Africa- Imperialism

**INTRODUCTION:**

The key to the defeat and eventually the end of imperialism as a whole is the unity of all socialist countries and progressive forces in capitalist countries. –Tim Buck

In Africa’s nineteenth and twentieth centuries, imperialism was present and growing. The main countries involved in the imperialism, before world war 1 were the French, German, and Great Britain. The French’s empire was mainly in North and West Africa while Britain’s colonies were scattered throughout the continent. Germany ruled over such countries as Tanganyika, Togoland, and Cameroon, until their defeat in World War I. There were many reasons for the European countries to be competing against each other to gain colonies in Africa. we will be looking at Africa in the aspect of Gold, glory and god and the motives behind the imperialism!! We will also be looking at the translation of this to World War 1!! To understand this better, we are going to take it in the context of Nigeria!!

BERLIN CONFERENCE

The berlin conference led in 1884-85 was a meeting which affected the subsequent colonization of Africa in 2 main ways!! This included negotiating and formalizing claims to territories in Africa, and ensuring that the ‘scramble of Africa’ would be accomplished without any major conflicts between European powers!! The countries in the Berlin Conference included  Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden-Norway, Turkey, and the United States of America. No thought was given to what Africa wanted and no Africans were present in the meeting!! This lead to the world war 1, as in the other half of the 18th century, European nations became rivals seeking the vast resources of undeveloped Africa as they sought to find sources of raw materials and trade to grow their economies, leading to war between nations!! The berlin conference made the world power-hungry, thus contributing to the start of world war 1!!

 **AFRICAN IMPERIALISM IN CONTEXT OF NIGERIA**

Gold: Nigeria was rich in Oil, cocoa, cotton, groundnuts, palm, rubber, minerals etc. That British required in- order to create and expand their markets. British also exploited Africa, since Nigeria was the tenth- largest oil producing country in the world, and had over one hundred oil and gasoline companies operating in Nigeria, along the Niger River. Nigeria is also blessed with coal rich states especially Enugu which is known as “the coal city” because of its vast coal deposits. This was an advantage for the British because this way, they could revolutionize the industrial market!! Nigeria is the richest in Crude oil deposit in Africa and this is one of the reasons why British wanted to conquer Nigeria, so that they could increase their market back home!! Since, Nigeria had a weak military force, it was not difficult for British to conquer it!!

GLORY: The rule of Africa between imperialist countries, started to become competitive resulting in war!! It became a sense of achievement to imperialize countries in Africa, simply, because of its natural resources, assets to revolutionize business and markets, expanding commerce, production of important metals and minerals etc. people were glorified by the fact that they had laid their hands on a goldmine of resources for them to use and create development in their countries!!

GOD: European missionaries wanted to spread Christianity and teach it to less educated and wealthy people in Africa as one cause for imperialism - They mainly saw it as their duty to be carried out and it is commonly referred to as "The White Man's Burden", taken from Rudyard Kipling's poem.

Missionaries thought they were helping the people they invaded and controlled. They saw them as weak and felt pity when they saw 'useless' and 'wrong' rituals and customs. The main goal of spreading religion was to have natives convert and learn the White Man's way of life because they thought it was simply better. They established churches in their land, violated sacred/meaningful beliefs and traditions, and sometimes resorted to violence in order to enforce their beliefs.

**SOCIAL DIVIDE:**

The British made a clear divide between black and whites throughout the imperialism period!! There was a separate colony made for blacks, they couldn’t travel in first class railways with whites, and they also didn’t have the simple luxuries of lives!! Children of black families could not interact with the white ones, and they couldn’t even be seen together!! The blacks were treated as slaves and they used to work for the whites in extremely hostile conditions, separated from their families!! This showed a clear social divide between colour and race!!

**CONCLUSION:**

Africans exhausted all options in responding to European imperialism. Some groups tried to shut out Europeans by not trading with them and not allowing missionaries to stay with them. Some traded with Europeans but tried to keep them at a distance politically. Others formed alliances with European powers often in an attempt to play one European country off another or to find protection against local adversaries. Still others offered armed resistance. With the exception of Ethiopia, all those who chose a military option, and there were many, eventually and tragically lost to superior European weapons.

This concludes that Nigeria, in Africa had resources that proved to improve a nation’s gross production and evolvement of resources to develop the country and improve its social, economic and political advancement!! Africa faced European imperialist aggression, diplomatic pressures, military invasions, and eventual conquest and colonization. At the same time, African societies put up various forms of resistance against the attempt to colonize their countries and impose foreign domination.

 