

Prospects for the Lagos Charter

COLIN LEGUM

Empirical Pan-Africanism at the Lagos Summit

THE LAGOS "SUMMIT" conference of heads of state did not deepen the division of Africa into rival power blocs, as is too often implied. What it did do was to throw into sharper relief the different trends of opinion, the various political forces, which co-exist throughout the continent today.

It is a mistake to assume the operation of a single Pan-African political dynamic, more or less perfectly expressed by any one government. There is no disagreement in Africa about the aim of Pan-African unity. But both within and between different states there are very real and honestly-held disagreements about the terms on which unity is possible or desirable. Ironically, the very governments who are most commonly associated with militant Pan-Africanism have become the least willing to compromise, for the sake of unity, the principles they regard as fundamental to Africa's progress. This political fastidiousness has to some extent isolated the very governments who, it had been assumed, would lead the Pan-African unity movement. These are, of course, the revolutionary governments of Ghana, Guinea, Mali and the United Arab Republic: by "revolutionary" I mean committed to strict non-alignment abroad and rapid state-induced economic progress within a one-party state at home. Until very recently Accra, Conakry and Cairo had been accepted as the capitals to which continental African nationalism looked for leadership as the prototype and magnet for the "African Personality."

With the independence of Nigeria and French-speaking Africa the political balance in Africa altered, at first imperceptibly. It was still assumed that the reformist approach of governments like the Nigerian, Ethiopian and Liberian would give way in time to the more militant prototype; and that revolutions in the ex-French colonies would pretty soon sweep away the "stooge" governments instated by France. On those assumptions, it was reasonable for the "true" Pan-Africanists to lay down the conditions for unity—non-alignment and "African socialism"—and wait for history to produce Pan-Africanist leadership throughout Africa. It was also to be expected that history would be given a helping hand in the form of financial and moral encouragement of opposition movements, trade unions and so on.

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The magnetic attraction of the "revolutionary" capitals remains one of the strong political forces throughout Africa. But it is no longer the only one. First, the tactics adopted by these governments have set up a strong reaction against interference by one African state into the affairs of another, which in turn, has weakened the ideal of *political* unity in which national sovereignty is diminished. Second, it has become clear that the revolutions expected against "stooge" governments are by no means as certain as had appeared, and may even be avoided altogether. The fact is that most of the small or/and weak former French colonies are utterly dependent upon French economic assistance not only for capital development but for recurrent expenditure. The old cry: "If Guinea could do it, why can't we?" recedes as Guinea's own difficulties increase. And weak though Guinea was when the French deserted her so shamefully in 1958, she was still a lot stronger than many independent French-speaking states today. The unpleasant fact is that most of these states simply have no alternative to their present dependence upon France whatever the complexion of their government: to expect a policy of militant non-alignment is not practical politics at present.

There emerges, then, three rough groupings of governments: the revolutionaries, the reformists and the conservatives. Each of these tendencies exists in most African states, but the revolutionary governments are at present in the minority. In 1960 and 1961, the Congo crisis precipitated the formation of formal groupings of states, which coalesced round foreign policy issues. In January 1961 the "Casablanca" group was formed primarily to co-ordinate its members' militant approach to the Congo issue. Ghana, Guinea, Mali and the United Arab Republic were joined by the Algerian Provisional Government as well as Morocco (for the particularist reason that she hoped for support for her stand on Mauritania). The group established a formal Charter for African unity and the rudiments of machinery for permanent co-operation.

Also in 1961, twelve conservative French-speaking states came together to discuss their relations with France over Algeria and the Sahara tests. They signed their own "Brazzaville" Charter, providing for co-ordination of policies and functional co-operation on economic affairs, defence and foreign policy. Ten states remained uncommitted to either Charter. The Monrovia conference of May last year was initiated by Nigeria, Liberia and Togo specifically in order to dissolve their exclusive groupings and supersede them in an inclusive Pan-African framework. The attempt failed because the Casablanca powers refused to come at the last minute. Although the Lagos conference was technically a follow-up of the Monrovia one, the sponsors again hoped to attract the Casablanca states as well.

