Black Pioneers in Business: A Brief Interpretive History 1650-1900

By Thomas L. Dolby
(For Associated Publishers, Inc.)

"Things that one knows about the past," writes historian Benjamin Quarles, "are of consequence in shaping his present and limiting contours to the future." In this connection, black pioneers engaged in business enterprises during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries command our attention and gratitude for the ingenuity they employed. It was they who laid the foundation upon which present-day economic and social institutions of the race have been built. To the extent possible, the efforts of these pioneers followed in the footsteps of the merchants and traders in the three great West African kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhay; and in the shadow of their more recent ancestors who traded throughout North Africa and parts of Europe and Asia in the 14th century.

In spanning the economic history of black people during the first three centuries in the life of this country, time, place, economics and racial attitudes have been salient factors in determining the extent to which members of the race engaged in business enterprises. This essay will focus on these factors as they relate to the development and nature of these enterprises, and on the character of the pioneers who had to depend upon "instinct and wits" since they did not have the advantage of apprenticeship, formal training, professional counselling, or more than modest resources, if that.

THE GENESIS, 17th CENTURY

Agriculture was the first enterprise to provide blacks with opportunities to engage in business on their shores. The development, as will be seen, occurred before chattel slavery was enacted into law.

The colonization of Virginia became a reality in 1607, after the ill-fated expeditions by Sir Walter Raleigh during 1584-1587. Three years had elapsed since the long war between England and Spain ceased. It left in England a large number of restless, unemployed soldiers. In addition, there were some noblemen, knights and merchants who had become desperate after losing their wealth in the war effort. They posed a political problem to the power structure. The financiers knew that fertility of soil in Virginia could grow products that would yield rich returns in European markets, and that the Western World could be cultivated for English goods and services. With this in mind, a solution to the unemployment problem, they stated those willing to become planters and colonizers. The manpower force would cut trees, root out stumps, build houses, split rails, plough, sow and harvest was drawn from the reservoir of poor, unemployed farm workers, prisoners, and people seized on the streets and whisked off to ships bound for Virginia. Planters bought these people as indentured servants to provide free labor for an agreed upon number of years, in exchange for costs of transportation, maintenance, training, and a small entrance consideration.

When terms of the contract were fulfilled, the servant became free and eligible to receive, under the on-going headright system, a grant of fifty acres of land for each servant they would import into the colony. Some Africans were imported and after working out their indenturship, they availed themselves of the headright benefit and became farmers and colonizers.

Anthony Johnson is the best known of the early black pioneers. He was brought into the colony about 1621, served out his indenturship in two years and started to buy property. By 1651, he was able to import five servants, on whose headrights he was granted 250 acres of land in Northampton County, on the shores of the Pungoteague River. He assembled perhaps a dozen native Africans in what was the second black community in America—the first was in New York in 1644. It is presumed that he grew tobacco since it was the principal cash crop grown to meet the demands of the European markets. In the same year, John Johnson imported eleven servants and received 550 acres. Each of these plantations was part of the black community. Elsewhere in the colony, Benjamin Doke, in 1650, was granted 300 acres in Surry County for importing six servants; John Harris of Kent County purchased fifty acres; and Phillip Morgan, unable to buy, leased 200 acres for 99 years in York County.

In 1623, there were 23 blacks in the Virginia colony. By 1660, the number had increased to 300 and at the close of the century, they numbered from 4,000 to 7,000; some 300 to 500 were reportedly free. Other colonies in which servitude of blacks preceded slavery were: Maryland, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina. Before chattel slavery was introduced, white indentured servants seemed to have met the need for labor in New Jersey and New York. At time, the planters in Virginia found that this class of labor was uneconomical. They were impressed, however, with the way Africans adapted to the environment and performed their work. In seeking ways to reduce labor costs, the expedient thing to do was so make chattel slaves of these servants, since they did not have any means of protection from a government. In 1661, such a law was passed, applicable to all Africans entering the colony. This law had the effect of curtailing, and in short time, eliminating blacks from qualifying for grants of land since the headright system was a preserve for free people.

As noted previously, available records show that Africans participated in the headright system from 1650 to 1660—less than a generation. The system was abolished in 1699, but it had enabled nearly five generations of Europeans to prosper and build a viable economic and social foundation for their future generations.

