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Alcohol in Colonial Africa

Lynn Pan

The Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies
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Responsibility for errors or misinterpretations remains, of course, my own.

Helsinki, April 1975

Lynn Pan

Exchange Rates, 1908–1950

(New York quotation in US cents per unit of national currency, annual averages)

Year	United Kingdom	Germany	France
	pound	Mark (1913–24) Reichsmark (1924–48) Deutsche Mark (from 1948)	franc
1908–1913 ^a	486.6	23.82	19.30
1920 ^b	349.5	1.37	5.93
1921	384.9	..	7.46
1922	442.6	..	8.19
1923	457.4	...	6.07
1924	441.8	Jan/Oct 0.000002 Nov/Dec 23.80 ^c	5.23
1925	482.9	23.80	4.77
1926	485.8	23.80	3.24
1927	486.1	23.76	3.92
1928	486.6	23.86	3.92
1929	485.7	23.81	3.92
1930	486.2	23.85	3.92
1931	Jan/Sept 482.3 Oct/Dec 366.1	23.63	3.92
1932	350.6	23.75	3.93
1933	423.7	30.52	5.03
1934	503.9	39.38	6.57
1935	490.2	40.26	6.60
1936	497.1	40.30	6.11
1937	494.4	40.20	4.05
1938	489.0	40.16	2.88
1939	443.5	40.06	2.51
1946	402.5	..	0.84
1947	402.8	..	0.84
1948	402.8	Ju/Dec 30.03	0.51 (Import rate) 0.47 (Export rate)
1949			
Jan.–Sept.	402.8	30.03	0.37 (Import rate) 0.37 (Export rate)
Oct.–Dec.	279.9	23.78	0.309 (Import rate) 0.286 (Export rate)
1950	279.9	23.78	0.309 (Import rate) 0.286 (Export rate)

^a Old gold parity.

^b December rates only.

^c Reichsmark introduced October 1924 = 10 million marks.

Sources: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1919; Svernilson, 1954:318

Introduction

In 1889 a number of European powers met in Brussels and drew up an international treaty under which they agreed to observe certain moral principles with regard to their African territories, including the principle of limiting the importation of liquor into Africa.

This was the first of several international instruments created to deal with the liquor trade. More than a mere episode in late nineteenth and early twentieth century European history, the creation of these instruments represented a novel and unique attempt to control alcohol by international agreement. What gave rise to these agreements? What were their terms? What previously existing pattern of alcohol use did these control measures seek to influence? What was the relationship between alcohol control and the colonial status? An examination of these questions is the basis of this study.

The interpretations and reinterpretations put upon past events quite often determine current approaches and course of action. And these interpretations in turn hinge upon the questions which each age asks. Today a question which occupies some people in the alcohol studies establishment, prompted by what appears to be a sizeable increase in the rate of alcohol consumption in many parts of the world, is whether alcohol warrants not only international concern, but also international control. The latter notion will immediately provoke in many people a comparison with narcotic and other psychoactive drugs, and such comparison is apt, not only because there is increasing acceptance of an integrated approach to the problems posed by alcohol and other drugs, but also because reactions to the use of drugs and alcohol on the part of society have led in both cases to international efforts which, despite their separate stretches of history, displayed many likenesses in form and intent. In fact, one cannot read the story of the African liquor trade without being struck by its extraordinary resemblance to that of the Anglo-Indian opium trade with China—which was, after all, the main factor in the genesis of international drug control.

The concentration of this study is necessarily on the European and historical dimensions of the story. But as the story unfolded, it increasingly threw up questions and reflections which, to be given clearer definition, seemed to me to require an excursion into present-day Africa. And so there is an attempt, albeit an unsystematic one, to begin the exploration of such questions as: in the passage of a society from a traditional type to an industrialized one, does drinking follow the general trend of private tastes and consumption; does bottled commercial beer supplant the traditional brew; is the juxtaposition of traditional and modern institutions in one and the same setting typical of many Third World societies reflected in the persistence of traditional drinking customs, even as new styles are grafted onto them?

These themes appear in this monograph in three ways: first, in a historical review of the liquor trade; second, in an account of the international conferences convened to devise its control and the work of the League of Nations body which came to supervise such control, and third, in a sketch of the local circumstances and consequences of alcohol control in three of the African territories themselves. Although the events are related in roughly chronological order, there are occasions when I range freely from an earlier period to a later one, and when an incident touched upon in one section is more fully developed in another.

So as not to overload the subject of this study with an importance out of proportion to its real significance for Africa, it needs to be stressed at the outset that, although here I abstract a particular area from the wide array of African experience for study, at no time were the broader outlines of that area not shaped by the larger processes of historical change.

In less than eighty years, Africa shed most of its colonial rulers with almost as much rapidity as it had originally been appropriated by them. Before 1955, only Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and Libya were not under direct European control; today, classical colonial rule has virtually ended in Africa. Although the boundaries of the present political map of Africa roughly approximate those drawn by the European powers in the last century, they are not the same as those delimiting the various colonial jurisdictions that undertook to implement the terms of the Brussels treaty.

Moreover, since a large part of this study is concerned with the fluctuations in the liquor trade in the period between the two World Wars, the course of events it encompasses cannot but reflect the economic and political upheavals which beset the world at large during that period. Just as Africa itself was tied to the changing fortunes of European economies, so the liquor trade was vulnerable to the varying flows of the European trade current.

The main difficulty which presents itself in this study is the paucity of reliable information. Although the topicality of the alcohol question in the early 1900s in Europe and North America had spawned a relatively large volume of print on the African situation, factual information occupied a comparatively small part of it: most of the literature tends to be anecdotal or polemical. The lack of precision in the use of terms in the literature is an added obstacle. Thus the quantitative data which appear later in the monograph, while not entirely meaningless—inasmuch as they inform us of trends and of the relative magnitude of changes — must nonetheless be interpreted with caution. These data had not been arrived at by uniform methods, and where they pertain to the volume of alcoholic beverages, the alcohol content of these was not specified.*

Within its limited scope, this study cannot be expected to provide a full picture of the alcohol situation in colonial Africa. However, it does bring together, and attempts to interpret, the fragments of historical, anthropological and contemporary data which are to be found dispersed in a wide assortment of materials. Until more archival material has been worked on by historians and empirical investigations carried out there must be inevitable gaps in our knowledge. Several African states have been

* They have remained so to this day. In interpreting present-day statistics of alcohol supply and consumption, it is still necessary to enter this caveat (see Sulkunen, 1973).

omitted from this study, the intention being to cover only those regions over which international alcohol control was applied. Thus it will not be concerned with the Arab states to the north; nor will it include South Africa except only insofar as it bears on the area under review. (Another reason for excluding South Africa is that its sizeable production of alcoholic beverages and its large white population made the alcohol problems there more analogous to those in Europe than the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.) More weight has been given to West Africa than to the rest of the continent. There are several reasons for this: the alcohol question has assumed more prominence there than elsewhere; more has been written on West Africa that is relevant to the alcohol issue by English, American and French scholars than on other parts of the continent; and my dependence on these sources made inevitable by my lack of knowledge of German and Portuguese has meant the near-total neglect of the ex-German and Portuguese colonies. Within West Africa itself, coverage of the various states is as uneven as the available literature on them.

To set the scene and evoke the special flavour of Africa, let us turn for a moment to the portrayal of contemporary African life in fiction:

The old party of the bar, a shop furnished with benches and rough eating-house tables, was full of the local regulars sitting over native beer and taking no notice of the band pressed deafeningly into a corner. In the new beer-garden — a yard more or less cleared (the dustbins still stood overflowing) and set out with a few coloured tables with umbrellas over them — there were some bourgeois Africans with women, and a couple or two dancing...Bottled European beer was being drunk here.

And elsewhere in the book from which the above quotation is taken, an African, who was being visited by his English friend, said by way of introduction to a young woman who turned out to be his wife, 'The beer she makes isn't too bad' (Gordimer, 1971).

Part One
Of Slaves, Palm and Spirits

1 Alcohol and Slaving

Alcohol was part and parcel of the commerce which for centuries constituted the basic tie between Europe and Africa. It was an article of the barter system through which European goods were exchanged for African slaves. The European colonization of the Americas and the West Indies and the development of the plantation method of cultivation had created a voracious demand for labour which was soon being fed by the notorious African slave trade. As the transatlantic market grew, Great Britain, France, Holland, Portugal and even small nations such as Denmark and Sweden clustered in slave ships along the African coast vying for a share in that lucrative trade in men. The coast between the Gold Coast and the Niger Delta in fact came to be known as the Slave Coast; to the Reverend Charles Morris, a traveller in Africa, the western coastline, with its rum-carrying coast-boats, seemed like 'one long barroom' (cited in Cherrington, 1925:71).

Contemporary records have it that for 'slaves, gum, gold, elephants' teeth, and ostrich feathers', French traders in Senegal gave 'brandy, silks, cotton, iron' and other merchandise (Dunand, 1806). An abstract from the records kept by a clerk of the Indian Company between April and June 1724 showed that in exchange for fifty African slaves, the Company paid out, among several hundred ells of cloth, strings of beads and other goods, five light guns, seventy-five pounds of gunpowder, 104 pounds of lead shot and twenty-four pints of brandy (Hargreaves, 1969:74). The market for alcohol varied, being less significant in the Moslem areas to the north but more highly developed in other parts of West Africa, where it played an essential part in the custom of providing refreshment for the brokers during the bargaining process (ibid.:47). At prosperous harbours the negotiations were accompanied by a great deal of entertaining, bestowal of gifts and alcohol refreshment. On one such occasion, recorded by the log of the *Albion-Frigate* in 1699 while trading at New Calabar, there was a riotous reception on board, with everyone being filled with 'drams of brandy and bowls of punch till night' (Davidson, 1961:94–95).

The traditional dues paid by European traders were quantified in terms of a certain number of cases of gin. In 1894, for example, a Liverpool firm at Old Calabar secured an extension of its riverside frontage by twenty feet for a sum of twenty cases of gin a year, payable in kind or in cash. When in 1911 agreements were made to convert the basis of reckoning from gin cases to cash, a case of gin was deemed to be worth twelve shillings (Pedler, 1974:77).

In 1807 Britain prohibited the slave trade and proceeded through her naval patrols to compel other traders to do the same. However, slaving continued throughout the nineteenth century. In a *Narrative of the Expedition to the Niger River* in 1841, Captain William Allen and Dr T. R. H. Thomson reported that Obi Ossai, an African king

in the northern Niger Delta with whom they had an interview, 'seemed to be highly amused on our describing the difficulties the slave-dealers have to encounter' (such as probing by the British Navy), and they suspected that 'much of his amusement arose from knowing that slaves were shipped off at parts of the coast little thought of by us. The abundance of Brazilian rum in Aboh, shewed that they often traded with nations who have avowedly no other object' (Allen and Thompson, 1848). Travelling up the Niger, Joseph Thomson had found that fetishism, cannibalism and the gin trade 'luxuriated in congenial union' on the lower river; further up the river however, the gin trade largely disappeared and an increasing improvement in the appearance and character of the native was apparent (Thomson, 1887). As Dike observed, it was profitable to the slave traders 'to spread a taste for cheap liquor on the coast, not only because it provided a means of giving little for the men but also because it was a convenient form of currency; a bottle of rum was much easier to transport than a bag of salt' (Dike, 1956:106). Until silver currency was introduced to West Africa it was apparently well nigh impossible to trade without a large stock of 'trade gin' and 'trade rum', the cheaper varieties of these liquors. In 1770 New England exports of rum to Africa formed four-fifths of the total colonial exports of that year (Johnson and others, 1915). The importance of liquor as an article of commerce was such that distilleries were established in the eighteenth century in Liverpool, England, specially for supplying ships bound for Africa (Donnan, 1930-35:529). In fact, an African chief is said to have remarked early in the nineteenth century: 'We want three things, powder, ball and brandy, and we have three things to sell, men, women and children' (Buxton, 1839).

Then developments occurred in Europe which were to change the erstwhile pattern of European and African relations; the Industrial Revolution and the upsurge of nineteenth century missionary activity had profound consequences for Africa. By the 1830s, the commodity which claimed the interest of European merchants as a profitable alternative to slaving, notably in the Niger Delta, was palm oil, a lubricant for machinery and a chief ingredient in the manufacture of soap. Many of the pioneers of the palm oil trade were the same Liverpool merchants who dealt in slaves, and not surprisingly, alcohol was one of the two barter items that remained constant, the other being guns. In fact, contrary to legend, alcohol played a more prominent part in the period of 'legitimate commerce' than in the earlier slave trade era (Hargreaves, 1967:47), although it came into increasing competition from other goods. Of the British exports to Africa in exchange for palm oil, cotton goods came to assume an increasingly larger share: while the sale of spirits declined drastically in the 1930s, the average value of cotton merchandise more than tripled (Stillard, 1938).

Alcohol also formed part of the payment for territorial concessions extracted from African chiefs by the envoys of European governments. By a treaty of 1843 for example, the king of Assinie (a small pre-colonial coastal state in what is now the Ivory Coast) ceded the sovereignty of his territory to King Louis Philippe I of France in exchange for five lengths of cloth, two barrels of powder, two guns, two sacks of tobacco, five hats, one mirror, one organ, several strings of beads as well as '*six pièces d'eaux-de-vie de 200 litres*' and '*quatre caisses de liqueur*' (d'Aby, 1952).

Although the slave trade was eventually extinguished, the liquor trade remained, it being contended by merchants trading in Africa that the Africans would not produce

any raw materials for export except in exchange for imported spirits (Wyndham, 1930). Dike was led to the conclusion that (1956:114):

little of permanent value came to West Africa from the 400 years of trade with Europe. In return for the superior labour force, the palm oil, ivory, timber, gold and other commodities which fed and buttressed the rising industrialization, they received the worst type of trade gin and meretricious articles.

In the meantime, European missionaries were achieving a measure of success in converting Africans to Christianity and, by selectively stressing certain features of African life in their letters and reports home, in changing the stereotype of the African from that of the savage to that of the sinful creature requiring salvation. And one of the sins from which they sought to deliver him was the sin of drunkenness. They began to clamour for a stop to the liquor trade.

2 The African Market from Different Angles

Although British public debate around the turn of the century was eloquent enough on the perniciousness or harmlessness of the liquor trade, it is difficult to glean anything in the way of reliable information from it. The pro-liquor position was exemplified by the views of the witnesses called before a committee appointed by the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce in response to Joseph Chamberlain's request for information on the subject. Rallying to that side were a number of colonial administrators as well as that intrepid traveller in Africa, Mary Kingsley,* who said that 'the missionary party have greatly exaggerated both the evil and the extent of [the liquor traffic] in order, I believe, to account for their own want of success' (Lugard, 1897). On the other side of the debate were the missionaries and the members of the Committee for the Prevention of the Demoralization of the Native Races by the Liquor Traffic (or, in short, the Anti-Liquor Traffic Committee) chaired by the Duke of Westminster. The arguments offered by the two sides were reviewed in an article by Frederick Lugard (1897) who, because of his key role in the history of the liquor question, deserves a special introduction here.

Sir Frederick Lugard (1858–1945), governor-general of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria (1914–1919), is generally acknowledged to be Britain's greatest colonial administrator. His name is associated with the practice of Indirect Rule (that is, governing African subjects through their own political institutions), a trend in colonial policy usually identified with British administration and contrasted with the French system based on theories of Assimilation. In 1906 he was appointed governor of Hong Kong and found himself having to deal with an opium problem there. He returned to Africa in 1912 and proceeded to amalgamate Northern and Southern Nigeria, becoming the first governor-general of the federation in 1914. After retirement he was appointed to serve on the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations and during the tenure of this appointment (1923–1936) he continued, though with somewhat less vehemence, his long crusade against the liquor trade.

To return to the Liverpool Committee: figures were cited by the witnesses as evidence that there was far more drinking in England than in West Africa, the average annual consumption of the Gold Coast, which was worked out at about 3.9 litres per

* English traveller in and writer on West Africa, who between 1896–1899 lectured extensively in the British Isles at the request of academic and scientific societies. She also lectured at the request of the Liverpool and Manchester Chambers of Commerce and it would be interesting to know if her views on the liquor traffic had anything to do with these invitations, or vice versa; the Liverpool members certainly had vested interests in the trade.

head, being offered as an example. The amount imported in 1893 into British African territories on the west coast (excluding the Niger areas administered by the Niger Company of George Goldie, of whom we will hear more later) had been set at twenty-seven million litres. Lugard dismissed the comparison with England by alluding to the concentration of consumption in the richer segment of African society, and warned against the increased availability of alcohol with the development of trade, the opening up of the country and the lowering of the prices of alcohol imports: 'are we then to conclude', he queried rhetorically, 'that *pari passu* with the development of our colonies, gin and rum, at present the luxury of the comparatively rich, will be placed more and more within the reach of the masses?' In any event, he thought that the imports should be restricted before the 'taste for alcohol has been implanted in the mass of the people.' In answer to Mary Kingsley's observation that one saw more drunkenness in a couple of hours on Saturday night in Vauxhall Road (a dock area of London) than in the whole of West Africa in a week, Lugard retorted that drunkenness in Africa was far less evident because drinking took place in villages out of sight of Europeans, who lived in quarters segregated from the Africans.

Lugard then went on to quote the testimonies contained in the pamphlets of the Anti-Liquor Traffic Committee, as well as the messages sent to England by African chiefs and people — the latter more credible witnesses surely, he observed, than even Miss Kingsley. Malike, Mohammedan Emir of Nupé on the Niger, for instance, had written in 1844 to Bishop Samuel Crowther, the first African Christian bishop in Nigeria, that 'Rum has ruined my country; it has ruined my people. It has made them become mad,' and had asked the Bishop to beg 'the English Queen to prevent the bringing of rum into this land...to spoil our country.'

Ironically, some of the white testimonies were founded on a racist belief in the inadvisability of allowing 'the natives' to drink; one can deduce from the names — Cecil Rhodes, Starr Jameson, Sir Sidney Sheppard — the kind of white settler thinking which must have been lurking underneath, for these were men responsible for the founding of the Rhodesian regime. Sheppard, for instance, attributed the total absence of crime throughout British Bechuanaland, of which he was Administrator, to the strict enforcement of the laws prohibiting the supply of liquor to Africans. Rhodes thought it bad economic policy to demoralise native labour by drink. This was echoed by complaints from the mining districts of southern Africa that drink was creating absenteeism among the African workers and lowering their productive capacity. (In fact, the 1894 Agreement which established the basic framework of a white settler rule in Southern Rhodesia singled out liquor as one of the categories in which Africans, as opposed to whites, could be subjected to exceptional legislation.) Of course this is not to imply that the other Europeans were not racist: practically everybody was racist, in the modern sense of the word, then. The difference between the missionaries and others who sought to protect 'the natives' and the white settlers was that the former saw them as children to be taught and redeemed, while the latter saw them as a labour force to be exploited. In this context it is worth remembering that the nineteenth century view of children was that they were inherently sinful and needed to have their 'original sin' driven out by discipline, punishment and education. At that time few saw the African native as anything but inferior; the difference lay in the kind of inferiority.

Another subject of dispute was the quality of the spirits entering Africa. Not surprisingly, the Liverpool Committee found hardly any evidence that this was poor, but there were others like Mr Hodgson, a colonial officer in the Gold Coast who more usually defended the trade, who said in a letter to the *Times* that Africans were sold 'semi-poisonous compounds under the name of gin'.

What probably proved to be the most persuasive argument of all those advanced by the anti-liquor group was one based on the premise that the liquor trade was an uneconomic proposition in the long run. As the governor of Sierra Leone put it, 'if you would take away from the natives the liquor, other wants would be created, and they would purchase other articles which would be far more remunerative to the British merchant'* (cited in Lugard, 1897). Furthermore, according to the Senior Assistant Treasurer of the Gold Coast, much of the gin and rum trade was in the hands of France, Germany and the US; the fact that foreign capital, foreign shipping and foreign operators were involved was as good a reason as any for attacking the trade.

In the French colonies too, the authorities, and particularly the officers, had felt some alarm at the beginning of French administration at the increase in alcohol use along the coast, and poor distilled trade spirits were thought to be instrumental in the spread of tuberculosis and criminality. This had arisen from a situation to which the following may be a clue: the amount of rum entering Cotonou, Dahomey in one quarter of the year 1890 was over a million litres, this being equivalent to the amount imported into all French West Africa during the entire year of 1957 (4 350 hectolitres of pure alcohol). The magnitude of the importation in 1890 is further reflected in its value, which exceeded two-thirds of the total value of all imported merchandise (Bismuth and Menage, 1960:56). In addition to the rum, 6 141 cases of geneva shipped from Hamburg, 4 300 cases of muscatel, 8 461 cases of *alcools anisés*, 4 353 and 4 890 litres of liqueurs and wines respectively were imported from Marseilles into Cotonou in 1890 (Bismuth and Menage, 1960b:9).

Little is known about the Belgian Congo as a market for spirits, although the following statistics presented to the Brussels Conference of 1909 provide a glimpse of its relative size: 1.4 million and 1.2 million litres imported in 1893 and 1898 respectively.

Such was the commercial exploitation of Africa under the colonial system that in exchange for the raw materials taken from her to be processed in the factories of Europe, a limited range of goods, including alcohol and tobacco, was made available to her (Crowder, 1968:274). And this pattern was to persist beyond the First World War. Writing of the sense of grievance felt by French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique Equatoriale Française*, or AEF) at France's meanness in the postwar years in according the Federation its share of sterling and dollar earnings, Thompson and Adloff (1960:118-9) note:

AEF was required to send to France such of its exports as France wanted — cotton and gold; in return it received 'foreign currency dispensed with an eye-dropper' and luxury goods that were either unneeded (such as perfume) or downright harmful to the African population. Never before, it was said, had AEF's trading posts displayed such an array of bottled liquor.

* Later, anti-opiumists were to use the same argument for the cessation of the Anglo-Indian opium trade to China.

Although in the earlier years the cheap liquor imported was destined for sale to the African population, there is reason to believe that the Europeans in Africa, though small in number, were not an insignificant consumer group insofar as the better quality liquor was concerned. Thus a contemporary observer took a less than favourable view of the white traders in the Oil Rivers in the 1880s, finding on some of them 'the stamp of alcohol' and on the faces of the rest the impress of fevers. That it was a hard and flat existence that these agents led there is no doubt, so that the arrival of the quarterly liquor supply — the firms often sent out a range of 'spirituous comforts' every three months — was an occasion for a week-long carnival (Pedler, 1974:203).

However, according to another observer, there was less drinking in the early decades of this century than in 1969. Earlier the young men could drink only what the agent gave them, the amount depending on the individual agent. The allotment was about one whisky and soda per day, with an added gin before supper in some cases, all of which were given free, as part of the remuneration (*ibid.*:203-4).

Heavy drinking by the colonial European has certainly become, as a matter of myth and perhaps a matter of fact, a marked feature of many ideas which the colonized peoples have about Europeans in general. The *West Africa Pocketbook — A Guide to Newly Appointed Government Officers*, directed to be compiled around the turn of the century by the British Secretary of State, had warned in bold type that 'Heavy drinkers should not go to West Africa, moderate drinkers should be very moderate there, and total abstainers should remain so'. Similarly, a French *Guide to the European Official, Trader or Visitor to West Africa* published in 1902 cited as one of the advantages accruing from the taking of African mistresses the probability that the 'sentimental attachments' thereby formed would serve as a prophylactic against alcoholism (Hargreaves, 1967:140). Within the English community, excess drinking does appear to have been tolerated. It was noted in 1936 that most Europeans in West Africa could be considered drunkards, and though Crowder thinks this an exaggeration, he concedes that heavy drinking was indulged in by the European expatriates without disapproval (Crowder, 1968:395). Commenting on the controversy concerning the policy, practised in many parts of Africa, of abolishing spirits for Africans but not for Europeans, Buell observed that, 'Judged from the amount of drunkenness one sees in the colonies, the prohibition of spirits to Europeans is more desirable than to blacks' (Buell, 1926:946).

A study of the French Colonial Service in West Africa conducted by William Cohen on the basis of the personnel files of the administrators in the *Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer* of Paris revealed that a significant number of these were labelled alcoholics (Cohen, 1971). An administrator of French Congo in the 1890s, for example, was certified by the Colony's doctor as being not 'in full possession of his mental faculties because of an overdose of certain drugs and alcohol'. This Frenchman, who had burned down two African villages and whose favourite sport appeared to have been taking pot shots at people who walked past his residence, was retained in the colonial service despite his obvious aberrations. Another administrator served in Senegal from 1911 until his death in 1925 a chronic alcoholic throughout. The French had a policy of transferring the least satisfactory administrators from French West Africa to the Congo and several alcoholics were 'demoted' in this way (Gifford and Louis, 1971:496). Indeed, the name of the French colonial official was to

continue to evoke, despite a gradual improvement in image and actual quality, 'the spectre of the pirate... the sadistic bureaucrat, the professional liar, and the drunkard' (Deschamps, 1931).*

The classical colonial alcoholism has now virtually disappeared. As the solitary European colonial officer seeking solace in drink from the isolation of life in the African bush typical of an earlier age came to be replaced by the expatriate who arrives in Africa with his family and all the accoutrements of modern living, so the past excesses gave way to moderation. There are of course exceptions, especially among luckless adventurers and *les suivants de l'époque ancienne* (Bismuth and Menage, 1960b). A study of the admissions to the Neuro-psychiatric Centre in Fann, Senegal between 1956 and 1959 by Bismuth and Menage (1960d:34) showed that of a sample of 117 hospitalized European alcoholics, fifty-nine were military officers; among the white civilians, officials in government and public services formed the bulk of the admissions for alcoholism.

It is perhaps an irony not peculiar only to Africa that among the small national bourgeoisie of officials and intellectuals created after decolonization, the emulation of the life style of their ex-colonial rulers made possible by their raised standard of living has meant the increased import of spirits along with cars and other consumer goods (Hargreaves, 1967:166-7). Suret-Canale notes (1964:501) that in Senegal, Guinea and the Sudan, alcohol has become a feature of the social life of the African élite, who not only have the means to purchase it but whose adoption of a more Westernized mode of living has entailed the adoption of drinking habits more characteristically European.

* Cf. the picture which Suret-Canale (1964) gives us of the French colonial service in Equatorial Africa (AEF): 'the staff was made up as follows: one administrator, a former pupil of the *Ecole Coloniale*, and three clerks: a former dentist, a former non-commissioned officer of the colonial infantry (who amused himself in the evenings, when drunk, by cutting down the flag with rifleshots), and a young man "of a good family", aged twenty-four, who had been guilty of two murders.'

3 The Alcohol Factor in the Colonization of Africa

Although historians differ in the relative weight they assign to the various factors which precipitated the launching of European empires in Africa, they are more or less agreed on the importance of traders in ushering in the colonial era. These traders were instrumental in forcing the hand of their respective governments in the acquisition of territories in Africa; and liquor occupied not a small place in the interests of these traders. It was Régis Aîné, the Marseilles trader largely responsible for the hoisting of the French flag at posts on the Ivory Coast and Dahomey, who persuaded the French government to establish a protectorate over Porto Novo in 1863 'with the sole purpose of securing for Régis's substantial imports of spirits an entry into Yorubaland free of the heavy duties levied at Lagos' (Hargreaves, 1960). For more than forty years, Régis exercised considerable skill in manipulating official policy to serve his personal interests. When British tariffs rose, particularly at Lagos, and Régis stood to lose from the decline in French trade, he addressed a memorandum to the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture in November 1875 spelling out the situation in the following terms. Spirits at 50° now cost 28 *centimes* per litre in France; duties imposed at Lagos amounted to 53 *centimes* per litre — that is, almost twice the value — so that 200 thousand francs in cash would have to be sent to the African coast to pay the duty on a shipment valued at 100 thousand francs. In this way more than half the value of the product would go to the coffers of the colonial administration (Gifford and Louis, 1971:226).

British tariff policy was a prickly thorn in the French traders' flesh, and drove them to carve out enclaves for themselves not only at Porto Norvo but also at Whydah (Gifford and Louis, 1971:225). The Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce was greatly incensed by the high specific duties on French brandies and wines levied by British Customs. In a letter to Salisbury dated 30 October 1879, Admiral Pothau, the French ambassador in London, objected to the differential rate of duty applied by the British to foreign products, since this affected French trade only: wines and alcoholic beverages were taxed by British Customs at a rate of more than fifty per cent of their initial value (*ibid.*:231).

Similarly, one finds that, among the people who influenced Bismarck's decision to make a bid for African colonies was the head of a German company trading in Africa, Adolf Woermann, who as vice-president of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce had called for the creation of a German colony in the Cameroons (Gifford and Louis, 1967:54–55). Prior to the Berlin Conference in 1884, which marked the beginning of the European 'scramble' for Africa, Bismarck went so far as to summon Woermann and ask for information on the location of the more important areas in West Africa over which the Reich should extend its control. Woermann responded with alacrity

and provided a lengthy memorandum on the subject two days later (*ibid.*, 1967:71). One of Woermann's concerns was shipping, and it was the Woermann Line, created, according to Lugard (1926:601), by the liquor trade, which carried the gin originating from Germany and Holland to the African colonies (Beer, 1923:174). The Woermann Shipping Company had been instrumental in the establishment of a German protectorate over the Cameroons in 1884: the Company had proposed to the chiefs of the Doula (an ethnic group in the Cameroons) that they accept such a protectorate, and when it was eventually created, the protectorate was based on a treaty between the Doula chiefs and a representative of the Woermann Company (Buell, 1926:273). It would appear that the link between alcohol and the origins of European imperialism is by no means tenuous.

