

Towards Relevant Culture and Politics in Africa

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The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communications, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

Marx and Engels.

We have been oppressed a great deal, we have been exploited a great deal and we have been disregarded a great deal. It is our weakness that has led to our being oppressed, exploited and disregarded. Now we want a revolution — a revolution which brings to an end our weakness, so that we are never again exploited, oppressed, or humiliated.

Nyerere.

I. — INTRODUCTION

The independent states of Africa are confronted with three perennial and enervating problems. These are: exploitation, due to the international capitalist system into which they are inextricably interwoven; lack of genuine independence and freedom of action; and finally, inadequate and inappropriate socio-cultural and political institutions which are incapable of solving the multitude of serious problems facing the peoples of these countries.

Our primary concern in this paper is on culture and politics. In particular we are interested in the discussion of what kind of politics and political institutions, culture and cultural activities which are likely to contribute to the maintenance of African political independence and cultural identity in the unfolding decades.

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Politics and culture are functions of society. Nature and style of politics, as well as the substance and creativity of culture are all dependent on the socio-economic structure of society. But the socio-economic structure of society is itself a manifestation of the prevailing modes of production, and the resultant class structure. We cannot therefore meaningfully discuss politics or culture of a society without prior reference to the modes of production and class structure of that society. It is this latter factor which creates and characterises the kind of politics and cultural activities carried out in society.

Thus all societies have cultures, and politics is to be found wherever there are people living and working together in groups. What distinguishes one type of culture, or the substance and style of politics from another is the socio-economic context within which such phenomena take place.

It is culture which manages to keep people together, to enable them utilize the experience, wisdom and the accumulated sophistication of the past; and to enable people to appreciate, understand the present and intelligently prepare themselves for the future. It is the political processes which facilitate and enable the diverse human beings to face and solve their basic problems of living and working together harmoniously and constructively.

It is of course possible for a country and a people to voluntarily adopt, or be compelled to accept the culture of another people. But for the culture to perform its legitimate functions properly and effectively, that culture must be shared and understood by the indigenous masses of the people. It follows that such a culture must be rooted in the traditions and ways of living of the toiling workers and peasants; and this ultimately must be derived from the modes of production prevailing in these communities.

An imposed culture from outside will be understood and have meaning only to those who have been affected or systematically exposed to such a culture. It is characteristic of such societies to be divided, with the elites adopting foreign ways of living, modes of thought and consumption patterns; while the rest of the people adhering to the indigenous cultures. But what is more significant is that such a society would not be independent or free, as its elites — the decision makers — would be informed and influenced by the alien culture.

Similarly with politics. An imposed mode of political thought, political processes or set of political institutions, which are at variance with the basic needs, aspirations and traditions of the masses are bound to undermine or fragment the political independence of such society.

This paper proposes that the only way which Africa can maintain its independence, avoid exploitation domestically as well as externally, and at the same time prevent the internal fragmentation and the resultant instability, is to opt for socialism and self-reliance. This assertion is based on both empirical observations of the socio-economic trends in Africa and the Third World in general, as well as on normative prescriptive criteria, in that socialism is the more meaningful and effective type of society for Africa.

II — THE CAPITALIST IMPACT

When Marx and Engels made the statement in 1848 regarding the compulsive powers of capitalism, Africa was then not much known for its huge wealth in minerals and other natural resources essential to capitalist production. But this was not to be the case for too long. No sooner had Africa begun to be spared from the ravages of the slave trade, European capitalist-industrialisation caught up with the realities of Africa's reservoir of raw materials and Africa's potentials as a market for the manufactured goods from Europe.

Here we are not interested with the rivalries between European powers for the acquisition, control and influence over different parts of Africa. It is the impact of imposed European capitalism on African societies which is our primary concern. For it was the consequences of this impact which inextricably brought the economies of Africa under the control of Europe and rendered individual African states, after political independence, weak and incapable of taking independent decision on behalf of their people. In order to fully appreciate the present state of affairs in Africa, and at the same time provide a background to the proposition that Africa must be socialist and self-reliant in order to achieve development and maintain her independence, it is imperative to take a closer but a brief, look at the manner in which capitalism was introduced in Africa and its devastating consequences on African societies.

