

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS  
AS CAUSES OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS

Imperialism and the petty Bourgeoisie to blame

by

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INTRODUCTION:

It is now thirty years since 1957 when the first all-black country Ghana achieved her formal political independence under the dynamic patriotic nationalist leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. The achievement of formal independence by Ghana was hailed everywhere in Africa, in the progressive anti-imperialist world and by the anti-colonial movements within the imperialist world. But this achievement was not welcome among the imperialist circles in the colonial powers in particular and in the West in general.

The achievement was welcome in Africa because since the end of the Second World War African nationalists had sworn to liberate the continent and the people from foreign domination and exploitation. This determination was clearly stated in a Declaration to Colonial Powers adopted by the Pan-African Congress held at Manchester in Britain in 1945. It was stated that Africans were determined to be free; they wanted education; the right to earn a decent living; the right to express their thoughts and emotions, to adopt and create forms of beauty. The Congress, which was attended by the then leading African patriotic nationalists and Trade Union leaders from Africa, the leading Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean nationalists, and members of progressive anti-colonial movements from Europe, demanded:

for Black Africa autonomy and independence so far and no further than it is possible in this one world for groups of peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation.

It was clearly stated that Africans were 'unwilling to starve any longer while doing the world's drudgery, in order to support by their 'poverty and ignorance a false aristocracy and a discarded capitalism'. The declaration therefore, condemned the capitalist system - the international capitalist exploitive network - which had bred imperialism which culminated into the two devastating world wars Africans were forced to participate in by their respective colonial masters in defence of national independence, self-determination, freedom and democracy - values which were upheld by both the socialist and the capitalist worlds which allied together in the struggle against Nazi German fascist dictatorship. The Manchester Congress therefore called for 'economic democracy. ... as the only real democracy.'

Accordingly all the participants pledged themselves to struggle in every way they could 'for freedom, democracy and social betterment' of the African people. Thus as one of the leading participants and secretaries to the Congress, the late George Padume from the Caribbean declared: 'At long last the die had been cast and the issue joined.' (B. Chango Machyo 1976:7-8)

Ghana's achievement was opposed among the imperialist circles in the West, because, during the Second World War European colonial powers - Britain, France and Belgium, rediscovered Africa. Thus after the war,

While Africa struggled for a taste of the Four Freedoms so widely heralded during the war, Europe at the end of the conflict faced the problem of bankruptcy. How to



olve it? Once again as in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, statesmen and financiers in London Paris and Brussels turned toward Africa.

Since the European imperialists had met with great disappointment in Asia where they had been severely defeated by the nationalist forces, they had now to turn to Africa. An organ of the French capital France Overseas therefore noted that "the European heart started to beat for the African continent". (W.A. Hunton 1960 :64)

Conservative and reactionary Africans too, also opposed Ghana's achievement. The African Kings, chiefs, religious leaders and pseudo-intellectuals who had been successfully incorporated into the colonial system as loyal servants, were strongly against formal independence. The Kings and chiefs whom the colonial regimes relied upon as slave-drivers under the system of indirect rule, to control the African masses in the interest of colonial rule and exploitation, were scared of the dynamic nationalist leaders like Nkrumah, of Ghana, Azikiwe of Nigeria, Musazi of Uganda and Kenyatta of Kenya. For the Kings and chiefs such nationalists were a 'threat' to their (chiefs) Status quo and vested interests and privileges protected by the colonial governors. Religious leaders, looking to the White missionaries as their mentors and naively believing in the distorted Christianity from Europe which merely served as a weapon of imperialist penetration, domination and exploitation of the Africans, sided with White missionaries to fight against the nationalist crusade for independence which they dubbed communist in the name of God!! Thus, condemning the anti-nationalist missionary activities in the colonies, the British Christian Socialists noted:

.... Christians in Britain should insist that the great missionary societies, which constantly appeal for money from Church people, should cease to operate a policy under which some of their agents are in effect, "prison chaplains" proclaiming in the name of Christ capitulation to foreign rule. (emphasis mine) (Machyo, *ibid.* p.9)

The African pseudo-intelligentsia throughout their educational system had been conditioned to despise all things African, to feel inferior to the Whites, in order to serve the colonial system as loyal servants. This point was very well expressed by Mzee Nyerere when he wrote of colonial education that

