

PN-AAY-966

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN LIBERIA:  
A Survey of Problems and Assessment of Research

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December 1980

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Liberia is a small, tropical country, rather sparsely and unevenly populated, with rich natural resources including minerals, forests and agricultural land. It is actively involved in international commerce, though its export trade is heavily dominated by foreign concessionaires. A modern monetary economy has developed, though it is confined largely to urban areas. The majority of the population remains dependent on subsistence agriculture, with a significant proportion under- or unemployed. Two features of Liberia's political organization combine with its structurally weak economy to produce its distinctive collection of population/development issues. The first is Liberia's non-colonial past, the source of an unusual legacy including its immigrant, urban elite of the descendants of former American slaves. This helps to account for among other features, the extreme disparity between traditional and modern sectors in the Liberian economy, and the relative neglect of public health and population issues in the rural, tribal, areas. Secondly, Liberia has recently undergone a major political transition. After an almost unparalleled duration of one-party government and peaceful transitions between leaders, Liberia underwent a comparatively mild revolution in 1980, bringing a new government headed by Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe to power. This paper explores the implications of these and other features of Liberia's natural and political make-up for population and development research and planning.

## II. GEOGRAPHY, ECOLOGY AND RESOURCES

Liberia is located at the Southern tip of the great Western bulge of the African continent, just off the equator. It is a fairly small country by African standards, just shy of 111,370 square kilometers in area (43,000 square miles or about the size of Pennsylvania). It is probably best known internationally for its thriving business, based in Monrovia, as a country of registry for ships engaged in international commerce and anxious to avoid the taxes and/or regulation imposed elsewhere. Liberia's coastline is a long one, though, which thrives (relative to the interior) on a number of other activities including international trade, government and fishing. The vast majority of the country's urban settlement is on the coast, a disproportion which was even greater in the past. Liberia is bordered by Sierra Leone to the west, the Republic of Guinea to the northeast, and the Ivory Coast to the east. Of its neighbors, Liberia probably has most in common with Sierra Leone.

Liberia's climate is tropical. Most of the year is hot and humid, with temperatures averaging in the 70's or 80's fahrenheit. Liberia has never experienced a drought, earthquake or hurricane. Each year, a hot dust-laden wind called the Marwattan blows from the Sahara, producing a dry season during which humidity may be as low as 50%. The rest of the year is wet; humidity seldom falls below 80% between March and November and 85% of the year's coastal rain falls. Precipitation is much lighter inland than along the Atlantic coast. Six main rivers run southward perpendicular to the coast, each of them carrying a good flow of water year round. There are, however, great variations in flow due to the rainfall pattern and rapid

run-off from the watersheds. Most streams overflow their banks after the heavy downpours of the rainy season, producing pools of stagnant water in which insects breed. The climate favours their activity year round and they are plentiful. Several species of the Anopheles mosquito transmit malaria; termites, driver ants, tsetse flies and Aedes aegypti, the vector of yellow fever and dengue, are also in unfortunate evidence. Watercourses provide the major boundaries dividing Liberia into counties, as well as into zones of particularly intense disease activity.

Topography is the greatest variable physically distinguishing the parts of the country. It may be used to divide Liberia into three zones. The 30 to 50 mile wide coastal belt is characterized by mangrove marshes, lagoons and tidal creeks. Most of the interior is a tropical rain forest region of hills and plateaus rising to about 1000 feet. The far northern part of the country is called the Guinea Highland; there the forest is sparse and mountains rise as high as 5000 feet. Most of the best agricultural land is not directly along the coast, where rainfall has eroded and leached the soil. Otherwise, Liberian soil is generally rich, and vegetation is abundant throughout. About half the country is forested, virtually all of this with commercially marketable trees.

Liberia's mineral wealth is fairly extensive, though not of uniformly high quality. Iron ore is particularly important, followed by diamonds. The latter are generally of poor quality, and Liberia's diamond trade shows an artificially high volume due to smuggling from Sierra Leone's superior diamond fields. Timber and rubber are the

other chief natural products exported from the country. Timber has only become an extensive commodity recently; rubber was the traditional mainstay with over 50,000 hectares under cultivation in 1964. Other tree crops are also grown in Liberia, and the climate seems especially suited to them, but generally conducive to the development of all types of tropical agriculture.

### III. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The extent to which knowledge gained from research in other settings can be used in the Liberian population and development planning efforts is limited by the distinctiveness of Liberia's past and present political organization and social structure. Liberia is unusual in its lack of a colonial past, in its long political stability and the long period in which it was one of the few black-ruled countries in black Africa, in its tiny but long-enduring black elite, and even, among countries where wealth is characteristically maldistributed and government characteristically enriches the governors, in its institutionalization of both features. Liberia has also been unusual in the absence of any particularly strong tribal orientation in political activity. This of course may change, just as one-party rule did. In this section, we shall look first at Liberia's history from its founding to 1980 under the exclusive rule of the Americo-Liberian elite. Then we shall turn to a survey of what is known about contemporary revolutionary Liberia.

#### A. History

The Republic of Liberia was founded in 1847 by black Americans

who migrated to Liberia, under the sponsorship of some white anti-slavery groups in America. The majority of the American migrants left the South, where there was no clear and satisfactory position for "free persons of colour". Later they were joined by freed slaves, resulting in an early stratification among migrants on the basis of skin color; this vanished in time. The first permanent settlement of the migrants was made in 1822 on the site of present-day Monrovia. Between 1822 and 1839, several other Americo-Liberian colonies were established along the coast. In each case, natives had to be subdued by force. The Americo-Liberian settlements banded together for mutual protection against insurgent native populations. From a very early point, they took on virtually all characteristics of a classical West European aristocracy. Their initial contacts with indigenous populations were governed by principles similar to those of European colonists--they sought to bring civilization, including Christianity, to the savages.

The Americo-Liberians' concerted move to go beyond mutual help to the creation of a central government came in 1839. This was a response to tribal insurgency; though it failed, another attempt was made in 1847. This time union was sought in response to British as well as tribal challenges. Both threats to Liberian sovereignty continued into the twentieth century. The United States was from the beginning the new country's staunchest ally; it provided both military and economic aid. For the most part, U.S. aid bolstered the position of the minority government of Americo-Liberians--never more than 2% of the total population and probably always much less--at the expense

of the indigenous, tribal populations. Various attempts were made, eventually, to incorporate the latter population more fully into the affairs of the country. In 1905, the old system of ad hoc deals with local chiefs, backed up (or superceded) by sheer force, gave way to a new system of dual administration. The central government appointed District Commissioners, who acted in consort with local chiefs. In 1923 this system was revised in line with British policies of indirect rule, using paramount chiefs, clan chiefs and town chiefs, of whom over 500 were brought into active relationship with the government. Discrimination against the tribal peoples was considerable, with special taxes combined with disenfranchisement. Natives were legally distinguished from Americo-Liberians.

In 1944, Liberian policy began to shift toward an attempt to incorporate the indigenous population more fully into the nation-state. A program of national unification was proclaimed. The three hinterland provinces were allowed to elect six of the thirty-nine members of the lower chamber of the Liberian legislature (which is modelled after that of the U.S.). Similarly, universal suffrage was introduced in presidential elections. These reforms did not, however, amount to granting the tribal societies in Liberia any substantial independent voice in public affairs. Instead, they give the appearance of participation and the possibility of assimilation. At least until the recent revolution, few persons of wholly tribal background (i.e. those born of two tribal parents and raised in the hinterlands) reached high office. Those who did so had of necessity to adopt all the essential

behavioral characteristics of Americo-Liberians. The educational system was just open enough to allow them to do so.

Economic and social development has followed largely the lines of cleavage established by Liberia's political structure. The country has prospered rather considerably by West African standards, with a 1977 per capita GDP of \$699.7 mn.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, wealth is very unevenly distributed, with the small fraction of Americo-Liberians (perhaps 0.6% of the population) controlling the overwhelming majority of monetary wealth.<sup>2</sup> The Americo-Liberian elite has been forthcoming with a variety of aid programs for the tribal hinterlands. These have included health services and education, but have always stopped short of anything which might bring a fundamental transformation of the hinterlands. There has been no support for a transition away from subsistence agriculture, for example, and in line with this there has been no unified national developmental planning or reality.<sup>3</sup> Until very recently there were no roads linking the hinterlands to each other and to Monrovia; schools have been decidedly inferior in the hinterlands, and in any case reach a much smaller proportion of children. The benefits of capable and honest administration in public affairs have also not been forthcoming. This is no small matter in a country where the government is a major source of private income for the elite. In 1970 Liberia's government consumption expenditure amounted to \$45.3m, or \$39 per capita, nearly three times that of neighboring Sierra Leone.<sup>4</sup>

The 1944 policy of incorporating tribal peoples into the policy, but in a decidedly subsidiary role, continued in force until 1962.

