



Not on the safari circuit.

thing stolen. "That's very Janiceburg, very Jozi," one resident later told him.

Mr. Theroux does not absolve Africans of responsibility for their own plight, but the only Africans he singles out for blame are the corrupt and thieving leaders. His book makes it clear that

sloth, lack of planning, and envy are to blame for much of Africa's plight, but he never says this directly nor does he consider the possibility Africans may be of lower intelligence than whites.

What is to be done with the place? Mr. Theroux condemns Western governments, international organizations, and private aid agencies for making the continent's problems worse. He believes the

only solution is to pull out the

whole apparatus of Western relief and development, and let *Africans* define their problems, work out solutions, and live according to their habits and customs. He does not doubt that by Western standards the continent will remain undeveloped and primitive, will perhaps

become much more so, but it may be able to sustain itself and create a life that is livable for Africans. He seems to think that if left alone, Africans will drift slowly back to their ancestral villages and turn once again to labor-intensive agriculture. Africa would not revert entirely back to a pre-contact state, but it might go halfway.

This may be an overly romantic view. The slaughter in Rwanda/Burundi, the double amputees in Sierra Leone, the witch-burnings and black magic common throughout black Africa, and the cannibalism that has come to light in the Congo are chilling examples of what Africans can do when left to themselves. Perhaps a return to old-fashioned European colonialism is the best solution. Short of that, a policy of leaving Africa alone, with all its potential perils, may be the best realistic choice we have. **Ω**

*Dr. Trask is a free-lance writer and historian who lives in St. Louis.*

## Africa and the Cult of Development

*The following is adapted from the Sept-Oct. 1993 review of a book about Africa by Gedahlia Braun called Racism, Guilt and Self-Deceit (to order, send e-mail to gene@global.co.za). It throws light on what the Malawians may have been thinking when they expelled the Indian shopkeepers and took over their stores. It may also explain why blacks in Zimbabwe who know nothing about running a modern farm seize white farms and expect wealth to follow.*

How the vast majority of Africans think must be understood in light of how poorly they grasp how the world works. Dr. Braun reminds us that belief in magic is deeply rooted among Africans. He reports that when a European magician came to Ibadan, Nigeria, and "sawed a woman in half," the audience assumed he had actually cut her in two. After all, if African witch doctors can fly through the air and turn people into alligators, the least a white man can do is cut people in two and put them back together.

Dr. Braun reports that many Africans see Western technology and high standards of living as a kind of magic. Many think a college diploma is not an indication of a certain level of knowledge but a talisman that can magically make a big house and a Mercedes appear. Even the blacks who run African schools have

superstitious beliefs in the *forms* of education; if white schools have a study period at 2:00 p.m., black schools must have one at the same time even if it is inconvenient. Many blacks think whites get their money simply by walking around in a suit with a briefcase and going into banks, where they get as much as they want. Whites have selfishly denied the benefits of this magic to Africans.

Dr. Braun quotes extensively from a brilliant article that likens the African



The great cargo bird.

attitude towards economic development to the cargo cults of the Pacific islanders. Some of these islands had been ignored by the modern world until the Second World War, during which the Allies used them as staging areas. To the wonderment of the natives, giant metal birds flew down from the sky, in response to various ceremonies such as the building of long flat clearings in the jungle. Out of the bellies of the giant metal birds came marvelous things like flash lights and round metal boxes filled with food.

When the war was over and the Allies left, the islanders decided to take over the rituals themselves. They built their own flat clearings in the jungle, and set upon them giant birds made of boxes and coconut trees so as to coax their great metal cousins down from the sky. They pretended to be soldiers, marching in formation around the flat clearings and waving strips of cloth stuck on sticks. Somehow the magic did not work; the giant metal birds never came back.

Just as the cargo cultists believed that by manipulating some of the *forms* of 20th century commerce they could reap 20th century rewards, Africans believe that a paved highway here and a parking lot there will bring the magical cargo of development.

Dr. Braun quotes further:

"When the first spurt of national infrastructure building failed to produce the desired cargo of development, additional rituals were invented. A ritual of North-South dialogue was started to persuade the guardian spirits of development to bring aid, to transfer technology, and to grant better terms of trade. When this ritual also failed, Third-World spokesmen resorted to blaming the West for holding up Third-World Development."

If Africans continue to believe that development is a form of magic they will never achieve it. **Ω**

# O Tempora, O Mores!

## Liver of Darkness

An estimated three million people have died in Congo's four years of civil war. At various times, five neighboring countries have sent in armies to fight over land and natural resources. In the chaos, tribes have vented ancient hatreds against each other, and revived an ancient form of dominion over one's enemies—cannibalism. Most Congolese appear to believe that eating a man's heart, liver, or genitals adds that man's strength to one's own. They despise Pygmies as sub-human, but believe that their organs, too, give special powers for hunting and surviving in the forest.

