



PERSPECTIVES

by McKinley Burt

Black Interaction In Europe IV

There once was a little dark complexioned man born on the Mediterranean island of Corsica (1769); A place not that far from Sicily, also a land of intense rivalries and vendettas. Thousands of years earlier this molten sea had been a stage for the expeditions and conquests of African Pharaohs. The little man's name was **Napoleon Bonaparte**—the way to becoming a great general and Emperor of France, and Europe's greatest importer of Africans.

As we move from the African presence and triumphs in Russia and England and now to France, I have an opportunity to emphasize the central point of this "Interaction" series by quoting **Ralph Ellison**. The noted Black author's classic novel, "The Invisible Man", was an award-winning description of the genocidal exclusion of Blacks from even the consciousness of white America.

In his collection of essays, "Going to the Territory", Mr. Ellison comments: "What, by the way, is one to make of a White youngster who, with a transistor radio screaming a Stevie Wonder tune in his ear, shouts racial epithets at Black youngsters trying to swim at a public beach—and this in the name of the ethnic sanctity of what has been declared neighborhood turf."

Over the past year I have clearly revealed the modus operandi of the American media, book publishers and educational establishment. They have mandated that the world's history is to be presented in the mode of the ethnic sanctity of a white neighborhood turf. The following is from material I furnished to the Portland

Public Schools as curriculum consultant in 1983.

On July 1, 1778 Napoleon landed an army on the coast of Africa near

Alexandria, Egypt. This was a city which had once housed the greatest cultural and technical libraries and medical research centers in the world—and to which the Greeks came to study and cart off sciences and philosophies that were promptly claimed as their own. So alien to Greek thought were these original African concepts, that back in their homeland, many of the thieves were driven out or condemned to death like Socrates. Add to this tribe of plagiarists the names of Euclid, Hero, Eratosthenes (all African born), Plato, Thales, Democritus, Pythagoras, among others—and Aristotle who loved to quote the old Greek proverb, **Something new is always coming out of Africa** (Snowden, "Blacks in Antiquity", 1970).

Napoleon's intent, then, was crystal clear for though his army was rather small for its task of driving out the British, it did include over 150 scholars, scientists and artists who were to study, report on and illustrate the whole range of life in this part of Africa—its geology, natural history, culture, technology, and people (sound familiar?). Many of the bright young professionals in this party became some of the most renowned scientists and mathematicians in Europe. And, no wonder, for they had access to a treasure trove whose development began 6000 years earlier in Ethiopia, Nubia (today's Sudan), and in Upper Egypt (Emil Ludwig, "Napoleon", 1926).

General Bonaparte gathered his scholars and soldiers before the **Great African Pyramid** and told them, "Forty centuries of greatness look down upon you". They must have believed him for the shiploads of documents and artifacts brought back to France not only became a major facet of the newly established Louvre Museum, but sparked a **Second Renaissance**

in mathematics, astronomy and geodesy.

Napoleon's artists even reproduced the graffiti of European scientists who, like the ancient Greeks, had gone to Africa to study the mathematics of the Pyramid upon which they emblazoned their names—Men to whom notable discoveries bearing their names had been falsely attributed. Most obviously plagiarized: **Mercator** (map projections and geometry); **Fibonacci** (This series proved to be the most powerful equations ever developed for physics, chemistry, genetics and nuclear reactions).

On a more pedestrian note, but no less important, French reproductions of 4000 year old African designs led to the proliferation throughout Europe of the **Empire Style** of dress and furniture—stylish innovations created at a time when most Greeks wore animal skins or artless togas. At the **King Tut Exhibit** it was evident that the ancient Africans (by 1600 B.C.) had invented such modern furniture techniques as the **tongue and groove joint, the dowel, rabbit and miter, and the moritise and tenon**. See the illustrations in a book by Hollis S. Baker, "Furniture in the Ancient World", 1965 (note the lathes). And today's haute couture presents and **Empire Style** fashion revival every other decade or so.

Napoleon lost the Egyptian campaign because his puny fleet could not match that of the British, but not before his great Black calvary general, **Thomas Alexander Dumas**, had won **The Battle of the Pyramids** and prevailed at Cairo. This provided enough time for the scholars to ship their African treasure to France; particularly there was time for the famed Chapollion to find the **Rosetta Stone**. This tablet led to the deciphering of Egyptian Hieroglyphics, and opened the magnificent ancient African Vista to the world.