There were various minor insurgencies, but no concerted resistance to government policy. In general, the Americo-Liberian elite seemed to have made enough concessions to native interests, allowed enough assimilation and provided for enough development, to make its rule tenable. In addition, it perfected a political style which reminds one in some ways of American populism--a folksiness combined with a claim to superior moral insight. The only institution well-poised to present a threat to the elite was the army, since it alone contained a considerable majority of tribesmen even in the officer corps. Indeed, several unsuccessful coups were discovered during the period, and their leaders punished; it is hard to tell to what degree the government cultivated these insurrections to make examples of them, but in any case, the examples seem for a long time to have been well heeded.

Liberia showed, until the 1980 revolution, an almost complete absence of the tribal political organization so characteristic of neighboring, and economically similar, Sierra Leone. A number of possible reasons for this may be advanced, but a few seem key. First, there are no tribal groupings which command the allegiance of a significant proportion of the population. There are some fourteen principal ethnic groups, of which the largest are the Kpelle and Bassa, with some 20% and 16% of the population respectively. In Sierra Leone, by contrast, over 30% of the population is Mende, and nearly 30% Temne. Second, to continue the contrast with Sierra Leone, there is no major socio-geographic divide uniting substantial supra-tribal groups. Instead, the tribal population remains fragmented.

Third, such political incorporation as there has been has undercut group identities, rather than reinforced them. This has meant that individuals and factions rather than whole communal groups compete for the spoils of political contests. Fourth, there is no substantial wage-labor force such as that in the Kona diamond fields in Sierra Leone, which might form the basis of a mobilization combining class interests and ethnic allegiances. Fifth, and relatedly, the main lines of contest over material resources have been defined as Liberian vs. foreign, so that even such union activity as has occurred has been directed against external foes rather than against government or elite appropriation of resources. Lastly, members of the elite, in line with the populist political style alluded to earlier, have appointed some of their own number to head potentially insurrectionary organizations such as trade unions, thus not only coopting them, but demonstrating their own solidarity with workers.

The government has shown considerable stability in terms of individual leaders as well as factions or parties of the population at large. President Tubman ruled for over a quarter of a century, and was succeeded by his long time and personally chosen Vice President Tolbert. Personal networks of kinship, business connection and patronage are the basis of political power within the ruling elite. These are also, though with some variations, the basis of tribal negotiations with and/or entrance into the elite. In the latter case, chiefly families are the only parts of the hinterland population (other than those adopted by Americo-Liberian families) which are able to gain access to the educational and other resources necessary to

become actors on the national political scene. This means at once that the chiefs are in a position to extend patronage to other members of their tribes and regions, and that they are the recipients of patronage from above. This pattern only becomes exaggerated when one looks at intra-elite relations.

Wealth is hardly the means to political success; rather, it is the reward reaped by a successful politician and his associates. As previously noted, government expenditures are an unusually high proportion of GDP. These come largely from fees paid by foreign concessionaires, and are redistributed to various government personages. This redistribution comes largely in the form of contracts to companies controlled or partially owned by senior government officials. It is far more the rule than the exception for politicians to divide their time freely between commercial and governmental administration. In addition to the rewards of government contracts, many prominent Americo-Liberians are nominal partners in predominantly foreign ventures. This became even more common during the 1970's as an attempt was made to head off objections to foreign domination of the Liberian economy. Thirdly, the distribution of government receipts to private persons comes largely from simple employment. Some 15% of Liberian wage and salary earners work for the government; these jobs are among the best paid and most attractive in the country. They are therefore among the prime plums of patronage.

1962 was a key year in the development of modern Liberia. It marked the beginning of a considerable intensification of the program of political assimilation of the hinterland populations

combined with a decision actively to seek economic development. Among the other products of this period of interest in reform, is the only major study of Liberian economic development ever conducted.<sup>5</sup> That research essentially concluded that Liberia's experience had been one of economic growth without investment in the infrastructure or capital which could produce real long-term development of economic capacities. The 1950's had seen rapid growth in Liberia's income, but almost all of this had come from fees paid by foreign corporations for the right to extract natural resources from Liberian territory. The growth was thus, in a sense, both temporary and artificial--it left little capital legacy behind. Moreover, the wealth had been spent largely on consumption, not capitalization. Thus, at the conclusion of a decade in which gross domestic money income more than quadrupled, Liberia had little but consumer goods to show for itself, and these were distributed primarily among the elite.

The government began, in 1962, not only to liberalize the political structure, but to modernize the economic one. The former goal was sought by abolishing the distinction between the hinterland provinces and the coastal communities. A system of counties was introduced into the hinterland, creating four counties there to complement the five already establishing on the coast. Though they remain drastically outnumbered, delegates from the hinterland counties are now elected in more or less the same manners as their coastal colleagues and have the same formal rights. Their numbers rose from 6 of 36 to 21 of 61 in the House and to 8 of 18 in the Senate. Access to political patronage and government jobs was

also notably widened. These changes were far from being mere window-dressing, for although they did not produce any immediate or early shift in the overall shape of Liberian politics, they did change the basis for access to political resources, and thus may have contributed considerably to the long-term changes the polity is undergoing. Already by the early 1970's, the rate of assimilation of tribal politicians appeared to have risen a good deal, with two even reaching cabinet posts by 1973. This assimilation was accompanied and aided by a shift of at least some resources into the former hinterland provinces. These came not just in the form of jobs, but also of health care facilities, roads, and educational institutions and scholarships.<sup>6</sup>

B. Revolutionary Liberia

In April 1980, a group of non-commissioned officers, led by 28 year old Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, took control of Liberia's government. Their successful coup ended an extraordinary duration of political stability and one party rule. Liberia's previous head of state, President Tolbert, was reported killed in fighting during the takeover. He had been president since 1971, and vice-president for the previous 20 years. The end of his rule marked the first major disruption to the rule of the True Whig Party and the tiny (0.6% of population) Liberio-American elite. It remains to be seen how basic will be the changes in Liberian social structure.

The April coup came after a year of gradual deterioration in public order and acceptance of the existing government. In April 1979, riots were widespread in response to rapidly rising rice prices, rice being a staple in the Liberian diet. More than 100

people were reported killed by the police and considerable property was destroyed. A fragile peace was achieved in time for the OAU summit meeting in Monrovia. Opposition to the government's policies continued, however, with attention focused on the economy. A trade deficit contributed to a rapidly rising rate of inflation. During 1978, external debt rose by 30%; foreign reserves at year's end were the equivalent of only two weeks imports at early 1978 levels--about \$18mn. Even in such a predominantly rural country, the weakness of the agricultural sector was apparent when food imports became necessary, and the government had to introduce expensive rice subsidies. Although Liberia's 1978 inflation rate of 8.6% was mild, compared to her neighbors and many other countries, the first quarter of 1979 was marked by a 7.6% increase--an annual rate nearly five times that of the previous year.

President Tolbert's regime had, as noted, attempted to achieve greater unification of Liberia. It had extended greater political opportunity and social services into the hinterlands. In this slight liberalization, it may have contributed to its own downfall. It had made the rule of the Americo-Liberian elite, and of Tolbert's government specifically, seem less immutable a fact of life than it previously had. Thoughts of rebellion did not seem foolhardy. Reasons for rebellion were not greatly lessened since the proportionate distribution of wealth remained nearly unchanged, even as economic problems cut into the total amount to be distributed among the growing population.

International agencies made some moves to help President Tolbert

shore up the Liberian economy in the last months of his regime. In March of 1978, the IMF approved a standby arrangement authorizing purchases up to the equivalent of SDR9.25mn of the next 12 months. At the same time, the IMF asked the government to take measures aimed at curbing the growth in domestic demand and limiting further deterioration in the external debt situation. This economically reasonable demand helped to provoke Liberia's political crisis. Because of his dependence on the Americo-Liberian elite, and because of his own and his family's and immediate supporters' heavy investments in various enterprises, President Tolbert was not in a position to impose the necessary restrictions on those who could best afford them. Instead, most of the burden fell on the tribal and ex-tribal populations. In particular, migrants to urban areas, always a politically volatile population, were affected, both by high food prices and by unemployment. Their riots were pivotal in the destabilization of the Tolbert regime which led to the eventual coup. Most aid agencies appear willing to continue their support of the Liberian people and economy, and the new government seems inclined to negotiate acceptable terms with them. We shall, therefore, discuss other relevant aspects of the aid situation in separate sections below.

The rest of the Liberian revolutionary story can be told fairly simply. The government struggled to keep the lid on domestic turbulence and at the same time to stabilize its economy. The Iranian revolution disrupted petroleum imports from Liberia's major supplier, and there were months of irregular deliveries and consequent uncertainty of supplies as well as high prices. Eventually, just a month before its downfall, the Tolbert government signed an agreement

with the Saudi Arabian oil company, Petromin. The latter undertook to supply Liberia with 4.1mn barrels of oil a year, to be refined in Liberia. Despite continuously worsening balance of payments, and an increase of 50% (from \$414mn to \$657mn) during 1978 in Liberia's foreign debt, the Tolbert government declared the debt situation to be manageable. The government hoped to trim its deficit to accomplish its economic goal. Political necessity, however, made it imperative that the government subsidize rice. Various other, relatively minor, concessions to the insurgent population were announced, such as free college education. These all cost something, thus weakening the government's control of inflation. Further, they did not speak to the basic social issues--such as the weakness and maldistribution of primary and secondary education.

