who refused to work for them; labourers and soldiers paid in note frequently exchanged them for coin with money dealers at a loss.

The exact level of wartime inflation is difficult to compute. An official estimate said the cost of living for European officers had increased by about 45 per cent, from August 1914 to June 1917,<sup>30</sup> and African clerks claimed in a petition of 1920 that the purchasing value of the pound had fallen by 50 per cent, in eight years.<sup>31</sup> Wartime demands for foodstuffs and labour increased internal price levels and rising import prices sharpened social conflict. In Kwahu between late 1915 and 1917 the *asafo* secured from the Omanhene a comprehensive set of rules regulating political and

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of total revenue. The export duty was lowered in 1922 back to one farthing a load, by which time it had become an accepted revenue source providing the territory with capital sums for the development programmes of the 1920s. Immediately following the war similar export duties were imposed on kola and timber, a differential duty on palm kernels, and later a duty on diamonds. By 1920 export duties contributed over 25 per cent of total revenue. These export duties were increased and retained after the war to compensate for the loss of revenue following the prohibition on the importation of 'trade' spirits introduced by the British authorities in West Africa in Mar. 1919 in anticipation of the Convention of St Germain—itself a product of the Paris peace negotiations—concluded in Sept. 1919. The *Report of a Committee on Trade and Taxation for British West Africa* (London, 1922), Cmd. 1600, p. 25, said that this prohibition 'effected a sudden revolution in the fiscal system of the British West African Colonies'. In 1913 spirits contributed about 64 per cent, of the total customs revenue of the Gold Coast; in 1920 only 6 per cent.

<sup>28</sup> C.O. 96/572/58099, Min. by Flood on Clifford desp. no. 840 to A. Bonar Law, 13 Nov. 1916.

<sup>29</sup> C.O. 96/561/59283, PS. by Clifford in secret desp. to A. Bonar Law, 4 Dec. 1915. Another reason for the coin shortage was that the Royal Mint was heavily engaged in munitions work. Cowries returned to circulation in the Northern Territories during the war: *Northern Territories Report, 1919*.

<sup>30</sup> C.O. 554/33/36050, Colonial Sec. to Crown Ag., 2 June 1917. An indication of the rate of inflation and the growth of the internal economy is given by the accelerated velocity of circulation of currency. In 1914 there was £463,750 in circulation, by 1918 £2,171,237: see Cox-George 'Studies in Finance', 156. Polly Hill in *The Gold Coast Cocoa Farmer: a preliminary survey* (Oxford, 1956), 36, quotes an informant on figures for annual rates paid to cocoa labourers at Asafo in Akim Abuakwa as £4 in 1914, £6 in 1916 and £10 in 1918.

<sup>31</sup> Kimble, *A political history*, 45.



economic affairs in the state and a charter which, Simensen, says 'outlined an ambitious plan for using state power to curb wartime inflation'.<sup>32</sup> Inflation helped change more speedily the social and economic relations within the country and led 'young men' to challenge chiefly authority.<sup>33</sup> In spite of inflation many wage levels remained unchanged throughout the war. This was so for clerks, the largest single employed group in the country, and gold miners at Obuasi.<sup>34</sup> War bonus was paid twice to European officials and in 1918 also to African 'subordinates', the latter sending a petition to the Secretary of State in 1919 which revealed the level of discontent over wages and promotional opportunities in the civil service.<sup>35</sup>

With the growing realization that the war might continue for some years the British government gradually erected tighter controls over its own economy and sought to mobilize the resources of the imperial dependencies for the war effort. Supplies of raw materials and manpower from the Empire played an increasingly important role as the war progressed. And the experience of the war helped fashion economic and military thinking about the role of Empire in peace time.

The British, unlike the French, did not regard the African colonies before 1916 as a source of troops to be deployed for imperial purposes. Local colonial forces were for maintaining law and order within the colony, securing frontiers, and a reserve in case of trouble in neighbouring territories. In World War I troops from the Gold Coast were used in Togoland, the Cameroons, and the East African campaign.<sup>36</sup> Enlisted

<sup>32</sup> J. Simensen, 'The *asaf*o of Kwahu, Ghana, a mass movement for local reform under colonial government', *Int. J. Afr. Hist. Stud.*, VIII, 3 (1975), 384.

<sup>33</sup> See also Kimble, *A Political History*, 458.

<sup>34</sup> Reporting on the unrest at the Obuasi mine in late 1919 the manager wrote that it was due to 'dissatisfaction with the existing rates of pay which are the same as in pre-war days'. Ashanti Goldfields Corporation papers (Guildhall Library, London), 14, 171/46, p. 126, Watkins to Mann, 17 Nov. 1919.

<sup>35</sup> See Kimble, *A Political History*, 102-4. Clerks of the Gold Coast Regiment in 1916 complained of their wages lagging behind other departments and claimed that 'promotion among us is very slow and dull': C.O. 96/567/29087, letter from Solomon Aidoo and 12 other clerks to Col. Rose, O.C., G.C.R., Kumasi, 3 Apr. 1916, encl. in Clifford desp. no. 396 to A. Bonar Law, 1 June 1916.

<sup>36</sup> The Gold Coast Regiment was led by white officers. The rank and file, for the most part illiterate, was recruited mainly from the Northern Territories or from neighbouring French territory. In 1914, 41 per cent of the G.C.R. came from within the N.T. and 59 per cent from outside, mainly from French territory. The latter figure had declined to a mere 5 per cent by 1918: from an approximate calculation given in Roger G. Thomas 'Military recruitment in the Gold Coast during the First World War', *Cahiers d'Études Africains*, xv, no. 57 (1975). C.O. 879/121/1098, *Report on the Combatant Manpower of the Native Races of British West Africa*, 1923, gives the following figures for the totals of West Africans involved in the war effort:

