

IKHWAZI

1.40p

A BLACK LIBERATION JOURNAL OF
SOUTH AFRICAN AND SOUTHERN
AFRICAN POLITICAL ANALYSIS

NUMBER 21

OCTOBER 1982



Northwestern University
Library

APR 22 1983

Africana

**IN
DEPENDENT
KENYA:**

**A CLASS ANALYSIS
OF COLONIAL AND NEO-
COLONIAL DOMINATION**

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Editorial

Amidst the tumbling debris of a world plundered, looted and oppressed by imperialism and social-imperialism, amidst the repulsive debris of the massacre of the Palestinians in Lebanon, of escalating struggles all over the Third World, and not least in our own Namibia, we have devoted this entire issue to a class analysis of the state of Kenya by young Marxist revolutionaries from that country. Kenya is par excellence the model neo-colonial state dominated by imperialism and an understanding of its class history from its colonial history to its present state of rampant neo-colonialism throws a great deal of light on imperialist domination and manoeuvres and the class forces at work in our African countries. This brilliant analysis, unfortunately severely abridged because of the lack of space, throws light on a number of issues affecting the political destiny of Africa today – amongst them the role of nationalism, the petit bourgeois, the land question, the nature of our national bourgeoisie, etc. that has great relevance to Azanian revolutionaries who are in the throes of a national liberation struggle that the revolutionaries of Kenya were in in the 60s. How that revolution became derailed after it had produced an authentic guerilla movement, the Mau Mau, and the class forces responsible for it has salutary lessons for

Azanian revolutionaries who are too fond of shouting about 'socialism', 'the social revolution' and even 'Marxism' without realising the path to that goal. We in Azania are faced too with the crucial question of deciding whether we are going to see our liberation struggle derailed or whether we are going to see the national struggle linked directly to the abolition of all classes and class exploitation which is the only basis of any genuine liberation in our era. We believe that Azanian revolutionaries will learn a great deal about the absolute validity of Marxist-Leninist class analysis by a study of this pamphlet on the subversion of the anti-colonial and national struggle into neo-colonial imperialist domination. It can happen to us too unless we understand that only the working class armed with its ideology of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Ze Dong Thought can successfully lead the struggle against imperialism and colonialism which are the real enemies of our oppressed peoples, and that the anti-racist struggle has little meaning if its shafts are not directed against colonial and imperialist domination. Imperialism is quite prepared to abolish racialism (or apartheid as it is called) and even colonialism, but not its domination which it wishes to perpetuate in new forms in our country. That is the challenge that Azanian revolutionaries are called upon to meet, and to defeat imperialism, our real enemy.

A Class Analysis of Colonial and Neo-Colonial Kenya

Introduction

Nearly twenty years ago, we were nominally granted our independence. At the time we made certain assumptions which in retrospect seem politically naive. We assumed that 'independence' would initiate a radical departure from colonial arrangements. We believed that the end of colonialism would mean the beginning of an equitable and democratic development of our natural and human resources.

We can no longer afford to be naive. The intervening decades have demonstrated that 'independence' can in fact point the way to a deepening state of eco-

nomie, political, and spiritual dependence. 'Independence' in Kenya has led to the looting and squandering of our resources, and the virtual silencing of our people. It has led to increasing misery and impoverishment for the many.

The situation in which we find ourselves today is a grim one. This study has been produced by a discussion group which has met over a lengthy period to investigate and debate issues of national interest.

As a first step along the path to our long-delayed 'independence' we must take our bearings, and find out where we are now. We must try to understand what has become of our country, and why.

Chapter I

Birth of our Power: Should We Forget the Past

History for most of us is something we have been taught in school about our past and place in the world. It comes to us out of tedious textbooks, generally written by foreigners. Most Kenyan historians have added little to our understanding of who we are.

Our history must properly be seen as a record of the efforts of our people to transform nature for their own use. Our societies were never static. Our peoples had contact — often extensive — with each other and with foreigners who visited our shores. Sometimes these contacts were violent, taking the form of warfare and raiding. More often, they were peaceful, with material conditions of existence being gradually modified by barter and negotiation between ethnic groups.

Until the advent of British colonialism our material base and level of productivity came up against natural barriers, such as insufficient rainfall for reliable agriculture and herding. After the British takeover colonialism itself, not nature, frustrated our further development as a people. We were ruthlessly introduced to the capitalist mode of production by foreigners who plundered our resources and com-

mandeered our labour. We were told what to grow and what not to grow, how and where to live.

That independence has never been re-gained. The past which is most clearly embedded in the Kenyan present is our colonial one. We see, in our supposedly independent land, the mass of our people creating wealth for others to steal. This situation is not unique to our country. However, the extent of foreign domination, as well as the way our present rulers imitate their colonial predecessors, distinguishes us as a neo-colony in its starkest sense.

Our continued dependence is a fact which we face in all our social, political, and economic activities. Our paltry intellectual life reminds us that we have been mentally enslaved as well as physically colonized. Our sham independence perpetuates the forms, institutions, and aspirations which we inherited from our colonial rulers.

However, a glance at the past shows an important difference between colonial Kenya and the Kenya of today. In the colonial past it is true that we were dominated, but at the same time we actively made our own history through our resistance. At no point during the sixty years of direct colonial rule did our pa-

rents and grand-parents passively submit to foreign domination.

In post-colonial Kenya that idea has been obscured. Our lying, self-interested 'leaders' have dispossessed us of the right to think for ourselves, and to pass judgement on policies they make in our name. We are forbidden to challenge their interpretation of 'nation-building'. Meanwhile our leaders behave as the natural successors of the colonial masters in whose footsteps they follow, and willing collaborators with our present foreign economic overlords. We are unable to engage in independent political and intellectual activity in 'free' Kenya. The freedom to discuss, to transmit ideas and information, has been denied us. Our leaders force us into becoming a passive population, deprived of the initiative and the language which we once possessed – a language with which we formerly voiced our refusal to go tamely along with the violation of our most basic interests and needs.

What then, can we learn from our colonial history? What does it tell us which can help us understand and change the circumstances in which we find ourselves?

The Colonial Past

Our textbooks tell us that the British grabbed our land for our own good.

Initially the land which became Kenya was viewed by the imperialists as more of a nuisance than anything else. It appeared in British eyes as nothing more promising than a dreary stretch of hot, dry bush which had to be crossed to get to Uganda, the source of the head-waters of the Nile and seemingly boundless fertility and potential wealth. Lusting after Uganda, the British in the closing years of the nineteenth century gained access to it by building a railway across our land which they had declared to be a British Protectorate.

The immediate preoccupation of the British was how to make the railway pay. The solution which they gradually stumbled upon was to make the territory of Kenya into a 'White Man's Country', in which European settlers would take for themselves all the best agricultural land and produce something for the railway to transport. The massive land grab of what became known as the 'White Highlands' was forced upon reluctant or indecisive British officials by rogue aristocrats like Lord Delamere who simply arrived, looked, and took what they wanted, leaving the administration to rationalize their activities in subsequent land policies.

The Settler Economy

There was nothing systematic and well-planned about the process which made Kenya a settler colony.

A few more far-sighted officials argued that a settler-dominated economy would prove more trouble than it was worth. It could be both needlessly expensive and politically dangerous. There were other ways to exploit the colony, which entailed fewer risks and less effort on the part of the colonists.

Such a commonsensical approach to colonial exploitation was not to be heeded. After World War I an over-populated Britain willingly exported its land-hungry citizens, and rewarded its soldiers with land grants in Kenya. By the 1950's, when our people took up arms to reclaim their country, a mere four thousand white settlers were in possession of over seven million acres of the best land in Kenya, only tiny proportion of which was put to productive use. The settlers had made our country into their exclusive playland, and our people their slaves. They despised us and they needed us. They robbed us, murdered us, and told us we should be grateful for their coming. We should be content to serve the 'master race' indefinitely in what they called 'White Man's Country'.

Thus, our people became prisoners in their own land. They were penned in 'reserves', the able-bodied among them forced by tax policy and unscrupulous chiefs, to go and work for a pittance on mixed farms, plantations, and in town, only to be flung back into the 'reserves' when no longer needed. By World War II nearly half of the African paid workforce squatted in towns. An artificial colonial city like Nairobi, built to service the pleasures and needs of the white rulers, developed a shanty-town culture.

Meanwhile, the 'reserves' became increasingly over-crowded and infertile. Two hundred thousand or so of our people had been forced to go to the Rift Valley in search of work on settler farms, and land on which they could squat with their families and livestock. In the 1940's they were threatened with permanent homelessness, when the whites ordered mass evictions of squatters.

World War II and After

During World War II the blood of our fathers was spilled in the service of murderous Europeans. During the 1940's nearly 100 000 of Kenya's five million inhabitants were pressed into the war. For many Africans who went abroad with the British army

men like Kaggia and Kimathi – the situation in which they found themselves was a profoundly radicalising one. Our men saw the 'civilising mission' in a new light. Behind European claims to be agents of a superior civilisation they discovered a brutality and racist-inspired genocide beyond all imagining. They recognized for what it was the hypocrisy of the British, who claimed to be fighting German racism while treating their own subject peoples in a similar way – as sub-human species.

There were signs of worse to come. For the settlers had reached the peak of their domination during the war years, when they had a free hand to do as they liked as long as they supplied the armies with food. Their numbers were growing. Eight thousand new white immigrants entered the colony after the war, hoping to settle in the 'White Highlands'.

But other imperialists saw matters differently after the war. Britain had been devastated by the war. Her economy was in ruins, while that of the only combatant to escape war-inflicted damage – the U.S.A. – was vigorous. Britain realised that she would have to cut her losses and shed some of the expenses of maintaining an Empire. Capitalism meanwhile expanded rapidly under the dominance of the United States. International capital, large banks and trading companies moved into Nairobi and transformed the city into a regional financial, marketing, and manufacturing centre for Eastern Africa. In the new circumstances existing economic structures which gave settlers monopoly control of marketing, prices and inputs seemed out-dated, and needlessly expensive and wasteful. Racial barriers hindered capitalist accumulation in the colony and limited African productivity. Britain could no longer afford to prop up a small parasitic caste. 'White Man's Country' would have to go the way of all uneconomic lost causes, and become the subject of nostalgic reminiscences over drinks at the Club and in books about 'Happy Valley'.

The post-war international situation thus demanded a new approach to the exploitation of our people. Foreign capitalists made it a policy to create an African middle-class which could mediate their needs and consume their commodities. Since the 1920's a small group of Kenyans had been pushing to become exactly that. Men whose education had enabled them to become teachers and clerks had hoped to put their salaries, however small, to commercial use. But they were frustrated mainly by licensing regulations and colonial policy which barred them from obtaining bank loans or any credit beyond two hundred shillings. At the same time they were pre-

vented from growing cash crops. The frustrations felt by these more prosperous of our countrymen were reaching dangerous proportions by the 1940's. It was time for the colonialists to invite them in from the cold. The new governor from 1944 – 1952, Sir Philip Mitchell, made it his primary task to create conditions for the consolidation of an African petit-bourgeoisie which would work with, not against, the government.

The Mitchell Approach

Mitchell's plan for 'multi-racialism' in Kenya obviously had nothing to do with African self-rule. Mitchell himself was a firm believer in the doctrine of trusteeship, maintaining that Africans would not be ready for independence for 2000 years, possibly a little less. But he knew the settler approach which doomed the African population to an eternity of service was potentially ruinous, both economically and politically. He favoured a so-called pluralistic approach to economic development, in which African economic interests would for the first time be taken into account. Recognizing the potential of peasant production, he pushed for the creation of a prosperous peasantry and a halt to the alarming deterioration of land in the 'reserves'. As for the wage sector, he urged that Africans be turned into a genuine urban proletariat, earning a 'proper' wage which would enable them to lessen their dependence of the 'reserves' for subsistence.

Mitchell believed a prosperous and stable Kenya depended on the advancement of the capitalist mode of production and class formation. Under his scheme land would be consolidated, with rich Africans buying out their poorer brothers.

However, neither Mitchell nor Creech Jones nor their successors cared to face the political implications of their new economic policies. They could not, as they intended, sanction the creation of an African petitbourgeoisie and then deny it a meaningful political voice. But this was what they tried to do. To the governor, even moderate Kenyans appeared dangerous radicals with 'Communist' connections. Thus, Mitchell turned a deaf ear to the moderates in the Kenya African Union (KAU), when they assured him that 'our people are not yet ripe to carry the responsibilities of a self-governing country'.

So spoke KAU in 1946. Not all Kenyans were so deferential or submissive to British authority. Then, as now, we had among us the time-servers and the opportunists, but we also had among us brothers and sisters in their thousands who were prepared to die for the liberation of our country.

The Birth of our Power

The earliest days of imperialist take-over witnessed fierce uprisings among the Giriama, the Kikuyu, the Nandi, the Kamba, the Gusii, the Turkana. When the uprisings were brutally suppressed by the superior fire-power of the invaders, our peoples found other ways to protest their loss of freedom. Protest movements taking a religious guise were common in Ukambani and western Kenya. From 1922 to 1952 our peoples used all the peaceful means at their disposal to resist their subjugation. Many refused to submit tamely to ideological control and western values, but instead formed associations, started newspapers, and their own schools and break-away religious groups to assert African cultural integrity.