It was not designed to prepare young people for the service of their country; instead, it was motivated by a desire to inculcate the value of the colonial society and to train individuals for the service of the colonial state... the state interest in education therefore stemmed from the need for local clerks, and junior officials; on top of that, various religious groups were interested in spreading literacy and other education as part of their evangelical work. (Machyo Missionary Educ: 1976;36)

In other words colonial education never developed critical awareness of the native elites. This would have been dangerous to colonial rule. Its objectives was therefore not to conscientize, but to domesticate, to instill a slave mentality, a dependence personality. It was, therefore

a form of domination, a form of suppression of personality, individual will and individual aspirations, and even, to a certain extent, a method of domination, a method of bringing the individual into submission with respect to elements of power. (Makarenko 1965: 55)

This point can not be better supported by another authority than by the confession of a Belgian Mission Mgr. Roelens who noted with special hope at the height of the struggle for independence in Congo (now Zaire), the fact that the entire



that only Christian - Catholic religion based on authority, is capable of changing native mentality, of giving to our Africans a clear and intimate consciousness of their duties, of inspiring in them respect for authority and a spirit of loyalty towards Belgium. (ibid: 47)

Hence Walter Rodney was right to condemn colonial schooling as 'education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment.'

(Rodney 1972: 64) Indeed as the English Headmaster of Budo Rev: H.W. Weatherhead once admitted, the concern of both the British Government and the Missions, was for the boys ... to be true to the Empire to which they belong.' The boys who were taken from Chiefly homes were to be trained as future chiefs who would succeed their fathers. (ibid: 29)

The African pseudo - intelligentsia was thus deliberately prepared by the colonial education system to be a slave driver in the service of imperialism. Otherwise, as Robert Moeteno once correctly pointed out, the colonial educators feared to produce a nationalist intelligentsia. The reason was that 'such a group' was 'capable of synthesizing the contradiction of indigenous African culture and European imported culture to produce a new interpretation of colonial reality.' (ibid: 46) That was the real reason behind the missionary's struggle against the elements of African cultural heritage which were not in the interest of colonial rule and exploitation, in the name of God! For as Gustav Jahoda (1961:95) pointed out, 'The crux of the matter is that the mentality of the inhabitants was viewed' by the agents of imperialism in its colonial form 'as an obstacle in the economic development of the economy.

From this stand point we should therefore note that 'some (African-BC) customs were not only primitive and unchristian, but also annoying to employers.' Says Jahoda (pp.cit).

Formal independence did not change the attitude of the imperialists towards Africa, neither did it affect that of the kings, the traditional chiefs, the religious leaders and the pseudo-intelligentsia. This is because the achievement of formal independence was not a genuine liberating event, it was not a transformation of the colonial relations, it was merely a reform, a change of guards, which left the anti-African independence forces intact under the new form of imperialism we now know as Neo-Colonialism.

It is in the light of the foregoing that we should briefly examine the real basis of 'Internal Conflict' in Africa. Our thesis is that whereas the relations under pre-colonial African societies were based on the struggle for a high sense of social responsibility, for the maintenance of cooperation, harmony and fair sharing of the product of collective effort - the social product, the colonial system destroyed this relationship and created socio-economic conditions which are responsible for the development of a kind of class struggle which is manifested in so-called tribal or ethnic, and religious conflicts in present day Africa. That the African pseudo-intelligentsia or the petty bourgeoisie class having developed under colonial socio-economic conditions which prevented that class developing to a level of critical awareness, is a dependent class, self centred, egoistic and selfish and therefore incapable of advancing post-colonial African society to unity and genuine liberation.



Because by its very nature it has nothing constructive to offer to the people other than to exploit ethnic and religious sentiments among the masses for its own class advancement; and that the masses easily respond to the call of the petty bourgeoisie in terms of ethnic conflicts because of the formers' struggle for cultural identity - hence the fear of cultural domination by other apparently more powerful cultural groups. And finally that the neo-colonialist agents exploit the dependent mentality and therefore ideological backwardness of the petty bourgeoisie, and the need for cultural identity of the various nationality in order to divide and rule and therefore advance imperialist interest under neo-colonial relations. Finally, that to eliminate these conflicts calls for first and foremost, the elimination of the petty bourgeoisie class which fans and services in these conflicts and thus creates favourable conditions for imperialist domination.

