

THE OUTLOOK FOR AFRICA

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I

WITHIN the last decade the greater part of the world's largest continent has passed from direct subjection to colonial powers in Western Europe to more or less well defined political sovereignty. Only fourteen years after the Free Officers' coup in Cairo or nine years after the independence of Ghana, the great majority of Africans whether living north or south of the Sahara have embarked upon the forging of a new destiny. Outside Africa the political and intellectual status of this continent had undergone a change that is scarcely less impressive. This status is now immensely different from that of the colonial period, even from that of the late 1950s. The historical achievements of Africans are increasingly traced and understood. Their traditional cultures are studied and respected. Their spokesmen are listened to as none were ever listened to before. All this speaks for no mean victory in the good old cause of human liberation from the servitudes of the past. Reflecting it, most Africans have lately felt and still feel the onward drive and movement of immediate and fruitful growth within their own lives, or at least, for the older generations, within the lives of their children and their children's children.

True enough, the work is incomplete even at an elementary level of political self-determination. There remain about half a million Africans under Spanish rule, about 12 or 14 million under Portuguese dictatorship, some four million under local White control in Rhodesia, and, worst of all, some 12 million in the grip of South African apartheid. These are servitudes that will be hard to shift; yet it remains that the strongest political fetters are already broken. Of the British empire in Africa nothing is left but three small territories in the southern region, Basutoland, Swaziland, Bechuanaland; and even for them the prize of sovereignty is well within reach, at least so far as Britain is concerned. Only the enclave of Jibuti still flies the flag of France. Italy has gone, and gracefully. Though far from gracefully, Belgium has followed. Even in the last-ditch colonial lands the liberation of Africans can be only a question of years.

And so at this point it seems reasonable to stand back a little and try to see, at least in a few situations and examples, what is likely to follow upon political sovereignty. What may we expect to see happening over the next ten years? Will Africa still be largely what it is

today: a confusion of systems or of bits and pieces of systems, a continent of spasmodic famine and distress, a turmoil of urban slums and rising unemployment, an abiding contrast between luxury enjoyed by few and misery endured by many? Or will there be, in 1976, a recognizably different and better situation to report? These are hard and hazardous questions. Yet they seem worth trying to approach, if only to the extent of tracing where the main lines of pressure and conflict, progress and reaction, now move and clash.

II

One may begin, perhaps, by stating the problem of development in its crudest terms. In these, at any rate, the measure of the African problem, of the transformation of pre-colonial and colonial structures into systems capable of bearing the full weight of machine-production and industrialism, is certainly clearer than before. The measure turns out to be a good deal smaller than the colonial myth of African poverty has implied in the past. Compared with India's, it is even quite a small one. Compared with the situation of Europe and other technologically advanced regions, it is less daunting than the advertised appeals of charitable organizations may often indicate (though these appeals, of course, speak for a sharp immediate need). Matchlessly wealthy in a number of important minerals, relatively poor in coal but wonderfully well-endowed for the production of electric power, possessing soils and rainfall often adequate to the production of large quantities of valuable food, and with nowhere any acute pressures of population comparable with those of much of Asia, the African continent can support a cheerful estimate about its economic future. Some thoughtful calculations by an expert of the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa have lately been made about the point. If the overall output of industry in Africa is still about thirty-two times smaller than in the main industrial countries, the *per capita* output of agriculture is now no smaller, according to Patel, than half of that in the main industrial countries.

This yawning industrial gap, Patel estimates, could be overcome "in only forty to fifty years if industrial output *per capita* were raised annually at a rate of 7 to 9 per cent (that is, a growth rate of about 9 to 11 per cent for total industrial output). This is a high rate," he comments, "but many countries have attained it in recent years. The total *per capita* output of industry and agriculture in the industrial field, measured on this basis, is some eight times' higher than in Africa. The real economic distance between Africa and industrial countries is thus not so high as indicated by the usual comparison of *per capita* incomes from all sources. If the *per capita* output were raised eight times in Africa, it could supply the average inhabitant of the continent with the same quantity of food which is now available

to an average citizen in the industrial countries. What are the economic dynamics in terms of time and pace for such a transition? It would require a *per capita* growth rate of 5 per cent maintained for forty to fifty years, or only an adult's life-time. The growth rate is neither forbiddingly high, nor the period unbearably long." There is little basis. Patel concludes, for scepticism about the possibility of rapidly eliminating African poverty and want.¹

All the same, it will be a bold man who claims that the political prospect of achieving this rate of transition looks at present very bright or hopeful. And apart from the political uncertainties, which, as we shall see, are not few, there are other difficulties in the way of confident prognosis that arise from the poor or partial economic data from which one has to work. What is the true or even the approximate rate of capital formation, whether by local accumulation or by foreign investment? How many capitalists are there, how many wage workers? If a genuine investing middle class and a working class have begun to fissure from the old societies of subsistence, how fast are they doing it? Which is doing it the faster, which is winning the race for power? It is possible, as I shall try to show, to reach some tentative opinions on questions like these, but the factual truth remains obtusely hard to find. Tied into these kinds of uncertainty, moreover, there is the highly unstable nature of many of the *régimes* that have taken shape during the past decade, an instability repeatedly revealed by the ambivalence of middle class *élites* or *élite* groupings who face now one way and now another, moved by the changing persuasions of opportunism, to the point of making any definition about the present influence of State capitalism and planning extremely difficult to fix. Plans there are by the yard and by the volume; but *cui* bono? Even where the control of finance and of the major means of local production appears to be firmly in governmental hands, it may still remain that the principal beneficiaries are not the nation as a whole, still less the wage-earners as a putative or an actual class, but the emergent bourgeoisie.

If one is nonetheless encouraged to persevere in prognosis, notwithstanding all such uncertainties and fluctuations, this is because it clearly seems that we have reached a crucial juncture in the fortunes of Africa. With some important exceptions already noted, the years of political decolonization are over. But the years of economic decolonization, of profound and systematic construction, have scarcely begun. Secondly, most of the principal formative factors are now plainly in the field. The main alternatives can be described. Thirdly, though with many gaps, a useful amount of basic economic information has become available on the processes of differentiation and capital formation outlined above: enough, perhaps to show us the general lie of the land. Last but not least, it appears important that socialists should try to gauge the actual weight and thrust of neo-

colonial penetration and its chances of success: to measure, in other words, the effort that is now being made to retain African countries within a posture of dependence on economic structures motivated not by common interest, but by the search of the relatively wealthy for enrichment at the expense of the relatively poor.

III

Politically, then, there is one essential question to be tackled. Given that the potential wealth of Africa will begin to be widely realized for the benefit of Africans during the next ten years, under what system will this happen? Systematically to the benefit of *which* Africans, the many or the few? The choice between moving towards socialism and moving towards capitalism turns out here to be anything but merely theoretical. Much less than in China or India, for example, the building of a socialist system is not a matter of first dismantling a capitalist system, nor the building of capitalism merely a problem of extending, under political sovereignty, the foundations of a capitalist system already laid in colonial times. The choice is now *imposed* on Africans. It cannot be escaped.

And it cannot be escaped because Africa, or most of Africa, stands at a juncture between the traditional economies of old and some kind of new economy that must emerge or begin to emerge in the immediate future. That is why the starting-point for an attempt to answer our main question must lie in the past. In more ways than one the greater part of this continent has reached a condition of profound inner crisis that will not be soon resolved. And the resolution that evolves over these coming years can only be the fruit of processes of change that did not begin with the political liberation of the 1950s and 1960s, but have their roots and reasons in a much more distant and capacious realm of time. If Patel's "forty or fifty" years at first sound discouragingly long, they may seem short enough when set against the background of the vast and continental transformations that must now be worked.