Once colonial administrations were founded, it was again alcohol revenue which largely paid for their upkeep. In fact, it might be said that revenue from alcohol duties was one of the crucial props on which colonial empires in Africa were built and maintained. This was so for several reasons. First, it was a cardinal principle of the pre-1914 policies of the metropolitan countries that colonies should pay for themselves, and grants-in-aid from mother countries were minimal. Secondly, imposition of direct taxation as a source of revenue was unpopular among peoples unaccustomed to it, and governmental efforts to tax directly were generally and repeatedly unsuccessful. Thirdly, European economic investment was conditional upon the freedom to repatriate profits so that most of what money there was went abroad. Customs duties were therefore of prime importance for the financial solvency of colonial governments, and those levied on alcohol were clearly crucial. The analogy with the place of opium in the revenue of colonial governments in the Far East springs readily to mind here. In nineteenth century Singapore, for instance, the revenue derived from the opium monopoly accounted for nearly half of the total government revenue; even in 1904, it represented 59 per cent of the total government revenue (Cheng, 1961).

Typically, the Gold Coast derived about \$ 5 million a year during the mid 1920s from duties on imported alcohol, and a third of the revenue of the country came from this source. In Sierra Leone, the contribution was 9.2 per cent (Buell, 1926:945). In Togo, known in colonial circles as the 'model colony' because it paid its own expenses without help from the German colonial office, the budget was balanced on the strength of import duties, almost half of the revenue derived from which was provided by the liquor imports before the turn of the century; after 1900 these imports continued to contribute at the rate of 20 to 22 per cent by value of all imports into Togo (Gifford and Louis, 1967:431-2). The following figures for French West Africa provide further illustration.

Table 1
Alcohol revenue (in millions of francs) of French West Africa, 1908-1913

Year	Total revenue	From alcohol	% from alcohol
1908	3.1	1.9	62
1909	5.0	3.5	70
1910	6.7	5.0	74
1911	7.2	5.1	71
1912	7.2	5.1	71
1913	5.8	4.0	69

Source: *Statistique du commerce des Colonies Françaises*, 1915.

The reliance on this source of revenue was equally to be found in French Equatorial Africa (AEF). In 1913 a group of French missionaries and other citizens of Gabon led by the local director of the *Société du Haut-Ogooué* made representations to the French Chamber of Deputies to stop alcohol exports to the colony, but their petition failed to gain parliamentary support because the government was afraid that such a move would jeopardize Gabon's budget. In the period after World War II, the question of imposing a quota on alcohol imports recurred from time to time in French parliamentary discussions and the local assembly debates, but among the reasons for finally rejecting the idea was the effect of such a move on AEF's already precarious finances (Thompson and Adloff, 1960:326), although this was overshadowed by the effective lobbying of interested French liquor manufacturers and merchants.

Nigeria was another case in point. The financial difficulties which it suffered in the early 1920s were attributed to the decrease in revenue derived from the sale of spirits to Africans following the sudden prohibition of 'trade spirits' as a result of implementing the St Germain Convention, the first treaty to deal exclusively with the liquor traffic (Lugard, 1926:605). When liquor imports were drastically reduced during the period of the World War, the proportion of revenue derived from them fell from 34 per cent in 1913 to 1.23 per cent in 1918 (Perham, 1960:561). When in 1916 Lugard, as governor-general of Nigeria, declared his intention of abolishing the liquor trade, the British Colonial Office was 'horrified at the cost of the sacrifice in revenue' (Perham, 1960:561). It was thus with satisfaction that Lugard was able to write to his wife the following year that he had proved the Colonial Office to have been wrong, for he had managed to balance the budget without the duty on spirits — 'and though the C[olonial] O[ffice] never calculated its extinction, they assumed I must borrow £ 1 3/4 million from the Treasury to carry on and complete the Udi Line [a railway line running to coalfields at Udi from Port Arthur]. We have not borrowed a cent! We are now solvent, and the Liquor Revenue is gone!' (Letter dated 22 Oct 1917).

Lugard's experiences with opium control when serving as governor of Hong Kong throw an interesting, though perhaps incidental sidelight on all this. Pressurized by the British Government (itself under international pressure to act on the sale of opium) to close opium dens in Hong Kong, Lugard had to seek an alternative revenue to make up for the loss in opium dues. This he found in a duty on liquor. Anomalous though this duty was in a free port — such as Hong Kong was — the business community there agreed to it, albeit reluctantly, and with the proviso that the officers of the small customs service which was to be set up to prevent smuggling should behave in a very restrained manner (Perham, 1960:333). Lugard himself, though a prohibitionist then as far as alcohol was concerned, was all for a gradual approach to the opium problem in Hong Kong, believing that hasty abolition would lead to replacement by 'anti-opium pills' containing morphine. Moreover, after visiting a large number of opium dens, the net impression he gained was that 'the so-called vice was really a most extraordinarily temperate and satisfactory substitute for alcohol'; he was also struck by the general orderliness of the dens and said, in a letter to his wife dated 30 July 1908, 'you could not find such things in English public houses' (Perham 1960:329).

The reason, then, why colonial administrations would not entertain a policy of prohibition as advocated by the missionaries is patently clear — they felt that they

could not afford it. As E. D. Morel, an English champion of native rights and a special correspondent of the *Times* put it in his book *Affairs of West Africa* published in 1902 (cited in Johnston, 1911):

The European Missionary... denounces drunkenness. But he is terribly handicapped... by the European Governments who, although they do now and again raise the duty on spirits in deference to public opinion, tacitly encourage a traffic without which their whole administrative machinery would become temporarily paralyzed, seeing that from 45 per cent to 75 per cent of the revenue of their Colonies is derived from this traffic. These circumstances may, or may not be preventable. They exist, and cannot be ignored.

In a footnote, he added that he looked upon the liquor traffic in the same light as the opium traffic in the Far East — as 'a blot upon the escutcheon of Christian Europe. But those who denounce the merchants might just as well, and more logically, denounce the Governments. *Per se* the liquor traffic is not a lucrative trade to the merchant, but to the local administration on the coast it is the backbone of revenue'.

The dilemma facing the colonial administrator was summed up by one as follows (cited by Lugard, 1897):

It is the liquor traffic that supplies a revenue which enables the administrator to deal with many crying evils. To make head against all of them, a strong and independent administration is requisite; to maintain that administration a revenue is necessary; could the liquor traffic be entirely and immediately done away with, and a sufficient revenue obtained from other sources, I for one would be very glad.

Colonial taxation reflected, to a certain extent, attitudes towards trade and taxation in the metropolitan country. Articles that were heavily taxed in Britain for example, such as alcohol and tobacco, were those bearing equally heavy duties in the colonies. Similarly, the economic philosophy of the Colonial Secretary had an influence on colonial tax policy: Joseph Chamberlain's leaning towards aggressive economic policies was reflected in the high import duties, particularly on German liquor, levied in the Gold Coast (Gifford and Louis, 1967:424). Not that the volume of the liquor trade or its value was by itself particularly worth shouting for, but within the framework of that old theme — international rivalry in Africa — it acquired an added importance, being a source of irritation in English-French and German relations in Africa. Clashes over the liquor trade were but an expression of wider national rivalries involving economic and political influence in Africa.

One might add, by way of a footnote to a general consideration of the relationship between alcohol and colonialism, that it is perhaps one of the special ironies of Africa that, among the outcomes of black agitation for equality with the whites in central Africa was the amendment of liquor laws in Southern Rhodesia in the late 1950s to permit Africans to consume beers, wines and spirits, hitherto accessible to white men only, as well as the local weaker 'kaffir' beer. Since that time the popularity of European beer had continually increased (Wolcott, 1974:33). Africans have long been vexed by the discriminatory character of the alcohol legislation existing in many parts of

colonial Africa, but however odious might have been the colour-bar which forbade the mixing of white and black Rhodesians in pubs and restaurants in places like Salisbury and Bulawayo, it is doubtful whether having it lifted in the sphere of alcohol control was in the best interests of the African either. Relaxed liquor laws would seem to be a dubious gain, when the historical events to which they owed their existence were motivated, to no matter how slight a degree, by the desire to protect the African from the harms of European drink.

There was an inevitability about the demand for equal access to European alcohol which is rooted in the days when the mythology of white superiority held sway and being allowed to drink was seen by the African as a bestowal of privilege and the affirmation of status. European policies gave encouragement to such notions by the practice (for example in British Togo) of allowing African clerks in government employment in the areas under prohibition to buy a fixed amount of spirits every month, a privilege conferred by the British Chief Commissioner, and one to which few other 'natives' were entitled (PMC, 31, 1937:106).^{*} Similarly, when Theodore Marchand, the French Cameroons *commissaire* expressed the opinion that 'Europeans and certain of the more highly developed natives' should not be deprived of the possibility of imbibing a reasonable quantity of alcohol, he was voicing a typical assumption on the part of many Europeans that drinking was an exclusive activity to which only the more 'advanced' Africans could aspire. The Africans themselves naturally came to see it that way too: Marchand spoke of an African member of the Administrative Council — one who had attained a high position in French Cameroons — who had requested permission to buy alcohol as freely as the whites did, and for whom 'the main consideration was the exercise of a privilege, far more than any wish to take up the habit of drinking alcohol' (PMC, 15, 1929:151).

^{*} This abbreviation will be used hereafter to refer to the minutes of the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission. The number following the initials denotes the session to which the minutes relate.

4 Home Brews

Apologists of the liquor trade maintained, with some justification, that drinking was not a new habit introduced to Africans by the European. They pointed to the prevalence of drunkenness in areas where 'the white man's drink' had not yet penetrated. Mary Kingsley argued that some intoxicant was necessary in the unsavoury malarial swamps of West Africa, where the food was poor and insufficient, and meat seldom obtainable (Lugard, 1897). Even prohibitionists believed that the absence of pure water, the heat of the African sun and the humidity of the atmosphere were together such as to compel the native to resort to alcohol, for 'the negro and kindred races are prone to excess in every direction. They are more deficient in moral stamina than most other races at an equally low stage of development' (MacDonald, 1916:62).

There is a wide variety of African alcoholic drinks: fermented honey water; fermented fruits and juices; fermented sap from various species of palm; and the beers. Although fermentation is a process of considerable antiquity in Africa (Platt, 1955), distillation, it is generally acknowledged, was introduced by seaborne Europeans when they came to the coasts of tropical Africa. Many accounts of the preparation of alcoholic drinks in different parts of Africa exist (Bernier and Lambrechts, 1959; Bismuth and Menage, 1960; Platt, 1955; Washburne, 1961). Leis (1964) has described the distillation of illicit gin by an Ijaw village in Nigeria — a technique for turning palm wine into a drink bearing a striking resemblance to the English gin which had been used as an item of barter.

The palm which yielded the oil so sought after by European merchants at the end of the slaving era also yields the wine which the 'Palm-Wine Drinkard' of Amos Tutuola's Nigerian novel drank 'from morning till night and night till morning' (Tutuola, 1952). Tapping toddy from the oil palms is detrimental to the tree and it is conceivable that this consideration entered into the debate on the relative merits of indigenous alcohol and imported beverages. The conflict between the needs of the palm oil industry and that of palm-wine making appears to be remarkably persistent, for the serious inroads made into palm oil production in Dahomey, for instance, by the production of palm alcohol, were held to account in part for the ridiculously low yield of palm oil in 1972 (Cornevin, 1965:85).

Scattered in the anthropological literature are sporadic observations on the cultural aspects of drinking in African society (see Heath, 1975). One of the earliest observations of the role of alcohol in African funerals must be that of the eleventh century geographer, Al Bakri of Cordoba, who described the ritual surrounding the burial of a king of the kingdom of ancient Ghana as follows:

They dig a ditch around the [burial] mound so that it can be reached only at one place. They sacrifice victims for their dead and make offerings of intoxicating drinks (Oliver and Fage, 1972:48).

The ceremonial use of alcohol and the practice among mourners at funerals of drinking to the point of intoxication have similarly been reported by nineteenth century ethnographers (Crawley, 1931:179-220).

Since ceremonial drinking was interwoven into the fabric of African cultures and seen to be so by Western observers, it is perhaps only natural that most of the anthropological literature on African drinking should have stressed its integrative functions rather than its disruptive effects. It is expressly stated by Wolcott, for example, that in his study of the beer gardens of Bulawayo, the emphasis on integrated drinking is more a matter of choice than of the absence of disruptive dimensions (Wolcott, 1974:219).

For want of fuller documentation of indigenous drinking in Africa at the turn of the century, I propose to draw on two relatively recent studies to illustrate patterns of traditional drinking. I would venture that despite their relative recency, these examples can help us to infer a reality as distant in time as the heyday of the liquor trade. Umunna (1967), in describing the drinking culture of a Nigerian community in Onitsha (one of largest towns in Nigeria), stresses the important place which alcoholic beverages have in the social life of the people: these drinks, mainly palm wine and beers made from maize or millet, are used for nearly all occasions — for hospitality, ceremonies, family and communal work meetings, funerals, peace-making and festivals. Drinking occurs mostly at home or in the house of a friend or kinsman; and during weekends and holidays friends would congregate over five litres of palm wine. Nowadays, a few go to bars to drink, but otherwise the traditional customs of the Onitshas have resisted the effects of modernization and urbanisation. In ceremonial drinking, the emphasis is on participation in the ritual rather than on intoxication. Although the customary quantity of alcohol required for each ceremony is often large, a smaller amount may in fact be provided, and money distributed as a substitute for the shortfall in liquor. For example, if ten litres of palm wine and a bottle of gin are required by custom for a particular ceremony, the host may offer only five litres of palm wine and pay the guests small sums of money in lieu of the other five litres and relatively larger sums in lieu of the gin. There is no drinking-age law and informal control is exercised by the family. While heavy drinkers who appear sober are respected outward drunkenness is considered shameful. Use of stronger drinks, such as a locally distilled illicit gin procured from outside the city and privately imbibed by some Onitshas, is considered detrimental to health and therefore discouraged by the community.

Netting (1964), who studied the Kofyar of Northern Nigeria, found their drinking customs to be well-established and consistent with the rest of the culture. Among the Kofyar, beer is the focus of group interest and value. It is a part of all important ceremonies; it is extracted as a fine for social misdemeanours; it is used to confer honour; the most severe punishment that can be meted out is exclusion from all occasions for drinking; and the beer house is the most sacred spot in the ancestral compound. Drinking occurs at traditional beer parties consisting of five to eight men and

women where each adult may drink one to two litres of the beverage. On the whole the men drink twice a week while women and children drink less than once a week. Netting estimates the alcoholic content of the beer at 3 to 5 % and, though they know how to, the Kofyar are not interested in raising this level.

By contrast, it has been observed that traditional beverages have in some areas been supplemented by 'hard' liquors. Nicol (1952) reports, for example, that families of Soragbemi fishermen in Southern Nigeria drink 107 millilitres of illicit gin (the alcoholic content of which is 60 %) per head per day, in addition to the 103 millilitres of palm wine consumed daily by each person.

Those who defended the liquor traffic maintained that if the natives were deprived of the opportunity of buying European spirits they would merely manufacture their own, with even worse results. The effect of native drinks compared with that of imported alcohol was for long a hotly debated subject on which there was a great diversity of opinions. Perhaps it was not a coincidence that the division of these opinions sometimes fell along racial lines. The following observations of the Gold Coast Commission of Enquiry regarding the Consumption of Spirits (1930:23-24) are certainly suggestive:

As a rule, the African witnesses, with however some noteworthy exceptions, have stated that the effect [of palm wine] is not deleterious and that no restrictions need be placed on the sale thereof; while European witnesses have been equally emphatic that the effect is more severe and lasting than in the case of spirits.

The white Commission itself claimed that the evidence was inconclusive, regarding as invalid the results of investigations carried out on samples of palm wine sold in local markets, which revealed that the alcoholic content was about one-half of that found in Nigerian palm wine in 1909, since this clearly showed, in the Commission's opinion, that the samples had been tampered with! (see Part Three).

Those who assailed the liquor trade were, on the other hand, at pains to show the low alcoholic content of local drinks. Thus Johnston, in his comparative table (1911) showing the approximate amount of pure alcohol contained in the various types of liquor to be found in Africa, set the proportion of alcohol to volume of liquid in the trade gin that was imported into Africa at about 50 %, and that in indigenous African fermented drinks at around 2 and 3 %. He did not indicate his sources but claimed that he took his figures from 'trustworthy authorities'. Lugard's information was that the maximum strength which it was possible for palm wine to reach was 7 % of absolute alcohol, as against 45 % in trade spirit as ordinarily sold (Lugard, 1926: 603).

Differences in alcoholic strength apart, it could be argued, as some did, that 'the import of European spirits...was harmful to the West African society, and that it might have been better if the Africans had kept to their traditional beers and palm wine' (Fage, 1969:89). Dr Albert Schweitzer was certainly of this opinion, when he wrote that (1922:125):

It is often asserted that alcoholism would prevail among the natives even if there were no importation of spirits. This is mere talk. Of alcoholic drinks produced

in the country itself [French Equatorial Africa] palm wine is the only one which has to be considered in the forest, and that is no great danger.

John Harris (1919:148) expostulated in a similar vein:

If the African has a right to drink something, and it is wrong for him to drink European alcohol, then in the name of common sense and justice he has a right to drink his relatively harmless native liquors.

The evidence which may be culled from the anthropological literature suggests that habitual drinking in other than indigenous ways is often disruptive (Heath, 1975). In view of the prior existence of indigenous intoxicants in African cultures, the problems connected with drinking cannot be wholly ascribed to white contact and acculturation, in contrast to what has been documented in relation to North American Indians (for example, by Lemert, 1954). Yet the influx of European liquor could not but have aggravated the process of social disorganization which other forces had already begun. Similarly, the rapid changes in the structure of African society and the weakening of traditional controls consequent on the appearance of the white man must certainly have affected the customary forms of drinking and undermined their balance. That this was so in the case of the Bantu people in southern Africa is cogently argued by Hutchinson (1961). A factor in the erosion of the basis of authority in the tribe was the prevalence of drunkenness among African chiefs, who could better afford European spirits. It was noted in Oubangui, French Equatorial Africa that alcoholism was widespread among the traditional chiefs (Suret-Canale, 1964:501).

Another important consideration was the introduction of new systems of distribution: whereas brewing was once a family affair confined to the domestic setting, ready-prepared beverages began increasingly to be sold in shops, thereby ushering in a process which ultimately led to the commercialization of drinking. Albert Schweitzer observed (1922:126) that while palm wine, which would not keep, enabled the people of the village to get drunk several times a year, on the occasion of festivals, the cheap spirits sold in shops posed a 'continual danger'.

5 Opposing Forces

Apart from statutory rules and informal social norms, there are control mechanisms of another kind regulating the use of alcohol in African society. These are the rules prescribed by religion, a key factor, as many writers have chronicled, in the evolution of African society. In the penal legislation of Northern Nigeria, it is stipulated that a Moslem who drinks anything containing alcohol other than for a medicinal purpose is liable to be punished either with imprisonment (which may extend to one month) or with a fine (of up to £5), or with both. In addition, he is liable to *haddi* lashing. The latter punishment can only be inflicted on a Moslem and is intended to deter by the public disgrace involved, in contrast to caning, which aims to deter by the pain caused (Gledhill, 1963:402-403).

That Islam has been a counterforce to the use of alcohol in Africa has been severally observed by Suret-Canale (1967:501) with regard to Senegal, Guinea and the Sudan; Banton (1957:220) with regard to Sierra Leone; and Thompson and Adloff (1960:326) with regard to Tchad. Some idea of the proportion of would-be abstainers in the West African population may be gleaned from the fact that by the early 1950s, Islam had converted 34 per cent of the total population of that region, representing some twenty million people (Crowder, 1968:356).

Having said this, it must be admitted at once that not all African Moslems abstain from alcohol. Johnston (1911) and other writers have attested to drinking among Moslems (see Heath, 1975; Bismuth and Menage, 1960d), and of the 369 hospitalized African alcoholics studied by Collomb, Ayats and Zwingelstein (1963), quite a few were Mohammedan. Moreover, Moslems have traditionally classified alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages on the basis of detectable effects on the drinkers and some African drinks (such as *burukutu* made from maize), whose alcoholic strength is less than 3 %, pass for non-alcoholic beverages on this criterion. Although these drinks are more typical of the Moslem North they are also to be found, for instance, in Onitsha, Nigeria, where they are brewed in large quantities by Hausa* women (Umunna, 1967).

Some of the smaller churches or sects, break-aways from Protestant Mission Churches, which had sprung up in Africa in increasing numbers, have similarly been a counterforce to the spread of alcohol use. One such sectarian movement, led by Prophet William Wade Harris, a Methodist-educated preacher of Liberian birth, forbade the use of alcohol by its converts** (Crowder, 1968:366), while another sect, the

* An African people, numbering about eight million, concentrated in Northern Nigeria and Niger.

** William Wade Harris travelled between 1913 to 1915 through the villages of southern Ivory Coast and won over some 100 000 converts. The movement was so successful that in 1923 a large number of Harrisites were still found to be active in the area of his mission. A conservative estimate put the number of Harrisite Christians in 1926 at 40 000 (Crowder, 1968:366).

Church of the Twelve Apostles, allows the use of wine and beer in moderate quantities only (Lloyd, 1967). The Missions themselves were vehement preachers of temperance, and to drive home the point that Christianity and the liquor trade were in direct opposition, some of them denied church fellowship to any but abstinent Africans (Cherrington, 1925:72). Because of the missions' stand on beer drinking, which made no concession to its place in traditional society, their only converts in the first twenty-five years of their activity among the Bantu Tiriki in Kenya were tribal outcasts who were excluded from drinking, and women who wished to escape from uncongenial husbands and children (Sangree, 1962). The missions went as far as persuading the Tiriki chief in 1932 to legislate that Christian women would not have to brew beer for the men, a move which won them many women converts. Even in recent times, the male church members tend to be uninitiated aliens, witch suspects and outcasts, or women and children.

Missionary response to the African liquor trade was a manifestation of the religious current coursing through the world-wide temperance movement that was to culminate in the United States in the coming into force of the National Prohibition Act in 1920. The eventual tapering off of interest in the African liquor question similarly coincided with the repeal of Prohibition in the early 1930s and the general subsidence of temperance activity. In Africa, missionary opposition to the liquor traffic was all the more pronounced because the traffic was arming Islam, the rival to Christianity in the continent, with the argument that it was the liquor of the so-called Christian nations which was causing havoc among Africans. Islam's restraining influence on the use of spirits and its appeal to African chiefs anxious to maintain sobriety among their people were thus an added reason for the missionaries to fight the liquor trade and thereby clear the way for the advance of Christianity.

Organizations for arousing public opinion were at work for years to bring about a cessation of the trade. In Britain, following the revelations of famous travellers such as Richard Burton and Thomson, and of the Colonial Congress of the National Temperance League in 1886, a United Committee for the Prevention of the Demoralisation of the Native Races by the Liquor Traffic presided over by the Duke of Westminster and chaired by the Bishop of London was formed. This Committee comprised twenty-six missionary and temperance societies. A debate in the House of Commons took place in 1888, and an influential deputation of the Committee to Lord Salisbury succeeded in securing his support and a promise to raise the question at the impending Brussels Conference. At the same time, pressure was being mounted by the British Anti-Slavery Society which had been trying since November 1888 to secure the passing of a motion calling for an international slave trade conference in the House of Commons. In March 1889, they succeeded. Temperance activity persisted beyond the Brussels Conference however, and the Protestant Missions were able to back up the resolutions they adopted at meetings in Abeokuta and Lagos in 1895 pledging to support efforts to suppress the trade with the signatures of more than 12 000 Africans (Cherrington, 1925:70). An anti-liquor campaign was also waged by the Empire Resources Development Company in England, probably motivated by the belief held among some business circles that the more money the African spent on spirits, the less demand there would be for other, especially cotton, goods (Ekundare, 1973:211).

In France, the question was taken up by the *Commission Coloniale de La Ligue Nationale contre l'Alcoolisme*. In addition, following a report by Dr Kermorgant, Inspector-General of the Colonial Health Service (Kermorgant, 1909), the *Société de Pathologie Exotique* in Paris adopted resolutions in 1909 urging that trade spirits be prohibited in French possessions; that other varieties of alcohol be heavily taxed; that the practice of paying African workers with alcohol in lieu of wages be forbidden; that heavy penalties should be imposed on violation of prohibition, and that coins should replace alcohol as a form of currency (see du Teil, 1909).

In the US, the leading national temperance organizations gave their support to the anti-liquor cause in Africa, and exerted pressure on the American government to prevent US companies from participating in the liquor trade. As humanitarian problems became increasingly matters of international diplomacy, there was an effort to start an international crusade against the sale of intoxicants to the so-called backward races of the scale of the anti-opium campaign, which was to surface later. US exportation of alcohol to Africa was automatically stopped by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

In Germany, the North German Mission Society of Bremen, concerned about the cumulative rise of liquor imports in Togo, waged an intensive campaign to pressurize the home government to levy a high duty as a measure of control. In 1885 a Mission Director charged that at least 60 per cent of Hamburg's exports to West Africa consisted of alcoholic beverages of a particularly poor and possibly harmful quality: he had instructed missionaries to buy representative brands of liquor in Togo to be tested in Bremen. The matter became an important issue in the January Reichstag debates of 1886, and Adolf Woermann, the Hamburg entrepreneur, was compelled to reduce the prominence of liquor in the commerce he conducted with the Cameroons (Gifford and Louis, 1967:432). Apart from this however, no attempt at control was made when the German administration of African territories began, the home government knowing 'well the place of alcohol in colonial life' (ibid.:432). The North German Mission's warning was unheeded until 1908 when Chancellor Bülow announced that the Germans would support the high liquor duty advocated by the British for adoption by international agreement at the Brussels Conference. The majority of the German traders were opposed to control but were conciliated, to some extent, by the old argument that if the Africans did not spend their money on alcohol they would be able to afford other commodities. Before the War, the most prominent missionary group in German Cameroons was the Basel Mission which, though a Swiss organization, was composed almost entirely of Germans. The Mission had affiliated to it a Trading Company, which, save in two respects, conducted a normal business with the Africans; the exceptions were that one, it did not sell alcohol and two, it turned back to the Mission all profits above 5 per cent for expenditure on Africans. To it a French missionary had paid the following tribute: 'The missionaries of Basel worked hard and well... they opened the interior of the Cameroons to the Gospel. [The mission] had courageously struggled to protect the natives against alcohol' (Buell, 1926:300).*

* There is a passage in a novel by a Cameroonian writer which depicts the brutal choice confronting the African thus: 'The natives had been forbidden to distil their own cheap alcohol from maize and bananas

to drive them onto the European spirits and the red wine that flooded into the commercial centre. For some time Gullet... and his men had been trying desperately to lay their hands on whoever was selling the stuff in secret... Raid followed raid. The missionary lost no time in condemning the drink from the pulpit for, he said, it blackened the teeth and the souls of his parishioners. He decreed that every Christian who drank it was committing a mortal sin with each mouthful that he swallowed' (Oyono, 1967). It is all too tempting to overdraw the picture of African innocence, beset by malevolent forces, but history bears out the reality of what the novelist implies.

Part Two
From Berlin and Brussels
to Geneva and Abidjan

6 Berlin

The prelude to the control of alcohol in Africa by international agreement was the conference called in Berlin in 1884 to settle Africa among the rival powers. Although the liquor traffic did not feature in the Berlin agreement, Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, in his instructions to the British delegation, had written:

the welfare of the natives should not be neglected; to them it would be no benefit, but the reverse, if freedom of commerce, unchecked by reasonable control, should degenerate into licence.

and had referred specially to the slave trade and the importation of spirits, to which 'strong feeling' in England was attached (Beer, 1923:221).

The officials in the Foreign Office had come to believe, as a result of Britain's leading role in the protracted struggle against slaving, that in the sphere of moral reforms, Britain naturally led the world, and it was in keeping with that tradition that she sought the penalization of trading in slaves and the restriction of the liquor trade on the Congo and the Niger at the Berlin conference.

As an aim of the conference was the opening up of the Congo and the Niger to free trade and navigation by the European powers, it was thought necessary at the same time to adopt safeguards against a consequent infiltration into the interior of the liquor trade that was already flourishing along the African coast but had not yet penetrated further inland on account of the high cost and difficulty of transportation.* Arguing that it was the professed aim of the conference to promote the welfare of the natives, the British urged that measures be adopted to shield the African from the ravages of the liquor trade. Percy Anderson, one of the British delegates, shared the view of the missionaries and the temperance societies that the trade led to the demoralization of the indigenous population on whom the effect of heavy drinking 'is disastrous'. 'They know no moderation', he wrote in a memorandum, 'the excitement of the brain makes them quarrelsome and uncontrollable; diseases which were comparatively harmless become malignant, and liver complaints rapidly carry them off.' The opening up of the basins of the Congo and Niger Rivers to trade would, he feared, provide the African with the financial means to buy spirits so that 'the process of civilization and demoralization may be simultaneous.'

In fact, the British proposal was not made without an eye to economic gain. British traders had already established a predominant position on the lower Niger and it was with a view to securing a monopoly for the British company — the National

* For this account and that of the Brussels conference which follows, I have relied heavily on Miers (1967).

African Company of George Goldie-Taubman which was to be granted a royal charter and renamed the Royal Niger Company — that the British asked for the exclusion of the liquor trade from the free transit provisions of the Act under negotiation at Berlin. This would allow them to levy heavy duties on the liquor passing through the protectorate on the lower Niger and thereby dislodge their competitors in the palm-oil trade, since it was with liquor that this commodity was usually bought. These duties would not affect the British company adversely since it would simply be paying them to itself.

Britain's designs were however thwarted by Bismarck, who was well aware of the fact that the traffic formed an important branch of the Hamburg-Africa trade, and that agreement with the British proposal would be against German interest. Both Germany and Holland were also opposed to liquor restrictions on the Congo. Thus all that the conference eventually did was to express the wish that the various powers concerned should agree on measures to protect Africans from the 'evils' of the trade, but in such a way as to entail no undue interference with legitimate commerce. As John A. Kasson, the American delegate observed, Germany and Holland thought that 'in portions of this region commerce is dependent on the exchange of such liquors for the native goods; and further that it would not be prohibited without involving a right of search of foreign vessels by the local authorities' (Beer, 1923:222). Thus, while avowing on the one hand that they were concerned with furthering 'the moral and material well-being of the native populations' (Preamble to the treaty), the powers at Berlin took no practical steps on the other to end 'what were considered to be the two great evils of Africa, the slave trade and the liquor traffic'.