	W.A.F.F.	Carrier Corps	Motor Transport	Total
Nigeria	13,080	28,313	250	43,043
Gold Coast	9,890	400	1,197	11,487
Sierra Leone	646	11,918		13,865
	1,400 (W.A.R.)			
Gambia	351	75		426
Totals	26,267	41,107	1,447	68,821

carriers were a necessary part of the peace time Regiment but wartime operations required further recruits to replace wastage. Two thousand carriers were speedily assembled for the Togoland campaign, many of them impressed by chiefs. The Gold Coast provided relatively few carriers for service outside the country compared to Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Of the estimated 20,000 carriers used in the Cameroons campaign<sup>37</sup> 3,300 were supplied by the Gold Coast government, mostly Ewe from occupied Togo; only about 400 carriers went from the Gold Coast to East Africa in 1916.<sup>38</sup> Owing to the labour shortage and the military recruitment programme of 1916–17 the authorities in Accra resisted proposals to recruit carriers and non-combatant labour for work overseas.<sup>39</sup>

There was considerable hostility by Africans to military carrier service, which placed a man under military discipline and contract on wages that, in the short term, did not compete with those of free carriers or other labour.<sup>40</sup> Commenting on the lack of carriers for use within the country in 1917 Haywood, the Deputy Director of Recruiting, said: 'The remaining tribes of the Gold Coast [*not the Northern Territories*] have of late years become so prosperous owing to the profits made in the cocoa trade that they will neither work nor carry'.<sup>41</sup> In attempts to secure carriers officials resorted to forced recruitment. In August 1914 the acting manager of the Obuasi gold mines melodramatically described government attempts to get carriers: 'Natives restless . . . sixty carriers have been obtained . . . and the rest of the natives are in fear of arrest for this purpose, with the consequence that yesterday the camp was more or less deserted, most of

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On the role of the Gold Coast Regiment in the war see Lucas, *The Gold Coast*; E. Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa* (London, 1920); Sir H. Clifford, *The Gold Coast Regiment in the East African Campaign* (London, 1920); A. Haywood and F. A. S. Clarke, *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force* (Aldershot, 1964).

<sup>37</sup> Haywood and Clarke, *op. cit.*, 173.

<sup>38</sup> CAB 1/23/2, Printed conf. memo misc. no. 331, Jan. 1917, 'On steps taken to increase the supply of (a) coloured troops, (b) coloured labour . . .', gives the following figures for the Gold Coast contingent in East Africa: 1,385 combatants and 400 carriers with a reinforcement rate calculated at 135 per month. Nigeria had 2,600 combatants and 1,000 carriers in East Africa and reinforcement rate was 360 per month. Service conditions in East Africa were extremely harsh as the casualty figures clearly show.

<sup>39</sup> In the War Cabinet discussion of 23 Mar. 1916 on labour supply, CAB 42/11/9, both Lloyd George and Bonar Law suggested African labour. There were other proposals for using West African labour—in the docks of the French Channel ports, for building munitions factories in the U.K., and Gold Coast miners for tunnelling on the Western Front. Strachey at the Colonial Office minuted a view shared within that department when he said ' . . . it is a complete delusion to suppose that there is a large field for the recruitment of labour of any kind in West Africa . . .'. C.O. 554/31/40535, on letter from War Office, 24 Aug. 1916. The following month Ellis, the head of the West Africa department at the C.O., argued that India's 300 millions should be used as a labour source for Mesopotamia and that 'proportionately to population the Gold Coast has done more in men and money than India'. C.O. 554/31/47393, minute on letter from War Office, 29 Sept. 1916.

<sup>40</sup> C.O. 445/33/17128, Inspector General W.A.F.F. conf. Report on Gold Coast Regiment 1913, encl. in Clifford to Harcourt, 1 May 1913.

<sup>41</sup> C.O. 445/42/27100, Haywood to Adj. Gen. War Office, 2 May 1917.

the boys taking to the bush'.<sup>42</sup> At many of the recruiting meetings in 1916 and early 1917 officials were met with a sullen response and few carriers or soldiers.<sup>43</sup> The Gold Coast authorities and the Colonial Office resisted appeals from the War Office in 1916 for labour for the Inland Water Transport Service in Mesopotamia, but it did agree to the recruitment of non-combatant motor transport drivers for East Africa, and between November 1916 and May 1918 about 760 men, mostly untrained, and from the coastal region, were sent.<sup>44</sup> Rates of pay were good but the drivers were rapidly despatched to Freetown before the start of the cocoa season to prevent desertion.

Over 1,000 Gold Coast troops served in the Cameroons campaign from September 1914 to early 1916. In the estimation of their officers they acquitted themselves well. As the war dragged on and new fronts were opened the imperial authorities, with the example of the successful campaign in West Africa before them, increasingly thought of using African troops in other theatres. The Cabinet had already considered a memo by Bonar Law, the Colonial Secretary, in October 1915 which said of West Africa that it was 'not practicable to train any considerable fighting force in addition to the force already in existence' although 'after the surrender of the Cameroons some part of the West African Frontier Force might perhaps be used outside West Africa, e.g. in Egypt or Mesopotamia, if it is considered safe to employ Mohammedans there'.<sup>45</sup> West African troops were thought to be particularly suited to East Africa where German tactics were holding down a large number of British, Indian and South African troops. The vast losses on the Somme and problems of Indian security made the War Office anxious to replace the bulk of the East African force with black troops.<sup>46</sup> In July 1916 a detachment of the Gold Coast Regiment was en route to East Africa 'not as volunteers but under orders'. Black troops gradually replaced Indians and South Africans. Cabinet policy was that when the Germans had been driven into the malarious south of Tanganyika 'it may be politic to conduct the final phases with black troops only, provided they are available in sufficient numbers'.<sup>47</sup>

A small lobby in Parliament used the press to promote the idea of a huge black army raised in Africa like that of France—the 'million black army movement' as it was disparagingly called by a hostile Colonial Office. The

<sup>42</sup> Ash. Gold. Corp, 14, 171/36, p. 74, W. Samson to Mann, 11 Aug. 1914.

<sup>43</sup> See D. Boyle, *With ardours manifold* (London, 1959), 160–7; also the *Transport Department Report*, 1916.

