

# Tribalism and Kenyan National Unity

## Nation-building in the New Africa

M.N. ODINGA

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UNLIKE nationalism which is a new introduction to life in Kenya, tribalism is as old as the land itself. In actual fact tribalism is so deeply rooted in the country that without it there would be no foundation upon which the nation could be cemented. Any notion which projects otherwise than this amounts to pretence of the first order.

There is tribalism in Kenya; no doubt about it. And it has come to stay. This shall ever remain fact as long as people are born as Kikuyu, Luyia, Kamba, Taita or what have you, as tribal groupings each of which form part of the Kenya nation. It is an unwelcome fact that our children continue to be born into families which belong to tribes that are constituted ingredients of the newborn nation.

It is quite true and equally proper that the Father of the Nation, President of the Republic of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and all his Ministers, as well as senior Government officials have, at every turn of time whenever opportunity presented itself, stressed the need for national unity; and urged the people of Kenya to discard tribal loyalties and work to build one united nation in the Republic.

But it would be quite wrong and unnecessary to suggest that there was no tribalism in Kenya; as that would suggest that the Kikuyu, Luo, Masai, and all the other tribes have ceased to exist as tribal entities in favour of national integration. It is proper to observe that the essence of urging the people to adhere on principles of national unity is, actually, to persuade them to forego tribal antagonism.

It is an academic exercise to merely say that tribalism is very much alive in Kenya; but it is hardly difficult to prove it as we shall see in the paragraphs that follow. All that is needed is to divorce the mind from the fear of discussing such a thorny matter; otherwise, it will seem as though this discussion is aimed at belittling or undermining the efforts by which the nation's leaders are attempting to persuade the people to move away from tribal animosities.

IN the past, and also at present, records show that tribes have been going to war against each other. A person who spoke a different language was taken naturally to be an enemy. In short, a tribe was consistently a nation of its own in its own limited world. Things have been changing so rapidly that the writer can only hope that one day all the tribes of Kenya will achieve complete integration into a compact nation.

Not only is it idle to suggest that there is not any tribalism in Kenya; it is, in actual fact more than that. It is dangerous. Any person who is truly striving to see tribalism eliminated would, first and foremost, recognise its existence. Then he can proceed and try to prescribe the cure.

Kenya is divided in districts. Strictly speaking, each district is occupied by one tribal group; and where this

natural law of division has been violated the result has been tribal clashes; or where a tribe has been divided such that a portion of it belongs to a district different from the other there have continued to be pleas for a reunion of the tribe. This is happening even at the time of writing this article.

Independence has brought many changes to Kenya; among them is a broadly-based Parliament. It strikes one, as a clear demonstration of the existence of tribalism that, though not conceived on a tribal basis, representation to the national Assembly is done on a tribal basis. With the exception of a handful of members who have been elected in urban areas, each one of the rest speaks for one tribe or another. Furthermore, a majority of our outstanding leaders enjoy their utmost support from their own tribes. Naturally, they will be expected to serve and work for their own tribes first and foremost before they think of the nation as a whole.

The latter observation does not suggest, even by the slightest implication, that the ministers of Kenya do not exercise collective responsibility in their discharge of their State responsibilities. They do. But accusations have not been absent that certain areas were receiving greater attention in development than others for the suggested reason that a greater number of ministers represented or were born in those areas.

THE African People's Party for example was formed as a breakaway group from the Kenya African National Union by Mr. Paul Ngei because he was dissatisfied with the way things were being conducted in K A N U. Mr. Ngei was one of the African political leaders detained with Mzee Jomo Kenyatta for their role in the national freedom movement; but that is not quite the point which will demonstrate the trends of tribalism in this country. Mr. Ngei is a Kamba, and he is the acknowledged leader of the Kamba people.

There is nothing to be ashamed of in giving this account because, having been Secretary-General to the organisation - I am neither a Kamba nor a tribalist, - I had inner knowledge of the running of that party. It is correct to report that when the Party fought the elections the majority of its candidates were Kamba people, and consequently, all those who gained seats to Parliament were people of the same tribe.

