
REVIEWS

One State

One Party

T. V. R. Beard

African One-Party States edited by Gwendolen M. Carter (Cornell University Press)

THE READER WHO IS expecting from *African One-Party States* an explication and analysis of the theory of "African democracy"—as it has increasingly come to be called—the theory as to why one-party states are best suited to Africa and why such states are democratic, will have to look elsewhere for he will not find it in this book. The title is in fact apt to mislead (it could equally well have been "Six African States"). Nevertheless this is a welcome addition to political literature on Africa. Edited by Miss Gwendolen Carter, it consists of six essays, each by a different person, with a short introduction by the editor herself.

Each of the essays traces the historical and political developments of an African state, and includes brief sections on its economy, geography and social structure, ending with a discussion of contemporary issues. All this goes to make up an extremely interesting book, for all the essays are well-written, penetratingly analytical within their prescribed limits, and many contain information which is not to be found elsewhere in the English language.

The book is limited to a single volume so that each essay is restricted to 90 or so pages, and many questions of necessity remain unanswered. This is the more so as four of the chosen states were former French colonies on which there is singular lack of material in English. These four are Tunisia (Charles F. Gallagher), Senegal (Ernest Milcent), Guinea (L. Gray Cowan), and Ivory Coast (Virginia Thompson). The other two states dealt with are Liberia (J. Gus Liebenow) and Tanganyika (Margaret L. Bates) and there is a scarcity of up-to-date political works on both of these countries. In fact all six essays could well be expanded into comprehensive and independent works. I do not intend to be disparaging though, for it is the high quality of these essays which whets the appetite for more.

Whether we choose to divide these states into North, West, and East African or into former French, British and American states, the contrasts between them are equally striking. The only common factors between all six would seem to be the arbitrariness of their boundaries, a colonial legacy; the underdevelopment of their human and economic resources, also to some extent a colonial legacy; and that all can be broadly categorised

as "one-party states". Whether or not this can be ascribed to colonialism, and to what extent, is likely to be a most controversial question, but it is a question which must take into account that the colonial regimes did not themselves, until recently, take kindly to opposition within their colonies, and even then the large number of "prison graduates" and the attempts to steer and circumscribe opposition reveal their attitudes on this score. Like the independent governments which followed them, the colonial regimes tended to see opposition as an undermining and destructive force hindering progress rather than promoting it. Paternalism has been replaced by a sense of urgency for economic growth, a not inappropriate sense of urgency either, considering the economic plight of most of Africa, and the tendency now is to try to eliminate any factors which are considered to stand in the way of economic progress. Opposition to the governing party is generally taken to be such a factor.

THE THREE FRENCH-SPEAKING states of West Africa: Guinea, Senegal and Ivory Coast provide an interesting contrast. Guinea, as is well known, voted "No" in de Gaulle's referendum in 1958 and is now a member of the Ghana-Guinea Union and a member of the Casablanca group of powers. Senegal and Ivory Coast both voted "Yes" and for continued association with France. President Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast, a man with a strong personal attachment for France, was not only the chief campaigner for continued association with France but was largely instrumental in the creation of the Monrovia group of powers. He at length changed his policy and led Ivory Coast to independence, but his approach to politics is more conservative than that of either Sekou Toure or Senghor. He is conservative in the sense that his approach is essentially pragmatic, for he is prepared to reshape his policies to meet changes in conditions. Much has been written of Sekou Toure and Senghor in the daily and weekly press, and they, along with figures such as Nkrumah and Nyerere are well known to most of us. Houphouët-Boigny, on the other hand is little known to the average reader of the English press.

This is partly due to the fact that he avoids undue publicity, does not trade on the charismatic powers which his followers have given him, and because he does not trade in polemical speeches which catch the reporter's eye. He seems to have something in common with Smuts with his comparative detachment, his adeptness in diplomacy, and his considerable astuteness. He has created the Council of the Entente, the Union Africaine et Malagache, and worked for the creation of the Monrovia group, and most of his work has been unspectacular and behind the scenes. He is undoubtedly a statesman of stature. Senegal, a Monrovia power, may be said to lie somewhere between Guinea and Ivory Coast in political complexion.

