

faraway theaters, capable of making rapid and less costly interventions than maintaining legionnaires in the four corners of the world.

Ultimately, Paris and London are working to get an African intervention force up on its feet, centered on the Organization for Africa Unity, capable of deploying under the direction of international institutions, instead of Western ones (see accompanying article).

Not shocking, really

This tendency toward the reconstitution of empires did not begin yesterday. For several years, quietly, almost imperceptibly, strategists, political ideologues, and other geopoliticians in the pay of powerful financier oligarchies, have been laying both the ideological and administrative bases for the advent of this new empire. That is the great merit of a recent work by Ghassam Salamé, *Les Appels d'Empires (Calls for Empire)*, which traces this evolution, giving an extensive bibliography on the subject.

The Gulf war, which lifted the taboo against neo-colonial interventions in the South, and the end of the bipolar world which no longer permits Third World countries to seek the protection of one bloc from the other, are among the causes that Salamé cites to explain this new infatuation with empires. Not a day passes without hearing, whether from the far reaches of “the South” or from the heart of “the wealthy countries,” calls for empire. And Salamé gives several examples: “An Asian head of state who demands of a French ambassador: ‘We want to be recolonized.’ ” The President of Gambia, who, overthrown by a coup d’état, demands, à la Aristide, his right to be restored to his functions by the international community, or even, the prime minister of the Comoros, who calls on France to put down the rebellion of mercenaries and restore him to power.

When the Third World leaders aren’t calling on the northern powers for help, then the rich countries themselves put out the calls for empire. Salamé recaps then-British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd’s positions, favoring an “imperial role” for the UN, in the *Independent* on Sept. 19, 1992. The world institution would replace the old colonial powers such as the United States, which no longer has the means and does not want to be the “world’s policeman” except in selective cases. Hurd envisaged this remedy, “the most radical of all,” especially for various African countries stricken with the most serious ills: “uncontrolled demographic explosion, collapse of the state apparatus, systematic kleptomania by the leaders, tribal massacres, epidemics.”

Salamé also mentions the case of William Pfaff, editorial writer for the *International Herald Tribune*, who, invoking “humanitarian” reasons, has argued since 1975 for the reestablishment of empires. Pfaff calls on Europe to “go back into Africa” to exert a kind of “disinterested colonialism,” and declares himself in favor of putting them under temporary trusteeship, lasting 50 or 100 years, which would give these

countries time to give themselves a true civilian society and solid institutions.

Salamé also cites Richard K. Betts, who, in 1994, was saying that to end civil wars, we must break with “interventions limited by time and objective,” and rather engage in an “imperial impartiality”: a form of massive involvement in conflicts, with the objective of lending a hand to the victor and thereby abbreviating the agony of the weak!

And this evolution, Salamé accurately underscores, brought forth considerable protest. If the leaders in the South do not have the sense to call for help from the powers in the

Jacques Chirac in Africa

During an official visit to Gabon, on July 16-17, French President Jacques Chirac threw his support to his “friend” Omar Bongo, who has been in power there since 1967 and was preparing to face legislative and senatorial elections at the end of the year. For the occasion, Chirac decided to give a lesson on “Afro-optimism,” as he put it.

The French President declared that over the last two years, according to the International Monetary Fund, Africa has had growth of about 5%. Chirac saw this figure as proof of the “success of the structural adjustment plans.”

Growth of what? Ghana, the model of the “African miracle,” with an annual GDP heading for 4.8%? Between 1986 and 1991, it watched its employment drop by 13%. Today, one out of every three Africans lives on less than one franc per day (about 20¢). Even the UN, in its World Development Report for 1996, considered that what was being called “growth” in economists’ jargon, was not the same as creation of jobs and economic development, and remained a “failure” for one-third of the world’s population.

Yes, there is growth, especially in financial flows. The stock market in Zimbabwe grew 123%, and in Ghana 50%, in one year. But industry, agriculture, physical and social infrastructure—these have been destroyed by the logic of austerity, closing the budget deficit, and immediate profit, which characterizes the structural adjustments Chirac so praises.

It’s not a question of being an “Afro-pessimist” or an “Afro-optimist,” but of destroying the world financial dictatorship; Jacques Chirac has amply demonstrated that he is not prepared to do that.

—Frédérique Vereycken