7 Brussels, 1889–1912

The primary aim of the 1889–90 Brussels Conference was the suppression of the slave trade; secondarily, it sought the control of the arms and liquor traffic in Africa. The principles which were to guide the European powers in the conduct of legitimate trade had been laid down in the Berlin Act of 1885; at Brussels the moral obligations to be assumed by them were adopted. Lord Salisbury, the British Prime Minister, claimed that the latter conference was the first in the history of the world to gather for the purpose of 'promoting a matter of pure humanity and goodwill' (Cecil, 1932:4). Britain, supported by Germany, was the country chiefly responsible for bringing the conference about, and among her motives was the credit that she would gain, both at home and abroad, for proposing such a humanitarian endeavour.

Germany agreed to support the British in this exercise, not only because the idea was being pressed by the Centre Party and the Catholic press, but also because she wanted to present a united Anglo-German front to the world, in order to increase Italy's confidence in her alliance with Germany, an alliance which France was seeking to undermine. It was arranged that Belgium should call the conference so that French and Portuguese suspicions might be disarmed. King Leopold II of Belgium saw in the conference an opportunity for securing the agreement of the signatories of the Berlin Act to his levying import duties in the Congo, which had been forbidden by the Act.*

The conference, according to Sir John Kirk, a member of the British delegation, was hard work — 'all the dinners, receptions and balls.' In addition to representatives from the Colonial Office, the Admiralty and the Foreign Office, Britain sent Lord Vivian, the ambassador in Brussels. The German delegation was less solid, consisting only of Count von Alvensleben, whom Lord Vivian thought too nervous to make any decisions, and von Arendt, the German consul-general in Zanzibar, who became ill and died during the conference.

The British used the opportunity afforded by the conference to reintroduce the question of liquor traffic control. This was at Percy Anderson's instigation (Anderson was head of the African Department from 1894–96). In a memorandum dated 22 October 1888, he had written

The spirit traffic only promotes the Slave Trade, like cannibalism by demoralising the natives, but if there is a Conference all the English philanthropists, who are absolutely illogical, will urge the introduction of the question as they did at Berlin. It is therefore a question of whether it is politic to anticipate them by suggesting its discussion; the suggestion will not be accepted by France and Germany but we might get credit for the effort.

* King Leopold had annexed the Congo in his personal capacity and ruled it as a private empire.

In a memorandum dated 30 October 1889, Lord Salisbury conceded that it required 'some ingenuity' to bring the question within the scope of the conference, but it would win popularity. Judging by the number of petitions which inundated the Foreign Office and the Conference — almost all were from temperance organizations — feeling ran high over this question. Goldie-Taubman's trading company — now known as the Royal Niger Company — was also pressing once more for the prohibition of free transit of spirits on the Niger River. The Company itself was in fact engaged in a large trade in liquor even in the areas where it had prohibited it (Flint, 1960). But this did not prevent George Goldie from saying in the year of the Brussels Conference:

I speak after sixteen years' experience, and I say confidently that unless immediate steps are taken to stop the liquor traffic — not by putting on higher duties but by absolute prohibition — a state of things will soon be brought about that must ultimately lead to the entire abandonment of the country. I cannot believe that the conscience of Europe will long allow that the vast populous regions of tropical Africa should be used only as a cesspool of European alcohol (cited in MacDonald, 1916:105).

Britain's intention was to announce at the conference that while maintaining heavy duties on the lower Niger, she would stop the passage of spirits beyond a certain point so as to protect the western Sudanese population from the harmful effects of the trade. Behind such a resolution was Anderson's belief that it was bound to bring credit to England, even if defeated; furthermore it would have 'the incidental advantage, if carried, of getting rid of our Niger difficulties with Germany, who, if the Hamburg spirit trade is stopped, would possibly cease to trouble her head about the river.' Another proposal by Britain to the conference was that the sale of liquor should be prohibited in areas as yet untouched by the traffic, areas which came to be known as 'prohibition zones'. These areas were mostly in the Congo basin. As for the coastal regions, where demand for imported alcohol was already well established, Salisbury had wanted to impose a high duty (ten shillings per gallon) but had had to give way to the Colonial Office's objections. The latter would not entertain a high tax for fear that this would result in smuggling and divert the trade away from the English colonies to the French and German ones where, it was assumed, such taxes would not be levied. The duty in the Gold Coast had indeed had to be lowered in one area to stop the trade from being diverted to neighbouring German Togo. The heavy reliance of West African commerce on the liquor and arms business made it all the more important to secure agreement on a uniform duty in all these territories.

Eventually, the tax proposed by Britain was a small one of two shillings per gallon in the slave-trade zone, an area stretching across the continent between latitudes 20 degrees north and 22 degrees south which the British had delimited earlier in the conference for the exercising of the rights of supervision over sailing ships (as a means of combating the maritime slave trade). The tax was limited to this area because Britain could not legislate for her South African colonies, where liquor for internal consumption was heavily taxed, in contrast to liquor for export, which was not. The Germans, who in the interest of their own Hamburg trade, imposed no duties in South West Africa and minimal rates in Togo and the Cameroons, were naturally opposed to the tax. Bismarck's own precarious position in domestic politics precluded him from get-

ting the agreement of the Hamburg merchants to the British proposal: although the temperance movement had some support in the Reichstag, it was insufficient to counterbalance the opposition of the traders, whose support Bismarck also needed. He tried, but failed, to persuade the British to drop the question, although he did manage to postpone the introduction of the proposal until after the elections for the Reichstag in the Spring of 1890 had taken place.

As for the reactions of the other nations, King Leopold of Belgium, seeing the British proposals as an opportunity for raising revenue for the Congo, supported them. On the other hand, Portugal set out to embarrass Britain by suggesting the extension of the proposals to South Africa; France for similar reasons asked that they encompass the whole of the continent. Holland, like Germany, was engaged in a substantial trade with the Congo and predictably opposed the anti-liquor measures. However, the final outcome of the tense deliberations was that the principle of prohibition in the 'uncontaminated' zones was accepted, provided that each colonial power defined these zones for itself. While rejecting the proposal for levying a two-shilling tax in the non-prohibition zones on the grounds that it would lead to smuggling, the conference agreed to adopt a Dutch proposal for a rate of fifteen francs per hectolitre (about 6 ½ pence a gallon) for three years after the coming into force of the agreement under negotiation. At the end of this period, the duties could be increased to 25 francs per hectolitre (10 ¾ d. a gallon) for a further period of three years, after which they could be revised in the light of the results obtained. Lord Vivian's instructions had been to secure agreement on a duty of ten shillings a gallon, as anything lower, the British believed, would have no effect on consumption. However, since German and Dutch opposition could not be overcome, Salisbury then concerned himself with making sure that the efforts were on record so that the British would get credit for them. He asked Vivian, 'will the proceedings as ultimately published show all this controversy?' And it was with the assurance that they would that the British delegation announced its reluctant acceptance of the duty proposed by the Dutch. Later, John Kirk, the British delegate, wrote privately: 'We are very pleased with what we have got seeing the Gov't never expected more than the credit of showing how far we were willing to go.' What they achieved was, as Miers (1967) put it:

a great deal... Humanitarians would be pleased with prohibition of the traffic in the 'uncontaminated' zone. The Niger Company's monopoly was secure. The small duty in the coastal areas was not such as to alarm the Colonial Office, but it was higher than the existing duty in Togo and the Cameroons, and the principle that liquor imports could be taxed in the conventional basin of the Congo had been established.

As to the actual statutory provisions, alcohol control measures were encompassed in six articles comprising Chapter VI of the Brussels Act of 2 July 1890. The Act established an arbitrary zone between latitudes 20° north and 22° south, stretching across the continent from ocean to ocean. This area constituted the prohibition zone in which the signatory governments undertook to prohibit the importation and distillation of spirituous liquors in those parts where their use did not exist already (Article XCI). The exact definition of the boundaries of these areas of total prohibition was left to the discretion of each government. Prohibition could only be suspend-

ed in the case of limited quantities intended for the consumption of the non-indigenous population and imported under conditions determined by each government. Then there were the already mentioned provisions relating to the minimum rate of duty to be levied. Finally, the signatories agreed to communicate to each other, via an office in Brussels, information relating to the liquor traffic in their respective territories. The British had intended the bureau to be a supervisory organ with powers to oversee the working of the anti-slavery treaty and to propose any changes which might subsequently appear necessary. However, France, Germany and other countries did not want to give the bureau such power and it thus became a mere information centre devoid of importance.

The Brussels Act was ratified in 1892; Holland, which had no African possessions but was the main exporter of trade gin, jeopardized the Act by delaying ratification (Lugard, 1926). Neither the French nor the Portuguese proclaimed any prohibition zones. The prohibition area in the Belgian Congo, on the other hand, was increasingly extended towards the coastal seaboard (Beer, 1923:172). Nonetheless the measures outlined in the Act did not succeed in reducing liquor imports; in contrast, it would appear, to the regulations governing the traffic in firearms, which worked more satisfactorily (Beer, 1923:170).

The rates of duty levied by the colonial powers varied, as the following table shows (Lugard, 1897):

Table 2

Rates of duty on alcohol in British, French and German colonies, 1897

		Rate per gallon in £ sterling	
		s.	d.
British possessions	Gold Coast west of the Volta*	2	6
	Sierra Leone	3	
	Lagos	1	
	Niger Coast Protectorate	1	
	Gambia	2	
	Niger Company delta district	2	
French possessions**	Dahomey		6 ½
	Gabon	3	
German possessions	Togoland	9	¾
	Cameroons		

Lugard (1897) took these figures to indicate a willingness on the part of Britain and France to increase their duties in at least some of their colonies, while Germany, though following the letter of the Brussels Act, showed no such inclination.

* The duty east of the Volta was reduced to match the German level applied in the neighbouring Togoland.

** In the portion of the coast described by the bend of the Niger a further 'consumption tax' was levied by the French which varied according to degrees of strength, and ranged from about 4 ½ d. per gallon on rum of about 30 % by volume to 3s. 6d. per gallon on alcohol 50° and stronger.

The Brussels Convention of 8 June 1899

It was soon apparent that the duties fixed in 1890 were inadequate to affect the volume of liquor imports into Africa; so Britain, after protracted bilateral negotiations to persuade France and Germany to increase their duties, called another international conference in Brussels. International agreement was deemed necessary because the juxtaposition of colonies and the impossibility of keeping their long frontiers under surveillance meant that if one colonial government raised its duties significantly, smuggling from adjacent territories was bound to occur. Chamberlain, in a letter to the Anti-Liquor Traffic Committee (17 April 1896) emphasized this (Lugard, 1897):

His Government are quite ready to agree to the imposition of higher duties, but no satisfactory agreement such as the Committee desire is possible unless the French and German Governments are also willing to increase the duties in their possessions to the same extent. His Government are in communication with the French and German Governments with a view to inducing them to join in raising the duties, but no agreement has yet been arrived at.

It took another international conference, therefore, to raise the minimum duty to 70 francs per hectolitre at 50 degrees Centigrade. The signatories agreed to adjust the rates according to the strength of the alcohol imports on the basis of this norm, and this arrangement was to be good for six years, after which it could be revised. Again, the most zealous proponent of higher duties was the British delegation, which declared at the close of the conference that they 'sincerely regret that it has not been possible to obtain the assent of the Conference to a higher rate' (Beer, 1923:224).

Another strong supporter of liquor control measures was the US which, in spite of having no possessions in Africa, adhered to both the 1890 and 1899 treaties. This was partly because the missionaries and temperance advocates in America were heartily in favour of such a step. As the liquor treaties pre-dated the international conventions on narcotics, and both the opium and liquor traffic was viewed in the same light by the missionaries and other anti-drug groups, the US government was subjected to much pressure to include control measures over opium in the alcohol treaties. From 1900, the matter was continuously before Congress and the State Department. In 1901, a resolution was adopted by the Senate which said that (Taylor, 1969:27):

in the opinion of this body the time has come when the principle, twice affirmed in international treaties for Central Africa, that native races should be protected against the destructive traffic in intoxicants should be extended to all uncivilized peoples by the enactment of such laws and the making of such treaties as will effectively prohibit the sale by the signatory powers to aboriginal tribes and uncivilized races of opium and intoxicating beverages.

Supporting this resolution was a petition signed by a large number of private individuals and reformist and missionary societies addressed to all the signatories of the 1890 and 1899 treaties. Further support came from former President Benjamin Harrison who, in a letter accompanying the petition, quoted from his opening address at the Ecumenical Missionary Conference held in New York City the previous year,

where he complained of the undermining of missionary efforts in foreign countries by those who carried 'rum and other corrupting agencies...with our boasted civilization.'

Acting on this resolution and on the representations of a group named Native Races Deputation, Secretary of State John Hay proposed to the British government that they jointly submit a treaty to the other powers prohibiting the sale of opium and alcohol to 'uncivilized races'. Britain did not reply to this suggestion, owing presumably to her embroilment in the Boer War at the time (Taylor, 1969:28). This did not deter the US from raising the matter at the 1906 conference at Brussels, which met to review the liquor duties agreed upon at the previous conference. In a message to the conference, President Roosevelt urged the powers to adopt measures 'for the universal prevention of [the] liquor and opium traffic with all uncivilized tribes and races'; to prove the interest of the American people in this question, the American minister at Brussels was instructed by the State Department to circulate the petitions of the Native Races Deputation and various other publications among the participants of the conference. However, US commitment to the principle of 'international action to control the traffic in the twin intoxicants of alcohol and opium for the benefit of unprotected peoples' was not matched by similar commitments on the part of the European powers, and the international control of opium came to command a separate history of its own. Nevertheless, it is tempting to speculate, given the decisive role which the US played in that history (see Bruun, Pan and Rexed, 1975), and potentially could have played in relation to the international control of alcohol, what might have happened if American economic, diplomatic and missionary interests had been as great in Africa as they were in China.

The Brussels Conference of 1906

By the time the 1906 conference met, the import duties in a number of African territories had already exceeded the rate fixed by the conference of 1899 — for example in the Gold Coast, where a rate of 124 francs per hectolitre was levied. The British representative proposed to the conference that this figure be adopted as the new baseline, a proposal which met with quite considerable opposition. However, the conference concluded on a compromise of 100 francs as the minimum rate of duties and excises.

What was the effect of the progressive increase in import duties between 1906 and 1912, when the new review took place? A look at the statistics of importation suffices to indicate that the effect was negligible. From 1906 to 1912 inclusive, the importation of alcoholic drinks into French West Africa doubled in volume. And as the rate of duty rose, the quality of the spirits, especially that of gin, deteriorated (Beer, 1923:174). Similarly, between 1906 and 1910 liquor importation into British territories in West Africa increased by 40 per cent (ibid.:225). In Nigeria (examined in detail in Part Three) the flow of liquor continued to swell. The increase was even greater in Sierra Leone and Gambia: in the former, importation doubled during this period, while in the latter the rate of increase was even higher (ibid.:175). Only in the Belgian Congo did the imposition of higher duties lead to a diminution in importation: when the duty on trade brandy was raised from 15 francs to 70 francs, impor-

tation fell from 1.2 million litres in 1898 to 0.5 million litres in 1902, and when the duty was further increased to 100 francs, imports were further reduced to 0.2 million litres in 1908 (*ibid.*:225). It would appear that the failure of the Brussels control measures was largely confined to West Africa, where the indigenous population had become accustomed, through decades of use, to drinking distilled spirits. This is consistent with the fact that early European commercial activities were concentrated along the coast of West Africa. The consequences for West Africa of the direct opening of commercial relations with Europe were truly profound, and the firm foothold which the drinking of European alcoholic beverages secured was in all probability one of them. When colonial administrations were being established in coastal West Africa, inland Africa was still almost untouched by European influence (Oliver and Fage, 1972:185). Moreover, during the period under review, the expansion of trade and economic exploitation of the West African colonies had brought about a considerable increase in the wealth, and consequent purchasing power of the African population, so that any deterrent effect which the imposition of higher duties might have had was completely nullified. The situation was in marked contrast to that in the hinterland, where at the time European positions had not yet been consolidated.

The conference of 4 January 1912

Since the alcohol trade with West Africa was unhampered by the rate of duties established in Brussels in 1906, another conference was called to consider extra measures. Great Britain and Germany jointly proposed the raising of the rate of duties from 100 to 150 francs and a yearly progressive increase of 10 francs up to a 200 franc ceiling. It was also proposed that the prohibition zones be delimited by the 'simplest possible lines in all colonies as it had been in those of Great Britain, Belgium and Germany, with the idea that this area should constitute a solid block' (Beer, 1923:226). These proposals were adamantly resisted by the French delegation. Although France had proclaimed Equatorial Africa a prohibited zone in 1908 and 1909, she had annulled this proclamation in 1910 (Wyndham, 1930). Prohibition had reduced the value of liquor imports from 414 000 francs in 1907 to 202 000 francs and 158 000 francs in 1908 and 1909 respectively, but when prohibition was lifted, the imports again rose from 303 000 in 1910 to 485 000 francs in 1911. The abrogation of prohibition was considered necessary on financial grounds, although the substitution of indigenous spirits was invoked as an additional argument (Beer, 1923:174).

At the 1912 conference the French maintained, therefore, that the delimitation of the prohibition areas should be left to the local authorities, and that this was the correct interpretation of Article XCI of the Brussels Act. Proclaiming prohibition zones and aligning them to those declared in adjoining foreign territories would, in the French view, limit her territorial sovereignty. The French delegate was also wary of increasing duties but conceded finally, after much hedging, to a minimum of 120 francs for Somaliland and French Equatorial Africa. He would not however, agree to a zone of prohibition in North Dahomey, insisting that such demarcation was optional and not, as Germany claimed, binding upon the signatories under Article XCI

of the Brussels Act. Officially, the French position was based on the contention that in the absence of imported alcohol, 'the natives' would merely substitute their own (toddy) made from oil palms, to the detriment of these trees, whose oil was a chief staple of export. Unofficially, economic reasons were also important, and Beer maintains that the pressure from the distillers of France was a factor (Beer, 1923:227).

The conference became deadlocked over this issue, and adjourned without a solution a month after it opened. The outbreak of the First World War delayed the renewal of talks until 1919, when seven governments met at Saint Germain-en-Laye and signed a new convention dealing exclusively with alcohol control.

Since the 1912 conference failed to reach agreement on uniform application of customs duties, Britain was forced to act independently of her neighbouring colonies. She imposed the rate applicable to the Gold Coast of 5s.6d. per gallon (150 francs per hectolitre) on all her West African territories and rapidly increased it until it reached 25s. several years later (Wyndham, 1930). The effect of these and other control measures is difficult to assess because of the impact of the World War: although in 1917 the import of spirits into Nigeria was only one-twentieth of the quantity for 1913 and in Gambia about one-eighth, this was almost entirely the result of the suspension of shipping and of Dutch and German exports of trade spirits during hostilities (Wyndham, 1930).

In the year following the abortive conference of 1912, Albert Schweitzer made his way up the River Ogowe to take up his work in the heart of French Equatorial Africa, and what he edscribed of the journey is revealing. He was witness to a transaction at an African village in which timber supplied by the village elder was paid for by the captain of the boat on which he (Schweitzer) was travelling in spirits instead of in cash. As the journey progressed, ruins of abandoned huts were seen on the banks. A fellow passenger on the boat, a trader, said to him, 'When I came out here fifteen years ago, these places were all flourishing villages.' 'And why are they so no longer?' asked Dr Schweitzer. The trader shrugged his shoulders and said in a low voice, '*L'alcool...*' The boat stopped opposite a shop after sunset, and the trader told Schweitzer, 'If we had stopped here in daylight, all the negro passengers... would have gone ashore and bought spirits. Most of the money that the timber trade brings into the country is converted into rum. I have travelled about in the colonies a great deal, and can say that rum is the great enemy of every form of civilization.' Schweitzer also relates how, in the following year, he had asked an African who managed a little shop for a white owner 'miles away from civilization' to show him all his stock. Standing conspicuously behind the counter were 'the beautiful white painted casks of cheap spirits' (Schweitzer, 1922:24–25, 114). Every litre of alcohol, according to Schweitzer, paid a duty of two francs on coming into the colony, and he had to pay the same rate of duty for the absolute alcohol which he used for medical purposes as that paid on ordinary alcohol for drinking.*

* It seems that the French levied, in AEF at least, a rate of duty they had officially rejected at the 1912 conference as being too high.

8 Saint Germain-en-Laye, 1919

During the Peace Conference following the First World War a Commission was appointed to consider revision of the Berlin and Brussels Acts. Three conventions emerged: one for the control of the traffic in arms and ammunition; one of a general character, and one relating to the liquor traffic in Africa. Signed by the Allied powers, Belgium, the British Empire, France, Italy, Japan, Portugal and the United States at St Germain-en-Laye on 10 September 1919, this last convention sought to continue 'the struggle against the dangers of alcoholism' throughout the entire African continent with the exception of Algiers, Tunis, Morocco, Libya, Egypt and the Union of South Africa. (Its provisions were also applicable to the islands lying within 100 nautical miles of the coast). It declared in its preamble that it was 'necessary to prohibit the importation of distilled beverages rendered more especially dangerous to the native populations by the nature of the products entering into their composition or by the opportunities which a low price gives for their extended use.' It also declared that 'the restrictions placed on the importation of spirits would be of no effect unless the local manufacture of distilled beverages was at the same time strictly controlled'. A shift of emphasis in the target of control is discernible in the text of the treaty. Making no explicit reference to the prohibition zones of the Brussels Act, the St Germain treaty forbade the sale, importation, and possession of 'trade spirits' (but not of other spirits) in both prohibition and non-prohibition zones alike. The actual wording was as follows:

The importation, sale and possession of trade spirits of every kind and of beverages mixed with these spirits, are prohibited in the area referred to in Article 1.* The local Governments concerned will decide respectively which distilled beverages will be regarded in their territories as falling within the category of trade spirits. They will endeavour, as far as possible, to establish a uniform nomenclature and uniform measures against fraud (Article 2).

Also prohibited were distilled beverages containing chemicals and other ingredients recognized as injurious to health. The names of these beverages were to be established by common agreement between the local administrations concerned (Article 3).

The non-trade spirits, which were not prohibited, were subjected to a minimum duty of 800 francs per hectolitre of pure alcohol. The equivocal obligation in the Brussels Act on the signatories to proclaim prohibition zones which the French had interpreted as optional was omitted. Instead, the signatory governments undertook to

* The entire African continent with the exception of Algiers, Tunis, Morocco, Libya, Egypt and the Union of South Africa.

pursue a policy of prohibition in those regions covered by the treaty where the use of spirits had not been established, and to suspend such prohibition only in the case of 'limited quantities destined for the consumption of non-native persons, and imported under the system and conditions determined by each Government' (Article 4). The omission of the formal requirement to delimit prohibition zones was probably not without consequence at the local level, given the development of internal transportation: the greater mobility made it more important, for the purposes of control, to spell out the limits beyond which alcohol could not travel.

Another stipulation was that the manufacture of distilled beverages of every kind should be forbidden in the territories covered by the treaty, as well as the importation, distribution, sale and possession of stills and distillation apparatus. These two provisions were waived, however, in respect of the Italian colonies, where, according to the Italian government, such provisions were unenforceable (Article 5).

None of the restrictions governing distilled spirits were applicable to pharmaceutical alcohol, and subject to the authorization and control of the appropriate local administration, the importation, distribution, sale and possession of testing stills and apparatus necessary for the manufacture of alcohol for scientific, pharmaceutical and commercial purposes were permitted by the Convention (Article 6).

The Convention also instituted a Central International Office under the control of the League of Nations to which all information had to be sent, each of the contracting Parties being obliged to publish an annual report showing the amount of spirituous beverages imported and produced, and the duties levied. The Central Office and the League of Nations Secretariat were to receive a copy of this report (Article 7).

The Convention further stipulated that in the case of a disagreement, the dispute should be submitted to an arbitral tribunal in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations (Article 8).

These then, were the terms of the international agreement for limiting the availability of alcohol in Africa. An obvious loophole, and one which some of the signatories were to turn to great account, was the failure to define 'trade spirits'. This was the crux of the matter when it came to applying the terms of the treaty. The allusion in the preamble to beverages which were particularly dangerous to the indigenes 'by the nature of the products entering into their composition or by the opportunities which a low price gives to their extended use' was the nearest the Convention came to defining the term. It seems that at the time there was little doubt as to what was meant: the restrictions were directed at excluding from Africa Dutch gin* and similar spirits (Buell, 1926:944) which were geared specifically to a low-priced native market. In domestic legislation also (for example the Niger Ordinances of 1906 and 1907, and the Sierra Leone Ordinance of 1912) they were simply referred to as spirits commonly known as 'trade gin' and 'trade rum' without further definition. This was also the case with Gambia and the Gold Coast. Up till then there had seemed no doubt about the meaning of the term: 'trade spirits' were well known along the coast, and were easily distinguishable by their green packing cases and their extremely low price from the alcohol imported for European consumption (Wyndham, 1930).

* 'Gin' was a local African colloquialism for geneva and schnapps.

But the necessity to define the term more explicitly was all the more important because just as the effectiveness of the Brussels Act had hinged upon the adequacy of the duties levied by each power on imported spirits, so the force of the St Germain Convention would depend on the stringency with which each power defined the term 'trade spirits'. The definition adopted by the British colonies was consonant with the intentions of the drafters of the Convention. Thus the Nigerian Ordinance of 1919, for example, defined trade spirits as those 'imported or of a kind previously imported for sale to natives and not generally consumed by Europeans'. Some uniformity in interpretation between the four British African colonies was achieved, at least nominally, by the end of 1920. But its application ran into practical difficulties that finally forced it to be abandoned: the Gold Coast, which had no pre-war traditional definition of trade spirits, issued a list of named brands of whisky, rum and gin for the guidance of its customs officers, provoking an immediate protest from proprietors of these brands and thereby necessitating a review of the entire question.

All the signatories eventually became parties, though they did not ratify the Convention equally quickly: Britain, including the Dominions and India, and Belgium ratified it in 1920; France in 1921; Portugal and Japan in 1922; the US in 1929, and Italy in 1930; Egypt also adhered to it in 1924.

Although the Convention provided that such modifications as might prove necessary could be introduced after a period of five years, no review has, however, ever been undertaken.

At St Germain-en-Laye

What was meant by the term 'trade spirits'? How did the Convention come to be worded so imprecisely? To know the answers, it is necessary to turn back to the negotiations among the countries concerned prior to and during the St Germain conference.

In a conversation between C. Strachey of the British Foreign Office and A. Duchêne, the French Director of the Colonial Ministry, about six months before the conference convened, the former told Duchêne 'what he did not appear to know before' — that it had been suggested that matters dealt with in the Brussels Act, such as the slave trade and traffic in arms and liquor should be placed under the supervision of the League of Nations. It appeared to Strachey that if this were done, 'it would be the best possible substitute for the obsolete machinery of the Brussels Act'.*

Between themselves then, the British and French governments arrived at an agreement on the alterations to be made to the Act. The draft liquor convention was then forwarded to the American, Belgian, Italian, Japanese and Portuguese governments with the request that they should appoint delegates to examine it in conjunction with the British and French delegates.

* Archives of the British Foreign Office, Public Record Office file 31762, contained in volume FO 371/4322.

(The liquor merchants seemed to have kept abreast of these developments: in September 1919, the Association of West African Merchants in Liverpool addressed a letter to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs requesting copies of the convention.)

As for the draft itself, the original Article 2 stipulating the prohibition of trade spirits had a second paragraph spelling out what these were:

1. beverage spirits that were industrial alcohol or methylated spirits in origin;
2. alcoholic beverages costing less than two francs in the country of origin and not more than eight francs per litre of absolute alcohol after the deduction of freight, packing and all other charges in the country of destination.

At the meeting which considered the draft convention, the British delegate explained that the insertion of this extra paragraph was prompted by the difficulty of defining trade spirits and by the need to provide some examples of such spirits for the guidance of the local governments in enacting their domestic legislation (*Procès-verbaux*, 1919).

The paragraph was however severely criticized by the Italian government, which would have none of this explicitness, even though the chairman of the conference (Duchêne) had remarked darkly earlier in the face of opposition to the clause that the prohibition of trade spirits was a moral, and not a commercial question. The Italian delegate considered the minimum rate of two francs per litre much too excessive. To this the chairman retorted that it was extremely low and that the beverages concerned were veritable poisons.

Yet, though the delegates were unanimous on the difficulty of defining trade spirits, no agreement was reached, except in principle, on what the term meant. In the end, the chairman proposed, with the consent of the British delegate, to delete this paragraph from the text of Article 2. And so it came about that trade spirits were left undefined.

As far as the harmonization of the classification of prohibited beverages between local administrations was concerned, the conference decided that this was a question with which the newly created League of Nations could occupy itself.

As for the fixing of the rate of duty, the Belgian delegation had wanted the minimum to be set at 1 000 francs per hectolitre. However, the Italian government thought it quite unnecessary to invoke draconian measures to deal with a non-existent problem, and asked for an exception to be made in the case of the Italian colonies. The other governments compromised on a rate of 800 francs per hectolitre.