It has to be admitted straight away that analysis of the economic past of Africa is at present even more difficult than analysis of the economic present. If the cultural and chronological history of pre-colonial Africa is still a study in its infancy, its economic history is little more than embryonic. Here, for the most part of detail, we are still groping in the dark. What was the role and importance of currency in pre-colonial Africa, of what *Einzig* and others have called "primitive money"? Why did marginal production for exchange fail to develop to the point where a cash economy could emerge? Is it even true that a cash economy everywhere failed to emerge south of the Sahara? I point to these unanswered questions merely as an indication of the present obscurity in which one has to work: even

so it seems to me that one may still define, at least within broad and tentative limits, how the African economic situation generally stood on the eve of the colonial conquest.

Excepting parts of northern Africa, notably Egypt and the Maghreb, and the southernmost tip of the continent where European settlers began to operate a market economy in the eighteenth century, the basis was that of subsistence farming and fishing. This was a continent of peasants (for want of a better word) whose peculiarity over against other peasants in other continents lay in the absence of any private ownership of land. This is an important fact, but it tells only part of the truth. It should not, for instance, be confused with ideas about primitive communism. Though social co-operation at the level of village community or community of villages was almost everywhere very marked, the absence of private ownership in land was seldom or never accompanied by an absence of private ownership in rights to use the land or in the produce of the soil. These subsistence economies were socially structured into patterns of organization that were often very complex; and they were further influenced by the early development of market relationships which, while remaining marginal to use-production, nonetheless exerted steady pressure on the way men lived and shared their wealth. Vertical stratification by kinship fragmentation and the like began to be complicated by horizontal stratification—by many forms of specialization in many crafts, and here and there by differentiation into groups that were at least embryonic classes, or sometimes real classes—as early as the tenth century A.D. and possibly earlier. These economies were far from static. They were not without internal growth.

Certain items of production, for example, became the staples of long-distance trade at least a thousand years ago, the most important among these being ivory and gold. Wherever long-range trade could flourish, economies expanded to provide for it. So much is clear from historical evidence, fragmentary though it often is. A recent calculation has suggested that Western Africa had produced as much as 3,500 tons of gold by about A.D. 1500,⁹ while the gold and copper production of Middle Africa, getting under way in the seventh or eighth century and greatly expanding up to the sixteenth, was very probably on a comparable scale. Widely separated societies were capable of developing technologies adequate to finding the ores of several important minerals, of mining and extracting these ores, and of melting, working, and trading in them to a high degree of pre-industrial and pre-capitalist skill. They evolved a notable degree of specialization in many handicrafts, and along with this they developed markets of great marginal importance. They used many currencies: rolls of cloth, bars or bracelets of metal, weights of gold, bottles of imported gin (much favoured as a form of "capital accumulation" along the Guinea Coast of the nineteenth century, since the price of

bottled **gin** never ceased to appreciate), and above all cowrie shells. It is even possible to argue that much of tropical and sub-tropical Africa belonged to a "cowrie zone" within which shells could everywhere be used, if at varying rates, as valid currency. A few commercial states south of the Sahara struck their own currencies: Kilwa, for example, from as early as the thirteenth century.

Trading partnership with maritime Europe, developing after the fifteenth century (when the relationship had been little more than one of occasional European piracy) and continuing for a long period of mutually profitable intercourse before the Atlantic slave trade cast its blight upon the scene, was another stimulant to change and growth. Later again, under the highly specialized conditions of the slave trade, this change and growth began to develop here and there into early forms of capitalism, or at least into forms of economic organization out of which capitalism could easily emerge. Energetic city-states in the Niger Delta evolved methods of wealth-accumulation which were clearly proto-capitalist in form. Later again, on the eve of colonial conquest, enterprising kings like Ja Ja of Opobo, in that same Niger Delta, were already well beyond the "proto" stage, and were competing with and beating their European **rivals**.⁴ The great empire of **Ashanti**, and the adjective is not hyperbole, can offer other such cases: its nineteenth-century kings, as Wilks has lately shown, were at the head of state trading organizations of insistent power and flexibility."

To say, then, that most of Africa was a continent of peasants living by subsistence production is only part of a complicated truth. All the same, it is the dominant part of that truth. Left to themselves in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, some of these **mainly**-subsistence economies might well have developed into cash economies and capitalist structures. But they were not left to themselves; and they did not so develop. They were invaded, taken under foreign control, and turned to the service of others. With reservations of this kind, which should help to make it clear how little the familiar stereotype of "pre-colonial stagnation" reflects the course of history, we can say that most Africans lived by subsistence-production up to the time of the colonial conquest. What happened then, however, was not the steady transformation of subsistence economies into capitalist economies, but their dismantlement and ruin. There were, of course, exceptions. Cash crops developed or were forcibly imposed in a number of African countries, and wherever this occurred, there came a shift to new forms of production and exchange.

Even before colonial conquest, a number of nineteenth-century pressures had begun the process of dismantlement of Africa's traditional economies of **subsistence**.⁶ Growth of population brought crisis to a number of Iron Age polities after about 1800. Others suffered upset from the British ending of the long-established maritime slave trade. Others again were disrupted by the eruption of a new slave

trade inland from the east coast. Generally, the nineteenth century was a period of socio-political disintegration, of movement towards new structures; and this helps to explain the familiar notion about European explorers "**marching** into savage chaos", a notion about pre-colonial Africa that has been greatly used as justification for colonial invasion. With invasion, however, dismantlement became rapid and disastrous. It could not be otherwise. Having pushed into these countries and imposed their peace, (or at least endeavoured to impose it, for the work of "pacification" had often to go on at least until 1920), the colonial powers were faced with a choice between renouncing their new sovereignty and enforcing it. In enforcing it, they were obliged to strip nearly all the traditional systems (here again, of course, with some exceptions) of their inner dynamic and framework of authority. Kings or chiefs might persist; they were no more than puppets of their European masters. Others might be appointed; they were never really recognized as such by the peoples over whom they were asked to rule by European command.

This political dismantlement was accompanied and followed by a far-reaching economic **dismantlement**. In a few countries there was vast expropriation of land for the benefit of European settlers. More widely and influential still, there was an even greater expropriation of labour. This took various forms. In the beginning, widespread use of directly forced labour was organized by means of military or paramilitary mobilization of peasants. The history of Leopold's Congo provides the worst examples, or at any rate the worst examples that are well known, for much in this dark period still remains obscure. Between the two world wars, the central **period** of colonialism, **forced-labour** practices continued but greatly dwindled in size. Instead, there came another form of labour expropriation. This was known as migrant labour. Cash taxes were imposed on peasants who lived without money, and who were thereby obliged, in order to find the money to pay these taxes, to take wage-employment with European planters, mining companies, and the like. Invented in the 1890s, this technique of forcing peasant labour into European service—or of "teaching the Africans the blessings and the virtues of **work**" as the apologists used to say—burned like an acid into the fabric of village life. Wide regions were regularly denuded of their able-bodied men and youths; and the results were socially **appalling**.[†]

Another aspect of the same process of dismantlement lay in the forced cultivation of cash crops for export. Large quantities of land and labour were taken out of local food production in this way; and once again the consequences were bad. Here is the bishop of the Catholic diocese of Beira, in Mozambique, on the subject: "Whoever has frequent contact with certain of the cotton zones [of northern Mozambique, transferred in this way to export production] has no difficulty in recognizing that the principal effort of the native . . . is absorbed by

the cotton, and that there remains not much time or effort to grow food which is needed by him and by others. I know a region which used to be a granary for lands afflicted with hunger. After the cotton campaign [that is, the imposition of cotton growing] was begun there, the fertile fields ceased to supply food for the neighbouring populations and the people of the region itself also began to feel hunger. There belongs to my diocese a region in which for six months the black spectre of hunger reaped the lives of the inhabitants. . . .⁹

Volumes could be written on this steady impoverishment. In one way or another, covertly or openly, blindly, carelessly, or at times with the charitable cover of official lamentations that were always disregarded, now ruthlessly and now with the flapping of futile regrets, the cash nexus conquered all. The traditional economies were toppled down. The old stabilities were overthrown.

