W.E.B. Du Bois and Pan-Africanism

W. E. B. Du Bois and Pan-Africanism:
His Place in Its Early Development

by

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At the background of every Negro, however wise, or well educated, or brave, or good, is contemporary Africa which has no collective achievement . . . like other nationalities.

Edgar Gardner Murphy, 1909.

The problems of the American Negro must be thought of and settled only with continual reference to the problems of the West Indian Negroes, the problems of the French Negroes and the English Negroes, and above all, of the African Negroes.

W. E. B. Du Bois.

$A \ C \ K \ N \ O \ W \ L \ E \ D \big| \ G \ E \ M \ E \ N \ T \ S$

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INTRODUCTION

Nationalist movements are generally preceded or accompanied by ideas that provide a framework within which leaders mobilize support and mould new images for once dominated people. The need for such movements in the African context has been particularly strong. African political movements have developed from ideological movements which gave a distinctive tone to the clamour for independence. This strong need for ideological justification derives from the fact that the period of colonial rule was not only a political and economic affair but, more importantly, it imposed a new social order emphasizing racial and cultural differences. In the case of Africa, racial and cultural differences were a euphemism for racial and cultural inferiority.

The most persuasive and enduring of African ideologies has been that of Pan-Africanism. Out of the "sponginess" of this concept came associated concepts and ideas that have become the mainstay of African intellectual independence and development: African nationalism, the African personality, Negritude, African Socialism. All, in common usage, have become a sort of descriptive shorthand for a kaleidoscope of separate and distinct phenomena that have characterized the African continent for the past half-century. Despite the widespread use of the concept of Pan-Africanism, there is not much agreement on the part of Africans or their leaders on just what the concept implies; understanding on their part has become a matter of experience.

The scope of this study is to examine the role played by W.E.B. Du Bois in the development of the Pan-African idea. Du Bois' direct influence was felt most prior to 1945 and to a great extent it was his leadership that provided the loose organizational structure that persisted through a series of Congresses. More importantly, however, it was Du Bois who provided the ideas that gave to Pan-Africanism a distinct ideology that to a large degree has persisted to the present.

The lifetime of W.E.B. Du Bois, the most prolific of all Negro writers and intellectuals, spans the decades from Negro emancipation down to 1963. Born in 1868, he had his first book published in 1896, and until his death there issued from his pen a flow of words that Isaacs sums up as "passionate and biting and strong and angry words, poetic and mystical, great, florid and sweeping words, stately and ornate words, vague, cloudy and often mutually contradictory words, and remarkably often, some deeply penetrating and piercing prophetic words." His books included sociological studies, essays and sketches, biography and autobiography, history, novels and poetry. It was through such works that Du Bois' claim to influence upon Negroes was based. His works reflected his own life long fight for dignity and respect and the securing for all Negroes civil rights and equality of opportunity. Much of his writing emphasized the relationship of the Negro to Africa and this was central to his Pan-African ideas.

^{1.} Harold R. Isaacs, "Du Bois and Africa", Race, II, (November, 1960), p. 3.

The study is divided into three chapters. The first deals with those aspects of Du Bois' life that provided the impetus for him in seeking solutions to America's racial problems on a world-wide basis with particular emphasis on Africa. This chapter also discusses the attachment that Du Bois felt for things African and his strong sense of racial kinship with the African people. The second chapter discusses those ideas of Du Bois that became the nucleus of the Pan-African ideology. The third chapter examines the series of Pan-African Congresses that Du Bois was instrumental in summoning.

In examining the role of Du Bois in the development of the Pan-African idea a number of propositions are advanced which, it is hoped, will be supported by the evidence contained in the three substantive chapters. These propositions are merely advanced at this stage and will be given detailed examination in the concluding chapter. First, the study will attempt to show that the Pan-African idea for Du Bois was an attempt to resolve American racial problems in world-wide and particularly African terms. It served also as a means of escape for Du Bois from the realities of the American situation. Second, Pan-Africanism prior to 1945 was not so much political in its impact as it was cultural. Here I hope to show that movements, such as early Pan-Africanism, consisting of a few intellectuals meeting periodically, have little hope of solving intense political and social problems. Their impact, if any, is that an idiom is created in which politically more active organizations and leaders operate -- Du Bois' idiom being a particular view of the relationship between the coloured peoples of the world and their collective relationship to colonial powers. He

attempted to destroy the old assumptions on which racial superiority was based and substitute instead new assumptions proving the equality of races. Third, prior to 1945, Pan-Africanism, organizationally, was not a movement, nor was it African; it was Du Bois. Fourth, the type and style of Du Bois! leadership severely curtailed any effectiveness Pan-Africanism might have had during this period.

In concluding this brief introduction it is pointed out that the major sources of information are Du Bois' own writings, chiefly his autobiographies. Secondary sources are used whenever they prove useful. The method of study is an analysis of Du Bois' own material.

CHAPTER I : THE MAN

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born in Great Barrington, a small town in western Massachusetts, three years after the end of the American Civil War. His father, Alfred Du Bois, who according to his son was "a dreamer -- romantic, indolent, kind, unreliable", left his family to roam and eventually drifted away permanently. It was left to Mary Du Bois, William's mother, to see that the needs of the family were fulfilled; Rudwick comments that it was often a 'struggle' for her to make ends meet. Du Bois described his mother as "dark, shining bronze, with a tiny ripple in her black hair, black-eyed, with a heavy, kind face who . . . gave one the impression of infinite patience, but a curious determination was concealed in her softness." Later investigations of his ancestors by Du Bois showed that his paternal family were descendants of French Huguenots and Dutch settlers. Du Bois, in a characteristic fashion, stated that he was born with "a flood of Negro blood, a strain of French, a bit of Dutch, but, thank God! no "Anglo-Saxon!".

As a child in Great Barrington Du Bois was not overtly aware of the

^{1.} W.E.B. Du Bois, <u>Darkwater</u> (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), p. 7.

^{2. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 6.

^{3.} In this thesis 'Negro' refers to the descendants of African slaves living in Europe, the West Indies, and North America. 'African' refers to the indigenous people of Africa.

^{4.} Ibid., p. 9.

colour line. There were perhaps fifty Negroes in a population of five thousand and while the "colour line was manifest" it was not yet "absolutely drawn". He was invited to the homes of white children, mainly the children of well-to-do 'Yankees', and, like them, learned to distrust the town's labouring population, Irish and German immigrants. It was a carefree life, untroubled by any sting of racial discrimination.

The happy and carefree childhood came to an end with the realization that there were ineradicable differences between him and his white friends.

Not surprisingly, the realization was caused by a girl:

Something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting cards . . . and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card - refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddeness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhaps, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil.

Once the 'veil' was in place, there was no desire to tear it down or "to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows." In another description of his realization of the veil, Du Bois wrote: "Then I flamed! I lifted my chin and strode off to the mountains, where I viewed the world at my feet and strained my eyes across the shadows of the hills." In his subsequent lifetime,

^{5.} W.E.B. Du Bois, Dusk at Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940), p. 10.

^{6.} W.E.B. Du Bois, Souls of Black Folk (Chicago: McClurg, 1903, Crest Reprint, 1961), p. 16.

^{7.} Ibid.

^{8.} Du Bois, Darkwater, p. 12.

his straining eyes encompassed slighted Negroes everywhere in the United States, and eventually coloured people everywhere. As Isaacs commented: "He stretched his view to all the great continental arenas, America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and even, on some of his steeper rhetorical flights, right up into the unwalled and gateless spaces of Heaven itself."

while Du Bois himself was the only authority for this childhood episode, and may have embellished it and his reaction considerably, it is not unlikely that some such event had deep implications for his subsequent life. Erik Erikson, 10 in a still experimental theory, has suggested that the life of men such as Du Bois may be interpreted as the striving to find an identity that has been denied by environmental factors. The beginning point of such a struggle is the feeling that a personal problem of identity can only be solved on a large scale and in a grand context. In Du Bois' childhood the realization of his apartness through the action of his playmates provided the impetus for him to seek the public arena in settling these slights. While such slights may not appear monumental, their impact upon a fatherless child is significant. There was his realization that he was no longer a member of a childhood group and that his exclusion meant a loss of security. It became apparent that being white carried with it prerogatives of wealth and an accepted place in society. His life became

^{9.} Harold R. Isaacs, The New World of Negro Americans (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 202.

^{10.} See Erik H. Erikson, Young Man Luther (New York: Norton, 1958), and Lucian W. Pye, "Personality Identity and Political Ideology", Political Decision Makers, Dwaine Marvick, ed. (Glenco, Illinois: Free Press, 1960).

an attempt to win these prizes for Negroes everywhere; to see that opportunities were open to them and that they were allowed to participate equally in the life of their community. "My problem then was how, into the inevitable and logical democracy which was spreading over the world, could black folk in America and particularly in the South, be openly and effectively admitted; and the coloured people of the world be allowed their own self-government." His own search for identity was bound up with the search for an identity and acceptance for Negroes everywhere.

He surpassed his classmates in examinations, graduated from High School, but because of his mother's death postponed attending university for a year. At first he wanted to attend Harvard University but was told that the place for him was in the South. A scholarship was arranged for him by relatives at Fisk University. "After a twinge he felt a strange delight" at entering the "land of the slaves:"

I was thrilled to be for the first time among so many people of my own colour or rather of such various and such extraordinary colours, which I had only glimpsed before, but who it seemed were bound to me by new and exciting and eternal ties. Never before had I seen young men so self-assured and who gave themselves such airs, and coloured men at that; and above all for the first time I saw beautiful girls. At my home among my white school mates there were a few pretty girls; but either they were not entrancing or because I had known them all my life I did not notice them; but at Fisk at the first dinner I saw opposite me a girl of whom I have often said, no human being could possibly have been as beautiful as she seemed to my young eyes that far-off September night of 1885.

^{11.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 29.

^{12.} Du Bois, Darkwater, p. 13.

^{13.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 24.

At Fisk Du Bois was thrown "boldly into the Negro problem." It was a region where "the world was split into white and black halves, and where the darker half was held back by race prejudice and legal bonds, as well as by deep ignorance and dire poverty." During summer vacations he became a teacher in a Tennessee country school and met at close range the poverty, poor land, ignorance, and prejudice with which southern Negroes had to contend. Violence that he had never realized possible in New England was common. These experiences made Du Bois embrace his race with greater enthusiasm than ever. A new loyalty and allegiance replaced his Americaness: "henceforward I was a Negro." He was proud to be a Negro, and this pride began in demanding for all Negroes the rights and privileges to which they were entitled. His understanding of the race problem became clearer and sharper at Fisk, and he resolved to fight the 'colour bar' in a forthright but peaceful way. The solution he thought would be found by Negro intellectuals and other leaders who saw it their duty to lead the race beyond its veil.

Had it not been that the race problem was thrust upon him at an early age, Du Bois commented that he probably would have been an unquestioning worshipper at the shrine of the social order and economic development into which he was born. But the prejudice directed at him by a white world that decreed for him an inferior status was completely unacceptable. At first he saw only

^{14.} W.E.B. Du Bois, "My Evolving Programme for Negro Freedom", in What the Negro Wants, ed. Rayford W. Logan (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 1944), p. 36.

^{15.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 28.

the Negro in relation to a white world but soon he was questioning the goals of the white world itself.

What the white world was doing, its goals and ideals, I had not doubted were quite right. What was wrong was that I and people like me and thousands of others who might have my ability and aspiration, were refused permission to be a part of this world. It was as though moving on a rushing express, my main thought was as to the relation I had to other passengers on the express, and not to its rate of speed and its destination.

The problem for him was determining how all coloured people could participate in the growing democratic climate he saw progressing throughout the world. This problem Du Bois thought could best be attacked and solved by a 'scientific conquest' of race prejudice.

In 1888 he graduated from Fisk, and when chosen as a commencement speaker, took as his subject 'Bismarck'. He spoke of the need for trained leadership under whose guidance Negroes would march forward. He later wrote

this choice in itself showed the abyss between my education and the truth in the world. Bismarck was my hero. He had made a nation out of a mass of bickering people. He had dominated the whole development with his strength until he crowned an emperor at Versailles. This foreshadowed in my mind the kind of thing that American Negroes must do, marching forth with strength and determination under trained leadership.

Nothing further was said of Bismarck in his writings although perhaps Bismarck remained an ideal leadership type for Du Bois.

After Fisk he entered Harvard, his original choice, as a junior and began a course of study that culminated in a doctorate in 1895. Life at Harvard was more relaxed for him than at Fisk. He made no attempts to crash

^{16.} Ibid., pp. 27 - 28.

^{17. &}lt;u>Tbid.</u>, p. 32.

the colour line and kept very much to himself. He asked nothing of Harvard but the "tutelage of its teachers, and the freedom of the library." He related that he

. . . was happy at Harvard, but for unusual reasons. One of these . . . was my acceptance of racial segregation. Had I gone from Great Barrington High School directly to Harvard I would have sought companionship with my white fellows and been disappointed and embittered by a discovery of social limitations to which I had not been used. But I came by way of Fisk and the South and there I had accepted and embraced eagerly the companionship of those of my own colour.

Contact with Harvard professors of the stature of James in psychology, Santayana in philosophy, and Hart in history contributed to his 'intellectual stimulation'. James with his pragmatism and Hart with his research methods turned Du Bois away from his first academic choice of philosophy to a course of study as close to sociology as was then possible. In his academic work, race was often discussed and "he heard lectures on biological-racial evolution; he was instructed that there were obvious differences among the major groups of mankind, and it was self-evident the lowest status belonged to the Negroes." Parenthetically, Du Bois wrote in his autobiography that he was the favorite pupil of James. There is no supporting evidence for such a claim. It illustrates the danger in using Du Bois' account of events without other confirmation.

From 1892-1894 he travelled in Europe and studied at the University of Berlin under such teachers as Schmoller in economic sociology, Wagner in social history, Weber and von Treitschke in sociology. He inquired into European social

^{18.} Ibid., p. 35.

^{19.} Ibid., p. 34.