The 17th century was highly constrained to the economic history of Africans. As related to black Americans, the century produced the earliest black pioneers in business, as well as provided the setting within which the race was reduced to the status of chattel slaves.

DOWN, BUT NOT OUT, 18th CENTURY

By 1700, the country had become organized into the following political communities: Virginia, 1619; Massachusetts, 1620; New York, 1623; Maryland, 1639; Connecticut, 1639; Rhode Island, 1641; New Jersey, 1664; Pennsylvania, 1682; and the Carolinas, 1665-1729. Supplying slaves to develop the colonies became a prime source of revenue for the English government, the shippers, and the highly-paid colonial officials and merchants. Except for Rhode Island, chattel slavery had become an institution in all of the colonies, and all kinds of laws were enacted to tightly control the complete life of the slave. Under these circumstances, the prospects were dim for them to pick and go forward from where their forepareents left off in their short engagement in business during the 17th century. But after mid-century, the dimness cleared to some extent. Again, the factors of time, place, economics, and racial attitudes came into play in bringing about this development.

Legalized slavery was the catalyst which attracted a massive number of Europeans to the colonies. From 1715 to 1790, their population soared from 375,750 to 3,172,006, or 844%. During the same period, the black population went from 58,850 to 757,181, or 1,286%. Of them, 677,245 lived in the South, and of them 658,621, or 97% were chattel slaves.

An assay of the achievements of blacks in the field of business during the 18th century must be confined to a base of just 3% of the black population since 97% resided in the South and could not engage in conventional business enterprises, nor did they have the money to support any. Their basic needs were supplied by their owners who were not likely to support a business owned and operated by a free black.

NEW ENGLAND COLONIES

The economic and religious conditions differed in these colonies. Most of the laborers were free whites who looked after themselves during the long, cold winter months, whereas slaves had to be maintained. This factor, together with the influence of the Puritans' patriarchal concept of slavery, led to emancipation of slaves in these colonies by 1784. Freedom though, was not complete, for there were a number of agonizing restraints imposed upon them, by law and public policy. The conditions to engage in business, however, were much better than those in the South.

Jim Riggs of Farmingham, Massachusetts was a jobber and basket maker. He had the leading clientele of the town as his customers. **Joseph Hayes** of the same town was a shoemaker, and in Boston, **John Perry**, the husband of Phillis Wheatley, was alternately a baker, grocer, harbor, physician and lawyer. In Connecticut, **Sharp Nero** of Salem owned a barber shop. Three of the twelve in the town were owned by blacks, and **Zabdi** of Groton was a fine musician. In Rhode Island, **Thomas Thomas** (1739-1827) was a celebrated barber in Newport; in 1766, **Edward Mooney Freeman** opened the first catering establishment in Providence. So important did his business become in the social life of the town, he became a prominent citizen of the day and served as a member of civic committees. Lucy Prince, which title was given to a black woman who was a celebrated cook, was a resident of Newport.

James Forten (1766-1842) free born in Philadelphia, sailmaker, inventor, abolitionist, Forten's rise to national prominence began in 1798 when he became proprietor of the sailmaking company for which he worked. They had soon recognized his ability and promoted him from foreman of their sail loft. As owner of the business, he became wealthy, employing as many as forty men, half of them white. His invention of a device to handle sails contributed a great deal to his success. He became noted for his philanthropy and dedication to the abolitionist movement.

Prior to 1780, free blacks in the colony had a distinctly lower legal and social status than whites, though not so low as the slave. The movement of free blacks was restricted, congregating by themselves was limited, and their rights before the courts were scarcely recognized. Few in numbers and shut out by common society, it is conceivable that most of their energy was expended in efforts to survive. The original reason for their presence in the colony was to provide free labor. When servitude was over, they became unwanted.

In the colony of New York, slavery of blacks was legalized in 1710. From 4,000 in 1715, they grew in numbers to 25,270 by 1790—an increase of 664%. Of them, 1,592 or 6% were free. In the same period, the white population went from 27,000 to 314,142—an increase of 1,163%.

The first multiple number of blacks to become free was in 1644. Eleven slaves, after providing free labor for eighteen years, petitioned the government for manumission. It was granted and land was provided for them to support themselves, but they were required to pay the government annually, as long as they lived, 22½ bushels of corn, wheat, peas or beans, and a fat hog valued at $8.00. Failure to comply meant return to servitude. The land grants were located far out from the edge of the settlement on a tangled swamp, known today as Greenwich Village and Washington Square. The section remained essentially black for more than a century—the first black community in America.