By 1939 the process was already far advanced. Then the Second World War, as well as its immediately following years, grimly smartened the pace. "For five years", an authority on the Belgian Congo wrote in 1945, "our populations were submitted to an extremely intense and varied war effort. The whole black population was mobilized in order to produce the most that was possible as fast as possible so as to export what the Allies needed and make good the lack of imports. That is the dominating fact".⁹ There were other dominating facts. Forced labour in the rural areas—or what certainly amounted to forced labour, however masked by the payment of cash wages—drove men into the towns where "mobilization" by the authorities was at least more difficult. Others were driven in the same direction by rural hunger and despair. Village Africa collapsed in many areas. Urban Africa took shape.

It took shape in scenes and circumstances of wild and wonderfully abundant chaos. There is no space here to tell that story. Africans have written a few novels to celebrate it, and many poems. Official reports have dwelt on its phantasmagoric proportions and dimensions. Sociologists have inquired into it.¹⁰ We may merely note its statistical side, for this, too, says much about the colonial dismantlement of traditional Africa. There had been large cities in pre-colonial Africa, whether cities primarily of commerce such as Timbuktu and Jenne, Kilwa and Malindi, or cities primarily of production such as Kano and Ibadan, to speak only of Africa south of the Sahara; but what happened now was something so quantitatively different as to be qualitatively quite new. Here are some fragments of the evidence:

*Growth of some African cities*¹¹
(population in thousands)

	1931	1960
Dakar	54	383
Abidjan	10.2	180

Bamako	19.4	120
Brazzaville	16	120
Accra	60.7	325.9
Lagos	126.1	380
Leopoldville	30.2	389.5
Nairobi	29.8	250.8
Salisbury	20.1†	192.8‡
	* 1928; † 1927; ‡ 1958	

Such rates of growth were fairly characteristic of all the cities in Africa whether north or south of the Sahara. That the colonial powers watched all this with helpless dismay, needing urban wage-labour and yet hating its detachment from its so seemingly safe "traditional ambience", noting the social squalor of the towns with astonishment but also with a certain condescending shame, calling conferences to deal with it and still doing nothing to deal with it, goes almost without saying. Even if they had really wanted to deal with it, they were powerless to handle, or even to understand, the tide and tumult of impetuous change that roared about their ears. By the 1950s colonial Africa was rocked by confusion and crisis of unprecedented complexity and magnitude. Not even the bitter days of invasion had seen anything remotely like it. And it was out of this crisis and confusion that the movements of national liberation were born. It was through them that *élite* African politics became, at last, mass African politics. It was in this difficult and painful birth that the child of renewed independence first saw the light of day.

IV

Chaos, then. But that is an emotive word. Can we find a calmer definition? Can we measure in some quietly factual way the true economic condition of Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s: the baseline from which any new system must start its life and growth? It is hard to do this. "A recent study [1954], which takes as its basis the distribution of land used for the different types of cultivation, estimated that on an average 27 per cent of men over fifteen years of age were engaged in cash-crop agriculture, while 60 per cent were still at work in subsistence agriculture and 13 per cent were wage earners."¹²

Now if it were true that three-fifths of all male Africans were still engaged in subsistence agriculture in the 1950s, there would be sound reason for suspecting that I have gravely over-stated the process of dismantlement outlined above. But there is even sounder reason for suspecting that it is not true, or not true in any meaningful sense. To begin with, the above estimate (and it is as good a round figure as anyone has so far offered) refers only to nine territories in tropical Africa where conditions greatly vary in themselves and are not neces-

sarily characteristic, even if one could average them, for African territories elsewhere. In some territories the rural populations still reach over 90 per cent of the total, while in others the proportion is much smaller. In some territories there is still relatively little production of crops for cash-exchange; in others there is much. Yet even where there are very big rural populations the numbers living by their own production, or mainly by their own production, are already far fewer than in the past. In Senegal, for example, the rural population has been estimated for the middle 1950s at about 78 per cent.¹³ But here the expanding cultivation of groundnuts has had its effect. About trebled in quantity since 1914, groundnut production has impoverished the soil and driven the producer to buy his food. Many peasants, it appears, are now buying 80 or 90 per cent of their food.¹⁴ And it seems quite clear that many of these belong to that "60 per cent" who are elsewhere said to be living still within a subsistence economy. If most Africans today are peasants—and this is incontestable—then it is also true that most of these peasants are already at the mercy of the market. Their enthusiasm and remarkably rapid adherence to the national liberation movements after 1945 cannot, indeed, be explained in any other way. I think that my general conclusion may stand. By the 1950s, rural economies of subsistence had been almost everywhere undermined to the point of irreversible ruin.

That is one side of the picture. But what about the people in the cities of the 1950s? It is just as hard to reach any reliable statistical conclusions about what was happening to them. How many wage workers? How many bourgeois? Let us take the first question first. Mr. Jack Woddis has lately buried himself in the files and archives during a valiant excavation in search of a useful answer to it. Taking everything into account, adding up in this or that place and guessing in another, he has surfaced with an opinion, the best that anyone has yet provided, that the total number of wage earners in the whole of Africa in 1965 was probably around twenty millions, or perhaps 8 per cent of the total population (although what the total population was or is, of course, we likewise do not at all precisely know).¹⁵ Now this is a sizeable figure, and surely much larger than twenty years earlier.

Yet here, too, we are in difficulties. In the same way that many "subsistence peasants" are found, on looking closer, to be well and truly wedged into a cash economy, so too are many urban wage earners still reliant to some extent on their family food-production in a more or less distant village. If you journey with African peasants going to town you may well be encumbered and set about with their piles of baggage; what they are likely to be carrying is not clothing or adornment, however, but food of one sort or another. The reason for this carrying of food to town is not a simple love of frugal living. It is rather a dislike of starvation. It arises from the happy colonial

custom of calculating the wages of the married urban African as though he were always a bachelor. As the East Africa Royal Commission of 1955 placidly but usefully explained, wage rates in the past had been set for migrant workers who came to town *without* their families. "Their wages were calculated on the needs of a single man", and yet, even though many men now had their families with them, "this has remained the basis on which wages are paid until the present day." These wages, not too surprisingly, the learned Commissioners found to be insufficient for African urban workers, "not only to feed, house, and clothe their families, but even for their own needs";¹⁶ and they proceeded to quote from the 1954 report of a Committee on African Wages, in Kenya, which ought to go down in history as a classic statement about the realities of life under colonial "trusteeship". This Committee found that "approximately one half of the urban workers in Private Industry, and approximately one quarter of those in the Public Services, are in receipt of wages insufficient to provide for their basic, essential needs of health, decency, and working efficiency".