They failed largely because they refused to invite the Algerian Provisional Government. This was a bad tactical blunder, which laid the group open to the charge of domination by the "Brazzaville twelve" who opposed the invitation to the Algerians. Even assuming that the Casablanca group used the Algerians for the excuse they were looking for not to attend a conference they

could not dominate, they should never have been given such a cast-iron excuse. The Casablanca group is well within its rights in refusing to attend a conference from which one of its number had been excluded. Nor is it fair to the Algerian Provisional Government to compare them with nationalists from Kenya or even South

Africa, who do not have a government in exile widely recognised inside and outside Africa. In 1960 the Algerians were seated as full members of the Conference of Independent African States; and they can hardly be blamed for their anger at being excluded by the "Brazzaville" governments, who until very recently

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CAPE TOWN I SING

PETE "CAPE" COD

CAPE TOWN I SING.

It is Sunday afternoon and I am dictating this while striding up and down the surf-pounded beach of Clifton, watching the waves break, break, break. I am wearing my cloak and from time to time I flick it.

My faithful readers, those that have stuck with me through thick and thin, in sickness and in health, in good times and bad since I started writing this column, will be asking—if they are alert—when I left Table Mountain. I had been living in a shack on Table Mount, waiting for the Bomb to go off. However, I made a pile of money (see last month's column) and am now touring the country, porting with me my portable bomb-shelter.

In front of me, scraping the ice off my toes and taking down my dicta, is Walt Whiteman, my own Boswell.

On a jagged rock a slim-hipped sea-gull has been intoning a mournful ditty. High pitched, but mournful; quite an achievement. Now he flies off, left wing stammering slightly, to join a group of prosperously-paunched penguins that have been chanting beckoningly on the horizon.

Walt, whose long white false beard has been flapping melodiously against the front of his alpaca jacket, turns to me. "We are not alone," he mutters.

"Precisely, my dear Whiteman," I answer.

He has at last seen the thousands of bikinied brown-people burning themselves up in the sun.

"Look at the ladies," he requests.

I do. ("Hul bratjies is bra skraal," protested Clifton's ace bard and poet laureate—but that was in another language, and, besides, in another magazine.)

"Tell your readers about Cape Town," Walt suggests.

Oh, dear readers, if you could see the well-fed, some-

what effete and sometimes exaggeratedly well-formed bodies lying here, you would understand something about Cape Town. Something about South Africa, too.

But Cape Town to me is not this collection of sun-burnt strangers. It is rather my friends here, many of them not Capetonians by birth. They are many, and share only their habit of holding meetings and parties, sometimes both simultaneously. They are not symbolised for me by the present Parliament but by the Cape Spring, green, infinitely lovely and promising a great future.

Let me describe a meeting/party I attended recently. It was held at the flat of a retired hog-runner. When a Porcine Prohibition hit the Karroo he made his pile selling illicit pigs to pig-fanciers and holding illegal hog-races from dorp to dorp. He now sells second-hand ears. His wife, our gracious hostess, spent the evening knocking down the walls between their flat and those adjacent, murmuring "Togetherness." Slumped inanely on the couch was a gigantic human Teddy Bear, an Oxford graduate, who grunted wisely at intervals. In the corner lolled a dishevelled jazz-fan barking out "Yes. Man" and "Dollar Brand" as if imitating a Feiffer cartoon. Next to me sat a barefooted gossamer socialist who had aggressively driven her father's Cadillac into the Hall. A balding ex-publisher (sacked, political reasons), a one-time Fort Hare lecturer (sacked, political reasons) and a former member of the N.E.U.M. (resigned, woke up) made up the complement.

We began the meeting, conferred for an hour, solved all the immediate problems, then got out from under the table.

Our host pulled out a bottle of wine (this is Cape Town, remember) and enjoined us thus, "Tipple, bibbers, and tope."

We did. Even the Special Branch man joined in. That is Cape Town. Cape Town I sing. And love.

Codicil

"Hi, Cod!" sneered a young man to me, mispronouncing my pseudosurname, "Still producing your undergraduate-humour-type column for *The New African*?" After felling him with a copy of *Encounter*, Dec., 1961, I read him extracts from Nigel Dennis' review of *Beyond the Fringe* contained therein,—"The spontaneous alacrity that makes so-called 'undergraduate humour' the entrancing thing it is" and "The mind of an intelligent undergraduate presents a maturity that only a handful of geniuses command after the age of 25." Then I answered the young man, who had just graduated himself, "YES." ●

actually sent troops to fight with the French army against the Algerians.