When it came to the wine régime, Duchêne shifted over to the side of the Italian and Portuguese governments in opposing an amendment introduced by the Belgian delegate to include under the term '*boissons distillés*' fermented beverages with an alcohol content of over 15°. Speaking now on behalf of France and not as chairman, he stated that all wines should be admitted regardless of alcohol content. Portugal was equally opposed to the amendment: there were a number of Portuguese wines, her delegate said, whose strength exceeded 15°. In a written statement submitted to the conference Portugal declared that practical experience in the Portuguese colonies had shown that if the indigenous population were habituated to ordinary Portuguese wine, this could help lower the consumption of indigenous alcohol whose clandestine production was extremely difficult to control. The Belgian delegate was nonetheless

quite insistent; one of his arguments was that alcoholism among white settlers could have graver consequences than among the indigenous population, being a source of much abuse and crime. However, when put to the vote, four delegations showed themselves in favour of the amendment, while three — France, Italy and Portugal — were against it, so that the amendment had to be rejected. The Belgian delegate's stand on the liquor question may have stemmed from the fact that Belgium had inherited a Congo that King Leopold's maladroit personal rule had left appallingly short of funds, and revenue from taxes was desperately needed.

The part played by the British at the conference appears from the proceedings at least to have been rather low-keyed. That they either did not take the matter very seriously or were not altogether clear about what adherence to the Convention implied is suggested by the contents of subsequent correspondence between the Foreign Office and H. M. Customs and Excise. The latter were asked whether their existing powers would enable them to enforce the operative clauses of the Convention. A not obviously zealous answer came from the Customs dated 21 February 1920:

None of the clauses seem to me to correspond to this description, and I should scarcely imagine that the Convention is considered to bind the contracting powers to prohibit the exportation of spirits from their own countries to the territories named in the Convention, as there is no mention of any such thing. In the circumstances, I do not quite understand the Foreign Office enquiry, and I should be grateful if you would give me further elucidation before we send an official reply.

In reply, the Foreign Office said that Lord Curzon would however be glad to have it in writing that the provisions of the Convention contained nothing which would apply to the United Kingdom.

It is clear from this that whatever measures the colonial administrator might take to prohibit the entry of spirits, there would be no supporting effort by the home government to prevent British alcohol manufacturers from exporting spirits to the colonies. The difference that complementary control 'at the source' could potentially make to the effectiveness of control in the importing country is one which has been amply demonstrated in the narcotics control field. There, through a progressive elaboration of international controls, countries have been made increasingly responsible for seeing to it that their drug products are exported only to countries permitting their import. This is a cardinal feature of international drug law which was never embodied in international alcohol legislation.

Effects of the St Germain Convention

British colonies:

As several of the West African territories will be dealt with individually in Part Three, only an overall view will be attempted here. Ordinances were enacted in 1919 in the West African colonies prohibiting the importation of trade spirits defined as those imported for sale to 'natives'. However, the smuggling from neighbouring French

possessions which had not followed a policy of exclusion was such as to cause the British Committee on Trade and Taxation to report that the prohibition of trade spirits was adversely affecting British trade (Buell, 1926:944). In an address to the Nigerian Council in 1923, Sir Hugh Clifford, the governor, complained that the prohibition reduced revenue and that the policy had merely had the effect of increasing the consumption of palm wine, to the detriment of the valuable palm trees. On the other hand, there were those who contested this view (Buell, 1926:944). The Dutch government attempted to persuade the British to readmit Dutch gin, encouraged perhaps in their expectation of success by the fact that there was some British capital invested in Dutch distilleries.

These events led to the convening of a conference of the Controllers of Customs of British West Africa in October 1921. This meeting recommended the alteration of the definition of trade spirits to allow the readmission of Dutch gin and all other spirits, regardless of how cheap they were, that were manufactured from fermented grape-juice, barley, rye, maize, sugar cane or a mash of cereal grains, provided they did not contain extraneous harmful ingredients (Buell, 1926:944). The result was the adoption of a new definition, based on the negative principle of excluding all spirits except those specifically admitted on the recommendation of the conference (Niger Liquor Amendment Ordinance, 1924). Thus in 1922, Dutch gin reappeared on the African market (see Table 4). However, it was now purportedly free of the injurious materials which it often contained in the past: it had to satisfy certain standards of purity of materials and methods of manufacture before it could be admitted. It was moreover subjected to a duty of 25 shillings a gallon, which met the dictates of the Convention. Thus, notes Wyndham (1930):

we are back in the same position as we were under the Brussels Act, in so far as the principal deterrent to the excessive use of spirits by the natives in the non-prohibition zones is to be their price, which, apart from the improvement in quality which has added to their cost, depends upon the level of the import duty, the settlement of which depends upon the co-operation of the Governments concerned, the absence of which, however, has not prevented the British colonies steadily increasing the duty.

A schedule of approved brands of Dutch gin was maintained and all applications from firms for their brands to be included in this schedule, as well as questions concerning those already contained in the schedule, had to be addressed to an African Traffic Control Committee appointed in 1924.

Despite what appeared on the surface to be a fairly rigorous control policy, the British cannot be credited with having abided faithfully by the terms of the St Germain Convention, even though they had not in the strict sense, actually violated them; for it had been Dutch gin which the framers of the treaty had specifically intended to bar from the colonies. It was that which induced the President of the French Union to complain to the Native Races and Liquor Traffic Committee in London that, to the regret of the French traders, trade spirits had increased in the British West African territories in violation of the St Germain Convention. The British, on the other hand, argued that it was the French who were infringing the treaty, because of the low rate of duty they levied on their side of the border and the smuggling to which this gave

rise. All the same, the low rate notwithstanding, the French were not applying a duty lower than that prescribed by the treaty, and they therefore thought that the British had only themselves to blame if their high duty made smuggling inevitable. At any rate, the French took the position that the proper interpretation of the Convention implied the exclusion of Dutch gin altogether, and that, if it were not for the English, they would have applied this interpretation to their possessions. But subsequent to the British readmission of Dutch gin into West Africa, France rescinded her ban on trade spirits in the territories adjacent to the British ones, namely Togo, Dahomey and the Ivory Coast. Elsewhere, such spirits continued to be prohibited (Buell, 1926:946).

The years immediately following the signing of the St Germain Convention were marked by a general increase in the amount of spirits imported into British West African territories, this being greatest in the Gold Coast. The imports of potable spirits into Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone were as shown in Table 3. Nevertheless, the figures were considerably lower than those recorded in 1913, which were, for the three colonies in question, 21 071 960; 7 998 651 and 2 791 258 litres respectively, making a total of just under 32 million litres. Thus it was argued by some that the Convention was not without effect: prohibition of the old trade, they contended, had reduced purchases to a level well below the 'normal' level of consumption (which was assumed to be round about the 1913 level), and the increases merely indicated a progressive tendency for consumption to return to 'normal'. A further claimed effect of the Convention was the purported disappearance of the synthetic adulterants found in the pre-war imports and the improvement in quality which ensued. It is not known to what extent these claims were based on fact.

French colonies:

The French anticipated the St Germain Convention by establishing a licensing committee at Dakar, Senegal which sanctioned the importation of various brands of French brandy and rum only. This aroused protests from the British government, which saw French protection of native welfare as a mere cover for safeguarding the interests of the national alcohol trade. Although France did not ratify the treaty until 23 July 1921, her action was seen as a violation of the St Germain Convention; it was, moreover, in contravention of the Berlin Act of 1885 under which equal tariff treatment ('the open door'), was to be assured to all the parties in the area of the Conventional Congo basin, of which French Equatorial Africa was a part. On account of British objections, France abandoned this policy in March 1920 in respect of

Table 3

Volume of imports of potable spirits (in thousands of litres) into British West African territories, 1922-1927

Year	Volume
1913	31 862
1922	3 376
1923	4 126
1924	4 953
1925	6 673
1926	6 478
1927	8 890

Dahomey and the Ivory Coast where the open door had been guaranteed by a treaty between France and Britain in 1898; in the other colonies in French West Africa the prohibition of foreign spirits remained. The St Germain Convention came into operation in the French territories in December 1921 through a series of decrees promulgated between 1921 and January 1923, which prohibited the importation of trade spirits, and defined them as all spirits excluding those made from the distillation of the grape, sugar-cane or fruit: as Dutch gin was made from grain, it was included in the definition (Buell, 1926:946). It will be remembered that while the British allowed the importation of spirits distilled from grain, which included Dutch gin, the French did not, until it became impractical to maintain prohibition in the territories adjoining the British ones, namely Togoland, Dahomey and the Ivory Coast. However, the depreciation and the general instability of the franc added to the difficulties of achieving parity of import duties with those levied in the British ones and thus the French tax remained consistently lower than the British standard. The importation figures reflect the fluctuations produced in the consumption of Dutch gin in the African market (see Table 4).

As far as overall importation into French West Africa was concerned, the following figures are quoted by Suret-Canale (1964:500) for the years following the ratification of the St Germain Convention:

	1923	1924	1928
Hectolitres	15 000	21 640	29 664

As was the case with the British territories, the amounts were nowhere near the 1913 total of 71 900 hectolitres, the increases notwithstanding.

As time passed, the French government moved increasingly towards a policy of encouraging the use of wines and beers in place of spirits (Buell, 1926:946). And by 1938, the imports of eaux-de-vie and liqueurs, for example, had fallen below 10 000 hectolitres in French West Africa, while imports of wine and aperitifs had increased to 100 000 hectolitres (Suret-Canale, 1964:501).

Table 4
Importation of Dutch gin (in litres) into West Africa, 1920–1925

	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1925
	Imported from Holland						Per Capita
British Colonies							
Gold Coast	1 214	0	362 620	2 206 600	2 670 200	3 840 200	1.67
Nigeria	?	182	342 464	382 310	817 986	1 244 864	0.07
Sierra Leone	0	1 527	93 350	34 610	40 327	42 860	0.28
French Colonies							
Togo	?	63 163	103 600	90 247	269 751	506 832	0.68
Dahomey	135 700	12 500	2 600	267 200	381 600	413 000	0.49
Ivory Coast	34 100	57 200	100	66 700	221 900	303 900	0.20

Source: Buell, 1926:947

The same pattern was observed in French Equatorial Africa (AEF), where the quantities of imports for the two categories of alcohol were 2 292 and 103 hectolitres respectively. In AEF, alcohol sale or distribution was prohibited under a decree of June 1927 to Africans only, Europeans being exempted, as were wines of less than 14° strength.

Alcohol consumption was considerably lower in French Equatorial Africa than in French West Africa, but it became a subject of increasing concern to the missionaries and to the local government. A decree of 3 September 1941, known as the Sicé decree, attempted to control alcohol use by placing a ban not only on the sale of all imported alcoholic beverages to the indigenous Africans, but on the local manufacture of palm wine and beer as well. This decree was extremely unpopular, and it is doubtful if it had any effect. Additional measures were certainly found to be necessary, and those, consisting of the raising of import duties, the control of the quality of imported alcohol through laboratory tests, the restriction of shops licensed to sell alcoholic beverages to certain areas and the limitation of their number to one per 2 000 inhabitants, were instituted through a decree of 20 May 1955. Two years later, the number of liquor stores was further reduced to one per 4 000 inhabitants. In the meantime, the advisability of imposing a quota on imported liquor was debated in French parliamentary bodies and the local assemblies. The proposal was finally rejected, and Thompson and Adloff (1960:327) cite three main reasons: such a limitation was seen as a threat to the already precarious state of AEF's revenues; some were wary of the risk of making certain beverages more attractive by virtue of their being forbidden (French Union Assembly debates, 22 November 1949; Grand Council debates, 9 November 1954); but a more important reason was the effective lobbying of French alcohol manufacturers and merchants. In any event, the fact that French citizens in AEF and naturalized Africans* were exempt from the prohibitory regulations and could import alcohol legally meant that Africans could acquire liquor from them illegally, and frequently did so. That the Sicé decree was actually enforced is evident from the number of convictions for violating it in the various states in AEF: in 1947–48, Moyen Congo had a record of 310 convictions; Gabon 220; Oubangui 260 and Tchad 140 (French Union Assembly debates, 23 January 1951). Moyen-Congo, despite a smaller population than Tchad, had the largest number of violations; the reasons for this are probably that it had the highest number of wealthy Africans, and that its port, Pointe Noire, was the main point of entry for French imports into AEF. Although Tchad's population was the highest in the federation, its consumption was relatively low, over half of its people being Moslems. The availability of imported alcohol in the coastal towns, where most of it was drunk, did not seem to have affected drinking in the hinterland, which continued to be predominantly of native brews.

* France, pursuing an 'assimilationist' policy towards her colonies, had granted French citizenship to a small proportion of her colonial African population.

9 Geneva

The Mandates

Although the international bureau set up by the St Germain treaty was, as was mentioned earlier, placed under the control of the newly inaugurated League of Nations, the latter showed little inclination to take the matter up on a wider basis. Nor did it make much effort to encourage the regional implementation of the Convention. Indeed, its concern with the liquor question did not extend beyond the limited confines of the 'mandated' territories.

The mandate was a system of administration by a responsible mandatory power subject to international supervision. Under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League, the international community was made responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of peoples 'not yet able to stand on their own feet in the arduous conditions of the modern world'. The article laid down the broad outlines of a working arrangement whereby 'advanced nations' would exercise 'tutelage' over such peoples on behalf of the League, accepting this duty as 'a sacred trust of civilization'. Obviously, there was an element of hypocrisy about this arrangement — 'the old hag of colonization puts on a fig leaf and calls itself mandate' was one description it had earned (Claude, 1965:321) — although its emphasis on the promotion of the welfare of the subjugated peoples derived also from a blend of high ideals and bad conscience. In any event, when the victors of the First World War dismantled the German and Turkish colonial empires, and distributed the spoils among themselves, they also ensured, under the guise of the mandates system which was applied to the territories taken from the defeated powers, the perpetuation of white colonial rule.

The distribution of mandated territories among the mandatory powers is shown in Figure 1. Each territory had its own mandate, a document spelling out obligations on the part of the mandatory power regarding such matters as the slave trade, traffic in arms and ammunition, the liquor traffic, freedom of transit and so on. Although based on a single principle, the system varied in its application, which distinguished between three types of mandate, differing according to the development, geographical situation and economic circumstances of the territories. The A mandates, comprising the Middle Eastern territories confiscated from Turkey and judged to be nearly ready for independence, were entrusted to Britain and France; the B mandates, namely all the African mandates save South West Africa, were to be administered on the basis of a commercial open door policy to avoid economic conflict among the European colonial powers. The last category C was made up of South West Africa and South Pacific islands, which were to be administered under the laws of the mandatory power as integral portions of its territory. While some stipulations applied to all the mandates, others varied according to category.

Figure 1
The allocation of the mandates

Mandatory	Mandates		
	A	B	C
Great Britain	Palestine & Trans Jordan Mesopotamia (Iraq)	Tanganyika British Togo British Cameroons Ruanda-Urundi*	
France	Syria & Lebanon	French Togo French Cameroons	
South African Union			South West Africa
New Zealand			Samoa
Australia			German New Guinea
British Empire (UK Australia & N. Zealand)			Nauru
Japan			German islands north of Equator
Belgium		Ruanda Urundi*	

* Subsequently negotiated

As far as alcohol control was concerned, the A mandates did not fall within the scope of the St Germain Convention; being Mohammedan, a large proportion of their population abstained for religious reasons. The provisions regarding alcohol were stricter for the C than for the B mandates: the former had to prohibit absolutely the supply of intoxicating spirits and beverages to the indigenes, while the latter only specified that the mandatory power concerned had to 'exercise a strict control' over the sale of spirituous liquors. Mandatories of the B category were obliged to apply to the territories under their charge any international conventions both existing or subsequently concluded with the approval of the League relating to such matters as the slave trade and the liquor traffic.

The agency through which the League Council exercised its supervision of the mandated territories was the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC), the members of which, though nominated by their governments, were appointed by the League Council and were supposed to serve as private individuals.* It was to them that the

* Eight of the more or less permanent members of the Commission were drawn from states with overseas colonies — Belgium, Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. The remaining two 'seats' were occupied by a Swiss member and a series of Scandinavian women (the Constitution of the PMC provided that one of the members must be a woman) who consistently confined their attention to educational matters.

mandatory powers had to report annually on the state of liquor control in their respective territories. As was noted earlier, all the parties to the St Germain Convention were already supposed to publish and send both to the Central International Office set up by the St Germain Convention and to the Secretary-General of the League an annual report giving statistical data on the liquor trade. But it appears that the main responsibility for documentation was assumed by this office rather than the League Secretariat. The Belgian government was asked by the League Council to continue at Brussels the work of the former *Bureau de la Traite* and to be in charge of the functions relating to liquor control in Africa. The Belgian government agreed to this, and confirmed in a letter to the Secretary-General that the staff of the Belgian Foreign Affairs department would assist in the work. It was suggested that the expenses involved might be divided equally between the powers which had signed or adhered to the St Germain Convention (Official Journal, April 1922:361). It seems that the old Brussels office was retained for this purpose mainly as a gesture to the country which summoned the first international conference for the control of the liquor traffic (Maanen-Helmer, 1929:159). The office was actually neglected; writing in 1929, Wyndham noted that 'the British Government appears to be the only one that has sent it regular reports'. This was also the situation earlier: Lugard, writing in 1922, observed that the periodical reports which were to show how far the provisions of the Brussels Act were being carried out, 'were in practice neglected' (Lugard, 1922:48). The Permanent Mandates Commission was the only part of the League to make use of the office; all the same, the latter quietly survived both the World Wars (Hall, 1948:244–45).

It has been suggested by Alfred Zimmern that the particular provision of the Covenant (Article 24) placing international bureaux under the League foundered because of the defection of the US, since the provision required the consent of all the parties to each treaty that set up a bureau (Zimmern, 1936:305–6). Another writer, while agreeing that this might have increased the League's reluctance to assume the functions assigned to it by the liquor traffic convention, considered the delay in American ratification alone an insufficient explanation. The treaty was, after all, 'a multilateral convention, of considerable importance to the African continent, which was already in force as regards the principal colonial powers in Africa as early as 1922, and which was clearly drafted upon the assumption that the League would play a definite role in its operation' (Hall, 1948:243–44). His explanation was that the enforcement of each treaty in Africa was dependent on the prevailing international climate. The suppression of slavery was least difficult because by then few governments had vested interests in slavery: though there was some internal raiding by Arab slave dealers, the export of slaves to countries outside Africa had largely ceased years before international slavery controls were adopted. In relation to the liquor traffic the situation was different: efforts to make it a general League concern were resisted because if the League attempted to tackle the problem world-wide, 'it would stir up a veritable hornet's nest of conflicting emotions and interests. The private slogan in the Secretariat was therefore: Keep away from drink' (Hall, 1948:238). Lugard's comment in an address in 1929 seems a fair summary of the work of the PMC: 'It is now nearly ten years since the [St Germain] Convention was signed, and only this year have we succeeded in getting agreed definitions' (Wyndham, 1930).

The work was bedevilled from the start by the inconsistencies in the terms of the Covenant governing the work of the PMC, the terms of some of the mandates, and the text of the relevant conventions. First, the Covenant (article 22) requires the mandatory to guarantee 'the *prohibition* of abuses such as the... arms traffic and the liquor traffic', while in the text of the B mandates, the exercise of a '*strict control* over the traffic in arms and ammunition and the sale of spirituous liquors' was stipulated. Article 3 of the C mandates, on the other hand, provides for the *prohibition* of the 'supply of intoxicating spirits and beverages to the natives'. Secondly, the target of control measures was unclear. The St Germain Convention prohibited the importation of '*trade spirits of every kind*' and imposed a minimum duty on *distilled beverages*. The Covenant on the other hand, placed an obligation on the B mandatories to prohibit 'abuses such as... the *liquor traffic*', whereas the text of the B mandates provided for the control of the sale of *spirituous liquors*. The C mandates referred to *intoxicating beverages*. The fact that both the French and the English versions of the various documents were equally authentic authorities complicated the issue even further.

The confusion was not helped by the resolution adopted by the Council of the League of Nations in July 1922, the text of whose recommendation was as follows:

The Council of the League of Nations,

Conscious of the gravity of the danger for the native populations of Central Africa arising from the scourge of alcoholism,

Recommends that the mandatory Powers should do everything in their power in order that their administrations shall protect the populations from the dangers afore-mentioned, and requests the Permanent Mandates Commission to investigate most carefully the measures taken by the Mandatory Powers in this connection and to report to the Council on the application of the provision in the mandates regarding alcoholism.

The difficulties were aggravated by the fact that the returns submitted to the Commission by national governments via the Brussels Office were rarely comparable one with another, employing as they did a variety of nomenclature and standards. Some of them gave quantities of importation without specifying the strength of the alcohol; some expressed the percentage of alcohol in terms of weight, others in terms of volume, and yet others in terms of the percentage of proof spirit. Some returns even included information on lemonades, vinegars and minerals.

Thus before the PMC could embark on any control activity, agreement had first to be secured on the definition of its objectives, and on nomenclature.

As far as the objectives to be pursued by the Commission were concerned, opinions differed as to whether alcohol must be prohibited totally, whether it was to be prohibited to the natives only, or whether only particular varieties of alcohol were to be forbidden. The matter was to drag on for years, shuttling back and forth between the Assembly, the Council, the PMC, and the respective governments. Thus one of the resolutions adopted by the League Assembly in 1924 specifically addressed the problem and the necessity of securing an agreed definition of the technical terms employed in the international instruments bearing on the liquor traffic.

From the very outset, the members of the PMC differed in their interpretations of

their briefs. For example, Friere d'Andrade of Portugal said at the first session in 1921 that alcohol abuse could only be avoided by the prohibition of import and manufacture for both whites and blacks, whereas Pierre Orts of Belgium was convinced that it was not possible to prohibit the use of alcohol by Europeans. Later, d'Andrade admitted that he did not think absolute prohibition feasible: 'there were countries with wines to sell. But the adoption of the proposal...forbidding the sale of liquors which were fermented or contained more than 12° of alcohol, would be compatible with a regard for legitimate interests' (PMC, 1, 1921).

At the third session of the PMC in 1923, Lord Lugard presented a paper in an effort to clarify the issues at stake. In the paper he had concluded that prohibition was not intended in the mandated territories to apply to Europeans and Africans alike, basing his opinion on the following arguments. First, the fact that the Covenant was concerned with the welfare of the indigenous people of the mandated territories and placed them under 'tutelage' precluded the possibility of European drinking being a target of control. Secondly, although to discriminate between Europeans and Africans would invoke the undesirable colour-bar, it was not so much race as the level of development within a single mandated area on which prohibition was meant to hinge: the definition of 'liquor traffic' which he, Lugard, had proposed would not debar 'educated Africans, who live on the same approximate plane of social development as Europeans' from buying alcohol. It was only as an article of trade with the natives that spirits were to be prohibited. Thirdly, the terms used in the St Germain Convention, a convention signed by all the Principal Allies at the same conference as the one which designed the League Covenant prior to the date on which the latter became operative, indicated that it was in this sense — that is, importation of distilled spirits for sale or barter to the natives as an article of trade — that the term 'liquor traffic' should be interpreted in the mandates. Fourthly, the varying terms used in the text of the mandates were such as to suggest that total and absolute prohibition was not intended: A mandates mentioned traffic in drugs and not alcohol; B mandates required 'strict control' over the sale of spirits; and C mandates expressly forbade the supply of intoxicating beverages 'to the natives'.

Lugard also made a case for the control of locally made intoxicants, although these were obviously not included in the 'liquor traffic' to which the international documents referred. He thought controlling these beverages was a duty expected of mandatories placed in charge of promoting the welfare of the people. Although such control was contingent upon the development of administration and the spread of education, Lugard thought that a beginning could be made by adopting the following measures:

- (a) prohibition of sale except by licence.
- (b) prohibition of manufacture for sale except by licence in definite localities under effective administrative control such as lands bordering on a railway, townships, or lands leased for mining etc.
- (c) protection of certain classes of palm trees.
- (d) active support to Moslem rulers in areas where intoxicants are prohibited by religion.
- (e) encouragement of native rulers in their efforts to control or prohibit the use of intoxicants.

- (f) the substitution for crude and potent native intoxicants of a very mild beer — practically harmless as an intoxicant.

With regard to the last point, Lugard thought it possible that a light beer containing not more than 6 % alcohol might divert the demand among Africans away from both distilled spirits and the locally fermented beverages, the latter being particularly undesirable for the 'filthy' way in which they were prepared, leading as likely as not to the dissemination of 'syphilis and other diseases'.

Returning to the definition of the term 'trade spirits', Lugard held that the criterion for distinguishing them from other kinds of spirits was one of *price*, since only cheap spirits could be used for trade and barter purposes with the Africans, higher-priced varieties being sold to the Europeans. Thus he proposed to define as trade spirits all spirits selling at a price below a minimum fixed by law. Such a law would lead, he believed, to better quality alcohol being sold and to the discontinuance of the use of spirits as an article of trade with Africans.

Not all members of the Commission agreed with Lugard. Friere d'Andrade was of the opinion that (PMC, 7, 1925)

the expression 'liquor traffic' meant a prohibited trade and that this interpretation of the word 'traffic' was that which was to be found in all dictionaries.

As he saw it, the St Germain Convention and the text of the mandates were

merely the result of a compromise between humanitarian ideals and private interests. Humanitarian ideals had inspired the wording of the Article of the Covenant in which alcohol was prohibited. The private interests had made themselves felt, with the result that the Convention of St Germain and the text of the mandates had been affected. What were the spirituous liquors which should be prohibited under the Treaty of St Germain? It was maintained that they were trade spirits. But what were trade spirits? Nobody knew, and perhaps nobody ever would. Who were the authorities who should decide what liquors were prohibited? They were the administrators themselves. The mandates had been drafted in such a manner as to authorize what it had been desired to prohibit by the Covenant, and the Treaty of St Germain had been so drafted as to give preference to the interests of the traders. This was deplorable.

As an explanation for the divergences in the text, this was quite accurate. Lugard's argument that the statesmen who signed the Covenant, the mandates and the St Germain Convention within a few months of each other could not have been so careless as to have signed three totally unco-ordinated documents was clearly open to question. The three documents had been drawn up at a time of great confusion, and there is no reason to suppose that the horse-trading common to international negotiations was not practised by those able statesmen whose supposed consistency Lugard had invoked: in the words of another commentator, they were 'only too ready to take away with one hand what they had given with the other' (Maanen-Helmer, 1929:193).

So the debate on an authoritative definition dragged on until the PMC finally agreed at its tenth session to interpret the clause 'shall exercise a strict control over the sale of spirituous liquors in B mandates' to apply to all distilled beverages containing

over 20 % alcohol. Not until all the mandatory powers had accepted this interpretation, however, could it be adopted, so that not until 1929 did the League Council approve the definition (Official Journal, December 1928:1956).

The liquor problem was followed up by the PMC at yearly intervals. The information required of the mandatories was outlined in a questionnaire consisting of the following queries:

- (a) What steps are being taken to assure the prohibition of abuses of the liquor traffic?
- (b) How is the campaign against alcoholism organized?
- (c) What are the effects of these measures (Statistics relative to the import and to the local manufacture of alcoholic liquors etc.)?
- (d) State place and origin of alcoholic liquors, other than wine and beer, imported into the territory.
- (e) What steps have been taken to secure the prohibition of the cultivation and consumption of other noxious substances (hemp and others)?

The last question applied to the A mandates which referred, it will be remembered, only to traffic in drugs and not to liquor. To some extent the concern with 'hemp and others' encroached upon the remit of another League organ, the Advisory Committee on Narcotics and Other Dangerous Drugs, which was shortly to take on the international control of hemp in a systematic and far from incidental way.

The annual reports produced in response to the questionnaire were examined by the PMC in the presence of an accredited representative of the mandatory power, who was usually interrogated by the members of the Commission on points needing clarification. The British accredited representatives were invariably administrative officers serving in the territory under scrutiny, who were fairly conversant with local affairs. The French, however, on the frequent occasions when they could not send the *commissaires* of the Cameroons and Togo to Geneva, would arrange for an official from the Colonial Ministry who had no overseas experience to appear before the PMC (Gifford and Louis, 1971:523). One question which was put to accredited representatives again and again was what accounted for the marked increase in liquor importation into the B territories. The answers usually attributed it to the opening up of the countries concerned by railways and motor transport, and to the growing wealth and purchasing power of the Africans (PMC, 13, 1928).

The greatest obstacle to control, however, was thought to be the disparity between the customs systems and monetary units of adjoining British and French territories. In British areas, imported spirits were taxed at a rate of 800 francs per hectolitre of pure alcohol in accordance with the requirements of the St Germain Convention, reckoning the franc at 25 to the pound (£); the French on the other hand used a rate of exchange based on a franc depreciated to 130 to the pound. Alcohol was therefore considerably cheaper in the French territories and much smuggling occurred between the French and British territories although it was by no means clear from the annual reports how large this contraband trade actually was. The PMC was much preoccupied by these disparities, and repeatedly called for both an increase in, and a unification of, the duties applied. It adopted a British proposal to fix the maximum alcoholic content of beverages which might be regarded as wines and not as spirituous liquors at 20 %. It

is interesting to note that smuggling between neighbouring states in West Africa as a result of differential import policies has persisted to the present, and substantial illegal flows occur between ex-British and ex-French states of imported cloth and other low-cost consumer items in one direction, and of imported tobacco, liquor and luxury goods in the other (Green and Seidman, 1968:304).

One other recommendation of the PMC remains to be mentioned and this was for the imposition of sharply progressive freight charges on the carriage of spirits by rail and the extension of this system as far as possible to motor transport.

Though alcohol was a subject of debate in the PMC throughout the period of its existence from 1922 to 1939, it was never a very intensive debate, and it grew less and less so as the years passed. The contrast in the number of formal observations* on the liquor traffic made by the PMC in its reports on the 1922 and 1924 sessions is noteworthy. In 1922, the PMC made formal observations about seven out of the eleven mandated territories; out of the seven reports for 1924 received by September 1925, the PMC made a formal observation in respect of one territory only, in spite of the fact that alcohol problems featured in the discussion accompanying the examination of five of these seven reports, and in spite of the persistence of such problems in the mandated territories (Hercod, 1925:12). A development which may have hindered the work of the Commission was the giving way of the initial continuity in governorship of the mandated territories to a succession of short-lived administrations (Gifford and Louis, 1971:530). The attendant lack of real concern comes through in the oral testimonies of the accredited representatives at the Commission meetings. In 1936 for example, a PMC member asked the accredited representative of the British Cameroons if the loss of life ensuing from the 'stick-fights' which the annual report mentioned as an outcome of the excessive use of local beer was a common occurrence in the northern areas. The representative's reply savours of a nonchalance that would perhaps have been surprising in an earlier period:

[he had] no personal experience of the northern areas. He believed there was occasional loss of life. The trouble occurred at celebrations (PMC, 30, 1936).