<sup>44</sup> C.O. 445/42/11383, Clifford conf. to Long, 7 Feb. 1918. The war provided Africans with new technical skills that contributed to the economic development of the Gold Coast in the 1920s.

<sup>45</sup> CAB/37/136/19, Conf. memo to Cab., 18 Oct. 1915, 'Question of raising native troops for imperial service'. See also C.O. 537/604, secret, 8 Oct. 1915.

<sup>46</sup> C.O. 445/37/55281, Brade of War Office to Under Sec. of State Colonial Office, 10 Nov. 1916.

<sup>47</sup> CAB 42/17/5, secret 'Note on the campaign in East Africa' to Cabinet from War Office, 7 Aug. 1916. See also C.O. 445/37/42406, War Office to Colonial Office on the Nigerian and Gold Coast contingents for East Africa, 4 Sept. 1916.

Colonial Office resisted the idea of using black troops outside West Africa and was strongly opposed to their use in Europe or against European troops.<sup>48</sup> The reasons given were that West African soldiers had lower levels of training, were unsuited to the climate, the difficulty of obtaining the correct food for them and their general unreliability as fighting men. In short they were, as one Colonial Office minute put it, mercenaries who fought for pay and therefore had to be used carefully. This was generally the view of the War Office also. Imperial needs in East Africa changed Colonial Office policy in 1916, and by the spring of 1918 both the Colonial and War Offices began to consider how West African troops could be used 'as a reserve for employment in any suitable theatre in any emergency that may arise'. The Colonial Office accepted that as the fighting in East Africa appeared to be drawing to a close the Gold Coast Regiment should form part of a West African Service Brigade under War Office control for possible use in the Middle East 'but *not* against German troops in Europe'.<sup>49</sup> The Brigade was destined for Palestine when the war ended. By then the C.-in-C. France was suggesting to the War Office the use of black troops for the offensives on the Western Front in 1919, an idea being considered by the Army Council.<sup>50</sup>

At the end of 1916 the Colonial Office, in response to the press clamour for a large West African army which had been taken up by the War Office, suggested that Colonel Haywood be sent on a recruiting mission to West Africa 'as a means of convincing the War Office on this subject, and also putting the *practicable* recruiting on a business-like basis'.<sup>51</sup> Recruiting in the Gold Coast since September 1916 had not been very successful partly because the cocoa season offered work which was much better paid. Even in mid-1917 army pay at between 1s. and 1s. 3d. was below that of the mines and the police. Conscription was not favoured by the Colonial authorities, or the War Office, who feared it would lead to grave trouble in the Colony and the possibility of a rising in Asante. A stark warning of possible consequences was provided by the rising against French conscription practices.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The parliamentary campaign for the Black Army was led by Col. J. C. Wedgewood. In Sept. 1916 the C.O. rejected a request from the War Office for 6,000 personnel from East and West Africa for use as supply companies for siege battalions on the Western Front. C.O. 537/952, secret, 8 Sept. 1916, minute by Flood, 9 Sept. 1916: 'I think it is high time that W.O. were told bluntly that the idea of collecting a large force from the thinly populated W.A. Colonies is chimerical. . . . In any case we could not agree to let W.A. negroes be murdered by France's winter climate simply to make a R.G.A. [Royal Garrison Artillery] holiday'.

<sup>49</sup> C.O. 445/45/21634, Memo on Inter-Departmental Conference at Colonial Office on the West African Service Brigade, 5 May 1918. See also CAB 27/8 WP-72, secret memo by Hankey to War Cabinet on 'Military policy of the Empire', discussed by Cabinet, 13, 14 and 20 June 1918.

<sup>50</sup> C.O. 445/45/46814, C-in-C France secret tel. to War Office, 19 Sept. 1918 and War Office reply of 20 Sept. 1918.

<sup>51</sup> C. O. 445/42/27100, minute by Strachey on Report by Haywood to Adj. Gen. War Office, 2 May 1917.

<sup>52</sup> See Hélène D'Almeida-Topor, 'Les populations dahoméennes et la recrutement

Haywood's recruiting drive lasted from January to April 1917. He was assisted by officials and also recruiting committees in the Colony which included representatives of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society. Enlistment was supposed to be voluntary but a large measure of compulsion was placed on recruits.<sup>53</sup> Numbers recruited were low and bore out the pessimistic prognosis of the Colonial Office. There was widespread resistance to 'joining-up' and especially to going over the sea to fight. Appeals to patriotism, pride and privilege appear to have had little impact. As the Omanhene and sub-chief of Kwahu said, they had every sympathy for the recruiting campaign but their people would not come forward because 'we have never crossed the sea aboard a steamer to a foreign land to fight contrary to our native customary law and rules; we are quite ignorance [*sic*] of using European guns; we are quite illiterate persons who cannot read and write; we are natives not accustomed to European wearing apparel; we will not want of our native diets'.<sup>54</sup> In the southern parts of the Colony public opinion and the press largely prevented direct or indirect pressure to gain recruits. However, in the Eastern Province Nana Ofori Atta, Omanhene of Akim Abuakwa, and Nane Mate Kole, Konor of Many Krobo, both members of the Legislative Council, put pressure on men to enlist and offered financial inducements. Between 600 and 700 recruits came from the Province; in the Central and Western Provinces numbers were negligible. Of the 200 or so recruits from Asante a good number were from the Northern Territories and had been bribed by chiefs eager to prove their loyalty to the authorities.<sup>55</sup> Slater, the Acting

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militaire pendant la première guerre mondiale', *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, LX (1973), 196-241; M. J. Echenberg, 'Paying the blood tax: military conscription in French West Africa 1914-29', *Canadian J. Afr. Stud.*, IX, 2 (1975). Harding at the Colonial Office described French conscription policy as 'a new and particularly objectionable form of slavery' (C.O. 445/45/7565), while Clifford said that a policy which forced Africans 'to risk their lives in a struggle in which they are only concerned at second hand . . . appears to me indistinguishable from the old slave traffic to the West Indies . . .' (quoted in a minute by Ellis, C.O. 96/579/31547, 3 July 1917).