It was obvious that in order for Africa to play its role as a source of raw materials and potential markets for European manufactured goods, local indigenous Africans had to be, as it were, socialized to be receptive to the European capitalist incursion; and, which was equally important, for these Africans to be reasonably proficient in the roles to which the capitalist system might assign them. This socialisation function was jointly carried out by the missionaries, the traders and the colonial governments themselves.

The missionaries were the first breed of Europeans to be interested with Africa. Their avowed objective was of course to spread the Light and the World of God; but they also had other motives, or at least some of them acted on behalf of organisations whose interests were more pecuniary rather than missionary. Witness, for example, the statement by Dr. Livingstone who in the course of his address to the University of Cambridge, said: « I direct your attention to Africa. I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and christianity. You carry out the work which I have begun.» (1). This was a clear indication of the dual role of the missionaries of the time.

But before an « open path for commerce and christianity » could be established a lot of groundwork had to be done in Africa for such an eventuality. In spite of the fact that the African societies of that period were not totally ignorant of, or affected by, the evolving and developing practice of 'buying and selling' of commodities, capitalism as an organised system of commodity exchange through the

medium of money had not as yet penetrated deeply into all levels of African society. Nor indeed, was the phenomenon of human labour as a saleable and exchangeable commodity (2). It was therefore imperative that the Africans' mode of economic behaviour and pattern of social thought be changed; otherwise it would be virtually impossible for the European capitalists to obtain the necessary labour for their manufactured goods and raw materials for their factories in Europe.

It should also be recalled that the missionary encounter with Africa took place during a period when European civilisation was regarded as the ultimate refinement and repository of all human excellence, virtue and industry. Africa by contrast had nothing to offer, only to receive. As one authority asserted:

« In tropical Africa, we have for the most part primitive races that seem at present to have but little to contribute, and that must undergo long years of patient work before they can effectively assimilate the rest that we can offer » (3).

Hence, although the missionaries as individuals, were genuine in their desires to educate and proselytise the African, their efforts were nonetheless very much influenced by their European prejudices. It was the European conception of Christian morality, and European graces of living which were considered worthwhile teaching. And, of course, it was the social and ethical precepts associated with the prevailing modes of production in Europe, capitalism, which the missionaries sought to introduce into Africa. Private property, frugality and the need to save and accumulate were regarded as synonymous with true Christian virtues. Thus, in their determination to educate and 'save' the African, the missionaries transformed not only the African's material needs, in terms of training for wage labour, but also his spiritual well-being as they taught him what God to worship and in what manner. In the process African cultures were exposed to, and were compelled to compete with, a more material, powerful, and, to most Africans, an exceedingly attractive one — the European. Moreover, the African had to be « modernized » and « disciplined » in order to face the rigours of modern industrial civilisation. A system of order and authority was also essential, but not one based on the morals and traditions known and meaningful to Africans, but on « higher » ones which have « universal applicability » — the European (4).

The missionaries were thus instrumental in providing the initial and necessary groundwork inculcating the natives with the imperatives of obedience and emulation of European manners and pattern of behaviour. This was a very critical stage in the process of social changes in Africa (5). For it was those Africans taught by missionaries who later emerged as leaders of independent African states.

But the missionaries were not the only people responsible for social change in Africa. Foreign traders constitute another important group. While the missionaries introduced new spiritual and material

values to the African, the traders complemented them by exposing the African to new goods and tastes, needs and aspirations which could not be acquired or fulfilled without money, a commodity the African did not possess. Hence, to acquire money the African had either to engage himself in producing cash-crops, or sell his labour to those willing to use and pay for it, i.e. to become a wage-labourer. Gradually the African was exposed to capitalism and the monetary economy became the real world to which he had to adapt. For example, in order to acquire the goods which met his fancy he had to learn the habits of saving and accumulating his meagre income; or to supplement his income with other forms of economic activities.

