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Anatomy of Political Instability

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The African Experience

By Ng'weno Osolo-Nasubo

Political development in Africa has gone through various stages in different states during the last two decades. Often this development entailed high hopes as well as disappointments. And as the new leaders of Africa embarked on the search for a political system ideally suited to transform the socio-economic and post-colonial political ills facing their citizens, a wave of "isms" spread across the continent. Concepts such as "African Socialism," "Nkrumahism" and "Pragmatic Socialism" were expounded to politically-unsophisticated citizens whose total loyalty to these concepts was demanded. Along with this emerged the concept of one-party versus multi-party system, which the colonialists had created and promoted on the eve of independence to insure "Parliamentary Democracy."

To some non-African watchers (notably Western Europeans), African traditional communalism, to which the African leaders constantly referred in their search for a new socio-economic and political order, became equated with Eastern European communism.

Meanwhile, African governments, pre-occupied with socio-economic problems facing their people, sought assistance from external governments and multinational corporations. While big powers sought to fight their ideological battles on the African continent, the Africans soon discovered how they might take advantage of both sides. But some nations were hurt in the process, both politically and economically.

The Beginning

To dwell on the origin of African political development, such a study would compel one to take intellectual and mental flight back to the pre-slave and pre-colonial epochs, when Africa had politically organized itself and had created great kingdoms and empires (e.g. Ghana, Kush, Mali, Songhai, Soudan, Zimbabwe).

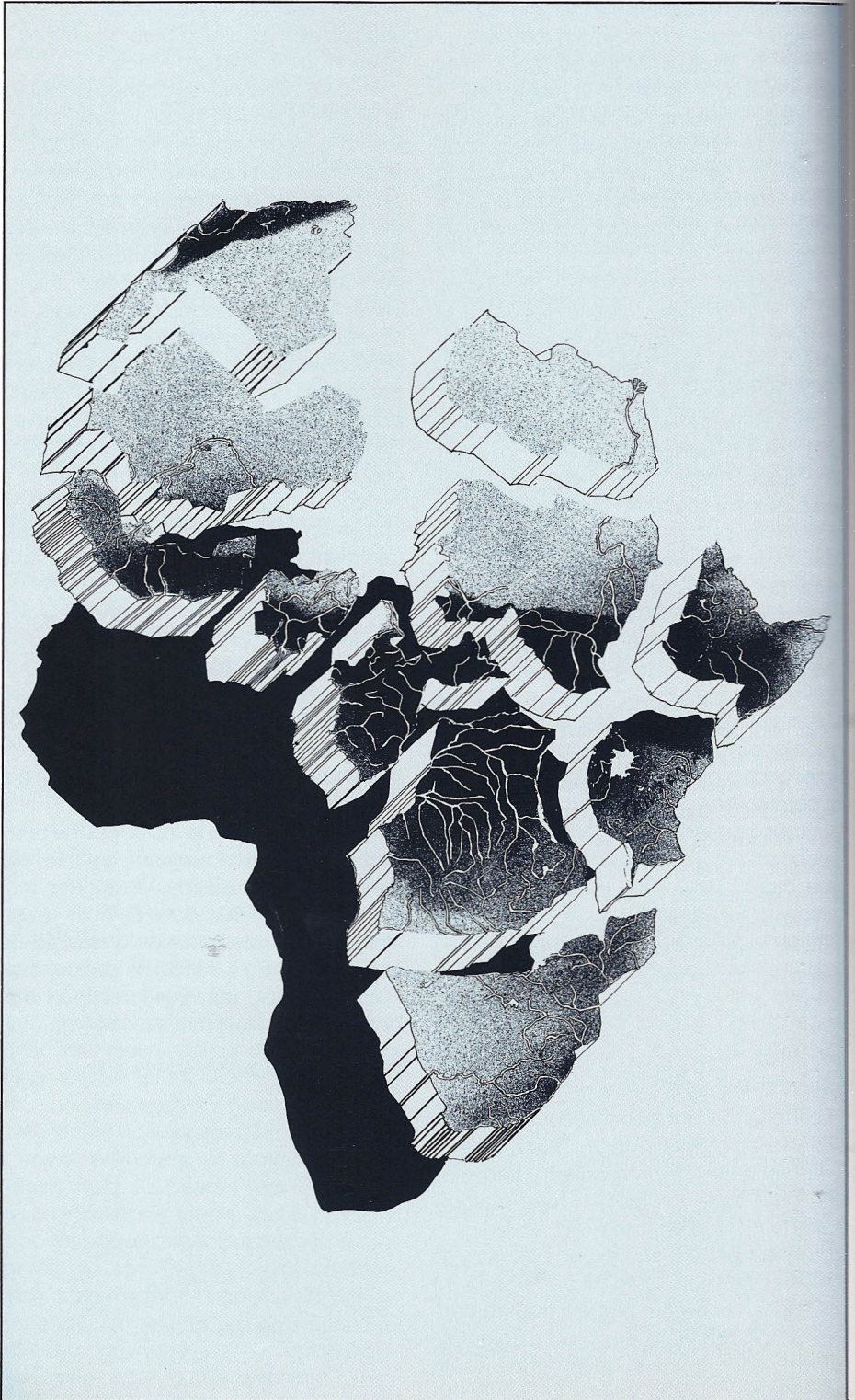


ILLUSTRATION BY KOFI TYUS

Today, more than ever, the world is saturated with both realism and contradictions: A world of "have-less" exceedingly outnumbering the "have-plenty," a world of strong political and economic growth and development known as "super-powers," and another world known by names such as: primitive, undeveloped, underdeveloped, developing, Third World. These last entities do not as yet fit or qualify in the definition of the common word "power"—let alone "super-power." There is a white world, and a non-white world; a world of the few super-rich (politically and economically) controlling the destinies of the emerging nations of the world.

