

# No Panacea for Poverty

**"A Primer of Economic Development," by Robert J. Alexander** (Macmillan. 210 pp. \$5), offers proposals for speeding up the entry of the underdeveloped countries into the mainstream of modern life. Ferdinand Kuhn, a free-lance writer, has traveled widely in many of the lands discussed.

By FERDINAND KUHN

**I**N SPITE of the Alliance for Progress, Americans still pay more attention to underdevelopment in Asia and Africa than in the Western Hemisphere. Editors in the United States believe, according to A. A. Berle, Jr., "that there is no public interest in Latin American news." Readers who know about India's five-year plans may have no inkling of Chile's twenty-five-year development plan, launched as long ago as 1939.

The shining virtue of Dr. Alexander's book is that it helps to right the balance. In explaining the problems of underdevelopment all over the world, and in proposing solutions, he sprinkles his pages with dozens of examples taken chiefly from the Latin American record.

Thus he reminds us that a one-crop export economy can be a curse in Brazil as well as in Burma; that a drop of one cent in the price of tin is even more ruinous to Bolivia than to Malaya; that diversified economies, in short, are essential in Latin America as well as in Africa and Asia. His Latin American examples carry special conviction because he has based them on fifteen years of study and summer travel south of the border.

Dr. Alexander, a teacher of economics at Rutgers, calls his book a "primer" for the general reader. He avoids footnotes and professional jargon; he assumes no specialized knowledge of economics in his public. Sometimes he states the obvious almost to the point of caricature. "A sick worker," for example, "is not generally a good worker." The aphorism recalls Calvin Coolidge's deathless words: "When more and more people are thrown out of work, unemployment results."

A more basic defect is that a "primer" on so complex a subject must simplify and generalize; therefore it can hardly

fail to oversimplify and distort. Dr. Alexander finds, for instance, "a profound desire among great masses of the people in the underdeveloped nations to change the whole pattern of their existence." What about the "great masses" that block economic development precisely because they are unwilling to change their cultural patterns?

Or, to take another overly sweeping statement: the underdeveloped countries "can bring into use immediately machines that represent the experience and knowledge accumulated in two centuries of the Industrial Revolution." Which countries? How many of them can use the new technology without trained managers and adaptable workers, and without purchasing power to buy what the new machines produce?

In his sympathy for all the developing peoples, Dr. Alexander wants them to have everything. He wants new in-

dustries set up as fast as possible, plus tariffs or quotas or exchange controls to protect them; new safeguards for urban labor; new agreements and buffer stocks to hold commodity prices steady; new farm techniques and land reform, and much more.

To pay for all this, he would have the United States and other industrialized nations contribute vastly more than they are doing now. His procedure looks deceptively easy. Just ask the underdeveloped countries to ". . . get together among themselves, or as regional groups," and draw up detailed programs of their needs for a decade ahead. Then let the advanced nations meet and decide how much they will lend or give.

**T**HE proposal, like others in this book, takes too little account of the hard facts of economic growth. Each nation is different in its ability and its readiness to develop. As Ambassador Galbraith has written, ". . . we can no longer speak of a common prescription for development. Any effort to offer such a general formula will be productive only of waste, frustration, and disappointment."

If Dr. Alexander has learned this lesson, it is a pity that he has not made his understanding of it crystal clear.

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## Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

### DOMESTICATED FOWL

If you think the poets, old and new, have neglected the duck, the hen, the goose, *et id genus omne*, you've got another quack (or cluck) coming. Lysander Kemp of Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, submits various citations to prove bardic devotion to the feathered tribe, barnyard division, and ask you to assign the correct quote to the correct author. Cracked corn dispensed on page 46.

1. The lazy geese, like a snow cloud,  
Dripping their snow on the green grass ( ) Eudora Welty
2. A hen  
I keep, which, creaking day by day,  
Tells when  
She goes her long white egg to lay. ( ) Edward Lear
3. I remember a swan under the willows  
Oxford, with flamingo-colored, maple-  
leaflike feet ( ) Richard Wilbur
4. At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make  
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,  
Downward to darkness, on extended wings. ( ) Robert Herrick
5. You cross the road in the teeth of Pontiacs  
As over a threshold, into waving, gregarious  
grasses,  
Welcome wherever you go—the Guinea Sisters. ( ) John Crowe Ransom
6. The pride of the peacock is the glory of God. ( ) Wallace Stevens
7. And who so happy,—O who  
As the Duck and the Kangaroo? ( ) Marianne Moore
8. Neither pale nor bright,  
The turkey-cock parades  
Through radiant splendors, darkly auspicious as  
The ace of spades. ( ) William Blake

## Shades of Darkness

**"African Profiles,"** by Ronald Segal (352 pp. \$1.45), **"A Short History of Africa,"** by Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage (280 pp. \$1.25), and **"The Arab Role in Africa,"** by Jacques Baulin (144 pp. \$1.25), initiate a new series, the Penguin African Library. Hal Lehrman, lecturer, author, and foreign correspondent, frequently writes from or about Africa.

By HAL LEHRMAN

IT MAY be the discomforts of African weather, insect life, non-plumbing, and tribal ferocities, or just because our ignorance of the place is still large and the field fairly free of encrusted academic pundits. Anyway, the exploding Dark Continent tends to be a young man's subject, as these first three entries in Penguin's paperback "African Library" demonstrate.