President Tolbert announced a campaign, backed by the National Legislature, to increase Liberia's food production to the level of self-sufficiency. This will clearly be a necessity for the future government of Liberia as well. It was the first time that serious attention was given to the agricultural sector; the first time that the True Whig Party elite considered reorganization of agriculture away from purely subsistence production, and the last time it would have the chance.

In March and April the Tolbert government tried to clamp down on the protest which its politics had engendered and its liberalization allowed. Peaceful opposition party leaders had gained a large following among the tribal and ex-tribal populace. Several of these politicians, together with some NCO's, were arrested. On the night

of March 3 several hundred followers of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) marched on the president's residence demanding to see Tolbert to discuss the arrests. They were turned away by security forces, and the minister of justice claimed that this was an attempt to take over the government. On March 7, the PPP leader, Gabriel Baccus Matthews, called for a general strike in the belief that this might force Tolbert to resign. Matthews seems to have hoped to form a coalition government which would focus its attention on more egalitarian-- and more effective--solutions to economic problems. The result, however, was that Matthews and some 40 other PPP members were arrested, charged with treason, and scheduled to be tried on April 14. The government forces sought other leaders of the PPP, and offered rewards for 20 of them--dead or alive. The older opposition group, the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) had not previously organized itself as an alternative political party. Now, however, it entered the fray, calling on the government to stop hunting opposition leaders and torturing PPP prisoners. At the same time, it criticized the PPP for its actions, claiming these had served no purpose other than to discredit the peaceful opposition movement generally. Parliament voted to ban the PPP and to renew draconian emergency powers which had been given to Tolbert during the 1979 rice riots.

On the 12th of April, however, two days before the trials of the political prisoners were scheduled to begin, soldiers entered the president's residence, killing him and 25 others. All PPP prisoners were released shortly thereafter, and Sergeant Samuel K. Doe appeared

as spokesman for the soldiers. All of the leaders of the revolt were of Non-Commissioned Officer rank or lower; they came from a variety of tribal and ex-tribal backgrounds. Sergeant Doe promised a society based on justice and human dignity. Together with the other soldiers, he suspended the constitution and put the country under the supreme command of the People's Redemption Council (PRC). The name gives a good suggestion of the ideological nature of the revolution. It is a more or less populist insurgency against corruption and failure in government. Though a variety of political and economic orientations from marxist through left wing and moderate groups to bourgeois capitalist are represented in the PRC, it has no declared or apparent ideology beyond this populism.

The revolution upset Liberia's previously strong ties with the West. In particular, Western governments have voiced disappointment at the execution of the thirteen former ministers of Tolbert's government. These were tried and convicted by a tribunal appointed by the PRC, without being granted defense counsel, right to know the details of charges against them, or the right to appeal. Despite this, the Liberian revolution has been by comparative standards a very peaceful one. Indeed, the new government acted with remarkable restraint and organization in the early days. Looting was stopped within two days of the Coup, and the general celebration as well as less desirable forms of unrest were limited by a dusk to dawn curfew. No popular opposition to the PRC has appeared, and in general it appears to have widespread support, and still wider tolerance during a "wait-and see" period. There was some early fighting led by a counter-insurgency unit which had been set up by the old regime, but it was soon captured.

Tolbert's vice president, Bishop B. Warner, who was out of the country at the time of the coup, announced plans to form a government in exile. It is not clear where he will find support for his desire to oust Doe and the PRC.

The new government appears to be facing much more difficulty convincing the rest of the world of its legitimacy than it does in convincing its own people. For a time, only Libya had recognized the new regime, and other states have been quite slow in following suit. The regime does appear to be stable, however, and has felt secure enough to release the vast majority of its prisoners and to promise that there will be no executions of any of the former Tolbert officials who still await trial. The new government has also indicated its willingness to enter into full diplomatic and economic relations with the Western countries. Such early contempts as the refusal of Nigeria to allow the new Liberian foreign minister to enter the country to attend an OAU meeting will probably not continue. Indeed, in July Sergeant Doe conducted a meeting with U.S. Ambassador to the UN Donald McHenry and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Morse, which was reported to be quite satisfactory to all sides.

The major domestic tasks facing the new government are economic. The PRC must maintain international confidence, increase domestic production, and satisfy popular demands for improvements in standard of living. The government's program for meeting those difficult goals is just beginning to take coherent shape. It is clear that the PRC intends to maintain Liberia's ties with the West. It will attempt moderation in dealing with its domestic difficulties, and accept responsibility for Liberia's international indebtedness. The Council

appears stable, but faces some internal tension arising from the differences between civilian and military members on certain issues.

The PRC initially ruled as an entirely body. The military still predominates in government, but there are some civilian ministers in the cabinet formed to advise the PRC. The Council and the Cabinet each have 15 members. The Council's are all military personnel representing the 15 Liberian provinces. The Cabinet includes representatives of the PPP and MOJA, together with the more liberal wing of the TWP. Gabriel Matthews is a leading figure as foreign minister, MUJA's leader Dr. T. Tipoteh, a former economic professor, is prominent as minister for planning and economic affairs; he is joined by Dr. H. Fahnbulleh as minister of education. The other three ministries most relevant to the concerns of this paper are former members of the Tolbert cabinet, who continue to hold their old portfolios: Dr. K. Bryant as minister of health and welfare, Mr. L. Dunso as minister of progress and development, and Mr. G. Tucker as minister of public works. The composition of the cabinet reveals the generally pragmatic, non-ideological orientation of PRC's current policies.

One of the PRC's first actions after the coup was to impose a general price freeze on all commodities and rents; these controls, though not universally enforced, are still in effect. The poorest paid members of the armed and police forces had a pay raise bringing their income to a minimum of \$250 per month; similarly a floor of \$200 a month was instituted for government employees. This has helped to minimize dissent from these important quarters, but does little for either the under- and unemployed--who could constitute as much as

50% of the work force, taking rural and urban areas together--or workers in the private sector. Plantation workers, for example, earn as little as \$2 a day. The government has issued statements to reassure investors that their property would be respected and that the economy would continue to be dominated by the private sector. The biggest issue here is how long and how well workers in the private sector will tolerate their very low pay relative to those in the public sector (and, be it said, to their foreign bosses). Private sector employees have been demanding pay hikes, but the government has said that it has no control over private employers. It has shown sensitivity to the workers' demands, though, but within the general framework of encouraging productivity. Minister Tipoteh's statement is indicative: "When we get the economy back to itself again and as more money begins to flow, the new government will do its best to encourage upward wage and salary adjustments in the private sectors as a principal means of promoting increases in the production ability of workers."<sup>7</sup> In July, however, the PRC banned all strikes and work stoppages after labor unrest threatened too severely to disrupt the economy.

The MUJA appears to some to be the party with the most widespread popular support in the country, and to the most likely winner of any elections in the near future. On the other hand, Matthews claims that "the future looks bright" for the PPP. It is not clear where the political preferences of the PRC lie, either with regard to when elections should be held or with regard to who would be the most desirable winners. Even before elections, there will no doubt continue to be considerable processes of adjustment within the PRC

and between it and the rest of the government. Sgt. Doe, who has been named official head of state, is rumored to favor a strong role for civilians, but it is not clear whether the rest of the council agrees. The new government is, in any case, at least as stable as any other known example, so recently after a revolution.

#### 4.C. Economy

For a long time, Liberia's economy was largely dependent on a single foreign concessionaire, the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. Firestone developed huge rubber plantations in the 1920's, and only lost its preeminence in Liberia in the 1950's. The Bong Mining Company is the most significant of its new fellow concessionaires, and it is indicative of the shift from agriculture to extractive industries and especially iron ore, in foreign exploitation of Liberian resources. The open-door policy inaugurated by President Tubman in the 1950's also broadened the range of international involvement well beyond the U.S., with Swedish and German becoming particularly important.

Dependence on America remains considerable though, as the United States is still the first choice for foreign education of Liberian nationals and the U.S. dollar is still the official currency. This last fact has eliminated, for Liberia, one of the common problems of developing countries--maintaining a solid currency. Of course, this also made Liberia vulnerable of late to fluctuations over which it had not control.

Liberia's economy is quite open; imports accounted for about a third of total supplies through through the 1970's, while exports disposed of some 40% of resources. In recent years, the imports have

grown more rapidly, leading to a balance of payments problem even before the revolution. Iron-ore is overwhelmingly dominant in the economy, leaving Liberia subject to international price fluctuations. By the mid-seventies income from iron-ore concessions accounted for some 30% of gross domestic product; the rest of the concession sector added only another 7%. Liberia grew at some 7% annually until 1975, after which there has been negligible growth and a slight decline during several years.<sup>9</sup>

The government appropriates most of the income from concessions, and its share appears to have increased up to the revolution. Government finances have nonetheless been tight, as Liberia must service a large public debt, so spending nearly a tenth of its revenues. Some attempts have been made to increase the Liberian share of the earnings made by foreign concessionaires, but at present only about 16% of iron earnings stays in Liberia, though as much as 50% of rubber earnings may.