Nowhere is this realism more seriously pronounced than in Africa (although one notes comparable problems in Asia and Latin America). The African situation is much more complex and precarious than the others primarily due to the continent's tortuous and disjointed historicity; and the rape of her resources by centuries of slave trade and the emergence of colonial hegemony and imperialism.

When Africans realized (during colonial period) that they were socially, politically and economically impoverished and were not politically free, they sought to achieve political freedom as a prelude to all other freedoms. But the search for a cohesive force faced insurmountable difficulties which were predicated upon the vertical partition of the ethnic population, and the creation of unviable colonial enclaves; and, also, due to the compounded absence of political education among the majority of the African population.

Nevertheless, when a few Africans took the charge to organize the masses, the latter responded enthusiastically because of the colonial pressure on the one hand and the envisaged unity promising them a change from that pressure on the other. Within a very short time, Africans rallied and placed the colonial governments in a state of siege. Apparently, when the colonial authorities in the Metropolitan governments learned what the Africans were up to, they quickly suggested "a ne-

gotiated settlement." But little did the African participants at independence conferences know that the colonialists had indeed already worked out a politico-economic formula advantageous only to themselves. Therefore, when the independence instruments were ceremoniously handed, the Africans got only a bare bone, while the flesh and marrow had been retained by the ex-colonialists.

Economic dominance and pursuit for wider markets for finished (manufactured) goods brought about both economic and political imperialism—thus prompting slavery, colonialism and now neo-colonialism. Further, politics has always been applied either as a weapon or as a ladder with which to achieve an economic goal; once that goal is achieved, politics is again used as a shield with which to protect the achieved economic objective.

Independence Constitutions: "Parliamentary Democracy"— Governments without Power

In *Politics Among Nations*, Hans Morgenthau defines political power as "the psychological control over the minds of men." In the case of Africa, this control was firmly entrenched in the independence constitutions of the new nations.

Constitutions that were drafted by colonial powers as a pre-condition for political freedom became the framework for independence. For example, the constitutions provided for a colonial minority representation and rigid requirements for amendments—aimed at protecting expatriates from "expropriation of their property." Taken together, these constitutions thus firmly closed the channels that the African majority governments might have used to introduce massive economic priorities, including land reform and ownership. For example, the constitutions of Kenya and Nigeria, and the presently proposed constitution for Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), state categorically that:

The Constitution will contain provisions ("the Bill of Rights") on the lines of those in the Constitutions of other recently in-

dependent Commonwealth countries, protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms . . . this will confer protection from expropriation of property except on specified grounds of public interest and even then only on condition that there is prompt payment of adequate compensation and that the whole compensation may be remitted abroad free from any deduction, charge or tax made or levied in respect of its remission.

The "Bill of Rights" provision forbidding expropriation of property that was undemocratically acquired during colonial rule, particularly land, guarantees the continuation of the unequal distribution of wealth between the African majority and the European minority. It sustains the development of the European sector, while continuing to hinder the development of the Africans on a large scale. More than that, the "Bill of Rights" provision allowing the remission of cash compensation abroad without restrictions or tax is indeed an example of how African governments are burdened with a critical lack of foreign exchange. This lack of foreign exchange continues to plague many governments into political instability.

Jacob Oser, in his book, *Promoting Economic Development—With Illustrations from Kenya*, writes about a related constitutional clause to compensate expatriate civil servants in Kenya who wished to temporarily leave government service:

When Africans took over from the Europeans, the question of what to do about the foreign civil servants arose. The new regime wanted most of them to stay on, but many were not inclined to do so. Both the few who were dismissed and the many who wanted to leave were offered compensation . . . so attractive that most European civil servants, even if they had wanted to remain in Kenya and work for the new regime, quit their jobs, took their termination pay, and immediately accepted other government positions—All these payments were and

are of course, convertible into sterling in London. No wonder this is called in Kenya the 'golden handshake', a sweet way to be bid adieu.

The retention of former colonial civil servants (both European expatriates and local bureaucrats) by governments in the developing nations of Africa has contributed tremendously to the socio-political and economic instability in Africa. Although most of the expatriates are not primarily political opportunists, nevertheless, they are economically inclined. They all capitalize on the fringe experience gained during the colonial period to further their socio-economic ambitions. They are not too keen about changing the direction of their countries' socio-economic transformation that would encompass most or all the people. They "are committed to capitalism because of their background, their Western education, and their shared experience and enjoyment of positions of privilege. They are mesmerised by capitalist institutions and organizations. They ape the way of life of their old colonial masters, and are determined to preserve the status and power inherited from them," wrote Kwame Nkrumah in *Class Struggle in Africa*.

Most of the expatriates were colonial diehards, conservative farmers and businessmen sympathetic to colonialism. Moreover, more complications were added to this episode when African governments entrusted these people with extremely significant responsibilities. For example, a few of them became senior advisors and executives in matters involving politico-economic policy. In Kenya, for instance, former spokesmen of the diehard European settlers were appointed to Parliament—some into President Jomo Kenyatta's cabinet—and as senior judges. But more often than not, they were unwilling to give unqualified support to the African governments they served. Nkrumah, in *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, recounts how his government experienced similar problems:

It did not escape my notice that where the administrative service was concerned, if a policy was laid down for the officials by the Government with which they disagreed, means were adopted, by subterfuge or otherwise, to wreck that policy—It happened too often for it to be a coincidence that whenever government policy was to be put into effect, the officials either dilly-dallied or saw that nothing was done about it.