^{20.} Elliott M. Rudwick, W.E.B. Du Bois: A Study in Minority Group Leadership (University City: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), p. 23.

problems and for the first time emerged from the extremes of racial provincialism imposed by his experiences in the United States. He now saw that the race problems in the United States were duplicated in Africa and Asia. He was startled upon realizing how much he "had regarded as white American, was white European and not American at all." After his return to 'nigger-hating America' in 1894 he published his doctoral dissertation and the effect of study in Germany became apparent. Before going to Germany a preliminary summary of his work dealt with the legal aspects of the African slave trade. Now he acknowledged the economic aspects of the slave trade and wrote that its final abolition was "largely the result of the economic collapse of the large-farming slave system."

vania and Atlanta Universities. At Wilberforce he planned his scientific method of attack on the Negro problem. He was certain that once the ignorance upon which race prejudice was based was illuminated by scientific investigation, it would disappear. Such ignorance could only be exposed by scientific proof, showing that neither colour nor race determined the limits of a man's capacity or reward. In retrospect, he wrote, however, that he

. . . was not at the time sufficiently Freudian to understand how little human action is based on reason; nor did I know Karl Marx well enough to appreciate the economic foundations of human society. 22

Despite these limitations his early investigations of the race problems in the United States taught him that society was not made up of fixed or static structures. It was dynamic and ever changing.

The publication of The Philadelphia Negro in 1899 started his systematic investigation of racial problems and his thirteen years at Atlanta University

^{21.} Du Bois, "My Evolving Programme for Negro Freedom", p. 41.

²¹a. W.E.B. Du Bois, The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638 - 1870 (New York: Longmans, Green, 1896).

²¹b. Ibid., p. 197

^{22.} Du Bois, quoted Rudwick, op cit., p. 27.

saw the beginning of a programme designed to stretch over a period of a hundred years. Du Bois envisaged

. . . a recurring cycle of ten studies in succeeding decades; with repetition of each subject or some modification of it in each decade, upon a progressively broader and more exact basis and with better methods, until gradually a foundation of carefully ascertained fact would build a basis of knowledge, broad and sound enough to be called scientific in the best sense of the term.

But Du Bois, after the initial series of studies, lost enthusiasm for the programme, and with it his whole attitude toward the solving of racial problems changed. At Atlanta he found himself, lost most of his mannerisms and

... grew more broadly human, made my closest and most holy friendships, and studied human beings. I became widely acquainted with the real conditions of my people. I realized the terrific odds which faced them. At Wilberforce I was their captious critic. In Philadelphia I was their cold and scientific investigator, with microscope and probe. It was but a few years of Atlanta to bring me to hot indignant defense. I saw the race-hatred of the whites as I had never dreamed of it before - naked and unashamed.

Du Bois, the detached scientific investigator, found that scientific investigation presented him with problems that science itself could not solve.

I began to know the problems of the Negroes in the United States as a present startling reality; and moreover (this was most upsetting) I faced situations that called - shrieked - for action, even before any detailed scientific study could possibly be prepared. I saw before me problems that could not and would not await the last word of science,

^{23.} Du Bois, "My Evolving Programme for Negro Freedom", p. 49.

^{24.} Du Bois, Darkwater, pp. 20 - 21.

but demanded immediate action to prevent social death.

Impelled by the urgency of the situation Du Bois, in 1910, resigned his teaching position at Atlanta and in effect became 'minister of propaganda' in the post of Director of Publications and Research for the newly formed National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (N.A.A.C.P.).

This post included also the editorship of the Association's journal, The Crisis, a post he retained for twenty-two years. Through the journal he addressed the Negroes of the United States and Africa and continuously urged them to be proud, not ashamed, of being Negro. He objected to the way in which historians had distorted the image of Negroes, pointing out that the Negro was an average and ordinary human being faced with the pressures created by the masters of his environment, against which he was struggling, almost in vain. He realized that a people must believe in themselves, for, as he put it, no people who did not had "written its name in history". 26

While Du Bois objected to the way historians had distorted the image of Negroes, he himself, when writing history, was not above distorting facts in order to present the Negro or the African in as favourable a light as possible. While he often proclaimed that the solution of racial problems was only possible in the "light of the best scientific research" his own historiography was best

^{25.} Du Bois, "My Evolving Programme for Negro Freedom", p. 57.

^{26.} W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races", American Negro Academy, Occasional Papers, No. 2.

^{27.} Du Bois, quoted Francis L. Broderick, W.E.B. Du Bois, Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis (Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 40.

summed up in his introduction to his book Black Folk: Then and Now. There Du Bois stated:

I do not for a moment doubt that my Negro descent and narrow group culture have in many cases predisposed me to interpret my facts too favourably for my race; but there is little danger of long misleading here, for the champions of white folk are legion. The Negro has long been the clown of history; the football of anthropology; and the slave of industry. I am trying to show here why these attitudes can no longer be maintained. I realize that the truth of history lies not in the mouths of partisans but rather in the calm Science that sits between. Her cause I seek to serve, and wherever I fail, I am at least paying Truth the respect of earnest effort. 28

For the rest of his life Du Bois was a 'minister of propaganda' for the Negroes of the United States and Africa, and, indeed, for coloured people everywhere. He hammered away at the conscience of a white world that stood in the way of progress for coloured people. He became the eloquent spokes—man of the

. . . fight for civil rights and equality of opportunity for Negroes, lashing, arguing, cajoling, pontificating, fighting white injustices with slashing journalism, savage wit, and fierce polemics, and fighting back weaknesses with every weapon he could grasp. He fostered pride in Negro history, Negro achievements, Negro good looks. He coaxed out artistic talent, ran issues devoted to college graduates, budding writers and artists, and beautiful babies.

This biographical sketch of Du Bois! early life points out many aspects of his personality that were the determining factors in his attack on the social order that relegated the Negro to his inferior status. Being a member of a racial

^{28.} W.E.B. Du Bois, Black Folk: Then and Now (New York: Holt, 1939), p. ix.

^{29.} Isaacs, op. cit., p. 198.

minority group, Du Bois! most important experiences were concerned with race. The reported snub which he received from a white girl pointed up dramatically his apartness, and perhaps caused him to have some feelings of inferiority. Her refusal of his card was perhaps the starting point of his life-long determination to have as little as possible to do with whites. When interaction was necessary he adhered to the rigid patterns of formality.

I presume I was saved evidences of a good deal of actual discrimination by my own keen sensitiveness. My companions did not have a chance to refuse me invitations; they must seek me out and urge me to come as indeed they often did. When my presence was not wanted they had only to refrain from asking.

He adequately compensated for his feeling of inferiority, however, and to such a degree that the compensation was more lasting than its origin. Du Bois counteracted with a definite feeling of superiority.

As time flew I felt not so much disowned and rejected as rather drawn up into higher spaces and made part of a mightier mission. At times I almost pitied my pale companions, who were not of the Lord's annointed and who saw in their dreams no splendid quests of the golden fleeces.

Not only was the feeling of superiority a compensation for his feelings of inferiority, but it also represented a realization of his own capacities.

Very gradually - I cannot now distinguish the steps, though here and there I remember a jump or a jolt - but very gradually I found myself assuming quite placidly that I was different from other children.

^{30.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 14.

^{31.} Du Bois, Darkwater, p. 12.

At first I think I connected the difference with a manifest ability to get my lessons rather better than most . . . then, slowly, I realized that some folk . . . actually considered my brown skin a misfortune; once or twice I became painfully aware that some human beings even thought it was a crime . . . if they beat me at anything, I was grimly determined to make them sweat for it.

Du Bois' deliberate avoidance of the white world was in itself compensation for the insults and conflicts that he was led to expect. He wrote that quite early in his life he assumed that most Americans did not want his personal acquaintance or contact except in a purely business—like manner; and that any personal approach on his part would meet with deliberate insults, or at the least, be found embarrassing by most whites. While he admitted that he was often wrong in these assumptions, he was right often enough to

. . . prove to myself my rule was wise and a great help to my own peace and quiet. Consequently, on the street, in travel, in public assembly and the like, where I came in contact with white people, I spoke to them only when necessary, and then briefly. For the most part I did not speak at all, unless they addressed me. This whole assumption and attitude may be explained as arising from an inferiority complex; but it seems to me that in my case it was born mainly of humiliating experience.

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More significantly, Du Bois not only removed himself from contact with whites but to an excessive degree he also removed himself from close contact with the mass of the Negro people. His only close contact came during his early teaching career when he spent two summers in a Tennessee country school.

^{32. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 11 - 12.

^{33.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 259.

Du Bois considered himself an intellectual and a scholar and was only comfortable in relationships with those he considered his equals. He told his <u>Crisis</u> readers that his personal column was written for sophisticated persons, not for 'fools and illiterates.' The <u>Atlanta Independent</u>, a Negro newspaper, concluded that

... the Professor [Du Bois] knows less men and women of his race than any prominent person in America, by reason of his aloofness and exclusiveness. He elects to know no one and to serve his people at forty feet range.

Du Bois did not see the need for personal contact with the mass of Negro people. He thought that the salvation of the Negro race would only occur through the creation of a 'talented tenth'; an intelligent minority which, through its superior achievements, would tend to elevate the race as a whole.

The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races. Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men.

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^{34.} Quoted by T.G. Standing, "Nationalism in Negro Leadership", American Journal of Sociology, XL (September, 1934), p. 186.

^{35.} Du Bois, quoted by E. Franklin Frazier, <u>Black Bourgeoise</u> (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 62.

Du Bois saw the talented tenth as the trained servants of the remaining ninety per cent of Negro Americans. Any special privileges accruing to such a group were justified on the grounds of the benefits that they could confer on their fellow men. To his critics such an idea from a man who was undoubtedly a member of the talented tenth had a "selfish, self-serving ring" and Du Bois was constantly accused of being interested only in a handful of Negroes and of being little use to the mass of Negroes clamouring for freedom. The Twin City Herald commented in 1929 that

. . . the upper class that has developed in the Race in the last twenty-five years has been a class whose aims are to exploit and drain the masses for all they are worth; they draw apart from them physically and socially and in many cases build up a light skinned world of its own and ape the white man . . . this class is of no importance . . . they are of no value to our masses, and the best interests of the Race demands that they refashion or be cast off.

Such criticism had a degree of truth but not much. The talented tenth to Du Bois was simply a means to an end; that end being the political and social emancipation of Negroes everywhere.

Du Bois' theory of a talented tenth leading the Negro people to emancipation was a striking product of his own experience and training, and was in a large degree the rationalization of his own social position. His interests, intellect and abilities were such that they would place him with the most cultured elements of American society. But the colour of his skin effectively barred him from full participation in such a group. An acute

^{36.} Broderick, op. cit., p. 74.

^{37.} Quoted by Standing, op. cit., p. 186.

awareness of this fact from childhood led Du Bois to an identification with Negro society. His identification was not so much with the mass of Negroes as with a cultured minority that served as a substitute for the larger society from which he was excluded.

Du Bois rationalized his separation from the mass of Negroes by claiming that he was not interested in being a popular leader, his only concern and interest being the advocating of new ideas and approaches to the problems of colour. He wrote that his

... leadership was a leadership solely of ideas. I never was nor ever will be, personally popular. This was not simply because of my idiosyncrasies but because I despise the essential demagoguery of personal leaderships, of that hypnotic ascendancy over men which carries out objectives regardless of their value or validity, simply by personal loyalty and admiration. In my case I withdrew sometimes ostentatiously from the personal nexus, but I sought all the more determinedly to force home essential ideas.

Du Bois viewed himself as the aristocrat of his race, who, sitting on high, would declaim the direction the struggle for freedom would take. He was not so much interested in the day to day realities as to what he considered the grand over view. He had no followers and little organization, and his relation—ship with Negroes was as someone lecturing them either in person or in print. To whites he was someone who denounced them.

While Du Bois was regarded with much respect by Negroes everywhere, he was not a person who was generally liked. Many commentaries pictured him as a crusty mordant-witted snob of both the intellectual and social varieties. He

^{38.} Du Bois, quoted by George Padmore, Pan-Africanism or Communism (London: Dobson, 1956), p. 162.

^{39.} See J. Saunders Redding, "W.E.B. Du Bois", American Scholar, XVIII (Winter, 1948-49), pp. 93-96.

was, many commentators suggest, a little too proud of himself and sure that his ideas were the only ones of consequence. Negroes and whites complained that they had to be introduced to him time after time, because it was only after repeated introductions did Du Bois appear conscious of their existence.

While holding himself aloof behind the 'veil', he put his talents to work in order to set things right, not for himself - he was above it, he always claimed - but for all. This was the essence of his life, the setting of things right for Negroes, the settling of the score imposed by his own colour. In setting things right Du Bois chose to operate in the largest arena possible. Exploitation and oppression were not characteristic only of Negroes but of coloured people everywhere. Solutions had to be found on a global basis for there was little hope of breaking down the racial prejudice found in the United States if prejudice continued elsewhere.

In seeking the largest arena possible for the solution of racial prejudice Du Bois chose to subordinate the realities of the American scene to the idea that racial harmony and co-operation was only possible if attacked on a world wide basis and, especially as far as the American Negro was concerned, the establishment of Africa as a land of consequence in world affairs. Du Bois wrote that "the problem of the American Negro must be thought of and settled only with continual reference to the problems of the West Indian Negroes, the problems of the French Negroes and the English Negroes, and above all of the African Negroes". From 1919 until his death in 1963 Du Bois' concern with the emancipation of Negroes everywhere occupied much of his time and energy.

^{40.} See Isaacs, op. cit., p. 201.

^{41.} Du Bois, quoted B.F. Rogers, "W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Pan-Africa", Journal of Negro History, XXXX (April, 1955), p. 156.

He was instrumental in calling a series of Pan-African Congresses where delegates from Africa, the West Indies, the United States and Europe discussed the problems of their race and advocated a programme which would see to the political, social, cultural and economic emancipation of Africa for the benefit of Africans. The Congresses, Du Bois thought, would bring the Negroes of the world together into a great international pressure group. On the Congresses and on popularizing Africa's past, Du Bois centred some of his grandest and to some extent his most personal dreams.

In re-creating Africa's past, Du Bois saw the means of "regaining for all Negroes the pride that he clung to so strongly in himself". By stripping away the myths which European conquerors constructed around the African past Du Bois hoped that racial pride would be established and with such pride the greatest obstacle to Negro emancipation, psychological inferiority, could be overcome. On the subject of Africa he hammered away year after year, reeducating some, stirring a few but meeting, as Isaacs puts it, "that deep unresponsiveness to Africa which not even he, alone, could overcome".

Du Bois' recreation of African history sought to tell the world how critical a role Africa played in human history. A role that needed retelling since most historians had assumed that history could be "truly written without reference to Negroid peoples". In many of his books, especially The Negro and

^{42.} See Chapter III for a full discussion of the Congresses.

^{43.} Isaacs, op. cit., p. 200.

^{44.} Ibid.

^{45.} W.E.B. Du Bois, The World and Africa (New York: Viking Press, 1947), p. vii.