After the English acquired the colony from the Dutch in 1664, the conditions of blacks grew harsh. In bitterness and resentment, they staged a futile insurrection in 1712 and, in 1741, a group of them and some whites were charged with "conspiracy to burn down the city and murder the inhabitants." There is no family on the charge were executed, but the country

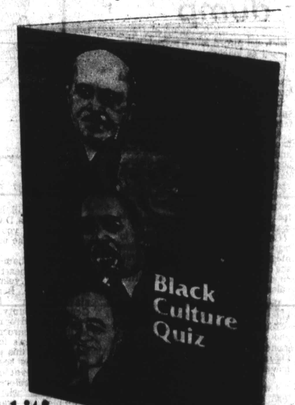
Top (L), W. E. B. DuBois in the office of "Crisis" magazine. The 369th Infantry Regiment arrives in New York after service overseas during World War I. Second row: Inventor Garret A. Morgan, and at far (R), Marcus Garvey.

Distribution of Black Population by Colony, Percent of Total Population and Number of Free Blacks (1790), 1715-1790

	1715*		1750**		
	Black pop.	% Total pop.	Black pop.	% Total pop.	Free Blacks
Maine	-	-	536	.6	519
New Hampshire	150	1.4	787	.6	767
Vermont	-	-	269	.3	264
Massachusetts	2,000	2.1	5,369	3.4	5,369
Rhode Island	500	5.6	4,697	6.3	3,484
Connecticut	1,500	3.2	6,419	2.3	2,771
New York	4,000	12.7	20,075	7.6	4,654
New Jersey	1,500	6.6	14,185	7.7	2,762
Pennsylvania	2,500	5.5	10,759	2.4	6,531
Maryland	9,500	18.6	111,079	34.7	8,043
Delaware	-	-	12,786	21.6	3,899
Virginia	23,000	34.2	305,493	40.9	12,866
No. Carolina	3,700	27.4	100,572	26.8	5,041
So. Carolina	10,500	60.0	108,695	43.7	1,801
Georgia	-	-	29,632	35.9	398
Kentucky	-	-	12,244	17.0	114
Tennessee	-	-	3,778	10.6	361
Total	58,850	13.5	757,181	19.3	59,557

*History of Slavery and the Slave Trade, Revised and Enlarged, by C. S. Drew, 1936
**Negro Population, 1790-1915, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Government Printing Office, 1918

We thought you'd like this book.



You loved it!

Back in 1971, with the idea we might assist Black Americans to learn more about their heritage, we published this Black Culture Quiz booklet. It contains some 100 brief descriptions of achievements by and for Blacks in this country. It was developed for us by Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, now president of Bronx (N.Y.) Community College.

We printed a modest number of the booklets that year, and gave them away at conventions and to individuals who asked us for them.

We were surprised (and pleased) to find that we had a long-running hit on our hands. We've revised and updated it three times. More than 150,000 copies have gone to schools, colleges, church groups, businesses and individuals.

Perhaps this little booklet is our most visible involvement with the black community, but it is only one way we offer encouragement. We also support the United Negro College Fund, work closely with Opportunities Industrialization Centers (our president, Frederick A. Collins, Jr., is a member of OIC's National Advisory Council and chairman of the New York Council). We support the black press through advertising and, of course, we are actively seeking minority employees — as we have been for many years.

The Sperry and Hutchinson Company

If you'd like a complimentary copy of the booklet, write to:
BLACK CULTURE QUIZ
The Sperry and Hutchinson Company
330 Madison Avenue
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Limited quantities of the quiz are also available at cost by schools and other groups.

New Gabon railway will unlock rich resources

By Augustine Oyanisan-Oyowe

Gabon's iron ore deposits at Makemba, which are thought to be among the world's largest, and its huge forest reserves are awaiting the completion of the 185-kilometre trans-Gabon railway scheme which is now around a third complete.

A dream came true for President Omar Bongo of Gabon when he recently opened the first stage of the Trans-Gabon Railway. Speaking at a ceremony at Ntoum, the first station on the 185-km track, the Gabonese leader said that the opening of the line was a slap in the face for those who predicted it would never be built.

To a certain extent, the President's taunt was justified, for when the project was launched in 1973, there was a general feeling that it was too ambitious a project to get off the ground.

