

PART ONE
AFRICA, TWENTIETH CENTURY

Foreword



The first part of this book is largely about Nigeria, at any rate so far as practical examples are concerned. This, however, is both accidental and incidental. The only reason why Nigeria figures so prominently is that it is the country, outside Britain, where the authors have lived longest, and they think it is better to write of what they know than of what they have heard at second hand. There are, however, ample reasons for thinking that the actual situations described can be paralleled elsewhere. The authors have indeed come across them in other parts of Africa, but not having this book in mind at the time they failed to document them. They have also heard them discussed by students and civil servants from almost all the underdeveloped countries of the English-speaking world, and it is a fair supposition that the problems are universal.

The book is an attempt by two collaborators to examine a social situation sympathetically. The bulk of it will be a discussion of bribery and corruption in Britain. Its most significant aspect will be an attempt to explore ground which the authors think has not been adequately explored before—what were the factors which led Britain, a country as corrupt as any, to achieve in a particular century a standard of public integrity which is perhaps without precedent. Perhaps even more important, can any threads be traced in the pattern which are meaningful for Britain's former African and Asian dependencies?

It is hardly necessary to apologize to Nigerian readers for citing examples from their country, since the best elements in Nigerian society, at all levels, are themselves the most forthright critics of corruption there; and nothing is written in the relevant chapters which is not already public knowledge from newspapers or official reports.

Nevertheless, the authors wish to repeat with emphasis that the first part of the book is only incidentally about Nigeria, or indeed West Africa.