The World and Africa, and in many of his articles Du Bois developed the theme of the importance of Africa in the unfolding of world history. In doing this Du Bois continually emphasized the fact that "black Africans [were] men in the same sense as white Europeans and yellow Asiatics".

In his concern with Africa, Du Bois was largely unique among American Negroes. There was on the part of most American Negroes a longing to forget their African past and to concentrate solely on the winning of freedom in the American context. Most saw little importance in stressing the African background; to do so was believed to be a reinforcement of prevailing white opinions about Negroes. Their homeland was the 'dark continent' and most Negroes agreed or at least accepted this verdict. To do anything but forget Africa was believed tantamount to seeking social and political emancipation while acknowledging their ties to the most backward area on earth.

Since his background contained little to accentuate Africa in his mind it is surprising that Du Bois saw the altering of opinions concerning Africa as essential to the emancipation of the American Negro. With Africa, Du Bois had only one direct cultural connection, and that was only an African melody his great—grandmother used to sing. Living with his mother's family he absorbed culture patterns that were not so much African as Dutch and New England. The family customs were those of New England and African ties were, as he points out in

^{46. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. xii.

^{47.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 115.

Dusk of Dawn,

purely a matter of my own learning and reaction; my recoil from the assumptions of the whites; my experiences in the South at Fisk. But it was none the less real and a large determinant of my life and character. I felt myself African by 'race' and by that token was African and an integral member of the group of dark Americans who were called Negroes.

Africa, as he related to Isaacs, was something that lurked in the background of his mind. During his early life he accepted the Negro lack of interest in Africa and the resentment at being classed as an African. He was an American and it was not until late in the nineteenth century that he embraced the idea of 'Pan-Negroism' and began to write of Africa as the 'great fatherland' of the race. Early in this century he believed that some Negro American customs were survivals from In particular he thought that the power of Negro ministers over their congregations and the strength of Negro churches were traceable to an African past. At the same time he was thinking in terms of organizing a small band of educated Negroes to go and help Africans achieve political, economic and social emancipation. He made representations to the Belgian Consulate-General in the United States for the help of the Belgian government in organizing a 'development programme: in the Belgian Congo. In 1907 he regretted that he was unable to "work directly in Africa" and informed the German Consulate-General that there were American Negroes willing to be "economic leaders" for Africans in Germany's West African Colonies. The fore-runner of the N.A.A.C.P., the Niagara Movement,

^{48.} Ibid.

^{49.} Organized by Du Bois in 1905 in order to inaugurate a coherent programme of public agitation for Negro constitutional rights in the United States. It lacked the backing of Brooker T. Washington, the then leading spokesman for Negroes, and was not successful. Most of its members joined the N.A.A.C.P. when it was founded in 1909.

maintained a Pan-African Department and corresponded with African intellectuals. This was his early pre-occupation with Africa and it amounted to very little. It was not until the second decade of the century that he became familiar with the work of Franz Boas and systematically began to develop his idea of the great importance of Africa in the emancipation of American Negroes. Boas, almost alone among social scientists, maintained that innate racial differences were inconsequential. To illustrate his point he wrote knowingly of the great African kingdoms that had flourished south of the Sahara before the arrival of the whites.

Although Du Bois understood the repugnance which Africa held for most Negro Americans, he developed a strong attachment for the Continent. His attachment was founded on a deep racial kinship that bound him to the 'dark continent'. He revered the 'essence of Africa', the birthplace of all culture: "the development of the village unit in religion, industry, and government, the realization of beauty in folklore, sculpture, and music". 51 Boas was cited to show that the African, while the "European was . . . satisfied with crude stone tools", had "invented or adopted the art of smelting iron". 52 Despite its backwardness in certain specific cultural areas, Africa, he argued, was in its overall development contemporary and not prehistoric. It could teach the western nations the truth that "efficiency and happiness did not necessarily go together in modern culture". 53 While Africa needed "modern communication systems . . .

^{50.} See Rudwick, op. cit., pp. 209 - 210.

^{51.} Du Bois, quoted Broderick, op. cit., p. 128.

^{52.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 153.

^{53.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 125.

its knowledge of the human soul had been deepened by its isolation."54

Apart from the above, his attachment to and sentiment for Africa needed little in the way of empirical evidence. Writing in his autobiography, Dusk of Dawn, Du Bois questioned what it was between Africa and himself that constituted a tie he could feel better than he could explain.

He answered:

Africa is, of course, my fatherland. Yet neither my father nor my father's father ever saw Africa or knew its meaning or cared overmuch for it. My mother's folk were closer and yet their direct connection, in culture and race, became tenuous; still my tie to Africa is strong. On this vast Continent were born and lived a large portion of my direct ancestors going back a thousand years and more. The mark of their heritage is upon me in colour and hair. These are obvious things, but of little meaning in themselves . . . But one thing is sure and that is the fact that since the fifteenth century these ancestors of mine and their other descendants have had a common history; have suffered a common disaster and have one long memory. The actual ties of heritage between the individuals of this group, vary with the ancestors that they have in common and many others: Europeans and Semites, perhaps Mongolians, certainly American Indians. But the physical bond is least and the badge of colour relatively unimportant save as a badge; the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas. It is this unity that draws me to Africa. 55

It is ironic that in such an answer Du Bois could say that his 'physical bond' to Africa was 'least' and that the badge of colour was relatively unimportant while for most of his life he was obsessed with colour, being hardly able to describe anyone or any event without stress upon it. He himself was "firmly chiseled in

^{54. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 128 - 129.

^{55. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 116 - 117, Emphasis added.

bronze"⁵⁶ and was critical of the caste system that developed in the United States. One of his most persistent criticisms of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association was that it accentuated this caste system. At Harvard he was indignant over the exclusion of two black friends from social affairs and championed their inclusion. While travelling in Europe he turned down the love of a white girl, telling her that "it would not be fair to marry her and bring her to America".⁵⁷ At home he ended his courtship of a Negro girl who "looked quite white" because it might hinder him in his work. His writings stressed 'blackness as a positive virtue' ⁵⁸ and 'whiteness' an object of hatred for Negroes. He once admitted that he, in opposing racial prejudice, was "one of the greatest sinners" in the intensity of his own prejudice against whites. In <u>Darkwater</u>, published in 1920, he concluded a section of verse which condemned "The White World's Vermin and Filth", with the lines

I hate them, Oh!
I hate them well,
I hate them, Christ!
As I hate hell!
If I were God,
I'd sound their knell
This day!
60

In his first visit to Africa at the end of 1923 Du Bois reported that it was the greatest experience of his life. Europe was "painfully white" but in his voyage south to "the Eternal World of Black Folk" he made the characteristic

^{56.} E.R. Embree, 13 Against the Odds (New York: Viking Press, 1944), p. 153.

^{57.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 46.

^{58.} See Isaacs, op. cit., p. 208.

^{59.} Du Bois, quoted Ralph McGill, "W.E.B. Du Bois", The Atlantic, CCXVI (November, 1965), p. 81.

^{60.} Du Bois, Darkwater, p. 54.

^{61.} Du Bois, quoted Rudwick, op. cit., p. 231.

observation that "as the world darkens it gets happier". ⁶² The trip was undertaken at the request of the President of the United States: Du Bois was to act as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the inauguration of the President of Liberia. On his landing in Monrovia, Du Bois reported that he positively swooned on the "black bosom" of Africa. ⁶³ Describing the emotional impact of Africa Du Bois' racial romanticism was given free rein:

The spell of Africa is upon me. The ancient witchery of her medicine is burning my drowsy, dreamy blood. This is not a country, it is a world, a universe of itself and for itself, a thing Different, Immense, Menacing, Alluring. It is a great black bosom where the spirit longs to die. It is life so burning, so fire encircled that one bursts with terrible soul inflaming life. One longs to leap against the sun and then calls, like some great hand of fate, the slow, silent, crushing power of almighty sleep - of Silence, of immovable Power beyond, within, around. Then comes the calm. The dreamless boat of midday stillness at dusk, at dawn, at noon, always. Things move - black shining bodies, perfect bodies, bodies of sleek unearthly poise and beauty . . . Eyes languish, black eyes - slow eyes, lovely and tender eyes in great dark formless faces . . . 60

Beneath a streaming sun he went into the "gold green forest" and visited a village. How to describe it?

Neither London, nor Paris, nor New York has anything of its delicate precious beauty. It was a town of the Veys and done in cream and pale purples, still, clean, restrained, tiny, complete. It was no selfish place, but the central abode of fire and hospitality, clean-swept for wayfarers, and best seats were bare . . . They quite expected visitors . . . Their manners were better than those of Park Lane or Park Avenue . . . They showed breeding . . . These folk have the leisure of true aristocracy - leisure for thought and courtesy, leisure for sleep and laughter. They have time for their children - such well-trained, beautiful children with perfect, unhidden bodies. Have you ever met a crowd of children in the east of London or New York, or even on the Avenue at Forty-Second

^{62.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 125.

^{63.} Du Bois, quoted Isaacs, op. cit., p. 208.

^{64.} Du Bois, quoted Isaacs, op. cit., p. 209.

or One Hundred and Forty-Second Street, and fled to avoid impudence and utter ignorance of courtesy? Come to Africa and see well-bred and courteous children, playing happily and never sniffling and whining.

The African was courteous and dignified; he did not see "one respectable quarrel" even on crowded platforms in Senegal. If Western cities were as crowded "the police would have a busy time". 66 Returning to colour Du Bois thought that the

African form in colour and curve is the most beautifulest (sic) thing on earth; the face is not so lovely, though often comely with perfect teeth and shining eyes - but the form of the slim limbs, the muscled torso, the deep full breasts.

He had read everywhere that Africa meant sexual licence but in his two months in West Africa he saw

. . . children quite naked and women usually naked to the waist - with bare bosom and limbs, and in those sixty days I saw less of sex dalliance and appeal than I see daily on Fifth Avenue. This does not mean much, but it is an interesting fact.

Many of the threads of Du Bois! thinking about colour are found in these comments on his sojourn in West Africa. "The elitest gratified by the rituals of power; the man drawn by deep full breasts; the day dreamer won by languor; the poet swooning on Africa's black bosom; the rhapsodist celebrating colour, curve, and form, the aristocrat pleased by dignity, deference, order and

^{65.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, pp. 126 - 127.

^{66. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 128.

^{67.} Du Bois, quoted Isaacs, op. cit., p. 210.

^{68.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, pp. 127 - 128.

gentility; the puritan alert to any nonpoetic licence". But in all of this Du Bois was well aware of his goal and it was always present. He was still the race propagandist, "always trying to carry his readers with him toward a better opinion of their past and present links to Africa and thereby toward a better opinion of themselves".

For all of his praise of things African Du Bois did not feel the need of retreating there himself. Africa for him was best appreciated from afar in spite of any inner peace its tropical languor might provide. Even visits were extremely rare; his second not occurring until 1960 when he attended Chana's Republican Day celebrations. Du Bois did not see any sense in returning; Negroes were Americans and not Africans and the idea of urging the masses of American Negroes to return and start life over in the whiteless wilds of Africa appeared to him to be ridiculous. The Negro's share of life rewards were to be found in the United States and Du Bois, despite great pressures to the contrary, never counselled them otherwise.

Such then is a brief summary of the forces that appeared to have influenced Du Bois' view of himself and Africa. The rest of the thesis will attempt to outline the specifics of his Pan-African movement; Chapter II dealing with the ideology of the Movement and Chapter III dealing with its organization.

^{69.} Isaacs, op. cit., pp. 210 - 211.

CHAPTER II : THE IDEOLOGY

Africa, in the thinking and writing of articulate American Negroes, had over the years been viewed in two distinct ways; both of these the result of the discrimination and race prejudice that forced upon them the fact of their African descent. One reaction had been a reluctance to acknowledge Africa as anything more than a distant home in a distant past. This view was constantly reinforced by the view of Africa displayed by the press, textbooks, and movies as savage, untamed, uncivilized, and primitive; a land which had no "collective achievements . . . like other nationalities."

The connection to Africa was felt an embarrassment, a factor contributing to white America's conception of Negro inferiority. Consequently over time, Africa, in the thinking of many Negroes, became the epitomy of evil and as one respondent in Isaacs' survey commented:

To call a kid an African was an insult. It was calling him savage, uncivilized, naked, something to laugh at, a naked black savage with a spear and war paint. It was equivalent to ugliness, everything painful and distasteful associated with Africa . . . In common talk the term was always derogatory - "You're acting like a wild African."

Africa was rejected because it was the land of blackness; to attach any importance to it was to reaffirm a desire to return to its savagery.

At the other end of the spectrum was the view that Africa was the only

l. Edgar Gardner Murphy, The Basis of Ascendency (New York, 1909), p. 42. Quoted by George Shepperson, "Notes on American Influence on the Emergence of African Nationalism", Journal of African History, I, 2 (1960), p. 300.

^{2.} Harold R. Isaacs, The New World of Negro Americans (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), p. 171.

place where Negroes were going to find the conditions necessary to live decently as free men in a free land. Mass exodus of Negroes from the United States to Africa was thought by many to be the solution. It was the ultimate option of men who dispaired of ever changing the conditions of life in the United States. It was, hopefully, an escape to a land where it was beyond the means of the white man to deny freedom and dignity. This feeling often flowered into spectacular movements which had their greatest appeal to the poorer class of Negroes; those alienated the most from American society who had nothing to lose but everything to gain by emigration.

Both of these views are still evident but since the Second World War have been supplanted to some extent by a view of Africa enunciated by W.E.B. Du Bois. He saw little hope of a solution to American racial problems within the limitations imposed by American society. There was, however, hope if all people of African descent throughout the world realized that they had common interests and spiritual affinity with each other and that, having suffered together in the past, they must now work together in order to realize a new and brighter future. Du Bois believed that the common sufferings of centuries of slave trade, slavery, exploitation, and colonialism had created a common identity among Negroes that cut across the political borders of Africa, the West Indies and the United States. The oppression and sufferings of Negroes within these areas could only be ameliorated when all joined forces to ensure that their weakness did not invite even greater oppression and exploitation. In 1915, Du Bois, writing in The Negro, thought that he saw

this brotherhood of 'Negro blood' arising:

There is slowly arising not only a curiously strong brotherhood of Negro blood throughout the world, but the common cause of the darker races against the intolerable assumptions and insults of Europeans has already found expression. Most men in the world are coloured. A belief in humanity means a belief in coloured men. The future world will, in all reasonable possibility, be what coloured men make it.