The railway was planned to run from the port of Owendo in the capital Libreville to Boue, then southeast to Franceville, to the manganese and uranium mines and forest reserves of the surrounding region, while a branch was expected to take off from Bou, north-east to the Makemba iron mines.

Gabon had difficulty raising funds, for no countries or international finance organizations showed any interest, in spite of the laudable objectives of the scheme.

However, when France reluctantly lent initial financial support, enabling work to begin in 1974, West Germany, the United States, Italy, the African Development Bank (ADB) and the European Development Fund (EDF) moved in with loans.

Fortune then smiled on the project. As the Middle East Yom Kippur War led to successive higher oil prices from OPEC, Gabon's offshore oilfields reached peak production, earning the country an average Cfa Francs 102 billion annually.

Inevitably, the trans-Gabonese railway scheme got its fair share in the revised five year (1976-81) development plan.

Gabon's oil boom, however, had the effect of lessening interest among the project's backers. Then the dramatic drop in the demand for oil early in 1978 and the corresponding cuts in Gabon's production dealt a severe blow to it, as President Bongo was forced to cut expenditure wherever possible.

Gabon turned to the Eurodollar finance institutions and Arab states for loans. In April last year, it managed to secure a medium-term loan from the Swiss-based international finance corporation SIFIDA with the participation of other banks, among them the Illinois National Bank, Trust Company of Chicago, Chase Manhattan, Provincial Bank of Canada, American Security Bank and Banque Nationale de Paris.

The Saudi Arabian Development Fund promised aid of US $20 million to provide electronic signals for the line, and after a visit to Bonn by President Bongo, the West Germans are to help Gabon develop its infrastructure to exploit its mineral resources.

An estimated U.S. $275 million has already been spent on the project and not a third of the line has been completed. It is still a long way from the mineral and forest reserves for which the project was conceived.

It is like having an El Dorado within sight and not being able to get there," a Gabonese government official said wryly.

The Makemba iron ore deposits, which are believed to be among the largest in the world, have been earmarked for exploitation by a consortium of European and U.S. companies who are currently waiting in the wings for the Trans-Gabon Railway to come to life.

One company, Societe des Mines de Fer de Makemba, in which the government has a 60 percent stake, is already operating in the area, awaiting the day the line arrives.

Gabon has forst reserves which many estimate could yield 30 million tons of timber. Because of a poor transport network, the government has been forced over the years to establish sawmills all over the southeast to turn the timber into planks to enable easier transportation to Libreville by road.

A new mill, Compagnie Forestiere du Gabon, certainly one of the biggest in the world, was commissioned two years ago and another factory has just been completed at Kango some 100 kilometres from Libreville, to make use of timber on the spot, in another effort to beat the transport problem.

The government projects the doubling of manganese production from its present 1.5 million tons annually and the trifling of uranium from 1,000 tons a year when the railway is completed and fully operational. There are also similar hopes on phosphate output.—African Features, Ltd.

African briefs

Road will open interior

By African Features, Ltd.

DAR ES SALAAM—An improved road link planned between Makambako and Songea is expected to open up large areas of under-developed southern Tanzania, resulting in social benefits and agricultural development.

An important aspect of the plan will be the linking of the southern ports of Lindi and Mtwara to the mineral-rich belts of Zambia and Zaire, giving those regions another much-needed outlet for their exports.

Much of the work on the 323-kilometre stretch of road, which will be up-graded to all-weather status, is being funded by a U.S. $80 million grant from Britain, the largest grant the British have given for any road project anywhere.

Ironically, it will help in the development of the area around Lindi and Mtwara where the British-inspired groundnut scheme of the 1940s foundered.

Other schemes in the coastal region of southern Tanzania aim to improve life for people living in one of the country's poorest areas, with the building of six rural health-centres planned and a possible new hospital at Mbeya. Agriculture will also be developed.

Under another roads scheme, the World Bank has provided a U.S. $20.5 million credit to help Tanzania cover the maintenance and rehabilitation of 2,700 kilometres of trunk roads in northern and western parts of the country.

The Tanzanians are also intent on improving their rail services, with the purchase of shunting locomotives, wagons and coaches from British firms.

River power plan eyed

FREETOWN—Feasibility studies are to be carried out by a French firm for a hydro-electric power scheme on the Mano River which would serve both Sierra Leon and neighbouring Liberia. The studies are being financed by the European Economic Community's Development Fund and are expected to spread over five and a half years.