## I

The fashion in post-colonial Africa is to blame whatever has gone wrong on the Africans themselves. In fact, since the slave trade some three centuries ago, Africans continue to be blamed for their own misfortunes, while foreigners are given credit for the Africans' salvation, civilisation, progress and the like. Thus the slave trade is blamed on the Africans themselves, then on the Arabs, and least on the Europeans. The end of that notorious trade is credited with the Europeans so that the victims of the trade did nothing to stop it! Colonisation is present as a 'civilising mission' and therefore as a 'white man's burden'.

But the Africans who took up arms to resist it are portrayed as heathens rebels: the Ashanti Kings, the Herero people, the Chaka and the Zulu anti-imperialist struggle, near home the Kabalega and Mwangi struggles etc., these are depicted as anti-progress forces. When it came to post-war nationalist independence struggles the leaders - Nkurumahs, Musazi, Kenyatta, Lumumba and others are presented as 'evil doers', as demagogues, anti-progress, failures, in life, verandah boys, agitators, communists and the like 'who are self-seekers' and therefore 'misleading the people'. Under neo-colonial liberation struggles, independence is presented as a gift from the colonial powers, aid is presented as a humanitarian expression from the rich people in the capitalist west to the poor in the so-called Third World. The people of the latter are therefore expected to be grateful to their benefactors - the aid donors. Any expression of ingratitude because aid is discovered to be a weapon of imperialism (Hayter) is strongly frowned at by the 'donors' and their local allies, the petty bourgeois elements who are the local beneficiaries of the international exploitive network. For as Professor Adnan Curle says 'The exploitive network is a network because the elites which mostly means the educated elites of the poor nations are sucked into the rich countries' economic systems.' Within that system these elites from poor nations 'serve as the local agents of the great corporations' - the multinationals, MNC - 'or as the officials who facilitate (the) cancerous growth' of these corporations. (p.4)



Further on he elaborates, referring to the post-colonial role played by the local elites. After formal colonial rule the colonial operators, the governors, and their officials were inevitably replaced by another kind of operators. Curle therefore notes:

As the representatives of the rich nations in the poor countries (ex-colonies -BC) increased in numbers, as the colonial officials were replaced with technical experts, foreign advisers, representative of a host of agencies and above all by business men, so a new elite began to emerge.

This new elite consists of 'local agents of foreign corporation, officials who smoothed the way, ministers and others whose good will it was desirable to purchase, labour leaders who could control the workers.' Add to that religious leaders financially supported by foreigners who continue to preach the word of the white man in the name of God and thus serve to kill the nationalist tempo and enthesiasm of the masses and call them into sleep to facilitate neo-colonial exploitation. Curle therefore, correctly observes that: It is this group that has really profited from aid and foreign investment. How have they benefited? They have done so through local contracts, the gifts; from their friend overseas, 'the high salaries, the privileges, the opportunities for travel, and scholarships abroad, the chances to invest, ....' So when the leaders of the National Liberation or Resistance Movements attack continued imperialist relations as the real cause of our internal conflicts and therefore economic and political backwardness, this beneficiaries will automatically ally with their foreign mentors and benefactors to resist change.

They will therefore attack the leaders of progressive national movements seeking genuine independence and development as bandits, power hungry, self-seekers, communists etc., in an effort to justify the fascist atrocities they are perpetrating on the masses of people who are struggling for their democratic rights and genuine national liberation.

The fact is that the imperialist practice of justifying their plunder of African resources by blaming the Africans for their misfortune is as old as the slave trade. As Marx wrote, among the factors which contributed to the growth of early capitalism was the trade in Africans as commodities. This slave trade was however, justified on the Aristotalian philosophy of some people having been born natural slaves; on the Catholic Christian doctrine of heathens having no souls and therefore justifying the right of Christian nations to enslave them.

However, the attitude of the west towards Africans has been essentially due to the fact that to justify their dominance and exploitation of our human and natural resources they have always regarded and treated us as small children who have failed to grow up. They therefore think that they know better what is good for us. They should therefore draw up the development model for us to copy and imitate like a monkey does a man! Any departure from such a model is strongly resented and obstructed by the use of force if necessary. In fact what the west means by development in Africa, is to create - to develop - a black European or American. Thus for the African petty bourgeoisie development means, and is in fact seen, as being synonymous with westernisation. But as Basil



These convictions may now seem greatly open to question. The fact remains that they and their underlying motivations have gone far to form the general culture of the "advanced" countries, and even, here and there, the general culture of the backward countries. If nothing else, they have given rise to a large number of misunderstandings about the nature of the problems of any other part of the "Third World."