This was the essence of the Pan-African movement that Du Bois spent a major part of his life advocating. It was not simply a movement to effect the decolonization of Africa as many commentators have contended. himself, defined the movement as meaning "intellectual understanding and co-operation among all groups of Negro descent in order to bring about at the earliest possible time the industrial and spiritual emancipation of the Negro peoples." It was thus a two-pronged movement that wanted not only the decolonization of Africa to allow the industrial emancipation of the Negro peoples but also, and this was the most significant, Du Bois was after the spiritual emancipation of the Negro people. He was reaching for a transvaluation of the values and ideas that had established the African and the Negro as persons of no consequence who had not progressed beyond the primitive stages of mankind. He was out to show that the Africans and the Negro were heir to a history and a culture, still in the process of rediscovery, which was as profound and significant as any, and that this history and culture had made significant contributions to the world.

^{3.} Du Bois, quoted by George Padmore, Pan-Africanism of Communism (London: Dobson, 1956), p. 22.

^{4.} Du Bois, quoted by Charles Andrain, "The Pan-African Movement", Phylon, XXIII (Spring, 1962), p. 15.

A major part of the transvaluation was Du Bois' work in establishing the idea that blackness was not the mark of a servile inferior people - the rationalization of the slave trade, slavery, and colonization. Instead, Du Bois contended that to be black was something in which to have pride and admiration.

In this way Pan-Africanism was for Du Bois both political and psychological. The key was Africa since the loss of freedom and dignity by Negroes everywhere was rationalized in terms of the savagery and primitiveness of their homeland. Destroy the myth of African savagery and primitiveness and the chains of oppression would be shorn and the bonds between all Negro people strengthened. Du Bois saw the origins of this myth in the "trade in human beings between Africa and America, which flourished between the Renaissance and the American Civil War". The trade imposed disasters upon Africans and Negroes which led to their characterization as savage and primitive. The disasters were graphically described by Du Bois as the "ruthless and ignorant destruction of cultural patterns."

Family life has been disrupted, women have been violated, children corrupted and freed of control, political organization overthrown, property ownership and control over-ridden, and the whole of the primitive life caricatured and made mock of. Only in recent days have scientists called to the attention of the world the values of primitive culture - the fact that in many respects these ways of living have solved social difficulties better than civilized lands have been able to do.

Du Bois considered himself a scientist and attempted to use new ideas

^{5.} W.E.B. Du Bois, The World and Africa (New York: Viking, 1947), p. 43.

^{6.} W.E.B. Du Bois, Colour and Democracy: Colonies and Peace (New York: Harcourt, Brace Co., 1945), p. 43.

being developed by anthropologists and historians to support his assertions concerning Africans. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the beginning of major revisions in the concept of Africa and its peoples.

Objective methods of research led western scientists to a broader and more sympathetic view of non-western cultures. 'Cultural relativity' gave rise to the idea that African culture and society had been seriously underestimated and that the African was something more than the savage he had been depicted.

The flow of ideas was by no means one way and Du Bois in many areas led the way in providing information and new ideas needed for a new understanding of Africa. His book, The Negro, published in 1915, popularized the history of African kingdoms south of the Sahara and wrote of them as possessing complex and sophisticated cultures. Another suggestion of Du Bois', based more on "mystical yearnings than hard factual data", was that American Negro culture owed much to the African way of life. This thesis was later examined by Herskovits when he published his Myth of the Negro Past in 1941. His extensive research to some degree supported Du Bois' thesis. However, it is still widely debated.

The new developments in history and anthropology in which Du Bois was both an innovator and communicator were essential in undermining the foundations of colonialism. "The colonizer conceived his relationship to the colonized as that of the civilized man to the savage. Colonialism is thus based on a hierarchy, assuredly elementary, but stable and sure". As soon as questions were asked about

^{7.} August Meir, and Elliott M. Rudwick, From Plantation to Chetto (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), p. 3.

^{8.} Kesteloot, quoted by Abiola Ireli, "Negritude or Black Cultural Nationalism", The Journal of Modern African Studies, III, 3 (1965), p. 342, f.n.

just how savage was the savage then the elementary hierarchy was indeed on insecure footing. If the savage was found to be as 'civilized' as the colonizer then colonialism's 'civilizing mission' became one of exploitation and oppression. Leo Frobenius, who played an important part in the revaluation of Africa's culture and people, summed up the indictment that the developments in history and anthropology made of colonialism as: "From colonization to civilization, the distance is infinite".

Du Bois attended the Universal Races Conference of 1911 in London and heard at first hand many of the new ideas on race that were changing the white world's view of the coloured. The conclave was 'scientific' and 'humanitarian' and focused upon the latest findings concerning the whole race question. Sergi of Italy, von Ranke of Germany, Myers, Lyde and Hadden of England, and Boas of the United States contributed papers. reported the findings of the Conference at length and its importance to him was the prestige of scientific authority it was to give to many of his own Speakers held that it was not possible to chart fixed or enclosed lines of racial demarcation and it was of no more "importance to know how many races there are than to know how many angels dance on the point of a needle". Boas asserted that races were "growing . . . entities" and declared that racial differences were the product of social and geographical environments. Myers went as far as to theorize that "the capacity to think of most of the early twentieth century Europeans approximated that of contemporary primitive peoples". The gathering also commented on racial

^{9.} Ibid.

prejudice and urged upon the delegates the "vital importance at this juncture of history of discountenancing race prejudice, as tending to inflict on humanity incalcuable harm, and as based on generalizations unworthy of an enlightened and progressive age".

Du Bois was attending the Conference as a representative of the N.A.A.C.P. who had sent him abroad in 1911 "to make foreign propaganda" and the Universal Races Congress fitted that aim. Du Bois spoke on "The Negro Race in the United States" and was critical of Brooker T. Washington's approach to racial conditions, although his allusions to the head of the Tuskegee Institute were "purely impersonal — and very dignified". He left the Conference with "a broad tolerance of race" and a stronger internationalist outlook.

Du Bois' own ideas on race at this juncture were similar to those of the Conferees. He saw race as a "cultural, sometimes an historical, fact".

It was a dynamic concept since for him race was based upon the changing factors that determined relations between smaller and larger, weaker and stronger, subordinate and dominant social groups. While he accepted the broad anthropological classification of race as occasionally useful, Du Bois insisted that the importance of race to the modern world was not visible through such

^{10.} Du Bois, quoted by Elliott M. Rudwick, "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Universal Races Congress of 1911", Phylon Quarterly, XX (December, 1959), p. 374.

^{11.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid., p. 373.

^{12.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid.

^{13.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid., p. 377.

^{14.} W.E.B. Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940), p. 153.

classificatory schemes. In the first place, he saw science as showing that there were

. . . no 'races', in any exact scientific sense; that no bodily development, of head form, of colour and hair, of psychological reactions, have succeeded in dividing mankind into different, recognizable groups: That so-called 'pure' races seldom, if ever, exist and that all present mankind, the world over, are 'mixed' so far as the so-called racial characteristics are concerned.

Modern racial problems to Du Bois were not problems of primary races, but of groups, nations and economic classes.

This is true today in the race problems of Jews, Poles, and Czechs; of Irish and English; of Japanese and Chinese. Only in the case of white and blacks in Africa and the United States, of brown and white in India, have we something which approaches contact between primary groups, and 'race' is not entirely clear in these cases.

Du Bois! concept of race dynamics is made more explicit in his editorial for the first edition of Phylon. Here he points out that the concept 'race' refers to

ressure and inner cohesiveness, still form and have long formed a stronger or weaker unity of thought and action. Among these groups appear both biological and psychological likenesses, although we believe that these aspects have in the past been over-emphasized in the face of many contradictory facts. While, therefore, we continue to study and measure all human differences we seem to see the basis of real and practical racial unity in culture . . . A culture consists of the ideas, habits and values, the technical processes and goods which any group possessed of either by inheritance or adoption.

^{15.} W.E.B. Du Bois, "Race Relations in the United States", The Annals, CXXXX, 229 (November, 1928), p. 6.

^{16.} W.E.B. Du Bois, "Persons and Places", Phylon, I (Second Quarter, 1940), p. 175.

^{17.} W.E.B. Du Bois, "Editorial", Phylon, I (First Quarter, 1940), p. 3.

By defining culture in this way and showing that racial unity was found in culture. Du Bois was trying to undermine the assumption that "congenital differences among the main masses of human beings absolutely condition the individual destiny of every member of the group". 18 Biological and psychological differences, while quite apparent, were not the determining factors in whether groups of men were members of a 'lower race' or members of a 'higher race'. The determining factors were cultural and were constantly open to change. When culture, through education, economic development or osmosis changed its ideas, values or habits then its members changed, irrespective of 'congenital differences'. There were no groups that were inherently inferior or inherently superior. All 'races' were in constant ferment, some advancing, others regressing, but none because of biological or psychological factors, standing still. Thus to Du Bois, racial and cultural relations were designations that were interchangeable; race was "cultural and historical in essence, rather than primarily biological and psychological".

It was the task of science not to obliterate all races and group distinctions, "but to know and study them, to see and appreciate them at their true values, to emphasize the use and place of human differences as tool and method of progress". Science had to show the world "racial problems" were problems of logic and ethics; that neither colour, nor condition, made a closed racial group.

^{18.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, pp. 139 - 140.

^{19.} Du Bois, "Editorial", p. 3.

^{20. &}lt;u>Ibid</u>.

While Du Bois constantly emphasized the role of science in ameliorating race prejudice, he did not see science by itself as changing the conditions of Africans or Negroes. Race prejudice did not continue simply because of "inertia and unconscious action" on the part of Europeans or Americans. Race prejudice was based on "tremendous economic structures" that were brought into being by the slave trade, and science no matter how persuasive could not by itself alter its basis. Science had to be assisted. "Force must come to its aid. The black world must fight for freedom. It must fight with the weapons of Truth, with the sword of the intrepid, uncompromising Spirit, with organization in boycott, propaganda and mob frenzy". Du Bois! Pan-African Movement was long on 'Truth' and 'intrepid, uncompromising Spirit' but short on 'boycott, propaganda and mob frenzy' and therein, perhaps, was its failure.

While Du Bois was hopeful about the effectiveness of his "brotherhood of Negro blood" in combatting oppression and exploitation in Africa and America, he did not see the problem as an isolated one. He writes in his autobiography that as early as 1892, while at the University of Berlin, he saw the "race problem in America, the problem of the peoples of Africa and Asia and the political development of Europe as one". In 1905 he suggested that the problems of the African and the Negro could best be solved by a union of all the black, brown, and yellow peoples; by 1917 the idea was a common one in his writings and he saw the Africans and Negroes, aided by their 'natural'

^{21.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, pp. 5 - 6.

^{22.} Ibid., p. 47.

allies, the Japanese, Chinese and Indians, in a militant crusade that would wage war upon the 'white world'. 23 While he hoped that war would not be necessary, since "war is hell", he reminded his audience that "there are things worse than hell, as every Negro knows". 24

The threat of race war between the 'darker peoples' and the 'white world! was the bluff of a frustrated man. Du Bois had seen his Pan-African Congresses as achieving nothing of any lasting importance. Africa had not been freed of her oppressors and there were few changes there that ameliorated the hopelessness of her people. The Congresses had shown that there was little international Negro unity. In spite of this, Du Bois continued his programme for the unity of all 'coloured peoples' on even more tenuous grounds than his Pan-Africanism. His threat of race war was toned down on careful reconsideration but his dream of China, Japan, India and Africa as developing a 'common consciousness! was not. 25 While he recognized that there was a 'vast gulf' between the peoples of these lands, like his 'brotherhood of Negro blood', Du Bois thought that the oppression and exploitation common to all would overcome In his most racist work Black Princess, Du Bois in Hollywoodian fashion bridges the gap by the marriage of an Indian princess to an American Negro. The Unity of Africa and Asia is decreed: "Pan-Africa belongs logically with Pan-Asia". That the gulf was more complex than Du Bois would admit

^{23.} Elliott M. Rudwick, W.E.B. Du Bois: A Study in Minority Group Leadership (University City: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), p. 234.

^{24.} Du Bois, quoted, Toid.

^{25.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid.

^{26.} Du Bois, quoted Isaacs, op. cit., p. 217.

goes without saying, and his captivity to the idea illustrates that for him the call to arms was more important than a realistic assessment of the problems involved.

Professor Edward M. East graphically depicted the 'vast gulf' thus:

"The Japanese and the Chinese despise each other, and both feel superior to
the brown and the black, and the Hindu has more caste tabus than either."

Du Bois, however, saw only colour and colonialism, and both had in common the
assumed superiority of white people. That other factors, perhaps more
important, were at work were dismissed. He was captive of his own racial
philosophy which saw 'white' as the criterion of evil and 'coloured' as the
criterion of good. The coloured peoples of the world, since they were oppressed,
could never be oppressors; and since colonialism was the exploitation of
coloured labour by whites, 'coloured' nations could not be imperialistic.

This was displayed most consistently in his portrayal of Japan as the harbinger of the emancipation of coloured peoples. He hopefully saw Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905 as the leading edge of a movement that would see the end of white domination of the world. The Washington Conference of 1922 saw the failure of an 'anglo-saxon entente' to drive a wedge between Japan and China and he predicted "that the day is in sight when they will present an unbroken front to the aggression of the whites". While in 1927 Japan was one of China's oppressors, Du Bois remained defensive and hoped that Japan would ally herself with the coloured races 'where she belonged'; her

^{27.} Rudwick, W.E.B. Du Bois, pp. 234 - 235.

^{28.} Du Bois, quoted, Francis Broderick, W.E.B. Du Bois, Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 132.

attacks on China were seen as part of her resistance to the white powers. 29 The strengthening of the Chinese government and the broadening of democracy in Japan would provide for a reapproachment between the two countries and both would see that their mutual antagonism had been caused by the white world, especially Great Britain. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 was the forerunner of a Japanese-Chinese bloc against the white world. Her attack on Manchuria was the seizure of "dismembered parts of China nearest to her" before European nations could seize them. Japan knew that China could not have been saved from Europe and America unless Japan "made Manchuria Asiatic by force". 30 As the occupation of Manchuria continued and became more oppressive, Du Bois became defensive and suggested that what was right for England in the nineteenth century was right for Japan in the twentieth. The concession in 1933 by Ethiopia of sixteen million acres of land to Japan was a "reapproachment between Asia and Africa which foreshadows closer union between yellow and black people". 31 No matter what the event, his notion of the unity of coloured peoples provided an explanation. Japan's silence at the coronation of Haile Selassie as Emperor was seen as a sign of her pleasure at the prospects of a strong, armed Ethiopia run by Africans. His summary of World War II in 1947 stretched his myopia towards Japan to its limits. "Japan aroused Asia, and by attacking America thus furnished the one reason, based on race prejudice, which brought America immediately into the war". 32

^{29.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid., p. 133.