Protests were not merely regional, nor purely racial. Despite British attempts to encourage purely 'tribal' divisions in order to fragment the people, during the 1930's and 40's there was a groundswell of anti-colonialist sentiment which transcended ethnic divisions, and which enabled Africans and Asians from various parts of Kenya to organize themselves to fight together for their common interests as workers and victims of colonial oppression. Asians like Isher Dass, M.A. Desai, and later Makhan Singh and Pio Pinto were especially prominent in publicising grievances through newspapers and the trade union movement which grew vigorously in the 1930's. The unions, using with considerable effectiveness the weapon of the general strike, organized labour on a *class* – not ethnic, racial or occupational – basis. Their leaders fought to retain their independence of action, and refused to be co-opted by the colonial administration.

By the late 1930's and 1940's, there were organizational links between the unions in the towns and the majority of our people in the countryside. Resistance to various aspects of colonial policy was often nation-wide.

Militants and moderates in the nationalist movement were, as we shall see later, by 1950 uneasy allies. The moderates preferred to negotiate, the militants – aware of the devious nature of the colonialists – wanted to *fight* for their independence.

This is not the place to list the unspeakable brutalities that were inflicted upon the Kenyan people during these years. Suffice it to say that the war of liberation fought by our people has not yet been fully or properly documented from the Kenyans' point of view. Most Kenyan historians are notoriously timid when it comes to the subject of the Emergency and

Mau Mau. For reasons of intrigue and personal pettiness most of them dismiss the achievements of the Kenya Land Freedom Army in Corfield style, refusing to admit that it had nation-wide support and aimed at nation-wide independence. The official figure of 11 000 dead should, on a conservative estimate, be tripled at least. The chronicle of atrocity and bestiality perpetrated by British soldiers and their Kenyan lackeys lives on in the minds of our parents. Someday soon their testimony must become part of our national heritage. Too long has it been slighted by a ruling clique anxious to disguise the heinous origins of its prosperity and political power.

Those who emerged to rule us in 1963 were in many cases those who had betrayed our freedom fighters. They were the loyalists, whose cooperation with the murderers of our people bought them privileges and wealth. Loyalists were exempt from certain fees and taxes. They could move around freely without a pass while their suffering kinsmen were imprisoned in camps and 'protected villages'. They had access to land consolidation committees where they could put forward their own personal interests. They alone among the African population of Central Province could plant cash crops and own trading plots. Under the point system, they put more votes per individual in the 1957 elections which produced a Bishop-Muzorewa-style future ruling elite.

By the end of the Emergency the colonial government had succeeded in creating a puffed-up African middle class, a group of nascent grabbers and dealers whose prosperity grew out of treachery to our people. Such people shared the aspirations of the British. Their goal was to possess businesses or settler-style mixed farms, frequented by settler golf and business partners. They shared with the foreigners an interest in stamping out the revolutionary energy of our people. They could be trusted to rule 'independence' safe for the continued operations of international capital.

Towards „Independence“

By 1960 some form of independence had become inevitable. International capital had deserted the settlers, who had simply become too expensive to support. America, looking to expand its trade and investments with Africa and Asia, pressured Britain to disentangle itself from the Empire. Granting 'independence' made good political and economic sense to the imperialists once they had created a tame collaborating class with an interest in a 'smooth transition'.

After 1963 the losers were those who had fought

for liberation, the winners those eager to 'eat'. The African President assured the former colonial rulers that 'the government of an independent Kenya will not be a gangster government'. A 'gangster government' was presumably one which would re-possess the stolen lands for the use of all the people, and preside over the creation of a more egalitarian society. Kenyatta's government instead turned its back on the question of land transfer without compensation.

Thus, at independence the stress was on continui-

ty, as the new politicians, civil servants, large farmers, traders, industrialists and other businessmen closed their ranks against the mass of our people and their demands for land and justice. The structure of the colonial economy and political system — as we shall see in the next chapter — was transferred virtually intact to Kenyans who preached harmonious co-existence with the exploiters of Kenya. Our bogus independence must be seen as a victory for the imperialists, and a demonstration of the ease with which international capital could bend nationalism to its own ends.

Chapter II

KANU and Kenyatta: Independence For Sale

Kenya has never achieved true independence. Full independence can only be brought about by revolution. It is the culmination of popular, protracted revolutionary change, during which the people seize control of the instruments of power under the leadership of a party dedicated to the eradication of the institutions and forms of the colonial state. In Amilcar Cabral's words, 'it is necessary to totally destroy, to break, to reduce to ash all aspects of the colonial state' before independence can be achieved. Colonial domination must be demolished through active popular struggle. No colonial ruling power has ever voluntarily relinquished hegemony at a negotiating table. It will only consent to negotiate if it can in the long term either preserve or even extend its position of privilege through bargaining. Such was the intention of the British, when they prepared to hand over nominal power to Kenyans at the Lancaster House Conference. The terms on which they handed over 'power' demonstrated that in the guise or other, they intended to stay in Kenya.

Independence means self-determination and self-government. It is a nation that controls its own resources, and that has the political and economic scope to utilize these resources, human and natural, free of foreign interference.

Independence in this sense has little relevance to our current situation. We find ourselves enclosed in a dependent country, wholly subservient to foreign interests. Our economy is geared to the needs of foreigners — of both our ex-colonial masters and other western capitalist nations. In order to keep things that way our people are deprived of vital human freedoms, including the right of political self-expression and association. 'Neo-colonialism' is not merely a matter of academic debate (and in any case

there is very little of that) in Kenya. It is a condition which our people live with day by day: a form of oppression every bit as effective as that practised by British colonialists.

Big Boss Politics

As the gulf between minority rich and the mass of poor continues to widen, we are told that there are no divisions in our country which cannot be healed by 'peace, love and unity', and a tame obedience and silence on our part. What passes for 'political' life revolves totally around personalities who serve as our bosses, our patrons. They are far from representing our true interests. Instead, they represent at the local level the power of the *big boss*, the all-powerful sun of the system around which the politicians rotate like little planets. All power radiates from the centre of the system, from our imperial president. Political success and personal enrichment depend on the positions held by the different planets as they circulate around the sun-king.

Such is the nature of Kenyan 'politics' today. Like an earlier sun-king this President professes to rule by divine right, as the chosen of God. He too has his court and jesters. He exercises supreme authority by mumbled decree, his every murmur being sacrosanct until it is found to be unworkable, ruinous, or both. Politicians and appointed officials carry out the imperial will. Their chief function is to smother all debate, and to link people firmly into a boss-servant chain of relationships which constitutes our permitted political life. The keys to the chain are the D.O.'s, D.C.'s and P.C.'s: they operate a rigid licensing system through which the government controls all gatherings of the people — no licence, no mee-

ting, no matter how innocent. Surveillance practised by the Special Branch, C.I.D., and G.S.U. destroys not only any vestige of 'participatory' democracy, but also, as we shall see later, our people's own initiative to better their condition. In Kenya today any such initiative is always deemed subversive.

As for our one official party, the party which supposedly won us independence, it has long been in a stupor. No political initiative or policy making emanates from KANU, a „party“ without regular party machinery or even functioning local branches. KANU today fulfils two functions, neither reputable. Since only those Kenyans wealthy enough to afford to buy life membership can be elected party officials, it serves as a rich man's club. From time to time Party branches are resuscitated in order to counter moves made by political dissidents or those slow in expressing their loyalty to the President and his clique. To further confound those who believed that parties like KANU should represent and respond to the needs of the people, KANU was in 1979 declared to be 'above the law'.

Did we fight for *uhuru* in order to be politically silenced in a supposedly free Kenya? To be intimidated, detained, and even eliminated for reminding our so-called leaders that they are there to represent *our* interests and not merely their own? To be ruled by a virtual king and his gang of favourites, all above the law and beyond the reach of principle and social responsibility? At what point did the party in which we once vested our hopes for the future become little more than a source of jobs and loot for politicians and their hangers-on? KANU's failure to function as a forum for political expression is symbolized today by an empty office in the Kenyatta Conference Centre: *was it a pseudo-party from the beginning?*

Enter KANU

The idea of forming the Kenya African National Union (KANU) was born at the 1960 Lancaster House Conference in London on the prospects for majority rule in Kenya.

The party seemed to be off to a rousing start. It had leaders: Kenyatta, languishing in detention, had an almost mythical aura around him. It had branches: the old district associations. More crucially, it had the enthusiastic support of people who believed it the vehicle for bringing home independence. And finally, it had a stirring party programme. Delivered in the form of a political 'manifesto' to a huge rally at Thika on 20 November, 1960, the *KANU Manifesto for Independence, Social Democracy and Stabili-*

ty makes instructive, and ironic, reading today. Before the jubilant crowd the party proclaimed that

all privileges and vestiges of colonialism will be swept away. Freedom has no meaning without the provision of the means for the vast majority of the people to enjoy that freedom.

KANU promised to replace the colonial regime with 'a political democracy' which would be concerned to safeguard the 'good of the country as a whole and not merely the interests of a few'.

The founders of KANU seem to have been blind to the fact that there is more to the formation of a party than the adoption of a name. A party is really only worthy of the name 'party' if it acts to animate and then channel popular expression at all levels of society. Despite its appearance of health and a certain measure of unanimity in 1960, KANU never in fact was a vertically-integrated party tapping and giving voice to grass roots interests. Instead, in Odinga's words, it remained an 'amalgam of many diverse tendencies and policies', a mere 'union' of different and even antagonistic interests. In the *Manifesto* of 1960 KANU acknowledges that it is more of a coalition (by implication, temporary) than anything else – it presents itself as a 'united front' composed of Kenyans joined together by the one common goal of working for independence. As our country was shortly to discover, there could be many different things meant by 'independence'.

Militant Nationalists and Moderates

At the risk of some over-simplification, we can say that the 'amalgam' which was KANU contained two broadly different groups. On one side were people who believed that 'independence' necessitated a total break with the colonial system, and a new beginning. They realized that a new beginning was only possible if Kenyans themselves had control over the country's resources and political destiny. For our purposes here we can call this group of radicals the militant nationalists. Their voice set the tone of the 1960 KANU *Manifesto*, demanding a clean break with the past and the creation of a more egalitarian society in the future through such devices as free education for all and a ceiling on how much private property one individual can own. Despite the attempt made by the colonial government – and later by the 'independent' government – to label them as such, these nationalists were by no means socialists. Nowhere did they speak out against the institution of private property, but they did maintain that a certain amount of nationalisation of the country's re-

sources and the serious encouragement of co-operative farming would benefit the Kenyan people as a whole. Their message presented in the *Manifesto* was that wealth and power in Kenya should not be monopolized by the few, as under the colonial regime.

But the other broad group within the 'amalgam' was ultimately to win the day. These were the moderate nationalists, who stressed *continuity* with the past, and not a complete break with the colonial system. They wanted to be well placed to take over positions vacated by the departing British, and to maintain the pattern and direction of colonial rule. Early in 1960 they were willing to allow the radicals to set the rhetorical tone of the *Manifesto* in order to win widespread popular support, making sure, however, that the 'Kenya for Kenyans' style of rhetoric was confined to what were essentially *secondary* issues. On the vitally important *primary* issues – the issue of the land, and of foreign investment – they were determined to rush through their own policies.

Land was the touchstone of new government policy. It was the means of production for the vast majority of our people, and the source of a bitter sense of grievance during the colonial period. With the nearing of 'independence', the people demanded the return of the stolen lands as a matter of *justice*. They saw no need to pay compensation to settlers who had come as thieves. In Kaggia's words, 'it looks very absurd for Africans to buy land that was rightly theirs'. But the moderates felt otherwise, and significantly, wrote their view into the *Manifesto*. KANU as a party accepted 'the principle of fair and just compensation', despite the fact that such a principle ran directly counter to the needs and interests of the people. There would be no 'free things' in an African-run Kenya.

Nor would there be any radical departure in economic thinking. The moderates asserted in the *Manifesto* that 'development' would continue along *the same lines*, making the implicit assumption that colonial style development was in fact the real thing. The *Manifesto* voiced the radical pledge to resettle landless Africans, but 'not at the cost of the high standard of agriculture already attained, and which must continue'. A KANU government would continue to approach economic matters in much the same old way, heavily emphasizing the dubious benefits of large mixed farming.

What conclusions can we draw from the evidence offered by the 1960 KANU *Manifesto*? We can say that as early as 1960 the militant nationalists were outflanked by the group which was subsequently to

inherit the trappings of political power – the moderates.

Furthermore, they had the support of a grass roots organization, the *Kiama Kia Muingi* (KKM), which was a re-grouping of former members of the Kenya Land Freedom Army. The KKM was committed to 'free land', through active seizures if necessary. It planned to capture political control of KANU's rural branches, and also to collect arms as insurance against a 'sell out' at 'independence'. *The great weakness of the KKM was organizational. When Kenyatta chose to move against its members in 1961, he easily isolated the leaders, and detained key cadres. The decapitation left the militant nationalists without an organizational base. They remained a minority faction within KANU, having failed to create their own sources of funds, their own propaganda organs, and institutionalised popular support.* Their programme won majority favour, but they had no ability to carry it out. Kenya's radicals on the verge of 'independence' therefore suffered from the same near-sightedness which has afflicted all opposition spokesmen since. They displayed a lack of political judgment and ignorance of the nature of political struggle. They were easily isolated and neutralised: and made to seem irrelevant, as the mainstream of Kenya's political history passed them by.

In 1960 the mainstream within KANU was flowing strongly towards the shores of neo-colonialism. The moderates, therefore, had their say on the primary economic issues which committed Kenya to continuity, not to change. The colonial model, minus such irritants as the legal colour bar, would be preserved in 'independent' Kenya.