The traditional sector lags far behind the modern in the Liberian economy. At present, the former accounts for only about 14% of GDP. Manufacturing is almost non-existent. The government and various service providers account for the overwhelming majority of value-added outside the concession sector. Some diversification has taken place, however, most notably with the recent development of forestry.

President Tolbert initiated a variety of economic reforms when he took office in 1971. Many of these were specifically related to the building of a political base. For example, the mandatory donation of

one month's salary to the True Whig Party by all state employees was ended. In general, however, he did little change the government domination of the economy. Nonetheless, Tolbert did attempt to address the issue of rural poverty. In particular, he initiated a Four-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan. This was intended to be only the first half of an eight year plan, the major objectives of which were (a) diversification of production, (b) dispersion of sustainable socio-economic activities throughout the country, (c) total involvement of the entire population in the development efforts, and (d) equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth, development, and diversification so as to ensure an acceptable standard of living to all Liberians.

This ambitious plan ran up against lack of both knowledge and money. The former included considerable ignorance of Liberian geology, geography, ecology, population, and social structure. These have been only slightly addressed, and remain important potential foci for research. The latter was a larger problem than might have been thought in a seemingly growing economy. Liberia was, however, caught in the world-wide recession of the later 1970's, and furthermore was victim to her own past. This had included little expenditure for development of the necessary infrastructure on which to base further development. The programs of the major sectoral ministries, therefore, had to be addressed to the provision of basis health care, education, and transportation, before much progress could be made in economic development itself.

Liberia joined in 1975 with other states in West Africa to

form the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). At about the same time, Liberia also entered into agreements with the European Economic Community through the Lomé Convention. The World Bank both contributed substantially to the financing of road projects. Liberia would have been unable, on even the most optimistic projection, to raise the \$145 millions of income necessary to the Development Plan had she not been able to call on international aid. Even so, she fell short.

Liberia's economic potential is considerable. The country's climate, topography and soils are well suited to the production of a wide range of tropical crops. Tree crops in particular have proved successful, including oil palm, coconut, cocoa, coffee, and rubber. The country contains some 12 million acres of tropical forests, with an estimated potential product of 1.7 cubic meters annually spread across some 60 marketable species. Although there has been no success in petroleum production as yet, Liberia's offshore geological formations are favorable.

The biggest economic problems facing Liberia are (a) the degree of dependence on a handful of foreign-dominated export commodities, (b) the absence of a manufacturing sector, (c) the proportion of GDP appropriated by the government and/or redistributed to those controlling the government, (d) the poverty and lack of education and skills of the overwhelming majority of the population, and (e) the lack of an economic infrastructure, and especially of basic modern necessities in the hinterlands. Fortunately, Liberia does not appear to suffer from as severe a population crisis as many other African

countries, as we shall now see.

D. Demography

About 40-45% of Liberia's nearly two million people are under the age of fifteen. While hardly a satisfactory figure, this is also far from the worst situation on the continent. The infrequent census enumerations and the problems with the old population survey data force us to rely on projections, and to operate with some doubt, when considering current demographic trends in Liberia. The United Nations Population Division and the Population Council have both issued projection through to the year 2000. The U.N.'s projection for the current period are included in the Statistical Appendix to this paper.

Basically, Liberia's mortality and fertility rates both seem to be falling, though the rate of decline is much more rapid in the former. In 1971, the Population Council estimated, the crude birth rate was 50 per 1000 and the crude death rate 21 per 1000. The UN estimated the birth rate slightly lower.<sup>10</sup> In both sets of projections, the future appears to hold serious demographic problems, though the Population Council's view looks somewhat rosier. The UN's medium variant suggests a gross reproduction rate of 2.34 and a net reproduction rate of 2.04 for 1980. The Population Council's medium variant hopes for 2.51 and 1.77 respectively, in order to achieve replacement fertility in 2000-2005. The UN's projections would yield replacement fertility at some point after the mid-twenty first century.

With a current median age of under 19, Liberia can ill afford the growth suggested by these projections. Because of the age

structure, with larger and larger cohorts continually arriving at fertility age for the next several years, the population will increase dramatically. On UN estimates, it will grow about 60% by the year 2000, for a total over 3.2mn. The dependency ratio would peak in 1990 with over 877.3 per 1000. The rate of growth may be expected to continue at over 2.5 through the rest of this century.

In our estimation, health care and sanitation are likely to improve more rapidly than population control in Liberia, further exacerbating the country's problems. At present the life expectancy for the total population is 48.5 years (according to the UN indicators). Perinatal and infant mortality is still very high, so there is considerable potential for increasing life expectancy with the extension of only basic health and sanitary services. On the other hand, no population policy was firmly in force before the revolution, and none has been enunciated since. Until either better planning is introduced, or migration and economic development take a direct toll on family formation and/or desire for children, fertility may be expected to remain high.

These problems are primarily future ones for Liberia, because at present population density is fairly low, perhaps 45 persons per square mile. The population projections discussed would lead to nearly 75 persons per square mile by 2000. Even then, the most acute problem would still be the maldistribution of population, with its heavy urban crowding. In 1974 Montserado County had 172.5 persons per square mile, while Grand Gedeh County had only 10.9.

In any case, demographic problems of age structure, distribution, and total population, will continue to plague Liberia the next several generations.

### III. Population/Development Issues and Research

Though suffering from neither as extreme a poverty nor as severe a demographic crisis as some African countries, Liberia does face several crucial issues in which population and development problems coincide. How these problems are dealt with will of course depend on the vicissitudes of Liberia's political situation. In turn, the stability and merit of Liberia's new government will depend on its ability to make reasonable progress in addressing each. One of the hurdles in the government's path is a lack of reliable information about Liberia's population and economy. Sources are scarce and analyses much scarcer. In the following pages, we look at several issues--or more accurately, clusters of issues--in which both research and practical action are needed.

#### A. Agricultural Productivity and Rural Life

Food prices are the most immediately serious threat to Liberia's political stability. The vast majority of Liberia's population is rural. The most serious health problems are in the hinterlands. Lack of indigenous food production forces Liberia to import, and worsen her balance of payments. For these and other reasons, agricultural productivity and the quality of rural life must be at the top of any agenda for research and action in dealing with Liberia's problems.

1. Liberia's rural economy has been gradually eroded over the years, most importantly by the neglect of the old elite, urban-oriented

governments. It was never strong. While at one time Liberian agriculture produced a sufficient quantity of rice and other staples to support a nearly completely rural population, this is no longer being done. For one thing, the tribal organization of rural life has been altered by dependence on the central government, migration, and the penetration of monetary economy into the hinterland. These factors have been studied almost exclusively by local-level anthropological research;<sup>11</sup> very little has been done to complete an analysis of the impact of these issues on the Liberian economy or population structure overall.<sup>12</sup> Rural areas seem to be so inadequately served by educational and health agencies, and so devoid of opportunity, that young people (especially young men) desirous of advancement will generally opt for departure. This further weakens the performance of the agricultural sector by removing the potentially most productive population. There is, further, considerable underemployment among those who stay. The subsistence organization inhibits the capitalization of agriculture; at the same time few moves have been made to introduce cooperative production. Control of the marketing of agricultural products has tended to fall, depending on locality and product, either into great fragmentation or into central government hands. There has been no banding together of merchants--as for example there has been in the Ghanaian cocoa trade. This further weakens prospects for capital formation and, by and large, increases the exploitation of rural areas by urban. Beyond very general impressions, however, almost no data exist as to the specific dynamics of rural activity as it relates to the larger Liberian economy.

2. If the government is to fulfill its promise of lower food prices agricultural productivity will have to be increased dramatically. At present the country is a heavy importer of rice--some 55,000 to 60,000 tons being forecast for 1980. Shortly before the coup, President Tolbert announced a "back to the soil" movement, which was aimed at creating jobs for the unemployed to work on lands owned by state enterprises. While this did represent an attack on the problems of production and unemployment, it risked falling into the same inefficient inequity as the rest of the state enterprise system; in other words it would probably have done most to enrich the elite supporters of the president. This tendency has somewhat tainted the image of programs of this kind, though the new government will probably seek to formulate some substitute. The US had promised \$412mn in aid for the "back to the soil" movement, and the IDA was considering a further loan of \$13mn at the time of the coup, to be used for the provision of general agricultural development services. Foreign aid has been instrumental in such development of the agricultural sector as has taken place, second only to foreign enterprise. Germany has been the biggest aid donor, while companies from the Ivory Coast have been among the most important in recent years in developing an export trade in coffee, cocoa, oil palm and wood. Even basic statistics in this area are lacking, let alone substantial research.

It is difficult to estimate the productivity of Liberian agriculture, though we know that of similar subsistence dominated sectors to be very low. Research is needed on the impact of the various kinds of foreign involvement in Liberian agriculture, so that the government can formulate coherent policies with regard to foreign

enterprises. Research is also needed to establish the total size and distribution of the Liberian domestic product, so that both production planning and allocation schemes may be more efficient. Thirdly, research is needed on the extension of arable lands. As Liberia's forests are more heavily exploited (and hopefully more efficiently managed) there will be possibilities for claiming considerable areas from the tropical jungle. Both ecological/technical research on what is to be done with these lands, and social research on the most efficient ways of organizing production on them and bringing a population to them are needed. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, research and experimentation is needed on ways of increasing the yield of Liberian domestic agriculture. Again, some of this may be a matter of technical improvement either in the strains under cultivation, or in farming techniques themselves.