The Commission was criticised for interpreting its task in the alcohol field (as well as in the other fields of its concern) in somewhat too narrow terms. Admittedly, neither the PMC nor the League had *explicitly* been made responsible for the supervision of the St Germain Convention, the League's involvement being confined to certain aspects only of the work of the International Office, yet it is clear that the PMC's approach to problems was often too restricted and legalistic. It was not entirely out of the question for the PMC to propose a revision of the St Germain Convention, but its members chose to see this as an initiative which should more properly stem from one of the contracting parties (Hercod, 1925:15). Again, while it is true that the PMC's scope of action was constitutionally limited to examining annual reports and interrogating the accredited representative from each mandated territory, it is also true that it had itself rejected the chance of a broader sanction when, on being consulted

* The PMC's report had two parts, the first of which consisted of three sections: special questions; observations on the administration of each mandated territory, and petitions. In the second part were the comments of the accredited representatives.

about whether it should be given the authority to conduct on-the-spot investigations to augment the reported information, it showed itself opposed to such authority (Hailey, 1957:243).

The PMC's work on alcohol was not unlike that performed on narcotic drugs by the Opium Advisory Committee of the League; the discussions in the meetings of the one are strongly reminiscent of the other. But the Mandates Commission operated on a much weaker legislative foundation; the St Germain Convention had none of the elaborate control measures of the opium treaties, nor was the PMC vested with special control powers. Moreover, the latter received scant support from the League Council and Assembly. As Duncan Hall put it (1948:247), the Mandates Commission

may be said to have left off in 1939 about where the Opium Advisory Committee of the League began in 1921. The latter, it must be remembered, was a specialized body with a single interest, and nothing like the multiplicity of functions of the territorial Mandates Commission. The universality of the dangerous-drugs machinery was impractical and unattainable in the case of liquor.

Nevertheless, he thought it possible that the control organ envisaged by the St Germain Convention could have done a better job than the Mandates Commission was able to do, and could have done it not only for the mandated territories, but for the whole of Africa.

United Nations

With the demise of the League of Nations and the birth of the UN, territories held under mandate were placed under an international trusteeship system established by the UN Charter (Article 75). By the end of 1949, Trusteeship Agreements were concluded for all the former African mandated territories; namely: Ruanda-Urundi, administered by Belgium; Cameroons and Togoland, administered by France; Somaliland, administered by Italy; and Cameroons, Tanganyika and Togoland, administered by Britain. Of the many differences between the terms of the Mandates and the Trusteeship Agreements one of the most striking was the shift of emphasis from the protection of Africans from various abuses in the mandated territories to the progressive development of trust territories towards self-government. Control of liquor was not mentioned in the text of the Trusteeship Agreements, and only in the terms for Western Samoa was there a provision for the prohibition of slavery, and the control of traffic in arms and of the distribution of opium and narcotic drugs, which had previously been included in all the B mandates. Another new feature of the Trusteeship Agreements was the provision for periodic visits by UN missions to the trust territories.

Although alcohol control ceased to be formally included in the terms of Trusteeship, the provisional questionnaire approved by the Trusteeship Council (the PMC's successor) at its first session in April 1947 had, among its 247 questions, two questions under the heading 'Alcohol and Spirits' (UN, 1947):

194. What types and quantities of alcoholic and other spirituous beverages were imported, manufactured, and consumed? What measures in the interests of the inhabitants have been taken to regulate the import, production and consumption of such beverages?
195. What are the import duties on: (a) spirituous liquors; (b) wines; (c) beer and other fermented beverages? Is there a maximum alcohol content for categories (b) and (c)? Are the duties higher or lower than those in the neighbouring countries?

These questions were included in a chapter entitled Social Advancement.* As the questionnaire was intended merely as a guide, the Administering Authorities (as the successors to the mandatory powers were called) felt no obligation to provide information on alcohol in their annual reports to the UN General Assembly, and in fact gave none of their own accord. What discussion there was on alcohol centred around the French Cameroons, about whose alcohol problems a UN Visiting Mission to West Africa in 1952 had expressed a concern.

Even though the obligation to control alcohol had not been written into the Trusteeship Agreements, the St Germain Convention had remained in force in the trust territories, since the UN Charter stipulated that nothing in the clauses dealing with the international trusteeship system 'shall be construed... to alter in any manner... the terms of existing international instruments to which Members of the United Nations may respectively be parties' (Article 80). (see La Gravière, 1957) Indeed the Trusteeship Council itself decided, as a result of a USSR intervention, to assume responsibility for alcohol. However, at its fourth session, it recommended, on the basis of a petition, that the Administering Authorities revise all legislation savouring of racial discrimination (Blanc, 1953:242).

The Office in Brussels apparently ceased to exist in 1958. The *Annuaire Administratif et Judiciaire de Belgique*, where an annual entry about the office had appeared ever since its creation by the St Germain Convention in 1919, contained no mention of it in 1959 (Peaslee, 1961:179). By 1962, the Trusteeship Agreements themselves were terminated for all the African trust territories as they attained independence.

* Cf. the preceding four questions in the questionnaire, which were about drugs: '(190) What legislation is in force governing the manufacture, sale, exportation, importation, labelling and distribution of drugs and pharmaceuticals? (191) Is the population of the Territory addicted to the use of narcotic drugs? (192) What types and quantities of opium, marijuana and other dangerous drugs were consumed during the year? What measures have been taken to regulate the traffic in and use of such drugs? (193) State which conventions relating to narcotics, if any, are applicable to the Territory.'

10 Abidjan

While the diplomats sat in Geneva and argued the finer points of the legal interpretation of the St Germain Convention, a number of pressure groups were working to awaken international organizations and national governments to the need for the revision of the treaty. An international conference against alcoholism held at Geneva in 1925 by the International Bureau against Alcoholism in Lausanne adopted a number of resolutions addressed specifically to the liquor question in the colonies and the work of the Permanent Mandates Commission (see Hercod, 1925). One of them urged the removal of the colour-bar in the St Germain treaty; another suggested that the League of Nations should set up a permanent international bureau for the study of alcoholism and of 'the social influence of the liquor traffic' in the African colonies (ibid.:135).

In 1930 an organization called the International Office for the Protection of Natives (*Bureau international pour la défense des indigènes*) whose members were mostly Swiss citizens, proposed, in a memorandum intended for the governments which had ratified the St Germain Convention, that the treaty be re-examined with a view to increasing its effectiveness. The memorandum pointed to several deficiencies in the Convention.

First, it mentioned the lack of precision in the definition of trade spirits and the failure of individual governments to establish, as they were supposed to do, lists of beverages which fell into this category. Secondly, the provisions regarding the prohibition zones were too vague and thirdly, the Brussels Office had no clear mandate what to do with the reports and information it received from the signatories.

The memorandum proceeded to outline new developments in Africa to which the ten-year old Convention must adjust. First, the economic development of the African countries, particularly those in West Africa, had rendered nugatory the restraining effect which the customs duty fixed by the Convention had previously exercised on the purchase and use of liquor by Africans. Secondly, the experiences of the Mandates Commission had revealed weaknesses in the treaty beyond those already mentioned; the smuggling across borders necessitated the fixing of uniform duties between adjacent territories. Thirdly, the Convention had altogether ignored the question of locally manufactured beverages. While some of these beverages were harmless and traditionally used to supplement the diet, others, claimed the memorandum, were more damaging and deserved attention. It urged that either the League of Nations, or the individual colonial governments, should do something about the problem of alcohol in Africa. Support for the views of the memorandum came from several national and international organizations, namely the International Bureau against Alcoholism, the Blue Cross and the *Comité universel de Unions chrétiennes de Jeunes Gens*, and from

individuals, among them Lord Lugard and Miss Dannevig of the Permanent Mandates Commission.

In a second memorandum, the International Office for the Protection of Natives elaborated its suggestions for reform, considering beer and local alcoholic drinks, wines, and distilled alcohol in turn. With regard to the latter two categories, the memorandum noted that in most of Africa the postwar years had seen a complete change in the alcohol situation: it was the '*boissons fermentées d'importation*' (such as wines and beers), as well as locally distilled alcohol, which now constituted the greatest danger to the Africans rather than the imported distilled alcohol of earlier years.

The memorandum then referred to debates in the French parliamentary assemblies and drew from them the guidelines for a revision of the Convention. Of these the most noteworthy was a proposal for a system of quotas.

All this relayed by Henri Géralin, of the *Union internationale contre l'Alcoolisme* to the first Inter-African Conference on the Alcohol Problem held at Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in July 1956.* Among the recommendations adopted by the conference were the following proposals regarding the St Germain Convention, which was thought to be both inadequate to the requirements of the alcohol situation in Africa, and on account of its racial discrimination, inconsistent with the French Constitution:

The Conference recommends

1. To the responsible Governments of the countries concerned that they shall undertake negotiations to bring about the revision of this Convention, negotiations aimed on the one hand at making uniform the legislation and regulations for the suppression of alcoholism, and on the other at prohibiting the clandestine importation and the fraudulent manufacture of alcohol and of its derivatives;
2. To the Governments signatory to the Convention that they shall submit to the United Nations Organization an international draft agreement on the regulation of alcoholic beverages;
3. That, in the text of future agreements to intervene, there shall be very precisely laid down:
 - the common agreement as to the list of beverages which are judged to be particularly noxious as well as the means of control regarding the manufacture, transport and sale of beverages suitable for consumption;
 - measure of a general order intended to suppress frauds of all kinds;
 - the organization and the nature of the duties of the international office which is to be re-instituted

Some of the recommendations of the Abidjan conference were specifically addressed to France; the following is a sample:

- considering that the most shocking aspect of the problem was the outflow of

* This account of the Abidjan conference is based on Henri Géralin's paper *La Question de la Révision de la Convention de Saint Germain-en-Laye* in *Actes et Travaux de la Première Conférence Inter africaine Antialcoolique*. (1956).

alcohol into the overseas territories of the French Union* that had continued to increase in the last ten years to offset the excess production and the decrease of export trade in foreign markets;

- considering that the solution of the alcohol problem was contingent on a drastic transformation of the French agricultural economy;
- considering that the improvement of public health, a pre-requisite of economic and social development, could not be achieved except by a diet which gave priority to healthy and useful products;

the conference recommended to the Government of the French Republic that it should undertake a reorganization of the production, marketing, sale, consumption and export of alcoholic drinks in France and her overseas territories, and, by means of the *Loi Cadre*,** enable the various territories to fix their own quotas for imported wines and alcohol in accordance with the opinions of the local Assemblies and Public Health Departments.

Recommendations addressed to public authorities in general included the following:

1. maintain and increase taxes on alcoholic drinks while taking the tax off non-alcoholic drinks;
2. undertake a public investigation before granting licences to wine shops so as to subject these shops to the supervision of all organs charged with anti-alcohol responsibilities;
3. take steps to revoke the driving licences of those shown by appropriate blood alcohol tests to be driving under the influence of alcohol.

Further measures proposed by the conference to African territories at large were:

That a large-scale enquiry be undertaken for the purpose of discovering the origins and manifestations of alcoholism in all its aspects, in the whole of the territories situated to the south of the Sahara;

That close collaboration shall be ensured between the Chiefs of Staff concerned and their medico-social services, with a view to ensuring the security and health of the workers and their families;

That non-alcoholic beverages (cooled drinking water, fruit juices etc.) shall be made available to the workers, and that measures shall be taken to track down drinkers and give them therapeutic and rehabilitative treatment;

That the practice of providing alcoholic beverages in canteens for factory workers, office workers, students etc. and at public functions shall be discontinued and that all propaganda in their favour shall be prohibited, and that non-alcoholic beverages shall be compulsorily made available to these assemblies of people;

* In the post-World War II period the French colonial empire was transformed into the French Union, in which the 'overseas territories' (*territoires d'outre-mer*) were to be 'partners' with France.

** An 'outline law' which gave the French government power to grant to each African territory a considerable measure of self-government and under which territorial assemblies and councils of ministers began to assume many of the powers previously exercised by the French.

That the texts relating to the use of alcohol in public offices shall be rigorously applied;

That the judiciary authorities shall not be too lenient in their interpretation of the circumstances in which, under the influence of alcohol, misdemeanours or crimes are committed.

Outcome of the Abidjan Conference

A few months after the Abidjan conference, a motion was put before the Assembly of the French Union asking the government to take the necessary steps to implement the recommendations of the Inter-African Anti-alcohol conference.

One of the recommendations had been the creation of a permanent organization for the purpose of promoting the setting up of committees in all the territories to study and provide information on alcoholism; the organization would moreover co-ordinate the activities of these committees.

However, the existence of the *Loi Cadre* militated against the establishment of a permanent public organization for alcohol control. Because of the *Loi Cadre*, it was necessary to specify the respective duties of the metropolitan and local organizations dealing with alcoholism and to define the relationship between the permanent secretariat, if created, and the local authorities. An additional problem was that of liaison between alcohol organizations located outside the French Union and those of countries not represented at the Abidjan conference.

The complications were such that the proposal was abandoned. Thus when in July 1957 the Assembly of the French Union came to consider the motion to take steps to put into effect the recommendations of the Abidjan conference, it concluded that while the territorial assemblies were competent to deal with alcoholism, such matters as the revision of the St Germain Convention and the study of the problem in the 'overseas territories' in general were the province of the French government. The proceedings of the Abidjan conference ended on this pessimistic note: that official intervention was therefore 'subordinated to a procedure which forbids the creation of the organization which was hoped for by the Inter-African Anti-alcohol Conference at Abidjan' (*Actes et Travaux*, Abidjan conference, 1956:488).

Part Three
Three Arenas of Control

11 The Gold Coast

Here I propose to examine in greater detail the workings of the St Germain Convention in one of the African Dependencies — the Gold Coast (now Ghana) — over which its terms were applied, but before doing so it is necessary to set out some relevant facts about the country.

The term 'Gold Coast' has come to include more than the strip of coastline to which it was originally applied, and during the period under review, it encompassed both Ashanti directly to the north and the Northern Territories in the hinterland. After the First World War a fourth unit, the mandated area of British Togoland, was placed under the administrative control of the governor of the Gold Coast. The population of each of the four units was, according to a 1931 census, as follows:

Gold Coast Colony (coast area)	1 571 362
Ashanti	578 078
Northern Territories	717 275
Togoland	293 671
	<u>3 160 386</u>

As the target of the St Germain controls was the quantity of liquor imported into Africa, it is in the importation figures that one must look for its effects.* In Table 5 the volume of spirits imported into the Gold Coast during the years from 1890 to 1929 is given. The figures show that between 1919 and 1920 there was a striking switch from rum to gin as the most heavily imported beverage type. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

As indices of the level of consumption the following figures, representing average imports (in litres) during the five-year periods 1910–1914 and 1925–1929 respectively, probably provide a more accurate picture:

	Gin	Rum	Other spirits	Total
1910–1914	2 515 115	4 974 492	220 749	7 710 356
1925–1929	3 954 647	124 460	451 567	4 530 674

The quite appreciable change between the two periods compared above occurred partly as a result of the application of the Spirituous Liquors Ordinance, 1920 (subsequently renamed Liquor Traffic Ordinance) which was passed in the Gold

* Much of the material for the discussion which follows is derived from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Consumption of Spirits in the Gold Coast (1930).

Table 5

Quantities of potable spirits in litres imported into the Gold Coast during the years 1890, 1900, and 1909 to 1929.

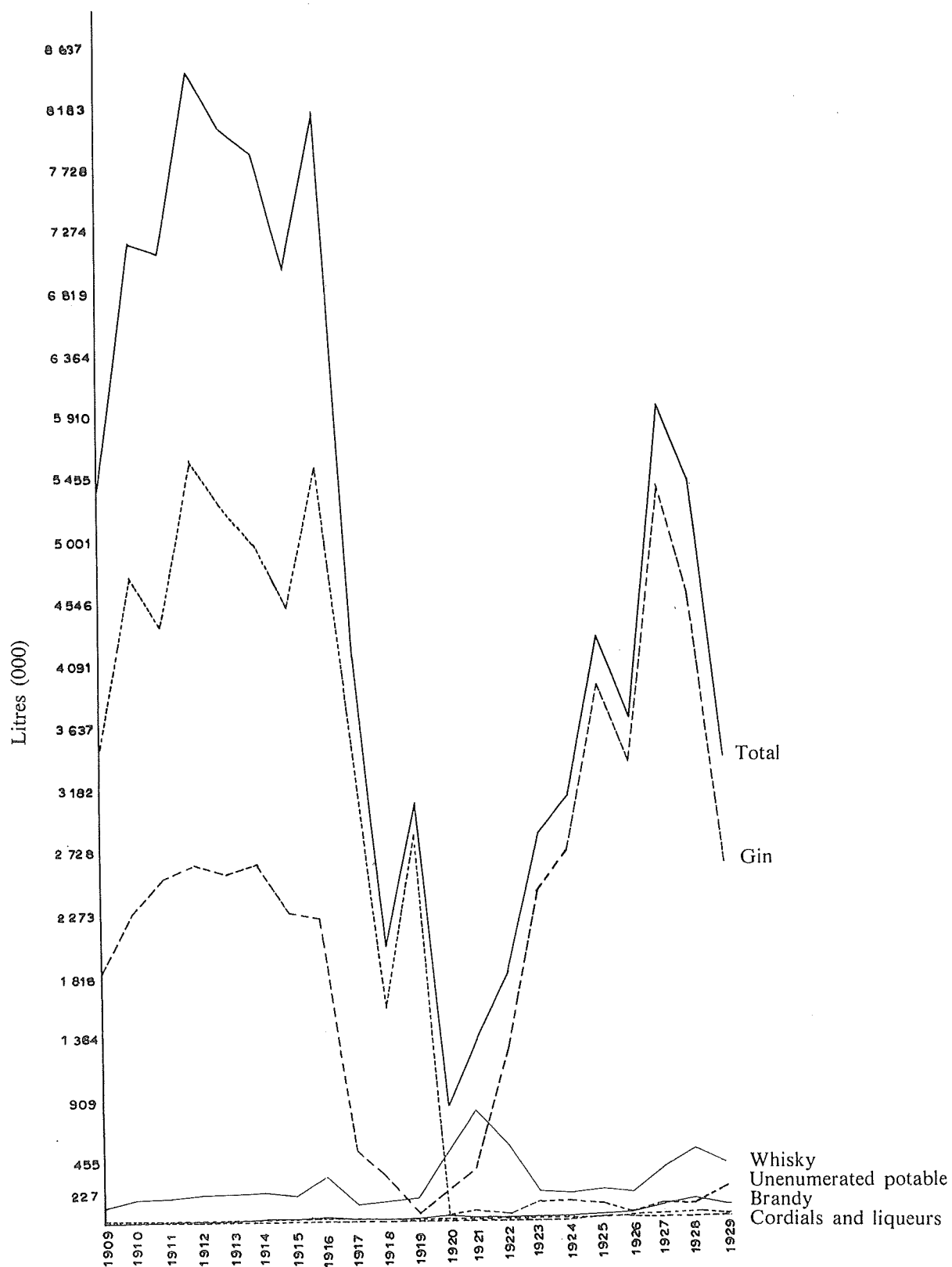
Year	Brandy	Gin	Rum	Whisky	Cordials and Liqueurs	Unenumer- ated Potable	Total
1890	2 337	766 788	3 651 738	22 944	2 691	882	4 447 380
1900	4 501	1 395 763	3 284 153	65 353	4 101	1 878	4 755 749
1909	6 587	1 845 985	3 372 809	122 292	5 996	668	5 354 337
1910	11 447	2 268 177	4 727 676	175 367	7 215	186	7 190 068
1911	13 247	2 528 167	4 356 505	182 608	10 156	86	7 090 769
1912	9 224	2 630 670	5 566 463	207 348	9 992	46	8 423 743
1913	11 138	2 540 614	5 243 611	208 007	11 620	418	8 015 407
1914	11 433	2 607 958	4 978 215	217 922	14 475	987	7 830 990
1915	11 929	2 282 869	4 496 371	179 458	6 528	168	6 977 323
1916	33 168	2 226 026	5 517 735	330 867	10 274	314	8 118 384
1917	11 174	547 966	3 511 594	106 217	2 509	5	4 179 465
1918	12 224	324 771	1 523 610	131 852	3 064	9	1 995 530
1919	12 952	44 469	2 825 053	171 466	3 073	—	3 057 013
1920	49 511	231 160	45 746	475 207	8 537	6 287	816 448
1921	25 008	381 205	67 194	807 001	5 223	2 337	1 287 968
1922	19 343	1 177 023	55 770	547 702	4 041	7 169	1 811 048
1923	19 071	2 399 779	143 904	209 362	5 305	7 419	2 784 840
1924	24 112	2 712 048	153 296	189 950	4 351	9 810	3 093 567
1925	32 977	3 905 741	111 500	209 984	5 373	23 517	4 289 092
1926	42 710	3 345 447	46 356	196 728	5 655	25 553	3 662 449
1927	103 749	5 372 977	106 663	341 205	7 692	33 240	5 965 526
1928	146 509	4 559 002	121 201	512 957	6 433	41 150	5 387 252
1929	94 643	2 590 065	236 592	395 734	4 573	27 467	3 349 074

Source: Report of the Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Consumption of Spirits in the Gold Coast, 1930.

Coast to give effect to the provisions of the St Germain Convention. The critical provision of the Ordinance was the definition of rum as 'a spirit (a) distilled direct from sugar cane products in sugar cane growing countries, and (b) stored in wood for a period of three years.' The effect of insisting that all rum imported into the Gold Coast conform to this definition — which excluded improperly matured rum — was a marked decline in this hitherto appreciable trade.

Two other aspects of the importation statistics bear noting. One was the effect of the suspension of shipping during the War on the level of importation reflected in the decreases in 1917 and 1918 and the slight increase in 1919 when shipping was resumed. The second is the relative slowness of the 1919 increase, due to the fact that in anticipation of the St Germain Convention which was under consideration at the time, the British Government prohibited in March of that year the entry of all trade spirits into British West African colonies. Between that month and the coming into force of the Convention in February 1920, a licence from the customs authorities was necessary before any spirits could be admitted into the Gold Coast; hence liquor imports reached their lowest water-mark in 1920. That the changes were in some way

Figure 2
Quantities of potable spirits imported into the Gold Coast during the years 1909 to 1929



wrapped up in overall variations in European trade is suggested by the fact that the beginning of the 1920s was a distinct period for the latter as well, for it was an occasion on which a definite drop in the level of Europe's overseas trade occurred (see Svennilson, 1954).

What happened subsequently has already been recounted in Part Two. The Dutch distillers managed, through pressure on the British Government and through undertakings to improve the quality of their geneva, to remove the bar against its entry into the Gold Coast. The matter was formalized in 1924, when a new definition was adopted which accommodated the readmission of Dutch geneva.* These factors are reflected in the statistics of importation which show a doubling of the volume of gin admitted between 1922 and 1923, and a progressive increase to about five million litres in 1927 and 1928. A local paper (the *Gold Coast Independent*) commented on 3 July 1926 as follows: 'after some juggling with definition and description of what should be known as trade gin, the traffic has regained its old hold... [This] is a disgraceful state of affairs... Africa will yet be free and dry.' (Buell, 1926:945).

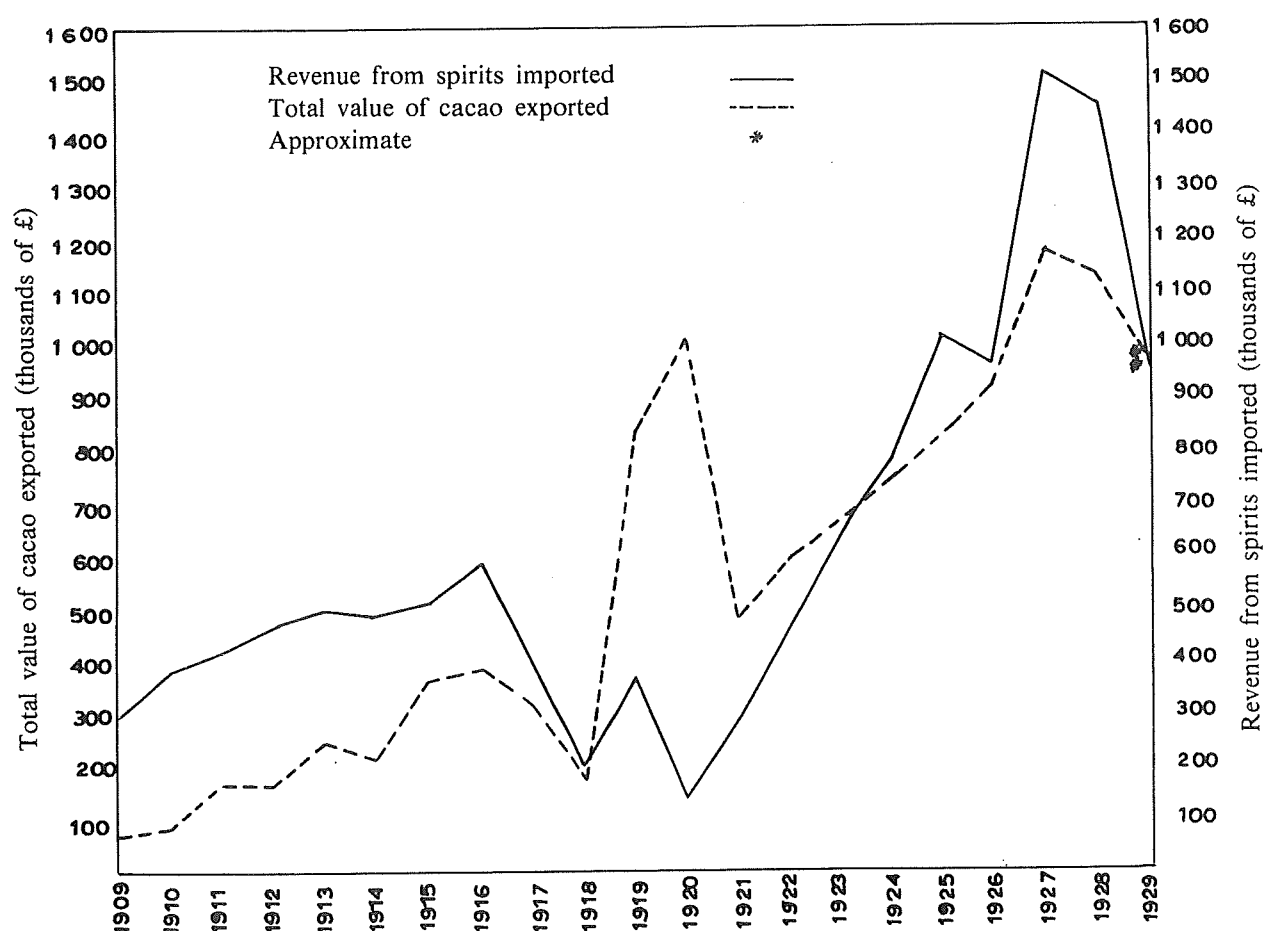
The control measures embodied in the St Germain Convention were, in broad terms, of two kinds: controls on physical accessibility (through the exclusion of certain varieties of liquor) on the one hand, and curbs on economic accessibility (through the requirement to impose minimum taxes) on the other. From the foregoing pages it will be clear that the effect of the exclusion policy was undermined by the manipulation of the definition of prohibited spirits to accommodate the readmission of Dutch geneva into the Gold Coast. The fiscal measures did not work either: a continuous rise in the rate of duty levied on various types of alcohol between the years 1909 and 1929 did not significantly affect the amount of alcohol imported. Neither did the rates of duty payable on licences to sell spirits bear any relation to the volume of spirits imported. It is clear, from a consideration of the economic conditions of the Gold Coast during the period in question, that the tax increases were lagging behind the rising purchasing power of the consumers. Fluctuations in the value of cocoa exports — an industry which by 1925 was producing nearly 44 per cent of the total world cocoa exports (Bourret, 1949:125) — were closely tied, as Figure 3 shows, to the amount of revenue derived from liquor imports. The period around 1920 was anomalous for two reasons — there was a record boom in cacao price and imports of spirits were deliberately restricted — but otherwise the curve showing the value of the annual cocoa crop bore a remarkably close relation to that showing the amount of revenue collected on spirits.

All of the above controls may be categorized as 'international', so much have they to do with external economic relationships, and so directly did they emanate from the obligation to give effect to the provisions of an international treaty. Measures of a more domestic character were also taken, and included a licensing law for the regulation of sales. With the exception of clauses inserted into the amending Ordinance of 1927 providing for the publication of applications for the issue of new licences and for

* The definition reads as follows: 'Geneva, i.e., a spirit (a) produced by distillation at least three times in a pot-still from a mixed mash of barley, rye, and maize saccharified by the diastase of malt and (b) then rectified by redistillation in a pot-still after the addition of juniper berries and other vegetable flavouring materials.'

Figure 3

Graph showing revenue from spirits imported and total value of cacao exported from the Gold Coast 1909–1929



the lodging of objections to such applications, the licensing legislation remained substantially unchanged until 1929. In that year, amendments were made which were of a more drastic nature: the fees payable for retail licence to sell spirits were very much increased; the hours of sale were reduced from fifteen hours a day to eight hours a day (10 00 to 18 00 hours); and retail credit sale of spirits was made illegal. The effect of the new legislation was to reduce the number of spirit licences taken out in the Gold Coast (including Ashanti and the Southern Section of British Togoland) by over 52 per cent (from 3 245 to 1 547) within six months of its introduction. Combined with the low price fetched by cocoa in the two preceding years, the amendments to the Liquor Licences (Spirits) Ordinance had the effect of bringing about a fall in the overall importation of spirits in 1929.