Mitchell's Children

As we saw in the last chapter, Mitchell and his successors wanted to 'modernise' the colonial economy in order to make it reflect new international realities.

Mitchell's new economic policy did not only concern itself with peasant farming in rural areas. He also invited in foreign capital in increasing quantities. As in West Africa, where giant firms like Unilever had successfully pioneered the strategy of grooming African managers and executives who could be reliable political partners as well, Mitchell and his successors sought to implement the policy of 'multi-racialism' in business and the civil service. From the early 1950's a series of Commissions examined ways of freeing the economy from racial restrictions in the name of political stability. Businessmen like Sir Philip Rogers, the first president of the Association of

Commercial and Industrial Employers (later the Federation of Kenya Employers) and director of British American Tobacco, drew on their varied West African experience when they set about creating a group of reliable 'African allies' in Kenya. Their type of 'multiracialism' became the watchword of liberal organizations like the United Kenya Club and the Capricorn Society, and the hope for the future of Blundell's New Kenya Group. 'Multi-racialism' depended on the emergence of trustworthy African successors to the colonial rulers who were well aware that their time was running out. The future in their eyes was one in which a white and black bourgeoisie with common interests would work together to defeat militant nationalism, and ensure that 'independence' meant continuity, not change.

By the early 1960's, all sources of organized opposition to a neo-colonial solution had been isolated they were shortly to be reduced to opposition in Parliament and rendered impotent. The KKM was suppressed. The unions, which in the early 1950's had played a significant political role in fighting colonialism, were made politically harmless as workers were gradually deprived of a sense of their *class* interests. In the late 1940's and early 50's unions had stood out against tribalism and racialism. During the Emergency, however, with the detention of far-sighted union leaders like Makhan Singh, and the mass round-up and detention of the urban Kikuyu population, the government used divide-and-rule tactics to break union solidarity. 'Tribalism' was used to divide the work-force, and keep workers from re-organizing on class lines.

At the same time labour leaders like Tom Mboya argued that unions should *not* be a political force in Kenya, but should merely work for bread-and-butter issues. Mboya himself was a classic example of the 'new' upwardly mobile Kenyan, dedicated to making the most of opportunities offered by a multi-racial Kenya. As general secretary of the Kenya Federation of Labour from 1953 he brought the unions into line with western (especially American) interests. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) had been formed by western industrialized nations under American leadership in 1949 to counteract Soviet influence in the trade union movement. In 1951 the ICFTU moved into East Africa and played a major role with Mboya's connivance in educating Kenyan unionists to see things America's way. Mboya himself had a flair for tapping American funds for the Kenya Federation of Labour. As its general secretary, as well as KANU's general secretary, Mboya was in a powerful position during Kenya's transition to 'independence'. He

subsequently became Kenya's Labour Minister and the originator of the anti-union Central Organisation of Trade Unions (COTU), which was a government-run workers' confederation dedicated to preventing strikes and keeping 'industrial peace'. As the organizer of the American-sponsored 'air-lifts' of Kenyan students, Mboya also played an important role in helping foreign capital recruit and groom its future collaborators from among our youth.

Enter Kenyatta

'New' men like Mboya, eager to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the new economic and political order, needed an 'old' nationalist figurehead who would see things their way. Jomo Kenyatta, conveniently in detention in 1960, was a man of the appropriate stature.

The militant nationalists made a great mistake by rallying around the symbol of Kenyatta, believing that they could harness his prestige to their own purposes. They should have known better, for Kenyatta had long shown himself to be the foe of both militant nationalism and the voice of the people. By nature a dictator, in the colonial period he specialised in killing popular debate and advancing his own cause instead of his countrymen's. He had proved himself through the years to be a thorough opportunist, more than willing to live off the people's support and adulation. Determined to be THE boss, Kenyatta could not tolerate political rivalry or even discussion. Nor could he countenance the activity of popular organizations over which he'd no control. Thus, in 1946 he denounced Chege Kibachia for leading a general strike of trade union members in Mombasa, believing that unions should be apolitical and moderate in their economic demands. Subsequently, he tried to thwart the wishes of Kenyans determined to use all means at their disposal to fight for independence, and found himself on the Mau Mau death list for his dangerous compromising. His detention was in fact a form of protective custody.

While Kenyatta was waiting offstage, KANU'S leaders and the colonial government were hammering out a solution to the land problem which betrayed the mass of our people and set the stage for continued co-operation between a parasitic ruling class and the international bourgeoisie. In 1960 and 1961 there was growing pressure on the colonialists and nationalists alike to do something about the landless. 1961 was a year of famine, with conditions in the 'reserves' made worse by the return of those men and women who had spent the Emergency in detention. Not surprisingly, a radical grass-roots alternative to KANU seemed to be making rapid headway,

as squatters and landless joined the KKM in large numbers. In some cases, they refused to await the compromise solution being reached by KANU and the British on land, and instead seized the land from settlers for their own use. Some type of resettlement scheme was clearly a political necessity in order to forestall rapidly growing discontent.

Buying Back our Land

This is the background to the call made by militant nationalists like Kaggia and the organizers of the KKM: Kenyans should not, they insisted, be forced to buy land that was rightfully theirs. In May 1961 Odinga addressed a crowd of nearly 20000 on the outskirts of Nairobi which collectively vowed never to buy land in the Highlands. But growing militancy on this all-important issue was successfully undermined by KANU moderates and British de-colonisers. The pro British land formula which they agreed upon represented the most critical compromise of the 'independence' negotiations. They would attempt to buy political stability through a token resettlement programme, while at the same time forcing Africans to buy the land and *disguising the impact of this policy with 'release Kenyatta' diversions*.

Kenyatta, finally released from custody in mid 1961, had by early 1962 thrown his weight solidly behind the moderates in KANU: 'we do not believe in being given this or that free', he told a Legislative Council meeting in January 1962, in his capacity as President of KANU. He added that land should be purchased by Africans, so that property rights would be respected. Shortly afterwards the Million Acre Settlement Scheme was announced by the colonial government (July 1962). Under this scheme part of the Highlands would be subdivided and sold to 30000 landless families. The country had to re-pay the British and World Bank loans which over-compensated departing settlers. Thanks to KANU's blundering, we began our 'independence' already in debt and faced a future rigged against our fundamental national interests.

The Settlement Scheme was essentially a way of de-politicising a potentially explosive situation. There was of course a cosmetic difference — the former 'White' Highlands were now the 'multi-racial' highlands. Newly in possession of vast tracts of land, African mixed farmers came to share the settler economic outlook and aspirations. Ex-detainees were in many cases re-detained squatters who boldly claimed land for themselves were imprisoned. Militant nationalists thus found themselves increasingly de-

prived of grass roots support, and had no effective way to champion the people's interests. They had earlier put their hopes in Kenyatta's release, not realising that he would become the main opponent of 'free things'.

Mtukufu Mzee

It seems colonialists who had believed Kenyatta to be the 'manager of Mau Mau' had badly misread the man and his inclinations.

Western capitals soon realised that Kenyatta was true find: an African President who would be most unlikely to flirt with 'Communism'. As he created conditions for capitalist countries to have a free-for-all in Kenya, Kenyatta soon became a valuable ally in the fight against 'foreign ideology'. *Anything* which threatened imperialist control of our economy came into the category of 'foreign ideology'. Between Madaraka by 1963 and the issuing of Sessional Paper no. 10 (on African Socialism) in 1965, the Americans and British tutored Kenyatta and the young KANU government on 'anti-Communist' tactics.

Kenyatta, with the backing of the west, was the creator of the imperial presidency. By December 1964, Kenya was a Republic, with an executive who was both the head of state (replacing the queen) and the head of government. Subsequent constitutional amendments relieved Parliament of any involvement in the election and rulings of the President, and of any say over his conduct and use of his power. The President was literally above the workings of the law. Kenya was swiftly being transformed from the 'participatory Parliament' promised by the KANU *Manifesto* to a personal dictatorship.

The President needed a bureaucracy to carry out his Royal Will. He came to rely more and more on the authoritarian Provincial Administration, which in size and function represented a wholesale revival of the machinery of the Emergency. The *Manifesto* had promised to tear down the old colonial structures and put in their place 'participatory democracy' which, in its view, 'must include the greatest possible element of consent'.

KANU in the Closet

Kenya today has the trappings of a bourgeois democratic state, but certainly not the substance. Even before the transition period to 'independence' was over, KANU had shown itself incapable of being used as the vehicle of popular political expression, and by 1962 had virtually ceased to operate as a political organization. As far as the moderate nationa-

lists who assumed control in 'independent' Kenya were concerned, KANU's 'united front' had served its function – it had provided a facade behind which moderates could out-manoeuvre those militant nationalists who were seeking to fulfil KANU's election promises.

For the new 'ruling class' party and state were to become instruments for unchecked personal accumulation, and the plundering of the nation's resources. *The powerful group which had captured the state* included the comprador bourgeoisie and educated opportunists of all sorts, who willingly carried out World Bank/IMF strategies to keep Kenya safe for foreign investment. Any criticism of the governing gangsters and their sell-out policies was denounced as the work of 'Communists' who were envious of Kenya's 'progress' and 'stability', and bent on subversion.

Open Season on Militants

By the 1970's few voices were raised against the ruling clique. Militant nationalism, confined largely to the backbenches of Parliament in newly 'independent' Kenya, did not survive the decade in any organised sense. By 1965 backbench critics of the government had been labelled communist subversives. Their most forceful leader, Pio Pinto, was murdered in February 1965. The government then cranked disused KANU machinery into life, and turned it against the remaining militant nationalists who were ousted from the party at the Limuru Conference of 1966. Belatedly they attempted to re-group, but their new opposition party, the KPU, was no match for a President now equipped with additional emergency powers, and a ruthless willingness to use them.

KPU represented a somewhat forlorn, rearguard attempt by militant nationalists to revive the struggle for our elusive independence. Its denunciation of the rapacious ruling clique transcended 'tribal' lines. It sought in a populist way to articulate for *all* Kenyans an alternative to the massive betrayal of our people's true interests which constituted *Uhuru* under KANU and Kenyatta. But the individuals who attempted to rally the people against the Kenyatta regime were organisationally weak. Called 'snakes in the grass' by Kenyatta, KPU leaders were denied permits for their meetings – their supporters were harrassed by the Special Branch and the G.S.U.

During the decade following the banning of the KPU the government moved steadily down the path to nascent fascism, using terror tactics to isolate and then eliminate dissidents.

To the regret of American imperialists, an early casualty in that battle was Mboya himself. Mboya

had long been a faithful servant of the Kenyatta regime but as an outsider – and a popular one at that – he threatened the monopoly of power aimed at by the Family and its cronies and thus had to be eliminated. In his various guises as trade union leader, Minister of Labour and then Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Mboya had been a precocious pupil in the Mitchell-Baring school for training 'new Kenyans'. Having mastered the lesson that Kenya's future development lay in neocolonial economic and social arrangements, Mboya helped foreign interests consolidate their hold over the Kenyan economy. The United States especially found him a useful ally. A crusader against 'Communism' – whether embodied in literature which now and then found its way into our country to 'pollute the virgin minds of our youth', or in the embattled ranks of the KPU – Mboya was America's rising star.

The West Closes in

Their stability had assumed a growing importance in the calculations of the West. With Communism apparently on the march in Asia, the capitalist camp determined to make the Indian Ocean region a bulwark against further Communist advance. For America, fighting a losing war in Vietnam, the implications of the 'domino theory' had reached nightmare proportions. American strategists used the coup in Zanzibar as an example of creeping Communism and excuse to shore up its dominoes in Eastern Africa before they all collapsed. Kenya, which had shown itself to be so amenable to foreign control, was a key domino in the American scheme of things. During the 1960's and 1970's it was important because of its 'open door' policy toward international capital. But it was even more important because of its adjacent position to the warring countries in the Horn of Africa, a region whose proximity to U.S. oil supplies in the Middle East brought it to the attention of American policy-makers and arms dealers.

From the early 1960's, the American Ambassador William Attwood had recognized the importance of wooing Kenyatta and dictating his foreign policy. Mboya had been seen as an important link man in the extension of American influence over East Africa. But by the end of the 1960's Mboya was dead, and Kenyatta was old. As Kenyatta became senile, and lost his grip on the running of the country, would there be a possible resurgence of militant nationalism seeking to reduce western domination? Would imperialist interests be sacrificed at the succession?

Capitalist countries, led by the United States, were determined to prop up this particular domino. Throughout the 1970's, American strategy in Kenya was aimed at bolstering the Old Man in his dotage, and paving the way for a successor who would continue the Kenyatta line. To this end, the C.I.A. gave Kenyatta a publicly-reported seven million dollars to build an organisation which would be used more effectively than the moribund KANU to broaden and secure his rule. Kenyatta chose to create a power base disguised as a 'welfare organisation'. GEMA, supposedly just another welfare union on the lines of the older Luo Union and New Akamba Union, was actually a political and economic stronghold of the Family and allies among the Kikuyu (especially the Kiambu Kikuyu) bourgeoisie. GEMA, which was from its initial formation rejected as *their* organisation by the broad masses of the Kikuyu people, served not only as the base for a new order of plundering politicians and executives with international connections, but it also by the mid 1970's acted informally as the Parliament, cabinet and often the judiciary in the country. As we shall see later, its leaders were able to use the apparatus of state and Kenyatta's name — to milk the people and emerge as the nation's foremost power brokers. Their link with Kenyatta assured them of limitless opportunities for accumulation.

