DEVELOPMENT *continued from page 1*

rated, some poor countries became so dependent on loans that their indebtedness rivaled—or even surpassed—their Gross National Products. By 1974, Somalia's ratio of debt to GNP was 127.5%, Botswana's 94.2%, and Zaire's, 72.5%. Of 29 nations whose ratio exceeded 30%, 18 were in Africa.

The litany of woes could continue indefinitely without generating controversy. It is in the complex search for causes that disagreements arise.

Wheatcroft and the *Time* writers pay passing homage to the bitter legacy of colonialism, and its drawing of illogical geopolitical boundaries that ignored ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural differences. But they fix real responsibility for Africa's plight on itself, particularly on leaders they see as immature, corrupt, power hungry, tribalist and—worst of all—socialist.

"Europe has indeed imposed a succession of alien concepts on Africa, which never asked for them," opines Wheatcroft: "mercantile trade, Christianity, liberalism, democracy, and, as a final bad joke, revolutionary Marxist socialism. Some African rulers lucubrate about socialism as though it has relevance to their countries. But it is an utterly European concept."

Historical accuracy is often stretched to reinforce the point. "One of the best examples that experiments in Marxist socialism have largely been unsuccessful," says *Time*, "is resource-rich Ghana, where the four-year-old government of Flight Lieut. Jerry Rawlings, 36, now faces an economy teetering on the brink of economic collapse."

Like similar statements about Angola and Mozambique, such reporting brushes aside the fact that in all three cases, left-leaning governments inherited from Western-oriented rulers economies that were already in shambles.

Tanzania is the most often-cited example of socialism's god-that-failed. David Lamb, former Africa correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, writes that Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere's experiment with socialism "has been one of the great failures in independent Africa, and one that should be a lesson for other countries."

"What Nyerere overlooked," says Lamb in his 1982 book *The Africans*, "was that people in Africa do not have to work to feed themselves, and in that setting socialism was a bad alternative. The rich soil and tropical climate provide ample food for subsistence. Take away the monetary rewards for increased production and people are perfectly content to live as they always have, growing just enough food for themselves and their families."

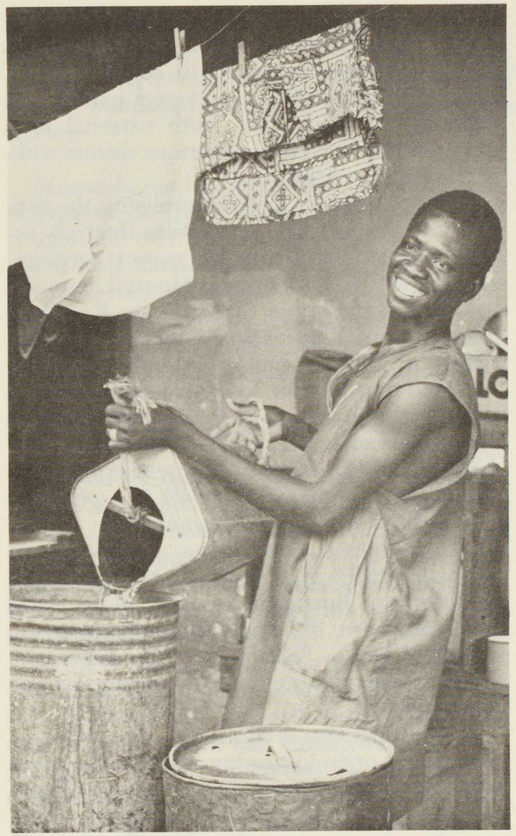
If that seems a breath-taking misstatement at a time when mass starvation threatens over two dozen African nations, including Tanzania, dissenters from the prevailing view argue that it is no less naive than blaming Africans for their own ills.

While Africa's current crises are often perceived as relatively recent, a betrayal of the bright promise of independence, there are development theorists who have chronicled—even predicted—what socialist thinker Michael Harrington calls "an important and dramatic phenomenon of the post-World War II years: the flow of money from the poor to the rich."

Even in showcase countries like Kenya, which is still held up, despite some recent tarnishing, as representing successful development on the Western free-enterprise model, there has long been trouble beneath the calm facade. A decade ago, development workers like Dutch agricultural specialist C.R. Ter Kuile were pointing out that the income of Kenya's rural poor—85% of the population—was declining.

The Development of Underdevelopment

The premise that underdevelopment is a process, a result of existing structural relations between rich and poor, is common among Third World economists and politicians, socialists and non-socialists alike.



Delivering water in Ghana's capital, Accra: After defying efforts of several administrations, Ghana economy is finally showing signs of recovery.
United Nations

Elsewhere in this issue, Paul Fauvet of the Mozambique News Agency portrays the economy of Mozambique as vulnerable to its structural dependence on South Africa. His thesis parallels the argument that poor countries, in general, are at the mercy of decisions taken by wealthy nations to benefit themselves.

Also in this week's issue is a review of a book by Guy Gran, assistant professor of African and Development Studies at American University's School of International Service. His *Development by People* stakes out a position that sounds heretical in the limited context of the usual debate about foreign aid. It is, however, one often encountered among development workers in the field.

"Analyzing the IMF [International Monetary Fund] in theoretical terms," he writes, "means departing from the vast establishment literature generated by IMF economists and their academic and journalistic supporters and striking out directly against more than a generation of some of the most sophisticated intellectual mystification of modern times."

Gran, who is regarded as an expert on Zaire, uses it to illustrate the functioning of aid projects:

"Coming to power with Western assistance in the mid-1960s, President Mobutu [Sese Seko] inherited a potentially rich country. With the guidance of European mining interests, the World Bank, and the IMF, Mobutu proceeded to lock Zaire into an export-led growth model."

Gran asserts that "a misshapen triple alliance" of Western governments, private interests and the Zaire elite collaborates to fend off the bankruptcy that always appears inevitable. The result: "Mobutu profits by every delay. Private banks maintain their global credibility. Belgium still gets its copper and the U.S. its cobalt. The Zairian people still starve."

American University economics professor Howard Wachtel says such dependency relationships were in place prior to decolonization and were strengthened in the immediate post-colonial years.

His 1977 study of multinational banks in the Third World, published by the Transnational Institute, traces current lending practices to an Eisenhower administration policy of encouraging private, rather than public, financing of development programs.

Wachtel says the success of that drive is partly responsible for the threat of default fac-