He therefore continued to observe that 'These problems are thus presented, and widely accepted, as rising chiefly from a failure to develop what already exists: from a failure, that is, to enlarge and expand an existing social and economic structures and international relations without any fundamental change! The failure to develop according to this model is therefore not attributed to that colonial socio-economic system, but as Davidson says:

the weakness of this or that regime, the corruption of this or that individual, the dissidence of this or that group, or simply the fecklessness of populations "who do not live as"

the West lives. In other words the blame for failure is put on 'internal conflicts,' ethnicity, religious and other differences which are also bound in developed countries. Or what Goran Hyden (1987:82) calls "The Economy of affection.' But as Davidson correctly asserts. 'All this seems to be a misconception of how things really are. Because:

The problems of politically independent Africa ... arise in no essential way from a failure to develop what already exists. This is because what already exists, in the sense of socio-economic system or articulated national structure, is not capable of development, cannot become a viable means of general progress, offers no reliable foundation for a better future. (op. cit)

Because, infact, what already exists in post-colonial Africa 'is either an inheritance from a world that is past, - a world of abakulu b'ebika (clan Leaders) or the merely peripheral fragment or fragments of an international system built and controlled for the benefit of non-Africans.' (p. 5) for the benefit of the controllers of the international exploitive network. The truth is that 'the past cannot be recalled, however valid it may once have been.' And yet 'the peripheral fragments' - the present neo-colonial socio-economic system, 'cannot be made to develop: cannot themselves, that is lead to systems which will be viable and expansive because they will be self-generating, sovereign in their choices of options and independent in their capacity to change.' (p.5) Accordingly, if progress is to be achieved there is need for a fundamental change, for a delinkage from the oppressor system into which imperialism has entangled us.

Thus when we deal with internal conflicts in Africa it is important that we start by examining their true root in the external conditions which constitute the present in Africa. These conditions are those imposed by the colonial system on the African pre-capitalist societies. The very conditions which develop underdevelopment in Africa.

The pre-colonial Africa was essentially a pre-capitalist society whose dominant relationship was based on collective communal interests, cooperation in work, mutual help mutual respect and trust, and fair sharing of the collective means of subsistence - land. The spirit of individualism which is the ideological basis of capitalist production relations was as yet to develop. Land was not only a collective asset where the kings, chiefs or clan leaders were mere trustees for the



mutual help, communal work teams and the distribution of the social product - as manifested in the sharing of clan meat. Distribution of land among individual families was based on the principle of fair sharing of the good and marginal land and meeting the people's needs. We can safely say that the distribution approached closely the rule from each according to his work to each according to his needs. People knew clearly well that they had to work in order to eat. Labour was not only the source of livelihood and progress but it was also respected. Lazy people were not, therefore respected in society. The quality of African Education, as Rodney described it

was its relevance to Africans in sharp contrast with what was later introduced. The following features of indigenous African education can be considered outstanding: its close link with social life, both in material and spiritual sense; its collective nature; its many sidedness; and its progressive development in uniformity with the successive stages of physical emotional and mental development of child.

In this educational system, "There was no separation of education and productive activity or any division between manual and intellectual education." Thus it can be seen that unlike colonial education: 'Altogether, through mainly informal means, pre-colonial African education matched the realities of pre-colonial African society and produced well-rounded personalities to fit into that society.' (p. 262)

In other words, the pre-colonial education system produced people who were highly socially conscious and responsible, with a high level of critical consciousness, self-confident,

self-respect, sense of independent judgement and trust in the possibilities of their own society and people for mutual development and progress.

Because the issue of social inequality based on property relations in the form of land was absent, and everyone had a rounded up education, pre-colonial African practised genuine democracy based on mass participation in discussion, decision making and the implementation process. The guiding social principles were therefore popular democracy, cooperation, mutual trust and help, compensation and reconciliation in case of disputes or injuries. The objective of social administration by elders was to create conditions for genuine unity, based on mutual trust, peace, happiness, prosperity, harmony and fair of all members of society.