While imperialists had hoped that organisations such as GEMA could be used to keep Kenya politically stable, the country was in fact becoming increasingly fractionalised. It would be a misreading of the situation to see the deep divisions among our people as a 'natural' outcome of endemic tribalism. Instead, our power-hungry leaders stirred up and used tribal sentiment when they found it convenient to do so. Thus, in the wake of Luo anger at Mboya's murder, members of the ruling clique exploited the situation by forced mass oathing of the Kikuyu population at Gatundu, and the appropriation of millions of shillings in oathing fees, causing further dislike for GEMA in Kikuyuland as well as elsewhere.

The situation in 1969 and after should not be interpreted as a straightforward Kikuyu vrs. Luo split. 'Tribalism' had instead been cleverly used to divert attention away from the real dynamics at work in the country — the emergence of a rapacious bunch of mercenaries whose own *class* interest transcended ethnic bounds. To their credit, many of our people saw how they were being manipulated. Thousands of Kikuyu, like the non-Kikuyu elsewhere, felt mounting anger at the Gatundu oathing, at the role which nepotism played in appointments, and at the way the Family and their associates seemed to be

grabbing all positions, property and power for themselves.

Who's Next?

From the early 1970's, then, Kenyatta's senility was a prime factor in all political calculations. To the ruling clique, the 'national interest' had little to do with periodic famine, relentless inflation, and the progressive impoverishment of the Kenyan people: it had everything to do with the succession. By the mid 1970's, our increasingly desperate people lost all hope that the existing system could be made responsive to their needs. That hope had been briefly re-kindled when a group of backbenchers, including the popular J.M. Kariuki and J. Seroney tried yet again to use Parliament as a forum to voice their criticism of the regime. But the Third Parliament met for only one day in November 1974. By the end of the month J.M. Kariuki's attacks on the government and GEMA provoked them to retaliate in their traditional racketeer-style. JM's murder, a decade after the 'mysterious' killing of Pio Pinto, was meant to serve as a stern warning to remaining critics (and by then they were painfully few) of what to expect if they continued to find fault with the extravagant looting which had become a way of life to the men at the top.

The assassination of JM and the government's clumsy attempt at a cover-up unleashed the biggest political crisis which the regime had ever faced. Kenyatta went into hiding for two weeks, while riots occurred spontaneously in many towns. In Nairobi demonstrating University students got vivid first-hand experience of the nature of a police state.

From JM's death to Kenyatta's three and a half years later all 'political' activity in the country revolved around silencing dissidents and manoeuvring for the best standpoint from which to wave the Old Man good-bye. Factional rivalry was intense between members of the Family clique and opponents clustered around the Vice-President and Attorney-General. In no way can this rivalry be interpreted as one between collaborators and true nationalists. On the contrary, both sides had a considerable stake in maintaining the general *status quo*.

Because the manner and timing of Kenyatta's death in August 1978, and because of the great unpopularity of the Kenyatta clique, his Vice-President Moi, with the help of the self-styled defender of the constitution Charles Njonjo and the former GEMA stalwart Mwai Kibaki, scraped through to the Presidency. Surviving to become President has, it seems from the present vantage point, taken all the cunning and political shrewdness which Moi had at his

command. Kenyatta, for all his greed and crimes, *did* project certain attributes which made him a revered figure among certain sections of the people. He appeared dignified, competent, and charismatic, and retained the aura of the legendary Grand Old Man of African nationalism. His successor clearly lacks all of these qualities. In their place, we find indecisiveness and bumbling on a spectacular scale.

As an illustration of the way the government creates national crises take the case of the doctors. Un-

able to negotiate with a raised club, the government doctors, suffering a decade's unattended grievances, staged a spontaneous walk-out which the authorities countered by arresting them and their wives. Not content to harrass them, and not about to sit down and discuss issues with them, the government then escalated the crisis by ordering that medical students be sent home. When other University students expressed their solidarity with the medical students and doctors, and sought redress of other long-standing problem, they were set upon by the G.S.U. and sent home 'indefinitely'.

Chapter III

Looters, Bankrupts and the Begging Bowl: Our Plundered Economy

All economic wealth is generated by three elements: 1. the personal activity of man or his *labour power*; 2. the *natural resources* of the earth (such as minerals, crops, energy); and 3. the *instruments or machinery by which the labour power acts upon the resources to make products*. The distinguishing feature of capitalism as against all other systems of creating economic wealth is that all these three elements, the means of production, are privately owned, generating a wealth which is privately owned. This wealth is distributed and disposed of by those who own these elements of production, not by the producers themselves. In Kenya the labour power of the people and the natural resources of the land are largely owned and controlled by private interests, most of which are foreign-based.

The Kenyan economy is a deformed child of the international capitalist system. Since its 'coming of age' in 1963 it has given the outward appearance of growth, but inwardly has become more and more sickly. At present the deformed and insignificant child is exposed without protection to the chill of the latest international capitalist crisis.

The great majority of our people live and toil on the land in the rural areas. The wealth produced by them is taken by road and rail to the city. Nairobi is a collecting point founded by the colonialists and developed by international capital for the wholesale export of our produce and our wealth to the dealers of Hamburg, London and New York.

As we saw in the last chapter, *continuity* was ensured at 'independence'. Continuity meant the wholesale adoption by the KANU government of the inequality underlying the colonial system, when fewer than four thousand settlers possessed three millions

hectares of our best land. The survival of our rulers depends in their continuing ability to dupe the people that the state is serving the *national* interest, and that there is only one national interest to be served. *The government has at various times used the seemingly conflicting ideologies of nationalism and of tribalism to keep Kenyans ignorant of the nature of class society which is being formed in their country.* Harambee, Nyayoism, African Socialism all bear the same message: there need be no class struggle in Kenya because Kenyans – true to their mythical African heritage – form one big united family.

Ruling class ideology thus projects an imaginary relationship which blurs the real and deep divisions in our society. It aims at preventing our people, or different groups of them, from uniting to express their own interests. To pretend that classes do not exist in Kenya is to indulge in fantasy. Of course these classes may not take the exact form of their western counterparts. We may not be able to speak with any precision about a national bourgeoisie and a landless proletariat in Kenya, since capitalist development has not taken the same form as that of nineteenth century America and Europe. However, all societies which produce an economic surplus are class societies to the extent that different groups contend over how the surplus is to be produced and appropriated – and one group dominates the other. In Kenya peasants and workers on estates and in towns produce the surplus which is then appropriated by a capitalist bourgeoisie, both internal and foreign.

What then is the nature of class society in Kenya? How can we describe the ruling interest groups, and the use they make of the state? To what extent is Ke-

nya's internal bourgeoisie a dependent class — a mere auxiliary of the foreign capitalist bourgeoisie? How do the ruling groups exploit the people and the resources of our country: are they productive capitalists or merely looters of our nation's wealth?

Origins of the Petit-Bourgeoisie

To understand the nature of capitalist exploitation in Kenya, and the origins of our post-colonial ruling class, it is necessary again to look back at the colonial period. Among some of our peoples, socio-economic (i.e. class) differentiation was occurring *before* direct colonial take-over. Colonialism, which brought Kenyans into production for the world capitalist market, reinforced and accelerated this differentiation. Under British rule pre-capitalist modes of production were gradually subordinated to the capitalist mode. This process had, it must be admitted, many desirable and economically progressive features. It introduced Kenyans to resources and instruments of production, and in general raised the productivity of their labour power. Kenyans were soon producing a surplus most of which was appropriated by the colonialists. Most, but not all. From a very early stage some Kenyans emerged as petty capitalists, although racist barriers prevented them from becoming a competitive threat. Thus, by 1915 there were African-owned and run businesses in Kiambu. By the 1920's, when half the able-bodied male Luo and Kikuyu were forced into some kind of 'wage employment', we see signs of an emerging African petit-bourgeoisie of shop-keepers, skilled workers, government clerks, teachers etc., a group with access to higher incomes than most of their countrymen. In some cases these Africans were in a position to accumulate a little surplus because of the way *pre-colonial* socio-economic differentiation had whetted their appetite for gain. At colonial take-over they were on the look-out for opportunities to continue the process of self-enrichment, and were willing to collaborate with the colonialists as chiefs and headmen and get in some instances substantial rewards for doing so. Other members of the embryonic petit-bourgeoisie were educated missionary converts, who received relatively large incomes for their work as clerks and teachers — incomes which they could then put to work for them on the land or in small businesses. Those with substantial land holdings could grow cash crops like wattle or tobacco. They were not allowed to compete with settler farmers by growing the really lucrative crops like coffee. African businessmen were severely restricted in their enterprises by the licensing system which favoured Europeans and Asians, and by their failure

to secure credit. But nevertheless, using the Local Native Councils as a source of loans, capital, and paid employment, they continued to accumulate and invest throughout the colonial period, demonstrating considerable resourcefulness and determination to take advantage of whatever the system had to offer. They displayed a commendable initiative, and refusal to embrace racist propaganda concerning African capacities and their 'proper place' — perpetual servitude.

During the changing international climate of the 1950's the Kenyan petit-bourgeoisie were split in their strategy of how best to advance their interests. Some members of the petit-bourgeoisie embraced militant nationalism, seeing the Mau Mau movement as a way of ending the domination of the settlers and opening further avenues to African accumulation. Not all Mau Mau leaders and supporters were acting purely out of self-interest, of course. Some leaders were determined to shed their petit-bourgeois outlook, and work for the welfare of all Kenyans, and the creation of a truly independent nation. These freedom fighters were regarded as traitors, as renegades by the large group which saw immediate personal benefit in collaboration with the colonial government in putting down the revolt. These loyalists saw eye to eye with the colonialists on many matters, and accepted fully the idea that progress was only possible for Africans *within* the existing economic framework. They became the apprentice-proteges of colonial and international capitalists, anxious to groom a future ruling class to whom power could safely be entrusted.

A petit-bourgeoisie is in historical terms a group with interests which straddle the spheres of production and of circulation. Members of the petit-bourgeoisie *may* produce commodities. They may be craftsmen, or artisans, or have other small productive businesses, and at the same time they may be involved in distribution or trade (circulation). Their different interests make them a politically unstable group, with a tendency to switch frequently the alliances they form to further those interests.

In the case of the Kenyan petit-bourgeoisie, there was, not surprisingly, little evidence of group unity as the country moved towards nominal independence. But within petit-bourgeois ranks, the loyalists were coming into their own. Trusted by the colonial rulers, loyalists were well-placed to take advantage of the opportunities which came their way when international capital deserted the settlers because they were not efficient enough at exploiting the resources of the country. Under the Swynnerton Plan these 'safe' Kenyans were pushed forward by the colonia-

lists to produce cash crops for the capitalist market, using the profits to consolidate their business interests. African businesses had long been starved of credit, since the Credit to Native Ordinance of 1926 had restricted to shs. 200 / – the amount which a non-African could lend an African. This Act was not abolished until 1960. However, in the mid and late 1950's exemptions were given by the government to those Africans whom it wished to groom for leadership. Various loan schemes with colonial and American backing were floated to provide grants to favoured traders. By the end of the 1950's, although African businessmen were still subordinate to European and Asian trading companies, they had carved out a profitable role for themselves as middlemen within the 'reserves'. Furthermore, they were proving themselves to be good future ruling class material. They were eager to embrace the colonial British outlook and style of life, and be embraced in turn as political partners in ruling Kenya.

The lack of group unity among the ranks of the petit-bourgeoisie showed itself clearly in the years after 'independence'. Some petit-bourgeois politicians were strongly convinced that Kenya's new rulers had bartered away real independence – these were to follow Odinga into the KPU. Others, eager to take advantage of the new potential for accumulation offered by control of the state, were determined to bury old differences, saying that in fact *everyone* fought for independence. They were anxious to get ahead in any way they could. Of course for the majority there were no great rewards – they remained on the outside as small-time shopkeepers, *mata-tu* owners or distributors. Some individuals within the petit-bourgeois ranks did achieve swift upward mobility, thanks to the political alliances which they were able to form. These political and business 'bosses' utilised the state machine and relationships with foreign capitalists to consolidate their uncertain economic base, and emerge as a 'dependent' national bourgeoisie.

Thwarting the Asian Bourgeoisie

Before discussing the national bourgeoisie in more detail, a few words should be said about the Asian business community, which certainly had the potential to become a substantial national bourgeoisie, but failed for obvious political reasons to do so. During the colonial period Asians were not allowed to buy land in the so-called 'White Highlands'. They could – and did – take over land in some outlying areas, including western Kenya, where they set up

large sugar plantations. But in general, they were blocked from the most productive land, and also blocked from the lucrative import-export business which remained in European hands. Before World War II the retail trade was the primary outlet for Asian capital.

After the War they began increasingly to move into *productive* industry. A few large-scale industrial firms began to emerge, belonging to families like the Chandarias, the Khimasias, and the Madhvanis. These firms produced steel, aluminium, textiles, glass, flour, and molasses. They took over many local companies operating in industry and investment. But in spite of their obvious efficiency and business acumen, the large Asian businessmen have never felt politically secure, and instead of using their profits to consolidate their economic base in 'independent' Kenya, have instead looked for ways to get their capital out of the country. Some have managed to buy a reasonable degree of security and a spectacular degree of wealth by adapting themselves to the new situation and forming partnerships with influential members of the African bourgeoisie, or by acting behind African 'fronts'. The small Asian businessmen have had more reason to feel insecure. From the late 1960's their trading enterprises have been at risk, as the government sought to assure itself of African petit-bourgeois support by moving against the Asian business community. In 1967 the Trades Licensing Act excluded non-citizens from trading in rural and outlying urban areas. In the same year, the Kenya National Trading Corporation began to use its licensing powers to force Asians out of the wholesale and retail trade. From 1972–1975 many non-citizen *and* citizen Asian businesses were issued with quit notices, and forced to sell to certain well-connected Africans. Again in late 1980 the Ministry of Commerce attempted in a muddled fashion to enable well-placed Africans to accumulate at the expense of Asians by decreeing that only Africans could operate in combined wholesale and retail spheres, a decision which it was later forced to withdraw. But meanwhile Asian traders found themselves excluded from trading in some parts of the country and in some commodities. The uncertainty of their position seems to have little to do with their citizenship status.