Among other developments in Sierra Leone are plans for a new highway to link Freetown with Monrovia, the Liberian capital, while feasibility studies for a second sugar-producing plant are being made in Pendembu, Eastern Province.

The largest clay-brick factory in West Africa, at Kissy, was expected to begin full production in January. It is designed to produce bricks for export as well as home use.

Filtration method studied

LONDON—A new filtration system which helps the river bed act as a natural sand filter to produce clean water, and which also cuts out the threat of the water-borne disease bilharzia, is being adopted by several African nations.

The "washing water" system developed by applied biologist George Cansdale can provide drinking water, irrigation and water for fish-farms. It is already helping Kenya export millions of carnation blooms a year to Europe and is also being used in Tanzania, for ranches and village supplies, as well as in Malawi, where it is used for irrigation and community intake purposes.

It is backed by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and has also aroused interest in Ghana, while in Nigeria, an agricultural college has taken it and feasibility studies are being conducted in two towns. The Nigerian Army is interested in the device, which is now in operation in 16 countries worldwide.

Cansdale began his research in 1966, while working at a marine zoo in eastern England. Essentially, what has resulted is a fibreglass box and a pump which use sand to filter and cleanse water. The system also excludes the larval form of bilharzia.

Swazi athletes increase

MBABANE—Swaziland has doubled its number of elite sportsmen, by registering another 500. Most of them are long-distance runners, for which the mountainous southern African state is becoming famous.

It was a Swazi, Richard Mabuza, who won the marathon at the Third African Games in Algiers last year.

Revamp of railway set

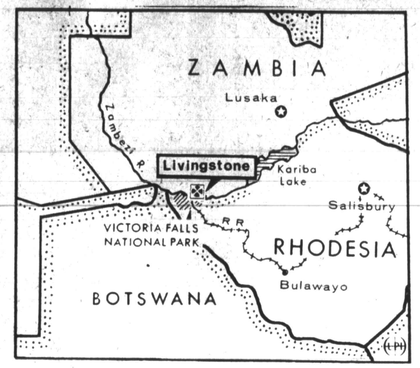
LAGOS—Nigeria's railways are to be managed by Indian experts for the next three years under an agreement here between the Nigerian Railway Corporation and the Rail India Technical and Economic Services.

It is expected that the loss-making railways system will be completely re-organized by the more than 400 Indian managers and technicians. In 1981-82, the Nigerian railways carried more than 11 million passengers, but last year that had dwindled to just over 4.5 million.

Wagon turnround time is presently 36 days instead of the normal 12 and only around a third of locos are being used. RITES' job is to see turnround time cut and more locomotives used.

RITES target is to also increase wagon loading per day. The passenger-carrying target for the first year is seven million, while the first-year target for goods is 1.8 million tonnes, rising to three million in the third year, as compared to under a million ton of goods carried yearly at present.

Other improvements are aimed at, not least in training, with the setting-up of a training school at Zaria by the Federal Government.



GUERRILLA WARFARE — Rhodesian warplanes crossed the border and pounded guerrilla bases in Zambia Feb. 17, striking against Black Nationalist insurgents preparing to infiltrate into Rhodesia, the military command said. The communique said the attack on Zambia was aimed at base occupied by Joshua Nkomo's guerrillas in the Livingstone area southern Zambia.

Amin wants U.N. council meet on Tanzanian 'invasion'

UNITED NATIONS (UPI) — The United Nations has confirmed that Ugandan President Idi Amin has requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council to deal with what he claimed was Tanzani's invasion "deep inside Uganda."

Amin requested the meeting in a telegram to U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, dated Feb. 12 and released Feb. 14. The Ugandan leader indicated he would not personally attend but would be represented by his U.N. ambassador.

There was no word immediately from either Waldheim or Kuwaiti U. N. Ambassador Abdalla Yaccoub Bishara, this month's president of the Security Council, as to when or if such a meeting of the 15-member council would be called.

The message to Waldheim came on the heels of a Radio Uganda report Feb. 10 that Tanzania troops had poured into Uganda.

Idi Amin

"The situation is very, very serious and massive Tanzanian forces are fighting repeat fighting deep inside Uganda in two provinces, namely, South Buganda and Southern Province, and an area of approximately 350 square miles is in their hands," Amin told Waldheim.

