

Who needs the civilisation of the oppressor?

THE CHURCH

We have seen that the rulers had a certain view of the ruled. They saw the ruled as non-Christian, and so they brought in the church to effect a campaign of 'missionising' the indigenous people.

The Christian Church was used as a tool to 'civilize' the indigenous people, in that it broke down the traditional value systems within the indigenous community and replaced them with the values and ideas of the Christian world.

This meant that the indigenous people were urged to reject themselves and their own way of looking at the world and see themselves as they were defined by their new teachers.

The church's role did not begin after the military campaign but in some instances went ahead of the militarists.

Missionaries such as David Livingstone are good examples of the forebearers of the 'Christian word'. They came to Africa in the belief that they were charged with a mission by God to 'civilize' the people of Darkest Africa.

Their task lay in persuading the indigenous people to define themselves in terms laid down by the gospel of Christianity. They were call-

Clash of cultures

ed upon to reject the traditional methods of worship, to hate their past, themselves and their own people.

Everything had to be redefined in terms of Christianity. However, the indigenous people found it difficult to come to terms with a religion that called upon them to relinquish 'material things' and live in the hope of a pleasant 'hereafter'.

They could not come to terms with the jealous God who took everything away from them and gave nothing concrete in return. And when the people rejected the Christian teachings the military might of the Europeans moved in.

Having been defeated the people were forced to reject themselves; and were forced to accept the dictates of the rulers. The way of life determined by the Christian found the defeated people always in a position of subservience because they could not do anything without being told by their masters.

The first step of the conqueror was to break down the beliefs of the conquered, and the church led the way in this. The next step was to break down the language, the dress, education process and the cultural traditions.

MENTAL CRIPPLING

This process led to the mental crippling of the indigenous people. No longer were the people allowed to make decisions about their lives. Now they found that decisions were being made for them. And whenever the people resisted, the military might of the conqueror came down heavily upon them.

All the while the conquerors were taking away the land, and recruiting from the conquered for their labour. This caused, withing the black people, the development of an illness - a type of culture shock - where they found that their history, their culture, their language and their wealth was slowly disappearing.

Thus, in their minds the people became lost. They did not know what to do. In most societies where the coloniser had defeated the will of the people there developed a number of syndromes which we shall discuss in the next issue.

(To be continued)