Nyang'au at the Door

The post-colonial state therefore predictably threw its weight against the emergence of the Asian business and industrial community as an indigenous national bourgeoisie. It preferred to foster gradually the interests of a group of African capitalists who

were able to use a wide variety of means – legal and illegal – to consolidate their economic base. In many studies of class formation in Africa, post-colonial rulers are characterised as belonging to a petit-bourgeois stratum because they rarely produce *value*, but accumulate instead by acting as middlemen in trade and creaming off profits as goods circulate, or by using their positions in government. Although this has in general been true of the Kenyan ruling class, we choose the term 'dependent' national bourgeoisie for several reasons. For one thing, some of its members have since the mid 1970's shown an interest in supplementing the quick speculative return to be obtained in property, business, finance and theft with a tentative move into production – the Tiger Shoe Company and Madhupaper being two recent examples. But at this stage too much significance can be given to African industrial or productive activity, the success of which is limited by lack of experience, and by extreme dependence on foreign technology and skill and the inclination of the state to suppress foreign competition.

It is important then not to overrate the *productive* nature of the type of bourgeois stratum emerging in Kenya. Its members remain for the most part speculators or looters, not producers. But they qualify as a kind of bourgeoisie because their looting has brought them the ownership of a considerable part of the means of production – in particular, property and land. Like the settlers before them, great tracts of land in their hands are underused, or left idle. Productivity has declined sharply. They prefer to focus their attention on other enterprises with a quick effortless return. Thus they accumulate through property speculation, through their control of parastatal bodies and marketing boards, through their political roles and positions within the civil service and administration, through the 'sleeping' partnerships they form with Asian businessmen, and – most importantly – through their involvement with foreign capitalists. Multinational corporations give influential Kenyans the opportunity to draw high salaries, sit idly but profitably on boards of directors, own shares, and take part in lucrative subcontracting ventures. In return, Kenyan directors and allies ensure that multinationals will be able to operate without undue government interference, and will enjoy a certain privileged, near monopoly status in their undertakings. Both sides reap great advantages from their association. For this reason the stratum which provides a favourable political climate for foreign investment cannot be merely termed comprador. The relationship which these influential Kenyans enter into with foreign capital is not completely

one-sided, nor does it represent the sum of their activities. Building on a comprador role, they often start and manage their own firms. Holding in some cases twenty or thirty directorships because of the political influence which they are able to command, individuals within this ruling class can accumulate from a wide variety of sources on a scale never dreamed of by their petit bourgeois fathers. But they are hardly more secure, since their extravagant income generally depends on political alignments.

Therefore in Kenya it is useful to distinguish between the petit-bourgeoisie and a developing national bourgeoisie with comprador tendencies. Because rich and politically influential Africans have no nation-wide base in production – because productive industrial capital in Kenya is largely in foreign hands – they remain part of an essentially 'dependent' bourgeoisie, a group which is consolidating its base as the *clients* of international capital. Local and international capitalists co-operate to siphon off the surplus produces by Kenyans. But the partnership between them is not one of equals. Local capitalists remain dependent on foreign companies and foreign banks. Their consumption patterns and style of life rely on goods, services and ideas supplied by foreign businesses. Their position remains a precarious one, dependent on the continued willingness of foreign capital to use Nairobi as the base for Eastern African operations.

The Kenyan ruling class and agents of international capital therefore derive certain benefits from their association with each other. But it should not be thought that the relationship between them is always happy and conflict-free. Generally the benefits of co-operation outweigh the disadvantages, but not always. Local capitalists frequently find that their interests might directly compete with those of foreign firms, forcing the state to mediate between them through its licensing procedures and tariff system. But prolonged conflict is unlikely, since neither the government nor the Kenyan bourgeoisie could afford to face the consequences of alienating foreign capital. The government openly states that foreign firms cannot be controlled by the state, and that they drain away huge profits at our expense – but still they are 'vital for development'. Kenya's indigenous firms have to be prepared to play second fiddle, or be taken over by outsiders. Usually a compromise between foreign and national capital is reached, giving foreign firms the dominant market position, while local capital operates on the periphery. Since the rivalry between the capitals is hardly one of equals, local capitalists have been in no position to complain too loudly. For instance, in the case of

African-owned Tiger Shoes, set up in 1972 by the GEMA chief Njenga Karume and five African ex-managers of the foreign multinational monopoly, the Bata Shoe Company, the annual output of 260,000 a year is scarcely a threat to the Bata Shoe Company which in the middle of the 1970's produced over eight million shoes a year. Tiger Shoes can hardly challenge the Czechoslovakian company either in its marketing or its advertising. It poses no real threat to Bata command of the Kenyan market, and its existence can therefore be tolerated.

We can conclude, then, that given the present economic structure there is little chance that indigenous enterprise will become competitive with large international companies which have a stronghold on the Kenyan economy.

As competition among different groups of the bourgeoisie – national and foreign – for increasingly scarce national resources becomes more fierce, it is possible that resentment over the largely auxiliary role played by the national bourgeoisie may grow stronger and ultimately pose a threat to the security of foreign capital in Kenya. But there is little sign of that happening as yet, perhaps because there are still opportunities for accumulation through the manipulation of government agencies like marketing and licensing boards, co-operatives, land companies, welfare associations, city councils, and through such activities as smuggling and extortion.

The Foreign Connection

Productive enterprise in the modern economic sector – industry and manufacturing – remains firmly in foreign hands. The government has exerted little control over the means possessed by these giant companies to drain away our national wealth. Kenya's is a monopoly economy, dominated by more than 125 American conglomerates as well as large British, West German, Japanese and Scandinavian companies. Large foreign companies have in many areas – including steel, paint, oil, and metal containers – come to agreements among themselves to fix prices and divide up the market. In other cases, Firestone Tyre Company being an outstanding example, a foreign company has long enjoyed an actual monopoly, with competition being legally barred.

They are the masters of the tax dodge, employing shoals of accountants to help protect their returns from the government taxman. Their accountants are well versed in such tactics as transfer-pricing, over-invoicing, and double-ledgering to disguise as legitimate payment what is actually another way to repatriate capital. The Nairobi Hilton Hotel, for exam-

ple, can very well equip the interior of its rooms with locally-purchased fittings. But instead it orders all internal fittings and equipment – its bedlinen, curtains, cooking equipment, etc. – from the Hilton chain at high prices, enabling it to transfer out profits in the form of a payment to the parent company abroad.

But Kenya is not of course the only victim of the multinational hunt for superprofits. Even in countries in which the government does attempt to act as a watch-dog on multinational corporation activity, and stem the drainage of national resources, large foreign firms generally remain one step ahead. Through the sophistication of their accounting systems and their control of technology, they manage to keep the upper hand in negotiations with host governments, and keep profits flowing out. A monster company like Unilever has an annual budget larger than the combined budgets of a group of ten or more African countries – there is absolutely no way the host can possibly control the behaviour of such a robust guest.

The Folly of Import Substitution

Such 'development' has produced a lopsided economic structure, which does little to meet the needs of the people, either their employment needs or needs as consumer. Of course the intention in unrealistic government development plans has been stated in quite different terms. According to planners in the 1960's, Kenya needed foreign-owned import-substitution industry to enable its people to get access to certain manufactured necessities and luxuries. Such industry, it was maintained, would provide large numbers of Kenyans with employment, and stimulate indigenous industrial take-off.

Foreign companies were therefore invited in, to produce commodities which had previously been imported, or to put the 'finishing touch' to commodities imported in an unfinished state. As people, including the planners, are now beginning to realise, import-substitution industry in Kenya has been something of an expensive folly. Industries, as we have seen, have been able to take advantage of government licensing and tariff restrictions to set up virtual monopolies. They control the prices. They meanwhile *import* all their machinery and raw materials as well as management and end up producing a product which is *more* costly than the same product would be if imported from abroad. Thus, Kenya presently has three vehicle assembly plants, even though it is uneconomic to produce cars and trucks on such a limited scale. Prices for these vehicles are very high to compensate for the limited market. It

would be far cheaper to buy abroad and ship cars to Kenya.

Our country pays in other ways for its 'open door' policy toward foreign investment. Kenya has often found itself landed with substandard goods and equipment, and local businessmen or government officials have received generous kick-backs for negotiating such deals. The scandalous rackets in drugs and pesticides are but two of the ways the well-placed crooks in our country have endangered the health and livelihood of the people.

Government finance has usually resulted in the further squandering of our national resources. Through such agencies as the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC), and the Development Finance Company of Kenya (DFCK), the government has, incredible as it might seem, provided giant multinationals like Unilever, Brooke Bond, and Union Carbide, with local resources, and has, predictably, got little in way of active control over decision-making in return. It might well be asked what business the government has investing in multinationals, or in certain expensive prestige projects which will do little to stimulate our economic growth. The new Kenya Chemical and Food Corporation in Kisumu, 51% government-owned, is a good example of insanely high investment for dubious returns. Here the government has involved itself with the Madhvaní and Mehta companies in one of the most ill-conceived and expensive agro-industrial projects in Africa. During the building phase the project has more than doubled its cost, to a staggering shs. 1 000 million – ten times the original estimate! At the time of writing shs. 200 million of additional revenue has to be found if the project is to be completed, and there is a distinct possibility that the entire undertaking will be abandoned. If this plant ever opens, it will convert molasses into power alcohol at an estimated cost of three times the current world price of petrol, and it will also provide Kenyans with much needed yeast and vinegar. This enormous white elephant will provide only about six hundred jobs.

We can conclude that foreign-owned industry has done little to expand our employment. Furthermore, the system itself is not internally-expanding as was industrial capitalism in nineteenth century Europe. There is little incentive in Kenya for foreign capitalists, whether in manufacturing finance, or primary commodity production, to re-invest when they can easily repatriate capital, including domestic capital borrowed at low rates from local banks. It is in the interest of foreign firms to consolidate and export their superprofits while the political atmosphere per-

mits them to do so. It is likewise in the interest of those Kenyans with a stake in the system – the Kenyan bourgeoisie, whose members sit on boards of companies and help them get licenses to import costly raw materials, to ensure that the political atmosphere allows a flight of the capital out of the country.

The Landed and the Landless

Over 90% of our people still live on the land. Many of them face arid, inhospitable conditions, and periodically watch their crops and livestock die for lack of sufficient rainfall. Every few years large numbers of our people face famine, and the usual government response is to deny that famine exists in Kenya.

Only 7% of the land in Kenya has been described as being of high cash crop potential, with favourable rainfall, soil, and topographical conditions. During the colonial period most of that land was in the hands of four thousand settlers, who had more than three million hectares of land with reliable rainfall. Today much of that high potential land is in the hands of large farmers who have purchased with the land the settler vision of the 'good life'. In many cases they live in Nairobi, and are too busy looting in other ways to worry about whether their land is being cultivated efficiently or not. The result is – as in the case of settler farming – that half the land belonging to large mixed farms is lying idle.

An even more disastrous misuse of land in high potential areas occurs on the large holdings owned by land companies and co-operatives. These are notorious for the way they provide a steady source of loot for their officers and directors, rarely giving anything resembling a decent living to their members. After waiting for years – perhaps even a decade – to be given plots on company-purchased farms, members all-too-often find that their savings and deposits have disappeared. Many land companies are totally bogus, simply collecting money to buy a farm which might not even be up for sale. Millions of shillings are confiscated from peasants in this way. They are left with nothing, while the swindlers, thriving in an atmosphere of lack of public accountability, continue their activities unchecked. Stealing from peasants seems to be almost an honourable vocation in Kenya, judging from the social esteem which these thieves can command, and the way the law and police protect them.

Finally, a considerable portion of high potential land is foreign-owned. Foreign companies still control thousands of acres of tea, coffee, sugar, sisal,

fruit plantations and ranches. The government appears more than willing to continue putting the agricultural resources of Kenya at the service of foreign capital. For instance, it obligingly killed small-holder production of pineapples around Thika in order that the American Delmonte Company could have a monopoly. Later, it negotiated a new deal with Delmonte, promising to exempt the company from whatever change might occur in foreign investment policy during a 25 year period. Commodities produced by foreign capital are intended only for limited internal consumption – land which could be used to *feed our people produces strawberries for resident expatriates, members of the Kenyan bourgeoisie with western tastes, and export.* Such delicacies are produced by agricultural workers for whom a cup of tea with sugar is a luxury. In May 1980 wages for such workers were pegged at the derisory sum of 215/- a month, the price of five kilos of coffee in the Nairobi shops.

Tea pickers and sisal workers are generally landless, and hence forced to sell their labour to foreign capitalists. But in the 1950's international capitalism had recognised that the creation of such a labour force by the wholesale expropriation of peasants from the land was not necessarily a desirable development. Out-and-out proletarianisation and landlessness could lead to dangerous political consequences. Besides, if a peasant retained access to some land he could produce his own means of subsistence, and thus subsidise the cost of producing for the capitalist market. A peasant tied to his own individual land holding would also be less likely to organise politically with his fellow peasants against exploitation.