He also said Tanzanian forces were "fighting with the support of mercenaries," but he did not identify them.

"I am requesting your excellency to pass my appeal to the members of the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular so that it convenes immediately to discuss this matter seriously," Amin said.

"I have not directed and I do not intend to direct my forces to fight Tanzania," he added. "I want Tanzania to withdraw to her internationally recognized border."

Reports reaching Nairobi Feb. 11 suggested the "Tanzanian forces" Amin claims to be fighting are actually guerrillas of the anti-Amin "Save Uganda Movement," SUM for short.

Ugandan exiles in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha were quoted as saying the movement has 1,500 guerrillas fighting inside Uganda and claimed the guerrillas are aided by Ugandan army officers in their fight against Amin.

Mugabe expects victory, says he alone should rule

MAPUTO, Mozambique — Zimbabwe African National Union leader Robert Mugabe, whose guerillas control much of the Rhodesian countryside, is predicting victory for his movement and feels it is entitled to the "reins of government."

Mugabe's statement, made in the ZANU offices here, came a week after white Rhodesian voters approved a constitution outling a limited degree of black majority rule in the racist, white and minority - dominated country.

Blacks were not allowed to vote in the referendum. They will be allowed to vote on the internal settlement agreement for the first time in history during elections next spring.

Mugabe said he will not renegotiate with Rhodesian Prime minister Ian Smith nor black politicians Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Rev. Ndabaninl Sithole, who both joined in Smith's internal settlement.

Mugabe also stated that the forces of Joshua Nkomo, whose Zimbabwe African People's Union joins with ZANU to make up the Patriotic Front, had done little fighting and thus "cannot reap the rewards of victory."

In effect, Mugabe was suggesting that he should be the ruler of Rhodesia, called Zimbabwe by the guerillas and supporters.

Confidently, Mugabe addressed himself to the military situation.

"Now that we are firmly entrenched in the rural areas and Mr. Smith's ground forces are no longer a match for our forces there, the next targets necessarily must be the cities."

Mugabe said his troops now have bases around the cities, giving them "a year from which he can hit the enemy any way we like."

Mugabe, who has received some Chinese backing and support from other Communist countries to go with support from nearby African nations, now expects aid from socialist countries "that have not assisted us in the past."

For many years the Soviet Union has assisted the Nkomo forces.

Mugabe indicated that some distance does exist between him and Nkomo when he said "No one else has done as much fighting as we have done, has undergone as much suffering and therefore is entitled to the leadership of the people."

"Those who have not fought cannot reap the rewards of a victory to which they have contributed nothing.

"Those who are capable of fighting must join our forces in fighting. Then our victory will be joint. Then the sharing will be joint."

Despite the seeming rift between him and Nkomo, Mugabe dismissed threat of civil war.

"I don't see anyone raising their fist against the people at the stage," he said. In other words, I rule out the possibility of a civil war.

"I don't think Nkomo will go to the extent of pitting his forces against the will of the people."

Concerning the future of Rhodesia after the war Mugabe indicated that he is committed to a redistribution of wealth that will not be hasty and will not disregard white people's interests.

Mugabe said there is a large amount of good land that is not in use and which should be redistributed "before you interfere with the right of ownership of the whites who have chosen to stay.

"We're not going to snatch all the land overnight — of course not. It's not feasible."

Furthermore, Mugabe said, "We don't mean harm to them (Rhodesian whites) because they are white."

He said they would be welcome in a "nonracial" society which in people would be valued on their skills.

Mugabe underlined this point when asked what he would do about whites fleeing Rhodesia.

Robert Mugabe

"We can't stem that," he said. "Many more will panic and are doing so.

"But we will try to give reassurance that we don't mean harm to them because they are white. It is the system we are fighting."

Looking ahead to the spring elections, Mugabe said he would not negotiate with the new regime, even if it were headed by a black moderate.

"Of course not," he said. "All that will have happened really is a change of heads — a black head being substituted for a white but with a body still the same — the same armed forces, the same civil service, the same judiciary, the same economic structure. The position will be one of a head acting as megaphone."

Chad president flees palace, police chief assumes power

PARIS (UPI) — President Felix Malloum of Chad has fled his palace and taken refuge at a French military base and the chief of the national police has assumed power in Ndjamena, according to Sudan's Suna News agency.