But most of these goods he did not really need. They were part of the new tastes and aspirations introduced by the missionaries and traders in their strategy to convert and transform the African into a christian and consumer of European manufactured goods. It was goods for mere consumption, and not to satisfy basic human needs. But in order to satisfy these new aspirations for new consumption goods, the African had of necessity to be acquisitive and accumulate, to think only of himself and to progressively care less about his extended family or the community. He had therefore to be an individualist. This had most damaging consequences on the structure of the community and the values which sustained its life and development.

The community lost the will, strength and freedom to develop in the manner most beneficial and compatible with the needs and aspirations of the people. The tastes for consumed goods originating from outside the country dictated what should be produced locally. Neither the structure nor the direction of the economy could any longer be determined by those most affected by it — the people.

Thus by encouraging consumerism, acquisitiveness and individualism colonial capitalism transformed what was essentially a *communitarian* society into an acquisitive and stratified one. It is of course true that social differentiations were already in evidence before the impact of organised colonial capitalism (6). But it was the introduction of capitalism and the encouragement of consumerism which decisively strengthened the trend towards clear stratifications. Consequently, the structure of the traditional society as well as its communal ethos were undermined. It was no longer possible to think and act in terms of the needs of the society as a whole. It was only the needs and desires of those who had the wealth, education or who were gainfully employed which were satisfied. And as the number of this group of people increased, so did the demand for such goods expand; and so, progressively, did the economic dependence of the community and the entire country on the metropolis develop.

III — WESTERN CULTURE AND THE INDIGENOUS ELITES

In the course of Western colonization of Africa, language and culture proved to be the most effective and least costly means of not only establishing and maintaining colonial rule but also of entrenching and perpetuating Western cultural domination of Africa beyond

the period of formal political independence. By establishing a new system of education based on the cultural values of the colonizers, and by deliberately creating an indigenous elite inured to such cultural values and world outlook, the business of colonial administration and domination of indigenous people did not have to depend on resident armed forces. Additionally, by creating totally new socio-economic institutions which could be manned or operated only by the colonial expatriates supported by the emerging indigenous elites, the running of these societies as well as their future programmed development tended to depend very heavily on the availability, competence and dedication of these combined human resources. Although with formal political independence a large number of the colonial administrators left, because of their education and formal training the indigenous elites continued to represent, articulate and maintain the Western cultural values.

Language and culture are of course closely-related. It is virtually impossible to master a foreign language without at the same time being influenced, or persuaded, by the cultural values of the people of that language. For language is not only a medium of exchange of ideas, information and emotions, but also of values, traditions and many other things. In a colonial situation, learning the language of the colonizer inevitably entails cultural assimilation or domination as well as ideological orientation of the indigenous elites. Obviously the degree to which the elites are assimilated or dominated by the colonial cultural values to a very large extent depends on both the enthusiastic receptivity of the colonized and the proselytizing vigour of the colonizer. French colonial Africa represents one extreme end of the continuum while the British are somewhere in the middle. In some parts of Africa, the ability to speak the language of the colonizer eloquently and with conspicuous ease was regarded as a mark of true cultural accomplishment deserving appointment or elevation to higher places in society. The person in question might be incompetent or a known buffoon, but because he has mastered the language and appears to have blended well with the cultural values of the colonizers he is coopted into the local ruling elite, and thus becomes an active agent of foreign cultural influence or domination.

The cumulative effect and indeed the objective, of Western education was to create an indigenous colonial elite. To the missionaries and the colonial administrators these educated Africans were a special breed, different and separate from the rest of the masses of Africans, and with special roles to perform. Not only did the colonial and commercial interests regard these educated Africans as special people, but also encouraged them to the extent that both the educated Africans as well as the masses came to believe in the superiority of the educated. Consequently the educated became convinced of their special role in the colonial situation, and this by virtue of their education and cultural assimilation. Indeed, the highest ambition the educated African ever had in the colonial situation was simply to substitute roles with their European «colleagues». This was certainly the experience in the early stages of the struggle for political independence in Tanzania.