Research must also include, however, two sets of social problems. First, some study is needed of the problems of encouraging innovation in the traditional economy. Although a good deal is known about this set of problems in general, every individual setting requires research of its own to discover the particular issues that are likely to effect planned improvements. In addition, social research must give attention to land-holding and utilization patterns. In many West African countries the evolution of customary law, and especially its interpretations in non-customary courts, has been found to introduce considerable insecurity into land tenure. This has been true, for example, in neighboring Sierra Leone. Non-locals are at a considerable disadvantage in trying to establish ownership of land, or even valid leasehold. Little research on customary land law has been done in

Liberia. It would appear that both the policies of the TWP and the abundance of land have prevented this from becoming a major issue, but this is likely to change. Under the TWP constitution, all land in Liberia was nominally vested in the state, which would grant it in fee simple to private owners. Excluded from this arrangement were only tribal reserve lands set aside from subsistence agriculture (which may be subject to the uncertainties described above, or to those surrounding reservations set aside for Native Americans in the U.S.) and the government forest reserves. The remaining land was being sold by the state at a flat rate, which was in 1973 \$30 an acre for urban land and \$0.50 an acre for other land. The result of this policy and these prices has been that virtually all available land in urban areas has been sold. Sales of rural land continued throughout the 1970's, however, in very great number and value. Consent of tribal authorities were required. This could, at least in the early 1970's, be fairly readily and cheaply bought in cash. Several different tribal authorities were involved, though--Paramount Chief, Clan Chief and elders--and this may have introduced some room for maneuvering and insecurity of tenure when land become more scarce. Members of the Americo-Liberian elite were the primary purchasers of land under this arrangement, though educated hinterlands and some local authorities also acquired estates. For the most part, these members of the elite set up plantations growing rubber, cocoa, and oil-palm. Foreigners were not allowed to own land, but might lease it from private owners or the government. A great deal of money was made by persons closely connected with the government who simply bought

large tracts of land at fifty cents or so an acre and leased them to interested foreign corporations.

Little research has been done on the crucial problem of how the various patterns of land-holding in Liberia affect rate and kind of investment in agriculture. The PRC does not appear, as yet, to have undertaken to alter land-tenure policies, though some variations in pattern may be expected if only from the redistribution of wealth. More likely, however, is the development of sufficiently severe problems to necessitate a rethinking of the whole system. In particular, the viability of plantation agriculture may be questioned since this form of social organization has proved extremely vulnerable in other developing countries.

3. The resolution of the issue of land-tenure will closely determine the kind of agricultural production which will grow in Liberia. The extent to which mechanization will be important will depend not only on technical/ecological factors, but on the size of farms and the nature of their control. At present Liberia's labor-surplus would appear to make mechanization an unlikely option. Nonetheless, some assessment of the prospects for mechanization is important, since farming has been moving in that direction in many areas. A high unemployment rate does not in itself preclude either the efficiency or the profitability of labor-saving or enhancing equipment. If mechanization is desirable, training needs, the development of a domestic service industry, and the economic impact need to be considered.

4. Substantial improvement in domestic agricultural production will have to be matched, if it is to be of maximum benefit, by equal

improvement in transportation and storage facilities. Research and planning are needed to insure that these are available not only on time, but to and from the right parts of the country. Reasonably accurate predictions of population distribution are integral to the successful development of this part of an economic infrastructure.

B. Population Growth and Distribution

As in other developing countries, population information in Liberia is woefully inadequate. It is, however, by no means the worst in the world, and in fact there is something of a base of information on which to build. Liberia's 1974 census is above average by African standards, though there is unfortunately an almost complete absence of routine information-gathering to supplement the one large effort.

1. Liberia should, in the best of all demographic worlds, be preparing for the administration of another nationwide census sometime in the early 1980's. It probably is not. This will make planning efforts of all kinds immensely more difficult and vastly less accurate.

Liberia has conducted nationwide censuses in 1962 and 1974. Fragmentary information does exist for the pre-1962 period, but only for a few major cities. The 1962 census contains useful information only on age and sex distributions, and even there is pretty unreliable. Predictable fears of taxation and reluctance to divulge personal information are blamed for most of the difficulties; management was not adequate either.

The 1974 census focused on housing and living conditions, and various socio-economic conditions, as well as number and distribution

of population. It was carried out with technical and financial assistance from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. Though subject to a variety of problems--most, such as underreporting, common to censuses on developing countries--this is a reliable and generally high quality data base. It provided Liberia, for the first time, with information on housing and living conditions throughout the country. The data were processed by a modern computer which minimized the mechanical errors in processing. In September 1977, a seminar of planners, administrators, scholars, and policymakers was held in Morovia to examine the census. Generally the group found the data very useful, though various criticisms were extended.<sup>13</sup> There have been a few attempts to assess the reliability of the data, though these have been generally favorable, they have by no means been exhaustive. Further attention to the 1974 census is desirable, though it is less immediately important in itself than as part of the planning process for the necessary new census.<sup>14</sup>

From 1968 to 1972, Liberia carried out a population growth survey, which is of particular interest for its experimentation with a dual reporting system. This project was carried out by the Ministry for Planning and Economic Affairs with technical and financial assistance from the USAID. Unfortunately, once the USAID funding was removed, the project ceased. Its object, to assess short-term population changes to complement the infrequent full-scale censuses, was an important one, the brevity of its duration is to be regretted. The details of the dual reporting scheme and its efficacy are among the few well-

researched subjects in the population/development area in Liberia.<sup>15</sup> The main result has been consistent with similar experiences elsewhere; though there is much new knowledge generated, the dual reporting scheme systematically underestimates tribal population and in particular fertility. The Liberian scheme did have sufficiently frequent enumeration visits, however, to make its data useful. The first team of enumerators made monthly visits; the second team came independently every six months. The Tolbert government did recognize the need for intercensal survey data in its planning process, and made arrangements for the beginning of a UNFPA supported survey in 1978. This survey was divided into four rounds at three month intervals, dealing respectively with fertility, mortality, family planning and migration. It has not been studied in any detail, partly because it ran into the problems of Liberia's political turbulence so early on. Some form of intercensal survey is definitely needed; research on this matter and the establishment of a regular recording procedure are of immediate importance. Subsequently, attention should be given to the development of a Liberian planning profession trained to utilize the data produced, as well as to academic analysis of its significance. Liberia continues to be short of professionals in statistics, demography, sociology, etc., which inhibits the carrying out of any sustained research.

2. Despite some efforts under the Tolbert government, particularly a reorganization of procedures in 1971, vital statistics are poorly kept in Liberia. The biggest reason for this is that registration of births and deaths takes place entirely through the hospital system. Since 90% of births and deaths occur in homes; the vast majority--

especially in rural areas--is missed. Many of these vital events occur far from any clinic or hospital, so reaching out to record them is not a simple matter of extending existing procedures. The population at large recognizes little need to exert effort to secure more recording--indeed, it may often avoid it for various reasons. The position of county registrar has been a minor political one rather than primarily a professional one, further complicating the problem. The most immediate approach to this would appear to be the training of more Liberian professionals to administer the collection of vital statistics; this may by itself help to remove the task from immediate political manipulation. Research might helpfully address ways of improving the collection of vital statistics.

3. Internal migration is of particular importance in Liberian demographic affairs. Population growth is primarily a problem in relation to food production and population distribution, Liberia. The biggest and most obvious problem of distribution is the rural-urban migration which has displaced a significant proportion of Liberia's population, and continues to do so at an apparently increasing rate. This migration would seem to be due primarily to rural poverty. The hypothesis that such factors are primarily responsible would seem to be borne out by the high unemployment rates in urban areas, which would seem likely to discourage would be migrants who had any other viable options. Of course, under the previous regime, almost all opportunities for advancement out of the subsistence farming sector were centralized, so ambition was a magnetic force attracting migrants to cities; it is unclear to what degree opportunity continues to be demographically

centralized. It should be borne in mind that leaving a rural area is not only an individual decision. In a tribal economy, it may be an explicit or implicit decision of a kinship group that it is able to support only a limited population in the traditional manner. Various mechanisms may then add incentives for those most weakly placed in the traditional social order to leave.<sup>16</sup> Research on the local causes of out-migration from rural areas continues to be inadequate in Liberia.<sup>17</sup>

Just as the success of policies to improve food production will depend on good research about the rural economy and social system, so any attempt to control or predict migration will require considerably improved understanding of the functioning of various regions of the Liberian hinterland. It would be useful to make an attempt to study the relation of various different tribal organizations to migration, for example. Little of the anthropological research in Liberia has been of this comparative/synthetic aim. At the same time, the basic demographic information on the process of internal migration is lacking. The population growth survey provides some, generally problematic, statistics on the matter, but it is rapidly becoming outdated. Not only is current data gathering needed to ascertain the basic demographic contours of migration, but attention should be focused on the social characteristics of migrants. If adequate planning for their incorporation into the labor force is to take place, it will be necessary to know their educational backgrounds and skills. It will be in general desirable to know whether they left by desire or of necessity. If the health and other needs of the migrant

population are to be ministered to, then information must be produced on their age and physical condition, the nature and spread of endemic diseases, their level of health information, the cleanliness and quality of their accommodations, their intentions (if any) to bring children or other dependents to join them upon securing employment, and similar factors. Almost none of this information exists; that which does is not systematically organized and cumulative.