From the round figure of 20 millions, accordingly, there must be subtracted an unknown but fairly substantial number of wage-workers who still retain, for purposes of sheer survival as well as from respect for traditional loyalties and customs, powerful and living links with the countryside, and who therefore, to varying extent, stand only on the fringe or even altogether outside the crystallizing working-class of the new cities. There are other reservations to be made. Mr. Woddie included South Africa and Egypt in this estimate: between them, however, they may account for almost half the total figure, or, if not for as much as that, then at least for more than one quarter. A further reservation, connected with the first that I have mentioned, is the still prevalent habit in a number of territories of paying a proportion of wages in kind and not in cash, another factor which helps to keep men linked to their traditional *milieu*.

For these and other reasons, we may safely conclude that the formation of a working class—of a class of wage-earners increasingly conscious of their separation and difference from other elements in society—goes at a notably slower rate than any gross figures for wage-employment may suggest. Here, of course, I am concerned not simply with the numbers of men and women who earn wages entirely in cash and not partly in kind, and who are already effectively detached from their rural background with its very different evaluation of labour, but above all with the rate of crystallization of new attitudes which are class attitudes.

It is against this background that one should view the relative immaturity of the African trades union movement, its often vacillating and occasionally corrupt leadership, its general failure to withstand the steady fall in the real level of wages, and its incapacity as yet to

win through to an all-African workers' movement. There have been moments in the last fifteen years when African trade unions have pioneered the struggle for political liberation, and have done it with a courage and decisiveness that gave essential backbone to opportunistic political leaders. One thinks in this respect of French West Africa in 1947 or of Northern Rhodesia (modern Zambia) and the Ivory Coast a few years later. But the moments have been few and spasmodic, and the reasons why are plain enough. They lie in the very nature of this emergent working class. They reflect the attitudes of men and women who, for the most part, are neither fully in one world nor the other, neither in the old world of rural life nor the new world of urban competition; who have yet to take a clear measure of the situation in which they truly stand; and for whom the lessons of industrialism, the lessons of unity, have still to come clear. One conclusion, then, is that an organized and self-conscious working class has certainly begun to emerge from the chaos of the old systems. Another is that its general rate of emergence remains—as we shall see, dangerously remains—slow and partial, while its capacity for self-defence and forward movement into clear political consciousness is still quite small.

V

Passing to the other side of the scales, what can be said about the rate of crystallization of a capitalist middle class, of a bourgeoisie that is capable of achieving positions of hegemony within the frontiers of this or that state? At the risk of being tedious, I have to say again that a reliable answer is hard to find. The process is certainly going on; but how rapidly? The first point is easy to demonstrate; the second is a different matter. Nigeria perhaps offers the most striking evidence of the first. "Along with pride in status and problems of self-government, *Time Magazine* told us the other day, "independence for the thirty-one nations of black Africa means the emergence of black businessmen. . . . Nowhere is the new African businessman doing better than in Nigeria, black Africa's most populous and most prosperous nation. With a population of 55 million and an economy that grows 4 per cent each year, the number of Nigerian millionaires is growing almost as fast as the country itself."¹⁷ Others have noticed the same happy burgeoning of free enterprise, though not always, as suggested by the highly popular overthrow of the Nigerian federal régime on January 15 this year, with the same relief and happiness.

Generally, the years since independence (but the process had already begun in the 1950s) have brought a growing concentration of wealth to a small minority of planters, merchants and other businessmen, together with a growing impoverishment of small producers and farm workers. This, of course, is a bold generalization. No doubt there

are local exceptions; the data are in any case sadly meagre. Yet that is what the trend looks like. Although in the Ivory Coast, for example, the production of cocoa and coffee has never ceased to rise since the middle 1940s, steadily increasing the number of African planters (at least by several hundred since 1956) and greatly enriching the handful among them who possess much land, there appears to have been no single rise in agricultural wages since independence was declared in 1960. On the contrary, living standards have fallen. "However surprising it may seem at first glance", a conservative French observer has written on this point, "food shortage (*disette*) has become endemic in certain coffee-growing regions, and follows like a shadow the stinging slogan of 'development' (*mise en valeur*)".¹⁸

How big is the Ivory Coast plantocracy? In 1964 a French estimate put the number of planters at somewhere between eight and ten thousand with more than 10 or 12 hectares each, and employing more than five wage-workers each. Perhaps a hundred of the largest estates may be in European hands but the large estates are not owned only by Europeans. Some Africans have estates that are big enough to employ several dozen workers, most of whom trek down as migrant Workers from the still more impoverished Republic of Volta. Here, as elsewhere, the bringing of land within a market economy has led to marked inequalities of calculable or realizable wealth. Along the seaboard of the Ivory Coast, for example, there is a population of about ten thousand people who live mainly from fishing and from perennial crops like kola-nut. A recent French report has pointed out that with transfer of land to private property there has emerged a clear distinction between the few with much and the many with little. Two per cent of landowners were said to own 17 per cent of the land, while half the landowners had only 14 per cent of it. Whereas the aforesaid 2 per cent each had an annual family income of 2,570,000 colonial-francs, 50 per cent each had an annual family income of only 55,000 colonial-francs.¹⁹

The same process of concentration has been at work, and continues to be so, in the groundnut regions of Senegal. For the year 1960-1 there were said to be some 2,800 farms of more than 17 hectares, or less than 1 per cent of a total number of farms of about 295,000; while the number of farms smaller than 1 hectare exceeded 63,000, and 43 per cent of all farms were smaller than 2 hectares. In all this the growth of rural debt goes on apace, and merchant usury gives rise to the consequences familiar in other lands. Once again the trend I have suggested above—concentration of wealth in the hands of a few with impoverishment for the many—seems likely to reflect the truth.

Other inquiries respond in the same way. In Togo, by the mid-fifties, there were about 8,500 cocoa farms smaller than half a hectare, but 700 ranging between 2 and 10 hectares: less than 5 per cent of the farmers had, in fact, about 22 per cent of the planted land. Much

the same differentiation holds good for Togo coffee plantations, an important factor since they grew in size from a total of about 4,000 hectares in 1949 to some 20,000 in 1958.²⁰ So much for a few examples. I am conscious of their scrappy nature, but it is probably fair to say that they reveal a trend that is general to many of the new countries south of the Sahara.²¹ North of the Sahara the same trend appears to apply fully to Morocco but not significantly to Tunisia, still less to Algeria, and, latterly at least, scarcely at all to Egypt.