The same thesis is reiterated by Jack Woddis in *Introduction to Neo-Colonialism*:

There may be some former colonial officials who sincerely wish to assist the new states, but the majority of them, whatever may be their views, are willy-nilly part of the imperialist establishment which trained them, moulded their outlook and continues to retain them precisely because they are still able to render a service.

Rapid Development Approach Versus Gradual Approach

The attainment of political independence in Africa was viewed by the African masses as a prelude to the struggle ultimately aimed at the eradication of the social and economic ills left behind by the former empire-builders. The masses yearned for quick solutions to a multitude of problems emanating, for the most part, from the lack of proper education, absence of infrastructural facilities, nutritional food, housing, clothing, employment, equal treatment and, above all, the return and redistribution of land.

Nearly all African political leaders understood these basic needs. However, the manner in which to achieve them presented the hardest obstacle; for it was not until a little while later that they realized the above needs or fruits of independence could not be easily achieved because of colonial contradictions and, if one may add, the socio-economic and political ideologies of colonizers, versus African nationalism.

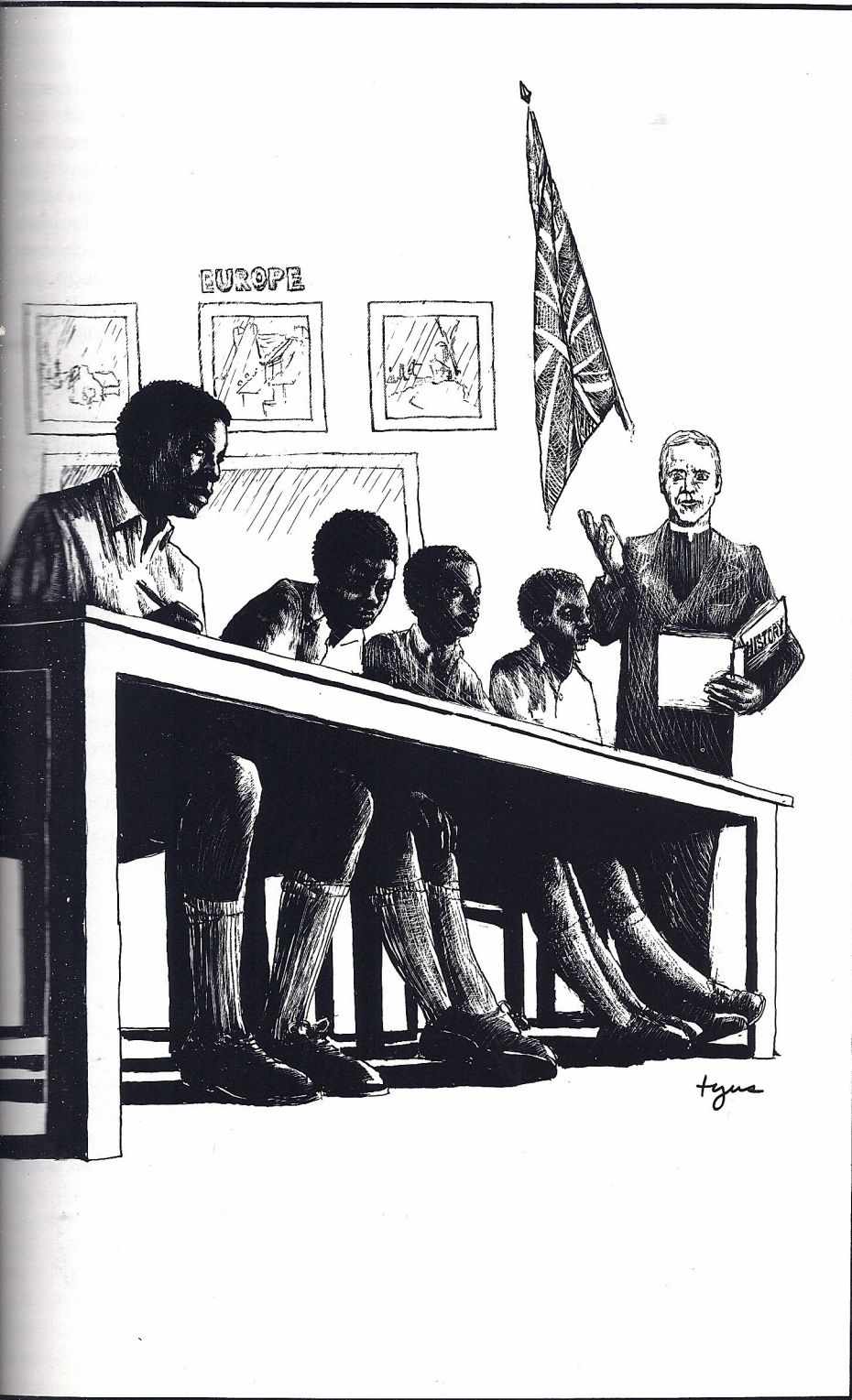
Education: as Colonizers' Ideological Weapon

Education in Africa during colonial period was influenced by the spirit of racial discrimination, just as all other aspects of colonial life. Whereas all children of the ruling settler group had comprehensive and well-developed educational facilities and proper curricula, the African children were simply looked upon and laughed at—as though they were "Charlie Brown" cartoons. In other words, Africans were depicted as educational sub-normals.

All European children were provided with professional kind of education and enough funds duly allocated for that purpose, but the Africans were required to pay "school fees." Also, they were subjected to rudimentary and irrelevant kinds of education that did not prepare them for the task of nation-building, before and even after independence. For example, whereas Europeans and other foreigners (e.g. Asians in East and Central Africa) were encouraged to study medicine, engineering and business, Africans were encouraged to memorize foreign religious beliefs and practices without permission to question their meaning and validity.