4. The lack of reliable vital statistics makes it difficult to plan or implement a coherent population policy. In any case, the government of Liberia has none. It has proceeded in such areas as family planning on a largely ad hoc basis. The Family Planning Association of Liberia was founded in 1956, and opened its first clinic in 1966. It received financial support from and became an associate member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation in 1967. Its programs included the training of nurses and midwives, and the promotion of research as well as practical health education and provision of family planning assistance and information. In the early 1970's, it began to find an increasing receptivity of the population to its message of limiting the number of children in a family to those for which it can readily care. Between 1970 and 1973, there was an increase of some 20% in clients per year, to a total of some 21,500 clients in all.<sup>18</sup> The AID has been active in Liberian family planning, both providing public health personnel and supporting training programs. Its efforts have been targeted primarily at rural areas, with special attention to preventative medicine, maternal and child health, family planning and nutrition. The

implementation of the family planning part of the program has, however, been the slowest and most difficult. The Liberian government has generally given priority to immediate humanitarian (and political) needs, and neglected all long-term concerns, especially those of population growth and family planning. The Tolbert government was an improvement in this regard over the preceding Tubman government, but not qualitatively different.<sup>19</sup> The PRC has not yet enunciated a clear policy in this area.

There has not been a great deal of research on the dynamics of fertility and family planning in Liberia. Clearly such research will form an important precondition for effective family planning, though Liberia does not appear to be greatly atypical, and thus can profit from the research and practical experience of other states. One recent study of family patterns, socio-economic characteristics and fertility did produce some interesting results. It divided the Liberian population into three "estates" based primarily on educational and occupational characteristics. The first estate consisted of university educated managers, professionals and government workers, the second of moderately educated white collar workers and skilled laborers, and third estate of unskilled and illiterate men and women. It was hypothesized that there would be a curvilinear relationship between fertility and estate, such that the first and third estates would have low fertility and the second high fertility. The reasoning was that the nuclear family would predominate in the first estate, while families would be fragmented in the third. The second estate's higher fertility would stem from its traditional orientation and extended family structure. Research in Monrovia among Bassa households

bore out the hypothesis.<sup>20</sup> It should be noted, however, that this study--one of the few important published studies in the area for Liberia--treats only of the urban "employee" and elite sectors. It does not treat of subsistence cultivators, cash crop farmers or moderately educated entrepreneurs--though it recognizes their importance.

The lack of research, and the absence of high priority government attention does not mean that Liberia does not need family planning. To be sure it is not yet at a crisis point in absolute growth--though it is in population growth relative to economic growth. Nonetheless, Liberia's population problems may be expected to get worse over the coming years. As the Population Council noted in a 1974 report, even if a transition to replacement fertility were to occur immediately (a still unlikely prospect in 1980) the total population of Liberia would still grow about 31% over the next 30 years, levelling off after 2050 at a size 60% larger than that of 1970. This most optimistic projection is worrisome enough; the Population Council's more conservative projections place the mid-21st century population at several times that of 1970.<sup>21</sup> Under these projections, severe population problems are coming; density is likely to reach between 125 and 200 persons per square kilometer. It will indeed take an economic miracle to support this level of population growth.

5. International migration does not appear to have been a major problem in Liberia. There is not any large, politically or economically significant immigrant community--like the Lebanese in Sierra Leone,

for example. There are, however, a variety of less substantial immigrant groups, most coming from neighboring states. The extent of their contributions to the economy is unknown. Indeed, little is known about them altogether.<sup>22</sup> It is hard to predict whether their presence will become a significant political factor in the coming years. Up to now, most of the hostility generated against foreign capital has been successfully diverted from major multinational (European and American) ventures toward such other African groups. This has laid a possible foundation for increased tension.

Migration out of Liberia does not appear to have been substantial, even among Liberians educated abroad. Some have stayed in the U.S. after college, for example, but not a significant number. This was due in the past, no doubt, to the fact that only members of the indigenous elite with very substantial opportunities at home (and correspondingly close kinship ties to the ruling group) were sent abroad for education. This may change.

### C. Labor Force

Liberia has had a much larger potential than active labor force for many years. The situation has only worsened with time. A key social and economic issue will be whether ways can be found for the successful incorporation of Liberia's approximately 50% unemployed and underemployed into the economy. At the same time, training of individuals with specific skills must be improved and increased, for the development of both the economy and the infrastructure.

1. A major economic goal for Liberia, second only to increasing agricultural productivity, must be developing productive industry, especially manufacturing. At present, manufactures count for less than 5% of total GDP.<sup>22</sup> Problems of ascertaining what sorts of

manufactures Liberia can profitably undertake, securing domestic and/or international financing, and training and disciplining a workforce are all important. None of these has received much study in Liberia, though comparative information is available. Relatedly, little has been done to improve or understand the deficiencies of Liberia's internal market apparatus. If a significant level of commodity production is to occur, and especially if Liberia is to depend on this base to go beyond a relationship of complete dependency, then a domestic market must be developed. The simple low level of general wealth has inhibited such development to date. This has combined with the extreme wealth of a tiny fraction of the population to exacerbate the balance of payments deficit by creating a demand for luxury goods which must be imported.

It is hard to say much more about this area despite its central importance to Liberia's future. So little has been done in the way of either research or practice that we have base point from which to begin. Domestic manufacture seems to predominate; even it is less productive than it might be due to a focus on tourist gimcracks, what is called the "charley" trade.<sup>24</sup> What difficulties stand in the way of centralization--even at a rudimentary level--of production are not known. What attitudes presently unemployed Liberians might bring to this sort of work are unknown. Even how many Liberians are available in specific places to undertake this sort of work is not known. These and other questions demand urgent answers.

2. The training of skilled workers has not become a major problem in Liberia, precisely because so little industry has been developed

to employ them. Hopefully this situation will change. In the meantime, there is still a shortage of mechanics, telecommunications personnel, construction workers and a variety of other skilled workers essential to the maintenance and improvement of Liberia's economic infrastructure. The type and location of educational programs undertaken both contribute to this problem. Most educational effort has been focused on elite urban populations, where manual vocational skills have been almost out of the question. Rural education remains struggling to achieve basic literacy. No systematic effort has been made to introduce a program of training in manual skills, though a variety of small on-the-job programs exist. One result of this has been the importation of trained professionals by foreign companies working in Liberia. This pattern does not help Liberia's development, and needs to be reversed. An important question for research is how workers in Liberia might be made ready to receive training from the foreign companies, and how the latter might in turn be encouraged to provide it.

3. Skilled professionals of all sorts are both lacking and maldistributed in Liberia. Much of the failure of the vital statistics program, the census, and the planning department have been attributed to a lack of such professionals. Means of locating likely candidates for such work and training them need to be developed. In particular, health professionals, statisticians and social scientists, and planners and applied economists are at a premium. Of those people educated to fill these positions, the vast majority are of the Americo-Liberian elite. Aside from the inequity of this, three further

problems are raised. First, these members of the elite are unwilling to work outside of the coastal towns, and often unwilling to leave Montserrado country and Monrovia. Secondly, they often see their professional careers as essentially political ones, and so subordinate the demands of their jobs to political network building, or, if they succeed, leave active professional service for full time political work. Thirdly, these members of the urban elite are neither familiar with nor trusted in the rural areas where most of the more serious population/health/development problems exist.

A particular problem area in this regard has been the health services. Liberia built a major university medical center at great expense, but continued until the last months of the Tolbert administration to send its best students abroad on scholarships. Instead of expanding the number of Liberian doctors available by training hinterlanders or others at the J.F. Kennedy Medical School of the University of Liberia, the government spent huge sums of money educating foreigners who did not stay to practice in Liberia. The school seems to have been treated primarily as a status symbol rather than as a welfare institution. The situation is somewhat better with regard to the training of nurses and some other medical professionals, though Liberia remains severely understaffed. No system of medical training for traditional tribal healers has been implemented. Some attention needs to be given to ways to rapidly improve the extent and distribution of health care in Liberia; the quality, at the top, seems to be quite good. Although there have been some recent efforts to improve health education, this has generally lagged behind the training of more prestigious specialists.