When we started TANU in Tanzania we had a little support — underground support — from African civil servants because many of them were annoyed not by colonialism but because the master denied them certain rights. They wanted to become District Commissioners, Provincial Commissioners, and perhaps for others to become Governors (?).

The assumption of European styles of life and language were some of the most conspicuous characteristics of the colonial educated African. It was not simply a matter of literacy, but right kind of literacy. It is very important to bear this point in mind. It was for this reason that the ability to speak English, for example, acquired a disproportionate importance in areas where the British have ruled. Because of the exclusive importance attached to the English language, and the manners generally associated with the British, any leader who did not command the language or whose style of life was so obviously that of the uneducated (meaning «African»), found his legitimacy to authority seriously questioned. It is for this reason that Western educated students find it very difficult to accept some of their leaders who are not conversant with any of the western European languages, particularly French or English. (For example, Tanzania students were embarrassed by the leadership of Karume, the late Vice-President of Tanzania, not because of his brutalities but simply because he was unable to express himself adequately in English. Indeed, to most of them he looked so ordinary — like a peasant! Oginga Odinga, leader of the defunct Kenya Peoples' Union faced a similar problem; whereas a man like the late Tom Mboya was able to inspire the envy and respect not only of his own people but also of outsiders — the Europeans. To the local people, he represented a fine example of a man who had learned the rules of the game and had succeeded precisely because of that; one who played his role well as expected in the colonial situation. And to the outside world he was one to be trusted because he was «educated» and understood the ways of the Western world).

Thus at independence the elites — the educated — and virtually the entire literate population were a colonial product, ostensibly created as part of the general improvement of the society, but in reality to serve the wider interests of the Western capitalist world. So too, were the socio-economic and political institutions such as banks, insurance companies, churches, colleges and universities bequeathed by the departing colonial masters. Though now in the hands of the elites who appear to be in operational control, yet in reality the institutions were links in a wider network of chain of external linkages through which control of the country could, and would, be exercised and maintained.

And the elites are the willing agents of such external manipulations and control. Indeed, by virtue of their education, training and acquired patterns of social behaviour, the elites know of no better or worthwhile roles to perform in their societies than serving the metropolitan capitalist interests. As Fanon once observed :

« Seen through its (national bourgeoisie) eyes, its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged which today puts on the masque of neo-colonialism » (8).

IV — CULTURE AND POLITICS

In a fully-fledged capitalism culture tends to cement the bourgeois society and oils, as it were, the linkages between the various institutions in the society. In particular popular culture in the form of films, TV, sex, fashion and romance magazines, and so on, play the important function of creating a false consciousness in the masses that they have the ability and are free to acquire and enjoy all the goods and services produced in the society.

This is the case because in a mature capitalist society, and by that we mean the metropolitan centres, there is a very close and highly developed relationship between culture and politics.

Both culture and politics are the direct manifestations of the capitalist class-structure; and being the product of indigenous capitalism such culture is widely shared by the people. Culture and politics in a bourgeois society are some of the means by which the bourgeoisie attempt to control or at least to ease the tensions created by the socio-economic cleavages in society. The metropolitan capitalist countries are able to do these things, and with a measure of success, partly because their economies are mature and more productive; and partly because the imports from the periphery — in dividends, profits and cheap food and raw materials — tends to raise the living standard of the people, including those of the workers. Of course the periodic economic depressions and chronic unemployment continue to haunt the workers and the capitalists alike.

Still, to a very large extent, the metropolitan capitalist society is capable of taking the shock, as well as the reverberation, of these periodical breakdowns and strains in the economy. Moreover, metropolitan capitalist societies tend to help each other out of any serious economic, social or political problems. This is due primarily to enlightened self — interest, in that a chink in the Western capitalist armour might encourage the socialist or communist onslaught, with dire consequences for the entire capitalist world.