Therefore, when A P P was formed, the greatest number of people who flocked to its offices for membership was that of the Kamba. Moreover, the most successful meetings that were held by the party were those held in Ukambani; and, without wishing to exaggerate, the majority of attendants at these meetings were people of the Kamba tribe.

It is not malicious to imply that tribalism was known to be a factor in the formation of the party. And this was actually

acknowledged by K A N U leaders when they ridiculed it calling it "Akamba Pole Pole" - meaning Akamba go-slow. There is not any doubt that those in Kenya who read these lines will be reminded of many occasions when they heard this ridicule at mass rallies. So much for that.

WHAT happened when Jaramogi Oginga Odinga broke away from K A N U to form the Kenya People's Union? The Government and K A N U condemned the move as having been motivated by tribalism. The main reason for this condemnation was that for the first time since its formation the ruling party

was witnessing mass exodus of its former loyal members. It would be quite accurate to state that the majority of those who instantly decided to follow Oginga Odinga were of the Luo tribe.

It will be recalled that since the formation of this Opposition Party so many things have been happening in Kenya. First, after the "little general elections" the majority of those who were returned to Parliament were Luos. There is nothing wrong with their being returned. It only proved that they were the bona fide leaders of their own tribesmen in their own areas.

Many times there have continued to be complaints that

# THE NEW KENYA

J.W. ISIJ

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THIS is the new Kenya - the Kenya that we all longed for, that very Kenya we all wished the Wabeberu to leave for us.

But this very Kenya is indeed a queer Kenya in that it is not the very example of the English democracy (and its counterpart African socialism) we intended to inherit from the colonialists or from our forefathers who actually did practise African socialism.

We are no longer seeing democracy or African socialism at its best in Kenya at all. What we are merely seeing is the African professionalism at its best in the government of the republic of Kenya.

The Kenya MP's are in parliament because we the citizens voted for them to represent us for a period of five years (1963-1968). This duration is about to expire and we are indeed shocked to understand that the house of representatives, whose members we voted to represent us for 5 years; is enacting an amendment bill No. 4 lead by Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of the Republic of Kenya, to 1970. This means that they are changing the Kenya Constitution, which clearly states that the duration of the House of Representatives shall be five years. Now it is to be seven years.

Who has exacted this period and who has approved of it. This in itself is a

new ideology that is neither democratic, African socialist, nor dictatorial. The pending question here is "what sort of government is there in the Republic of Kenya - democracy or dictatorship?"

Just a few months ago there was the floor crossing that resulted in the formation of KPU. "the Kenya Peoples Union". The KANU reaction, in other words the government reaction was that those who crossed the floor were to go back to the people (us the voters) and seek a mandate from us so as to cross the floor. We accordingly gave them the mandate that the KANU government wanted; hence the formation of an opposition led by Mr. Odinga, the first Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya. Why? Let them tell us.

Now that the same government wants intentionally to extend the five years to seven years, who has given them the mandate so to extend the years? Please MP's and Mzee Jomo Kenyatta come to us (voters) and ask us to vote for you for the other five coming years.

We call you cowards because you have feared us - you have feared the fact that we may not vote for some of you to go back to the parliament. Please do tell us where you are leading us to - the path of democracy, the path of dictatorship or the path of the marshalls? Be sincere with us the voters.

jobs were dished out on a tribal basis. It is not unlikely that there are people in Kenya occupying certain positions which they could not earn in their own right had they not belonged to this tribe or that. This is a factual albeit obviously bitter observation; it is even bitterer because our leaders fail to pinpoint the existence of tribalism in the country.

This article is indeed aimed at spotlighting an evil whose mention in Kenya is frightening, to put it very mildly. But this is a free and frank analysis offered of a nation which is striving to eliminate tribalism. How many times have leaders in the Buluhya area complained about the appointment of Kikuyu District Commissioners in their area? Is it not tribalism that a Kikuyu, who belongs to the Kenya nation, should be regarded as a stranger by a Muluhyia who belongs to the same nation?