Suna reported that once Malloum had fled Feb. 15 to the French camp in Ndjamena, the capital of the central African nation, the cammander of the Chadian police, Col. Abdul Gadir Kamojl, had assumed power.

"Fierce fighting between forces backing Malloum and troops loyal to (Premier Hissen), Habre resumed today with Habre's troops advancing on all fronts in the capital," Suna said.

The agency said Kamojl played a key role in the military coup which toppled pro-French President Ngarta Tombalbaye four years ago.

Malloum's presidential palace was threatened by advancing Habre forces and the president fled to the camp manned by hundreds of heavily armed French Paratroopers, diplomatic reports in Paris said.

More than 1,000 French residents were hastily evacuated to the same base because of heightened offensive by Habre's self-styled Army of the North which reopened fire on government forces in Ndjamena for the fourth consecutive day, the reports said.

Gen. Louis Forest, commander of the French military contingent in the landlocked African country, supervised a cease-fire between the warring sides Feb. 13 but it was reportedly broken.

(The Kuwait News agency in an unsourced dispatch said the forces of Malloum and Habre agreed to observe still another cease-fire.)

The uprising erupted Feb. 12 following charges by Malloum that Habre was trying to usurp his power.

Habre had fought against Malloum's troops in a rebellion last year but joined the president after a cease-fire was declared.

France made plans to evacuate Europeans living in Chad. A DC-8 was scheduled to fly 148 refugees, mostly Frenchmen working in Chad, from Libreville to Paris later in the week.

Chad, bounded on the north by Libya and the east by the Sudan, has been in a state of civil war since 1965.

French troops until four years ago fought on the government's side in the former French colony, which became an autonomous member of the French community in 1960.

'New' technology takes hold in Africa

By James Picton

KARAI, Kenya (UPI) — A new technological revolution — simple, potentially cheap and geared to helping millions of rural poor immediately — is taking root in some African nations.

The "new technology" signals a fresh attempt by International relief agencies and the world's rich nations to find the best method of helping the globe's most impoverished people to raise their standard of living as quickly and as effectively as possible.

The new programs concentrate on producing simple new ideas, using existing local materials and labor without destroying the rural and agricultural infrastructure of the local population.

The developing technology is also tacit acknowledgement that many former capital-intensive and grandiose aid projects to these same struggling nations in the end did little to help the individual.

Several of these new ideas are being tested in this central Kenyan village.

Basket water tanks, for example, Millions of African women currently spend virtually their whole lives carrying water for miles from far-away wells and streams. Back in their village, the precious water is often stored in leaky urns.

Experts from the United Nations UNICEF Organization here at first installed huge metal water holders at strategic points around the village and trained women to funnel rainwater off the roofs of their homes into the holders.

Recently they went one step further, coating the inside of large, man-sized baskets already made in the village with thin layers of concrete.

These new containers cost half as much as the metal ones—$100 as opposed to $200—and last longer.

"The tank now gives me more time to look after the cows," one village woman, Mama Ngoro, said. "Now my husband plans to use the extra water to irrigate a garden during the dry season."

Another idea winning support here is a simple mud stove to replace the open fire inside village homes.

The U.S. Peace Corps, as well as similar organizations in Britain and Western Europe, are now all expanding their "new technology programs." Yet there are still major drawbacks.

Because the ideas are relatively new, many programs remain expensive and there are not enough experts to go around. Africa's rural populations are notoriously conservative to new ideas.

Many experts also question whether developing countries will get value for their scarce capital on these village aid schemes. But a World Bank official said:

"Instead of measuring progress through gross national product, we are now looking at new village indicators like literacy, life expectancy and disease rate."

These are the qualities which the new basic technology is designed to improve.

Mousetrap guidelines are hefty enough to kill

WASHINGTON

Until recently the government could have killed more mice by dropping the purchase order specifications on the rodents than by any more devious physical violence.

The specifications for prospective mousetrap purchases were 102,000 words long and weighed more than two pounds.

The specifications now have been boiled down to a single page. But they used to describe in great detail the type of steel and wood that must be used in each mousetrap as well as other specific features.

Sen. Lawton Chiles, D-Fla., said Feb. 6 by looking at the General Service Administration's track record on mousetraps, it's easy to see why the taxpayer ends up footing excessive bills for government supply purchases.

"I don't think you could have sold the government a better mousetrap if you had one," said Chiles.