A little known fact which Virginia Thompson brings out in her essay is the relative wealth of the Ivory Coast as compared with the other West African states. Living standards there are growing rapidly, so providing evidence that at least one of the new African states is making significant economic progress. The economic problem is an acute one, and there are economists in

western countries who hold extremely pessimistic views about the possibilities of economic progress in the new African states. It is sometimes asserted that there is too much concern for political ideologies and too little for economic facts in Africa today. It is said, for example, that there is too much emphasis upon industry and not enough on agriculture. But while this may in some cases be true, it should not be forgotten that in many parts of Africa agricultural advances are dependent upon taking people off the land, and industry in achieving just this opens the way for agricultural progress. The need for developing agriculture has certainly not escaped the leaders of the new states, all of whom are profoundly aware of the need for economic planning, and almost all of whom are empirical in their search for the economic systems which best suit their needs. This empirical approach certainly applies to the leaders of all the states dealt with in this book.

NEGRITUDE, IN ITS contemporary form, emanates from French West Africa, Senghor usually being associated with it. It is interesting to ask to what extent negritude is a reaction to the former French policy of assimilation. It is curious how Africans in French-speaking Africa have not only found negritude appealing but have developed it and given it a meaning which goes far beyond Senghor's idea of negritude. For Senghor, negritude is not a kind of racialism or a rationale behind nationalism, it expresses rather the need for an African

contribution to world culture. Senghor sees it in a world-wide context, and not as exclusive. Much of our cultural heritage comes from the East and the West, and now it is Africa's turn to contribute. This is the basis of Senghor's approach as I understand it. It involves a broadening and not a narrowing of world horizons.

The idea that one-party states are best suited to Africa and that they correspond to "African democracy" seems to have taken firm hold in Africa. On the other hand several African states have achieved their independence to find themselves with only one significant party in existence, all political forces having been combined in the struggle for independence. Nyerere's justification of the one-party system is basically a rationalisation of the fact that Tanganyika simply has no opposition of any consequence and that T.A.N.U. at present has the backing of almost the entire population. In such circumstances, as Nyerere himself has said, an opposition can hardly be manufactured, and Tanganyika is left a one-party state whether we like it or not. Nyerere is not averse to a responsible opposition but he is concerned to prevent tribalism from upsetting the broad unity which he has succeeded in establishing, and so would be opposed to any opposition which aimed at driving deep wedges into the society by playing upon tribal allegiances. This is a far cry from Nkrumah's banning of opposition and amending the Ghana constitution to make Ghana a single-party system by definition.

It is all too easy to attack one-party systems and to show that they are not democratic, but, where for historical reasons, other parties simply do not exist, and where the overwhelming majority of the people support the existing party, is there any justification in condemning such a state of affairs as long as the governing party does not oppress minorities? On the other hand what are we to make of such states? Are they simply undemocratic, Q.E.D.? *African One-Party States* can, as Miss Carter suggests in her introduction, help to answer this kind of question although no attempt is made to answer it in the book itself.

This is a good book and well worth reading. Should it go into a second edition I suggest that detailed maps of each state would be a welcome addition. ●

Not Much Plot

R. N. Nordau

I will not be moved edited by Marion Friedmann

IT WAS NOT UNTIL I reached the very last lines of *I will not be moved* that I really sat up and took note. And even then my reaction was one of relief, not of surprise. Miss Nadine Gordimer concludes the book, and her sketch "Great Problems in The Street"—a sad little catalogue of meetings and protests against what seem now to be the minor evils of the pre-Vorster era—with this epitaph:

The indifferent are left in peace. There is nothing to disturb

THE NEW AFRICAN 8 JUNE 1963



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them, now, but the detonations of saboteurs and the hideous outbursts of secret society savagery.

For the first time in the book someone had made a reference to the real problem that faces South Africa now. The rest of it gives no indication of the nearness of South Africa to boiling point. Its eleven articles (which range from the heroic speeches of Nelson Mandela and Robert Sobukwe at their trials, through the powerful—if not altogether coherent—speech of Philip Kgosana to the pass-resisters of 1960, to the record of banishment misery described by Helen Joseph) describe the process of decay, but do not attempt to assess its effect, or its meaning.