Additionally, there are strong historical links binding the great capitalist centres, particularly those in Europe and the United States of America. People living in these centres belong to the « great » Western Civilization, about which there is so much pride and prejudice written. In the name and spirit of this « great » Civilization the metropolitan capitalist countries cooperate among themselves as and assist each other in cases of troubles so that together they can preserve their cultural heritage, the form and style of their politics.

This is not the case in independent African states primarily because these states are the direct products of peripheral capitalism. In as much as the prevailing culture of the local bourgeoisie, as the local capitalism itself, was imposed from outside, it does not have deep indigenous roots in the society and consequently it cannot effectively perform the functions of cementing the society and eiling the linkages of its various institutions. On the contrary, such a culture tends to consolidate the links between the local bourgeoisie and their counterparts in the metropolis.

It is these linkages and the domination of foreign culture which has progressively led the local bourgeoisie to depend, and thus import or manufacture locally, exotic foods, household appliances and other artifacts which in turn encouraged adoption of foreign technology that is totally inappropriate to the prevailing economic realities. The addiction to such exotic goods and services merely, but surely, further entrenched the bourgeoisies' dependence on periphery capitalism. This led to another equally devastating phenomenon: dependence on foreign advisors and expertise. The local bourgeoisie feel utterly inadequate without the presence and service of these foreign experts. And it is these experts who, either in the service of their multinational corporations or simply in the spirit of international capitalism, advise and actively promote the adoption of sophisticated and modern technology into these poor African countries.

Another deleterious effect of imported popular culture is that it tends to widen the gap between the bourgeoisie who are able to enjoy it and the rest of the people who cannot. And as the bourgeoisie persists on its unrestrained conspicuous consumption, encouraged and supported by the demonstration effect of the mode of life of the local expatriates, the gap between the rich and the poor assumes the dimensions of chasm. Moreover, by raising false and unrealizable aspiration for most people, foreign popular culture creates tensions and frustrations among the masses. But it does reinforce the consumer society based, as it must, on exotic goods and services.

With regard to politics and political activities, these tend to be pale and pathetic imitation of those prevailing in the « mother country ». Increasingly, a lot of important political decisions are taken in the course of a round of golf or a round of drinks at the favourite country or night clubs. Politics are then reduced to part-time activities of the monied elites in their daily intrigues and struggles to out-wink, out-smart or cheat each other in their unrestrained greed to get rich quick; or in their equally determined will to isolate, undermine and destroy the spokesman of the workers and peasants. Neither trade union leaders, nor even the conscientious intellectuals who have the courage of their convictions to point out the inequities in society, are allowed to participate in real political decision-making processes. Politics then become the prerogative of the rich, the powerful and the local agents of international capitalism. The vast majority of the workers and peasants are kept out, their living and working conditions are reduced to issues of intra-elite vulgar competition and

inter-elite political manipulation, and not regarded as challenges for the nation as a whole to meet and solve.

Similarly, the political institutions — national assemblies, parliaments and the political parties — become undignified caricatures of those operating in the metropolis. There is a great and elaborate attachment to the form and structure of these institutions rather than their intended functions. Institutional and constitutional rules and procedures are used to frustrate and curtail the activities of these regarded as critics or opponents of the status quo, rather than as means by which the business of resolving national problems and the provision of solution to these problems could be formally and peacefully conducted. Indeed, parliament or national assembly itself becomes the property of the bourgeoisie; and instead of searching for the best ways and means of solving the problems facing the masses of workers and peasants, parliament passes laws to facilitate the accumulation of wealth for bourgeoisie and the protection of that wealth. Parliament then ceases to have either the will to solve, or the capacity or the patience to understand, the problems of the poor.

The bourgeoisie do of course strive to coopt some of the leading and vocal trade union leaders, radical intellectuals and other influential elements in society, but because of the inadequacy of the available resources, as most of these are repatriated to the metropolis in the form of profits or dividends, the task of absorbing all these people in the system becomes an impossibility.

