

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE & SOCIALISM

A Continent in
search of a
formula

by **Jalang Kwena**

The African revolution has already brought national independence and freedom to 29 countries with a total population of 184 million souls; while four more countries with a total population of 30 million will be liberated this year or early next year. Though they have gained their political independence and have their own governments, most of these countries are economically still dominated by their former rulers.

But while their emancipation is still incomplete, and while many of these countries have yet to carry out important economic and political tasks essential to their full and complete freedom—establishment of their own national industries and development of agriculture, expulsion of foreign monopolies, removal of remnants of colonialism and imperialism, and introduction of far-reaching agrarian reforms—they are already brought face to face with major national problems which demand immediate solution.

Having rightly condemned imperialist oppression and exploitation before they attained independence, leaders of these states are now called upon to remove the evil legacies of colonialism. The masses who courageously and selflessly fought for freedom, social justice and a bright future want an end to poverty, hunger, unemployment, disease, lack of housing, low wages, illiteracy and ignorance.

The question of removal of poverty and its associate and resultant evils, therefore, is the greatest problem plaguing the newly freed peoples of Africa. Yet the solution seems straight-forward enough. We all know that for a country to be able to end those evils it must have a highly developed economy. It must have heavy and light industry, developed transport and communication systems, and

its agriculture must be modernised. Its capacity and ability to produce wealth must be tremendously increased. It must have skilled producers and efficient tools with which to produce. This means that the government concerned must embark on a programme of planned economic and industrial development.

To end lack of education, knowledge and skill adequate primary schools, secondary schools, technical and training colleges and institutions of higher learning are necessary. To abolish diseases there must be enough well-equipped hospitals and clinics staffed with properly trained personnel, and to prevent disease all citizens must be properly housed, fed and clothed, and must live under good hygienic conditions.

But the big question is: how are all these fine things to be done? That is precisely one of the problems worrying the authorities in all independent African States today. All are aware of the gigantic economic and social task, even though some of them are sitting helplessly and merely resorting to usual bourgeois methods and tricks of keeping the people quiet. However, others are trying in their own way to tackle the problem resolutely.

Essentially, the matter is one of social systems: which system is it to be, which is adequate for the task, capitalism or socialism? Because of their feudal petty bourgeois background and anti-communist Western propaganda many African leaders in independent African States have a strong *capitalist* bias.

CAPITALISM HAS FAILED

As a system based on private ownership of the means of production and whose sole purpose is to make profit, capitalism and its variants—colonialism, imperialism and fascism—has miserably failed to satisfy the needs of the mass of humanity. This is the case not only with regard to Africa, Asia and Latin America, but everywhere where the system obtains. There are over 3 million permanently unemployed workers in the United States and millions more in other capitalist countries. We all know of daily queues at labour bureaux, queues of desperate men and women seeking in vain for non-existent jobs, and begging for the dole.

Capitalism is to-day a sick and dying social order. It is in a state of chronic economic crises and depressions. Hence the reckless policy pursued by the Western powers in connection with the vital question of war and peace. Hence also the formation of many post-war economic organisations such as the "Coal and Steel Com-

munity", the "European Common Market" and others. These bodies have been set up to curb competition and control the supplies of particular goods into the market. This system is therefore utterly inadequate for and unequal to the huge and very important social task envisaged.

The theory of and speculation about an entirely new and peculiarly African social system is nothing but a baseless reactionary petty bourgeois dream which should be rejected with the contempt it deserves. While admitting that capitalism has failed, the advocates of this absurd theory maintain that "communism has the soul of Africa against it", and that "the irrational, unpredictable and religious African soul will resist the disintegrating power of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, even in cases where the African intellect has agreed to accept."

These wishful-thinkers are wrong, both in their assumption and inference. The African people are not against but for communism. But, in any case, what right has anyone to suggest that they therefore want their own different "African" social system? If it were true that Africans did not want common ownership of land and of the means of production, then surely they must be in favour of private ownership, capitalism. Happily, this is not the case. Africans are neither opposed to Communism nor do they want an "African social system". The African people are not going to cut themselves away from the peoples of the rest of the world.

It is true that they are searching for a humane social system. But a system which is good for the Europeans, Asians or Americans is also good for the African people. The peoples of the capitalist world and of the newly freed African and Asian countries want a radical system, one ready and prepared to carry through fundamental social, economic and political tasks. Some have already found it.

"Africans," writes a Western spokesman, "are prepared to use Marxist doctrine as a guide to the solution of economic and political matters. . . ." And Mr. J. K. Tettegah, the General Secretary of the Ghana Trades Union Congress, says they in Ghana have chosen socialism because "capitalism has only brought humanity the evils of imperialism and colonialism."