In the early 1970's the ILO Report divided Kenya's farming population into three categories. 22% were landless; 44% were smallholders with less than seven acres on which to grow crops for their own use and for sale. Most of these farmers earn the equivalent of less than 60 pounds a year, and face a hopeless future on tiny plots which are becoming increasingly over-crowded and impossible to sub-divide in an economic way among children with no alternative means of getting a livelihood. These smallholders have little access to extension services or inputs like fertiliser and improved seed which might enable them to raise productivity. They can do nothing but hope for a good rainfall and watch conditions of the land deteriorate year by year. Still, in comparison with the hundreds of thousands of landless, who subsist by squatting, working for others, or begging they (if not their children) are the more fortunate ones, who have access to *some* land and

some security.

The remaining third of the small-holders have relatively more hopeful prospects, in theory anyway. They own seven acres or more, and are in the position to produce commodities for local sale or export which *should* bring them about 100 Pounds a year. But, recently at any rate, they have rarely received their due. In many cases, they are at the mercy of marketing co-operatives, which take their crops (co-operatives in the 1970's marketed more than half of all coffee, 40% of all milk, and the entire pyrethrum output) and pay them either a tiny percentage of the final price which the commodity will fetch on the market – or, as is the recent trend, don't pay them at all. Farmers can only hope to obtain a fraction of the value of their produce after numerous cuts are taken by unproductive middlemen. Peasant producers are totally subordinated to the vagaries of international commodity quotas and prices over which they exercise absolutely no control, and inefficient corrupt marketing structures.

The Coffee Fiasco

In the case of Kenya's leading export commodity – coffee – the international quota system, lack of local storage and dumping in Kenya of sub-standard agro-chemicals combine to impoverish and demoralise the peasant farmer. In 1981 farmers will lose millions of shillings because of coffee disease, having been supplied with fake chemicals sold as coffee fungicides. However, even if the crop survives international racketeering in chemicals it could bring farmers little income. In 1981 the original quota given Kenya coffee of 78000 tons was reduced to 70000. The reduction was caused by the fact that year after year the Coffee Board of Kenya failed to meet its allotted export quota. Instead, Board management in collusion with government officials sold premium quota coffee very cheaply to bogus non-quota companies owned by influential people. The 'companies' would then sell off their coffee in the quota market, making millions for the board management and their accomplices and political protectors. Expected production in 1981-2 of 90000 tons will be little short of disaster, since the Kenya Planters Co-operative Union is in no position to handle and store the glut, and a higher quota will not be forthcoming. Coffee farmers who have still not been paid for the years 1979 – 80, would get nothing for a crop which KPCU could not immediately sell. But even if the crop *were* to find its way onto the international market, the farmers might still get nothing. The money which has recently been exchanged for the commodity during its sale in London has largely

remained abroad, being deposited by various members of the ruling bourgeoisie in foreign banks and invested in foreign assets. According to the records of the Central Bank, export credit for the 1980 coffee crop to the tune of shs. 300 million has never come back to Kenya. Our peasants, with their unending labour, have been under-writing the crippled Kenyan economy since the coffee boom ended in 1978. What they so laboriously produce, others simply appropriate.

Coffee speculation and theft have been the way to wealth for many Kenyans in the 1970's.

Commandeering the Surplus

Thus far, we have only mentioned the inefficiency of co-operatives and marketing agencies, which lack adequate storage facilities and therefore only pay farmers, if they pay at all, for what can immediately be sold. Marketing agencies are not only inefficient; they are also in many cases crooked. Co-operative societies and the various marketing boards inherited from the colonial administration, which were originally set up to promote settler agriculture at the expense of African production, are tools used by the ruling class to plunder the peasants. The co-operatives are notorious. Annually the directors of co-operative societies embezzle millions of shillings which should go to members. Members of the Mukurweini Farmers Co-operative, for example, were bled of a reported shs. 54 million by its officials in 1978 alone, which represents more than 3000/- confiscation per member a year!

The marketing boards give producers little more *in the way of a fair deal*. The boards were set up to assure colonial settlers a virtual monopoly at subsidised prices for their produce. Today too the boards – like all parastatals – serve the interests of a particular class, the Kenyan bourgeoisie. By inhibiting competition, and controlling the movement and marketing of produce, these boards are able to keep prices paid to producers low and the cut taken by middlemen as well as final prices on the market high. They give our rulers a further opportunity to consolidate their economic base through nominally legal and dubious means.

As an example, let us take a brief look at the recent activities of the National Cereals and Produce Board, a merger of the former Maize and Wheat Boards. It maintains poor storage facilities, expensive middlemen, and a virtual monopoly over the movement of Kenya's staple food – maize – from producer to market. A surplus beyond the country's internal food requirements is bought cheaply by the Board, and after being processed by middlemen, is

sold abroad at a loss. Between February 1978 and July 1979 nearly 200000 tons of maize were exported at a loss of shs. 165 million. The rest of the surplus was disposed of in 'mysterious' circumstances, leaving the country to face famine in subsequent years.

The same officials who loot the proceeds of peasant labour work hand in hand with politicians to extort money from the people in other ways. A leading method is that of the *Harambee* meeting, where forced collections are made and seldom accounted for. Here the 'big shots' who have political influence are able to use the state to plunder the people in the name of 'self-reliance' and 'deployment'. If our people try to organise in their own interests, or to fight off the predators, they are told that they are engaging in rumour-mongering, *payukaring*, and that all meetings are illegal without a license from the D.C. From time to time, at considerable risk, our people do rebel, and refuse to perform the role expected of them, that of producing cheaply commodities wanted by the international market. They refuse to harvest tea in Kisii, they burn sugar plantations in the West; they let coffee rot on the bush in Central Province. Such protests are generally smashed by the G.S.U. The only further recourse open to the impoverished small-holders, the landless and their children is that of migration, or more properly, drift.

According to the government's economic survey for 1980, agricultural production in Kenya must more than *double* in the next twenty years in order to deal with a rate of population increase which is the highest in the world. There is no sign of the country moving in that direction. Instead, agricultural productivity is *declining year by year*. The government blames drought and the will of God. It chooses to overlook the prolonged demoralisation of our people and the massive depletion of national resources which government policies and looting have brought about.

Our land is slowly dying. Kenya has become incapable of feeding her people as millions of hectares of the best land – in the hands of foreign owners and the bourgeoisie – are put to exclusive production for export.

Hakuna Kazi

Those who migrate from the rural areas to the towns do not form a proletariat in the nineteenth century European sense. Peasants in nineteenth century Europe went to look for work in the new industries of the towns when they were expropriated from the land. Largely uneducated and illiterate, they were forced to sell their labour for a wage, having no means of subsistence to fall back on. Gene-

rally they found a ready market for their labour, since industry around Europe was swiftly expanding. In bad times they would be laid off, swelling the ranks of the unemployed — the 'industrial reserve army' — whose presence enabled the capitalists to keep wages low and profits accordingly high.

In Kenya the reservoir of labour — the *kibarua* — is not only made up of the expropriated and uneducated. Many of our migrants still have ties with the land but have a certain level of education which has bred heightened expectations that cannot be satisfied on the land. Finding nothing but stagnation in the rural areas, they in many cases find nothing awaiting them in the cities. There are hundreds of thousands of school leavers like themselves who are hoping to find non-manual employment as the key to upward mobility. They naturally aspire to enter the ranks of the petit-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie.

These aspirations cannot be safely ignored by the state, since seeming to satisfy them is the key to political stability. For this reason the state has enormously expanded the civil service, which has doubled in size in the period 1971-80, with over 170000 now being employed in the administration and various ministries. If teachers are added in, the figure increases to over 250000. There are 50000 in the high ranks of bureaucracy. The government has to keep them in their lordly positions, make sure that pay differentials at this level are maintained, and at the same time seek to absorb Sixth Formers and University graduates into the overloaded public sector. But such expansion of the public sector, financed by the surplus produced on the land, cannot go on indefinitely. It is unlikely that the unemployed will be found jobs with the state. Neither will they — like their nineteenth century European counterparts — be able to find jobs in manufacturing. Since the working population will increase by at least 250000 a year in the 1980's, the government is facing a grave problem, that of massive unemployment.

As we have seen, industry in Kenya provides relatively few jobs, and is unlikely to change its employment pattern in the future. Capitalism is no longer geared to nineteenth century technology. Capital-intensive technology insures the largest profits. It will not be abandoned because of an employment crisis, regardless of the needs of the state.

International capitalism operating in Kenya has an interest, with the state, in forestalling the emergence of a fully-expropriated proletariat. As long as most workers maintain links with the land, possibly in the form of a home plot tilled by the wife who earns family subsistence, firms can pay their wor-

kers low wages. Peasants with individual land holdings, no matter how insufficient, can be more easily divided and controlled than landless labourers. Therefore, both the international and national bourgeoisie have a stake in preventing classes from being fully formed on western lines. 'Straddling' of classical class categories is common in Kenya and other 'Third World' countries. Thus, we have the situation of the wage worker in the town relying on his wife in the 'reserves' to produce the family subsistence. He feels 'temporary' in the town, and aspires to get back to the land someday. His sense of himself as belonging to an urban working-class is correspondingly weak.

Both the 'modern sector' and the state get certain advantages from the existence of the so-called urban 'informal sector'. Street hawkers, shoeshine boys, small-time mechanics and producers of cheap furniture, shoes, jikos, etc., all work in the informal sector. These are the most exploited of our workers, having to put in long hours under uncontrolled conditions in order to keep themselves alive. Workers in the modern sector, who cannot afford to purchase the items which they manufacture in import-substitution industry, rely on this 'informal sector' for the necessities of life. Furthermore, the informal sector absorbs some excess labour and in so doing contributes to political stability. More than 200000 people now eke out a living in this way, using great ingenuity and a few basic tools, to re-cycle the garbage of capitalism. They cling to the edges of the cities, hoping to hang on until formal employment is found. Generally that day never comes.

All workers in the towns, those in informal and formal employment, have been hard hit during the 1970's by steeply rising prices and rents. The present minimum wage for an unskilled worker in Nairobi — 456/- a month — will hardly pay the rent for a room in a shanty. Workers get little assistance from their unions whose leadership has promised to stick to government wage guidelines. The state-controlled umbrella union, COTU, is totally subordinate to the President and his cabinet who frequently warn its members that strikes are illegal. As far as the expansion of employment is concerned, the future looks grim. Meanwhile the population continues to rise. The August 1979 census put the Kenyan population at 40% higher than the census of the previous decade. More than half that population of 15 322 000 are under the age of fifteen. They will soon be following their parents and elder brothers and sisters and looking for work. Since the rural sector is declining in productivity, the public sector has reached saturation point, and the manufacturing sector is contrac-

ting with the end of easy import-substitution 'growth', how will they realise their hopes of leading productive lives? The government has no answer, no plan, no advice except 'go to school, work hard and pray to the Lord'.

The IMF Kiss of 'Life'

Kenya's economic prognosis is hardly encouraging.

The government has tolerated and even connived at a steady seepage of national surplus when Kenya needed all her resources if 'development' was to be more than a hollow word. According to one estimate, nearly Pounds 100 million left our 'independent' country in one way or another before 1969. After 1969 the outflow has become a flood, and a positive torrent following the assassination of JM in 1975 and the death of Kenyatta in 1978. During the late 1960's, the national bourgeoisie discovered easy pickings to be made through poaching and the export of ivory. In the mid 1970's, they looted our nation's mineral wealth and forests, as gemstones and charcoal were shipped out of the country in great quantities, and the enormous proceeds deposited abroad. Recently, in the late 1970's, their search for the quick return has been taking a more ominous form. While Kenyans face famine, well-connected individuals sell to neighbouring countries maize and grain purchased at concessionary prices from America and South Africa.

Substantial businessmen – African, Asian, and European – have been repatriating whatever they can lay their hands on. Our new rulers, the new order of *nyang'au*, show little sense of self-restraint even for their own survival, and an alarming lack of simple business acumen. With the level of foreign exchange insufficient to cover three months' worth of imports, the President shelled out our money for a new Boeing Jumbo for the virtually bankrupt national airline, pocketing a \$2½ million in the process. He ordered his face to appear on the national currency, and got another large commission along the way. He has also moved into large-scale property buying, grabbing up such prestigious towers as International House in Nairobi and land in England with nationally-borrowed foreign exchange. Other members of his entourage have also been buying farms and mansions abroad, and depositing huge sums in their Swiss bank accounts.

The ruling bourgeoisie goes on with its gross over-indulgence, importing without restriction shs. 600000 Mercedes Benz, Volvos and BMW's, while the import of nuts and bolts for productive use is

banned on the grounds that it is draining away our foreign exchange. Nairobi supermarkets continue to titillate the tastes of expatriate residents who maintain in our capital city a standard of living considerably higher than they knew at home. While our country sinks into a quagmire of indebtedness, UNEP-type parasites drink their French wines and eat their Russian caviar, giving our own bourgeoisie an 'international' life style to emulate.