In the meantime the social and political crisis gather momentum. The gap between the rich and poor widens, unemployment escalates and insecurity to life and property becomes daily evident. Expatriates as well as the local bourgeoisie begin to feel and experience direct threat to their exclusive and exotic way of life; they can no longer enjoy with ease what they have collected and accumulated. Increasingly the poor unemployed become a menace to orderly society and special laws are passed to deal with them; and the self-respecting, God-fearing and the beloved head of family suddenly becomes a vagrant, hunted and haunted by the laws of his own country. He is humiliated and banished behind the bars, or to the already crowded village, because the capitalist labour market has decided that the value of his labour power was not profitable enough to the employer. In order to protect periphery capitalism the towns and their streets must be made safe for the bourgeoisie to work and enjoy the fruits of their exertions.

The poor unemployed must neither be seen nor talked about in public. They must be dealt with officially and expeditely. At that point the rich deliberately refuse to be their poor brothers' keeper; and the poor begin their determined organisation to ensure that the rich will no longer exploit, humiliate or disregard the poor. It is in such circumstances that a revolution takes place, or the military intervene either in the name of the oppressed poor or to prevent precisely such a revolution.

V — SOCIALISM AND SELF-RELIANCE

The experience of the last two decades indicate that African countries have not been able to evolve the form of culture and politics which could sustain the independence and development of these countries. This was the case because the economic and political institutions of these countries were imposed from outside; they did not evolve and develop from within the African societies themselves. It is this economic dependence and socio-cultural emulation of the metropolis which have been responsible for the failure to evolve the relevant forms of culture and politics for independent Africa. It thus follows that the only means by which Africa could evolve the relevant forms of culture and politics is to disengage herself from the international capitalist system. This can be best done by the adoption of the policy of socialism and self-reliance.

The adoption of socialism would ensure that the resources of the African countries would be owned and controlled by the people themselves. This would enable the proper planning and utilisation of these resources for the development of the African economies and for the general welfare of all the people. With the resources locally owned and controlled, and their employment decided upon by the people themselves on the basis of their needs rather than on profits to be repatriated to the metropolis, it would then be possible for them to be free and to exercise meaningful politics. Moreover, in a genuine socialist society political issues resolve themselves into questions of what are the best and efficient means of developing the resources for the benefit of all the people; rather than, as in the case of a capitalist society, a class struggle in the appropriation and allocation of the available scarce resources for the benefit of the dominant classes. Thus, in a genuine socialist society every individual has the right to participate in the discussions and decisions which affect his life. And it is in the course of such discussions and deliberations that people evolve their own mode of political expressions, patterns of political behaviour, political institutions, and culture.

There is also a cultural dimension to the notion of self-reliance. The overwhelming majority of Africans are peasants and are still bound to the predominantly subsistence rural economy. Hence, if the future of Africa is to be characterised by the presence of things made by Africans, certainly in the cultural aspects, then the cultural and spiritual guidance is not the city but village and the countryside. The city has never served the cultural or spiritual needs of the peasant; on the contrary, it has always been the centre of alien influences — in terms of goods and social behaviour — and the channel through which the external world — capitalist, and imperialist — manipulated the entire country. Nairobi or Abidjan for example, is more a home to an American, Frenchman, West German, or a Japanese, industrialist or capitalist than it is to an African peasant.

Self-reliance is also an important means of redeeming, as it were, the lost dignity and self-confidence. As we have already noted, the consequence of the colonial situation on the African was of such a

nature to vnder him a mere imitator of the colonial masters. He had to do so in order to survive as well as to achieve his goals, which were themselves determined by the colonial situation. Hence any development that took place in the colonial situation was not the development of the African as an African, but as an imitator or as an appendage of someone else. And the degree to which he was considered to be successful was the reflection of his capacity to approximate the postulated colonial model. Consequently, the colonial African, because he had to imitate in order to succeed, lost his own sense of dignity as an African, as well as confidence in himself as a human being.