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

The Ghanaians declare they are aiming at "a state based upon a socialist pattern of society adapted to suit Ghanaian conditions, in which all citizens, regardless of class, tribe, colour or creed, shall

have equal opportunity, and where there shall be no exploitation of man by man, tribe by tribe, or class by class; and shall strive to promote and to safeguard popular democracy based upon universal adult suffrage and the rule of the majority". (Objective of the Convention People's Party, the governing party of Ghana.)

It is not in Ghana alone where a governing party has come to this realisation and has chosen socialism as the only type of social order that will successfully tackle the basic economic and social problems facing it. Governing parties in other African countries have come to the same conclusion, and in Mali and Guinea we can see purposeful development on non-capitalist lines towards the building of socialist societies.

However, recognising the strong dislike of capitalism among the African masses, and powerful attraction towards socialism, some African leaders declare themselves in favour of "socialism" but in fact do nothing to build it. Instead they do everything to foster the capitalist elements and even compromise with international imperialism and neo-colonialism. For example, in Senegal and Egypt we have the remarkable picture of leaders who claim to be socialists, while persecuting militant socialist and trade union leaders, and Bourguiba of Tunisia combines "socialist" demagogy with protestations of undying affection for "the West".

The difficulty is that, due largely to the black-out on true information maintained for so many years by the imperialist powers in Africa, there is widespread ignorance in Africa as to what socialism really is.

There is only one genuine form of socialism—socialism as defined in the teachings of Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin. There is not and never will be such a thing as "national socialism", "Christian socialism" or "African socialism". It is true that there have been several "socialist" governments in Europe in the past 44 years. But with the exception of the U.S.S.R. all of them failed; some ended in a Mussolini, a Hitler, a Churchill or a de Gaulle. All of them failed because the countries concerned did not attack the real fundamental issue: the problem of the basic means of life, the ownership of land, forests, waters, industry, mines and mineral resources and raw materials, and because they did not attack the power and forces of property owners or abolish their privileges.

So, while we are in full agreement with the proposition that each country will reach socialism through ways and methods best suited to its people, we do feel that it is essential that there should be no

confusion or misunderstanding about what we mean by socialism.

“Socialism is a system based on *social ownership of the means of production* in its two forms—state (public) and co-operative or collective farm property. In this system there is no exploitation of man by man. The national economy is developed in a planned way, for the purpose of completely satisfying the growing needs of the working people by means of an uninterrupted growth of production on the basis of advanced techniques and realisation of the principle of distribution according to work.

“Under socialism the means of production are socially-owned, and production itself is for the satisfaction of the needs of society as a whole and of each of its members.”—*Political Economy*, publication of the Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.

This then is the socialism for which we stand, the scientific socialism which the peoples of the U.S.S.R. built after their October Revolution of 1917, and which is being built in China, North Korea, North Vietnam and in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Socialism is not an emotional or sentimental thing. Socialism is a thorough-going social revolution in which public ownership of the means of production is substituted for private ownership. This truth cannot be invalidated by fancy names or labels.

ILLUSIONS AND WISHFUL THINKING

It is absolutely necessary that all African students of economics and politics and all African political leaders should rid themselves of illusions and wishful-thinking when dealing with social problems and the structure of African society and its customs. The peoples of Africa do not have a homogeneous social system. There are several social orders in various countries of Africa. In some, Africans live under tribalism where there are no definite classes, others live under feudalism or capitalism. In the last two systems there are classes with irreconcilable class interests. Each country, therefore, has its own peculiar social, economic and political problems which have to be determined, recognised and considered separately and individually.

It stands to reason that political institutions set up for and policies pursued in a classless society will be inadequate for a society divided into contending classes with strong antagonistic class interests. Where there are no classes the economic and political policies will be easy, simple and straightforward: no civil war,

no class struggle. The nation as a whole will move forward towards the building of a socialist order without much subjective difficulties. But where the people are divided into classes there will certainly be many subjective difficulties and some bitter and grim class struggles in which privileged sections aim at preventing any attempts to nationalise the means of production. In such a situation the government and the state must be of a type that is capable of and suited for implementing radical social policies. Here it is very important that the State should not flinch or hesitate when it comes to taking strong measures against the propertied classes or depriving them of power and their privileges.