The coming of the colonial rule shuttered all these. It is true that left alone, African societies would also have developed - indeed as all societies have to - into the stages of feudalism, capitalism etc. But such development would have followed the normal path of the development of all human societies.

However, the objectives of colonisation was not to civilise Africans or end the slave trade. The European colonial powers having developed an industrial capitalist system from the slave trade, were now more interested in the cheap raw materials available in Africa and to use the African cheap labour to produce and acquire them cheaply. They were also interested in acquiring markets for their cheap industrial commodities; and not least, virgin lands for investment of surplus capital.

In other words, the objective of colonial annexation was to expropriate and appropriate the Africans economic surplus in order to facilitate further accumulation in Europe, Africa was thus regarded by the European empire builders as their undeveloped country estate.

In order for the colonial exercise to succeed, the colonial powers had therefore to impose an international division of labour between the colonies and the so-called mother country - the metropolis. Africans were forced to produce the raw materials agriculture and materials required by the 'mother country' and in turn to buy in unfair exchange the cheap industrial products of the 'mother country'. Africans were thus forced to produce what they did not need and to consume what they did not produce. But even more important, Africans manufacturing industrial development was arrested and stopped as the division of labour meant that European colonial powers were to monopolise all the manufacturing, intellectually stimulating activities. African cultural development was thus stemmed.

To meet the colonial demands the mode of production conducive to capitalist exploitation was imposed. The people's common property - land - which provided the basis for African democratic social relations was either expropriated and given to European settlers, or was given to the African ruling groups to acquire their collaboration. Wage labour hitherto unknown to the African was introduced; money was introduced as a means of exchange, education was introduced as an instrument of developing loyal servants of the colonial system; foreign religions - especially christianity was introduced as an instrument of psychological warfare against African cultural values and heritage - as a means of imposing intellectual domination.



Religion emphasised individualism as a means of personal salvation.

When it came to education, its purpose and objective was to acculturise the African - to produce a black-European. The aim of education was therefore to alienate the African as a human being, as a member of his society. Boarding schools like Budo, were deliberately built for that purpose. The missionaries to succeed in the process of acculturation - of the Africanisation-adopted a policy of removing small African children from their homes where they were subjected to African cultural influence. Asavia Wandira (1972:11) cites Bishop Willis of the CMS who pointed out the function of the boarding school as an indoctrination centre under colonial rule:

The most effective work can be done through a boarding school, where at the most impressionable age, through a course of a few years, in the Christian atmosphere, the young pagan can receive his first lessons in the christian faith.

At these boarding schools education was divorced from the African realities. It was learning by rote about Europe, about the white man's way of life. For the boys were not expected to participate directly in the activities of material production, their role was to be that of slave drivers. They were therefore, 'prepared to occupy positions in Government offices or as rulers of counties, while at the same time it is recognised and hoped that some will become teachers and preachers.' Declared the Weatherheads leads of Budo.

Education was therefore meant for the sons of chiefs, but then, chiefs themselves were no longer responsible to the people, they had been converted to colonial instruments

of oppression, coercion and domination. The people, therefore lost respect for and trust in them. Furthermore, with the introduction of wage employment, education was a certificate to better monetary remuneration.

In the colonial situation the role of women as producers of wealth and the mothers of the future generation was relegated to the bottom. They never featured at all as a factor of social development and progress as had been the case in pre-colonial society. Land was for the men, education was for the men so was remunerative employment. In the missionary education system the place of the woman was to be in the kitchen. She was preferred to become a good housewife of the educated sons of chiefs. She became a helpless dependent personality.

In terms of the country the colonial governors imposed a regional division of labour. In Uganda, the southern zone - Buganda, Busoga and Bukedi (Tororo) and later Bugishu and Teso were to be producers of the agricultural cash crops - cotton and coffee demanded by the colonial labour and later to provide illiterate young men to be employed in the colonial armed forces - the forces of colonial coercion and suppression. Colonial district boundaries were essentially drawn according to ethnic borders. But more important each ethnic district existed as if others did not. There was no attempt to establish horizontal and vertical indigenous administrative linkages. This would not have conformed to the imperialist practice of Divide and Rule. Nor did education ever attempt to create a national cultural consciousness. In terms of education all the leading schools were located in the production zone.