As observed earlier changes are rapidly coming to Kenya. But the time has not yet come when one could honestly state that, for instance, the Hon. Masinde Muliro, a Muluhyia enjoys more support among the Kikuyu than among his own tribesmen; or that more Kikuyu support Mr. Paul Ngei than do the Akamba people. To argue thus nowadays would warrant a mental check-up.

How much tribalism would you find in our local political institutions? A lot of it. The driver of any political leader who has cared to hire one is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, a person of the same tribe; and the same could be said of clerks, bodyguards and all their other surrounding functionaries. What other incentive would there be than tribalism in compelling a nationalist leader to stick to his own brothers who alone he considers fit for everything?

It would, of course, be extremely dangerous to try and drive tribalism underground. All that needs to be done is to examine this vital subject in the most manly and patient way possible. The people should be told clearly that there is tribalism in this country; they should be told of the dangers and disadvantages of this disease.

It is quite in order to say that tribalism is still a major force in the conduct of affairs in Kenya; but this does not suggest in any sense that everything that is done is based on tribalism. It merely means that tribalism is playing a very great part in the life of the nation. Maybe one of these days things will change and we shall see a nation in which each individual, official or ordinary citizen, poor or rich, educated or uneducated is equally concerned to fulfil the requirements of national unity.

There is not any doubt that those in the country who have rejected tribalism in favour of national unity will have a greater role to play in building a strong nation in this country. No doubt as times pass the number will increase and the pace will hasten. Until that time Kenya has a lot to learn in the art of nation-building.

## The rise and fall of Grace Ibingira

### PART TWO

FOLLOWING Gulu the UPC appeared to enjoy an upsurge. In August carpet crossers from the Democratic Party and Buganda's Kabaka Yekka ("Kabaka Alone") swelled its parliamentary group to an absolute majority and the coalition with KY was ended. In Buganda, the DP made more local level headway than did the UPC but KY MP's continued to cross under the influence of Ibingira until only 7 of 24 remained, along with 8 DP and one ex - UPC trade union independent, on the opposition benches. Late in 1965 the then Opposition Leader, Basil Bataringaya (of the DP and Ankole) had crossed with 5 other MP's and - it then seemed - most of the DP machine.

Naturally the political situation seemed well in hand. Even in Buganda the KY crossings created an aura of success. A series of moves of tax allocation, kingdom border delineation (the "lost counties" issue between Buganda and Bunyoro), and procedural disputes between Entebbe and Mengo were consistently won by Entebbe - after appeals all the way to the Privy Council by the Kabaka's Government. However, these disputes greatly weakened UPC Muganda's influence wherever their posts in the Central or Kingdom government. Elsewhere the simmering local and quasi-ideological fudes were far from settled. Indeed in his attempts to purge the constituence parties of their heavy pro-Kakonge majorities, Ibingira reduced many of them to merely nominal existence. At the same time his "local notable" centered faction-building increased the level of district and kingdom party tensions while making them more dangerous by overt linking with national politics.

Early 1965 saw opposition to US support for the Tshombe regime in Congo Kinshasa serve as a focus for intra - UPC unity. A few months earlier Kakonge had returned to at least partial favour and influence appearing repeatedly with Dr. Obote at economic affairs related meetings and conferences adding to the impression that the split dangers described at Gulu were safely passed. In the summer of 1965, however, Dr. Obote made a prolonged trip primarily to Eastern Europe and China while late 1964 and 1965 saw US trips by Ibingira, Sir Wilberforce Nadiope and a number of their UPC supporters. Apparently Ibingira and Nadiope - and certainly their supporters - freely hinted that Dr. Obote would soon be out of office and that the USA could expect a more "friendly and responsible" government when they assumed power.

On his return to Uganda, Dr. Obote was greeted by a concerted series of increasingly bitter challenges to his visits and foreign policy. In a blazing speech - whose lack of specific names was a device which left few Ugandans in doubt as to its targets - Minister of State Grace Ibingira claimed that Dr. Obote had aligned himself with the East, forfeited Uganda's independent external position, and betrayed his party. For this, Ibingira held, he must be summarily removed from Office. Speaking for the Prime Minister, AAA Nekyon (Obote's kinsman from Lango and his regular hatchetman) and John