<sup>53</sup> Thomas, 'Military recruitment', deals in detail with the recruiting drive and shows that the image of 'volunteer' enlistment suggested by Kimble and Crowder is an 'oversimplified description of the situation'. For a parallel study of recruitment in Nigeria, see John Barrett, 'The rank and file of the Colonial Army in Nigeria, 1914-18', *J. Modern Afr. Stud.*, xv (1977). Haywood writing in 1923 said that 'far greater energy in organizing the recruiting campaign was displayed by the Gold Coast than in other West African dependencies': C.O. 879/1/1098, Conf. Print (Africa).

<sup>54</sup> C.O. 445/38/5946, Omanhene to District Comm., Kwahu, as reported by Acting Governor Slater conf. to Long, 31 Jan. 1917.

<sup>55</sup> See Armitage, Chief Comm. N.T. to Colonial Secretary, enclosed with *Northern Territories Report 1918*, 20 Sept. 1918, in C.O. 96/604/57959. There was a total of 9,890 Gold Coast troops in the West African Frontier Force during the war; 5,680 were recruited during the war of whom 4,908 enlisted in the recruiting drive 1917-18; 3,879 recruits (61 per cent) came from the Northern Territories. Gold Coast casualties during the war were as follows: in Togoland 14 killed, 58 wounded; Cameroons, 44 killed/died of wounds/accidentally killed, 18 died of diseases, 115 wounded; East Africa, 221 killed/died of wounds/accidentally killed, 309 died of disease, 24 missing, 693 wounded and 531 invalided. The source for these very high figures is C.O. 445/50/15672, Rose O. C. Gold Coast Regt. to Governor, 10 Feb. 1920, in Guggisberg to Milner, 26 Feb. 1920. Crowder

Governor, who accompanied Haywood on his recruiting tour in Asante observed that in the old days the Omanhenes could have 'produced unlimited numbers by a mere order to their young men . . . but nowadays their authority is but slender'.<sup>56</sup> Up to 1914 the general feeling of officials, although not of Fuller the Chief Commissioner, was that the Asante were suspect and therefore should not be recruited as soldiers. Wartime demands for men threw the Gold Coast Regiment open to Asantes in early 1916 although a few months earlier the Colonial Office had opposed their recruitment as premature.

In the Northern Territories Armitage feared that the measures used by chiefs to secure recruits would undermine their authority, although a frequent response by chiefs reluctant to denude their lands of their strongest young men was to send recruits of the poorest quality.<sup>57</sup> Compulsion was widespread and the authorities were fully aware that most recruits came in this way. Mountray Read, the Acting Chief Commissioner in the Northern Territories, said that chiefs 'are all in sympathy with our requirements and will give men'.<sup>58</sup> Clifford wrote: 'It is probable that few individuals among those who have enlisted would have agreed to become soldiers if left to their own devices. When, however, they have found themselves selected by their Chiefs and Elders, and by them have been bidden to serve the Government as soldiers, they have resigned themselves to the inevitable . . . most of the recruits must, I think, be regarded as having had to submit to compulsion'. But, added Clifford, this 'need not greatly perturb us'.<sup>59</sup>

Resistance to recruitment was often passive; chiefs disregarded the call for soldiers, men refused to join up or provide their labour.<sup>60</sup> Response was at times openly hostile. Among the Anlo Ewe and Sefwi

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in Crowder and Ajayi, *History of West Africa*, 493, gives lower figures without citing a source. In 1929 about 440 ex-servicemen were in receipt of disablement pensions although this official figure did not include every man entitled to such awards: see correspondence in C.O. 820/6/13269. Deaths in the influenza epidemic of 1918-19, spread in part as a consequence of the war, were in the region of 4 to 5 per cent of the total population.

<sup>56</sup> C.O. 445/38/6236, Acting Governor Slater conf. to Long, 11 Jan. 1917.

<sup>57</sup> See correspondence and encl. on Recruiting in C.O. 445/39/31551, Clifford conf. to Long, 19 May 1917. Col. Potter, the officer commanding the Gold Coast Regt. at Kumasi, said that the Regt. was becoming the 'sink of the Northern Territories', full of 'men unfitted for any sort of manual work'. C.O. 445/43/11226, 'Notes on recruiting' to Governor enclosed in Clifford conf. to Long, 11 Dec. 1917.

<sup>58</sup> C.O. 445/39/11226, B. Mountray Read to Acting Colonial Secretary, 27 Apr. 1917, encl. 2 in Clifford conf. to Long, 19 May 1917. For an example of enforced conscription of a man who had fallen foul of the law, see J. A. Braimah and J. R. Goody, *Salaga: The Struggle for Power* (London, 1967), 64-5.

<sup>59</sup> C.O. 445/39/31551, Clifford conf. to Long, 17 May 1917. There were some genuine volunteers in the G.C.R. Part of the Volunteer Force, which consisted mainly of clerks and educated men, served in the Cameroons campaign and also in East Africa.

<sup>60</sup> Some chiefs refused to provide recruits for the military in 1916-17 for fear of losing their peoples' respect and undermining their political authority. Chiefs had responded in a similar way when they resisted the demand for carriers under the Compulsory Labour Ordinance, 1895: see Kimble, *A Political History*, 466.

'scholars' and 'young men' encouraged men not to enlist. At the Accra training centre a teacher from a Basel Mission school persuaded over one hundred fellow recruits newly arrived from Eastern Krobo not to sign the attestation because it was inaccurately worded, and then led them to 'stampede' and 'desert'.<sup>61</sup> On the arrival of a recruiting party Africans often slipped away into the bush or temporarily over the frontier. 'None of them are the least keen to volunteer', reported the Obuasi mine manager, 'but they are afraid they will be taken by force or commandeered, and there is considerable unrest. Indeed, a considerable number of Ashantis and Crepis have already filtered away to the bush.'<sup>62</sup> Once enlisted between one-quarter and one-third of new recruits deserted. To reduce this the Regiment was placed on active service conditions, which permitted the use of corporal punishment, and troops were sent out of the country to Freetown and Lome as soon as possible to complete their training. Some troops were even sent to East Africa without full training. The methods and the results of the recruiting drive worried some officials who saw it as encouraging unrest and undoing the patient work of years. In the Northern Territories one or two district officers were accused by the Chief Commissioner of being 'passive resisters' to recruitment and thus undermining government policy and authority before subject peoples quick to detect any sign of weakness.