This is left to Dan Jacobson to do in an introductory essay, which, though clear and sensitive at the intellectual level, lacks the incisive quality that is really required—at least somewhere in the book.

THE FURTHER ONE reads, the more disappointing become the articles. Lewis Nkosi, for instance, hardly rises above the level of information of ten years ago in his piece on farm labour. And from Chief Luthuli we have only the bare bones of his already much-quoted Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

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In fact, I could not help being reminded of the story of Sam Goldwyn and the first volume of the New York telephone directory. On reading it, he is supposed to have said: "It aint much of a plot but my, what a cast."

This book cannot be sold in South Africa—because so many of its contributors are banned—but I do not think that this is so important. Those South Africans who do not know the facts it records have deliberately chosen to ignore them. Those who do know them, will not be enlightened further; and, in any event, they are more concerned with formulating the new methods of opposition to the horrors of totalitarian white supremacy than they are to reflection on the glorious failures of the past.

Yet Mrs Friedmann's efforts have not been wasted. The book will be read most where it is most needed—outside South Africa. It will not only drive home the ugliness of the situation to those who read it, but it will also show them that there are always people who are prepared to challenge it. If it also makes them realise that these people cannot do so successfully without massive support from abroad, it will have achieved its purpose. ●

In Terms of Vermeer

Ursula Laredo

The Ochre People by Noni Jabavu (John Murray)

NONI JABAVU'S SECOND book is misleadingly titled: despite fairly frequent references to the blanketed pagans of the Transkei, the main purpose of the book is to record the author's impressions of a fairly extended visit to her relations in South Africa, about a year after the death of her brother which was described in her first book, *Drawn in Colour*.

The prevailing mood is nostalgia, harking back to the "old days", when Black and White lived side by side (no buffer strips then) in an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect. Whether these "old days" were as idyllic as pictured by Miss Jabavu, is open to question. Certainly life in her father's home was leisurely and comfortable and her memories of Alice, where she lived as a child, reflect few if any racial tensions. But perhaps a South African family (of whatever colour) which can afford to educate its daughters in England is automatically insulated from much of the humdrum life around it.

Although Miss Jabavu claims to belong to "two worlds", England where she now lives and South Africa where she was born, her attitude is always that of a visitor in her, "uncrushable suit of man-made fibre,

with a lightweight suitcase for air-travel", amongst her kinsmen who still partially adhere to the quasi-Victorian mode of life of which, for others, she approves. "It warmed your heart", she writes of a visit to her uncle's farm, "to see the (servant) women and older girls working away on washing and baking days, every now and then pausing to wipe the sweat off their foreheads. It was homely to see their back views as they bent over the zinc containers when you would catch almost forbidden glimpses of . . . ankles . . . beneath the hems of swinging skirts."

WHEN SHE IS FACED with unpleasant modern reality (the court-case in Alice, Tanktown in Pimville), Miss Jabavu's reactions are interesting. While ostensibly watching the legal process, she recalls happy scenes from childhood (a black child and a white one, both on tricycles, herself playing the violin with the D.R.C. minister), and soon leaves the courtroom. In Ema Tankini where her cousin forces her to look at poverty,

she is amazed to discover that people can live in such conditions and yet remain human, even gay.

It is ironic indeed that here, in the midst of squalor and poverty, there is evidence of active political life (in this case, resistance to the Western Areas Removals), while in the "civilized" Cape, "we liked to feel" writes Miss Jabavu, "that apartheid is only another framework, a transitory one—like other policies that had framed people's lives in other times."

In retrospect it is sad that Tengo Jabavu, editor of the influential *Imvo* and a great Cape liberal, did not identify himself more closely with the rights of the people. Even when his son (later professor at Fort Hare) was refused admission to all-white Dale College, he did not see the signs of the times. Now his granddaughter, Noni, married to an Englishman, sees South Africa in terms of Vermeer, Hogarth and del Sarto, and is evidently very relieved (and who in her position would not be) to board the aeroplane that is taking her "home."

To The Editor

DEAR SIR,—Your commentator on Mary Morrison Webster's reviewing ("Words, Words, Words") might have lightened his heavy—but deserved—bludgeon by referring to her *imbongi*-act when Jim Bailey's *F as in Flight* came out. A more fulsome and obsequious prostration before something—certainly not talent!—has not appeared in South African writing.