Instead, the government seems almost totally devoid of any policy direction whatever, blundering from one decision to its opposite. From 1972 the government has turned more and more often to external borrowing as a way of closing the gap between domestic production and domestic consumption. In 1964, our public debt stood at Pounds 86 million, and then began to rise steadily, reaching Pounds 160 million in 1970 and nearly Pounds 312 million in 1975. The public debt in 1979 stood at nearly Pounds 578 million, approximately 10% higher than the debt for 1978. Figures continue their upward spiral, until presently Kenya is one of the world's top-borrowers. In order to service its debts, and compensate for the bleeding of foreign exchange, the government is forced to seek additional loans from 'friendly' nations, the IMF and the World Bank. In return, it accepts IMF and Bank advice about when to devalue the currency, and what currency restrictions to place on residents – restrictions which have yet to be enforced. Kenya's reputation as an international mendicant grows while hopes for achieving self-sufficiency in food production remain confined to the pages of optimistic economic plans drawn up to demonstrate our present and future credit-worthiness. The reality is of growing indebtedness and dependence, and reliance on the life support system which will be provided by the IMF and World Bank as long as we are considered 'deserving'.

Thus far, the government has been only too eager to follow the marching orders issued by the IMF, and in all likelihood will continue to play the obedient waif in the future. At the request of the IMF and World Bank, it will continue to forbid strikes, and agree to low wages for our workers and an open door for imports and profit repatriation. The President at the end of 1980 took pains to reassure foreign investors that no matter how dismal Kenya's economic prospects, investors will in the future be able to repatriate capital *with greater ease* than in the past. The government paid for America's maize with bases at Mombasa and elsewhere for the patrol of the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf, thereby doing its bit to keep the region 'safe for democracy'. In the future it is likely that we will deepen our crippling

dependence on the United States and the Industrial West. As long as the government can prove that it is 'worthy' of western loans and 'aid' – as long as it continues to put the profit margin of international capital before the welfare of its citizens – Kenya

will in all probability find a bed waiting for it in the intensive care ward for subservient Third World client states. In a neighbouring bed, occupied by prostrate, debt-choked Zaire, it will discover the vision of its own plundered future.

Chapter IV

The Culture of Dependency: Hakuna Njia Hapa!

The disease of dependency has poisoned our nation's life-blood. Transfusions from the capitalist West – taking the form of grants, loans and 'aid' have, in the short-term, kept our invalid economy from total collapse, but the long-term diagnosis is not encouraging. The government seems deluded as to the nature of the disease, lulled into the belief that IMF's *uchawi* is good for the system, and that the best possible treatment is being obtained. Dependency has become a way of life, and the way to death. Dependency in Kenya is mental as well as material. We have been deprived of the opportunity to *act* and to realise our creative potential as individuals and as a nation. Instead, we are taught further to stifle initiative in ourselves and our children, and told to follow – blindly, mutely, meekly. Our leaders have made themselves mental mendicants, habitually dependent on the outside world for support and direction. This is the path they order us to follow. The path leads to impotence and national ruin. In order to revive our country and our capacities, we must veer from this hopeless destination, and fight for our lives and our future.

In this chapter we will honestly confront the fact of our mental and cultural dependency. We must first be able to recognise the problem – its depth and all pervasiveness – before seeking solutions to our condition. The roots of the dependency syndrome are embedded in colonial history. Our people were uprooted from their traditions and customs, and forcibly enlisted in the army of the Lord. They were taught to believe in their 'innate inferiority', so that they could be more easily manipulated by the ruling 'master race'. Their confidence and self-reliance were destroyed. They were drilled to obey and to take orders. *Colonialism sought to reduce us to perpetual servitude.*

As we saw in the first chapter, there was continual resistance to colonial domination. However, seventy years of persistent indoctrination gradually took their toll. By the end of the colonial period a mentally-emasculated group had been produced rea-

dy to invite further outside domination. It must be admitted that the loss of the sense of self-direction, and cultural and mental integrity, had pervaded the entire society.

The 'independence' which the nascent ruling class brought back from Lancaster House reflected our wounded national self-image. Proper decolonisation – real independence – could only be based on the regeneration of cultural self-confidence, and the creation of a sense of national direction and pride. As we have seen, decolonisation has never taken place. We have yet to experience real independence. What we *have* experienced – twenty years of concentrated neo-colonialism – has merely reinforced the dependency syndrome.

We can state unequivocally that 'independence' under KANU has further crippled our faculties. Dependency is now an all-encompassing condition, pervading all spheres of national life: economic, political and cultural. The withering away of KANU, and the war waged against popular participation in the political realm and in economic decision-making, has virtually killed our national self-assertiveness and self-esteem.

Kumtumbuiza Raisi

Under these circumstances, what is left of our culture. We have a Minister of Culture, who applauds the dancers at the Bomas of Kenya, as they perform under the eye of their American choreographer. We have groups of tired 'traditional dancers' who wearily go through their paces at State House, praising the king and his court, and being fortunate to get a soda as their reward. We have a so-called Kenya Cultural Centre, leased from the British Council, which caters totally to foreign tastes. In the cultural void foreign houses have moved in to provide entertainment for their nationals, occasionally inviting lecturers from the University to discourse on 'Kenyan Culture'. We have a so-called National Theatre which specialises in bed-room farces, Gilbert and Sullivan, and acts as host to touring musicians from

Europe. And in a recent series of stamps, various colonial buildings — including the P.C.'s headquarters with its strong resemblance to a Victorian public toilet — have been declared national cultural monuments!

While foreign culture digs deeply into Nairobi, and feeble imitations of something which was once vital and meaningful to Kenyans pose as our 'rich cultural heritage', the Kamirithu Community Theatre is proscribed and our most distinguished author detained and then forced into seclusion. Surely Kamirithu, tapping the creative energies of our people, and Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o are the carriers and creators of a wholly authentic cultural expression: can the same be said for the lifeless dance routines displayed to tourists at the Bomas of Kenya?

A national culture is not something static, for display only. It is not a fossilised museum piece. Instead, it must be seen as an ongoing process, involving *people* and their creative capacities. What we call culture is the representation of the meaning and values which people give to their lives and society. It is produced by a complex, reciprocal relationship between the community and its entire environment — physical, social, and political. It is something vital: a living, ever-changing process of self-discovery.

In the absence of anything else, many Kenyans have adopted the more inane aspects of foreign life and thought. Our cultural existence is today imported, like so much else. We mimic images of the outside world. Because of our inability to develop and hold fast to our own cultural moorings, we easily succumb to foreign advertisers and salesmen who swamp us with cultural claptrap and alien values produced by foreign profit-hunters. We succumb because we are surrounded by a void of our rulers' making. In the twenty years of pseudo-independence, society has been fragmented and our creative potential stunted. We have been deprived of what we had under colonial rule — a culture of *resistance*. Fearing that a vital cultural and intellectual life would pose a threat to continued foreign control and their own lofty positions, our rulers have ruthlessly suppressed even the beginnings of local self-expression. They have treated our people like children, saying that they know what is best, and that they will do all our thinkings for us. All we have to do is obey, and follow. We even need a D.C.'s permit to gather together, to generate new ideas and institutions, and to create something of our own, and that permit is rarely forthcoming.

Starving the Mind

Dominant groups in all societies attempt to use education to stabilise and reproduce the *status quo*. It is a powerful ideological tool, used to indoctrinate the young with the values and outlook of those who rule. However, instead of instilling conformity, it can in certain situations become subversive of that outlook: an example from our colonial past was the 'independent school movement'. For this reason, because education can — if it produces independent thinkers — be used as a weapon *against* rulers governments which are unsure of the depth of their support among the population do not take chances with the educational system. They seek to control it from above, to tell its teachers what and how to 'teach' and to make certain that the educational system is used to deaden, and not to stimulate, mental growth.

One way to ensure that education does not become a 'subversive' activity is to separate the 'educated' from the 'uneducated' socially, politically, and spiritually. The educated are told that they are members of the elite, set apart from and above the rest of society. In this way, potential leaders are so to speak cordoned off from the rest of the population, and when properly groomed, re-imposed on the population to lead in directions already laid down by the ruling class. People are told to educate their children, and then some of their children are turned and used against them.

The missionaries pioneered this approach to education in Kenya. Before they brought the concept of the formal school, to be used to acquire literacy (for Bible reading) and a few other skills required by the colonialists, education among our people was geared to the reproduction of their social and economic needs. It was related to the lives of all the people, not something set apart. Education was socialization.

However, the formal school from the earliest colonial period was primarily a vehicle of propaganda and indoctrination, and not of education in its true sense. The colonial education system served to convince the colonised few to be the petty officials and agents of Christianity and alien rule. Missionary education aimed at uprooting the *asomi* from their communities and traditions, and setting them against their own people's interests. The educated became 'civilised'; those outside the magic circle of the mission station and school remained 'barbaric heathen'.

It is a dismal fact, but one which must be openly

confronted, that our mental and cultural life today is nearly as moribund as our economy. Our leaders must be condemned for their collaboration with foreign interests, their greed, and addiction to 'eating'. But they must be damned even more thoroughly for the crimes they have committed against the spirit of our people. In post-colonial Kenya we see little evidence of the 'pride' and 'freedom of mind and body' which fired the hopes of some writers of KANU's first *Manifesto*. We see, on the contrary, plentiful evidence of the 'slavish mentality' developed under an unimaginative stilted education. Present-day Kenya shows little sign of the explosive energy, initiative, creativity and resourcefulness that characterize vital new social formations. But since there is nothing much 'new' about 'independent' Kenya, this is perhaps not surprising.

No Groupings Allowed

Our leaders have not only failed to stimulate a renewal of spirit and energy among our people, but they have gone out of their way to *destroy* the initiative and creativity which had survived the colonial period. Traditionally, all Kenyan ethnic groups had evolved communal organisations for mutual self-help and communal improvement. Significantly, none of these democratic institutions were given new life after 1963. Instead, they were replaced by large centralised bureaucratic bodies which were unresponsive to the people they 'served'. The concerted effort by our rulers to disorganise society, to discourage or break up forms of community organisation which had once generated a culture of resistance, serves as an eloquent testimony to the fact that the leaders of this country perceive the mass of our people as potential enemies, to be kept down at all costs. Under our present circumstances, *any* communally-based form of self-assertion is a positive development which must be encouraged.

There is at present no clearer illustration of the fear with which the rulers regard the people than the so-called 'philosophy' of *nyayoism*, which seeks to glorify passivity – follow me, sheep! Ideology is used by the ruling class to make people passive followers so they will forget their capacity to judge, to initiate, to act.

The 'drive among the educated' to emulate Europeans in the 'superfluities of life' aptly describes the ruling class of today. However, this situation no longer causes concern to KANU. Instead, the party in the post-colonial period has fully accepted the view that the point of education is to enable *some* Kenyans to imitate and compete with Europeans; to rule

over their fellow Kenyans as the British ruled over them. Colonial education has continued virtually unchanged since 'independence'.

Campus Farce

The University is the pinnacle of our neo-colonial education system. If education through secondary school is irrelevant, expensive and intellectually stultifying, our University provides the same and more. It does little or nothing to promote inquisitiveness and intellectual awareness on the part of the student. There is little discussion about new ideas and their social applicability – in fact, there is little discussion of any sort.

The result is a predictable one. The University of Nairobi produces few doctors who are willing to work in the rural areas. They have no interest in creating forms of medical service that suit poor, rural illiterate societies. The same is true of engineers, architects, agriculturalists, and veterinarians who pass through our unreformed educational system. All these graduates are rather expected to learn how to 'climb' and do well for themselves. Aspiring to a privileged life, they are determined to segregate themselves in high-rent districts of towns, and go into some lucrative private business: the welfare of the people is not their concern.

The University thus seldom encourages its students to put their skills to socially-beneficial use. But it fails even more miserably in that area of learning which does not involve the imparting of practical skills – in the humanities, or liberal arts. The humanities involve the study of human thought and economic, social and political structures. Students *should* be able to apply what is relevant in their studies to present problems, engaging in vigorous – even fierce – debate, and ultimately deriving new directions for their own societies and the nation. But University of Nairobi humanities students are not encouraged to study and think in these terms. The ruling class is mortally afraid of discussion and of new ideas. It uses its control of the University administration to limit academic debate, and suppress discussion. Thus, symposia on national problems are banned by the President in his capacity as Chancellor of the University, unless they are sponsored by imperialist cultural agencies. The Chancellor and his minions virtually decree what is to be taught, and what books are not to be read. They bar students and lecturers from forming extra-curricular associations, from publishing newspapers and magazines, from coming together to discuss or even socialize.

However, despite government intimidation, there

is a growing rebellion of youth at all levels of the education system.

Ineptitude Rewarded

For the present, education — such as it is — remains the key to upward mobility. Students are taught or forced by default to aspire for 'something better' than the life which their parents know. They aspire to join the parasites, those who produce nothing themselves, but grow fat on the labour of others.

We do not mean to imply here that the education system should simply be geared to the production of people with practical skills who can immediately be put to work. The system of education in a newly 'independent' nation like ours has the additional responsibility of producing self-confident, resourceful students. To serve the nation they must learn self-reliance and independence of thought and action. Since colonial penetration was not just material, but deeply mental, it should have been the primary role of education to carry out intellectual and spiritual decolonisation, and infuse our people with a new faith in their own capacities.