Before the war the Gold Coast often had a labour shortage, particularly for carrying, the mines, and public works—a shortage increased by the seasonal labour demands of the cocoa industry. The war accentuated the problem.<sup>63</sup> A large part of the labour force for the mines and on cocoa farms came from the Northern Territories, the area in which most army recruits were sought. Labour for the gold and manganese mines was regarded as essential for the war effort but organized recruiting for the mines was suspended by the government in April 1917 because of the urgent need for soldiers.<sup>64</sup> However, the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation succeeded in persuading the authorities in March 1917 not to recruit from the existing labour force in the mines at Obuasi, Tarkwa and Prestea.<sup>65</sup>

Harsh French conscription policies caused large numbers of Africans to migrate into Liberia and British territories, an estimated 15,000 to

<sup>61</sup> C.O. 445/38/17329, Capt. Challenor to Acting Colonial Secretary, 7 Mar. 1917, encl. 3 in Acting Governor Slater to Long, 6 Mar. 1917.

<sup>62</sup> Ash. Gold. Corp., 14, 171/41, p. 89, Watkins to Mann, 23 Mar. 1917; and C.O. 445/39/22646, Acting Governor Slater to Long, 9 Apr. 1917.

<sup>63</sup> On the question of mine labour, see Roger G. Thomas, 'Forced labour in British West Africa: the case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast 1906-1927', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xiv (1973). There seems little evidence to support the contention of Cox-George, 'Studies in Finance', 155, that military recruitment 'depleted' the able-bodied and skilled elements in the ranks of the agricultural labour force. Most recruits came from the Northern Territories and represented a very small proportion of the total working population.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas 'Forced labour', 90.

<sup>65</sup> Ash. Gold Corp., 14, 171/41, p. 99, Watkins to Mann, 26 Mar. 1917; also C.O. 445/39/22646, Acting Governor Slater conf. to Long, 9 Apr. 1917.

18,000 being in the Western Province of the Colony alone.<sup>66</sup> British response to French demands that the refugees be returned was half-hearted; Colonial Office policy was 'to spin out the matter until the end of the war'.<sup>67</sup> In the Gold Coast the authorities lacked the means to deport so many people and it was feared that forcible methods would increase hostility to the British recruiting programme. Although the presence of large numbers of refugees from French recruitment and labour practices tended to infect people in the Gold Coast with similar feelings nevertheless they were seen as a valuable boost to the labour force.<sup>68</sup> A large part of the road labour force in 1917 was from French territory, as were many of the mine workers in 1921-2.

The labour shortage and the withdrawal of white artisans and blue collar workers for war service opened a range of jobs and promotion opportunities for Africans. They became engine drivers on the railways, fitters and mechanics in the mines, and were less closely supervised in a wide range of jobs.<sup>69</sup> An Asante book-keeper and cashier, describing the outbreak of war, wrote: '... so a European in charge of the factory was called on to Kumasi for H.M. active service. And ... the factory was reluctantly left in my charge, so I shall have to act for factor temporarily—first time in my life'.<sup>70</sup> The withdrawal of the Basel Mission placed a large part of the work in the hands of African pastors and school teachers, and in certain areas weakened the influence of orthodox Christianity.<sup>71</sup> The changes of employment during the war helped usher in the increased opportunities in government service for Africans after the war under Guggisberg's scheme, and it may also have helped Europeans to adjust to accepting this.<sup>72</sup>

Britain's traditional *laissez faire* commercial policies were undermined by the war while the resources of the Empire were increasingly mobilized

<sup>66</sup> A. I. Asiwaju, 'Migration as revolt: the example of the Ivory Coast and the Upper Volta before 1945', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xvii (1976). Movement was both ways across the frontier to avoid military recruitment. Duncan-Johnstone, District Commissioner at Lohra in the Northern Territories, described how in early 1918 the Lo Wiili chief of Korohora removed 'himself, his goods, and his cattle into French territory where he still remains', to avoid providing recruits. Local Franco-British co-operation in the Northern Territories to return deserters was described by one captive: 'The French and British are now like two fingers on the same hand', *Annual Report, Lohra, 1918*, copy in Duncan-Johnstone papers, Rhodes House Library, Oxford, MSS. Afr. S. 593/4.

<sup>67</sup> C.O. 96/579/23855, Minute by Ellis, early 1917.

<sup>68</sup> C.O. 96/578/12640, Prov. Comm. Sekondi to Acting Colonial Secretary, 9 Feb. 1917, encl. in Acting Governor Slater conf. to Long conf. A, 15 Feb. 1917.

<sup>69</sup> Kimble, *A Political History*, 105.

<sup>70</sup> 'A remarkable day', anonymous writer in Lady Clifford, editor, *Our days in the Gold Coast* (London, 1919), 76-7.

<sup>71</sup> H. W. Debrunner in *A Church between Colonial Powers. A History of the Church in Togo* (London, 1965), 146 ff., says that the departure of the Mission from southern Togoland 'brought a revival of open paganism'. There are probably close links between Christian revivalism and wartime economic and social changes, for example the decline of the timber export trade of Eastern Province in 1914 and the Harris movement, and influenza and the cocoa slump of 1919-20 and the rapid growth of Samson Oppong's church in central Asante.