Young Africans spent more time studying the history and geography of the world, especially of Europe and the Americas. This curriculum was saturated with glorious Western Europe under the Popes, the renaissance and the reformation—undoubtedly with a lot of exaggeration. Africans were led to believe that it was important to memorize William Shakespeare's plays, know a great deal about the One Hundred Years' War of the Roses, Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon Bonaparte, Alexander "the Great," Captain James Cook, the Battle of Waterloo, the United States and the French Wars of Independence, Louis XIV and Louis XVI, Hitler and the Jews, the War of Jenkin's Ear, and most preposterously, King Leopold of Belgium as the divine owner of the Congo.

Nothing of substance was mentioned about the Great African kingdoms, and



the Europeans' involvement in the slave trade, except to glorify Europeans as the pioneers who struggled and brought the slave trade to an end. Africans were further led to believe that the Europeans were superior, and their culture and continent represented the earthly heaven. Thus, the Europeans were mandated by the Creator to "colonize" and "civilize" the "primitive" non-white races. In this respect, the African was totally mis-educated, and this process contributed to his belief in his own inferiority; and later to his political instability.

In French and Portuguese colonies, assimilation (*assimilado*) became the basis of education. The curriculum emphasized the acceptance of European culture as the basis of the "civilized" life, and the rejection or forsaking of African culture, which formed the basis for the "primitive" life.

Another devastating obstacle to Africans' educational advancement was the result of colonial governments' policy of systematic elimination of young Africans from school at the early or primary stage. Under this policy, called "superannuation," which did not apply to Europeans and other foreign students, indiscriminate turnovers became the order of the educational system.

("Superannuation," a policy aimed at ensuring Europeans and other non-Africans of abundant and unlimited semi-skilled labor, was recommended to the colonial government of Kenya by the Archbishop of East and Central Africa, The Rt. Rev. Leonard J. Beecher. It stated that in the event an African pupil failed in European language(s) (i.e. English or French), the student in question would automatically be withdrawn from school regardless of the results or performance in other courses. Under this policy, repetition in either course or examination was outlawed. This policy later spread throughout colonial Africa. As a result, the youngsters thus affected by this policy ended up auctioning their labor power on

European farms and/or factories gathering raw materials for export; others labored in non-African [e.g. Asian, Arab] commercial stores doing domestic work, and other back-breaking jobs while others enlisted in the colonial army, police and prisons. And those who did not find work ended up in untold misery. For further details, see N. Osolo-Nasubo, *A Socio-Economic Study of the Kenya Highlands, from 1900-1970: A Case Study of the Uhuru Government*. Chapter 111, pp. 64-112.)

Along with this, was the stigma attached to manual work. Agriculture and other manual occupations were viewed as careers of the "unintelligent" or "stupid" people. This stigma was re-enforced particularly by the punishment often imposed on an African student for whatever reason or mistake committed by the student (e.g. arriving late for class, failing given tests, or appearing in rags). The punishment so imposed was, more often than not, related to performing some work in the field: such as cultivating or cutting grass. Psychologically, therefore, African youths grew up despising rural life, and every youth struggled to the utmost to pass the numerous examinations prepared in the Metropole so that he would eventually migrate to urban centers in search of rudimentary socio-economic salvation.

Despite this limited education, one basic advantage the system had was its emphasis on liberal education as opposed to technical and/or science education. This system was tailored upon the principle of comprehensive essay type of examinations, which fortunately prepared young Africans to think and reason comprehensively. Similarly, the encouragement of Africans to study law extolled their thinking and reasoning process. A few African students went abroad, and while there, new ideas and philosophies developed and crystallized. This was later expressed in speeches and writings—most of which were intended to put in proper perspective the African history and tradition, the repudiation of colonialism, and

call for self-determination and independence.

Upon independence, the new African leaders realized that in order to forge ahead socially and economically, a policy designed to combat illiteracy must be elevated highest on the order of priorities. Many states resolved to broaden educational facilities by offering free education. Although this was received somewhat positively, nonetheless, some leaders have made rather more serious mistakes than the colonialists. In Kenya, for instance, private school fees have skyrocketed since independence, especially in the former European schools. As a result, only the children of politicians and wealthy businessmen are able to afford the cost. Coupled with this blunder is the policy of offering free education at the university level. In essence, it is like trying to build a house starting with the roof while neglecting the foundation.

The Search for Rapid Socio-Economic and Political Development (ISMS)

Compounded with ever rising frustrations among the masses, African political leaders resolved that political slogans used during the struggle for independence had already served their purpose. They had to be catalogued and kept in the archives, and serious considerations given to the provision of social amenities. To some African leaders, the problem was not merely confined to district, national or regional level; it was seen as too compounded and too formidable to be tackled singly or in isolation. Therefore, first the struggle was to be linked to the issues of identity and the crisis of economic development.

The search for a scientific system or approach that would offer rapid solution to the compounded socio-economic and political ills in Africa soon became the ideological battleground, chiefly between Western capitalist adherents (both local and abroad) on the one hand, and East-ern socialist admirers on the other.

To most Africans, Europe was associated with slavery and colonialism. It was a period of desperate search for an alternative system that would offer a strong hand in regaining the traditional African communal life and personality, guarded with the managing of the means of production and distribution of resources. With this spirit, most African leaders preferred the socialist approach—for it derives from the communalism and humanism of traditional Africa. This system was given several names by several leaders, for example: "African Socialism," by Jomo Kenyatta; "Ujamma," by Julius Nyerere; "Nkrumahism," by Kwame Nkrumah; "Communaucracy," by Sekou Toure; "Negritude," by Leopold Senghor; "L'homme personnaliste," by Mamadou Dia.

