

Document based question (ap world history)



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Africa Africa is one of the world's richest sources of diverse flora and fauna. Yet today, Africa faces the same problems that any third world region faces: the scarcity of basic human needs, the dangers of civil unrest, the presence of epidemic diseases, and the haunt of debt. Analysts argue that these problems that have beset modern Africa are largely due to its history of being possessed, and eventually abandoned, by Europeans. As with any colonizer-colony story in the history books, the European colonies of Africa were simply exploited for their resources and then left in tatters.

In 2002, then US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill claims that the World Bank gave Africa \$300 million in loans (as reported by BBC news, 28 May 2002).

This staggering amount is just part of the reason why the countries of South Africa have accumulated so much debt. One should simply realize that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), while being international financial institutions, are actually largely controlled by the government of rich countries, like US and Britain (Africa Action website, 2005). While these creditors do provide aid and new loans to Africa, the hapless people of the region are forced to pay more money to them in a vicious cycle of debt. Thus, these creditors are able to wield significant influences over Africa's economy and the region's future.

It is thus no great wonder why, despite these huge foreign debt, Africa barely has enough to properly supply its people with basic commodities such as food and clean water (O'Neill, 2002). To add insult to obvious injury, Africa is simply up to its neck in epidemic diseases, with AIDS being a major health concern of many countries in the continent. Information from UNAIDS (2000) signify that a great majority of the country is infected, thus resulting to more than 11 million children orphaned by AIDS and an equally significant amount

being infected by the disease (UN, 2004).

Perhaps the saddest point of this issue is the fact that amidst all these problems, civil unrest still pervade the region (Copson, Africa's Wars and Prospects for Peace). While children are being orphaned by AIDS, parents lose their children to the never ending wars in the continent, as children are being recruited to serve either as soldiers or perform noncombatant roles both for the government and for the rebels (Amnesty International, 2005). The good thing that may be coming out of all these is that the rest of the world does not just sit back and watch Africa suffer through its woes. Celebrities are making their contributions and doing their part in spreading awareness about the dire needs of the continent and its people (BBC News report, 8 September 2000). Campaigns for totally eradicating world debt will ease not only Africa's burdens but those of other third world nations as well. This is a novel campaign, and as such, perhaps Africa's colonizers should be reminded as well to clean up after the mess they have made.