<sup>72</sup> See Kimble, *A Political History*, 105-9.



for the imperial war effort. In the Gold Coast cocoa and oleaginous products became subject to imperial direction and control. On the outbreak of war the Colonial Office discussed an imperial preference scheme with prohibitive duties on all cocoa other than that from British colonies. In December 1914 the Sub-Committee on the Restriction of Enemies' Supply said there was no case for restrictions on cocoa exports despite a large entrepot trade from Britain to continental ports which might be of possible assistance to Germany. The Cabinet disagreed and in early 1915 cocoa exports from Britain to certain European ports were prohibited.<sup>73</sup> Despite this loss of market cocoa exports from the Gold Coast steadily increased until 1917 when the imperial government, faced with an acute shortage of shipping, restricted imports to 50 per cent, of the 1916–17 figure and fixed a maximum price in the United Kingdom. Cocoa could now only be exported from the Gold Coast under licence granted by the colonial government. Most licences went to the large produce buyers who were also the major importers. African farmers and traders, almost all excluded from the export trade, suspected that the 'Combine' firms were exploiting the colony. They protested to the Governor in 1918 and were granted the export licences forfeited from firms of enemy countries.<sup>74</sup> But with an acute shipping shortage only the joint pressure of the Colonial Office and the Ministry of Food on the Ministry of Shipping in mid-1918 secured freight for the licenced export of 25,000 tons. Licensing, a U.S. embargo on Gold Coast cocoa because of its inferior quality, plus a virtual French embargo as well, all combined to hit cocoa exports in 1917–18 and to cause many farmers to abandon cocoa and turn to other crops.

Over palm oil products the United Kingdom pursued a more directly interventionist policy.<sup>75</sup> Up to 1914 the bulk of palm kernels exported from British West Africa went to Germany. In an attempt to compete on better terms after the war with the German palm kernel crushing industry a committee of enquiry, supported by the Colonial Office, recommended in April 1916 that a preferential duty of two pounds per ton be imposed on all palm kernels exported to areas outside the British Empire. The duty was to run from the end of the war for a period of five years. Governor Clifford was a member of the committee but returned to the Gold Coast from leave before it reported. He sturdily opposed the suggested duty and argued against the Colonial Office instruction to introduce a draft bill in to the Legislative Council. He said that the elimination of competition would further restrict the falling market of an industry already in decline and that 'the native producer of the Gold Coast stands to lose much and

<sup>73</sup> For a brief account of the cocoa industry and trade during the war see Polly Hill, *The Gold Coast Cocoa Farmer*, 108–13.

<sup>74</sup> Kimble, *A Political History*, 48–9.

<sup>75</sup> See W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth affairs II. Problems of economic policy 1918–39*, part 1 (Oxford, 1942) 113 ff.

to gain nothing at all by the artificial restriction of his market'.<sup>76</sup> In the following year Clifford again firmly stated his belief in free trade principles for the Gold Coast when he replied to the interim report of Lord Balfour's Committee on Commercial and Industrial Policy after the War which proposed 'to conserve for the Allied countries, before all others, the natural resources of the Empire'. He said that economic policies should be 'in the interests of the native population of the Gold Coast, that monopolies of all kinds should be resisted, free markets preserved, and that native loyalty during the war should not be abused'.<sup>77</sup> Powerful interests in Britain urged control over West Africa's products. The Ministries of Munitions and Food wanted the lowest possible price for glycerine and foodstuffs; especially the latter faced with the submarine campaign of 1917 and planning for post-war reconstruction. Within the Gold Coast there was strong opposition to the proposed palm kernel legislation both within and without the Legislative Council. African opinion linked the proposal to the machinations of the Empire Resources Development Committee, an unofficial although influential body, which West African observers endowed with more weight than it actually had.<sup>78</sup> The *Gold Coast Independent* summed up the fears of the African élite about the ERDC and schemes of imperial preference when it said 'We are suspicious that these matters relate to our goods, not to our good'.<sup>79</sup> When the palm kernel bill was brought before the Legislative Council in October 1918 it was unanimously rejected by the unofficial members, the first time such

<sup>76</sup> C.O. 96/572/58090, Clifford desp. no. 823 to A. Bonar Law, 8 Nov. 1916.

<sup>77</sup> C.O. 96/581/45894, Clifford conf. to Long, 15 Aug. 1917. Clifford further argued that 'from the point of view of a Tropical Colony, which has no manufactures, but which is a large producer of raw material, . . . every effort should be made to recover those lost markets [i.e. Germany] and that no steps should be taken the effect of which will be to limit or restrict any doors that were open to our produce before the outbreak of war': see the Gold Coast correspondence on the *Committee on Commercial and Industrial Policy*, printed in C.O. 885/25, misc. no. 330, Appendix.

<sup>78</sup> The Empire Resources Development Committee, like the 'Million Black Army movement', was part of the wartime mythology of endless African resources. Founded in Oct. 1916 (the inaugural meeting was chaired by Milner), the ERDC advocated developing the imperial estates 'for State purposes, under State auspices', or, as a hostile Colonial Office put it exploiting 'the colonies for the benefit of His Majesty's Government'. At one time over 200 members of parliament belonged to the British Empire Development Parliamentary Committee which was chaired by Arthur Bigland, the wartime Controller of Oils and Fats. The War Cabinet examined the ERDC proposals in Jan. 1919, and Amery, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, told the House of Commons in Feb. 1920 that 'sympathetic consideration' would be given to the proposal for a select committee to consider ERDC ideas. The ERDC enjoyed support while the colonial export market boomed; interest waned with a depressed market and by Nov. 1920 the Colonial Office referred to the lobby as a 'very dead horse'. Nevertheless the ERDC appears to have had a great influence in mobilizing West African political thinking; there are constant references to it in the Gold Coast press between 1917 and 1920. See further Hancock, *Survey*, 106-10; Alfred Bigland, *The Call of Empire* (London, 1926); and two articles by W. F. Hutchinson, a Gold Coast journalist working in London, 'Empire development or Empire plunder', *The African Times and Orient Review*, June and July 1917.