Yet the crystallization of a bourgeoisie capable of striving for hegemony in the state is not limited to the consequences of business, land purchase and rural usury. Africans who consider this question are accustomed to point to the "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" as another main source of reinforcement. A Nigerian economist was thinking of this when he recently attacked "the system that pays a permanent secretary in the civil service £3,000 a year and his messenger boy £9 a month".²² The system, of course, is perfectly understandable: all that has happened is that the salary scales paid to Europeans have been transferred to Africans who have obtained their jobs, while the wages paid to other Africans, who have gone on doing the same jobs as before, remain much as they used to be. This is manifestly a system which must rapidly promote the ethic of the white collar and the private motor-car. A Nigerian educationalist had this in mind when he recently deplored the kind of values—ambition for white collar jobs and private motors and so forth—still being inculcated in Nigerian schools. "There is no unemployment in Nigeria," he acidly remarked, "there is a horde of unemployable young citizens being minted in a snowball fashion, by a dead or at least moribund educational

If it still remains inaccurate to speak of the existence of an African bourgeois class in any part of independent Africa south of the Sahara, it is nonetheless obvious that one is now in course of formation, and probably of rapid formation in quite a few cases. This trend, one should note, has been greatly helped by the circumstances of decolonization. More or less consciously, the British and the French were eager to hand their power to *élites* who would keep the African world safe for capitalism, above all for their own capitalism. With a few important exceptions, which we will look at in a moment, they appear to have succeeded fairly well. There were, of course, some nasty moments. African politics after 1945 became increasingly a popular affair. The older spokesmen of African equality found themselves jostled and thrust aside by younger men with far less patience, far greater willingness to act against colonial authority, and, what counted for even more than that, a far better grasp of the needs of mass organization. For long a matter of legalistic argument in tied colonial assemblies or literary conflict in obscure colonial newspapers, the cause of independence was swept out

into the streets and sidewalks. No wonder the old guard, men like the late J. B. Danquah and Fily Dabo Sissoko, found it hard to adjust. Gone were their cosy little quarrels and compromises with the great imperial power. Instead, they found themselves plunged in the vulgar noise and tumult of enormous demonstrations, agitations, repressions, tortures, shootings: brash and little welcome, the din of revolution pounded on their doors and windows and called them forth to martyrdom or millennial change. Few of them thought they had been educated for anything as vulgar as that. Some of them backed away and were left behind. Others went for a time with the irresistible tide. There is the interesting case of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast. It is worth pausing a little to consider this here, for it helps to explain a good deal about the evolution of post-1945 *e'lites* and the ideological confusions of Africa today.

With Houphouët one may very well see both the positive and negative aspects of the personal career of these *e'lites*. Of chiefly origin, shrewd, hard-working, successful in his medical studies, Houphouët as a young man watched the doings of the French plantocracy in the Ivory Coast with a cool and thoughtful anger. As an African planter's son he was well placed to understand how the system worked. He moved against it towards the end of the war. His first triumph was to lead his fellow-African planters in breaking the monopolist power of local French planters. Translated to the scene of French West African politics after 1944, Houphouët scored another victory. He led the multi-territorial Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (R.D.A.) in a successful parliamentary fight against forced labour, and secured its legal abolition in 1946. These were great gains within their context. They illustrate some of the ways in which the *élites* of Africa have helped to liberate their continent.

It is not surprising that in those days Houphouët passed for a radically-minded leader, or even to some extent thought as one. Today he is one of the main "establishment figures" of French-speaking Africa, a Gaullist eminence and, at home, a quasi-dictator; then it was very different. Affiliated in the French National Assembly to the French Communist Party, the R.D.A. under Houphouët's leadership was certainly not a Marxist party, but just as surely it was no "constitutional" one either. On 4 November 1946, for example, we find Houphouët writing from Yamoussoukro to the then secretary-general of the R.D.A., Gabriel d'Arboussier, in terms that echo the atmosphere of those momentous post-war days. Condemning the conformist Fily Dabo Sissoko, he writes that "after the precious help given to the Oversea Territories by the Communists in their struggle against the common enemy, imperialist and colonialist reaction, it is painful to hear a black man, even if he has pocketed milliards for doing it, carry on a campaign of calumny against this great workers' party whose triumph, desired by all men of good will, can bring social

peace not only to France, but also and above all to the Overseas Territories. I am sorry not to be a communist. I am sorry not to have a communist conscience. . . .¹⁹⁵⁸

It is even possible that Houphouët meant what he said, however improbable this may now appear. The communists then had great prestige. They seemed to promise a brotherhood that the other French parties denied. Such sentiments apart, however, rich and privileged African leaders found themselves increasingly *débordés par la gauche*. With more or less of opportunism, they moved over till the times should alter. Here too the incipient conflicts of interest between emergent *élite* groups on one side, and their clamorous popular following on the other, were masked by a joint resistance to colonialist efforts at out-manceuvring or suppressing the independence movements. Out of this, in due course, there came a great deal of theorizing about "African Socialism" and the like—one sees this kind of thing most clearly, perhaps, with Senghor—in an attempt to appear radical without really being so.

There were important exceptions. Not all of those who "moved to meet the masses" did so from opportunism. Some of those who did so from brave conviction were outplayed and defeated: I think of Jibo Bakary who tried to carry the Niger territory to independence in 1958. Others of the same firm conviction were not defeated: on the contrary, they carried all before them. Here no doubt the outstanding case is that of Kwame Nkrumah. In June 1949, before an audience of 60,000 people, Nkrumah broke away from the orthodox lawyers' leadership of the United Gold Coast Convention and formed a party of the people, the Convention People's Party, that was to take the Gold Coast to internal self-government in 1951 and full political independence six years afterwards. His comment on this action makes the point extremely well. "We were not disturbed", he writes in his autobiography, published in 1957, "by those who labelled us 'veranda boys, hooligans and communists'; we had succeeded where they had failed. We had succeeded because we had talked with the people and by so doing knew their feelings and grievances. And we had excluded no one."

In most cases, though, the *élites* won control and have kept it by skill in talking like the Left and acting like the Right. Carried to power on the crest of a wave of radical change they took to radical slogans like ducks to drops of water, shaking them off as soon as they were safely on the dry land of power with as little trouble or inconvenience as they had previously displayed them. Having secured power they have exercised it—often enough, continue to exercise it—by more or less close alliance with their previous colonial rulers. As early as 1951, for example, Houphouët announced that "a new page has been turned. On it let us write a resolution to make Africa the most splendid and the most loyal territory in the French Union."¹⁹⁵⁹ Though the

label changed in 1960, the reality today shows that Houphouet has kept his word. And Houphouet is not alone in this.

What we have, then, is a weak though rapidly crystallizing middle class which has received power without much trouble from the old imperialists, and which continues to exercise power with the political and economic help of these and the United States. But this is very far from saying that these *e'lites* have solved their problem of *continuing* to exercise power: of staying where they are, that is, until they are numerically and financially strong enough to win a clear position of control. Comparatively weak as they are, they have not been able to settle the underlying crisis of structure in their own favour. On the contrary, with every effort they have made and continue to make in that direction, the conflict sharpens.

VI

The trouble for these *e'lites* is an old one. You cannot have capitalism without capitalists, or build a capitalist system without a capitalist class. And you cannot build a capitalist class without directing the wealth of many into the pockets of few in ways that are at first very crude, and therefore very obvious. What you require, in short, is a period of primitive accumulation. There is no need to labour the point in these pages. Whether they like it or not, the *e'lites* (and I am using this term as a convenient hold-all for many different folk who share in the effort to form a capitalist class in one way or another) are faced with some painful necessities. Not only do they have to appropriate. They also have to do it fast.