^{30.} Du Bois, quoted, Tbid., p. 133.

^{31.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid., p. 134.

^{32.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 14.

Du Bois! colour astigmatism towards Liberia, while understandable, further illustrates his total involvement with colour in place of many—side analysis. In his writings, Liberia was romanticized as the "lonely symbol of the Negro race daring to be free". 33 Liberians were real kinfolk—or at least the ruling class were—the descendants of American Negroes who were repatriated in the middle of the nineteenth century. During a visit there in 1923 as envoy extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, by designation of President Calvin Coolidge, to the inauguration of President C.D.E. King, Du Bois spoke of the ability of Negroes to rule in Africa as a "great and encouraging reinforcement" in the fight against discrimination in the United States. The American Negro pride in America was accompanied by a

. . . pride in their race and lineage, a belief in the potency and promise of Negro blood which makes them eager listeners to every whisper of success from Liberia, and eager helpers in every movement for your aid and comfort. In a special sense, the moral burden of Liberia and the advancement and integrity of Liberia is the sincere prayer of America. 31.

Du Bois, in his own reporting, made sure that 'every whisper' from Liberia was one of success and advancement. The evils were glossed over or forgotten. Practices that would have enraged him if performed by whites were accepted with tolerance and understanding. While he condemned slavery in Liberia, he refused to censure the Negro government for permitting it. Instead, he wrote that the black republic 'is no more guilty' than other countries. He even noted that

^{33.} Rudwick, W.E.B. Du Bois, p. 233.

^{34.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 25.

'domestic slavery is discouraged by the government', while he acknowledged simultaneously that Liberia used 'forced labour' and the indenture system.

If 'Liberian labour' was sold in France and Spain, what of it? Did not the European nations pressure the small state into such practices, and besides did not the British only just release two hundred thousand slaves in Sierra Leone?

George S. Schuyler, in <u>Slaves Today</u>, provided a devastating reply to Du Bois' warped vision of Liberia. The Liberian government was condemned for permitting slavery, and exploiting and terrorizing its people. Schuyler pointed out that Liberia's problems were of her own making and that there was little evidence of a European conspiracy. He lectured Du Bois for "condoning abuse when the culprits were Negroes"; ³⁶ his "belligerent . . . Negrophilism" while commendable warped his vision. Du Bois made no reply to the attack.

Schuyler's assertion that Du Bois' Negrophilism warped his ability to see the problems of the Negro in more than one dimension contained a great deal of truth. Du Bois was the prisoner of what Margaret Halsey called the 'Myth of the Wonderful Oppressed' - "the notion that because a group suffers from persecution, it automatically incompasses all virtue and is purged of all faults". 38 Japanese imperialism and Liberian shortcomings had to be explained

^{35.} Rudwick, <u>W.E.B. Du Bois</u>, p. 233.

^{36.} Schuyler, quoted, Ibid.,

^{37.} Schuyler, quoted, Broderick, op. cit., p. 135.

^{38. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 135.

and in Du Bois' view, they could only be the result of white exploitation since these states were 'coloured' and thus unable to act in ways that were imitative of the 'white world'. While his belief in the myth gave Du Bois a "coherent point of view . . . it led him some distance from the real world . . . The colour line was not monomania among all coloured peoples." He was unwilling to admit that 'coloured' states such as Japan and Liberia could act from nationalistic, economic or even racist motives. 39

While his analysis of world problems in terms of colour and colonialism in the 1920's and '30's was perhaps some distance from being totally realistic, its applicability to the world ushered in by World War II was not so far off the mark. Japan viewed the War in Asia as a campaign to win 'Asia for the Asians' and the post war independent movements in the area had a large degree of racial nationalism at their core. While wrong about the time, he was certainly right about their intensity, place and programme. Du Bois' call for unity between the Africans and Asians has certainly had manifestations since the war, although the duration and intensity of such unity was and still is fickle. But despite this, Du Bois' assertions that the welfare of American Negroes was tied to the welfare of coloured people everywhere was a sound one and has been a factor in impressing upon white Americans today the necessity of racial justice at home.

There were never any organizational links between Du Bois' Pan-African movement and Asians. It was left to later Pan-Africanists to refine the theme and today it is a constant one. Padmore in his book Pan-Africanism or Communism, speaks of the "oneness of the struggles of the Coloured world for freedom from

^{39. &}lt;u>Ibid</u>., pp. 133 - 135.

alien domination", and that Pan-Africanism "endorses the conception of an Asian-African front". Also, Pan-Africanism "draws considerable inspiration from the struggles of the national freedom movements of the Asian countries, and subscribes to the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence as a means of attaining self-determination and racial equality".

Du Bois' portrayal of colour as the basis of most world problems, while singular, also gave him an understanding of events that were at times most perceptive. He saw the world draped in an elaborate racist ideology propounded by Europeans who saw their duty, as Du Bois put it, in dividing up the "darker world and administering it for Europe's good". The "darker peoples [were] dark in mind as well as in body" the "born beasts of burden for white folks". In Darkwater, Du Bois wrote that such degradation of men by men was as

. . . old as mankind and the invention of no one race or people. Ever have men striven to conceive of their victims as different from the victors, endlessly different, in soul and blood, strength and cunning, race and lineage. It has been left, however, to Europe and to modern days, to discover the eternal world - wide mark of meanness - colour.

The primacy of colour was uppermost in shaping the world and it was so much part of the 'warp and woof of . . . daily thought' that few realized its thoroughness.

Everything great, good, efficient, fair and honourable is 'white'; everything mean, bad, blundering, cheating and dishonourable is 'yellow'; a bad taste if 'brown'; and evil is 'black'. The changes of this theme are continually rung in picture and story, in newspaper heading and moving picture, a sermon and school book, until, of course, the King can do no wrong — a white man is always right and a black man has no rights which a white man is bound to respect. There must come the necessary despisings and hatreds of these savage half-men, this unclean canaille of the world — these dogs of men. All through the world this

^{40.} Padmore, op. cit., p. 18.

^{41.} W.E.B. Du Bois, <u>Darkwater</u> (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1920), pp. 41 - 42.

^{42. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 42.

gospel is preaching. It has its literature, it has its priests, it has its secret propaganda and above all - it pays!

In an Atlantic Monthly article "The African Roots of War", in 1915, his emphasis on colour gave Du Bois a much clearer picture of the world than most. Africa was the 'land of the twentieth century' and if lasting peace was ever to succeed it was essential that the democratic ideal was extended to "yellow, brown and black people". The monopolizing of African land by Europeans reduced which had forced "poverty on the masses and them to the 'dumb driven-cattle' stage of labour activity" had to cease. Education had to be applied honestly and effectively before Europe succeeded in making over "yellow, brown and black men into docile beasts of burden". Most importantly, the "principle of home rule must extend to groups, nations, and races. The ruling of one people for another people's whim or gain must stop. This kind of despotism has been in late days more and more skillfully disguised. But the brute fact remains: the white man is ruling Africa for the white man's gain, and just as far as possible he is doing the same to coloured races elsewhere". If Europe did not heed the call then war was always possible, arising out of three dangers endemic to colonialism:

- 1. Renewed jealousy at any division of colonies or spheres of influence agreed upon, if at any future time the present division comes to seem unfair.
- 2. War will come from the revolutionary revolt of the lowest workers.

^{43. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 44.

3. The coloured peoples will not always submit passively to foreign domination . . . When a people deserve liberty they fight for it and get it.

After the First World War in 1920, who but Du Bois and his preoccupation with colour could place the conflict just past into its proper perspective and write these prophetic words:

The World War was primarily the jealous and avaricious struggle for the largest share in exploiting darker races. As such it is and must be the prelude to the armed and indignant protests of these despised and raped peoples. Today Japan is hammering on the door of Justice, China is raising her half-manacled hands to knock next, India is writhing for freedom to knock, Egypt is sullenly muttering, the Negroes of South and West Africa, of the West Indies, and of the United States are just awakening to their shameful slavery. Is, then, this war the end of war? Can it be the end, so long as sits enthroned even in the souls of those who cry peace, the despising and robbing of darker peoples? If Europe hugs this delusion, then this is not the end of world war - it is but the beginning!

Another important aspect of Du Bois! Pan-Africanism was his insistence that Africa belonged to Africans; Africans in this case excluded any Europeans who had settled there. It also excluded American or West Indian Negroes who dreamed of returning to Africa in hope of securing the freedom and equality that was lacking at home. Du Bois saw the 'twenty-five million grandchildren of the European slave trade! as playing a leading role in the awakening of Africa but their emigration was not part of that role. Africa was for the Africans and the idea of transporting Negroes back to Africa was never acceptable to him as

^{44.} W.E.B. Du Bois, "The African Roots of War", Atlantic Monthly, CXV (May, 1915), pp. 712 - 713.

^{45.} Du Bois, <u>Darkwater</u>, pp. 49 - 50.

a solution of American racial problems. Even though he realized that 'back to Africa' movements seemed to be solutions not only to the "inexperienced and to demagogues, but to the prouder and more independent type of Negro . . . tired of begging for justice and recognition from folk who seem to him to have no intention of being just", 16 Du Bois felt the idea was impractical. As a result of European colonialism, Africa was "about the last place where coloured folks could seek freedom and equality". Africans had not the slightest intention of giving up their land to

. . . foreigners, white or black . . . They resent the attitude that assures that other folk of any colour are coming in to take and rule their land. Liberia, for instance . . . is not going to allow American Negroes to assume control and to direct her government. Liberia, in her mind, is for Liberians.

To those who continued to think about a return to Africa, Du Bois offered realistic advice.

No person of middle age or beyond should think of migrating
... Young and energetic people who want to migrate to
Africa must remember [that] labourers are not needed in
Africa ... Skilled labour ... is wanted, but even there
the difficulties of remunerative work ... are very great.

By opposing emigration Du Bois came into conflict with Marcus Carvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.), or, as it came to be known, Black Zionism. It had as its central idea the realization of a free and independent Africa as home for Negroes throughout the world. At the opening

^{46.} Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 195.

^{47.} Du Bois, quoted, Isaacs, op. cit., p. 221.

^{48.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid.

^{49.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid.

convention of the Association on August 2, 1920, Garvey set the theme of his movement.

We are descendents of a suffering people; . . . we are the descendents of a people determined to suffer no longer . . . We shall now organize the 400,000,000 Negroes of the world into a vast organization to plant the banner of freedom on the great continent of Africa . . . We do not desire what has belonged to others, though others have always sought to deprive us of that which belonged to us . . . If Europe is for the Europeans, then Africa shall be for the black peoples of the world. We say it; we mean it . . . The other races have countries of their own and it is time for the 400,000,000 Negroes to claim Africa for themselves.

Garvey was of West Indian ancestry; a spectacular showman, he built the U.N.I.A. into an organization that at its apogee in the early 1920's had a membership of nearly two million Negroes. It had what Du Bois' Pan-African Movement lacked, support from the mass of American Negroes who saw in Garvey their only hope of delivery from exploitation and oppression. In addition to its aim of establishing Africa as the homeland of all black peoples, the Association also campaigned for Negro owned and operated commercial and industrial business throughout the world. Several such enterprises were commenced - the most notable being the Black Star Steamship Line. It, due to mismanagement, brought a charge of fraud from the United States Government; convicted, Garvey was jailed in 1923. His jailing and the reluctance of the Liberian government to support his plans for a Negro state or allow members of the U.N.I.A. into Liberia (Garvey main-tained that was at the insistence of Du Bois), caused splits in the movement

^{50.} Quoted, Edward David Cronon, Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), p. 65.

and by 1929 it had disintegrated. It was ironic that Du Bois' Pan-African Movement, in spite of its opposition to U.N.I.A., was seen by many white people as a part of Garvey's Black Zionism. During the 1921 Pan-African Congress, one Paris newspaper went so far as to say that Du Bois was a disciple of Garvey.

Writing during the First Pan-African Congress in 1919, Du Bois succinctly explained his movement to American Negroes:

This is not a 'separatist' movement. There is no need to think that those who advocate the opening up of Africa for Africans . . . desire to deport any large number of coloured Americans to a foreign and, in some respects, inhospitable land. Once and for all, let us realize that we are Americans, that were brought here with the earliest settlers, and that the very sort of civilization from which we came made the complete adoption of Western modes and customs imperative if we were to survive at all. In brief, there is nothing so indigeneous, so completely 'made in America' as we. It is as absurd to talk of a return to Africa, merely because that was our home 300 years ago, as it would be to expect the members of the Caucasian race to return to the vastnesses of the Caucasus Mountains from which, it is reputed, they sprang. The African movement means to us what the Zionist Movement must mean to the Jews, the centralization of the race effort and the recognition of a facial fount. To help bear the burden of Africa does not mean any lessening of effort in our own problem at home. Rather it means increased interest. For any ebullition of action and feeling that results in an amelioration of the lot of Africa tends to ameliorate the condition of coloured peoples throughout the world. And no man liveth to himself 51

Du Bois first heard the term 'Pan-African' at the 1900 Pan-African Conference although as early as 1897 he was thinking in world wide race terms:
"If the Negro was to be a factor in the world's history it would be through a Pan-Negro movement". 52 The Pan-African idea for Henry Sylvester Williams, the

^{51.} Du Bois, quoted Isaacs, op. cit., pp. 222 - 223. Emphasis added.
52. Du Bois, quoted, Colin Legum, Pan-Africanism (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 24.

organizer of the Conference, was an attempt to bring people of African descent into closer contact and to foster friendly relations between the races of the world. This, as can be seen from the above, was also an aspect of Du Bois' Pan-Africanism. There was, however, another aspect to Du Bois' movement that took it beyond what Williams envisaged. Du Bois saw little hope of friendly relations between the races of the world if one race continued to dominate the others; racial harmony meant that self-government for European colonies in Africa and elsewhere was essential. Du Bois' address at the 1900 Conference called upon the British Government to give the "rights of responsible government to the Black Colonies of Africa and the West Indies". 53 While it is not certain that by responsible government Du Bois meant a cabinet responsible to a popularly elected legislature, his subsequent statements at later Pan-African Congresses indicated that 'responsible government' certainly meant self-government or independence.

As a prelude to self-government for all of Africa, Du Bois suggested in the same speech that the Belgian Congo should become a "great central Negro state". 54 Nothing was said, however, on how this idea was to be implemented. Seventeen years later the same idea was presented: this time, German East Africa was to be joined with the Belgian Congo as a "great free central African state". 55 The following year, the idea, growing ever larger and ever more impractical, it was suggested that the great free central African state be enlarged to include

^{53.} Du Bois, quoted, Alexander Walters, My Life and Work (New York: Revell, 1917), p. 259.