The government concerned must be under no illusion regarding the aims of its opponents. The role and responsibility of the working class is vital in the stage and period of struggle for nationalisation. They have to play the leading and decisive role in the struggle for freedom and national liberation. However, under conditions of private ownership of the means of production it is at all times the duty and responsibility of the workers' organisations such as trade unions to fight for better wages and working conditions for their members.

Under those conditions there can be no question about "unity of action between the government, the governing party and the trade unions" unless such unity of action concerns attacks on private ownership of the means of production or basic progressive social measures. Any trade union which forgets the bread and butter issues betrays the interests of its members.

Even when the economic conditions have changed, when the workers are the owners and rulers of the means of production, trade unions still have to look after the interests of their members. But here the best way of doing this is by increasing productivity and in this way increasing or raising the share and material benefits of their members. Under such conditions the producers, the workers, and the whole of society benefit from the wealth resulting from increased productivity. Apart from their wages and salaries their rich society will provide them with all the necessaries essential for a full life: food; all types of education; good houses; hospitals; clinics; electricity; proper sanitation; efficient transport services; unemployment, sick and maternity benefits; old age pensions; recreational and cultural facilities and entertainments.

It should be quite clear now from what we have said above that only through the complete elimination of capitalism, colonialism,

imperialism and neo-colonialism in all its forms, and by the establishment of socialism will the fundamental and pressing economic, political and social problems of Africa be solved. The future salvation of mankind lies in communism, and socialism is the first stage of the communist society.

HOW TO ACHIEVE SOCIALISM

In order to achieve socialism it is necessary to do more than denounce capitalism and to declare oneself in favour of socialist objectives in general. To solve the concrete problems presented by each and every area in Africa, and to lead the masses of working people in the prolonged and difficult struggles against foreign imperialism and neo-colonialism as well as against local power-groups which will oppose socialism to preserve their selfish privileges, leadership is necessary by political parties which represent the most advanced element in African society, the working class, and which are enlightened by the study and application of the advanced theory of scientific socialism—Marxism-Leninism.

Several such Parties already exist in various African territories, and it is encouraging to note that at gatherings of the world communist movement African Communist and Workers' Parties are more represented than at any time in the past.

In many African countries one can observe the growth of groups which are moving towards or actually proclaim their adherence to Marxism-Leninism. In Senegal, the African Independence Party has long proclaimed its faith in Communism. In Nigeria several groups have been formed in various parts of the country which speak out in favour of scientific socialism—it would be an excellent thing for Nigeria and in particular for its working class if these could all come together to pool their resources and talents in a single organisation. In Morocco the journal "Al Moukafih", edited by Ali Yata, vigorously advocates Marxist-Leninist ideas. In many African countries groups of readers of "The African Communist" have been formed to discuss the contents of this journal and to apply its inspiring ideas to the solution of their own local problems. Everywhere in Africa individual Communists are studying and working and playing an unselfish and leading part in the struggles of their people against colonialism and neo-colonialism, in close friendship and association with the national liberation movements.

From Cape to Cairo and from Somalia to Senegal, African working-class organisations, youths and intellectuals have decided for socialism and are enthusiastically turning to Marxist-Leninist studies and organisations. It is with these people—the youth in political organisations, in trade unions, in colleges and universities—that the future lies. They are the builders of to-day and the leaders and statesmen of tomorrow.

TRIUMPH OF THE IDEA OF SOCIALISM

The President of the Republic of Mali, Modibo Keita, visited the Soviet Union in May, 1962, at the head of a Government delegation. Speaking at a reception given in his honour in Moscow, he proposed the following toast:

“To the triumph of the great idea of the abolition of all systems of oppression, whether oppression of one country by another, or oppression of some human beings by others. I raise my glass to this great idea which was discovered by the genius of the Soviet people, who have been able to translate this idea into reality—an idea which is now the hope of millions and hundreds of millions of people in all countries and on all continents.”

In another speech during the same visit, President Modibo Keita declared:

“The peoples of the Soviet Union and Mali are waging on one single front a difficult, gigantic, but hopeful struggle against colonialism and all forms of oppression and for world peace. . . . Both you and we have confidence in the victory of Socialism. It is because of this that we wanted to come to the original sources of this idea, to see the realities of life in your country, your successes, even if the actual conditions of existence in your country somewhat differ from ours, and even if your methods somewhat differ from ours. Nevertheless, we want to borrow your experience, because the main thing is the aim you have set yourselves. . . .

“We have already had a chance to appreciate your friendship at difficult moments in the development of our country, when it was the object of attacks from imperialists who tried to destroy our independence. The people of Mali will never forget the assistance rendered us by the Soviet people in consolidating the independence, territorial integrity and national unity of our country.”