

Et Maintenant, Lord Lugard?

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ABSTRACT

The author addresses Lord Lugard. He recalls his career and his policy, which he contrasts with the French tendency to assimilation. Contrary to the belief of some British authors, this has by no means been the constant inspiration of French colonial policy and methods. Indirect rule has been practised by local governors at least since the Second Empire; from the end of the nineteenth century the official policy was that of 'Association'—very close to Lugard's ideas. Everything depended on the indigenous chiefs (preserved but, in contrast to Lugard, not systematically consolidated) and on a gradual evolution, the end of which was not foreseen.

The author recalls that in 1932 he wrote an article inspired by the egalitarian and Jacobin ideas of the Revolution and directed against 'Lugardism'. He prophesied the collapse of chiefdoms and traditional societies. The future of Africa, in his opinion, depended on the new classes modernized by our education and he looked forward to the extension of French citizenship to Africans. His ideas found no audience. In 1945 they were partially realized in the 'Union Française', but very much too late and in a historical context of independence which finally triumphed.

What have been the roles and the respective importance of Lugardism and Assimilation in the emergence and recent development of the new African nations? 'Indirect rule', perfected by Lugard, accustomed small areas to responsibilities; the English habit of 'self-government' opened minds to centrifugal movements in African countries. By contrast, the non-consolidation of chiefdoms in the French system has facilitated the creation of unity in the new nations; primary education in French has narrowed the gap between the élite and the masses.

Each of these policies, English and French, has therefore had its limitations and its merits. Both have prepared Africa for the world of today, but belatedly and inadequately. Their authors lacked clear conceptions of long-term ends and these have been forced on them by evolution and circumstances.