^{54.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid.

^{55.} Du Bois, quoted Rudwick, W.E.B. Du Bois, p. 210.

Uganda, French Equatorial Africa, German Southwest Africa, and the Portugese territories of Angola and Mozambique. How such a state was to become a reality, Du Bois gave no clues except to say that once the state was constituted "organized civilization" would act as guardians. Organized civilization in Du Boisian terms was the opinions of those educated Africans and Negroes who presumed to speak for all of Africa. Such guardians would gather at regular Pan-African Congresses and attempt to merge modern cultural advantages - science, education, communications, philanthropy - with the "curiously efficient African institutions of local self-government through the family and the tribe". Apart from this suggestion Du Bois had little to say on how self-governing African states would govern themselves. He made reference to the idea that they would be 'democratic' and 'socialistic' but did not embellish on what he meant.

This chapter has examined the ideology of Du Bois' Pan-Africanism. It was not an ideology in the sense that it represented an elaborate, comprehensive or closed system of knowledge. Instead, his Pan-Africanism was a disjointed body of assertions and beliefs held together by his concept of colour that showed African society, its history, and its goals was not much different in kind from that of other societies. While Du Bois recognized that there were fundamental and far reaching divisions on the African continent, he thought that the cultural and political heterogeneity could be overcome by the realization by Africans of their common sufferings under colonialism. That this did not happen is more apparent today than thirty years ago.

^{56.} Du Bois, quoted, Broderick, op. cit., p. 129.

^{57.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid.

CHAPTER III : THE CONGRESSES

From an organizational standpoint the Pan-African movement under
Du Bois consisted of four loosely structured congresses that met between
1919 and 1927. A secretariat was established after the second congress in
1921 but it was ineffectual due to disagreement among its members. Du Bois
had long been interested in summoning members of his race to a conference,
but until 1919 had been unsuccessful. He, himself, had attended several
such conferences and it was at the 1900 London conference that he first
l became acquainted with the idea of Pan-Africanism. The 1900 Conference
was not unlike those later convened by Du Bois, so some consideration is
given to this earlier conference.

Although Du Bois first heard of Pan-Africanism at the London Conference in 1900, no mention was made of the conference in his earlier autobiographical works. It was not until 1947 in <u>The World and Africa</u>² that brief reference was made, but even then there was no mention of his own presence and participation. It was characteristic of Du Bois that since he did not conceive or call this first conference, its importance to him was marginal. His reference in his 1947 work points out that the conference was called by "a black, West Indian barrister, practising in London", 3 whom Du Bois does not even name. The conference

l. While H. Sylvester Williams was the first to talk of Pan-Africanism, Du Bois in 1897 had said that "If the Negro was to be a factor in the world's history it would be through a Pan-Negro movement." (Quoted, Colin Legum, Pan-Africanism (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 24.

^{2.} W.E.B. Du Bois, The World and Africa (New York: Viking Press, 1947), p. 7.

^{3.} Ibid.

"attracted attention, and put the word "Pan-African" in the dictionaries for the first time. Beyond these meagre words Du Bois had nothing to say, but references in autobiographical works of others point out that the participation of Du Bois was significant and it was in an address he delivered that many of the ideas he subsequently developed were found.

The conference was organized by Henry Sylvester-Williams, ⁵ a Trinidadian barrister, practising in London. It was attended by about thirty intellectuals, mostly Negroes from the West Indies and the United States along with several white and African residents of London. Du Bois and Alexander Walters were attending the Paris Exposition and this accounted for their presence at the Conference. Walters was appointed Chairman, while Du Bois was named Secretary. Walters later reported the aims of the Conference as being threefold:

First, to bring into closer touch with each other the people of African descent throughout the world:

Second to inaugurate plans to bring about a more friendly relation between the Caucasian and African races; and

Third, to start a movement looking forward to the securing to all Africans living in civilized countries their full rights and to promote their business interests.

^{4.} Ibid.

^{5.} Not much is known of Williams except that he was legal advisor to several African chiefs and other native representatives who visited London on political missions to the Colonial Office. He returned to Trinidad shortly after the Conference and died.

^{6.} Walters was Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; he also worked with the Afro-American Council and wrote often about the need for a 'Negro Cecil Rhodes'.

^{7.} Alexander Walters, My Life and Work (New York: Revell, 1917), p. 253.

Why Williams called the Conference when he did is not known, but the Boer War was raging at the time, and it no doubt influenced his thinking.

Du Bois as Secretary prepared the Conference's "Address to the Nations of the World". In the "Address" Williams' aims for the Conference were transformed by Du Bois to include limited self-government for the British Colonies in Africa and the West Indies. While the language was concilatory it was explicit in what it demanded.

Let the British Nation, the first modern champion of Negro freedom, hasten to crown the work of Wilberforce, and Clarkson, and Buxton, and Sharpe, Bishop Colenso, and Livingstone, and give, as soon as practicable, the rights of responsible government to the Black Colonies of Africa and the West Indies.

This demand was preceded by the warning that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea". His "Address" went on to suggest that the Congo Free State become a great central Negro state of the world", and that other colonial powers grant 'justice' to Negroes. He then advocated respect for the "integrity and independence of the free Negro states of Abyssinia, Liberia, Haiti, etc.", hoping that the people of these states, "the independent tribes of Africa, the Negroes of the West Indies and America, and the black subjects of all nations [would] take courage, strive ceaselessly, and fight bravely, that they may prove to the world that their incontestable right to be counted among the great

^{8.} Du Bois, quoted, Ibid., p. 259.

^{9.} W.E.B. Du Bois, The Soul of Black Folk (New York: A Crest Reprint, 1961), p. 23.

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brotherhood of mankind".

The Conference addressed a memorial to Queen Victoria protesting the treatment of Africans in South Africa and Rhodesia, especially, "the compulsory labour, segregation, the curfew, the passes, and the restrictions on their right to vote". The reply through the Queen's secretary was polite, but vague. She had commanded the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, that "in settling the lines on which the administration of the conquered [South African] territories is to be conducted, Her Majesty's Government will not overlook the interest and welfare of the native races". 12

The Pan-African Conference had its social side and Walters reported that it "brightened immeasurably the social season of the London Negro colony and served as a brilliant intellectual and social diversion for 'coloured American tourists' abroad that summer". The Lord Bishop of London entertained the delegates at 'his stately palace'. Walters, self-consciously reports: "After a magnificent repast had been served we were conducted through the extensive grounds which surround the palace. Professor Du Bois (and several others) moved about the palace and grounds with an ease and elegance that was surprising; one would have thought they were 'to the manor born'." Following a tea for the delegates at the St. Ermin Hotel ("one of the most elegant in the city . . . splendid repast was served") the

^{10.} Du Bois, quoted Walters, op. cit., pp. 258 - 260.

^{11.} Du Bois, quoted, <u>Ibid</u>., p. 256.

^{12.} Walters, op. cit., p. 257.

'distinguished' delegates returned home "vowing they would recruit the better classes of our people in their project". 13

The Conference, before concluding its meeting, voted a constitution and named officers (Du Bois was vice-president for the United States) to continue to press its programme on the colonial powers concerned. But "the meeting had no deep roots in Africa itself, and the movement and the idea died for a generation". Its significance was that Du Bois, after attending its meetings, began to see the American racial problem in a world wide and especially African perspective.

Apart from his presence at the Universal Races Conference in 1911 and his call for a Congress to meet during the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, Du Bois, between 1900 and 1919, did little to build a Pan-African organization, although, as already mentioned, it was during this period that most of his proposals for Africa were developed. While he continued to reiterate to his readers in <u>Crisis</u> that "the cause of Liberia, the cause of Haiti, the cause of South Africa is our cause, and the sooner we realize this the better", ¹⁵ it was not until 1919 that his idea for a series of Pan-African Congresses was realized. In that year the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples (N.A.A.C.P.) sent Du Bois to Europe to collect material for a history of Negro participation in the War just concluded, and to call, if possible, a Pan-African Congress.

^{13.} Ibid., p. 261.

^{14.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 8.

^{15.} Du Bois, quoted Elliott M. Rudwick, W.E.B. Du Bois: A Study in Minority Group Leadership (University City: University of Pennsylvania, 1960), pp. 210 - 211.

Du Bois secured passage on the press ship "Orizaba" by 'indirection', landed in Paris in December, 1918, and went about trying "to impress upon the Peace Conference sitting at Versailles the importance of Africa in the future of the world". 16 He tried to see President Woodrow Wilson, but got only as far as Colonel House, "who was sympathetic but non-committal". 17 A memorandum was prepared for presentation to Wilson outlining Du Bois' plans for a Pan-African Congress and suggestions on what the Peace Conference should do regarding Africa. The Chicago Tribune of January 19, 1919, reported that Du Bois' suggestions were "quite Utopian, and . . . has less than a Chinaman's chance of getting anywhere . . . but it is nevertheless interesting". It held out a ray of hope, "as 'self-determination' is one of the words to conjure with in Paris nowadays, the Negro leaders are seeking to have it applied, if possible, in a measure to their race in Africa".

In the memorandum - which was published in <u>Crisis</u> as the official policy of the N.A.A.C.P. at the time he arrived in Europe - Du Bois cautiously acknowledged that while the principle of self-determination cannot be applied to uncivilized peoples, there were available groups of educated Negroes who constituted "the thinking classes of the future Negro world" and should be given "the decisive voice" in the disposition of the German colonies. ¹⁹ These people were the African chiefs and educated Negroes in the West Indies and the United States, French West Africa, Equatorial Africa, British Uganda,

^{16.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 8.

^{17.} Ibid.

^{18.} Quoted Du Bois, Ibid.

^{19.} Du Bois, quoted Rudwick, op. cit., pp. 210 - 211.

Nigeria, Basutoland, Swaziland, Sierre Leone, Gold Coast, Gambia, Bechuana-land, and in the Union of South Africa. The governments of Haiti, Abyssinia, and Liberia were also to be represented. In order that the opinions of these groups could be determined, a Pan-African Congress was to be called. But as Rudwick points out, as far as Du Bois was concerned, the dispositions of these groups were already known since he advised Wilson what the Peace Conference should do with the German Colonies. The colonies should be internationalized and be placed "under the guidance of international organizations. The governing international commission should represent not simply governments, but modern culture, science, commerce, social reform, and religious philanthropy. It must represent not simply the white world, but the civilized Negro world". 20

The suggestion for a Pan-African Congress was not enthusiastically received by either of the three major powers at the Peace Conference. The United States and Great Britain, feeling that official French policy would allow no meeting, refused to issue passports to prospective delegates. When the announcement was made that the First Pan-African Congress 21 was to be held February 19 - 21, in the Grand Hotel, Paris, Acting Secretary of State Polk was 'puzzled' and reiterated that he "had been officially advised by the French Government that no such conference would be held". 22

France's change of policy occurred when Du Bois was able to convince

Balise Diagne on the value of the Pan-African Congress. Diagne was a Senegalese

^{20.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 9.

^{21.} Du Bois called this Congress the 'First', and to avoid confusion his enumeration will be followed.

^{22.} Ibid., p. 10.

representative in the Chamber of Deputies, and more importantly was Commissaire-General in charge of recruiting native Africans for the French Army. During the War he had recruited eighty thousand African soldiers who took part in several battles, including the German onslaught in Flanders Field and the Marne. Diagne stood high in public esteem and was a close friend of Georges Clemenceau, Premier of France. (Later Diagne was much criticized by African nationalists as a French 'stooge'.) Diagne convinced Clemenceau of the value of the Congress and in early February Clemenceau agreed that the Congress could be held as long as it was not advertised. 23

The First Pan-African Congress was attended by fifty-seven delegates from fifteen countries. Of that number, twelve delegates were from nine African territories. Sixteen delegates were American, and twenty-one were from the West Indies. The remainder were from Great Britain, Belgium, France and Portugal. While Du Bois spoke of these delegates as representative, apart from himself, and one or two others, the delegates represented no one except themselves. Most of the delegates were residents of France and this appeared to have been the main criteria for their presence at the Congress.

The Congress was described by the New York Evening Globe as "the first assembly of its kind in history . . . seated at long green tables in the council room today were Negroes in the trim uniform of American Army officers, other American coloured men in frock coats or business suits, polished French Negroes who hold public office, Senegalese who sit in the French Chamber of

^{23.} Ibid., pp. 9 - 10.

Deputies . . . ". 24 Diagne was elected President and gave the opening address;

Du Bois was elected executive secretary. Diagne's speech was restrained and laudatory of French colonialism. Other speakers acquainted the delegates with Belgium's latest reforms in the Congo while another spoke about the "opportunities and liberties given the natives in the Portugese colonies". 25

When the time came to pass resolutions for presentation to the Peace Conference the delegates lost some of their accommodating pose and were critical of colonial policies.

The resolutions asked that the "allied and associated powers establish a code of law for the international protection of the natives of Africa, similar to the proposed international code for labour". Also that a permanent bureau be established under the League of Nations to oversee the application of the code of laws so that "the political, social and economic welfare of the natives" would be assured. The resolutions went on: "The Negroes of the world demand that hereafter the natives of Africa and the peoples of African descent be governed" so that they are allowed to own as much land as they can profitably develop; capital investment by outsiders should be "regulated as to prevent exploitation of the natives and the exhaustion of the natural wealth of the country"; the general conditions of labour were to be prescribed and regulated in each state and slavery and corporal punishment had to be abolished; in education each child had the right "to learn to read and write his own language,

^{24.} Quoted by George Padmore, Pan-Africanism or Communism (London: Dobson, 1956), p. 123.

^{25.} Quoted by Rudwick, op. cit., p. 213.

^{26.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 11.

and the language of the trustee nation, at public expense, and to be given technical education in some branch of industry"; the application of the principle of self-determination was limited by the factor of African development but "the natives of Africa must have the right to participate in Government . . . in conformity with the principle that the government exists for the natives and not the natives for the Government". In cases where the Africans were not receiving just treatment at the hands of colonial powers "it shall be the duty of the League of Nations to bring the matter to the notice of the civilized world". No mention was made of any right of the Africans to independence.