J.B.B.

Johannesburg

DEAR SIR,—One of the heaviest burdens under which the creative arts in South Africa labour is the inability of many critics—and many artists—to see themes in any terms other than black and white.

Z.N., in his (her?) review of *Sponono* which appeared in *Spark* and subsequently in your symposium, falls bang-crash into this category.

Why should two people who, in Alan Paton's words, are attempting to reach out to each other have their efforts related to "the white man's burden of looking after the black "and" the black man's burden of trying to find a place in the sun"?

Paton has expressed surprise at the diversity of meanings read into *Sponono*. After reading Z.N.'s review, I am not surprised at his surprise.

It is intriguing to consider what the fate of Z.N.'s treatise on the "social significance" of the play would be if Paton's claim that the role of the Principal could as easily be filled by a black man were accepted. And I, for one, am prepared to accept it although such a step would certainly diminish the dramatic quality of the play.

First, the failure of the Principal's mission—which, after all the "contacting" and "reaching out" has been dealt with,

boils down to restoring a juvenile delinquent to the straight and narrow—could not possibly be linked, in these circumstances, to the failure of the white image.

Z.N.'s further argument—that Christianity has not given the solution—would fall away, therefore, as well, since he chooses to associate the white man's mission with Christian morality.

All of which would make gibberish of his conclusion that the struggle of man against man, in the context of the play, is for equality of opportunity for all.

Z.N. would do well to concentrate less on the "message" behind the play and more on *Sponono* itself. After all, it's the play that's the thing.

JOLYON NUTTALL

Durban

[Permission to use his name instead of the initials Z. N. was received from Mr. Zola Nqini too late for inclusion in *The New African*, 4 May. It was felt that he would want Mr. Nuttall's letter to appear despite his present inability to reply to it: Mr. Nqini was imprisoned on 10 May under the "90-day" clause of the *General Laws Amendment Act*.—EDITOR]

DEAR SIR,—Your contributor Mr. J. K. Sale in endeavouring to prove that Europe has undervalued African cultures and civilisation, has gone to the opposite extreme and drawn a completely false picture of Negro attainments.

I am assuming that when he talks of Africans, he must mean negroes since Europeans have never minimised the achievements of Egyptian civilisation, and it is hard to see why they should scorn those (if any) in other parts of the continent.

He gives no details of any African culture apart from that of the Niger basin, the East Coast and the Rhodesias. In the first instance, the only authorities quoted are those of Portuguese travellers of the 15th and 16th centuries, and Arab historians. As to the former, every boy

knows that the explorers of that era drew heavily on their imaginations. The Arabs may or may not have done so, but the fact that they had records of a great West African State may imply that it was simply an outpost of Mohammendan missionary enterprise, and the terminal point for their Trans-Saharan trade. Whatever that state may have been, it seems to have reverted to barbarism very soon, when one considers the condition of Ashanti in the nineties and it has left neither literature nor monuments in stone to its greatness.

The second African civilisation mentioned by Mr. Sale was on the East Coast, but he failed to explain that the only towns were on the seaboard and were the trading stations of the Arabs; also that the indigenous peoples never absorbed the culture of the newcomers, as for instance the Britons did that of the Romans, but were found in a state of savagery when the British went to Kenya.

As to the mining industry which Mr. Sale speaks so highly of in Central Africa, it is well known that it was carried on in a very primitive manner. It may be that Zimbabwe was constructed by the Bantu, but it bears none of the signs of a great civilisation, and if the Arabs did not actually assist in its construction, there can be no doubt that their demand for copper and gold stimulated the negro to activities foreign to his nature and unknown in other parts of the continent. The general opinion is that Zimbabwe is only about 600 years old and that it has been long since abandoned, so that as evidence of Bantu culture, it may be regarded as a flash in the pan.

I repeat, why was Europe so deeply impressed by the civilisations of the Near East, Egypt, India, Java, and the Far East, and after the discovery of America, in those of Mexico and Peru, and yet studiously ignored the alleged culture of Negro Africa?
R. LEATHER
Somerset West