Nyerere, in *Ujamma: Essays on Socialism*, asserted that:

'Ujamaa,' then, or 'Familyhood,' describes our socialism. It is opposed to capitalism, which seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man—Modern African socialism can draw from its traditional heritage the recognition of 'society' as an extension of the basic family unit.

Nkrumah, one of the great theorists and an eloquent philosopher on the African political scene drew great attention to socialism (scientific socialism), and what it could, if adopted, offer Africa. He reasoned:

Socialism is the only pattern that can within the shortest possible time bring the good life to the people. For socialism assumes the public ownership of the means of production—the land and its resources—and the use of those means for production that will bring benefit to the people. (from African Socialism, by William Friedland and Carl Rosberg, Jr.).

Capitalism, therefore, became synonymous with slavery, colonialism, elitism (class and/or social and economic strati-

fication), and neo-colonialism. The majority of Africans reject capitalism because it breeds individualism (as opposed to Africa's communalism or villageism). To Africans, individualism breeds selfishness, family disintegration, personal greed and, therefore, misery. Capitalism, hence, is viewed as a threat to the survival of African traditional pillars of life: e.g. the concept of land ownership, extended family, method of choosing spouse and polygyny (or polygamy), rules of succession and inheritance.

But it became difficult to introduce socialism on a massive scale to take the place of capitalism. This complication was predicated upon many contradictions. For one thing, Western capitalists already had invested in colonial Africa and did not withdraw either their capital or personnel at the eve of independence. The colonial governments, along with African leaders and European settlers, agreed to a constitutional framework that offered protection—thus giving the capitalists a strong hand in the management of the means of production and distribution of goods and services.

Moreover, since the colonial authorities had relinquished a "shadow" but retained the "substance," it became impossible for the new African governments to change the relations of Western colonial-capitalist system and its form of production. This complication was further predicated upon these factual variables alluded to earlier: First, the new government's retention of old colonial civil service, and European senior personnel of the armed forces; secondly the Africans' acceptance of rigid and unworkable constitution during negotiation for independence.

The battle, therefore, shifted on the acquisition of capital that would neither be wholly capitalistic nor communistic (for the latter was said to be associated with its denial of basic human rights; e.g. race and racism). Again and again, the West hammered hard on this question of "basic human rights" in socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union (as though the

colonialists themselves were champions of human equality). African leaders responded to this propaganda chiefly because of colonial experience involving race and racism. In other words, Africans could not in any way embrace communism—an ideology also associated with racism, the gravest menace partly responsible for both slavery and colonialism.

The acquisition and control of capital investment in Africa has dominated African politics since the late 1950s and early 1960s, when most African states attained political independence. It has drawn both the West and the East into a stronger competition for economic superiority all over the world. Africans, not wanting to be entangled in East-West cold war politics, resolved to develop their nations from the neutral position, bearing in mind an old proverb: "When two bull elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers most."

Private investment (capitalism) and public enterprise (socialism) as separate and distinct political and economic systems continue to dominate African political and economic development.

But most Africans prefer scientific socialism to capitalism, because the former offers elements deep-rooted in the African traditional social structure, which calls for communal ownership of land and the concept of extended family.

One Party Vs. Multi-Party Systems

Immediately following independence, the new African governments realized that the rhetoric, the quest for unity and support they had sought and received during the heyday of political struggle for independence from colonial bondage could no longer be guaranteed unless the ever rising socio-economic frustrations were solved once and for all.

The politicians quietly acknowledged that these frustrations could not be solved, primarily due to the socio-economic and political framework they and their ex-colonial governments and settler-businessmen had agreed to. New slogans

were therefore immediately created as a means to conceal their embarrassment, weakness and, above all, their failure to fulfill the rhetorical promises.

For instance, in Kenya, the old slogan "*Uhuru na Mashamba*" (freedom and expropriation of the highlands from the European settlers) was substituted with "*Uhuru na Kazi*" (freedom and work); in Tanzania, the emphasis shifted from "*Uhuru na Kazi*" to "*Uhuru na Umoja*" (Freedom and Unity); in Ghana, "Freedom and Unity" was substituted with "Work and Happiness," while in Cameroon "*Unificacion Imediate*" was replaced with "*Paix Travail Patrie*" (Peace-Work-Fatherland).

The emphasis, therefore, was on "Unity and Hard Work"—without which the new governments could not guarantee their survival. This became apparent as members of the "opposition" got busy accusing the new governments of political naivete and impotence. The opposition felt they too had participated in the struggle for independence and were entitled to an equal share of the fruits of independence. This they had been denied by their former colleagues who had, by sheer chance, been successful in forming the first government. Being furious and angry, the opposition held nuts and bolts politics around the country (or countries) telling the people how the government had lied to the masses by failing to honor pre-independence promises. Fearing possible negative consequences, most governments reacted by banning the opposition party (or parties).

Role of the Opposition

Under colonialism, the role of an opposition party (or parties) was not quite understood by the Africans who always were at the fringes of the power structure. Under British colonial practice, for example, the government successfully operated on the premise of law and order. Senior members of the opposition party's "shadow cabinet" (who were all Europeans) were in constant touch with the government—par-

ticularly on matters involving major policy, e.g. forced labor, African taxes, racial segregation (in schools, employment, housing, etc.), and appropriation of African land.