Next week, more revelations of ethnic sanctity.

RABBIS ENDORSE CIVIL RIGHTS REVERSE CARAVAN

Two hundred and thirty six rabbis and other synagogue leaders from across the United States endorsed the "Reverse Freedom Caravan" commemorating the 25th anniversary of the deaths of Michael Schwerner, James Earl Chaney and Andrew Goodman. These young men, a Black and two Jews, were murdered while on a campaign to register Black voters during the summer of 1964. The Caravan left Philadelphia, Mississippi on June 21 for a three day journey, stopping in Washington, D.C. on June 23 and ending in New York City on June 24.

Al Vorspan, Senior Vice President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the nation's largest Jewish organization, speaking at a Caravan event in Statuary Hall of the United States Capitol said, "In life they [Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner] symbolized a Jewish-Black partnership which became a powerful engine for social justice. . . . People have tried to bury this partnership and recite obituaries for it, but it still lives. Blacks and Jews share a vision of an open, decent and compassionate America."

The Jewish community was actively involved in the Reverse Caravan. In addition to Vorspan's speech in Statuary Hall, Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, spoke at the culminating event of the Caravan, a service at New York City's Cathedral of St. John the Divine on June 24 and at a rally for voter registration on the steps of the Capitol on June 23.

Recent Supreme Court Decision Sends Minority Women Reeling

Four recent United States Supreme Court decisions "dealt severe blows to programs designed to assure the rights of women and racial/ethnic persons in this society," according to a statement released June 28, here by the head of the board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church.

While two of the Supreme Court decisions have rewritten the legal rules for minority hiring in U.S. government and industry, the other two "limit the scope of affirmative action and chip away at basic civil rights for women and racial/ethnic persons," said the Rev. Thom White Wolf Fassett, general secretary of the church's chief social action agency.

The most distressing ruling issued by the court this year came in *Patterson v. McLean Credit Union*, a case in which the board signed as amicus curiae, Mr. Fassett said in the statement. In that case, the court unanimously upheld a law used to challenge discrimination in making private contracts, but refused, by a 5-4 vote, to extend the law to racial harassment.

According to Mr. Fassett, the court's ruling narrows the 1866 landmark civil rights ruling since it makes it difficult to sue on the basis of racial harassment.

The United Methodist Church in its Social Principles statement asserts "the obligation of society, and

groups within the society, to implement compensatory programs that redress long-standing systemic social deprivation of racial and ethnic minorities."

A June 27 Supreme Court decision giving states added authority to execute 16- and 17-year old murderers or those who are "mildly" or "moderately" retarded, must be decried by "people of faith," the statement says. The Board of Church and Society was also amicus curiae in two of the cases that were before the court.

A total of 30 youths, all younger than 18 when they committed murders, now await execution on the nation's death rows and the courts estimate that as many as one-fifth of the nearly 2,200 men and women on death row nationwide are retarded to some degree. "To order execution of children and mentally retarded persons, for whom we have a special responsibility, is reprehensible," the statement continues.

The statement also condemns "the Supreme Court's refusal to exclude children and retarded persons from application of the death penalty," saying to do so would be "an outrage that we must protest and work to change."

The United Methodist Church is opposed to the death penalty and urges through its Social Principles "its elimination from all criminal codes."



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THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN INSTITUTE ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT

The Board of Trustees of the African-American Institute (AAI) announces the election of Vivian Lowery Derryck as AAI's new president.

Ms. Derryck, recently the Executive Director of the Washington International Center of Meridian House International in Washington, D.C., is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary in the U.S. Department of State and Alternate Representative to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. She has also served as Vice-President of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. Having worked for the U.S. Agency for International Development and various international private voluntary organizations, Ms. Derryck has more than 20 years of experience in international economic and political development in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and South America.

Founded in 1953, AAI is the principal not-for-profit, private American organization working to strengthen U.S.-African relations and assist in African development. It is supported by contributions from individuals, corporations, and philanthropic foundations; endowment income; and U.S. government contracts for specific training programs. Its headquarters are in New York, with a sub-office in Washington D.C., and program representatives in 22 African countries.

The Board of Trustees also announces the election of Maurice Tempelsman, Senior Partner of Leon Tempelsman & Son, as its new Chairman, and Roger Wilkins, as its new Vice-Chairman. Mr. Wilkins is a Clarence J. Robinson Professor of History and American Culture, George Mason University, and a Senior Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies.



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