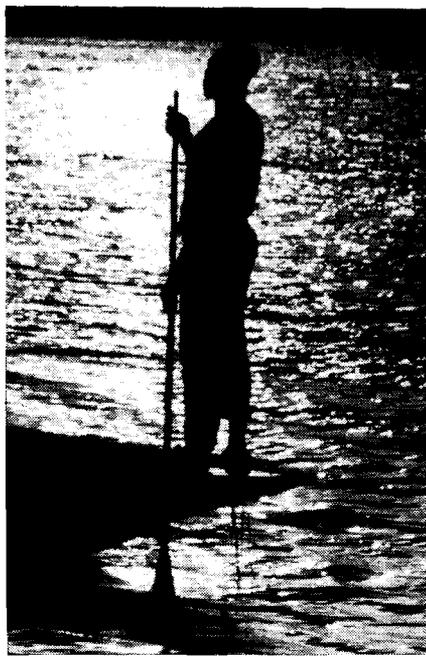
The oldest learned contributor is forty-one, the youngest—who is the boss-editor of the series—barely thirty. Appropriately, the youngest young man is the angriest, and the others share with him two other traits of new-generation scholars and journalists: a robust personal identification with their specialty that sometimes bubbles up into unabashed partisanship, and a happy unawareness that finality is never safe when assessing a contemporary situation—because contemporary situations have a way of never staying put.

The caprices of each new wonderful morning are especially sly in Africa, and the perils of not allowing for them are particularly sticky in editor Ronald Segal's "African Profiles." Mr. Segal, a non-conformist South African who completed his manuscript in London "exile" last March, stoutly committed himself then to the notion that the two "profiles" that "best personified" contemporary Algeria were Ferhat Abbas and Ben Youssef Ben Khedda. His analysis of the Algerian revolution rests entirely on these two chiefs of the rebel Provisional Government. Today Abbas is in the cellar of power and Ben Khedda on the garbage heap. (But this, too, let me speedily add, may not be eternal.)

Further, it takes a splendid optimism—and a wee touch of unripeness—to

have believed in March, as Mr. Segal did, that the Congo disunity crisis "seemed fast to be drawing to its close." Nor is it very scientific of him to have buried "Bourguibism" a while back because Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba happened at the moment to be outraged over hard-nosed French behavior at Bizerte. "Bourguibism" was and remains an imaginative doctrine of compromise and moderation, notably in seeking sensible accommodations with France and the West. Mr. Segal's premature obsequies for this doctrine reflect his own impatience with anything except lusty toughness toward all forms of "colonialism," or "domination, foreign or racial," as he calls it.

HOWEVER, "African Profiles," which surveys the continent from stem to stern mainly through career outlines of the leaders and factions in each territory, offers much information in a handy package at a popular price, though its reliability is somewhat reduced by the author's habit of switching between rose-colored and black glasses. Kwame Nkrumah's dictatorial antics in Ghana are only gently chided, but Moise Tshombe in Katanga gets knocked on the head for declining to be drowned in Congo "unity." We are



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given a searing indictment of Portuguese beastliness in Angola, but Gamal Abdel Nasser's systematic appeals beyond Egypt to murder and revolutive are benignly passed over. Indeed, the whole chapter on the Egyptian Colonel-President—scourge of imperialists and darling of African unifiers—deserves a prize for obtuse benevolence. How else interpret, for example, Mr. Segal's conclusion that Nasser, when his much-touted United Arab Republic was collapsing around his ears and his loyal troops were enthusiastically surrendering to Syrian mutineers, "emerged with his reputation for statesmanship enhanced . . . ?"

Something of the same double standard is waved, though less passionately, in "A Short History of Africa," by Roland Oliver and John Fage. For instance, the co-authors, though both British and both already distinguished for sober scholarship, permit themselves to dismiss the significant 1956 Anglo-French assault on the Suez Canal as "a fit of temper." But their bias shows more clearly in their zeal for Africa *per se*, not just as a thing to be studied but, having once been studied, as a thing to be loved.

Messrs. Oliver and Fage challenge the "parochial European idea" that Africa ever was "dark." Why, they cry, Africa on the eve of the Age of Discovery enjoyed a higher civilization by far than, say, the aborigines of Australia or the Indians of North America. If there were scholars in medieval Paris, so were there scholars in Timbuktu; what the Renaissance "accomplished with pigment, the artists of Benin [in the Nigerian forest] achieved with bronze." From the Western historian's self-centered viewpoint, the antique kingdom of Kush below Nubia was a last gasp of Pharaonic civilization; but to our co-authors it was a bright proof of Black African alertness to ancient Egyptian inspiration.

THIS dogged impulse to justify Africa pervades the author's attempt to synthesize all that is known of the continent's pre-European history. Unfortunately, African history before the colonial era depends too heavily on archeology, linguistics, tradition, and the like to permit much precision. Thus adroit guesswork is a major tool for half the volume. Every scrap of fact or reasonable conjecture is treasured.

Having consumed so much space on what is half-known or dimly inferred, the "Short History" leaves relatively little room for the important modern period, where written records abound and much light can be thrown on current problems. Here the treatment is hurried and skeletal. The resulting