It is against this historical background that Nyerere* has argued that the only way by which the African can regain his lost dignity and sense of self-confidence is for the African to be actually *involved* in his *own* development. The African must ensure that he is free and in control of his destiny. Unless the development of the country is organised, controlled and undertaken by the indigenous people, then that country and people will not be free.

« Development brings freedom, provided it is development of people. But people cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. For while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's house, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man has to create in himself by his own actions. He develops himself... increasing his understanding of what he is doing, and why; by increasing his own knowledge and ability, and by his own full participation — as an equal — in the life of the community he lives in » (9).

Thus, only by developing himself can the African really regain and maintain his dignity as well as his self-confidence as a human being. Nyerere believes that the erstwhile colonised African can do this with a degree of success only through self-reliance; doing things for and by himself. The level of material economic development might not be high, or commensurate with the labour exerted when compared to other countries, but the results will be of the African's own design and exertion. And what is even more important, the African learns something about himself in the process — a thing denied him in the colonial situation.

It is within this context of development through self-reliance that the importance of a national and official language emerges. The adoption of a foreign language means more than mechanical competence in its usage. It involves a high degree of cultural assimilation or adaptation by those adopting the language, and through it the real possibilities of continued manipulation, control or influence by the former colonial powers. English and French always have been the languages of education, training and work in Africa. In fact the elites, as well as a large part of the literate population, were so speak simultaneously inhabitants of two worlds: that of their own kind, i.e. of

* Julius K. Nyerere, President of the Republic of Tanzania.

other elites, freely interacting and communicating among themselves at both the domestic and international levels; and that of the masses with whom the elites had to work at home. But it is the former world which the elites valued greatly, and consequently it is the one which influenced their pattern of behaviour and cultural outlook. It is not therefore surprising to observe that in those countries which have opted to continue with English or French as their official languages and medium of instruction at schools and other places of learning and training, the influence of the English or French speaking world is far greater now than was the case before independence.

For what has happened in these countries is that the indigenous elites have joined hands with their Western counterparts, not necessarily in an unholy conspiracy to subvert the developmental aspirations of the masses, but simply because they are the people in whose company they feel quite at home. They have more in common with these foreigners, in terms of language, leisure activities and business interests, than they do with their own people at home. They meet in bars and restaurants, board-rooms and other places where important business and government discussions are conducted and crucial decisions taken. And it is at these places where the vulnerabilities of the elites are exposed to the manipulation of the metropolitan countries.

Of course the basic problem here is that of class-structure created by periphery capitalism. The local bourgeoisie were compelled to adopt the foreign cultures and languages as part of the total strategy of Western colonisation and capitalist penetration of Africa. None-the-less, adoption and usage of foreign culture and languages by the African bourgeoisie hinders rather than facilitates the task of development through self-reliance. It is therefore imperative for each African country to adopt, or evolve, a national and official language that has indigenous roots and is understood by the majority of the people. This is not a question of atavistic cultural chauvinism. It is only when all the people can communicate with each other in a language which is rooted in their own history and traditions that a people can evolve their own cultural and political institutions.

The evolution of genuine free politics, meaningful and relevant socio-cultural institutions will, of course, take a long time. In the first place the damage done by decades of peripheral capitalism must be repaired. This will of necessity entail formulation of totally new education policies to fall in line with the policy of socialism and self-reliance. The reactions from the metropolis must also be properly gauged; for these centres would not take kindly to the socialisation of their assets. Hostile reactions from the metropolis should therefore be expected. But this could be most effectively met by collective self-reliance amongst the Third World countries.

The countries of the Third World have a lot among themselves, in terms of natural resources, techniques of production, relevant technology, trained and experience personnel, administrative expertise, and so on, which could be shared in the spirit and objective of collective self-reliance. What is needed is will and the capacity to effectuate such a policy.

Regarding the precise type of a political system, whether it should be one-party state or the multi-party variety, it does not really matter which. What is important is that the political and cultural institutions should be relevant, effective and meaningful. The existence of a multi-party system is no proof that there is democracy in the given society. Similarly, the existence of one-party state is no conclusive evidence that there is no democracy and that the people are oppressed and tyrannised.