Only sons of outstanding chiefs and clergymen were allowed to come south to these schools. Those of peasant origin who were bright enough had to be sponsored by the missionaries. So that whether in terms of the economy, of administration or of education and culture, each district looked to the governor through the Provincial Commissioner (PC) and from there to the colonial office in London. The affairs of each district therefore remained its own business. The others were not concerned.

In terms of religion, the white colonisers used religion to deceive Africans to fight each other so as to decide by violence whether it was the Arabs, the French or the British who were going to be the masters of Uganda. But while the Arabs and the whites fought for political domination Africans who actually bore the brunt of the fighting were made to believe that they were fighting to save their respective religious faiths.

Another practice which created antagonistic consciousness among Africans was the use of Baganda as agents of the colonial governments. The Baganda served as chiefs in various parts of the country to establish British colonial rule. Thus the anti-colonial struggle in Bunyoro known as Kenyangire was directed against Baganda chiefs as agents of the British. Still another practice was the extravagant praises that were heaped on Baganda by colonial agents and even missionaries. On the other hand, Banyoro who had violently resisted British colonisation were called all sorts of derogatory names meant to humiliate them. Meanwhile, the Acholi as the main supplier of men for the King's African Rifles (KAR) were praised as



The overall effects of colonisation can therefore be summoned up thus: A property relationship was introduced in terms of land ownership and control which created the landlord and tenant system which had never existed - especially in Buganda. The structuring of the socio-economic systems created social divisions which had never existed before education alienated the educated and turned them into a dependant class whose loyalty was to the agents of imperialism and against the pre-colonial African social values and ushered in a spirit of competition and rivalry for the means of the development of a national consciousness among the emergent indigenous elite. In terms of psychology religions was, the leading role played by the Baganda under colonial rule, the praising of the Acholi as 'natural warriors' and the socio-economic division of the country into zones produced antagonistic consciousness which led to the superiority complex of Baganda petty bourgeoisie, and which led to the superiority envy and jealous leading to inferiority complex among the non-Baganda petty bourgeoisie.

## II

In terms of economic classes the colonial socio-economic system created an essentially of petty bourgeoisie class. This class, except for the landlords in Buganda did not possess an independent means of economic livelihood. It derived its socio-economic status from the colonial education system. This system enabled its graduates to be employed as minor functionaries in the colonial system. As minor functionaries their ambition was to emulate the ways and manners of the White colonial rulers.

Since they had been intellectually alienated from their natural African society they had nothing left for them to do than to aspire for the European way of life or life style

- Obulamu bwe kizungu - and therefore the political and economic positions the European occupied in the systems. For Frantz Fanon (1963:32) once observed,

the look that the native turns on the settlers' town is a look of lust a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession all manner of possession, to sit at the settlers' table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible.

Accordingly, the petty bourgeois class proper never quarrelled against the system. Its sole objective was to replace the white managers of that system.

But the petty bourgeois has a handicap. He is ideologically backward. His conception of what independence really meant was therefore limited. For him all that was needed to achieve independence was the removal of the white officials. That achieved everything would follow automatically. He would step into the white man's shoes but work within colonially structured system to eradicate poverty, disease and ignorance. These were his fighting slogans. The enemy was the white officials not the system. Therefore the petty bourgeois' real interest was the white man's job and therefore socio-economic status.

At the start of the anti-colonial movement the petty bourgeois were therefore limited by only one objective - to remove the white man. They rallied the masses of people to their support because that is also what the masses wanted. They wanted to end the humiliating conditions they suffered under the colonial rule - taxes, police brutality, law



in slums etc. The white rulers seeing no option to independence gave in. But this also had a negative effect on the anti-colonial nationalist movement. The petty bourgeoisie now forgot the independence issue because it was no longer debateable. It was now who was going to occupy what position? The petty bourgeoisie now began to compete furiously for political positions for stepping into the white man's shoes. But since they were ideologically backward, they could conceive of no other political issues to debate in the struggle to win the masses. The only option left to them was to exploit the obvious ethnic and religious differences, and regional unbalanced socio-economic colonial development. And within these differences they resorted to egoism, personalities name calling and outright lies. That is why they labelled politics a 'dirty game'

From this point in the history of the anti-colonial struggle nationalist patriotic politics gives way to the politics of the quest for 'falling into things' of eating. That is how for example, countries like Uganda, Kenya achieved their independence in the 1960's.