<sup>79</sup> *Gold Coast Independent*, 10 Aug. 1918. See C.O. 554/33/1865, Clifford conf. to Long, 12 Dec. 1917, for the impact of ERDC propaganda in the Gold Coast.

a thing had happened.<sup>80</sup> Milner, the Secretary of State, insisted that the bill be passed, and while acknowledging the support of the Gold Coast during the war, he said that the United Kingdom contribution had been far greater and 'it would, therefore, only be just . . . to ask the people of the Gold Coast to furnish some small relief to the burdened consumers of the United Kingdom'.<sup>81</sup> Enforced in late 1919 the duty was withdrawn in 1922, not because of African opposition or liberal protests in Britain, but for economic reasons.<sup>82</sup>

During the war a vigorous geological survey in the Gold Coast opened up exploitable sources of manganese and bauxite. Manganese, a vital material for hardened steel, was first shipped out in September 1916. Bauxite was not worked until after the war but at the suggestion of the Secretary of State a bill proposing to secure a government lease of ninety-nine years on the bauxite mining area at Mount Ejuanema in Kwahu was debated in late 1917. In defending the proposal Clifford argued that the mineral 'will be worked for imperial purposes' but the profits would accrue to the Gold Coast treasury. African spokesmen in the Council strongly opposed the bill which was dropped.<sup>83</sup>

The peace treaty of 1919 enlarged the administrative frontiers of the Gold Coast by 13,000 square miles. When the Northern Territories Constabulary had occupied Yendi in northern Togoland in August 1914, Armitage drafted a 'treaty' providing protection for the Dagomba from the French and unifying the country with the Gold Coast.<sup>84</sup> Although this 'treaty' lacked international validity it nevertheless helped secure for the United Kingdom a stronger claim to the Dagomba lands at the peace talks. In 1914 Clifford, asked by the Colonial Office for his views on the future of Togoland, argued that it should not be returned to Germany but that if it was then the frontiers should be redrawn along ethnic lines to unify the Ewe and Dagomba within the Gold Coast.<sup>85</sup> This was substantially done by the Simon–Milner Agreement, 1919, when France retained 60 per cent of Togoland. However the new frontier split the Ewe, a source of considerable discontent then, and since.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>80</sup> This was an alliance of conservative Africans and European mercantile interests who feared a loss to confer advantage on British manufacturers and consumers.

<sup>81</sup> C.O. 554/37/4068, Clifford desp. no. 641 to Milner, 29 May 1919.

<sup>82</sup> See further the *Report of a Committee on Trade and Taxation*, 1922.

<sup>83</sup> The *Gold Coast Leader*, 5 Jan. 1918, described the bill as 'the thin end of the wedge of the Empire Resources Development Committee propaganda'. See also Cox-George, 'Studies in finance', 175. When diamonds were discovered in Akim Abuakwa in 1919 the Secretary of State suggested that the colonial government take over the diamondiferous lands. The Acting Governor and the unofficial members of the Legislative Council were opposed to government control: see P. Greenhalgh, 'An economic history of the Ghana diamond industry 1919–1973' (unpub. Ph.D., Birmingham University, 1974), 96, 184–5.

<sup>84</sup> C.O. 96/548/39120, Clifford conf. to Harcourt, 24 Sept. 1914, encl. from Armitage CCNT, and C.O. 96/544/42087, 29 Sept. 1914.

<sup>85</sup> C.O. 96/549/46959, Clifford memo to Harcourt, 30 Oct. 1914. See also W. Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's lost colonies 1914–1919* (Oxford, 1963).

<sup>86</sup> There were frequent demands by the African élite in the Gold Coast that the whole of Togoland should be brought under British control. The National Congress of British

The social and economic changes brought by the war, and the post-war boom of 1919–20 followed by a sudden slump, inevitably had a political impact on the Gold Coast.<sup>87</sup> Wilsonian ideas of self-determination and liberal democracy, an enhanced race consciousness, pan-African idealism, and a belief in post-war reconstruction all encouraged the educated élite to believe that they might be consulted over the peace settlement, gain greater equality of civil opportunity, and a representative voice in the government.<sup>88</sup> Such aspirations were commonly aired in the Gold Coast press during the war and immediately after,<sup>89</sup> and were closely interwoven with the economic discontent of the élite at the departure from *laissez faire* policies and a fear of the predatory imperialism of the ERDC. The new Gold Coast nationalism of 1918, which led to the West African Conference of 1920, was more radical than that of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society within which it had grown; its origins lay partly in personal rivalries and jealousies in the Society that had been nurtured by the war.<sup>90</sup> When the Conference eventually met in Accra in March 1920 its resolutions expressed the political and economic grievances of the élite. Basic to all the resolutions was the demand for greater African participation in the colonial administration and greater influence over the economy. The National Congress of British West Africa, formed at the end of the Conference, argued that elected representation in the colonial legislatures would give to the élite not only their rightful place but also a measure of control over the economy of West Africa so that its produce could be used for local benefit rather than that of European governments, merchants and consumers.<sup>91</sup> Thus the economic resolutions looked to protect West Africa from the ERDC, schemes of imperial preference, and the enhanced position of the shipping ring and London based banking—in short, all imperial interests which had been strengthened by the war. In their appeals to the Secretary of State, and as a delegation to London, the representatives of the NCBWA were brushed aside. Their arguments citing the changed economic and political circumstances brought about

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West Africa took up the case for Ewe unification; one Ewe chief asked that the claim for union with the Gold Coast might be 'considered side by side with those of Alsace-Lorraine at the time of the German occupation in 1871'.

<sup>87</sup> The importation of motor vehicles into the Gold Coast, on the eve of the revolution in transportation, perhaps gives an indication of the boom and slump in the economy in 1919–21: 1919 = 532, 1920 = 2,040, 1921 = 294.

<sup>88</sup> J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and nationalism in West Africa 1900–1945* (Oxford, 1973), discusses the formation of the National Congress of British West Africa. See also Kimble, *A Political History*, chs. 2, 10 and 13.

<sup>89</sup> The *Gold Coast Independent* in its first issue, June 1918, said: 'But the war has proved our loyalty, our equal sacrifice in lives and money; in fact it has opened our eyes that both white and black have a common destiny and a common goal to be reached by all.' See further the press comments quoted by Langley, *Pan-Africanism*, 107, 165–6; and Kimble, *A Political History*, 105.

<sup>90</sup> See especially Langley, *Pan-Africanism*, 164–77.

