IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA

The Search for Natural Resources

In the 1800's, the Industrial Revolution was powered by machines and factories that created goods. These machines and factories resulted in a need for large amounts of natural resources. Many European countries did not have the natural resources needed, so they looked to other countries. The African continent had large amounts of resources, such as gold, silver, diamonds, coal, palm oil, and rubber. European leaders knew they would profit greatly from these resources.

In 1884, European countries including Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany met at the Berlin Conference to divide the African continent for themselves. The United States also attended the conference but did not claim any African territory. No one from Africa was in attendance. When one country takes control of another country to profit economically or politically, it is known as **imperialism**.

Stop and Jot *your summary so far:*

Control and "Civilization"

By the early 1900s, almost the entire African continent was split into **colonies** that controlled by European countries. The colonial borders they established disregarded the existing boundaries, often putting groups of native people together who did not traditionally get along. Economic growth was not the only reason for imperialism. European countries wanted to control distant lands because it helped to increase their political power and influence over the rest of the world, thus building an **empire**. (This is where the term *imperialism* comes from.) European leaders thought the people in Africa were "uncivilized" and creating colonies would not only increase their countries' power but also "civilize" Africans.

Stop and Jot *your summary so far:*

Colonial Policies and Legacy

Through forced labor and slavery, European colonial leaders made African people work against their will to extract natural resources. The resources were shipped to Europe. An African colony wasn't allowed to trade with any country besides the one that controlled it. For example, modern-day Nigeria was controlled by Great Britain until 1960. While under British control, Nigeria could not trade with anyone besides Great Britain. This made Nigeria rely on Great Britain economically.

African people were taken advantage of in every colony. In Belgium's African colonies, most notably the Congo, rulers forced Africans to harvest rubber from trees and murdered an estimated 10 million people. France's colonial leaders encouraged Africans to become like the French in every way possible, but Africans in French colonies were not given the same rights or opportunities as French citizens.

Great Britain generally allowed the people in its colonies to keep their traditional ways of life and leadership roles, but they had to follow orders from the British government despite not being considered citizens. The British also taxed Africans and used the money to help Great Britain, which hurt the colonies' development.

Beginning with Ghana in the late 1950s, African countries began to become independent from European countries. By that time, much was taken from Africans: natural resources and the economic wealth that came with them, traditional ways of living and cultural practices, and in some cases their very lives.

Stop and Jot *your summary:*

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