The Congress also formulated a petition to the Peace Conference demanding that the former German African colonies of Togoland, Cameroons, South West Africa, and Tanganyika be placed under international supervision, and be held in trust for the inhabitants. This proposal in a diluted form became embodied in the Mandates System of the League of Nations. Du Bois contended that in this proposal by the Congress were the origins of the System. But Logan comments that this was not the case. "George Louis Beer, chief of the Colonial Division of the American Delegation to Negotiate Peace in 1919, had prepared as early as 1917 a memorandum on the subject which greatly influenced the thinking of Woodrow Wilson, the real architect of the Mandates System".

^{27.} Ibid., pp. 11 - 12.

^{28.} Rayford W. Logan, "The Historical Aspects of Pan-Africanism, 1900-1945", in Pan-Africanism Reconsidered, ed. American Society of African Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), pp. 42 - 43.

Du Bois was enthusiastic about the effectiveness of the Congress and thought that it had acquired many powerful supporters. The Tenth Annual Report of the N.A.A.C.P., probably written by Du Bois, stated that:

Colonel House, of the American Peace Commission, received Dr. Du Bois and assured him that he wished these resolutions presented to the Peace Conference. Lloyd George wrote Dr. Du Bois that he would give the demands of the Congress "his careful consideration". The French Premier offered to arrange an audience for the President and Secretary of the Congress. Portugal and Belgium, great colonial powers, offered complete co-operation. The League for the Rights of Man, which freed Drefus, appointed a special commission to hear, not only of the African, but the facts as to the American race problem.

A great deal more would have been accomplished, Du Bois suggested, "if the Negroes of the world could have maintained in Paris during the entire setting of the Peace Conference a central headquarters with experts, clerks, and helpers, they could have settled the future of Africa at a cost of less than ten thousand dollars". Broderick's only comment to this was that the Congress for Du Bois was an exercise in self-deception.

The proposals by the Congress for advancement towards self-government and those for the Mandates System were premature since they had to contend with the prevailing view of the inherent inferiority of the Negro. Beer and Wilson both believed in the inherent inferiority of the Negro, and Jan Smuts, who backed Wilson's mandates proposals, held even stronger views. As far as mandates were concerned one has only to compare the African mandated territory with that of the former Turkish empire to see that it was not the system that prevented

^{29.} Rudwick, op. cit., p. 214.

^{30.} W. Du Bois, quoted Francis L. Broderick, W.E.B. Du Bois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 130.

self-government. The Turkish communities which were presumed to be white were, with the exception of Palestine, independent by 1945. Not one of the former German colonies in Africa was granted self-government by 1945.

The establishment of the League of Nations was the one hopeful result Du Bois saw from the Peace Conference. The admittance of Haiti and Liberia as full members made him optimistic that the League could become an alternative to race war. He thought that the United States would have to become a member "on terms which the world lays down" and her membership would limit racism at home. While enthusiastic he held reservations about the effectiveness of the League of Nations in Africa since it was dominated by the major African colonial powers.

The Congress was well reported in the American press (Du Bois: "the entire press of the world had approved"). The New York Herald saw nothing unreasonable in the programme but the ever realistic Chicago Tribune termed the resolutions a "dream" of "an Ethiopian Utopia". William Z. Foster saw the Congress as important since "it emphasized the solidarity of American Negroes with the oppressed colonial peoples, and especially that it expressed the national sentiments of the American Negro people". Rudwick on the other hand saw it as accomplishing very little. No one considered "Du Bois or his followers' representatives of the Negro race. Educated Negroes in the United States were not much interested in the Pan-African Congress and the masses did not respond differently.

A handful of Negro intellectuals were thinking out loud and

^{31.} Du Bois, quoted Rudwick, op. cit., p. 214.

^{32.} Quoted, Ibid., p. 213.

^{33.} William Z. Foster, The Negro People in American History (New York: International Publishers, 1954), p. 435.

resolving even louder. There was no real grass roots organizational support; none of the N.A.A.C.P. branches seemed to have taken Pan-Africa very seriously and headquarters gave it only lip-service". 34 John Hope Franklin thought that the Congress was moderately successful in that it reminded 'world public opinion' that Negroes were interested in what the Peace Conference was doing and it represented the first concerted effort by Negroes in demanding fairer treatment from colonial powers. 35

Du Bois returned to the United States after the Congress and, fired by what he thought were the possibilities of additional congresses, began to plan for a Second Pan-African Congress. Late in 1920 he was successful in convincing the executive Board of N.A.A.C.P. to lend their support and to allocate three thousand dollars for a Pan-African fund. Responding to criticism from Marcus Carvey over the lack of Africans at the previous Congress, Du Bois stated that all organizations interested in the Pan-African idea would be invited to send delegates to the Second Pan-African Congress scheduled for August and September, 1921, in London, Brussels and Paris.

Prior to the convening of this Congress, Du Bois met with the Aborigines Protection Association and was critical of its membership because it was dominated by older, conservative white men. He pointedly told the Association that while the whites were helpful to Africans they showed no concern for the opinions of Negroes. The Association should in the future defer to Negro leaders, and policies in the future should be decided by "Negro effort aided by white

^{34.} Rudwick, op. cit., pp. 215 - 216.

^{35.} John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1948), p. 462.

co-operation". ³⁶ Another meeting was held with the International Department of the British Labour Party "where the question of the relation of white and coloured labour was discussed". ³⁷ Sidney Webb declared that the Labour Party was opposed to "the colour bar in labour and elsewhere", and asked for information on Negro labour.

The first session of the Congress met in London at the Central Hall on August 28 and 29. Twice as many delegates were in attendance - 113 - as at the 1919 Congress, and African representation more than tripled with forty-one delegates. Twenty-five were from the United States, twenty-four from Europe and seven were from the West Indies. While attempts were made to have representatives from organizations and groups, most of the delegates, as in 1919, represented no one but themselves.

Du Bois, as President of the Congress, delivered the opening address in which he reviewed the problems confronting Africans and gave solutions that should be applied by the colonial powers. Following addresses by several British colonial experts, notably Sir Sydney Oliver, a former Governor of Jamaica and Dr. Norman Leys, a leading authority on Kenya, the delegates endorsed a "Declaration to the World", drafted by Du Bois. The 'Declaration' was typical of Du Bois' writing of this period and in part stated that:

The absolute equality of races, physical, political and social is the founding stone of world and human advancement. No one denies great differences of gift, capacity and attainment among individuals of all races, but the voice of Science, Religion, and practical Politics is one in denying the God-appointed existence of super-races or races naturally and inevitably and eternally inferior.

^{36.} W.E.B. Du Bois, "A Second Journey to Pan-Africa", New Republic, XXIX (1921-22), p. 39.

^{37.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 237.

That in the vast range of time, one group should in its industrial technique, or social organization, or spiritual vision, lag a few hundred years behind another, or forge fitfully ahead, or come to differ decidedly in thought, deed, and ideal, is proof of the essential richness and variety of human nature, rather than proof of the co-existence of demi-gods and apes in human form. The doctrine of racial equality does not interfere with individual liberty; rather it fulfills it. And of all the various criteria of which masses of men have in the past been prejudged and classified, that of the colour of the skin and texture of the hair, is surely the most adventitious and idiotic . . .

The beginning of wisdom in inter-racial contact is the establishment of political institutions among suppressed peoples. The habit of democracy must be made to encircle the earth. Despite the attempts to prove that its practice is the secret and devine gift of the few, no habit is more natural or more widely spread among primitive people or more easily capable of development among masses. Local self-government with a minimum of help and oversight can be established tomorrow in Asia, in Africa, America, and the isles of the sea. It will in many instances need general control and guidance, but it will fail only when that guidance seeks ignorantly and consciously its own selfish ends and not the people's liberty and good.

Surely in the twentieth century of the Prince of Peace, in the millennium of Mohammed, and in the mightiest Age of Human Reason, there can be found in the civilized world enough of altruism, learning, and benevolence to develop native institutions, whose one aim is not profit and power for the few . . .

What then do those demand who see these evils of the colour line and racial discrimination, and who believe in the divine right of suppressed and backward people to learn and aspire and be free? The Negro race through their thinking intelligentsia demand:

- 1. The recognition of civilized men as civilized despite their race or colour.
- II. Local self-government for backward groups, deliberately rising as experience and knowledge grow to complete self-government under the limitation of a self-governed world.

- III. Education in self-knowledge, in scientific truth, and in industrial technique, undivorced from the art of beauty.
- IV. Freedom in their own religion and social customs and with the right to be different and non-conformist.
 - V. Co-operation with the rest of the world in government, industry, and art on the bases of Justice, Freedom and Peace.
- VI. The return of Negroes to their land and its natural fruits and defense against the unrestrained greed of invested capital.
- VII. The establishment under the League of Nations of an international institution for study of the Negro problems.
- VIII. The establishment of an international section of the Labour Bureau of the League of Nations, charged with the protection of native labour . . .

In some such words and thoughts as these we seek to express our will and ideal, and the end of our un-trying effort. To our aid we call all men of the earth who love justice and mercy. Out of the depths we have cried unto the deaf and dumb masters of the world. Out of the depths we cry to our own sleeping souls. The answer is written in the stars.

When the Congress reconvened in Brussels on August 31, the unity that had been apparent in London had evaporated. Negroes in the audience were out-numbered by whites and the audience had, according to Du Bois, a much deeper interest than "that of white people we had found elsewhere. Many of Belgium's economic and material interests centred in Africa in the Belgian Congo. Any interference with the natives might result in an interference with the sources from which so many Belgian capitalists draw their prosperity." These fears had

^{38.} Ibid., pp. 238 - 239.

^{39.} Ibid., p. 237.

been voiced earlier by a Brussels' newspaper, The Neptune, when the announcement of the Brussels' meeting was made. The Congress was denounced as "an agency of Moscow [1921?] and the cause of native unrest in the Congo". The government was called upon to forbid the meetings of the Congress in Brussels. The editorial went on to say that

It is interesting to note that this Association (N.A.A.C.P.) is directed by personages who it is said in the United States have received remuneration from Moscow (Bolsheviks). The Association has already organized its propaganda in the lower Congo, and we must not be astonished if some day it causes grave difficulties in the Negro village of Kinshasa, composed of all the n'er-do-wells of the various tribes of the colony aside from some hundreds of labourers.

Despite the criticism in the press the Congress met and for the first two days, "calmness and clichés reigned". He Belgian spokesmen from the Colonial office pointed out to the delegates how far the Africans had advanced under Belgian administration. The 'calmness' was broken by Du Bois when, on the last day of the meeting, he read the resolutions adopted at the London sessions and asked that they be accepted by the delegates. One of the resolutions was critical of Belgian's colonial administration, although it also gave her credit for plans of reform for the future. Du Bois' action "produced 'a serious clash' between the American-British delegation, who favoured a critical approach to colonialism, and the French-Belgian delegates, who desired an accommodation with the status quo". 142

^{40.} Quoted by Padmore, op. cit., p. 133.

^{41.} Rudwick, op. cit., p. 223.

^{42. &}lt;u>Ibid</u>.

Diagne, as Chairman, refused to allow the London resolutions to be voted on, and charged that the "black American radicals" were courting disaster. A white Belgian was allowed to present an alternate set of resolutions in which it was agreed that the Africans could profit from education and asked that the colonial powers establish commissions to investigate the educational and living conditions of Africans. Also suggested was an amalgamation of racial advancement organizations with headquarters in Belgium. In spite of the overall majority of the American and British delegates the alternate resolutions were accepted by the Congress in a vote in which, according to Du Bois, even white spectators were allowed to cast ballots. Du Bois thought that Diagne had acted in "bad faith" but felt that it was better to allow the London resolutions to be tabled than to cause further disunity in the fragile organization.

In a mood that was characterized by antagonism, strain and anger, the delegates moved on to Paris for the third session of the Congress which met on September 5 and 6. "Diagne confessed he had been dictatorial in Brussels but argued that he was only trying to save the race from destruction." But his action as Chairman in the Paris session did not differ overmuch from that at Brussels and he often refused to recognize delegates who disagreed with him. The schism between the British-American and Belgian-French delegates was not helped when Diagne along with Gratien Candace 45 told the Congress about the

^{43.} Ibid.,

^{44.} Ibid., p. 224.

^{45.} Guadalupian member of the French Chamber of Deputies.

"good fortune of being 'black Frenchman'." Du Bois was later to characterize Diagne's stand as a 'crying danger' to black France. Leaders such as Diagne were only too willing to go along with the exploitation of the masses in the colonies. They held to the "ordinary European attitude of the classes to the masses". 47

The split in the Congress was brought into the open with the presentation once again of the London resolutions. The French delegates refused to accept any of the resolutions that were critical of capitalism or those demanding the return of land to Africans. Diagne termed the latter "rank communism". With these "minor corrections" the resolutions were adopted.

The Congress, before adjourning, elected officers to a temporary PanAfrican secretariat which was to oversee the calling of congresses every two
years and to lobby for the implementation of the Congress' resolutions. Gratien
Candace was elected President; I. Breton, Secretary; Rayford W. Logan and
another Frenchman completed the executive. Du Bois asked to be relieved of his
post as Secretary, although he agreed to continue to serve on a committee that
was to oversee the establishment of a permanent organization for the Pan-African
Movement. Until the ideological differences between the American-British and
French-Belgian members was healed, Du Bois thought that a 'loose' organizational
structure was sufficient.

^{46. &}lt;u>Ibid</u>.

^{47.} Du Bois quoted Broderick, op. cit., p. 131.

^{48.} Quoted Rudwick, op. cit., p. 225.

^{49.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 238.

^{50.} Logan, op. cit., p. 225.

After the Congress Du Bois went to Geneva to present the resolutions of the Congress to the League of Nations. His one minor success was that the League's Labour Bureau under Albert Thomas agreed to establish within the Bureau a special section dealing with Negro Labour. He was less successful, however, in demanding before the Mandates Commission⁵¹ that a Negro "properly fitted in character and training", be appointed a member of the Commission. The Commission accepted the petition but nothing was done.

With his resignation from the executive Du Bois attempted to shift some of the responsibility for the Pan-African Movement to the newly elected executive and especially to the new executive secretary, I. Breton, a French school teacher, but was forced to resume his leading role when Breton appeared unenthusiastic. Breton declared the meeting of a Third Congress to be indefinitely postponed, citing a lack of interest among possible delegates. He reported that in an attempt to collect dues from members of the Movement he spent fifteen thousand francs but collected only one thousand francs in dues. Du Bois, fearful that if the Congress for 1923 was not held the fragile structure of the movement would disintegrate, persuaded other members of the executive (except Candace) to over-rule Breton. Breton and Candace immediately tendered their resignations.