To maintain a dry zone in the north, the Northern Territories Spirituous Liquors Ordinance of 1909 made it illegal for any African to be in possession of any spirituous liquor or wine. Any non-African wishing to import liquors or wines into the Northern Territories for sale to Africans had to have obtained a permit from the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories (League of Nations, 1930:32). Prohibition was apparently fairly effective in the zone, because spirits were beyond the economic

reach of the Africans in this relatively poor region and a high proportion of the population were Mohammedans. There was in fact so little demand that no enforcement service was necessary to prevent spirits from being transported into the zone from Ashanti.

The average consumption of spirits per head of the population in the Colony, Ashanti and the Southern Section of British Togoland (exclusive of the Northern Territories and the northern section of British Togoland) dropped by about 50 per cent in the twenty years between 1909 and 1929:

Year	Average consumption per head*	
	Litres	Litres of pure alcohol
1909	4.59	not available
1913	6.50	3.09
1928	2.91	1.18
1929**	1.77	0.73

* Population of Colony and Ashanti estimated at 1 161 780 in 1909.

** Figures for 1929 subject to slight revision.

To indicate the extent of alcohol health damage the only available source of data is the number of cases of alcoholism treated in the government hospitals in the Gold Coast:

Year	Number of cases	Deaths
1920	44	1
1921	28	3
1922-23	14	1
1923-24	34	1
1924-25	28	1
1925-26	55	1
1926-27	37	—
1927-28	19	—
1928-29	13	1

Of the four cases of death attributable to alcoholism reported in Accra since 1921, two were Europeans. The reports were based on post mortem examinations, of which an average number of sixty to seventy cases were carried out each year.

The apparent moderation of drinking suggested by the official statistics belied the anxiety that was being felt in some quarters about the abuse of alcohol. Local customary law required that mourners at funerals were supplied with geneva; the grandeur of the funeral was judged in direct proportion to the amount of money spent on it, so that the Head and Paramount Chiefs who sought to temper excessive drinking at funerals attempted to do so by passing bye-laws (based on native jurisdiction) which prescribed the amount of money which various classes of people would be allowed to spend at funerals. It appears that these bye-laws were not enforced.

For some time since the War there had been a great deal of agitation for the prohibition of the sale of spirits in West Africa, and in the Gold Coast in particular.

The agitation reached a peak in the early months of 1929 and, partly as a result, the Gold Coast Government appointed a Commission of Enquiry into the consumption of spirits in the territory.

The Commission of Enquiry, 1930*

The Commission's terms of reference were to inquire

- (a) whether any, and if so, what further action should be taken to control the consumption of spirits in the Gold Coast, Ashanti and the Southern Section of British Togoland; and
- (b) in the event of action being advisable which would be likely to result in an appreciable loss of revenue, what means should be adopted to make good such loss.

Subsequently, the Commission was further requested to consider the question of the control of the sale of palm wine.

The Commission considered both oral and written evidence. Of the 125 witnesses examined, 64 were Africans, 59 Europeans, and two were Syrians. Although a policy of prohibition was advocated by a number of witnesses, the Commission's opinion was that the evidence before it did not justify such a move. In fact, the Commission interpreted the evidence as indicating that

- (a) the imports of spirits had taken a definitely downward trend;
- (b) the legislation regulating the sale of spirits was on the right lines;
- (c) the Africans of the Gold Coast were not drunkards;
- (d) the imported spirits were not in themselves harmful;
- (e) the number of Africans in favour of prohibition was insignificant;
- (f) the *per capita* consumption of alcohol was moderate;
- (g) those demanding prohibition did not believe it possible for this to be enforced without the neighbouring colonies and French Togoland falling into line, or else they had little grasp of the measures which would be necessitated by such a law.

On the other hand the Commission conceded that there was considerable demand for the exclusion of geneva and schnapps from the Gold Coast. Thus the principal recommendation of the Commission was for the gradual exclusion of geneva by means of a progressive reduction in importation over a ten-year period. Importation would be authorised by permits issued by the customs authorities to firms which were already importing geneva in 1929: the amount allowed each firm in the first year of reduction would be 10 per cent less than it had imported in 1929, in the second year 20 per cent less than in 1929, and so on. A heavy penalty would be imposed on persons making importations in excess of their quotas. The ten-year reduction scheme is

* The commission had four members: The Honourable Harry Scott Newlands, Secretary for Native Affairs (Chairman); Captain Angus Durham MacKenzie, Deputy Comptroller of Customs; the Honourable Frank Edward Talland, O. B. E. and Frederick Victor Nanka Bruce, M.B. CH.B.

reminiscent of the agreement reached between China and Britain for a diminution from 1907 of the imports of Indian opium into China by one-tenth annually.

As an additional brake on consumption, the Commission recommended an increase in the duty on all spirits. The Commission believed that the rate of duty applied at the time (27s. 6d. per gallon), coupled with the decreased purchasing power of the people, had proved to be an important factor in effecting a reduction in consumption. A further recommendation was for the amendment of the Liquor Traffic Ordinance to ensure that only the best class of spirits would be admitted into the Gold Coast.

A more drastic recommendation was for the sale of palm wine to be under licence, with the object of making the inspection of the purity of wine easier and to control drunkenness.

In a series of detailed recommendations, the Commission made further suggestions concerning the control of outlets, sale, the dilution of spirits, licensed premises, the transportation of spirits for illegal distribution, the practice of paying fees and fines in spirits and the checking of drinking at funerals. The Commission regarded the last of these measures as being one which fell peculiarly within the sphere of the native authorities who should, in the Commission's opinion, 'rely rather on precept and example in this matter and not merely on legal provisions which as experience has shown are difficult to enforce and therefore ineffective' (*ibid.*:28). Lastly, since the probable effect of these recommendations, if adopted, would be an increase in smuggling, the Commission thought an expansion in preventive measures might be warranted, with the proviso, however, that the effect on smuggling should first be ascertained before deciding on additional measures for countering it.

As a result of the Commission's recommendations, the import duties on spirits were increased and the scheme of an annual reduction in the permitted gallonage of gin was introduced, with the expectation that in ten years from 1930 the importation of gin into the Gold Coast would have ceased completely. The legislation which gave effect to these controls was the Gin and Geveva (Restriction of Importation) Ordinance, 1930. Subsequently, Legislation No. 17 of 1930 — the Liquor Traffic Amendment Ordinance, 1930 — also prohibited the entry of those brands of rum, brandy and whisky the price of which was below a certain figure. In addition, the Liquor Licences (Spirits) Amendment Ordinance, 1930 (No. 18 of 1930) was passed imposing further restrictions on licensing, hours of sale and transportation of spirits (Gold Coast Annual General Report, 1930–1931:53).

An effect of this tightening of controls was the appearance on a fairly widespread scale of illicit stills where spirits were manufactured from palm wine, corn and cassava: between September 1930 and February 1932, sixty-two such stills were discovered in the Gold Coast (Cardinall, 1932:241).

Owing to a world-wide depression, the amount of gin imported into the Gold Coast from 1931 to 1936 stayed at a level considerably below that permitted by law, and only in 1937 did the importation begin to approach the permitted quantity. However, contrary to the intention of the Gin and Geneva Ordinance of 1930, gin importation did not peter out by the end of the decade. The amount allowed for 1940 was fixed by the Governor of the Gold Coast at 681 900 litres: in reply to a question put in the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for the Colonies stated that he had

decided to modify the former policy to avoid, among other reasons, a further growth of illicit distillation that would ensue if gin was to be completely prohibited (*Actes et Travaux*, Abidjan Conference, 1956:384).

12 Nigeria

What information there is on the liquor trade in colonial Nigeria indicates that it was a crucial factor in its economy. Not only was alcohol important for the reasons already discussed, but even within the sphere of purely domestic transaction, it had a place of consequence. Nigeria had no accepted currency at the turn of the century, and gin was used in many areas not merely for drinking but as a substitute for currency, so that large quantities were stored as accumulated wealth (MacDonald, 1916:90–92).

Royal Niger Company

Nigeria, it will be remembered, was created under Lord Lugard by the merger of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914. Formerly, the northern territories had been administered by the Royal Niger Company of George Goldie, Britain's imperial agent on the Niger. The main exports of this company were firearms and alcoholic liquors, chiefly gin and rum, manufactured not in Britain, but in Rotterdam and Hamburg, and re-shipped from Liverpool (Flint, 1960:33).

Goldie succeeded in maintaining a complete monopoly of the imports of firearms and alcohol into the Niger, a monopoly which effectively captured the whole of the Niger trade, both import and export, since these goods were essential articles of barter. His demand for such a monopoly from the British Government was shrewdly coupled with a fierce denouncement of the liquor trade in his speeches and writings, the sentiments expressed in which were such as to win him the support of several missionary and temperance groups which were protesting against the trade. The fact that Britain had signed international agreements with other European powers (for example the Berlin Act) containing guarantees against monopoly deterred Goldie not at all; through the use of tariff regulations, the Company set out to exclude all 'foreign traders', meaning not merely other Europeans but all persons not born in the Company's territories. To this end Goldie also employed a system of licences: any 'foreigner' wishing to trade in the Company's territory had to purchase a retail trade licence at a cost of £100; if in addition he wished to trade in spirits, he had to take out an extra spirits licence costing a further £100.

Goldie's high-handed methods drew forth complaints from German merchants as well as the West African traders in Liverpool. The high duties on spirits were alleged to discriminate against the Germans whose main exports to West Africa were gin and rum. Liverpool, as Mary Kingsley put it, 'hates the Royal Niger Company like the devil' (Perham, 1956:649). Towards the close of the 1890s, the Company's opponents

accused it of having shipped out enormous quantities of spirits in 1897 in order to avoid any duties which might be imposed by the new administration that was to succeed the Company (the British government revoked the Company's charter and took over control in 1900). It was furthermore pointed out that the Company had shipped 900 000 bottles of gin in the first three months of 1898 by the regular steamers alone. Public opinion was aroused; questions were asked in Parliament; the Government was asked to give statistics, and Goldie betrayed himself by providing two sets of figures which did not tally (Flint, 1960:302–3):

	version of Oct 1898		version of Feb 1899	
	gallons	(litres)	gallons	(litres)
1892	218 646	(993 965)	169 116	(768 801)
1893	318 834	(1 449 419)	266 303	(1 210 613)
1894	nil		21 250	(96 602)
1895	142 250	(646 668)	162 275	(737 702)
1896	159 830	(726 587)	126 275	(574 046)
1897	138 037	(627 516)	162 892	(740 507)
1898	not given		178 180	(810 006)

The records of the Hamburg distillers showed that the Niger Company traded extensively in spirits, on which duty was paid by the simple expedient of transferring a figure from one side of the balance sheet to another (Flint 1960:118).

Southern Nigeria

Official discouragement of the trade in spirits in Britain was based in part on a reaction against German trade rivalry and in part on the fear that an increase in liquor imports would mean a decreased demand for British goods, especially cotton goods. The Lagos administration (which later became a part of Southern Nigeria) was urged to reduce consumption by the imposition of heavy duties on these spirits, but it demurred. In a dispatch to Chamberlain in 1896, McCallum, the Governor of Lagos, said:

The vexed question, the harm done to the natives of the interior, by the spirit trade, still remains under discussion...I have during a service of over nine years in Lagos travelled a great deal along the Lagoon, and in the interior countries, and I am bound to say that drunken people are but rarely met with and that the representations on the subject are much exaggerated... No one is more anxious than myself to prevent the introduction into the Hinterland of ardent spirits in undue quantities, and as the surest means of checking the trade I should like to see the duty on them raised, if an international agreement on the point can be arrived at, but it would be useless for Lagos to follow this course alone as the only result would be a great influx of spirits from Dahomey which would cause loss of revenue to the colony [Lagos] and do no good to the people whom it is desired to benefit (cited in Ekundare, 1973:92).

The upshot of anti-liquor agitation was the appointment, in April 1909, of a Committee of Inquiry into the Liquor Trade by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.* The terms of reference were comprehensive: the character of the spirits imported; their sources, distribution and sale; drinking habits of the people; local beverages; the physical, moral and social effects of the trade on the Africans.

The interests of the abstinent African (and those of the missionaries) were ill served by the conclusions of the Committee: 'There is absolutely no evidence of race deterioration due to drink... There is hardly any alcoholic disease amongst the native population, and with the exception of one or two isolated cases we found no connexion between drink and crime. On the occasions of feasts and festivals the natives often drink more than is good for them, both spirits and native liquors... [but] the people generally are a sober people. There appears, however, to be a tendency among some of the natives who have received a certain amount of European education to acquire drinking habits, but the prohibition of the import of trade spirits would not do much to diminish this evil. As education progresses this tendency will doubtless be carefully watched. The expert evidence taken in England shows that there is nothing to complain of as regards the quality of the spirits imported into Nigeria' (Report of the Committee, 1909:18). With regard to the last conclusion, what the analyses showed was that the rum and gin imported into Nigeria were of about the same quality as the cheaper classes of those spirits sold in England. Some of the testimonies certainly seemed to lend cogent support to the thesis that culture contact was a critical factor in the adoption of excessive drinking habits by Nigerians. A number of Provincial Commissioners and Commissioners of Police gave evidence which suggested that heavy drinking was commoner among the 'half Europeanised' Nigerian: the 'clerks, carpenters, interpreters, etc., also soldiers and police' who had been transferred from 'the more civilised parts'. The desire of Africans in contact with Europeans to assume the latter's life style was remarked upon by a number of witnesses: 'They saw them [the Europeans] drinking at meals, and followed their example' (MacDonald, 1916:82).

Importation of spirits into Southern Nigeria in the late 1890s had been of the order of 11.8 million litres. Until the War, the quantity of importation in the 1900s remained at a more or less comparable level:

Year	Litres
1904	14 503 281
1906	12 265 104
1908	12 581 641

Official perception of liquor importation, as the following address by the Governor-General of Nigeria to the Nigerian Legislative Council in 1917 shows, continued to be coloured by the selfish interests of the imperial power, but they became widened to embrace her Allies in the War:

* The members of the Committee were: M. D. Chalmers (chairman); Captain C. H. Elgee (Resident at Ibadan); A. A. Cowan and T. Welsh representing firms engaged in trade with Southern Nigeria, and D. C. Cameron of the Southern Nigeria Secretariat. The Committee examined 171 witnesses orally; of these 83 were Africans and 88 were Europeans.

Are our imports, for the most part, of a nature to promote the commerce and industry of Great Britain and her Allies? Is there any direction in which we can better assist in developing the resources of the Empire?... I invite this Council to record its judgement that it would be to the great benefit of the industries of the Empire, if this import [spirits] were replaced by others which emanate from our own country [Britain] or those of our Allies... I will go further to add —though I am no extremist in this matter — that it would also be to the benefit of Nigeria if these foreign imports of spirits were replaced by articles of more value to the people of this country — articles more calculated to raise their standard of life and comfort, and to increase the output of the industries from which they derive their wealth. (cited in Ekundare, 1973:214).

When the introduction of legislation to prohibit the importation of trade spirits into Nigeria was contemplated, some of the opinions voiced in the House of Commons were sceptical: export production, particularly of palm kernels, would not increase, it was thought, 'without dangling bottles of gin before the noses of the natives' (ibid.:214).

Post-Amalgamation Nigeria

When Lugard took over the administration of Nigeria, he formulated the government policy in regard to the control of alcohol as follows (Nigeria Governor General Report, 1920:55):

- (a) The extinction of the traffic in spirits of whatever origin as an article of trade with Africans, and the restriction of importation of spirits by the levying of heavy duties on cheap trade spirits up to a point at which the cost plus duty would equal the cost plus duty of spirits usually imported for European consumption.
- (b) The control of the sale of imported liquor by a licensing system in areas where its application was feasible.
- (c) Enforcement of prohibition in the 'prohibition zones' and the extension of such areas where possible.
- (d) The substitution of light beer for imported spirits.
- (e) The control of the sale of local fermented liquor in areas where direct white supervision was possible and in districts under Moslem law where the cooperation of the Native Administration was forthcoming. Prohibition of tapping oil palms in a way injurious to the tree.
- (f) Prohibition of local distillation except by special permit.

Two of these principles, (a) and (c), clearly reflected those embodied in the international treaties. Enlisting the help of the native administration referred to in principle (e) in enforcing control was in keeping with Lugard's philosophy of Indirect Rule. The legislation which provided the framework for control was the Liquor Ordinance of 1917, which attempted for the first time the regulation of the sale of imported spirits throughout the whole of Nigeria. Under it Nigeria was divided into 'prohibited areas',

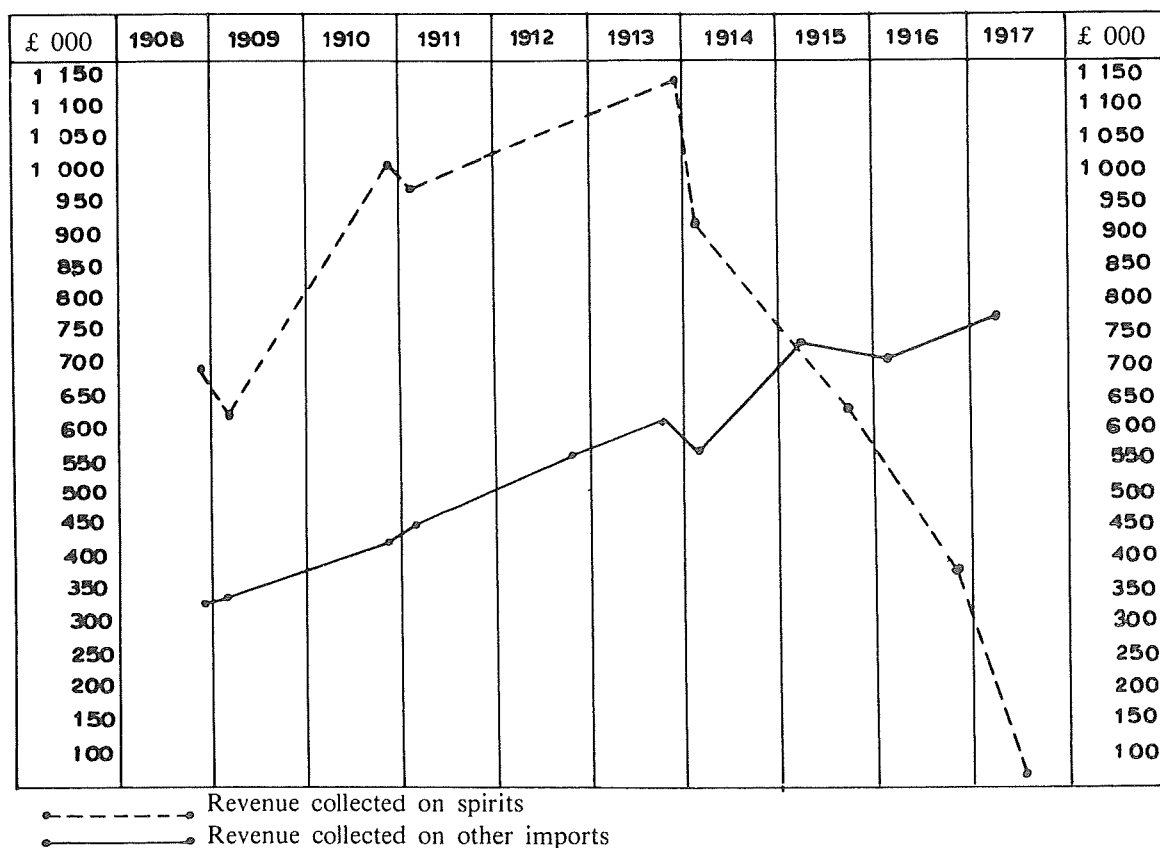
areas in which liquor might be sold only under licence, and in which the sale of spirits to — and the possessing of spirits by — natives was prohibited; 'licensed areas', where imported liquor could only be sold under licence, and 'restricted areas' where the sale of liquor by Africans was subjected to the possession of a licence and to rules made by the Governor or by a Native Authority, and where no liquor might be sold to Africans by a non-native or non-Nigerian except under licence. However, writing in 1924, Wyndham noted that such restrictions were evident only in the Abeokeuta and Ijebu Ode provinces (Wyndham, 1930).

Local liquor was dealt with in a separate ordinance, the Native Liquor Ordinance, 1917, which empowered the Governor to specify the areas in which liquor could only be sold in licensed premises under strict control. Lugard was sufficiently realistic, however, to put little store by its enforcement (Nigeria Governor General Report, 1920:58).

In 1917 revenue from trade spirits ceased to appear in the budget of Nigeria. Progressive increases in the rate of duty — imposed with the declared intention of crushing the trade and not for revenue — had raised the cost of gin from 9s. 6d. in 1913 to about 16s. in 1918. The combined effect of the heavy duty and the War may be discerned in the abrupt dwindling of importation between 1913 and 1917 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Chart showing the amount of customs duties derived from spirits and other imports for the years 1908 to 1917



Source: Nigeria Governor General Report, 1920

Nigeria managed to come through the war years despite the absence of the revenue from the liquor trade, and Lugard justifiably claimed two conclusions: that the revenue from spirits was not indispensable to the economy, and that the production of, and trade in other commodities could be conducted successfully without it. During the War, export duties on products such as cocoa and palm oil had been introduced to raise revenue. The loss in revenue suffered during the War had also forced the British administration to decide on the introduction of an income tax system (Ekundare, 1973:109). As Table 6 shows, the prominent place once occupied by spirits in Nigerian alcohol imports was very much shrunken in the inter-war period. The depression of the 1930s had clearly affected the trade. The figure for 1945 may be a reflection of the same wartime factors that so drastically reduced imports between 1914 and 1917.

Nigeria after World War II

The information on Nigeria after the Second World War is fragmentary and all that I will attempt here is a piecing together of the data scattered through various sources. First, some noticeable trends in importation. As Table 7 indicates, beer imports have

Table 6
Imports of spirits into Nigeria, 1920–1945

Year	Volume (in thousands of litres)	Value (in thousands of £)
1920	577	341
1925	959	217
1930	846	190
1933	232	75
1938	482	80
1945	291	95

Source: Ekundare, 1973:213

Table 7
Imports of beer into Nigeria, 1946–1960

	Quantity (in thousands of litres)	Value (in thousands of £)
1946	2 096	165
1950	11 729	905
1951	19 498	1 768
1952	16 647	1 747
1953	23 139	2 390
1954	21 671	2 265
1955	25 799	2 729
1956	29 822	3 201
1957	28 003	3 158
1958	28 503	3 319
1959	31 058	3 602
1960	32 695	3 898

Source: Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1963, cited in Ekundare, 1973.

risen progressively, a development which would have pleased Lugard, had he survived to witness it, although to infer that his alcohol policy had anything to do with it would be reckless. In fact, the demand for beer was so high that it was thought more economical to adopt an 'import substituting' strategy and produce it in the country. Thus in 1949 the Nigerian Brewery Company was set up and its product Star Beer, which was manufactured from imported hops and malt, was awarded first prize in the Brewers Exhibition at Olympia, London in 1954. In 1957, a branch of the company was opened at Aba (Ekundare, 1973:307). Table 8 illustrates the growth of Nigerian beer production. The figures for beer imports during the corresponding years are also given and it is interesting to note that despite the consistent increase in the output of domestic beer imports of ale, beer, stout and porter continued to grow and to exceed the amounts produced locally. This is in contrast to the effect in Nigeria of import substitution in relation to cigarettes. As domestic production of cigarettes rose between 1946 and 1960, a corresponding fall occurred in cigarettes imported from abroad.

Table 8
Volumes of domestically produced and imported beer (in thousands of litres) in Nigeria, 1955–1960

Year	Output of Star Beer	Imports
1955	8 010	25 799
1956	10 151	29 822
1957	10 942	28 003
1958	13 911	28 508
1959	20 252	31 058
1960	20 271	32 695

Source: Edundare, 1973:307.

The industrial production of beer and other drinks was probably helped by the fact that there were flourishing traditional brewing industries in many parts of Nigeria. Between 1950 and 1960, the production of beer and soft drinks in Nigeria increased by over 900 per cent, and contributed significantly to the rapid increase in the gross product of manufacturing, as Table 9 illustrates:

Table 9
Percentage share of beer and soft drinks in Nigeria's total manufacturing production, 1950–1960

	1950	1954	1957	1960	% increase 1950–1960
Production of beer and soft drinks in thousands of £*	257.9	741.1	1 683.7	2 800.0	911
Percentage of total manufacturing production	8 %	11 %	15 %	17 %	

* At constant 1957 prices

Source: Ekundare, 1973:311

The question of alcohol in Nigeria has recently received attention from the World Health Organization in response to whose Inquiry on Problems of Alcohol and Drug Dependence a preliminary report has been prepared (WHO, 1972). In Lambo's 1957 'Survey of detribalized people in Yoruba Country', it was noted that the morbidity rate, as measured by crime, incidence of venereal diseases, use of marihuana, alcoholism, psychoneurotic and psychosomatic symptoms, was highest among those individuals who were perpetually out of work, who did not have their families with them and who could be termed 'migrant workers' of long duration (Lambo, 1965:124).

Hodder and Ukwu (1969) show how prominently palm wine features in the economic transactions of local markets in Yorubaland and Iboland. In one survey of exchange transactions in African markets, palm wine was found to represent 12 per cent of the total purchases by men (the palm wine was however *carried* to these periodic markets by women). In another survey conducted several months later, it was found to represent 14 per cent of the total sales by men and 18 per cent of the total purchases by men. In fact, palm wine was the second most important local produce sold by men as measured by frequency, and the most frequently bought item among men in Iboland. The study also refers to markets where contraband spirits might be procured (ibid.:215).

13 Mandated Territories

In Part Two I dealt with the Permanent Mandates Commission as they sat in the chambers of Geneva and debated the means of curbing the liquor traffic in the territories wrested from Germany, and it is appropriate that attention should now be turned to what was happening within the setting of the African territories themselves. The Cameroons and Togolands, nine-tenths placed under French mandate and one-tenth under British, provide a locale for tracing the international supervision of the provisions concerning alcohol written into the texts of the individual mandates. They also offer an opportunity for some comparisons between French and British policies on colonial alcohol control.

Large liquor shipments by German traders, the dependence of colonial income on the duty derived therefrom, the opposition of the missionaries — such, in brief, had been the typical features of the liquor trade in the context of German imperial rule. All this will be familiar from what has already been said of other colonial possessions. Whatever abuses the other colonial powers might have accused Germany of at the Peace Conference, the terms in which they did so could not have been more defamatory than the vilification of the Germans by themselves in the Reichstag: indeed the Socialists characterized the legacy of German colonial policy as 'murder, robbery, syphilis and the abuse of liquor' (Crowder, 1968:242). Nevertheless, Germany did put up the duty on liquor in conformity with the terms of the agreements reached at the various international conferences. Thus it increased from 22 pfennigs per litre in 1894 to 48 pfennings in 1900, and to 64 and 80 pfennings in 1904 and 1907 respectively. In 1909, stringent controls were imposed by Togo's governor, Count Zech, forbidding the sale of alcohol in two large northern centres, where only limited amounts for whites were allowed (Gifford and Louis, 1967:433).

Alcohol control under British and French mandate regimes 1922–1939*

Because the British Cameroons and Togoland were administered as an integral part of the adjacent territories, namely Nigeria and the Gold Coast respectively, they did not have their own liquor laws but were subjected to the liquor legislation of their neighbours. Thus the Liquor Ordinance of Nigeria was applied to the British Cameroons and the Second Spirituous Liquors Ordinance, 1920 of the Gold Coast

* Except where otherwise indicated the data given in this chapter are based on a League of Nations document (C. 608. M. 235. 1930 VI) and the annual returns of the British and French governments to the Mandates Commission on the territories under their respective administration.

Colony was applied to the *southern* sphere of Togoland. In fact, when the accredited representative of the Cameroons was asked the basis for the division of the territory into two zones, one where prohibition was imposed and one where it was not (particularly whether this was because 'the natives [were] considered to be more highly developed and better able to take spirits' in the non-prohibition zone), the answer was that it was a question of administration: 'Spirits had always been imported into the northern provinces of Nigeria; and, as the northern areas of the mandated territory were administered from Nigeria, the same rule applied to them' (PMC, 30, 1936).

France on the other hand treated her mandated territories as separate entities; hence they had their own alcohol legislation, promulgated through a succession of Decrees and Orders.

This was the broad formal difference between British and French policies. There were, inevitably, differences of emphasis and detail. It is all too easy to overstate these, considering the fact that whatever policy might have been articulated in an official forum, the way in which it was implemented locally invariably fell short of the purported intentions — this much was common between the British and the French. Yet divergencies certainly existed, as we shall see from a brief consideration of the liquor controls of the Cameroons and Togoland under British and French mandates.

Enough has been written about the liquor laws in the Gold Coast and Nigeria to obviate discussion of the legislation of British Togo and Cameroons here. For present purposes it is only necessary to note the salient features of the French system. This bore a definite French stamp. First of all, absinthe and similar liquors were prohibited in the two territories. Although the regulations of French Togo bore a fairly close resemblance to those prevailing in the British areas, in the Cameroons there were differences. There was no reference to trade spirits, nor was there any delimitation of prohibition zones. Africans were authorized to take alcoholic beverages with an alcohol content not exceeding 14° by volume, and this freedom was generalized throughout the Cameroons. Commercial and industrial firms whose factories, branches and the like were managed by Africans were forbidden to keep alcoholic beverages on the premises. Although the minimum rate of import duty on distilled beverages specified by the 1919 St Germain Convention was 800 francs per hectolitre of pure alcohol, that levied in the Cameroons stood at 200 francs per hectolitre throughout the early 1920s, and it was not until 1924 that this was raised to 1 600 francs.