Commitment as a Subversive Concept

We do have individuals of talent and initiative who want nothing more than to dedicate their capabilities *to their country, but they can find no way forward*. The system penalises excellence and integrity. By its very nature, it pulls down the few who seriously want to make a social contribution. Exceptional individuals who attempt to swim against the tide of mediocrity and *magendo* are targets of jealousy, suspicion, and intrigue. Bureaucrats and politicians cannot tolerate such energy and commitment. They feel personally threatened by those who do their work well, and refuse to grab on principle. Such people are considered quite mad. In our country, mediocrity brings its own rewards. Only those who play by the rules written by the men at the top will get ahead. Those who want to introduce demanding new standards will be thwarted at every step. Thus, the siphoning off of our material resources by foreign interests and their collaborators among the Kenyan bourgeoisie is matched by the squandering and destruction of our human resources. The handful of political leaders who are determined to serve the people and not merely their own interests find themselves detained or out in the cold. Writers and religious leaders who insist on expressing the truth as they see it are considered renegades. Scientists with skills desperately needed by their country are unable to make headway in their fields, and are instead pushed into

administration or petty business. Likewise, our tremendous raw talents in sports, music and theatre are almost completely overlooked (except when they go abroad) while second-rate foreign artists are nightly applauded in Nairobi.

It is not simply paranoia on the part of the ruling class which produces this aversion to excellence and competence. Instead, members of the ruling class fail to embrace or cultivate those aspects of bourgeois culture which even anti-bourgeois revolutionaries like Lenin believed necessary for the achievement of certain social and material goals. Indifferent to those bourgeois values which made European society so dynamic in the nineteenth century — to a respect for thrift, hard work, and punctuality — our leaders operate with a pre-capitalist mentality. They embrace the type of conspicuous consumption which is the hallmark of a feudal ruling caste, where the patron has to impress his dependent clients with hollow pomp and lavish signs of his wealth and influence. They respect the big belly squeezed under the steering wheel of their Mercedes far more than they respect talent, quality, and productivity. Perpetual parasites, they are simply not good enough to be truly bourgeois.

Saidia Maskini

This endemic lack of respect for quality and achievement is one manifestation of our failure as a people to achieve self-reliance and self-rule. We appear a nation of beggars. What can be a more eloquent commentary on this national 'dependency syndrome' than the fact that with the exception of the occasional police station or post office, our so-called 'independent' government has never initiated and successfully carried through a single major development project, without soliciting external assistance in planning, finance, management and maintenance?

After twenty years of 'independence' foreigners still train our army and catch our criminals. They help run our ministries, our schools and our hospitals. They plan our towns, roads, and even sewers. They collect our taxes and influence our legal decisions. They write our textbooks, own our newspapers, and even prepare our development plans.

This state of continued dependence illustrates the failure of the educational system in Kenya to instill self-confidence and faith in our capacities as a people. Our rulers seem to find it more natural to solicit foreign 'aid' than to harness the skills and energies of Kenyans. They rely more and more on expatriate 'experts'. These reputedly 'infallible' foreigners

might actually have little in the way of expertise and suitable experience, but that does not outweigh their one great qualification: they are from the outside, and (in all likelihood) white. *Apana fikiri mzungu tarekebisha*. If anything goes wrong, outsiders will take care of it.

As a result of this mendacity, of this excessive psychological and material dependence on external support and direction, our country has once again been carved into 'spheres of influence' dominated by foreign powers. Imperialist nations and their donor agencies now scramble to offer the latest programmes in 'development' and 'modernisation' and the loans to finance them. Thus, Turkana is ceded to the USAID (USA), NORAD (Norway), the FAO (UN), and the EEC. Machakos is in the hands of the EEC which experiments in 'integrated rural development'. CIDA (Canada) meanwhile surveys and develops the rangelands, Belgium supplies water to Marsabit District, the World Bank plans and finances urban housing and waste disposal. Isiolo district is in a British sphere while West Pokot is a Dutch one and Baringo a dual mandate of the World Bank and USAID's marginal lands project. York and Toronto Universities (Canada) oversee economic planning and train what they deem to be appropriate manpower. Multinational companies control the commanding heights of our economy — they dominate industry, finance, agriculture, and trade — while the chief watch-dog of the system, the IMF, prepares to spring to the rescue should collapse threaten.

As often as not, these 'aid' agencies leave behind a trail of failed projects, like the 10 year USAID group ranching flop. They also leave behind outstanding loans, which must be re-paid with interest.

Only a naive observer would believe that projects such as these are intended to make our people self-reliant. Instead, they are part of the long-term political strategy of international capitalism. Their purpose is to extend political control, and to bend recipient economies to satisfy the needs of imperialist powers. Initially 'aid' donors were interested in long-term infrastructural projects like those involving roads, ports, and communications in order to facilitate the extraction of surpluses. Now the emphasis is on 'rural integrated development'. This tactic is designed to improve marginally the lives of rural populations and increase the production of primary commodities by peasants in order to forestall explosive social unrest. The strategy aims at keeping the people on the land, since the towns clearly will not be able to absorb them.

Our future has been mortgaged by this continual reliance on outsiders to 'develop' our country for us. Not only are we chronically in debt to donor agencies, but also we are bogged down mentally and spiritually. The habit of ingrained dependence leads us to mistrust our own capacities to rule ourselves. Our mental energy atrophies. We continue to expect salvation to come from the outside, instead of taking direct responsibility for our lives and our country.

Chapter V

Conclusion

We have demonstrated in the foregoing chapters that 'independence' is a hoax in Kenya. For independence to be more than a word, the colonised must take charge of their own affairs and obliterate colonial social and economic forms, creating fresh ones in all spheres. But in Kenya, the entire colonial system was passed on virtually intact, and has been perpetuated in a practically unchanged form over the last two decades. Instead of British governors and their P.C.'s, we now have Kenyan governors and their P.C.'s, using the same or even more repressive laws and institutions to subdue our people's expectations. Kenya's rulers have in fact surpassed the colonialists in their determination to eliminate popular participation and association and to ensure docility.

Political life in Kenya today parodies the promises

made by KANU before 'independence'. The manoeuvring for personal influence which today passes as 'politics' has been divorced from the activity of the broad masses of the people, and left to a small clique surrounding a President who is himself above all criticism, acting more as a kind of sultan than an elected leader. The President and his select band control the state and use the state to plunder the national wealth for their own personal profit and that of their *international allies*. Due to their incompetence, greed and chronic mismanagement, a period of prolonged chaos, and economic and social disintegration is, we fear, one likely future for Kenya.

What other possible futures might await us? We can foresee the possibility of the following forms of change in the nature of the regime. But given our

present outlook and shaky structures, the first three are considerably more likely than the others:

1. *coup d'état*

Coups, either military, or occasionally civilian, have become a way of life in Africa. Some coups have been brought about by imperialist intrigue. In most cases coups involve the replacement of one section of the ruling class by another section of the *same* class. In most cases the public remains passive, and does not participate in the exchange of power. Coups rarely bring constructive change, but generally enrich the new clique and continue the old system. Coups for the most part occur when that old system is endangered, and act to perpetuate it in a different guise. Thus, a coup will become more and more likely as a way of preserving the system as ruling class factionalism intensifies in Kenya. Such a 'solution' is merely temporary and never constructive. As the case of Uganda demonstrates, coups all too often usher in the beginning of the end — of a downward spiral into moral and social derangement, culminating in a national collapse.

2. *puppet state*

Although most neo-colonies are client states of one or other imperialist power, there can exist regimes which even more shamelessly hand over a measure of their sovereignty to a dominant force, and merely exist on paltry 'rents' paid by such a power. Zaire was moving in this direction when its government ceded vast tracts of the country to the West German company Otrac. It is possible that Kenya might come to this sort of an arrangement with the United States. The American 'strategic consensus' for the Indian Ocean — Persian Gulf — Southern Africa complex of interests has temporarily raised Kenya's strategic importance as a rearguard base for American and NATO 'Rapid Deployment Forces'. As the U.S. naval presence in the region grows, it is possible to foresee new deals being made in which the Kenyan government will hand over more facilities and control to the superpower in exchange for loans and 'food aid'. An even more crippling state of dependency would be the result.

3. *state capitalism*

There are numerous regimes, some nominally 'socialist', characterized by state ownership of large industrial, commercial and financial conglomerates or parastatals. Various 'isms' are invoked to cover up the extent to which these bodies, supposedly, run for the benefit of 'the people', in fact operate in the interests of a small group of the population. Zambia's Christian 'Humanism' provides such an example. The large Zambian parastatals produce benefits for

a handful and not for the country which remains perpetually poor in the midst of enormous natural wealth.

Other less likely directions in which our country may move include the following:

4. *bourgeois capitalism*

With due respect to the argument that capitalism has rarely conformed to a 'classical' pattern of development, and that it might yet stimulate industrial 'take-off' in neo-colonies like Kenya, we must state that we see little sign of that happening. In Kenya the infrastructure is geared to meet the needs of outside interests. Productivity is low, and falling. There is little indication that the country will develop its own capital goods industry, a vital component of industrial 'take-off'. Instead, self-sustaining economic growth seems certainly as far away now as it was at 'independence'. We thus have in Kenya an inefficient, deformed economy, with a small internal market and weak regional trade links. The Kenyan economy is essentially unproductive: a kind of drain for the outflow of surpluses. Profits accumulate outside the country, in the hands of the international capitalists and members of the contemptible 'indigenous bourgeoisie' who bank abroad. The latter bear little resemblance to the inventive, dynamic entrepreneurs whose risk-taking and ruthless sense of efficiency and thrift fuelled industrial 'take-off' in nineteenth century Europe and America.

5. *populism*

Here we must make a distinction between a half-hearted harnessing of what can be termed 'populist solutions' to damp down social discontent, and a thoroughly democratic populist system. Under the former, a government seeks to appease the population by carrying out minor reforms — especially in land ownership, or some aspects of foreign control of the economy — or by vociferously embracing cultural nationalism. At first this approach may seem progressive, because it might lead to more of the wealth being spread more widely in the society. But this approach has serious weaknesses, depending as it does on the 'good heart' of a benevolent ruler who blocks organised participation by the people in their own affairs. It is a fragile system which lasts as long as the 'good man' lasts. There is evidence that imperialist powers or internal reactionaries can easily undermine such a regime, if in their interests to do so.

As opposed to pseudo-populism, genuine populism is a democratic and egalitarian system in which authority flows from the people up to their leaders. Such a system, possessing close affinities with socialism, demands that the people be in control of their

resources and how they are used. This sort of populism is highly unlikely in Kenya.

6. *African Socialism*

Many African regimes have sought to disguise class antagonisms and inequalities by declaring themselves to be 'African Socialist'. They then go on to glorify a mythical African past where in theory all people were nice to each other and all shared communally the wealth produced communally. The proponents of this view state that class struggle is biologically and culturally alien to Africans, and is part of a 'foreign ideology'. In practice, African Socialism generally protects and nourishes a neo-colonial dependency with imperialist-oriented economies. Kenya's Sessional Paper no. 10 on African Socialism (1965) is an excellent example of this kind of deception. Tanzania's *Ujamaa* is currently still masquerading as an experiment in 'socialism', while the country slips deeper and deeper into dependency and bankruptcy. Such African Socialist regimes generally depend on the outside world even for basics such as food. Foreigners and ruling cliques carry on accumulating, while preaching the virtues of 'shared poverty'. The people remain largely passive, and democratic organisations are not tolerated. In short, the word 'socialism' – detached from its social and economic moorings – is merely bandied about by these regimes to cover their innate inadequacies with a cloak of morality.

7. *scientific socialism*

Unlike the 'African' parody, scientific socialism cannot be reduced to a set of bureaucratic declarations imposed on the people. It cannot simply be 'decreed'. Rather, this most progressive of social systems must emerge from a long revolutionary process and fierce class struggle, culminating in the overthrow of the entire capitalist system of production and social relations. As the histories of the USSR and China demonstrate, during the transition to socialism intense class struggle continues, and there is a constant danger of regression to brutal state domination. That danger is lessened if certain pre-conditions for the attainment of socialism have already been realised by the society at large. These pre-conditions include a high level of economic productivity, and a politically-conscious people led by a politically-uncompromising party which is prepared

to wage revolutionary civil war to uproot the old order when the people are ready for it. Neither of these pre-conditions is present in Kenya today.

With our background, and in our present circumstances it seems idle at the present to talk of a true socialist alternative to the current regime. Socialism will not descend to us like manna from heaven.

Instead of indulging in wishful thinking we can – and must – get our sense of direction, and determine what must be done to bring about a situation in which socialism *can* be considered a realistic alternative for Kenya. The first step is an obvious one: we Kenyans must learn that we and we alone must take responsibility for our national future.

Our orientation and re-education must recognize the realities of class formation in Kenya. As recent studies of class in Kenya make clear, although class formation may not be following the 'classic' European pattern, there are certainly groups exploiting others in our society, and appropriating for themselves the surplus which others create. It only delays our political emancipation to seek tribal, regional, or racial explanations of what are in fact *class* divisions. Ultimately, we must be able to think beyond the boundaries of artificially-created nation-states like Kenya and be aware that class struggle has an international dimension. That international dimension can only gain in importance in the future, as the growing power of the multinational corporations renders increasingly nation-states subordinate, and even obsolete. The struggle to make this or that country socialist must finally merge in the larger struggle to defeat capitalism globally.

But for the present, however, we must work realistically within the framework of the nation-state. We must now undertake the initial steps of defiance which can act as a trigger for the disciplined mobilization of our people. It is not for us to formulate a clear-cut recipe for that mobilization and resulting social change. Such change is not a simple matter of prescription, but emerges from the concrete strategies and alliances formed during struggle. In the process of struggle our people will learn to create their own vigorous forms of expression, to revitalize their own culture, and to find a cure for mental apathy and destructive habits of dependency. What better legacy can we leave future Kenyans?