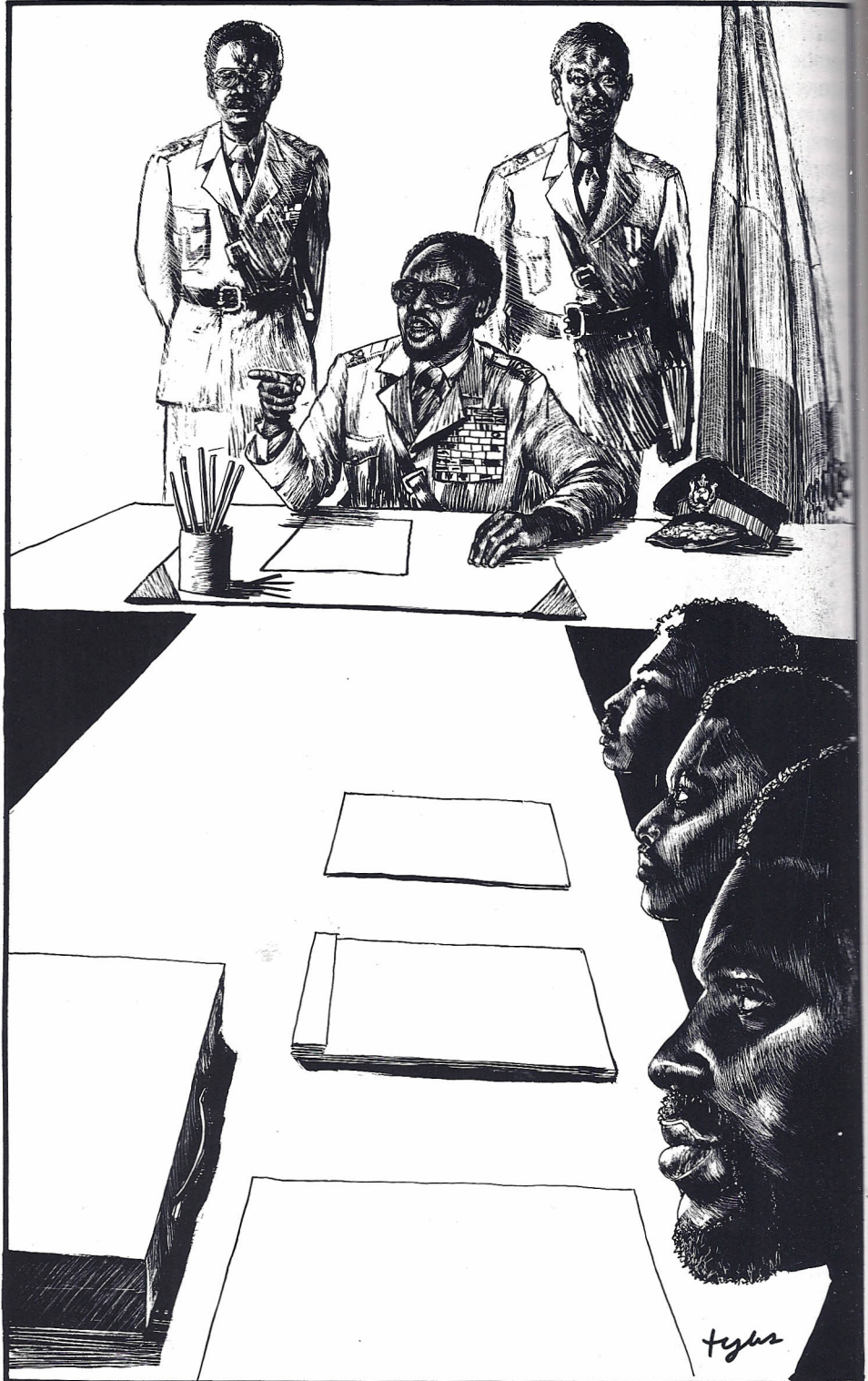
Although some colonialists were in the opposition, nevertheless, they were always considered part of the colonial structure. Consequently, they were constantly kept posted by the sitting government or administrator of the new policy under consideration.

The new African governments failed to continue with this procedure or practice. And government policy was kept from the opposition, except in parliamentary debate over common concerns. Even then, a lot of shouting and heckling—mostly by “governments’ back-benchers”—prevented logic and/or reason to prevail. It has even been charged that some speeches and documents given in African Parliaments were actually written by foreign “advisors.” (For example, the Kenya Government’s “*Sessional Paper No. 10: African Socialism.*”)

When the governments were advocating unity and hard work, some members of the opposition traded on inter-ethnic animosity (“tribalism”) and, also, capitalized on the governments’ lack of proper planning and allocation of resources. More criticism was directed toward governments’ poor performance, coupled with massive accumulation of land and other property. Approval to these charges was echoed by the masses, and the governments became angry. Soon the governments labeled the opposition as “dissident groups” and “enemies.”

To make matters worse, some members of the opposition (at times a majority of them), misunderstood their role in politics. Most of them regarded their responsibility as that of “opposing” whatever policy or program the government introduced. Competition, jealousy, and oratory overrode reason and logic.

The rulers, after a long while, charged that the opposition was not participating



in the search for solutions to the many problems of nation-building. Because the members of the opposition in parliament received salaries (from national budget), they were accused by the ruling group of being a "do-nothing" group and an "expensive luxury."

The opposition was also seen as lackeys or agents for ideological contest and subversion which, with the aid from multinational corporations, neo-colonial as well as communist powers and/or their agencies, could resort to illegitimate means for the overthrow of the party legitimately in power. Leopold Senghor argued in *Nationhood and the African Road to Socialism*:

The opposition is tempted to place itself, under the pretext of ideology, at the service of the foreigner—the opposition parties are teleguided from the outside....