Nonetheless, such major diseases as yaws and smallpox have been virtually eradicated. In recent years, efforts have been made by a multi-purpose epidemiology team to provide vaccination against smallpox, tuberculosis, cholera, yellow fever, etc. This work has been almost entirely dependent on foreign professionals and aid, however; if it is to continue, Liberians must be trained. The magnitude of the problem can be grasped from some simple figures: in Liberia in 1977 there were 28 physicians, 5 dentists, 4 social workers and some 1,300 paramedical professionals working in a government health service system which includes 15 government hospitals, 200 clinics and 13 health centers. Twenty-one other hospitals are operated by private sources, including concessionaires and missionary organizations. Some 70% of the total of 150 physicians in Liberia were expatriates.<sup>25</sup>

Expectations are not optimistic about the ability of Liberia's medical school and four nursing training institutions to meet this shortage of health care personnel. Indeed, some of the programs at these institutions were closed at the time of a recent UNFPA mission due to lack of teaching personnel. Nearly half of the government's expenditures on health programs goes to support the JFK Medical Center. The hospital at the center does train a significant number of "physician assistants" who are junior or senior high school graduates with three years health training. Although these are on scholarship while in training, there is a shortage of qualified candidates and a shortage of funds for instruction. Basic educational deficiencies are surely important causes of this problem, but research is needed on immediate ways of improving health services personnel.

Educational personnel are in much the same short supply as health workers. Liberia's university trains relatively few people; those it trains are such an elite that they are not inclined to pursue careers in rural education. Missionaries and other aid programs help, but at present Liberia has a tiny teaching force, and is able to boast of only 13% of its population attending school of any sort (i.e. about a third of children under 16). High absentee rates are the norm--with over 75% often absent. In 1970 only some 22% of the population was literate; nonetheless, this is an improvement over the 1962 figure of 9%. The biggest problem in education is lack of resources. The law requires all children between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school, but the lack of facilities and personnel makes this impossible.

Personnel shortages are the more serious problem. The educational system relies on a few teacher training institutions to ameliorate the defective quality of primary education. Output, however, is not nearly adequate to overcome the the teacher shortage. Newly qualified teachers move to urban areas which offer better material opportunities. Coordination between teacher training colleges and employers is minimal. County school supervisors have found difficulty in securing new teaching personnel due to lack of budgetary allocations. The best rural students (and their families) are readily able to assess the quality of local schools, and therefore tend to migrate into urban areas, especially at the high school age. This overloads the Monrovia school system without helping the rural system. This also removes one of the most likely groups to mobilize from an interest in improving

rural schools. As in the case of health care, a quick numerical summary is illustrative: in 1971 there were 4,316 elementary and secondary school teachers in Liberia; 2,716 taught in public schools, 1100 in mission schools, and 490 elsewhere. In the same year, Liberia's school age population (as defined by law) was about 400,000. There was, in other words, not quite one teacher for ever 92 potential students. Though no figures exist for these teachers' maldistribution, it must be borne in mind.

D. Quality of Life

Implicit in the foregoing discussions of problems in Liberian development has been the question of how one is to secure an adequate standard of living for the vast majority of the population. As the population grows, however, the bare minimum will become increasingly difficult to maintain. Nonetheless, it is worth while to consider briefly just how minimal that lowest level currently is, and in what directions one might reasonably hope to bring improvement in the quality of life. The ability to maintain or improve on an adequate standard of living is of course central to the government's claim to political legitimacy, and to its stability, as well as to more general humanitarian concerns.

1. The majority of the Liberian population lives in huts; most of these are windowless, circular structures with conical thatched roofs and mud floors. Urban housing is better than this rural norm, but overcrowding is increasingly lowering its quality and producing slums. Most urban buildings are of frame, brick or concrete, with corrugated roofs. In Monrovia, the average two-room house is occupied by twenty persons. In many parts of the cities, sewerage

problems and the lack of individual cooking facilities add to sanitary problems produced by overcrowding. Hinterland villages, despite their poorer housing and lack of material resources are generally more sanitary.

The biggest health hazard is poor sanitation. Pathogens are distributed through open latrines, congested facilities and other human dangers, as well as borne by insects, water and the air. Intestinal parasites are fairly common. The tropical climate increases the ability of disease organisms to survive outside the human body. There are two major reasons for the continuation of sanitation problems. First, there is a chronic shortage of funds and planning to support adequate programs. Second, there is a lack of understanding among the population at large of the relationship between hygiene and personal cleanliness and disease. Long familiarity with some preventable diseases may result in their toleration as a "fact of life." Adequate research has not been done on the Liberian health situation, again largely because of the lack of basic data, but it is clear that Liberians suffer from a number of preventable diseases.

Communicable diseases are more important causes of morbidity and mortality than organized and degenerative diseases. However, existing hospital records provide only a very small and biased sample for analysis of the problem. As far as is known, malaria is by far the major source of morbidity, followed rather distantly by intestinal worms. At various points, studies have found over half of Liberian mothers to have had varying degrees of anemia at time of childbirth. Schistosoma haematobium infestations are still not uncommon in the hinterland, though they are reported to be largely under

under control in the more developed areas of the country. Trypanosomiasis has been a minor problem in recent years, but Liberia remains vulnerable due to the prevalence of tsetse fly carriers and a low but definite endemic concentration of the disease along the border with Guinea. Any effective containment of this threat is dependent on coordinated action between Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea; the Kissi tribes are particularly vulnerable as they inhabit the border area and travel frequently among the three countries.

Smallpox has been largely contained, and indeed, significantly reduced. It was once a major health problem and is now minor. There is some question, however, as to whether the program of vaccination against smallpox and measles has been adequately maintained in recent years. Vaccination is not complete, though it is widespread, and the disease is no longer reported. Cholera has occupied more recent attention. A mass vaccination campaign introduced in 1970, which appears to have had considerable success. Nonetheless, authoritative estimates of the incidence of cholera are hard to come by. A 1973 U.S. Public Health Service report estimated that the incidence was much higher than the official figure of 1450 cases with 43 deaths between October 1971 and August 1972.<sup>26</sup> Measles epidemics are an annual event in December and January with an annual number of deaths approaching 250. Mortality from measles is, however, largely a function of malnutrition, a much larger and more general problem, which we shall treat separately.

2. Protein intake in Liberia is extremely low; malnutrition and related anemias are exceedingly common.<sup>27</sup> It is estimated that

90% of the people in Liberia live on a substandard diet. This is severe enough to make it difficult for the Liberian people to make the physical effort needed to raise their standard of living even when and where opportunities exist. This fact should be borne in mind when considering the recent agricultural crisis, during which production fell below even this "normal" substandard level. In urban areas, protein-calorie malnutrition is emerging as a major problem, focused on the immigrant slum-dwelling, under or unemployed populations. Urban diets are often vitamin, mineral and protein deficient, accounted for in part by the use of milled grains and cereals, which lose important nutritional elements in processing. In any case, the money market in foodstuffs accents the malnutrition problem in urban areas.

Rural subsistence agriculture protects many Liberians against the worst of malnutrition, but some level of problem is virtually universal outside of the privileged urban groups. The major staple food of Liberians is rice, and continues to be so despite the need to import. Manioc is next in significance in the hinterland. Groundnuts, vegetables, bananas and breadfruits are readily available and widely eaten. Citrus fruits are common, though not abundant. The biggest problem is lack of protein; most Liberian protein intake comes from vegetables. The consumption of meat in the tribal areas is minimal. There is virtually no local production of milk; eggs and poultry are luxury items. Reports by health professionals (such as that cited in n. 22) are apt to blame dietary deficiencies largely on ignorance and superstition. Though these may play a role (not adequately researched), it is our contention that this is

overwhelmed by problems of supply. The fact that many tribal girls and women abstain from eating eggs due to a belief that they cause sterility is certainly secondary to the scarcity and high price of eggs as an influence on actual diet. Maldistribution of foodstuffs is certainly more of a problem than ignorance about what or how to eat well. Absence of transportation and refrigeration facilities exacerbates problems of maldistribution. Some of the resistance to change exhibited by the population of the hinterland is probably the reasonable conservatism of those on the margin of subsistence.

The total caloric production of Liberian agriculture probably comes close to being adequate. The severe and long-term problems of malnutrition are the result of the shortage of protein in this production and its maldistribution. The lack of foreign exchange makes it difficult for the government to make up the deficit with imports. Last but not least, malnutrition is part of a vicious circle, in that it produces a variety of long-term problems and weaknesses in individuals and populations which inhibit productive capacity and in turn exacerbate nutritional problems.

Several international funding agencies have financed projects aimed at reducing the Liberian nutrition problem. AID has provided direct contributions of food as well as assistance to the government (under Tubman and Tolbert) in development and implementation of modern farming practices. It has also helped the ministry of agriculture in planning, marketing and soil technology. The UN (UNDP) and the World Bank (IBRD/IDA) are the largest donors in agriculture,

and they have supported rice research as well as studies of the rubber industry and other aspects of the plantation sector. The Republic of China has provided technical assistance in cooperation with the UNDP, to increase rice production and to develop better fishing methods. More research and aid in these areas is needed. The most basic sorts of issues have been less studied here--that is, little attention has been given to means of improving the infrastructure on which Liberian agriculture depends, or redressing the inequities of distributive mechanisms. It is reasonable to believe that the PRC government is more interested in these issues than its predecessors.

3. Social welfare services other than those described with regard to health and education are virtually non-existent. Individuals and families are left pretty much to fend for themselves. The roots of this attitude seem partly to be the traditional preponderance of tribal subsistence agriculture. Hinterland families were able, however, inadequately, to take care of themselves. This neglect of social welfare services becomes a much more serious problem as rural-urban migration swells the least satisfactory residential areas of the cities. The absence of basic information collection among the migrants is indicative of general neglect.