It must be said that they are doing their best in this tricky situation. Nigeria has some of the most interesting evidence, thanks to the admirable frankness of its newspapers. A case in point is that of the chairman of Nigeria's national shipping line, Chief Kola Balogun. He was lately in trouble with the critics for explaining how a capitalist solution for Nigeria must really work if it were to have any prospect of success. The occasion was his having rented his own house to the national shipping line, of which he is chairman, at what was thought to be a very handsome price. Newspapers like the Lagos *Daily Times* took powerful exception to this. They argued that a man in Chief Balogun's position had no right to make money in this way. But the Chief was not disturbed. He replied to his critics with an argument from the ethics of early industrial Britain. What he wanted to know was how any enterprising man could gather capital unless he could make money in every way available? "To say that financial transactions in land and landed property by many leading citizens of Nigeria have not become a gainful pastime," he pointedly observed, "is to start deceiving ourselves. All top Nigerians, ministers, parliamentarians, top civil servants, journalists, hold positions of trust in one form or the

other. They all indulge in these transactions. When it suits our purpose we quote conventions surrounding the British parliamentary system." He meant, of course, this system as it is today, not as it was in the early days of British industrialism, pocket boroughs, parliamentary corruption and the rest. But "when it again suits our purpose, we close our eyes to certain practices, all in the name of the Nigerian way of life. . . ." Nobody could have put it better, nor have more effectively explained why a leading Nigerian journalist could write in 1963 of "the moral depravity of our society" and yet do no more than state what seemed most obvious to a large number of Nigerians.²⁶ "Local government in the southern regions of Nigeria", opined two British sociologists not long ago, "has reached the point of being a conspiracy against the public, so riddled is it with bribery, nepotism, politics and corruption."²⁷ This was the background against which the military government, established last January, declared that it would "stamp out corruption and dishonesty in our public life with ruthless efficiency, and restore integrity and self-respect in our public affairs."

Though at a much earlier stage of independent growth, Kenya offers another relevant case. Here the general policy approach looks much the same as it was in Ghana after 1957, and of course it may still change as much. For the present, one finds it difficult not to agree with a recent Fabian comment. Reviewing an official paper called "African Socialism and its application to planning in Kenya", this comment remarked that the document appears to have so little to do with socialism, African or not, that "one has almost to turn to the title page of the paper to remind oneself that one is reading a socialist and not a conservative programme".²⁸ Alongside a number of benign generalities about the eventual possibility of the nationalization of industry, we learn that "the government should meanwhile take steps to develop the nation's money markets and in particular to stimulate wider interest and participation in the stock exchange". Strictures on this-kind of thing have drawn a pained refutation from Mr. Tom Mboya, the minister concerned; and it is of course obvious that Kenya at this stage, and no doubt for a long time, cannot get along without an expanding private sector. The fact remains that it is the private sector which is not only in command at present, but, as things go now, seems bound to remain in command. Our Fabian commentator may have been over-simplifying the situation when he said that an emergent middle class "have captured power in Kenya and are now busy consolidating it". All the same, this is what will certainly have happened in a few years' time unless policies are changed as radically as they were changed in Ghana after 1960.

Elsewhere the trend is clearer still, especially in the weak little countries of the old French empire. Gabon is a good example of what actually goes on. Perhaps the least impoverished of the old French equatorial colonies, Gabon was producing about 800,000 tons of oil

for French and American companies as early as 1961, about 900,000 tons of manganese in 1964, and an unknown quantity of uranium for the French nuclear-atomics industry. Bethlehem Steel and allied French interests were completing in 1965 a 435-mile railway from the open-cast iron-ore workings of Mokambo, reputedly among the most capacious of their kind anywhere; and Gabon's "development budget" in 1965 was to total some £5 million, a third being provided by the World Bank and more than £500,000 by the European Development Fund.

But development for whom? The facts about the Gabon development budget repay a little thought. They indicate, for instance, that the greater part of it is allocated to the expansion of mineral and processing projects whose profits go largely to Europe and the United States, and, not being directed to labour-intensive industries, can do little to raise the local demand for wage employment. Not much more than 1 per cent of this budget, it appears, is to be spent on schools in a country which is still largely non-literate, and even less than that on hospitals where today there are practically none at all. But this, of course, is not to say that nobody gains. On the contrary, the Gabon parliament has sixty-five members, and each of these members receives a salary that is equivalent to about one-third *more* than the pay of a British M.P. before the recent raising of the parliamentary wage. "As for the cost of the presidential and ministerial establishments", in some recent words of Professor René Dumont's, "with all their more or less pointless travelling back and forth, it is probably higher, in relation to the national income, than the cost to France of the Court of Louis XVI in 1788".²⁰ As one sees, *tout se tient*: the devil has the hindmost.

VII

The *élites* can do all this for themselves because they temporarily hold a strong hand. But the hand has several weaknesses. To begin with, the processes of primitive accumulation are not very pleasant for those who suffer them and this, as we shall see, leads to difficulties that grow in size rather than diminish. And then these processes are delayed and hampered by the very structure of the world economy. In the short run, foreign aid can and does do something to alleviate the problem of private accumulation by underwriting new industries and infrastructure from which local agents and contractors may greatly profit. But foreign aid is expensive—and this, though in varying ways, is true both of Eastern as of Western aid—besides being in short supply. Even if the supply were much larger than it is, or seems likely to become, its effect would still be far outweighed by the catastrophic adversity of the terms of trade for a number of crucial commodities, of which cocoa and coffee make obvious examples. (Since 1954, to

take only one case, the average spot price for cocoa beans fell from £467 a long ton to as low as £80 a ton in the autumn of 1965.) The new middle classes of Africa come to birth in a difficult conjuncture.

Besides this, they are in chronic conflict with their own *national* positions. They were carried to power on a great wave of popular awakening and demand for a different and a better life. If they are to stay in power without resorting to authoritarian government—or even, given their weakness, *while* resorting to it—they must do something to satisfy this wide and irresistible demand. They must behave as national leaders while trying at the same time to behave as class leaders in a period of primitive accumulation. Now this, of course, becomes extremely difficult once the resources of demagoguery are exhausted. Just how hard it is may be seen by looking at public education. Many *e'lites* rendered valuable service to Africa, during their early years of rule, by insisting on the rapid expansion of schools and universities. But the position today is that the number of secondary-school leavers and graduates begin greatly to exceed the number of jobs available for them. With this, the *Plites* begin to find themselves in a truly desperate position; they are increasingly besieged by their own kith and kin. Either they must face the prospect of an "educated proletariat" banging on their doors, or else they must start to close down schools and refuse to open new universities: neither alternative is reassuring.

One can see the same inner conflict in other directions. Many governing *Plites* are vowed—another of their services to Africa—to inter-territorial co-operation and functional unification, ideas codified in the ambitious Charter of African Unity signed by all the independent countries in 1963. And it is clear that nearly all the basic industries upon which the future of an industrialized Africa must rest can indeed be viable only within markets that are far greater than those offered by all but one or two individual African countries. Yet the *e'lites* are likewise vowed, for the most part, to the service of their separate, national, and unco-ordinated futures. Industrialization accordingly proceeds piecemeal, and not by inter-territorial co-ordination. Just as the adverse terms of trade have done since 1954, this disunity is bound to hamper and delay expansion, or even, in many cases, make it impossible for the foreseeable future. Once again, time is not on the side of these emergent middle classes.

There is another large point. If I have considered all this in what may seem, I fear, a somewhat mechanical way—"emergence of middle class *versus* emergence of working class"—the necessities of simplification must be my excuse. One really has to bear in mind, however, that the "social distance" separating governors from governed is meanwhile often very small, and that the pressures of popular discontent can and do take a peculiarly intimate and personal form. The *e'lites* have greatly contributed towards creating in Africa a new atmosphere of change and resurgence; now they find themselves the

prisoners of it. With one or two exceptions they find it hard to apply, in self-defence, authoritarian and repressive policies such as can have much chance of being effective.

