

Sources from the Past

Lord Lugard Justifies Imperialism and Indirect Rule in Africa

Frederick D. Lugard (1858–1945) played a major role in opening Africa to European colonialism. Born to missionary parents in Madras, India, he served as an army officer in Afghanistan, Sudan, and Burma. As an official of the British East Africa Company, he helped secure British rule in Uganda and persuaded his government to declare Uganda a protectorate in 1894. His name is especially associated with Nigeria, where as governor and governor-general (1912–1919) he welded the diverse territories of Nigeria into a single administrative unit and introduced a system of indirect rule. As the following passages show, Lugard was also an eloquent spokesperson for British imperialism in Africa.

The “Scramble for Africa” by the nations of Europe—an incident without parallel in the history of the world—was due to the growing commercial rivalry, which brought home to civilised nations the vital necessity of securing the only remaining fields for industrial enterprise and expansion. It is well, then, to realise that it is for our *advantage*—and not alone at the dictates of duty—that we have undertaken responsibilities in East Africa. It is in order to foster the growth of the trade of this country, and to find an outlet for our manufactures and our surplus energy, that our far-seeing statesmen and our commercial men advocate colonial expansion.

Money spent in such extension is circulated for the ultimate advantage of the masses. It is, then, beside the mark to argue that while there is want and misery at home money should not be spent in Africa. It has yet to be proved that the most effective way of relieving poverty permanently, and in accordance with sound political economy, is by distributing half-pence in the street. If our advent in Africa introduces civilisation, peace, and good government, abolishes the slave-trade, and effects other advantages for Africa, it must not be therefore supposed that this was our sole and only aim in going there. However greatly such objects may weigh with a large and powerful section of the nation, I do not believe that in these days our national policy is based on motives of philanthropy only. Though these may be our *duties*, it is quite possible that here (as frequently if not generally is

the case) advantage may run parallel with duty. There are some who say we have no *right* in Africa at all, that “it belongs to the natives.” I hold that our right is the necessity that is upon us to provide for our ever-growing population—either by opening new fields for emigration, or by providing work and employment which the development of over-sea extension entails—and to stimulate trade by finding new markets, since we know what misery trade depression brings at home.

While thus serving our own interests as a nation, we may, by selecting men of the right stamp for the control of new territories, bring at the same time many advantages to Africa. Nor do we deprive the natives of their birthright of freedom, to place them under a foreign yoke. It has ever been the key-note of British colonial method to rule through and by the natives, and it is this method, in contrast to the arbitrary and uncompromising rule of Germany, France, Portugal, and Spain, which has been the secret of our success as a colonising nation, and has made us welcomed by tribes and peoples in Africa, who ever rose in revolt against the other nations named. In Africa, moreover, there is among the people a natural inclination to submit to a higher authority. That intense detestation of control which animates our Teutonic races does not exist among the tribes of Africa, and if there is any authority that we replace, it is the authority of the Slavers and Arabs, or the intolerable tyranny of the “dominant tribe.”

SOURCE: Frederick D. Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, 2 vols. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1893, 1:381–82.

According to Lord Lugard, what aspects of European imperialism in Africa proved advantageous to Europeans at home?