More stringent control was introduced later in response to the increase in consumption in 1927 and 1928 (Blanc, 1953:241). This was based on a system of rationing: each year, commercial firms were allowed to import a certain quantity of alcohol, the annual total being distributed among these firms according to the customs duties paid in the previous year. The maximum figure set by the quota system was 60 000 litres of pure alcohol (about 120 000 bottles of liquor), a figure the French administration considered reasonable for a population of two million, which included two thousand Europeans. Marchand, the accredited representative, told the PMC that what with the large number of ships which put in at Duala, the main port, and the sizeable white population, very little of this total was in fact left over for consumption by the African Cameroonians. According to his calculation, the consumption worked out at ten centilitres per head of native inhabitants per annum, and thus, he claimed, 'there was no danger of alcoholism in the Cameroons' (PMC, 15, 1929).

His conclusion was probably based on the findings published in July 1928 of an alcohol commission set up by the Chamber of Commerce, a not obviously impartial body (see Blanc, 1953:241). The underlying attitude, one which appears characteristically French, was expressed by Marchand at the Commission meeting: that 'no attempt should be made to deprive Europeans and certain of the more highly developed natives, by means of a system of restriction, of the possibility of consuming a certain reasonable quantity of alcohol'. Consistent with this attitude was the tendency of the Administration to shut its eyes to what was going on, for example the collusion between Europeans and African chiefs in the diverting of liquor from one to the other, rather than to adopt what it considered to be unduly restrictive measures. Yet, for all that was said in its defence, the rationing system was open to abuses: a number of importing firms brought methylated spirits into the Cameroons described as eau-de-Cologne and sold them for drinking to the Africans, but in view of the special rights of manufacturers with respect to their own brands, it proved difficult for the Administration to exercise control of the importation of alcohol in perfumes.

Legislation in the French territory showed a peculiar concern for the white population's access to alcohol. It was as if it had to ensure that no restrictive measure inconvenienced the Frenchman unduly in his need for constant access to alcohol. The regulations stipulated that in any locality where the European population exceeded twenty persons, one shop selling on-premise alcoholic liquors might be authorized (none was allowed where the whites did not number more than twenty). In localities whose population did not meet the conditions for the opening of a shop, the opening of hotels and restaurants dispensing alcoholic drinks might be authorized by the Commissioner of the Republic if they were particularly frequented by whites passing through or stopping temporarily. When the Duala Chamber of Commerce tried to secure a change in the rationing system, it used as an argument that if there was a lack of good quality alcohol, the Europeans would soon find themselves forced to drink trade spirits which were fit for drinking by Africans only. The considerations by which at least some of the measures were guided are apparent in the reasons Marchand gave for not harmonizing the French and British duties, a step consistently urged, it will be remembered, by the PMC to thwart the contraband traffic. Such a measure, he said, 'would be penalizing the whites of the French Cameroons... The introduction of a uniform rate would entail such a reduction of consumption in the French Cameroons that it would practically amount, in the end, to a general prohibition. The settlers in the Cameroons were not very much in favour of the dry regime' (PMC, 15, 1928).

The clear distinction which the French made between alcoholic beverages and *boissons hygiéniques* represents another variation from British practice. Under the latter class were placed wine, beer, cider, lemonade, syrups and the like, and not until 1928 was Lugard allowed the satisfaction of noting that the different types of spirits were distinguished in the annual report for French Togo to the PMC, and mineral waters and the like were omitted as he had suggested (PMC, 15, 1929). It seems that an idea put forward a decade previously by the Governor-General of French West Africa in an interview with Morel, the *Times* correspondent

we met in an earlier chapter, was an accurate forecast of what was to come. The French Governor-General said that

the negro's craving for alcohol — at present met by the importation of brandy, rum, gin, and whisky — might be satisfied if these distilled spirits were ousted in favour of wine and beer imported from Europe. At the same time to create a market for French wines in West Africa might be a splendid thing for French viticulture, an industry which has certainly been hit at the present day by the diminished consumption of wine in Britain and the United States owing to the spread of total abstinence (Johnston, 1911).

That this idea was shared by the French Mandate Administration is evident not only from the laws but from actual practice. A case cited by Marchand illustrates this. There was an African, a member of the Administrative Council, who had requested permission to buy alcohol on the same conditions as the whites. The Commissioner had to refuse his request, on account of the prevailing regulations against such authorization, but he had 'invited him to obtain wines of a good quality or beer instead' (PMC, 15, 1929). As a matter of fact, the PMC members themselves became increasingly committed to this idea: at the 1930 session, one of them commended the French Togolese Administration for its efforts 'to replace alcohol by wines and beers of good quality'; it was a good sign he thought, that the importation figures for the latter were rising. In French Togoland, while 'alcohols suitable for human consumption' were taxed at the rate of 4 000 francs per hectolitre of pure alcohol, liqueur wines were taxed at a rate of 320 francs and ordinary wines at 10 % *ad valorem*. Similarly, while a commercial permit for selling alcoholic beverages in conjunction with another trade in the French Cameroons cost 1 000 francs, the charge for permission to sell wine and other 'hygienic drinks' was half that amount. Yet another disparity was in the rate of consumption tax levied. This was a tax peculiar to the French territories, the difficulty of controlling which led to its eventual replacement by an equivalent duty (PMC, 15, 1929). In the French Cameroons, consumption taxes ranged from three francs per hectolitre of ordinary wine under 12° to 400 francs for distilled liquor.

In both British and French territories, local distillation of alcohol was prohibited. Importation of distillation apparatus was prohibited under the British regime but not explicitly so in French territories, where, it was claimed, such apparatus did not exist. Manufacture of indigenous fermented liquor was prohibited in certain specified areas and in the mining districts in the British Cameroons. Likewise, economic considerations appeared to underlie the tendency to single out alcohol made from the oil palm from other varieties of indigenous alcohol. In British Cameroons for instance, no control was exercised over the manufacture and sale of indigenous fermented liquor outside a township unless it was made from the oil palm. In French Cameroons, even the *use* of palm wine was subject to penalties, in contrast to the use of other indigenous beverages, such as the millet beers 'dolo' and 'pipi'. Furthermore, in French Togo, an Order of 1920 levied a tax of four francs on each palm tree felled; this was supplemented by an Order of 1923 prohibiting the transport of palm wine by rail. That these controls were largely unenforceable or evaded is clear from the reports to, and discussions in the Mandates Commission. Illicit distillation

was increasingly reported as the years passed. In the French Togolese report for 1935, it was noted that clandestine manufacture by means of rudimentary apparatus was increasing despite local law enforcement and the punishment of guilty persons; and that the growth of this activity had led the Administration to consider the possibility of encouraging the controlled import of 'mildly alcoholic beverages, so as to induce the native to give up manufacturing and consuming a product which might endanger his health.' Besson, the French accredited representative, further reported that the Administration was considering the passing of a more severe decree, but warned that 'too great a value should not, however, be attached to legislation in the matter' (PMC, 30, 1936). Cameron, the accredited representative for British Cameroons, informed the PMC that the practice appeared to have begun in the river districts of Nigeria and had spread by 1931 into the Cameroons. The Administration responded by preventing the importation by unauthorized persons of tubing and metal piping for the distillation process and by introducing a law to inflict heavier penalties, but on the whole, it seems that there was little it could do. According to Cameron (PMC, 22, 1932)

The natives failed to understand the Europeans' attitude on this subject. They argued that they were only producing better palm wine than before. It was useless to tell the natives they were damaging their health. They did not believe it... He was frankly at a loss to know how the practice could be dealt with.

Trends in importation

The logical consequences of the respective policies pursued by the British and French mandatory powers are best illustrated by the importation statistics submitted to the League of Nations for consideration by the Mandates Commission. An abridgement of these statistics is given in the following tables. The consequences of French policy are clearly reflected in the changes over time in the structure of imports into Togoland. The bias towards wine and beer at the expense of spirits is, as Figure 5 indicates, patently marked in the 1930s. Whereas in British Cameroons there was a progressive increase in all types of alcohol, the pattern for the French Cameroons is much less consistent: wines and beer increased steadily in volume between 1921 and 1927, but no very clear trend is evident in the figures for the other types of beverages. The level of importation into French territories was naturally considerably higher than that of the British territories, given the larger population and the greater number of white inhabitants in the former; but even if allowances were made for these differences, it can be shown that alcoholic imports into the territories under French mandate were relatively greater. There is reason to believe, however, that not all quantities were consumed in the territory which imported them: a fair proportion probably went into the illicit traffic supplying markets across the borders in British areas. Table 13 and Figure 5 bring out clearly the setback to French alcohol exports during the depression of the 1930s. In fact it was partly on account of the decline in her exports of wine and other luxury products that made France one of the countries most heavily hit by the depression (Svennilson, 1954).

Table 10
Imports of alcohol (in litres) into British Cameroons,* 1921—1928

Year	Spirits (brandy, whisky, gin, rum, liqueurs)	Wines	Beer
1921	3 191**	1 191	3 087
1922	6 114**	3 314	7 119
1923	4 714**	3 700	14 129
1924	8 274	4 269	19 802
1925	6 060	6 801	47 647
1926	14 638	18 639	68 631
1927	20 061	28 885	102 190
1928	22 294	40 632	118 742

* Population (1928): Native (in prohibition zones): 615 118; native (outside prohibition zones): 103 746; non-native: 292.

** Whisky formed the greater part of these imports; thereafter (from 1924), gin represented the largest share (well over half).

Table 11
Imports of alcohol (in litres) into French Cameroons*, 1921—1927

Year	Brandies	Liqueurs	Wines (including sparkling wines and champagne)	Beer
1921	38 717	5 940	219 318	61 754
1922	56 900	15 254	201 834	68 962
1923	119 021	15 966	400 681	74 251
1924	80 638	24 044	618 672	137 448
1925	62 873	17 347	1 165 268	183 700
1926	173 895	25 146	2 095 951	455 734
1927	103 084	8 630	1 181 616	514 270

* Population (1927): Native: 1 900 000; non-native: 2 000.

Table 12
Amount (in litres) of pure (100 %) alcohol *consumed* in British Togoland*, 1925—1928**

	1 July to 31 Dec 1925	1926	1927	1928
Spirits (Whisky, gin, rum etc.)	2 559	8 046	17 525	24 239
Wine & beer	5 251	14 152	41 360	104 581

* Population (1921): Native: 187 939; non-native: 20. Population not included in prohibition zone: 87 255.

** Figures for Togoland itself were not available for previous years, these being included in the statistics of imports into the Gold Coast.

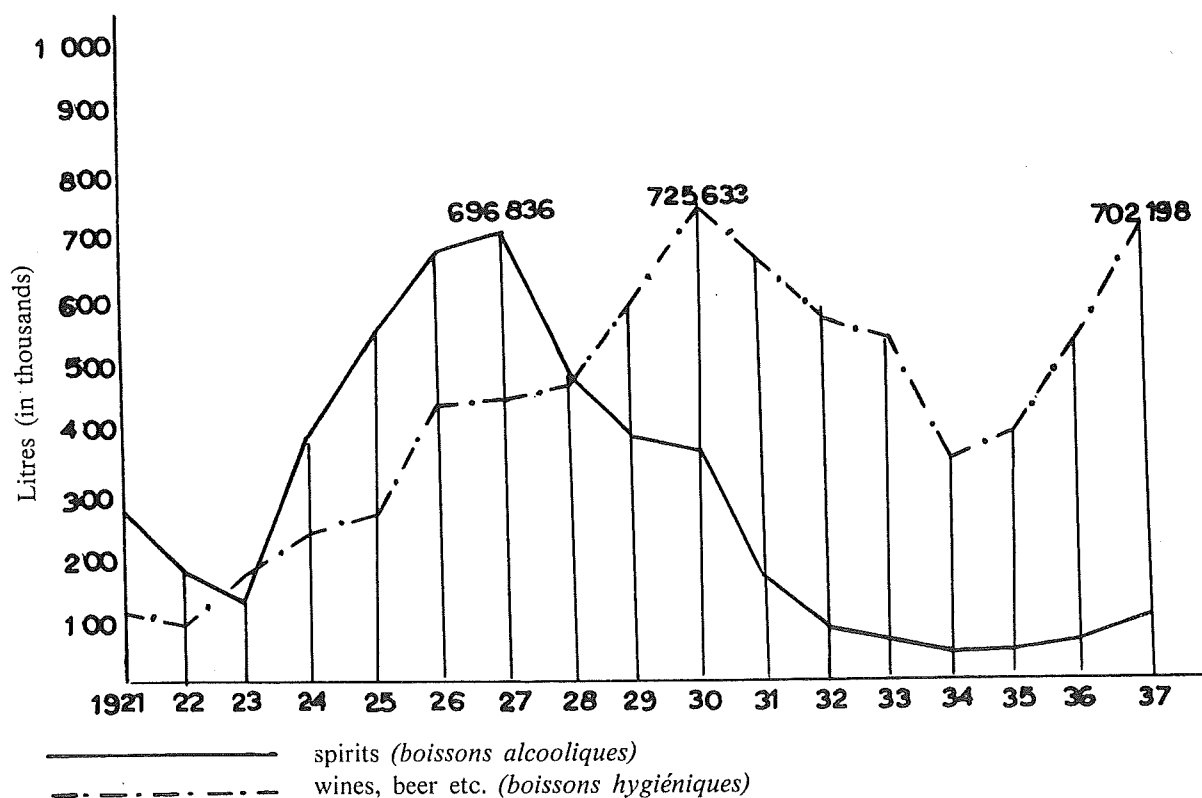
Table 13
Imports of alcohol (in litres) into French Togoland*, 1921–1937

Year	Spirits (<i>boissons alcooliques</i>)		Wines & beers (<i>boissons hygiéniques</i>)	
	Total imports	per capita	Total imports	per capita
1921	286 377	0.95	100 859	0.12
1925	556 290	1.52	267 009	0.36
1930	375 719	1.25	725 653	0.98
1935	38 043	0.12	382 205	0.52
1937	92 997	0.30	702 298	0.95

* Population (1927): Native: 750 000; non-native: 550.

Source: Péchoux, 1939.

Figure 5
The structure of liquor imports into French Togoland, 1924–1937



Source: Péchoux, 1939.

In the seventeen years in which the liquor traffic in the Cameroons and Togolands appeared as a regular item on the agenda of PMC sessions, the focus of attention shifted from a concern with curbing imports of injurious spirits into the mandated territories to become centred on the illegal practice of indigenous distillation. Towards the end, a definite flagging of interest in the liquor question was

evident. The PMC members would dutifully question the rising liquor statistics in the annual returns, but as the years passed, it came to display an increasing disinclination to challenge the superficial explanations proffered by the accredited representative concerned. When the accredited representative of British Togoland, in answer to a query about the increase of liquor sales in 1936, said that this was due to increased prosperity and consumption of liquor in connection with the 'celebration of belated funeral customs of those persons who died during the lean years', the PMC appeared not to have demurred.

Finally, a word about the application of the St Germain treaty in these territories. The Commission's task was to supervise the application of the terms of the mandates drawn up under the auspices of the League, and the application of general international treaties came only indirectly under its purview. Be that as it may, the Commission did, now and then, inquire into the workings of the St Germain treaty in the mandated territories. In 1930, for instance, Bonnacarrère, the French accredited representative for Togo, was asked if the convention was efficacious and fully adapted to the existing conditions. To this he replied that the Convention was 'a very convenient weapon and quite sufficient for the Administration'. So as to abide by the terms of the Convention, a system existed whereby before an importer could bring in a certain brand of alcohol, he had to produce a certificate of origin and of analysis made out in Europe; applications to import alcoholic liquors had also to be accompanied by a sample, to be examined at the chemical laboratory in Lomé, Togo. In this connection, customs officials were authorized to take samples of imported liquor at any time, and if an importer was found to have introduced alcohol not in conformity with the original sample, he ran the risk of severe punishment.

Alcohol under UN Trusteeship

Given the developments of the period we have just reviewed, perhaps it comes as no surprise that when a United Nations Visiting Mission was sent to the Trust Territories in West Africa in 1952, it came back expressing concern about the alcoholism it had found in the French Cameroons. After the War, the consumption of alcohol had reached disquieting heights. In June 1947, an alcohol commission composed of the heads of the competent services and representatives of the people had met to study means of combating alcoholism and had recommended the restriction of the number of licences issued and the re-introduction of the import quota system, which had been shelved. In consequence, the *Haut Commissaire* had implemented a series of control measures, comprising, in addition to those recommended by the commission, an attempt to increase the import duty and to widen the latitude for the sale of beverages with a low alcohol content. An anti-alcohol propaganda campaign was launched in the schools, and three bills aimed at increasing the penalties for alcohol-related offences were submitted to the French Parliament. The results, however, were unimpressive (see Blanc, 1953:243). In its report, the Mission expressed the view that the problem of alcoholism in Africa was a particularly complex one, and that the most vigorous steps should be taken to reduce the consumption of distilled spirits in the French Cameroons (General Assembly, 8th, 1953; 9th, 1954).

A Mission which visited the Territory in 1955 reported that the problem appeared to have persisted, and that it had received various communications offering suggestions for its alleviation. Some of these were of the opinion that a law should be passed to prohibit the manufacture and sale of indigenous alcohol: others proposed reducing the number of bars and their earlier closing. The Visiting Mission felt, on the other hand, that the solution lay as much in providing education as in repressive measures, and advocated the implementation of educational programmes aimed at reducing the incidence of drunkenness (General Assembly, 11th, 1956).

At the seventeenth session of the Trusteeship Council, the representative of the Administering Authority stated that as a result of various control measures taken by the Administration, imports of alcoholic products had dropped by 20 per cent during the first eight months of 1955 in comparison with the same period in 1954. Apropos of this, the Trusteeship Council adopted the following conclusions and recommendations:

The Council notes with satisfaction the efforts of the administering Authority to combat alcoholism, especially in the south, by instituting an intensive publicity campaign, by limiting the number of establishments selling alcohol, by increasing licence fees, and by repressing illicit distillation. The Council recommends that the Administering Authority consistently continue to combat alcoholism and it urges the population of the Territory to co-operate with the Administering Authority in these efforts. (ibid.:172)

These is as far as is known no sequel to the story. With the attainment of independence in 1960, the Trusteeship Agreement was terminated for Cameroons under French administration. Alcohol slipped out of the purview of the United Nations along with the sloughing off of colonial paternalism.*

* British Togoland was united with the Gold Coast to form the independent state of Ghana in 1957. French Togoland attained independence in 1960. The Northern (British) Cameroons joined the Federation of Nigeria and the Southern (British) Cameroons joined the Republic of Cameroon in 1961.

Part Four

Conclusion, Discussion and Argument

14 Conclusion and Discussion

I began this study by introducing three broad concerns: what were the circumstances surrounding the conclusion of the international agreement to limit the liquor trade between Europe and Africa, what is to be made of that experiment in international alcohol control when viewed in a wider world and in the light of the thinking and concerns of today, and finally, what is to be made of alcohol problems and controls in the context of present-day Africa. I want to conclude by looking at each of these three themes in turn.

Before doing so, however, I should confess to a point of view that is implicit in my choice of emphasis throughout much of this study. The presupposition has been that 'the rate of any alcohol related problems in a population is related to the *per capita* level of alcohol consumption in that population, with the corollary that any measures which diminish total alcohol consumption will decrease the alcoholism rate' (WHO/FFAS, 1974). The notion that the overall level of consumption is a crucial consideration in the reduction of alcohol-related problems and therefore in control policies is a point of general significance which must be made explicit because it has coloured the interpretation to which the historical events recounted in the present study have been subjected.

The previous chapters have given what I hope is an accurate account of Africa's experience with regard to alcohol control, and it remains for me to gather here the questions and reflections prompted by that experience.

A person who comes away from reading this account with the impression that there is nothing new under the sun will have ample grounds for his view. Were not the choices open to the legislator of alcohol control in Africa, and the political and economic circumstances which constrained him, characteristic of the fundamental dilemmas facing the policy-maker of today? Should the colonial administrator sacrifice his alcohol revenue, or should he use it to finance his roads and railways, which will help to open up Africa and bring it economic rewards? There is a familiar ring to the following questions, for they are a variant of the ones that continue to be asked today. Should the metropolitan government bend to the importunings of the temperance groups; should it win international favour by giving form to its pledge to protect Africans from the liquor trade, or should it instead indulge the wishes of traders abroad and manufacturers at home? In the terminology of our times, this problem would be articulated as a need to 'strike a balance between legitimate interests', to choose correctly between an interlocking complex of needs, where each can be fully satisfied only at the expense of one or more of the others. Then, as now, economic considerations were the ones that, in the nature of things, generally carried the day.

By way of illustration, consider today's Rhodesia, where the proponent of alcohol control is confronted with a dilemma no less acute. There an arrangement exists in Bulawayo whereby profits earned by the municipal beer industry are ploughed back into the municipal coffers to provide housing and social amenities for the swelling stream of African migrants from the country who, without these facilities and without municipal beer gardens to provide a focal point for their social life, would no doubt find urban life even more trying than it is. Thus for social workers to denounce the alcohol industry is to bite the hand that feeds them (Wolcott, 1974). But perhaps the Rhodesian case is merely an extreme example of a spectrum of contradictions which includes the conflict between the roles of state alcohol monopolies in some countries as simultaneous government revenue earner and guardian of alcohol control.

The radical nationalist would find here yet more evidence to support the historical truth of current theories of imperialism. Here was a clear case of colonial exploitation of the underdeveloped world to help finance Western industrialization, and of the new industries in turn unloading their surplus commodity exports of consumer goods upon colonial territories. Indeed, the African case is an oblique commentary on the truism that social problems cannot be sensibly discussed in abstraction from the wider issues of their structural foundations: underlying the events surrounding the alcohol trade and its control were the intractable realities of colonialism as well as the basic ambiguities in the intentions of the ruling governments. The colonial reformer moved within a social reality very narrowly circumscribed by his political duties and his loyalty to imperialist ideology.

A further difficulty in pursuing a viable control policy in the context of colonial rule may be illustrated by reference to a statement by Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor-General of Nigeria, in a report to the Nigerian Council in 1923:

The vast majority of the indigenous population are still independent of the outside world for all their essential supplies... For them imports from Europe are still, in the main, luxuries with which, if needs must, they can wholly dispense; and the sole exception to this, in pre-war days, was imported spirits of European manufacture (Crowder, 1968:347).

Were the latter really indispensable? If so, was it because the need for them had been fostered to such an extent as to have become pressing and pervasive, or was it simply because domestic manufacture of their substitutes was prohibited by law?

And yet straightforward answers to these questions would have obscured the quite complex intermeshing of factors that make up the strands of our story. I would venture that home brewing has always, despite its illegality, been fairly widespread. Arrogating to themselves mainly those sectors of criminal jurisdiction and law enforcement which touched upon European interests and expatriate norms, colonial régimes tended to leave the control of indigenous brewing and drinking to native traditional authorities.* But the outlawing of traditional brewing was itself a response deemed appropriate by the criteria of the colonial government's country of origin and

* British colonial policy at least was fairly solicitous of traditional authority partly because it often suited the colonial administrator to capitalize upon its potential for pacification and social control.

shaped in the image of the legal canons there. Not surprisingly it meant little to the Africans. Home brewing was, and has remained, a cottage industry providing a source of income particularly to elderly, single or widowed women with no other means of livelihood (Wolcott, 1974:227). Illicit brewing has similarly been attributed to the need of some Africans to bring their wages up to subsistence level or else to maintain standards of living they had been taught to desire. Yet traditional brewing could not but have succumbed to the transformations attendant upon the coming of the Europeans. Though it has not completely disappeared, the age-old employment of alcohol as a form of currency was probably caught up, like other features of traditional life, in the larger changes wrought by the introduction of cash crops and wage employment, by participation in the European economic system and by emigration from the village to centres of mining and commercial activity. Illicit brewing has been cited, for example, as the purpose of many bereaved Bemba women in emigrating to towns (Wolcott, 1974:227).

As for other strands in the story: that there was genuine moral concern is without doubt; yet humanitarianism also cloaked designs of a very different character — rivalry for commercial and territorial supremacy, and a pretext to interfere in the affairs of other colonial powers. That the steps taken to reduce alcohol imports into Africa stemmed in part from a sincere belief in the harmfulness of excessive consumption and the efficacy of restricting overall availability — this much too is clear. The moral strictures of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were levelled at least as much against the traders as the consumers. It is necessary, it would seem, to qualify the all-too-ready debunking of earlier religious and temperance agitation. It was no accident that the heyday of international alcohol control coincided with the golden era of popular and religious temperance movements and missionary activity.

There is no less need to give credit to some of the colonial administrators (for example Johnston and Lugard) for their bold confidence, coupled with some measure of perspicacity, in dealing with alcohol abuse, not *qua* abuse, but in terms of the need to decrease overall availability. In fact, if we examine their underlying assumptions about alcohol and alcohol control, we may find that they tally with much current belief and practice with regard to these matters. With the hindsight of history, we see many things taken for granted by our nineteenth-century reformers about which there is far less agreement today, things not contentious to them — as the relationship between *per capita* consumption and the rate of alcohol-related problems is to many of us — or perhaps, too obvious to them to warrant argument. Yet, though the older certainties have given way to new controversy, perhaps we shall not find ourselves in fundamental disagreement with them? Then there were the views espoused by realists like Friere d'Andrade of the Permanent Mandates Commission, which appear not to have dated either. Although he was in favour of doing away with the liquor imports altogether, seeing that there was enough alcohol being produced anyway by the Africans themselves, he was ready to concede that prohibition was not something one could bring about by a stroke of the pen. He thought it important to control traders who invariably resorted 'to every possible trick' to import the cheapest possible varieties of alcohol. Years of traditional drinking did not seem to have undermined the growth of the African population; it was contact with the white man, he reminded the PMC, which did this (PMC, 7, 1925).

Another commonplace to be noted is the phasic nature of historical trends. The relatively high levels of liquor consumption in the years before the First World War appear to be as much a phase in Africa as elsewhere, and the sharp reduction which took place during the War, with its subsequent partial recovery, was paralleled by a reduction and recrudescence of a similar order of magnitude in Britain (Smart, 1974). Admittedly fortuitous circumstances were involved in both cases: the War; the suspension of shipping from Europe in the case of Africa; and in England the sharp decrease by 1916 of hop cultivation with the result that the strength of beer fell and its price rose, which helped, along with other factors, to reduce drunkenness. Yet in neither case did the level of alcohol consumption revert to the high levels of the pre-war period. How much the manifest reduction in Africa was due to factors in the world at large, how much to deliberate control efforts, how much to a combination of both, such questions remain unanswerable.

Our contemporary will also find nothing 'new' in the fact that as income rose in Africa, so did alcohol consumption, since the tie between the latter and prevailing economic conditions is well known. But in countries with developing economies, where the general living standards were low and large numbers of the population lived in conditions of extreme poverty, a higher drink bill seems hardly the most hopeful reflection of a relative increase in prosperity. Throughout the inter-war period, a keen awareness of the relationship between the size of the market for imported alcohol and variations in the general economic situation permeated discussions on the liquor traffic in Africa, especially in the Permanent Mandates Commission. The extent to which Africa was tied to the imperial economy made the liquor trade all the more vulnerable to fluctuations in the overseas trade of the three big pre-war powers — Britain, France and Germany.

The starting point of this study was the control of alcohol trade and consumption on the basis of international agreement, and the question it wished to address was, broadly speaking, whether the African experiment had a wider and more enduring significance in terms not merely of Africa's colonial history, but of one of the concerns of current research in alcohol, namely, the workings of alcohol control. To the extent that contemporary economic changes are tending to propel alcohol production and distribution towards increasing internationalization, and alcohol controls are perhaps beginning to adjust to these processes by becoming themselves a shade more international, scrutiny of the one instance of international alcohol control offered by the African episode appeared worthwhile.

The African endeavour was of course not originally conceived in these terms, and cannot be expected to speak directly to the discussion of alcohol controls in progress today. Nevertheless, it highlights some of the questions which are still being asked, questions about the objectives of preventive policies on the one hand, and the practical means of intervention on the other. As far as the latter is concerned, we learn little that is new from the African experiment. Taxation, trade controls, and the maintenance of 'dry' and 'wet' areas are familiar strategies in alcohol control policies. To the question, what were the consequences of giving effect to these policies, various equivocal answers can be found, but the picture is opaque and full of qualifications. If it were not for the laxity of enforcement and the looseness with which the international treaties

were interpreted, a considerable reduction in the consumption of European spirits by Africans could have been effected, as witness the nadir in the imports of Dutch geneva when they were strictly defined as trade spirits. Inasmuch as they posed an obstacle to the unbridled expression of market forces and gave a fillip to the enactment of control legislation in the colonies, the international treaties were of more than passing service. But the slightness of their long-term effect on the pattern of demand is an illustration of the partiality and time-bound character of any single solution in this area.

However, even though we may be able to learn little in practice from the African case, we can perhaps learn much in principle. The establishment of international control based on multilaterally accepted rules is often a case of one set of interests using various kinds of levers to extract concessions from another set. To give effect to such control it is often necessary to resolve the contradiction between state sovereignty on the one hand and the binding nature of international jurisdiction on the other, a contradiction which has to be taken into account by anyone thinking of alcohol control in international terms today.

The idea of international alcohol control is not much in favour nowadays. Whereas few would deny the necessity for maintaining the current international system for controlling the production and distribution of narcotics and other dependence producing drugs, many would insist on the impracticability of considering alcohol controls on an international basis. Yet for all its lop-sidedness, the narcotics control system was adumbrated by an international commission (the International Opium Conference in Shanghai, 1909) whose programme was patterned on the 1890 Brussels Convention (Musto, 1973:40). Both the narcotics and alcohol models of international drug control rest on the perceived social and political necessity of formulating some norms of international behaviour and of having some norm-supervising authority in the international organizational system. Both the alcohol and narcotics treaties prescribed rules for controlling the physical availability of the substances in question and for international co-operation where trans-national trade made such controls unenforceable by domestic means alone. Both systems of control employed a statistical reporting system. Both systems girded themselves about with the most impervious self-righteousness.

