

Editorial

One year has rolled round since Abbia came into being. In the very first number, in February 1963, an appeal went out entreating us to bear a hand in this undertaking, an enterprise wide in scope and deep in merit. And in answer to this call, we launched out with zest into diverse fields — history, ethnology, literature, religion, economics, education, language, the fine arts. It was freest prospection in different domains according to the interest and the specialisation of each. But all this activity was animated by the one purpose that was defined, in the first issue, by Bernard Fonlon namely, « to serve but culture and serve it alone, and serve it impartially, and serve it scientifically ».

Today, we feel the need to take our bearings. Having lived face to face, for one year, with the facts about our country, we are now in a position to make a precise appraisal of its problems. And God knows that they are vast and complex. We are more conscious now of the concrete difficulties which impede this enterprise of striving to salvage what can still be salvaged from our disparate, disintegrating, fast-disappearing past; we are more conscious still of the foreign pressures which are bringing their influence to bear on our efforts to adapt ourselves to the modern world.

That is why we have thought it wise to attempt a first, general analysis of the forces that have met in this country and of the principles that should guide cultural reconstruction in Cameroon. There you have the whole problem of integration.

Our first preoccupation, therefore, is to define our culture in order to shed light on the exact understanding that we have of ourselves and of the world. But this is not enough.

For we must further invest this culture with a purpose, must give it direction, must endow it with meaning, must reconstruct its scale of values with reference to the African whose dignity we hope to see en-

thereby. After all, culture is meant for man and we must decide what type of society we desire to create in this country. That is why every intellectual must, from time to time, pause and ponder over his activity and ask himself the simple and eternal questions of the homo sapiens: « Whence are we? What are we? Whither are we tending? »

And, for Africa, now is the time to find the answers, now the time to make the urgent choice; for now has come the indispensable moment for us, to « take up again », as Césaire has put it, « the initiative of her destiny »; in a word, the time has come for us to do a work worthy of the free.

We call, therefore, upon the Cameroon intelligentsia, at home and abroad, for whom this review was created, to collaborate with us, to meditate with us upon the following words of Frantz Fanon and to help us to draw from them the conclusions they hold for our country:

The under-privileged, he wrote, stands today against Europe like a colossal mass whose chief concern should be to strive to solve those problems for which Europe has not been able to find the answers.

Therefore, comrades, we should not pay tribute to Europe by creating States, institutions and societies which draw inspiration from her.

Humanity expects from us something other than this sort of imitation which turns us to ridicule.

If all we intend to do is to transform Africa into a new Europe, why, then let us hand over the destinies of our countries to Europeans. They would take care of that better than the best of us.

But if we want to make humanity advance, even by so much as a notch, if we intend to raise it to a height other than that to which Europe is pointing, then we should invent it, then we should find it.

For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, it is imperative, for us, to turn over a new leaf, to elaborate a new thought, to endeavour to bring forth a new man and set him on his feet.

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