For example, those in power in Africa hardly cooperate with or consult the opposition on the identification and allocation of national priorities, distribution of ministries (particularly key ministries). Important budgetary considerations and allocations are planned and carried out by a small number of self-conceited individuals, who pay more attention to the advice from the expatriate "advisors" whose knowledge of the continent's needs and priorities—particularly in the rural sectors—is very limited.

In most African states, key ministries—defense, economic planning, attorney general, state, commerce and industry, and foreign affairs—have often been allocated to members of the president's ethnic group (Kenya is a case in point) on the pretext of ethnic loyalty. Therefore, certain sections of the nation are systematically ignored in programs of economic development. And the citizens in those areas are obliged to conclude that the country's leaders do not consider them on the same footing with the ethnic group of whom the nation's president is a member. This treatment of subserviency has indeed forced

some ethnic groups to advocate secession or irredentism. For example, the problem of ethnic Somalis in Ethiopia and in northern Kenya and also that of Eritrea may have been predicated by this kind of treatment.

The desire to retain power indefinitely is certainly a factor in the problems and constraints of African political development. African presidents and ministers (especially those in the key ministries), tend to hold on to their offices for life—regardless of manifest incompetence and even extremely advanced age. Because some of these leaders have suffered imprisonment in the hands of colonialists, they feel the new nation owes them an ever-lasting political and economic reward.

The Military and Politics

The colonial governments, seeking to run the colonies with uninterrupted power (power at equilibrium), most often selected African men to join the colonial armed forces, mainly from the most disadvantaged ethnic groups. And although these people played no significant roles in decision or policy making during colonial period, they knew that their European bosses were kept in close touch and consultation by the sitting colonial government. In other words, top men in the armed forces were regarded as equal partners in the sharing of colonial authority and the fruits of colonialism.

On the eve of independence, or soon after, many of these Africans who for years had served in the colonial military and police structure expected to be promoted to "officer" or "inspector" rank (promotion through experience) by virtue of the fact that their nation(s) had achieved independence. Further, they also looked forward to the time when they would be consulted by the new African leaders on policies or matters of national security and importance. However, African governments, still preoccupied with the colonial psychosis of neglecting those without

formal education, and the false notion of "white is always right," failed to promote the African officers soon enough.

After political independence, the African members of the armed forces—excluded from economic participation—watched with frustration and desperation those at the top of political echelon abound in wealth, while the incomes of the armed forces personnel remained virtually unimproved (bearing in mind that these people's emoluments or wages were among the lowest during colonial period). Consequently, they acted in concert with some members of opposition party (or parties), and revolted by overthrowing the sitting government.

When this move was successfully carried out, a justification was given by the new forces in power: that the deposed government, together with the political machinery had proved unworkable and, therefore, a change of the existing order was justified.

It must be noted, however, that military rulers, especially those who replaced progressive governments, have hindered the "revolutionary" changes in the neo-colonial economic order. This was the case of the 1966 coup in Ghana, which deposed Nkrumah.

Another aspect involves former colonial governments' directly intervening militarily to put down any form of military takeover of an existing government whose socio-economic and political direction and performance meet overwhelming approval of the former colonial power. This was the case, for example, in Senegal in 1962, Niger in 1963, Gabon, Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar in 1964.

The catalyst for military takeover of power in young African nations can be explained in terms of class struggle in the new nations, busily searching for (new) answers to the ever growing socio-economic and political frustrations and impoverishment. This new quest is predicated upon the numerous failures resulting from the old colonial-capitalist path.

32 Coups d'etat in Africa should therefore be understood as a process through which young nations are still plagued with complex contradictions and problems of nation-building.

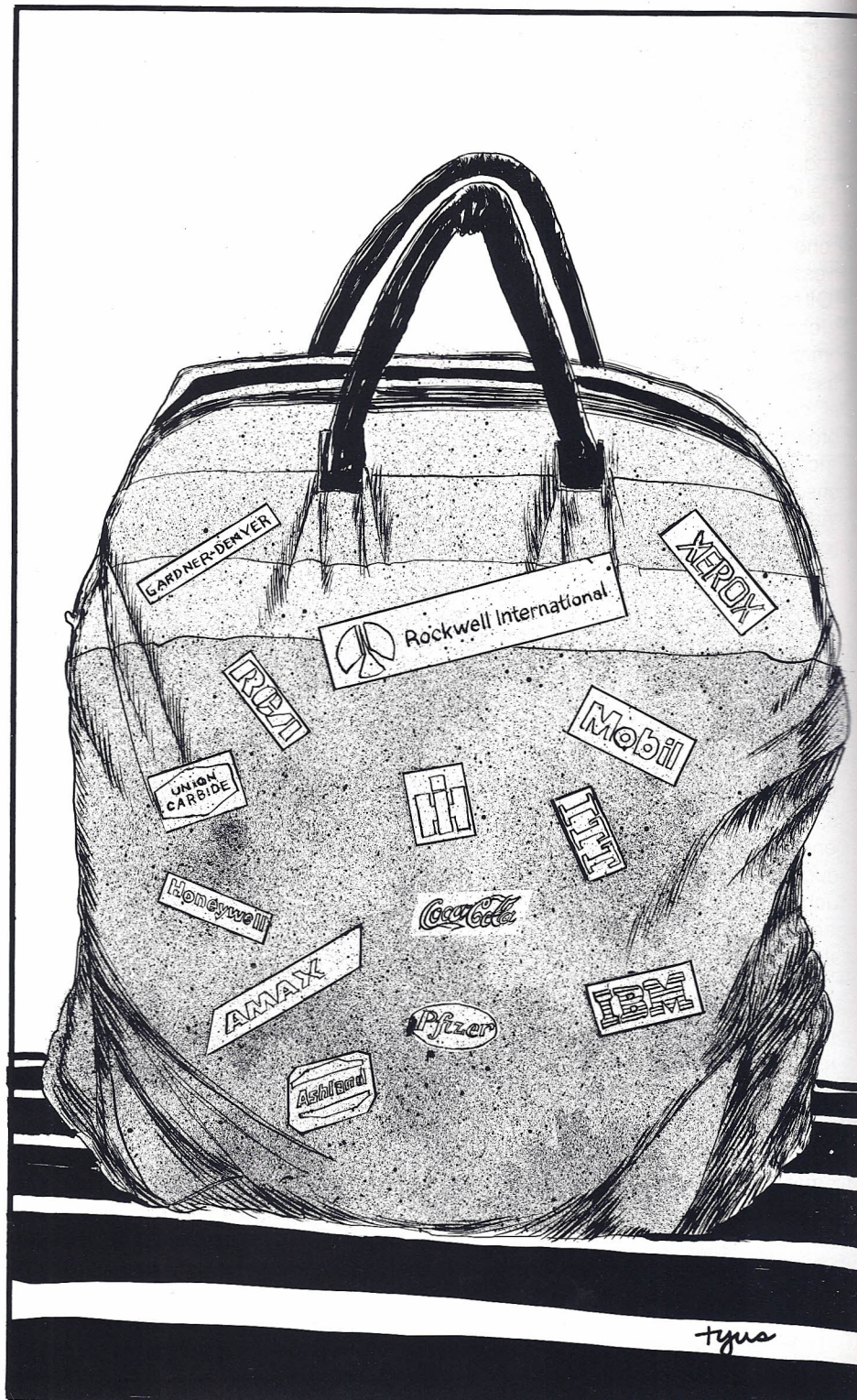
Multi-National Corporations and International Monetary Agencies