One sees the truth of this in the sudden *coups* and clamorous upheavals which have lately begun to happen. The voters are there on the threshold, and they cannot be ignored: behind them lies no long and bitter epoch of social struggle and warfare, grinding them into attitudes of submission or of patience, but centuries of traditional democracy. Anyone who travels much in Africa will hear their acid commentary on "people who get above themselves". What a French reporter wrote of the Congo the other day may be generally applied: "One meets men who are severely critical of the new Congolese ruling class. They blame it for appropriating the riches of the country to its own profit alone, and, through the deliberate weakness in which it keeps the State, for making itself the accomplice of foreign companies and their work of exploitation. The reasoning of these men is often coloured by violent nationalism. . . . Yet it is not really a "violent nationalism" that moves such men as these, who may be found all over Africa today: rather it is a feeling that the African revolution—the profound transformation of structure and organization which they know or even vaguely feel to be *necessary* for Africa to prosper—is being betrayed by the governments in power.

But not all the governments in power. Here we touch on the last but by no means least point of weakness in what we may call the middle class position. There have been some régimes in Africa looking for another position, and even beginning to approach it. And it is to these that the disappointed or the disabused have turned increasingly for argument and example. They include Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Tanzania, and maybe one or two others. They differ among themselves, and with none of them is the position simple or resolved. What is important about them is that they have all variously attempted to transform a firmly capitalist posture, inherited on the day of independence (or in 1954 in Egypt's case), into a non-capitalist posture; and to use the instruments of State capitalism, producer co-operation, and the like in order to lay foundations for a socialist-orientated structure and morality. In some of them the dominant pattern of power and economic structure is already far removed from the middle class position.

The clearest cases are those of Egypt and Ghana, partly because both were relatively rich among their neighbours and have therefore had a little more room for independent action. Neither gets a good press in Britain, which is no doubt another way of making the same point. Each has gone through many erratic changes in the last few years, and each has yet to solve the problem of transforming a mass independence movement into a strongly structured and self-conscious party of radical reconstruction. It remains that the middle class position

seemed firmly and even impregnably entrenched in Egypt until a few years ago, and that much the same appeared likewise true of Ghana, but that in neither is this the case today. In both a private sector still exists and is to some extent encouraged, but it exists and prospers only as a secondary adjunct to the public sector, while it is to their new public sector that these régimes have looked for progress.

Disastrous cocoa prices have hit Ghana hard. So has poor or bad management. But the country is in a very different shape from a few years ago. Its massive Volta Dam, built largely with Ghana's own money ahead of scheduled time and under scheduled cost, began producing power early in 1966. A string of basic industries has taken shape alongside an entirely new deep-water port. Trials are under-way with producer co-operatives, State farms, and other publicly-promoted means of raising food supply. In a notably different situation from Nigeria, the soldiers who took over in March 1966 have now to show whether they can lead towards a wider democracy which will not only avoid the repressions and blunders of the Nkrumali régime, but also maintain and extend its very real socio-economic achievements.

No doubt there is a long road to travel, especially in finding and applying new forms of popular democracy. The crucial point is that the journey has begun. One sees the same in a different context in Tanzania and Mali. These very hard-up countries, each setting forth at independence with next to no money in the till, have not become the possessions of small power-cliques. Little by little, in ways severely limited by lack of finance, they are striving for broad and democratic means of transformation. They too are among the countries where social and ideological debate latterly begins to range widely and freely: from the long and arduous effort in Tanganyika to find appropriate checks and balances on the use of power by a national movement that is now the only party in the State, to the strong attacks on privilege and corruption that have lately rocked the Ghana parliament.²¹ These are the countries where talk of unity and non-alignment, structural change and even socialism, can take a real and practical form. These are the countries where something different begins to happen. For the leaders of the middle class position they may be a maddening irritation; but of course they are also much more than that. They are a demonstration, however tentative and fragmentary as yet, of the non-capitalist alternative.

VIII

Perhaps one can tie all this into a few working conclusions. In the first place, most African régimes are at present pointed in a capitalist direction. Some of them, like Nigeria and Ivory Coast, are emphatically and explicitly so. Others, like Senegal and perhaps Kenya (for the latter case is not yet clear), promote capitalism under the cover of

variously misleading slogans about socialism and "Africanism". A few of these capitalist-orientated régimes hate solid weight and purpose, and rest on powerful indigenous trends of interest and opinion. Others represent little more than scattered groups whose numbers are few and whose roots remain shallow: without the firm embrace of the world capitalist system—whether expressed directly in military and political presence or indirectly in economic control—these weak régimes, resting on no solid weight of local interest and opinion, could not survive.

Even with the stronger régimes a capitalist future seems far from assured. In none of them, not even in Nigeria or the Ivory Coast, is it a question of defending an already crystallized capitalist system and middle class, but of holding off the consequences of mass poverty and frustration while such systems and classes come into being. The problem for most *élites*, perhaps for all of them, is to know how to keep themselves in power during a necessarily painful and unpopular—even violently unpopular—period of primary accumulation. All other emergent capitalist classes, as we know, have solved this problem by long decades of savage oppression and dictatorship. If the United States has seemed a partial exception, this is only because the plight of the Negroes has been generally forgotten and because the United States could rely on a very large investment from Britain during fifty years of formative growth. There is absolutely no evidence that any part of independent Africa can hope for private investment—for investment, that is, aimed at helping to build an indigenous middle class—on anything faintly resembling such a scale. Nor do the rising capitalists of Africa dispose of a slave class such as the Negroes were in the United States.

If, then, these emergent middle classes are to stay in power and reach their aim of cultural and economic hegemony—of being *accepted* as a ruling class—they will have to face great and growing conflict with the mass of their fellow-citizens; and they will have to face this, no matter how tough they are, over a long period. More and more overtly and explicitly, their economic domination will have to become a political dictatorship as well. Given their domestic weakness they will have to rely more and more upon foreign supports of one kind or another. They will become—and what is perhaps more important in this context, they will be seen to become—less and less national in their posture. (Nigerian events of January 1966 have underlined many of the points in this essay, written before they occurred. Assailed by mounting criticism from all sides, the old federal clique led by Sir Ahmadu Bellowas moving towards dictatorship by use of the army; but the army, responding to popular pressures, threw them out instead. Now it remains to be seen how far the army commanders can adjust to a wider and more effective democracy. Going on in Nigeria this year is a modern version of the Putney Debates.)

What seems likely over the next ten years, accordingly, is that the stability of the capitalist-orientated régimes will be under growing threat of dislocation by popular upheaval, more or less violent spasms of economic crisis, and, reflecting all this, sudden coups *d'état* by one or other section of the ruling group in conflict with itself. One thinks of Latin America, though the circumstances are otherwise very different. On the other side, meanwhile, a small but geographically well spread group of countries will have been moving in another direction, and this movement, however difficult it may find the road to democratic and socialist forms of national organization, may be expected to win some successes, and, in winning them, to bring a cumulative pressure of different example.

Other factors will play their part. Of gaps and omissions in this essay the most important, no doubt, is the absence of discussion about the degree in which rural Africans, village Africans, have taken the road of revolution in the past few years, and how far they may take it again. That they have so taken it has been demonstrated in Kenya by the Kikuyu and their allies, in South Africa by the Pondo, in Cameroun by the Bamileke, in Angola by the Bakongo and Kimbundu, to offer only a few varied examples outside the general support which peasant masses have given to independence movements up and down the continent. If it may be helpful to clarity to look at this whole knotted situation from the standpoint of middle class and working class emergence, the fact still remains that it is the rural millions who will provide the critical weight in the balance between progress and reaction. Who wins them will win Africa. But to ask who will win them is to ask who will lead them. And with this we are back again, at least for the purposes of crystal gazing, at the need to evaluate the respective rates of growth and capacity of the middle classes and their ideological opposition.