Politics and culture are dependent variables. They are determined by the modes of production and the socio-economic structure. Freedom of expression and of association, of actions and thought are not necessarily, or solely, confined to the written constitutional provisions; on the contrary, they depend on the fundamental ability of a people to control and dominate the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, and clothing. Only when people are no longer preoccupied with the necessity to fulfill these basic needs, that it can be said that they are really free. And that can take place only when society as a whole owns, controls and utilizes its natural resources for the benefit of all the people in society.

FOOTNOTES

1. Quoted in C.E. Carrington, *The liquidation of the British Empire*, Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited, Toronto, 1960, p. 33.
2. See Richard Gray and David Birmingham, eds, *Pre-Colonial African Trade* Oxford University Press, London, 1970; see also Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity/Uhuru Na Umoja* (Introduction Oxford University Press, Dar-es-Salam, 1966.
3. Arthur Mayhew, *Education in the Colonial Empire*, Longmans, London, 1938, p. 3.
4. Ako Adjei, « Imperialism and Spiritual Freedom; an African View », *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 1 No. 3, November 1944, p. 190.
5. See L. Gray Cowan, James O'Connell and David G. Seanlon eds., *Education and Nation-Building in Africa*, Praeger, New York, 1966.
6. See Gray and Birmingham, *Pre-colonial African Trade*, Op. Cit. See also Samir Amin, « The Class Struggle in Africa, » In *Revolution* Vol. 1 No. 9, 1964; see also John Liffe, *Agricultural Change in Modern Tanganyika*, East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1971.
7. President Nyerere addressing teachers in Dar-es-Salaam on May 31st 1969, see *the Nationalist*, 1. 2. 69.
8. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York, 1963, p. 124.
9. Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Development*, Dar-es-Salaam, 1968, p. 2.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, l'auteur discute la question de savoir quel système et institutions politiques, quelle culture et activités culturelles susceptibles de contribuer efficacement au renforcement de l'indépendance politique et de l'identité culturelle de l'Afrique dans les décennies à venir.

Pour ce faire, il définit d'abord la méthodologie qu'il entend appliquer. Après avoir montré que politique et culture sont toutes deux fonctions de la société, dont la structure organisationnelle dépend à la fois du type de mode de production en vigueur et de la structure de classe qui en résulte, l'auteur propose de se référer avant tout à ces deux derniers facteurs pour comprendre les systèmes politique et culturel prévalant dans une société.

Appliquant cette approche à son étude, l'auteur trouve que :

1. — Pour assurer valablement ses fonctions, — à savoir : maintenir la cohésion de la population ; permettre à la population d'utiliser efficacement l'expérience, la sagesse et les connaissances héritées du passé ; lui permettre de comprendre et d'apprécier correctement la situation présente en vue de mieux préparer l'avenir — la culture doit être enracinée dans les traditions et modes de vie de la majorité de la population, c'est-à-dire les travailleurs et paysans. Elle doit être la culture du pays et non une culture importée. Car une culture importée, non seulement ne sera comprise et vécue que par une minorité nationale qui y aura été systématiquement exposée, « l'élite », mais encore et de ce fait, elle sera l'instrument de division de la société entre « élite » qui a adopté le mode de vie et de pensée étranger et la grande masse du peuple vivant de la culture indigène.
2. — Plus grave encore, une telle société ne sera pas indépendante, car l'élite qui dirige et contrôle l'appareil étatique s'abreuve à la culture étrangère. Il en découle un système et des institutions politiques imposées de l'extérieur, sans lien ni avec les besoins fondamentaux, ni avec les aspirations et les traditions de la masse populaire. L'essence d'un tel système politique, c'est de saper l'indépendance nationale.

Dès lors, conclut l'auteur, la seule voie de salut, pour les sociétés africaines, si elles veulent sauvegarder leur indépendance, éviter l'exploitation locale et étrangère et prévenir toute fragmentation et instabilité, c'est d'opter pour le socialisme et le développement auto-centré.