Since economics was the chief cause of colonialism, the colonies' economy was thus tied to that of the colonizer countries. This meant that the colonies' primary responsibility was to produce raw materials for feeding and sustaining the machines in the Metropole, and to provide markets for poorly manufactured "treaty" goods. Rene Dumont observed in *False Start in Africa*:

In December of 1949, in northern Congo (then Belgium), I picked up an alarm clock I wanted to buy in a little Greek shop. The proprietor quickly grabbed it out of my hands, saying: "That's a treaty article, it only works for a few days." But it was sold to the Congolese at the same price as good European clocks."

As a result, the colonies were not industrialized. Industrialization, rather than agriculture, Africans argue, is the only perpendicular road to the eradication of the socio-economic and political ills accrued and abandoned by departed colonial governments. This undertaking, however, requires enormous capital investment. Although Africa has the capital resources (most of it still untapped), it does not as yet have the means necessary to mobilize its accumulation and utilization. Consequently, developed nations of both the East and the West have been approached by African governments for assistance in this regard.

While both the East and the West have responded with some degree of apprehension and sympathy, politics—as a concentrated expression of economics—has often dominated the economic intention by the would-be financiers. The multi-national corporations of Western Europe and the United States, aided in part by



international monetary agencies (e.g. The World Bank, The International Monetary Fund, Agency for International Development (AID), the United Nations, Chemical Bank, Barclays Bank, Banque de France, Banque Belge, Oppenheimer's Anglo American Corporation), have a monopoly as well as the power to exert political and economic influence over the selection of investment in Africa.

Often African politicians are reminded by corporation spokesmen that the economic development of Africa seems impossible without financial and technological capital which can only come from abroad, meaning from the West. Because Africans still produce what they do not consume (chiefly export-oriented raw materials), and consume what they do not produce (import-oriented), they often pay more attention to such advice.

Foreign capital investment is not only a means of enhancing development, it is also (and importantly so) a mode of realizing high rates of profit. As a result, big foreign investors, before committing themselves to invest their capital, first prefer to be guaranteed by African governments the conditions that will provide such profits. Furthermore, assurance involving compensation for loss of future profits is sought in the event of political changes such as nationalization of investment, regardless of the amount of capital and the rate of return at the time.

David Apter and Louis Wolf Goodman, authors of *The Multi-national Corporation and Social Change*, noted the following characteristics usually employed by multinational corporations in host countries:

... Corporations have demanded guarantees of police action against the formation of unions or the arrest of principal union militants as preconditions for establishing a plant in a host country ... the opportunity to adjust prices so that the bulk of the product's value accrues either to the host country, the tax haven, or the country of destination, depending on which is most advantageous to the corporation.

A few years ago, the leading international financing institution (World Bank) rejected requests for loans from member-nations of Egypt, Tanzania and Zambia to construct the Aswan Dam and the Tanzanian-Zambian Railroad, respectively. In both instances, the respective governments were advised that the proposed projects were not economically viable. And when these governments turned to Eastern nations as a last resort, the Western nations were quick to charge that these governments "had gone red."

It would appear, at times, that the multinational corporations and international monetary agencies as peculiarly being more destructive to the African political process than are helpful in building and strengthening that process. Equipped with capital and personnel, the foreign enterprises influence African political process—like a remote control mechanism—in pursuit of their own selfish ends.

Given the fact that little, if anything, has been done by the African governments to positively respond to the pre-independence promises and expectations, to relieve the poverty and impoverishment of the overwhelming majority of their underprivileged peasants in rural areas, and little could be expected under the ongoing policy of pouring most of the investment and other resources in urban centers, both civilian and military governments will continue to experience turn-overs.

Therefore, the future political development in Africa will continue to undergo this metamorphic experience until the Africans themselves as a whole (or at least a majority) first undergo mental decolonization, followed by political and economic unity through union government in the same manner that the majority of Americans and the Soviets saw the logic of forging their states and republics into respective unions. □

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