A reporter who recently traveled to the Congo listened to first-hand accounts of cannibalism. One pygmy, for example, told of coming back to his village and finding soldiers butchering and eating his family. Another man, named Kakule, was rich enough to have a chain saw, and was cutting trees with two assistants. Soldiers appeared and held the three at gun point. Their chief ordered Kakule and one assistant to hold the other down on the ground. The chief then:

"... yanked a knife across the throat of Kakule's assistant. He cut the tongue from below and pulled it out through the throat; he cut the belly down the middle and claimed the liver; he stripped off the trousers so he could slice off the testicles and penis. One of his squad hacked up the body. The commander gave Kakule his knife, told him to pare the skin from an arm, a leg. He told Kakule and his other assistant to build a fire. From their satchels, the soldiers brought cassava bread. They sat in a circle. The commander placed the dead man's head at the center. He forced the two loggers to sit with them, to eat with them the pieces of boiled limb. The grilled liver, tongue and genitals had already been parceled out among the commander and his troops."

Many Congolese believe that if they eat the organs of enough people they will be able to deflect bullets, but there are other ways to do that. The same reporter watched as the men fighting under a warlord named Vita Kitambala demonstrated their leader's powers. They be-

lieve he can fly, make himself invisible, and work some kind of mumbo jumbo with water so that it wards off bullets. The demonstration was as follows:

"At last a camouflage-patterned hat was drenched . . . I focused carefully on the gunman, on whether he aimed downward precisely at the target. He didn't. He lifted the barrel several inches as he fired. Dirt spattered up three feet from the hat. His move seemed so awkward, so obvious, that for a moment I believed I felt everyone's embarrassment.

"But the general didn't look embarrassed at all. The spiritual force of the water bent the barrel, he explained matter-of-factly, causing the bullet to veer off target. He showed me the rifle, whose tip did look a bit battered from years of use but hardly bent."

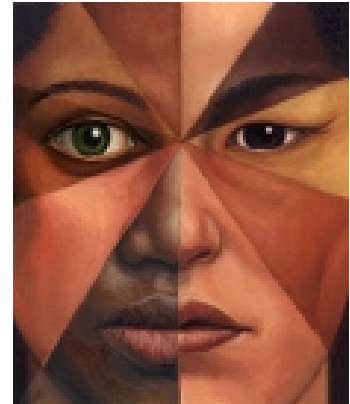
There is widespread belief in magic throughout black Africa, and cannibalism for the purpose of absorbing a man's strength has been reported in Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the Central African Republic. In the Congo, where non-African influences have largely disappeared, this form of fetishism has certainly become more common, but cannibalism appears to have acquired another purpose.

"Fetishism can't explain why, according to testimony given to U.N. investigators, M.L.C. [Movement for the Liberation of Congo] troops forced one woman to eat from her husband's corpse. It can't explain why some victims were ordered to swallow their own ears or toes, why Kakule had to eat the less desirable parts of his assistant's body alongside his captors or why, after the butchering of a Protestant priest, others were forced to pay money or eat his flesh—or be butchered themselves. The inflicting of vengeance and spreading of terror—aspects of war that are as modern as they are ancient—have played a part in Congo's cannibalism. A Human Rights Watch report released in July suggests that 'perpetrators have found that fear of cannibalism terrorizes victims more effectively into compliance with their orders than does the simple fear of death, so frequently faced in daily life.' " [Daniel Bergner, *The Most Unconventional Weapon*, Sunday New York Times

Magazine, Oct. 26, 2003.]

## The Tragic Mulatto

A recent study of 90,000 middle school and high school students has found that mixed-race children have more health and psychological problems than children who are not mixed. For example, children who consider themselves both black and white are more likely than black or white children to be depressed, sleep badly, skip school, smoke, drink, and have sex. They are also more likely to suffer from stress-related health problems, get hold of guns, consider suicide, and suffer vari-



ous aches and pains. White-Asian hybrids also show the same symptoms. The principal author of the study, J. Richard Udry of the University of North Carolina, says, "The most common explanation for the high-risk status is the struggle with identity formation, leading to lack of self-esteem, social isolation and problems of family dynamics in biracial households." The study appeared in the Oct. 30, 2003, issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*. [Connie Cass, Study: Mixed-Race Youth Have Health Woes, AP, Oct. 30, 2003.]

## Diversity Begets Violence

In late October two prisoners died in a race riot that pitted blacks against Hispanics. Violence at the Eagle Mountain prison about 60 miles east of Palm Springs, California, involved an estimated 150 inmates and raged for 90 minutes. Fighting broke out in a recreation room, where prisoners were watching the