When it became clear that the Algerians were not going to be invited, Tunisia, Sudan and Libya, Monrovia group sympathisers, all left the Conference. This raised in exaggerated form, a further minor strand in the Pan-African web of ideas: the conflict between those who believe the Arabs are part of Africa and those who think black Africa should be united without the Arabs, who, to quote a delegate at Lagos, "always drag their own divisions into Africa." Perhaps the remaining delegates at Lagos felt an underlying sense of guilt about the Algerians, perhaps they were simply disappointed at the absence of so many others. Whatever the explanation, the departure of Tunisia, Libya and Sudan released a surprising flood of anti-Arab invective. Though it probably does not go very deep, it was symptomatic of an attempt to rationalise underlying emotions, which few were prepared to defend in public debate.

The Charter devised at Lagos is modelled clearly on the United Nations Charter, with the persistent emphasis on non-interference in each other's affairs. There is an elaborate three-tier structure of command: Assembly of Heads of States, Permanent Council of Ministers, and Secretariat. The Secretary-General's position is carefully spelt out very much on the lines of the U.N. Secretary-General—except that there is provision for his succession if he dies in office. The only important U.N. institutions missing are the Security Council and the veto. Much is made of the essential equality of all states, and the opposition to any "great powers" pretensions. The emphasis is upon isolating and building upon areas of common agreement, ignoring divisive differences. The Charter is to come into effect when three-quarters of independent Africa has signed it, when it will be registered with U.N. as a regional organisation like the Organisation of American States.

The prospects for the Lagos Charter depend upon two things. First, are the revolutionaries (Casablanca) prepared to work with the conservatives (Brazzaville) for functional unity—as the reformists (the middle states) have already indicated they can? Will Ghana and Guinea be willing, for instance, to sit round a conference table with the French advisers of some of the Brazzaville states? This problem goes much deeper than the question of which Charter everyone should sign: it is a problem of what price in terms of principles the Casablanca powers will be prepared to pay for unity now. It is a very real dilemma, not to be dismissed as a question of power-seeking or *amour propre*.

Finally, like all elaborate structures the success of the Lagos Charter will depend upon who is appointed as Secretary-General and what he is allowed to make of the position. If the new organisation is to amount to anything its Secretary-General must be able to speak with the authority of an international civil servant. It is hard to know at this stage whether a figure of real prominence and power is envisaged or would be acceptable in practice. No nation, no continent, has found it easy to unite or to accept a supra-national authority. It is hardly surprising that Africa, strongly charged as it is with nationalisms, should have failed so far to find a magic formula. ●

A "NEW AFRICAN" RE-VIEW

When men were "boys"

LEONARD BLOOM

IN 1950, Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban: a study of the psychology of colonization* was first published in French. At that time, the imminent, speedy and sometimes violent overthrow of modern colonialism was unsuspected by the colonial powers, who were still motivated by a mixture of wishful-thinking and complacency. True, in 1947 India had won her independence and China had shaken off both the western powers and Japan. Yet the French, Dutch, British and Portuguese control of their colonies in the Far and Near East was only beginning to crumble, and Africa was barely stirring. Few questions were asked about less-known colonies: the Outer Russian republics and "satellite" countries, and those Latin American states that were economic fiefs of American business.

Not surprisingly, most studies made of colonial situations dealt with economic and political issues, and the handful dealing with psychological and sociological aspects of colonialism tended to be compulsively concerned with defending or attacking theories of the alleged intellectual, emotional and moral inferiority of subject peoples, and the equally illusory superiority of the rulers.

Mannoni's book has for its basic object the analysis of "the meeting of two entirely different types of personality and their reactions to each other, in consequence of which the native becomes 'colonized' and the European becomes a colonial." He argues that the assimilation of "European" culture by "native" (1) can succeed only if "the personality of the native is first destroyed through uprooting, enslavement, and the collapse of the social structure," (2) causes the "celebrated inferiority complex of the coloured peoples," which is the "key to the psychology of backward peoples, and their relationship of dependence upon the 'European,'" and (3) is hampered by the difficulty that "it is not yet clear how a personality originally constructed on the 'noncivilized' model can later produce a second, 'civilized personality'." Mannoni even appears

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