

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Between Three Continents: Rethinking Equatorial Guinea on the Fortieth Anniversary of Its Independence from Spain

Hofstra University, Hempstead (New York)
Thursday April 2—Saturday April 4, 2009

Respondent

Simon R. Doubleday

Hofstra University

Beginning at the end:

Dolores García speaks of the re-enslavement of millions of human beings in the late 19th century: genocides, she says, with still incalculable consequences.

This leads us to think about the way in which colonial violence in this period plays into a much larger picture.

Cf. Sven Lindqvist, *“Exterminate all the Brutes”*. *One Man’s Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and the Origins of European Genocide*.

- Europe’s destruction of the “inferior races” of four continents *prepared the ground for the destruction of European Jews by the Nazis*.
- Hitler’s war in the east was a colonial war; and *Lebensraum* was a belated continental equivalent of the overseas British empire.
- Charles Darwin is prominent in this story -- note his assertion that in the relatively near future, “the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races”.

This kind of sensibility transcended pragmatic self-interest.

Classic argument: The Holocaust of the Jews was, as **Raul Hilberg** has shown, contrary to economic rationality.

→ question for Juan José Díaz Mattarranz. In this paper, historical agents *appear* to act in a way which is economically rational: aiming for the self-financing of colonial

territories, seeking to *maximize revenues and minimize expenditure*. But what place is there in this picture for a sense of mission which overrides economic logic? What is the role of colonial idealism?

This connects with a question for Jordi Sant Gisbert. Here, again, we are confronted with a picture of capitalist rationality and indeed flexibility: “demonstrando una pronta readaptación a las nuevas directices internacionales”.... Interestingly, your paper suggests that rationality on the part of individual elements within the colonial regime – merchants, agriculturalists, or chocolate manufactuers – does not necessarily translate into a rational, purposeful system. Quite the contrary, the colonial economy “no demostró tener un rumbo claro y decidido”. So on a macro-level, there appears to be a certain chaos. Again, I would like to ask whether external, extrinsic factors, help to shape this system.

And I would like to ask about another facet of Spanish colonialism in Africa which is missing in this panel: Morocco (cf. **Sebastián Balfour**). Jordi’s paper suggests that the loss of the Caribbean and Philippine territories meant the abandonment of any broad colonial project – “cualquier proyecto colonial de envergadura”: but what about Morocco? What about the desperate, genocidal impulses at work in Morocco, which are seemingly driven by something far more transcendent than economic self-interest: so transcendent that in the 1930s, the same crusading brutality will be practiced within Spain, with catastrophic economic results.

The horrific violence committed by the Guinean authorities in the 1910s, movingly described in Lola’s paper, is a crime against humanity. It might be worth asking how it compares to we encounter in Morocco in the 1920s. On the one hand, there is no use of weapons of mass destruction -- chemical weapons -- to destroy entire villages, either in the 1910s and 1920s, as certainly did take place in Morocco, and if Lola would like to speculate on why this is, I would be very interested. [Why the qualitative difference in the treatment of resistance in Guinea?] But there *is* clearly the same fear of rebellion. Bubi resistance in some sense shapes Spanish policy – just as Andean resistance had shaped Spanish policy in the 16th century.

My question for Josep María, whose paper I found extremely suggestive and engaging, is how precisely this fear of rebellion played into the question of alcohol. You indicated that the spread of alcohol dependency in Guinea “fomentó un serio problema de orden social”, and you suggest that this was also an economic problem in that limited the long-term productivity of the workforce. But was there any concern that the kind of social disorder that alcohol produced might also mean political disorder?