But the similarities are more marked in the practical application of controls than in their underlying criteria. Whereas the narcotics model rests on the prohibition and control of all *forms* of use other than for approved medical and scientific purposes, the alcohol model was addressed to (a) a particular population (non-Europeans in whom the taste for alcohol had not developed), and (b) a particular *type* of alcoholic beverages — trade spirits. The latter model sought to establish parity between neighbouring jurisdictions in the economic accessibility of alcohol; the narcotics model, in contrast, stresses uniformity in the application of the criminal sanction across countries. The notion of withholding alcohol from regions where there had been, for religious or other reasons, no previously existing consumer demand reflects, however dimly, an awareness of cultural diversity absent from the conceptual approaches of the formulators and wielders of international narcotics control (see Bruun, Pan and Rexed, 1975).

Yet international alcohol control was, for all that, a less than well-rounded system of control. The kind of considerations which have to be borne in mind in

evaluating it as a system are perhaps best presented by example. In 1913 the British announced that they were ceasing to export opium to China from India. This was the culmination of an arrangement to which I had compared the scheme to reduce by a tenth of the quantity of a baseline year the amount of gin imported into the Gold Coast. In the case of opium, the British agreed to the annual reduction over a ten-year period of the quantity of opium exported from India by ten per cent of the average annual Indian export. The operative words here are 'imported' and 'exported': obviously, the greater the degree of commitment on the part of the exporting country to a policy of control the more effective such control is likely to be in the importing country of the products concerned. Since trade invariably involves more than one party, control of trade necessarily requires complementary action by the partners concerned. Ideally, international control would draw upon national control and vice versa in mutual reinforcement. Reciprocity was, however, altogether lacking in the control of the liquor trade, even though the trade relation was primarily one of mother country and colony, and therefore close. Nonetheless, the colonial administrators had to fend more or less for themselves when it came to applying the terms of the St Germain treaty in their territories.

Since alcohol use is universal, it might be supposed that restraints of this kind — that is, preventing alcohol from reaching regions of no or negligible demand — are now too outdated to have a place in contemporary control policies. What is revealed by studies of world-wide trends in alcohol use, however, offers no such comfort. Not only had overall consumption level risen around the world, the increase being larger in countries with a formerly low consumption level, but there also appears to be a tendency towards convergence in the choice of beverages used across countries (Sulkunen, 1973a; WHO/FFAS, 1974). We have seen how, through what amounted to a cultural imposition, distilled spirits, a category of alcohol relatively alien to traditional African drinking, came to be grafted onto an already existing range of alcoholic beverages, and controls had to be instituted to check this process. When viewed in broad terms such as these, that is, in terms of the compounding (through cultural transmission) of traditional and modern elements in drinking pattern, and of the level and movements of total demand, then a widening of the scope of alcohol control policies would appear to be called for: such widening would necessarily entail a commitment on the part of individual nations to engage in practical co-operation for the assemblage of information; for the review of policies and for the initiation of novel forms of international control measures.

15 Argument

The argument which I will present in discussing the last of my three concerns has already been foreshadowed by the final paragraph of the preceding chapter. To preface this discussion a few remarks on the concepts 'development' and 'modernization' are required. The social science literature on these terms is too vast to be reviewed here; it is enough to point to the distinction that is often made between 'development', as referring to economic growth processes, and 'modernization', as the various socio-cultural changes concomitant with development. That much research has been done in the alcohol field on ecological factors in drinking and alcoholism, and particularly on the relationship between alcohol use and urbanization, is a token of the relevance of these two concepts to my present purpose.

Without entering into the controversy over the relationship between economic development and international trade I will merely point to the reality of such tangible processes as production and marketing.

In Africa, as elsewhere, efforts to control alcohol availability have to confront economic realities which are in conflict with an emphasis on the primacy of health considerations. In the selection of items to carry the highest taxes, liquor and other luxury consumer goods have traditionally borne the heaviest import duties. But such controls have often been offset by the incentives they generate for home production. The need for developing countries to minimize the drain on foreign exchange to pay for their imports has led many to adopt an 'import substituting' strategy aimed at replacing imports by home manufacture. Industries manufacturing consumer goods catering to the demands of the wealthy have frequently been the first industry to appear in developing countries, and for many countries in Africa, a brewery has been the first major plant (Lloyd, 1971:90). It is, indeed, one of the first signposts on the road to industrialization. Nigeria, for example, boasts of four breweries, a distillery for making whisky, gin and schapps, and an industry engaged in bottling imported brandy (WHO, 1972).^{*} Ironically, a report from Zambia associates the excessive alcohol consumption there with the 'relative economic viability of the country compared with some other developing countries, coupled with the Government's increasingly effective policy of ensuring that the whole population of the Republic benefits from the National Product' (WHO, 1972a).

^{*} By the same logic, it has been argued that from the point of view of the less-developed countries, it is more advantageous in the long run for the multinational pharmaceutical industries to continue to export their drugs at high prices, since this would provide the impetus for domestic pharmaceutical manufacturing (Wortzel, 1971). However, be that as it may, the home production of beer and soft drinks is in the class of 'easy' import substitution, whereas pharmaceutical manufacturing belongs, in all probability, to a more remote future.

It can all too easily be assumed by observers in industrialized countries who live under conditions blessed with a reasonable degree of governmental probity and economic well-being that the less-developed world should work to achieve their aims through orderly and rational processes. It can be argued that using scarce resources on the local production of luxury items is not, despite the apparent benefits of import substitution, necessarily desirable, since such production is usually geared to markets limited primarily to the wealthy élite, and involves diversion of investment from worthier enterprises. But it is unlikely that the rich clientele would be persuaded to modify their habits. In any case, many African countries passed the stage of the 'easy' import substitution — the stage of home production of beer, soft drinks and the like — a long time ago.

Attempts to control consumption through price manipulation are inherently discriminatory: they fail to touch the rich but aggravate the deprivation of the poor. Yet, as was the case with the colour-bar problem in colonial alcohol legislation, equality is not necessarily the ideal either, for equality of opportunity to drink also implies equality of exposure to the hazards of drinking. In modern Africa, the problem has many facets. For example, the clienteles for the locally brewed lager beer and Chibuku (the indigenous maize-based brew) are represented in Zambia by two distinct income groups. Increases in indirect taxes on fermented beverages caused a slowing in the expansion of demand for Chibuku and other sour beers, the effects being all the greater because these beers are drunk predominantly by the low-income groups. When in November 1972 sales fell short of predictions, this was at the expense more of the breweries in the rural areas than in the big cities and the Copperbelt. The effect of price on demand was obviously particularly felt by the low-income layers. It is believed, however, that consumption was not reduced, owing to the availability of illegally brewed beer in the outlying districts. In the cities, lager beer is rapidly ousting maize beer among the richer consumers. In reviewing the situation from the point of view of improving the level of nutrition in the country, as well as from an economic perspective, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has suggested that lager beer and Chibuku should be taxed at markedly different rates, and that different levels of taxation should be considered for the different provinces. By means of the latter measure, demand for the smalltown breweries might be stimulated and their competitiveness with the illegal brewers enhanced (FAO, 1974:31–32, 67). Because the manufacture of beer utilizes eight per cent of the commercial maize crop, it has an economic importance beyond the sale of alcohol alone.

Since domestic production takes place on too small a scale to be economical, it is natural that efforts should be made to expand markets and promote consumption. Although politicians on the whole recognize the contribution which improved public health could make to what economists call social overhead capital, they rarely see the relevance to this kind of thinking of the risks introduced by the increased availability of alcohol.

W. G. A Ormsby-Gore, the British Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, once said in the Permanent Mandates Commission that 'the bad old days' were over when the motto in West Africa was 'trade spirits in and slaves out' (PMC, 12, 1927). True, gone are the days of laissez-faire and the era when Africa was at the receiving end of

European liquor, and the market is, as we have seen, now being supplied, at least partially, by domestic production. But all these recent developments are also bound up with a phenomenon common to Third World countries: that is, the transfer of technologies, consumption patterns and urban tastes from industrialized countries. The summing up of these trends by the catch-phrase 'modernization' is familiar enough. While economic progress as a goal is zealously pursued, modernity is more likely to be seen as a trend to be resisted to the extent that it entails the adoption of the least desirable features of Western cultures, the fragmentation of traditional village community life, the undermining of the ethic of sharing and the breakdown of traditional morality and social control.

Drinking patterns too, are susceptible to changes wrought by cultural diffusion. There is evidence of this happening in Africa. Thus Clifford (1974:69) observes the overlay of Western influence — producing interesting differences between the English-speaking, French-speaking and other parts of Africa — which has modified the traditional style in the use of beer. Similarly, writing of Rhodesia, Wolcott remarks (1974:234):

Perhaps most exciting to the student of culture change is the process of cultural diffusion as exemplified in the gradual shift toward the acceptance of and preference for European beer going on right before his very eyes in the urban setting. Who is making the 'switch' [from African beer] and who is resisting it? Is the decision an economic one, as some insist? That is the argument put forth in Salisbury, by a manager who feels that if the price of the two beers was comparable, 'we wouldn't sell a drop of African beer'.

Claiming that they are serving a 'more sophisticated' urban African, the liquor outlets in Salisbury are already showing more signs of making European beer readily available than those in Bulawayo. Wolcott points out that as preference for European beer becomes more pronounced, the municipalities will gradually be eased out of their role as brewers and will function only as distributors for commercially produced beer (Wolcott, 1975:235).

Official control policy may retard the diffusion of such tastes. An example comes from Singapore of an official appeal to abstinence from cannabis use dictated by the needs of national development. In many other developing countries, the use of this drug has been a long-standing practice among older, low socio-economic groups in the population, but now in the wake of its popularity among Western middle-class youth, it has acquired a new appeal for their contemporaries in developing countries as well. Because of this, it has become a target of vigorous control efforts in Singapore, for the counter-culture values associated with its use in Western society are seen as inimical to the country's developmental goals (Koh, 1974). Resistance to the transmission of Western values assumes the form of a stringent drug control policy.

Another example of how acculturation can affect drug preferences is provided by Defer's study in Morocco (Defer, 1969). Whereas cannabis was the traditional drug of choice among Moroccans, alcohol use tended to be concentrated in those sections of the population who were in direct contact with Europeans — '*militaires, domestiques, garçons de café*'.

All this raises the interesting question of how far increasing resort to commercial drink has eaten into the demand for traditional brews; of whether the change is merely one of replacing one product by another. The evidence provided by trade figures, slender though it is, suggests that this is not simply a change of product type. Nor is it simply a matter of inconsequential chronology in the passing of traditional to modern society.

Communal drinking typical of traditional societies is a primal gesture of community, a gesture such as is embodied in religious rituals. Beer had a customary rather than an intrinsic value; it was linked to occasions for mourning or celebration. But if traditionally he drank in celebration, observes Wolcott (1975:75), the African now finds less occasion to celebrate. In the towns, notes Clifford (1974:123), drinking has its Western connotations of diversion and entertainment. While retaining some of its traditional significance — beer is still regarded by a vast majority of Africans as a food, for example — urban drinking is in sharp contrast to the traditional variety.

On the other hand sociological work on urban voluntary associations in African towns points up the mingling of mutual aid-giving with gatherings for drinking expressive of conviviality and ethnic solidarity in African urban life. The existence side by side of traditional drinking with urban styles has its parallel in other spheres: for example, in the juxtaposition (commonly referred to as economic dualism) of modern enclaves of manufacturing and commercial activity with a backward, usually agricultural sector; and as we know from the work of T. A. Lambo, in the enormous staying power of traditional medicine and healing practices, even as Western medical facilities become more widespread. The tenacity of traditional drinking in the midst of 'Europeanized' drinking points up the continuity between past and present, the crisscrossing of practices straddling in their development widely different distances in time.

How to minimize drinking in the interest of public health and social well-being without an assault on the fabric of collective life, into which traditional drinking is so closely knit, presents the formulator of a viable control policy with a challenge that is perhaps part of a larger one facing the African leader, who desires not merely modernity, but a modernity that does not deny the inheritance of the past.

Appendix

Alcohol in East and Central Africa: A Bibliographical Summary

This study has been concerned mostly with West Africa. However, for a comprehensive view of the subject, it is necessary to take account of the facts, observations and interpretations which have emerged from work on other parts of the sub-Saharan continent. Although an integrated treatment of the whole literature has not proved possible, it is hoped that this review of the areas neglected by the study (again excluding South Africa) will nevertheless contribute to an overall impression of the available data. The type of 'mapping' work which this review represents is a necessary preliminary step to any studies that might be directed more closely to the question of alcohol in Africa.

A start can be made with Popham and Yawney's *Bibliography of Anthropological Studies* (1967), Washburne's study of the uses and functions of alcohol in selected groups (1961), and Heath's near-exhaustive review of ethnographic studies of alcohol use (1975).

East Africa

The best covered African region after West Africa is East Africa. The official reports by the British government on Tanganyika Territory for the years from 1920 onwards to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations are important for providing a picture, albeit sketchy, of the inter-war alcohol trade and controls. It is interesting to note that, since the sale of alcohol was prohibited in those days to Africans, the Hindu minority claimed equal rights with the white population in this respect (PMC, 1, 1921). An incident which is of interest from the point of view of the often competitive relationship between commercial alcohol manufacture and native brewing is that reported by the British government to the League in 1936. The Tanganyika Breweries Ltd., which had entered into a contract with the Township Authority in Dar es Salaam to supply beer for the indigenous market, had decided at the end of 1935 that it did not wish to renew the contract on account of the low turnover, the beer it had manufactured being of a type which did not apparently appeal to the native consumer. The result had been a considerable drop in consumption. A new system was therefore introduced in January whereby licences were granted each month to twelve native brewers, usually women, each of whom was provided with a stall, a kitchen for brewing, and a lock-up store. As all the brewing was done under the supervision of the Township Authority, the system was seen as having the advantage not

only of affording a wider choice of beers to the prospective consumer, but also of allowing better control than what was exercised before (Great Britain Colonial Office Report, 1937:119–20). Tanganyika was also the location of two anthropological studies: one of the Safwa (Harwood, 1964) and the other of the Ukaguru (Beidelman, 1961). The former shows that beer-selling is the best means which poor people have of securing the cash required to buy food in times of want, and therefore provides a positive adaptation against famine. Beidelman's study of inter-tribal relations in a Tanganyika chiefdom contains a brief account of beer-drinking in the *klubu*, or beer club, among the Kaguru. Here again, beer is the most important cash-earning commodity.

Alcohol use is touched upon in two studies based in Uganda, one on clinical psychiatry by German (1972), and the other on crime by Tanner (1970). German notes that alcoholism is a major public health problem in Uganda, and cites a 1968 report which noted that in 13 per cent of all admissions to Butabika Mental Hospital, Kampala, alcohol was an important cause of acute mental disorder. He contrasts this with Asuni's finding (Asuni, 1961) that alcoholic psychoses are extremely rare in clinical practice in Western Nigeria. He posits the following cultural factors in the development of abnormal alcohol consumption:

1. widespread ignorance of the dangers of excessive drinking;
2. perception of alcohol as strengthening, as an aphrodisiac, and as a remedy for worms;
3. absence of religious controls;
4. the fact that local beers are unfiltered, used as a substitute for food, and fed to babies.

In clinical terms, German further reports that alcoholic psychoses, delirium tremens, and alcoholic dementias are common in Uganda, and that patients admitted in a confused state after heavy drinking take from five to ten days to recover, an effect which he associates with prolonged hypoglycaemia.

Tanner (1970) offers some interesting observations on the relationship between alcohol and homicide in Uganda in 1964. Alcohol was thought to be a factor in homicides in only a minority of cases, even given the bias towards over-reporting the presence of alcohol. Its presence in male and female homicides (not involving gangs) was reckoned to be as follows:

	Men killed %	Women killed %
Alcohol present in		
Both victim and offender	25	19
Victim only	4	5
Offender only	9	5
Alcohol present in homicide situation	38	29
Alcohol not present in homicide situation	62	66

Tanner points out that traditional agricultural communities in Uganda are closely integrated and as such do not tolerate more than an occasional disturbance precipitated by alcohol. The drinking party, an occasion for social interaction, is an

infrequent locale for homicide. Tanner cites the Uganda Police's memorandum addressed to the Cabinet Committee on Crime which gave the following statistics for cases of homicides or attempted homicides connected with quarrels at beer parties or after drinking: in 1961, 71 out of 907 cases; in 1962, 141 out of 1 101 cases and 1963, 158 out of 1 398 cases — all comparatively small figures.

It was possible, on the other hand, to infer a relationship between alcohol-implicated homicides and the days of the week on which they occurred. While only 27 per cent of homicides in which men killed men occurred over the weekend, 58 per cent of the cases in which men killed women took place during that period. Tanner believes that the connection has to do with the sale of illegal spirits and attendance at beer clubs and bars during weekends and holidays. Tanner concludes, however, that no evidence exists to point authoritatively to a close connection between alcohol and homicide in Uganda.

For information on alcohol use in Kenya there is Sangree's study of the social functions of beer drinking in Bantu Tiriki, a people living in the south-eastern portion of North Nyanza District (Sangree, 1962). Here the typical beer party is held with considerable frequency whenever sufficient grain is available for beer brewing, and is conducive to a sense of community. Drunkenness is rare and occurs only from illegally distilled liquor. Under missionary pressure, the chief was persuaded to legislate in 1932 that Christian women would not have to brew beer for the men. However, the traditional Tiriki initiation with its beer-filled ceremonies has persisted.

Carothers (1972:73) claims that drunkenness is common and reports that in a series of a hundred consecutive cases of capital crime seen by him in Kenya, it headed the list of causes, being the main cause in twenty-three cases, and playing a conspicuous part in others.

An anthropologist David Parkin, working among the Giriama in a trading centre in Kenya between 1966 and 1967, has published an account of economic change from a primarily distributional trade based on palm wine to an accumulative or capitalist one based on copra and coconuts (Parkin, 1972). Palm wine is a commodity used on festive occasions and in transactions between neighbours. Because the production and distribution of palm wine makes the large-scale producer dependent on a local and neighbourhood labour force, a high premium is placed on cordial relations with the men who make up the labour force. The ethos of egalitarianism is reinforced by the customary rule that a man may never tap his own palms, but must summon the help of men outside his family, thereby ensuring that all men have work.

Work in Tanzania with reference to alcohol has been done by Widstrand (1974). The regulation, licensing and taxation of Pombe, a local beverage, formed the subject of a syndicate report from the Institute of Public Administration of the University College at Dar es Salaam by Herman *et al* (1963–64).

Finally, studies conducted by Collis *et al* (1971, 1972) on alcoholic drinks produced locally in East Africa showed that cancer of the oesophagus was commoner in areas where the main ingredient of beer was fermented maize and rare where it was produced from bananas, millet or sorghum. These studies support the evidence yielded by research elsewhere in the continent that a geographical and temporal correlation exists between the frequency of oesophageal cancer and the consumption of indigenous alcohol (for example, McGlashan, 1969).

Central Africa

The literature on central Africa is uneven. Ferreira (1957) provides some information on the campaign against alcoholism in the Copperbelt (Southern and Northern Rhodesia, or Zambia), where the number of alcoholics was estimated at 400. Gelfand (1966) has remarked on the involvement of alcohol use in cases of pellagra, porphyria, psychoses, spontaneous hypoglycaemia and liver cirrhosis, but offers no supporting evidence for his observations.

An attempt at systematic collection of basic data on alcohol availability and consumption in Zambia has been made under the WHO-sponsored National Programmes on Problems on Alcohol and Drug Dependence, but the effort is still at a preliminary stage. Zambia is perhaps, among African countries, the one most conscious of, and readiest to tackle alcohol on a national scale. Here, it has been reported that 30 per 1 000 workers in a large mine were classified as problem drinkers in 1962 (Moser, 1974:13). Another study reports that 16 per cent of the consumer's food budget goes on fermented beverages, which is as much as is ordinarily spent on beef (FAO, 1974:67). A powerful diversified beer industry has been created to cater to the money-economy consumer. Two breweries in Lusaka and Ndola produce lager beer, while twelve breweries owned by the National Breweries supply the maize-based local beverage, Chibuku. The beverage is delivered in bulk to authorized taverns. In addition, small quantities of bottled beer and other beverages are imported.

Local lager beer production grew rapidly in the wake of urban demand and the creation in 1968 of a national fixed-price market which made the products more cheaply available to the rural population. In the case of Chibuku and other sour beers, production doubled between 1964 and 1967, but tailed off as a result of an increase in indirect taxes on fermented beverages. Nevertheless, consumption of commercial beer

Table 14

Trends of commercial supply of beer (in tons) in Zambia, 1964–1972

	Production		
	Lager beer	Sour beer (Lusaka)	Chibuku
1964	10 000	10 000*	102 000
1965	22 500	10 000*	106 000
1966	33 000	19 999*	192 000
1967	44 300	20 581	199 000
1968	55 400	17 226	176 000
1969	64 800	16 500*	167 000
1970	73 900	16 000*	163 000
1971	82 800	16 500*	173 000
1972	86 900	15 000	156 000
Rate of increase per year	27.1 %	4.0 %	4.0 %

* Figures are estimates only.

Source: FAO, 1974:114

Table 15
Imports of alcoholic beverages (in metric tons) into Zambia, 1964–1971

	Wine, vermouth	Cider	Beer	Alcoholic beverages
1964	243	27	565	455
1965	300	41	2 698	507
1966	540	42	146	897
1967	480	55	322	736
1968	510	51	1 726	544
1969	670	47	793	396
1970	565	71	280	460
1971	605	110	654	612

Source: FAO, 1974:122.

remains very high in towns, and it is predicted on the basis of past trends that Chibuku consumption will reach 212 000 tons in 1976 and 221 000 tons in 1980, while that of local lager would increase to 95 000 tons and 104 000 tons respectively. There is a tendency for lager beer to supersede Chibuku in popularity among the richer classes, a trend which FAO considers not altogether desirable because Chibuku is more nutritious than lager beer. (ibid.: 32 and 67)

Domestic production in Zambia is supplemented by imported supplies of alcohol, in the quantities shown in Table 15.

The most comprehensive and detailed study of African drinking published to date remains Wolcott's (1974) investigation at first hand of integrated drinking in the segregated society of Rhodesia, to which references have already been made several times.

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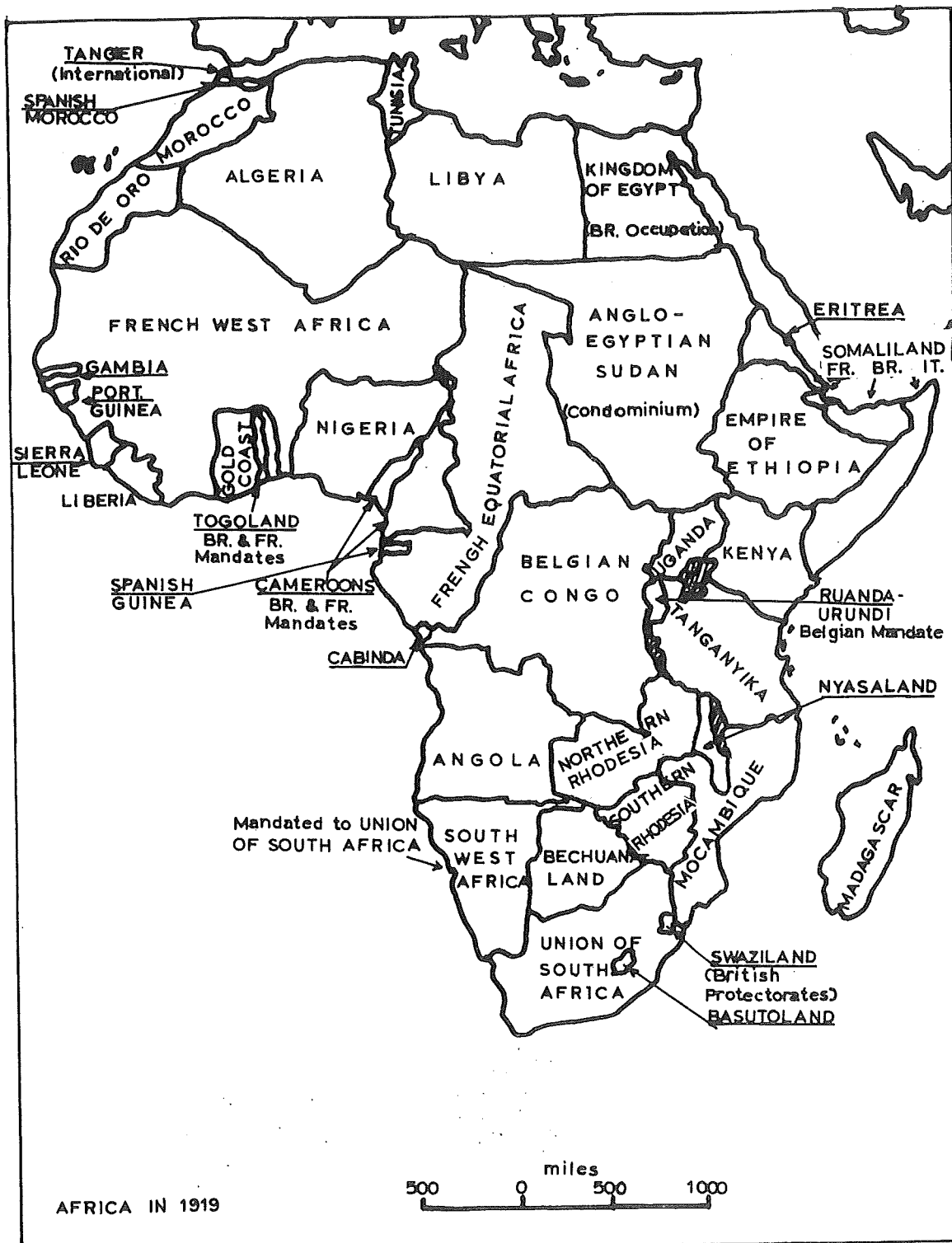
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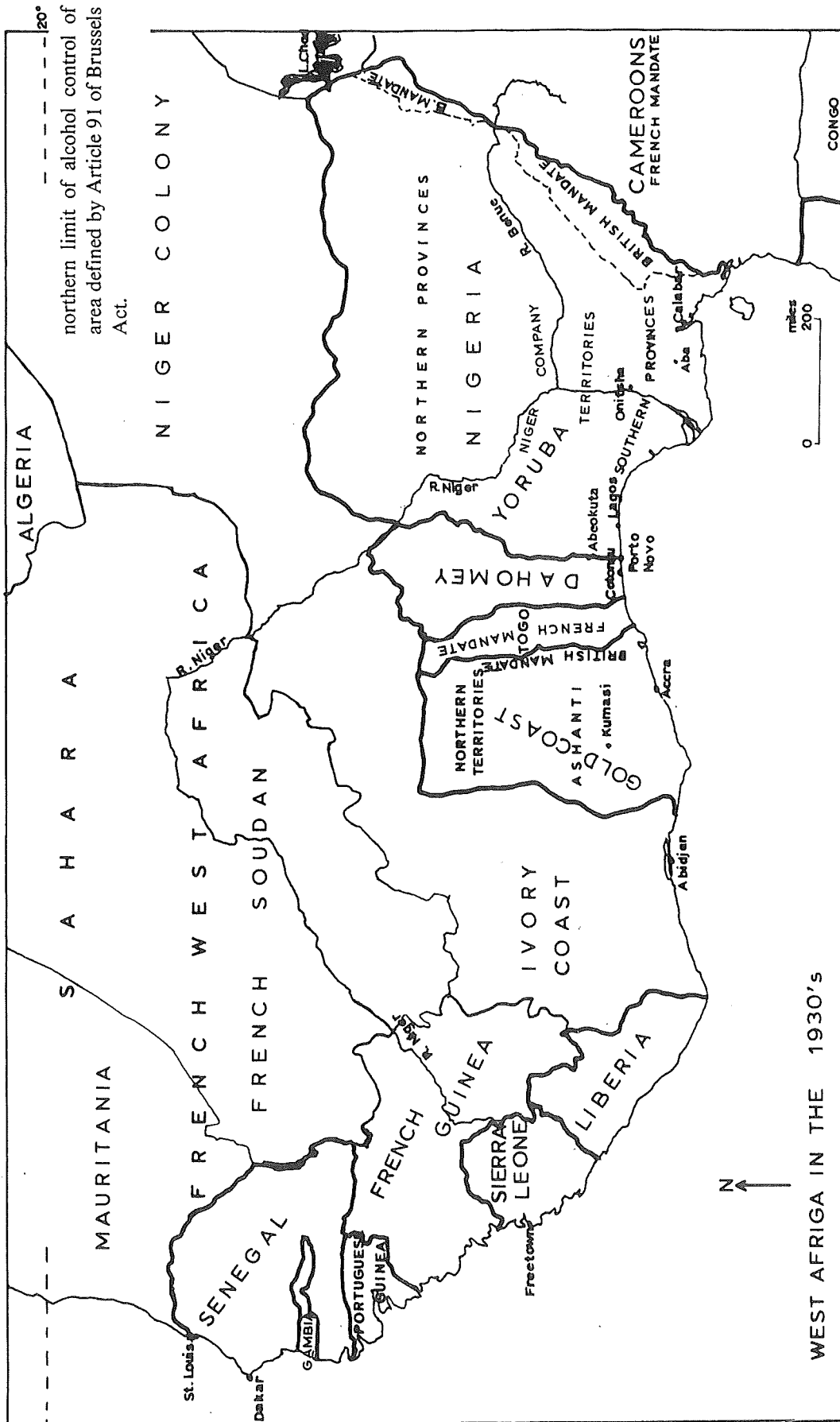
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Note: French West Africa (*Afrique Occidentale Française*, or AOF), an administrative federation with a supraterritorial government, consisted until 1958 of Dahomey, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Upper Volta. In French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique Equatoriale Française*, or AEF), another such government linked the states now known as Gabon, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville and Chad. Central African Republic was formerly known as Oubangui-Chari, and Congo-Brazzaville as Moyen Congo.



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