<sup>91</sup> Langley, *ibid.*, 199, says that 'fundamentally their very constitutionalism was a defence of their own interests'.

by the war were disregarded.<sup>92</sup> The nationalism of the Congress was also an attack upon the authority of the chiefs whose position and power was being increasingly challenged by the dual effects of wartime inflation and the emergence of wealthier 'young men'. Writing in 1916 Clifford talked of the 'industrial and economic revolution' in the Gold Coast and Asante which 'has contributed to strengthen the idea of personal, as opposed to family or communal, property, and is . . . almost insensibly working very radical social changes' where 'young men are beginning to acquire the influence which is wont to accompany affluence'.<sup>93</sup> In 1921 the Acting Commissioner for the Western Province saw traditional authority under threat by a 'spirit of unrest' and 'a cloud . . . and across it written the word "revolution" [which] may ultimately spread and engulf all the ancient institutions of the country . . .'.<sup>94</sup>

The labour shortages in wartime and during the post-war boom encouraged among the wage labour force a new awareness of their bargaining power. In mid-1917 underground workers at the Obuasi gold mines struck for two days over working conditions, fines, and delays in pay. The mine manager reported that 'a new and very bad feature made its appearance during the strike. The boys organized themselves and picketed the mine—forcibly preventing willing workers from going to work. Many scimmages occurred and some blood was shed . . . Although all work is going on normally at the moment of writing there are many indications that the natives are working themselves up to try for a rise in wages'.<sup>95</sup> A further strike at Obuasi occurred in August–September 1917 and there was unrest in September and October of 1920 over food, wages, and paper money.<sup>96</sup> Artisans in Accra formed a union in 1920 and gained both better hours and pay by threatening to go on strike. Government clerks also aired their discontent, but a strike by government employed artisans in 1921, when the boom was over, failed.<sup>97</sup>

Another source of possible trouble which concerned the authorities was from demobilized soldiers. Generally there was little trouble although

<sup>92</sup> The West Africa Conference argued that as India was represented at the peace negotiations then West Africa was similarly entitled to a voice over the 'disposal of the German colonies which West African blood and treasure have aided in recovering for civilization': Resolution of the Gold Coast section of the West African Conference, 24 Feb. 1919, encl. in Clifford desp. no. 189 to Long, 7 Mar. 1919, C.O. 96/598/18863. Demands for West African representation at the Imperial War Conference appeared in the Gold Coast press in the first half of 1917: see Kimble, *A Political History*, 376–7. J. G. Casely Hayford addressing the League of Nations Union in London in Oct. 1920 said: 'In the great war, we all united for the common cause in common sacrifice for common hopes, and, surely if this concession [representative government] is made to Ceylon, why not to British West Africa?': reprinted in M. J. Sampson, *West African Leadership* (Ilfracombe, 1949), 47.

<sup>93</sup> C.O. 96/567/29277, Clifford conf. to A. Bonar Law, 26 May 1916.

<sup>94</sup> C.O. 98/36, *Western Province Report*, 1921.

<sup>95</sup> Ash. Gold. Corp., 14, 171/45, pp. 187–8, Watkins to Mann, 20 June 1917.

<sup>96</sup> Ash. Gold. Corp., 14, 171/46, p. 71 and p. 96, Samson to Mann, 19 Sept. 1919 and 17 Oct. 1919.

<sup>97</sup> Kimble, *A Political History*, 44–5.

some chiefs in the Northern Territories had their position challenged by newly returned 'wealthy' ex-servicemen. Ex-servicemen did form an association which was involved in some political activity over the Italo-Ethiopian war in the 1930s,<sup>98</sup> but the fears of officials and some missionaries that military skills learnt by Africans during the war might be turned against the colonial authorities were ill-founded.<sup>99</sup> So also were the hopes of radical pan-Africanists and Marxists that discontent among black troops and ex-servicemen might be exploited in the cause of the anti-colonial struggle.<sup>100</sup>

## SUMMARY

Although on the periphery of the war Gold Coast resources and manpower were mobilized for the imperial war effort. The educated élite and many traditional rulers were loyal and internal conditions, despite the withdrawal of personnel and troops, generally peaceful. Small-scale disturbances occasioned by the war occurred, the most serious in the Northern Territories. The direction and pattern of Gold Coast external trade changed; exports, with the exception of cocoa, contracted and the price of imports rose. Serious shipping shortages exacerbated difficulties. British 'Combine' firms increased their hold over Gold Coast commerce. A fall in government revenue held up public works, and railway construction was paid for by an export duty on cocoa. The war brought marked changes to the government fiscal system. Gold Coast troops were used in the West and East African campaigns and prepared for employment in the Middle East. Varying degrees of compulsion were used to recruit carriers and soldiers and resistance to this was widespread. Labour shortages and the withdrawal of whites provided new job opportunities for Africans. Cocoa and palm kernels were subject to imperial direction and control; Governor Clifford opposed the imperial preference scheme for palm kernels. Imperial wartime economic measures fuelled the nationalism of the NCBWA; the Gold Coast élite demanded political representation as a reward for wartime loyalty, while their economic resolutions attempted to displace European commercial interests strengthened during the war. Economic changes further weakened the position of traditional rulers; labour shortages provided wage labour with temporarily enhanced bargaining power. Post-war trouble from ex-servicemen was slight.

<sup>98</sup> S. K. B. Asante, 'The Italo-Ethiopian conflict: a case study in British West African response to crisis diplomacy in the 1930s', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xv, (1974), 296.

<sup>99</sup> The war did demythologize the white man in the eyes of many Africans. In the immediate post-war years very many observers commented on the effect that this might have: for example, Sir Harry Johnston 'The Africa of the immediate future', *J. Royal Africa Soc.*, xviii, 71 (Apr. 1919), 161-82; and his *The Black Man's Part in the War* (London, 1917); Elie Allégret 'The missionary question in the French colonies', *International Review of Missions*, Apr. 1923, p. 163.

<sup>100</sup> See E. T. Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa before World War II* (New York, 1974); and also Langley, *Pan-Africanism*.