Though this problem is worst in the cities, or at least most dramatic, it is not negligible in the hinterland. Water supplies, for example, are given little attention by the central government. At most, the ministry of Health and Social Welfare provides technical advice on the location of wells and pit-latrines. The actual construction and maintenance are left to others. Only recently did the pre-revolutionary government enter into an agreement with the Federal

Republic of Germany to construct water systems in the six county seats. In other towns and villages no plans have even been laid, let alone executed, for this sort of assistance. There are hardly any public health inspectors; even less attention is given to such issues as fair marketing practices in foodstuffs.

The urban, elite officials who have been in charge of planning in all social welfare areas, including health and education, have paid little attention to the rural quality of life. Even in areas where there is a recognized need, the planning focus of the elite administrative authorities has been entirely on the importation of prestigious western models of services, especially those focused on high-status professionals. This has been quite inappropriate, given Liberia's shortages of such personnel, but it has met with a positive political response due to pride of the elite, and the need of any political program, at least under the Tubman and Tolbert governments, to provide payoffs to the supporters of the government. A striking example of the government's attitude toward rural people is its complete failure to consider--despite suggestions from international agencies--any use of folk medical practitioners to provide recognized medical services. It is evident that only, a tiny fraction of the total population has access to modern medicine, but the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare persists in putting all its resources into that sort of care, and none into such schemes as the further training of "native doctors." The latter, of course, would have the advantage of prior acceptance by client populations, as well as those of number and knowledge of cures which need not be imported or paid for with

scarce money.

4. Modern communications technology is almost unknown in Liberia, beyond the urban areas. There are a few radios, but few radio stations may be received. Even roads, as we have noted, are inadequate or non-existent in the hinterlands. This has been observed already as a problem in the infrastructure necessary to development. It is also an issue in the quality of life for the rural population. Not least of all, the relative isolation and ignorance of the outside world characteristic of tribal Liberians, makes their political quiescence thus far an increasingly dubious bet for continuation. The example of neighboring Sierra Leone, where rural populations organized an insurgent movement which, despite various setbacks and other problems, did succeed in eliminating the monopoly of the Creole elite, must play some role in the consciousness of these rural Liberians. In particular, the revolution itself may prove but a first step in social change, and the forces which mobilized to make it work represent only a fraction of the Liberian populace, if a much larger one than that of the old True Whig Governments. A sense of relative deprivation and a sense of opportunity for change may both grow in the hinterlands in the years to come. The success of any substantial ventures in economic and social development will depend on their ability to keep abreast of demands made by the majority population. This will involve not only new ways of thinking about Liberian social problems, but intensive investment in the collection--continuously and at regular intervals--of social and demographic information about these rural Liberians. They are the source of the apparently disruptive new urban populations, so that the latter cannot be understood so

long as we are in ignorance about the former. The subsistence economy which provided for rural Liberians, and occupied their efforts for so long, appears to be at the breaking point. What is going to happen next must be the subject of immediate attention.

#### CONCLUSION

Liberia has a number of factors in its favor. (1) Its population has not reached a crisis point in aggregate numbers. (2) It has a new government which is (a) moderate, (b) sensitive to having been brought into power by an insurgent population and therefore to the need to bring about some changes, (c) oriented to development, and (d) not set in any patterns of operation which will either restrict its opportunity to act or impede its creation of a new organizational structure. (3) It has considerable natural resources. (4) It does not have an insurmountable burden of international debt. Liberia also faces a long list of serious problems. The most basic demand the first attention. (1) The majority of Liberians do not have enough to eat, or a high enough quality of diet. (2) Liberia suffers from a growing balance of payments deficit. (3) Liberia's economy is excessively dependent on a concession sector which may provide for some growth but not for much development. (4) Liberia's agricultural basis is in subsistence agriculture using relatively primitive techniques. (5) Rural Liberians are leaving their homes for the already crowded cities at a rapid rate. (6) As much as half the Liberian population is under- or unemployed. (7) There is virtually no manufacturing sector in Liberia, and consequently no capacity

for the economy to absorb surplus population or fundamentally improve its international economic situation. (8) The provision of basic health care is inadequate. (9) The provision of basic education, even of literacy, is inadequate. (10) The provision of the infrastructure on which development might be based is inadequate. (11) Employment, wealth, health care, education; in short, social welfare of all kinds is radically maldistributed (a) as between elite Americo-Liberians and others, and (b) as between urban and rural areas. (12) The professional and other skilled personnel necessary to both development and the provision of a satisfactory quality of life are lacking. (13) Institutions for training Liberian professionals and skilled workers are lacking. (14) Liberia's population continues both to grow and to grow younger. (15) Population planning is in its infancy and still appears to have a very low priority for the Liberian government. (16) The collection of basic information on population characteristics is inadequate, and that concerning more specialized issues of health, nutrition, migration, etc. is worse. (17) Research and analysis have lagged proportionately behind the collection of basic information in all areas of population and development. (18) The new regime is not yet universally recognized and established on a firm international footing.

NOTES

1. UN Statistical Yearbook, 1978.
2. Clapham (1976: 130-131).
3. The best source on the structural underpinnings of Liberia's problematic development experience for the pre-revolutionary period remains Clower, et. al. (1966). Amin's more recent (1978) and more general study of West African neo-colonialism is in complete agreement with Clower, et. al.
4. Clapham (1976: 10).
5. That by Clower, et. al.
6. Clapham (1976) is the best source on pre-revolutionary politics.
7. Africa News, Aug. 4, 1980, vol. XV, No. 5, pp. 3-4.
8. Ibid., p. 4.
9. Good economic reporting is to be found in the Economic Intelligence Unit's Quarterly Economic Review of Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Liberia.
10. Interestingly, the Liberian estimates look less optimistic than either those of the UN or the Population Council. See Massalee (1974).
11. The possibilities for important anthropological research have by no means been exhausted. There is just an even greater lack of larger scale research. The best--and one of the broadest--of the existing anthropological studies is McEvoy (1972).
12. See, however, Dorjahn (1970).
13. See, for a text of the seminar's recommendations, UNFPA (1978) annex III. Relevant papers from the seminar are cited in the bibliography.
14. See Massalee (1974) for an account of the census data; it is also summarized in UNFPA (1978).
15. See Rumford (1972), Rumford and Green (1979), Blacker (1977), Lingner (1972) and Pradel de Lamaze (1978).
16. See, for example, Moore (1976).
17. The most important work is McEvoy's--still unpublished--Ph.d. dissertation cited in note 11 above.

18. Ajose (1974).
19. See Mellbrug (1972), Gauthier and Brown (1975), and UNFPA (1978).
20. Handwerker (1977).
21. Population Council (1974).
22. See, however, the tabulation from Liberia's National Socio-Economic Development Plan (1976) reported in UNFPA (1978), p. 46.
23. According to the UN Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics, 1978.
24. Fish, Carter and Robinson (1978). "Charleys" tend to be muslim immigrants, and enhance their profits by haggling--the source of considerable price discrimination.
25. UNFPA (1978: 23-24).
26. Gauldfeldt and Gangloff (1973). This remains the best general source on Liberian health problems (though it is perhaps weak in its understanding of Liberian social organization).
27. See May (1970) and Gauldfeldt and Gangloff (1973).

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

Demographic Profile

Population, total (1000s).....	1937
Population, male (1000s) .....	955
Population, females (1000s) .....	982
% Population age 0-4.....	17.5
% Population age 5-14 .....	25
% Population age 15-64 .....	54.1
% Population age 65+ .....	3.5
% Population under 20 .....	52
Sex ratio (per 100 females) .....	97.2
Median age .....	18.9
Proportion urban .....	17.7
Population density (per sq. mi.) .....	45
Rate of growth (1975-1980) .....	2.52
Rate of growth (1980-1985) .....	2.54
Crude birth rate (1980-1985) .....	42.5
Crude death rate (1980-1985) .....	17.1
Gross Reproduction rate (1980-1985) .....	2.84
Net reproduction rate (1980-1985) .....	2.04
Life expectancy, males .....	46.9
Life expectancy, females .....	50.2
Life expectancy, total .....	48.5

Source: UN Yearbook of Demographic Statistics, 1978; medium variant projections for 1980 or period 1980-1985 where applicable.

Other Information

Area .....	43,000 sq. mi.
Gross Domestic Product, 1977 .....	\$699.7mn.
Structure of Economy, 1974	
Modern Economy .....	86%
Concession Sector .....	37%
Rubber .....	4%
Forestry .....	2%
Iron-ore mining .....	28%
Other mining .....	3%
Other modern sectors .....	49%
Commercial agriculture .....	4%
(Rubber) .....	(1%)
Manufacturing .....	5%
Construction .....	3%
Government .....	6%
Other .....	31%
Traditional Economy .....	14%
of which, rice constitutes .....	(5%)

Source: Items one and two, UN Statistical Yearbook, 1978; other items, Republic of Liberia, National Planning Council (1976).

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