Du Bois persuaded the National Association of Coloured Women in the United States to sponsor the Congress, and succeeded in getting the British Labour Party to officially support the holding of the first session of the 1923

^{51.} The Commission had ten members, all Europeans, half of which belonged to non-mandatory countries.

^{52.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 240.

Congress in London.

end of 1923. The resignations of Candace and Breton were accepted, widening the split between the French and American members of the movement. Despite addresses by such British socialists as H.G. Wells, Lord Oliver and Harold Laski, the meeting was poorly attended with 'representatives' from only thirteen countries. Ramsay MacDonald, electioneering, sent his regrets about not attending and declared: "Anything I can do to advance the cause of your people on your recommendation, I shall always do gladly". 53 Resolutions from the earlier Congresses were reiterated, the most significant being the demand that Africans be given a voice in their own governance. The Congress' manifesto stressed that the only road to peace was to treat "black folk as men". Taking a swing at Jan Christian Smuts, Premier of South Africa, the Manifesto concluded:

What more paradoxical figure today confronts the world than the official head of a great South African State striving blindly to build peace and goodwill in Europe by standing on the necks and hearts of millions of black Africans.

A second session of the Third Congress was held in Lisbon and arrangements were undertaken by the <u>Liga Africana</u>. Padmore described the <u>Liga as "an actual federation of all the indigenous associations scattered throughout the five provinces of Portugese Africa."

The meetings were attended by two former Portugese Colonial Ministers. Representations were made in an attempt to get the Government to abolish conscript labour in its African provinces, and to</u>

^{53.} Quoted Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 241.

^{54.} Quoted Padmore, op. cit., p. 140.

^{55. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 241.

initiate other reforms. The representations were ignored. It was after this Congress that Du Bois made his first trip to Africa, discussed earlier in the thesis.

A Fourth Congress was scheduled for 1925 but by this time the lack of support for the Movement had taken its toll. Du Bois' idea was to charter a ship and "sail down the Caribbean stopping for meetings in Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba and the French Islands" but upon hearing the price of the charter from the French Line - fifty thousand dollars - the scheme was quickly dropped. Du Bois' only comment was that he suspected "the colonial powers spiked this plan". The Unable to find support in holding the Congress elsewhere, the 1925 Congress was indefinitely postponed. It was not until August 1927, that he was able to collect enough support to call the Fourth Pan-African Congress to meet in New York City.

The Circle for Peace and Foreign Relations of the National Association of Coloured Women under Addie W. Hunter and Addie Dickenson agreed to sponsor the Congress for the second time. Two hundred and eight delegates from twenty—two American states and ten foreign countries attended. Most of the American delegates were the representatives of various women's organizations. Africa was sparsely represented by delegates from the Gold Coast (Chief Amoah II), Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria. Anthropologists - Melville Herskovits from the United States and Mensching from Germany - were to address the sessions.

Du Bois, ever hopeful, thought that this Congress would "settle for all

^{56.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 242.

^{57.} Ibid.

time the question as to whether Negroes are to lead in the rise of Africa or whether they must always and everywhere follow the guidance of white folk". S8 Afraid that this Congress would become confused with Garvey's "Back-to-Africa" Movement - which had happened to previous Congresses - Du Bois was extremely careful in his pre-Congress statements. The New York Times was informed that the Pan-African Movement had no desire to resettle Negroes in Africa nor was it interested in removing whites from their recognized 'portion' of Africa. The Congress was only interested in promoting harmonious race relations and the Times lauded the "absence of inflammatory racialism". 59

The resolutions from previous Congresses were reworked and brought up to date by including sections deploring American intervention in Haiti and the increasing power and influence of the Firestone Rubber Company in the affairs of Liberia. One new note was added, however: "We thank the Soviet Government of Russia for its liberal attitude toward the coloured races and for the help which it has extended to them from time to time". A generous statement since the American Communist Party was denouncing the Pan-African Movement as "petit-bourgeois, black nationalism . . . blocking the dissemination of Communist influence among the Negroes".

Once again Du Bois' hopes of arousing the Negro race were unrealized.

The Fourth Congress had little impact on conditions in the United States, the

^{58.} Du Bois, quoted Broderick, op. cit., p. 132.

^{59.} Quoted Rudwick, op. cit., p. 232.

^{60.} Quoted Broderick, op. cit., p. 132.

^{61.} Quoted Colin Legum, Pan-Africanism (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 30.

West Indies, or in Africa. The New York <u>Times</u> reported that the Congress centred "in the personality of Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois"; 62 apart from that it had little to sustain it as a viable movement.

Du Bois made one more attempt to keep the Movement alive. Answering critics that his Congresses were always convened away from Africa, he scheduled a Fifth Congress in Tusis for 1929. The French Government, however, upon being informed of the plans "very politely, but firmly, informed [Du Bois] that the Congress could take place at Marseilles or any French city, but not in Africa". The Congress was rescheduled for somewhere in Europe, but was never held since, as Du Bois put it, "there came the Great Depression". 64

No further Congresses were attempted during the 1930's and it was not until 1945 that a new Congress was called. The Congress was organized by the Pan-African Federation; ⁶⁵ Du Bois had little to do with its planning, although at the age of seventy-three, he flew across the Atlantic and was given an "enthusiastic welcome by the delegates". ⁶⁶ He was elected Chairman but for the first time in the Pan-African Movement the initiative and leadership passed to Africans. Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, Peter Abrahams, S.L. Akintola and Nmandi Azikiwe played prominent roles. Over two hundred delegates were present

^{62.} Quoted B.F. Rogers, "W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey and Pan-Africa", Journal of Negro History, 40 (April, 1955), p. 157.

^{63.} Du Bois, The World and Africa, p. 243.

^{64.} Ibid.

^{65.} Formed in 1944 by the merger of the International African Service Bureau with several other coloured and colonial organizations in Great Britain. Its aim was to present a united front in ending colonialism in Africa. See Padmore, op. cit., pp. 146 - 151.

^{66.} Padmore, op. cit., p. 162.

and what was significant was that a large number of them represented political. trade union, and farmer's organizations in Africa. Many of the delegates had just attended the organizational meeting for the World Federation of Trade Unions held in London. These delegates had organizational support in the colonial territories and unlike the small intellectual elite that had guided the previous Congresses were geared for social action. The Satyagraha methods of Gandhi were thoroughly discussed and endorsed by the Congress "as the only effective means of making alien rulers respect the wishes of unarmed subject A study of the resolutions adopted by the 1945 Congress indicates the transformation of the Pan-African Movement from a protest movement primarily against racial inequality and involving mainly western hemisphere Negroes to an African movement primarily concerned with the liberation of African colonies from colonial rule. Gone were resolutions reaffirming vague principles and demanding limited self-government. The resolutions were direct and in firm language pointed up the fact that these delegates saw only "complete and absolute independence for the people of West Africa as the only solution to . . . existing problems".68

While Padmore comments that "Du Bois was by no means a silent spectator at the Fifth Pan-African Congress" his influence was minimal and his acclaim at the Congress was largely sentimental. After 1945 he was not overtly active in events concerning Africa. In the late 1950's, thoroughly

^{67.} Quoted by Colin Legum, Africa: Handbook to the Continent (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 420.

^{68.} Padmore, op. cit., p. 165.

^{69. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 162.

disenchanted with life in the United States, he moved to Moscow, and in 1961 accepted the invitation of Kwame Nkrumah to live in Accra. He died there in 1963.

When Du Bois made the familiar discovery that being a Negro in a predominantly white society meant rejection and inferiority, his personal reaction was to isolate himself for life from all but the most superficial contact with white people. But the relationship between whites and Negroes was at that time, as it is today, the most pressing problem facing American society. Du Bois, while holding himself aloof behind his 'veil', did not forego the problem. His separation was a personal decision. At the public level he constantly strove to right the injustice that saw Negroes in essentially the same position as that prior to the American Civil War. White Americans still accepted as inevitable and wise the subordinate position ascribed to Negroes. The justification rested on the assumption that Negroes were in some manner innately less intelligent than whites, and hence incapable of adequately performing tasks requiring higher skills.

Previously this assumption had been attributed to cultural rather than biological factors, and attempts to explain the apparent racial differences were made on these grounds. Frederick Douglass and Brooker T. Washington accepted such arguments and consequently advocated as the solution a speed-up in the process of education among Negroes. Implicit in such a response was the assumption that the Negro had no noteworthy cultural accomplishments. The evidence cited for this belief was the absence of any known higher Negro civilization either in America or Africa.

Du Bois totally rejected this latter assumption. He wanted equality both

within the Western world between Negroes and whites, and between the African nations in embryo and Western nations. This equality was not to be a reward for successfully aping the ways of western civilization through education, but a right derived both from the natural dignity of man and what Du Bois considered the glorious achievements of African civilization. The result was a blending in his work of the rights of Negroes in the United States with the rights of Africans. The blending took place in a revival of interest in African history and society, and an abhorrence of European domination of Africa. The result of this came to be called Pan-Africanism.

Du Bois correctly diagnosed racial problems as being as much psychological in character as political, and as a result he saw the need for a transvaluation of the ideas that denied the existence of any African cultural achievements. In restoring Africa to a respected place in the world, Du Bois hoped that some semblance of dignity might be restored to the Negro, a dignity that had been lost through years of enslavement, persecution, inferiority, discrimination and dependency. Without dignity or a pride in their history, psychological emancipation for Negroes was impossible. To this end, Du Bois sought to bolster the dignity and self-esteem of Negroes by searching the past for factors that could give the Negroes the basis of pride in their race. Out of this search came Du Bois' conviction that all people of African descent had common interests and must work together if freedom were to be attained.

Du Bois saw the common interests of Africans and Negrœs as resulting

^{1.} See Immanuel Wallerstein, "Pan-Africanism as Protest", in The Revolution in World Politics, ed., Morton A. Kaplan (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962), p. 139.

from two factors. First, their racial kinship, and, second, their common history of exploitation and subjection. His Pan-African idea was an attempt to exploit both of these factors in the hope that joint action could force a change in the European domination of Africans. His Pan-African Congresses were to be the vehicle for applying such force but, by and large, the Congresses were empty gestures, since the common interests that Du Bois spoke of were not sufficient to overcome other factors. International Negro-African unity did not exist, and, even if it did, the race possessed no power at that time that could force a change in American racial patterns or European colonialism.

The Pan-African idea fulfilled for Du Bois a deep personal need in that it allowed him to get beyond the American scene and find the acceptance and recognition which he felt were denied him in the United States. In his own country Du Bois isolated himself, personally, from the mainstream of American life, fearing the sting of 'deliberate insult' if he attempted to participate. The Pan-African Congresses provided him with an atmosphere of racial brotherhood, in which there was little danger of personal rejection or insult. The satiation of the need for recognition and acceptance was sufficient for Du Bois and, hence, prevented him from seeing the weaknesses inherent in his organization. In light of this, one can say that the movement was a success for Du Bois personally but a failure in its attempt to ameliorate racial conditions in the United States or Africa.

While commentators on early Pan-Africanism have consistently used the term 'movement' to describe Du Bois' Congresses, organizationally, his Pan-

Africanism was not a movement in the sense of enjoying wide support from those it was designed to help. African involvement was minimal. Most of the delegates were from the United States or the West Indies, and those Africans who did attend were residents of colonial countries and had little contact with events in Africa. Du Bois, in 1923, attempted to interest the National Congress of British West Africa but found little rapport for, or interest in, his idea. The lack of African support was matched also by the lack of lasting support in the United States. The N.A.A.C.P. approved of the 1919 Congress and voted funds for the 1921 Congress, but thereafter did little to support the idea. Du Bois did little except for writing editorials to win widespread support or influence key Board members. His relations with Board members were often strained and he refused to modify his programme in order to keep them interested. Instead, he attacked them, accusing them of being ashamed of their African heritage.

The only consistent factor in the growth of Pan-Africanism was Du Bois himself, and his own shortcomings became the shortcomings of the movement. Once he lost interest in the idea, there was little else to keep it alive. After his failure to summon a 1929 Congress, Du Bois realized the futility of his idea and concluded that there was little hope of changing racial conditions through worldwide action. Thereafter, his ideas were dormant and it was not until 1945, when more politically active organizers arrived on the scene that some of his goals were achieved. Even then, the success of Africans in ending colonialism became possible only with a rejection of Du Bois' central thesis of international racial co-operation. Colonialism was displaced when African leaders realized

that the fight had to take place on an intra-territorial rather than an inter-territorial basis.

It is possible that Du Bois! Pan-Africanism would not have achieved its aims, no matter what its support, but under the type and style of his leadership the whole effort became hollow and ineffectual. Du Bois was chiefly a propagandist, fond of writing stirring editorials and conference resolutions. He was not given to developing strong, well-organized social action groups and as a consequence his Pan-African organization was small and ineffective, never becoming more than a sort of exclusive club for a few African and Negro intellectuals. Du Bois was unable or perhaps unwilling to attempt wider support, and consequently his idea of international racial co-operation remained just that - an idea.

Du Bois started out in life to be a social scientist, a seeker of truth in the belief that the truth would make the Negro and the African free men. But he felt driven to be a propagandist and as such his truth-seeking became more selective and his truths more supple. Nowhere was this more evident than in his use of race and colour, central to his Pan-Africanism. Negroness and blackness not only had to be made acceptable, they had to be romanticized and in his more rhapsodic moments made the criterion for good, beauty, and truth. Race doctrine that was anathema when it was white became eloquent when it was black: "I believe in the Negro race, in the beauty of its genius, the sweetness of its soul". In such a scheme white became the criterion of all evil. Du Bois thought that since coloured people everywhere were exploited by whites it was

^{2.} See Harold R. Isaacs, The New World of Negro Americans (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

possible to develop international racial co-operation between all coloured peoples. The idea of common racial consciousness was even more tenuous than his idea of common consciousness between Africans and Negroes. Racial chauvinism was not a dominating force among coloured peoples, for if it were Du Bois might have headed an epic movement. Du Bois was a captive of his own racial philosophy which saw the call to arms more urgent than many-sided analysis. The call to arms was hardly a success, since colour was not monomania among coloured peoples.

In all of this, one is forced to conclude that Du Bois' Pan-Africanism was a failure. A failure mainly in his misunderstanding of the forces at work in the world of the 1920's and 1930's. He did not realize that other forces apart from race and colour were concurrently at work. The most that can be said for his idea is that it produced the idiom in which politically more active organizations and leaders could operate. His Congresses symbolized that the day was coming when Africans would be part of the world community and their voices heard in the councils of power. Du Bois made himself and his Pan-Africanism part of the glacial pressures that move human society, and in doing so he provided impetus for others.

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