We may reasonably conclude that in most cases these emergent middle classes are not going to be able to hold their ground in the turbulent years which now lie ahead. They have come too late to the feast. They are too new, too few, and too weak in spite of all the support they have received and can expect to receive from abroad. But this is still a long way from saying that the socialists are going to have an easy time of it. They also are new, few, and weak. They have barely begun to think their problems through, even though here and there the ideas of socialism may now enlarge and fructify the ideas of nationalism. In most cases they have far to go before they can hope to achieve any decisive influence among village Africans or even among the new wage-earning multitudes of the towns. And their weakness is made worse by their possessing as yet no inter-territorial movement, party, or even journal of debate with which to compensate for their rarity and isolation, a fragmentation that is emphasized still further by the disunity and inter-territorial conflicts

of the trade unions. Yet the socialists, for all these handicaps, have several indigenous bases on which they can rely, and, as the struggle widens over coining years between the few who stand to gain by the formative processes of a post-colonial capitalism and the many who do not, they also have the prospect of a continental field of action and persuasion. Their position is stronger than it often seems.

What we are likely to see, then, is a protracted struggle giving rise to new forms of thought and action on both sides of the fence. The *élite régimes* will be forced either into compromise—and to that extent away from their hope of middle class hegemony—or else out of their parliamentary framework into more and more openly oligarchical or personal forms of rule; but even these will be anything but stable. Disunity among them will remain as sharp as it is today, apart from diplomacy at the top, since nationalist separatism is essential to their being; where dictatorships appear, disunity will of course become even sharper than it is today. The *non-élite régimes*, meanwhile, will begin to apply (as one or two of them have already begun to apply) the theories of socialism to the practical realities of their peoples and their lands. They will make progress. In making progress—in building up their countries on democratic lines and in moving at the same time away from the purely nationalist conceptions of the last period of struggle—they will meet and have to solve the problem of achieving an organic unity of aim and action, argument, debate and criticism, not only at the top but also and above all at the base. The idea of an all-African socialist movement is evidently premature today. But when it comes—and perhaps this will have happened quite a few years before 1976—we shall know that Africans, who cannot prosper so long as they remain divided as they are divided today, have once more stepped forward to the command of their own destiny.

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NOTES

1. S. J. Patel, "Economic Transition in Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, ch. ii of vol. III, 1954.
2. Cf. P. Einzig, *Primitive Money*, 1949.
3. R. Mauny, *Tableau Gkographique de l'Ouest African*, 1961, p. 375.
4. See K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, 1956; and G. I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers*, 1963.
5. I. Wilks, "Aspects of Bureaucratization in Ashanti", Legon 1965.
6. A. T. Bryant, the missionary historian of the Zulu, put it this way some forty years ago: "Such a wave of political animosity, panic, fear or general unrest seems to have invaded the South African native mind in the earlier decades of the past century—or even, indeed, the whole Negro mind; for we find evidence of similar political upheavals at the same period also in other parts of the Dart Continent". *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 1929, p. 147.

7. I have reviewed some of them in a recent book: *Which Way Africa? The Search for a New Society*, Penguin 1964, p. 81.
8. *Which Way Africa?*, p. 84
9. Father J. van Wing, "La Situation actuelle des Populations congolaises", *Bull. des Séances* of Inst. Royale Colonial **Belge**, 3 of 1945.
10. Most effectively, perhaps, G. Balandier, *Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire*, 1958.
11. Economic Commission for Africa: Workshop on Urbanization: report of conference of April-May 1962, Addis Ababa, second part.
12. International Labour Office, *African Labour Survey*, 1958, p. 111, quoting U.N. sources.
13. Quoted in R. Barbé, *Les Classes Sociales en Afrique Noire*, 1964, p. 17, from estimates in *Comptes économiques de l'AOF*, 1956, vol. II, p. 69, and in R. P. Lebret, *Comité d'Etudes Economiques (Sénégal)*.
14. *Loc. cit.*, p. 27, quoting *Rapport général de Synthèse sur les Perspectives générales de développement du Sénégal*.
15. In a letter to the writer.
16. East Africa Royal Commission, *Report*, 1955, pp. 45 and 206.
17. *Time*, 17 September 1965.
18. B. Holas, quoted in R. Durnont, *Re'conversion de l'économie agricole: Guinée, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali*, p. 67.
19. Quoted in Barbé, *supra*, p. 37, drawing on a study by P. Marnay, B. Larssonneur and J. Tys, *Le Littoral alladien*.
20. *Comptes économiques du Togo 19563*.
21. It would be easy to add more examples, but I doubt if they justify the space in this context. Our conclusions would be the same. According to a report on *The Development of African Private Enterprise* made in 1964, for the U.S. National Planning Association by T. Geiger and W. Armstrong, the Nigerian Ministry of Commerce and Industry has estimated that "there are roughly 200,000 Nigerian entrepreneurs, the great majority of whom are partially or wholly engaged in small retailing activities". Their incomes are mostly low: "a 1959 report of the Nigerian Government indicated that about 85 per cent of the African traders in Lagos earned less than \$420 a year—and this is probably higher than in most other parts of the country". The same report quotes a 1963 census in Ghana which showed "over 100,000 enterprises of all sizes, of which, 1,200 employ more than 10 people", and adds that most of these, as in Nigeria, are small retailers with low incomes. The Ghana cocoa farming situation is another aspect of enterprise too complex for discussion here. Broadly, though, Geiger and Armstrong's conclusions seem acceptable: "that modern forms of indigenous private economic activity are only beginning to be developed in the countries of tropical Africa, except for Nigeria and Ghana".
22. Quoted by *The Economist*, 7 August 1965.
23. *Loc cit.*
24. Original in French: my translation.
25. *Afrique Noire*, 2 December 1951.
26. Quoted in *Which Way Africa?*, *supra*, p. 151.
27. R. Wraith and E. Simpkins, *Corruption in Developing Countries*, 1963, p. 19.
28. P. MacAuslan in *Venture*. September 1965, p. 25.
29. R. Dumont, *L'Afrique Noire est Mal Partie*, 1962, p. 65.
30. J. Ziegler, *Le Monde*, 24 September 1965.
31. For extracts from this particular debate, not the only one of its kind, see *West Africa*, 18 September 1965, p. 1,039, which quotes some hard-hitting stuff, such as one M.P.'s complaint that "today we have swarming

into the [Convention People's] Party men who arrived from Damascus like Saul and changed their name to St. Paul. They have become more Marxist than the man **Marx** himself. They have become more Nkrumaist than the man Nkrumah himself. . . ." There was "a new aristocracy, a new class which absorbs an enormous part of the national income", etc., etc. Or the sarcastic remarks of another M.P., Miss Comfort Asamoah, who complained of hypocrites who appear before the President in smocks but "visit their girl friends in costly suits". Or an M.P. from Koforidua, Mr. Kwatia, who alleged that many people had been making large sums out of import licensing. Or a great deal else to the same healthy effect. As events were to show, it was nothing like enough. For the sake of its good achievements and aims in the socio-economic field, one had hoped that the blunders, repressions and sheer bombast of the Nkrumah **régime** would be corrected, lifted and grown out of; but it was not to be. Even so, history will be likely to see the Nkrumah period's achievements as far greater than its failings which mainly lay, no doubt, in over-ambitious planning and personal vanity but, above all, in the degeneration of the Convention People's Party into a mere political apparatus staffed too often by incompetents and careerists.