But it is important to point out that the petty bourgeoisie resort to the exploitation of ethnic and religious differences for political end not because they are sincerely 'tribalist' or genuinely religious but merely as an easy convenient means of attracting the support of the masses and thus use them to climb into positions of political power which they can then exploit for personal enrichment. For in terms of tribal affinity many petty bourgeoisie are, as we have seen an alienated people. The petty bourgeoisie still believe in 'one nation one people, one leadership' but the question is who is to be the leader and how does he get there given the



keen competition for the position? The only option for them is to seek the answer in ethnic and religious differences. Internal conflicts are therefore the creation of the petty bourgeoisie to divide and rule.

It is important to stress that petty bourgeoisie exploit ethnicity and religious differences for personal gains, rather than because these are the real issues felt by the people. That is why ethnic or religious conflicts do not flare up first from places where the petty bourgeoisie compete for jobs and positions. So when such conflicts like Baganda against non-Baganda in Buganda, Sebei against Bagisu, Bamba-Bakonjo against Satoro, Banyankore against Banyarwanda, and even within ethnic groups, South Bugisu against North Bugisu, it will be found that behind them are the petty bourgeoisie competing for jobs and political positions.

However, their success in this game depends on the level of the desire of the masses for cultured and religious identity. The force of cultural identity as a moving spirit behind the liberation struggles at international and national levels has been very clearly stated by UNESCO (1977:37) thus:

"The assertion of cultural identity is now widely recognised as a powerful factor in the life of the nations as well as in international relations. Firstly as a factor making for liberation, cultural identity provides a justification for independence movements and resistance to colonialism. For newly established states cultural identity remains a guarantee of their very existence as a

nation. The right to one's own culture is invoked throughout the world, in the fight against racial, ethnic, linguistic or cultural discrimination, as a basic human right".

Thus 'the assertion of cultural identity is still exerting a decisive influence on liberation movements, particularly in Africa'. That is why even Marxist oriented thinkers and revolutionaries have also found it to be a difficult dialogue (Ronardo Munck 1986).

The fact is that within individual African countries cultural identity plays a big role in the internal conflict. This is, in every African country, you find a single dominant ethnic group fearing to be culturally submerged by smaller cultural groups but who together constitute the great majority of the country's population. And conversely the smaller group also fear the domination of the largest single group. This is the case in, for examples, Uganda and Kenya: Baganda against the rest and vice-versa, similiary Kikuyu against others. Here petty bourgeois politics exploits these fears. That is the case of pre-independence confrontation between the Kabaka Yekka (KY) and the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) in Uganda. Religious fears are exploited in a similar way, for example in Nigeria and Sudan.

The fact is that in a country like Uganda the great majority of the masses of people take pride in their cultural heritage even if some of it is subject to

historical changes that all societies have experienced and must experience in the course of their social development e.g. the dissolving away of the Kingship or monarchical institution as a heritage of a form of feudal order. But apart from that, people in Uganda - apart from the petty bourgeoisie - are very sensitive to things like language and other forms of behaviour they cherish in their sub-cultures. For example, in those areas where you find Lunyankore and Luganda speaking people, as in parts of Mubende District, each group will stick to its own language even at public meetings. The same is true in areas of Tororo and Soroti Districts where the Luo and Iteso have lived together for generations. What is true of culture is true of religion. It is very difficult to make a conservative Christian to believe that Islam is also respectable religion and vice-verse.

Such deeply rooted cultural and religious feelings are the easiest means the petty bourgeoisie exploit for political ends. But again it should also be pointed out that because the petty bourgeoisie exploit these cultural demands, it does not follow that they believe in them! It is only because they are convenient for gaining mass support. For as we have noted the petty bourgeoisie are an alienated class from genuine African cultural roots. Many of them cannot write and read in their mother languages properly, let alone express in it. In fact some feel ashamed when referred to



by their ethnic name! While the great majority of them will feel at home with peasants and workers from their ethnic groups - because they 'have nothing in common to discuss!' They encourage their children to forget 'tribal' languages, customs and traditions because these are primitive. They enjoy being called European names as opposed to their African names. Many do not enjoy eating and drinking traditional foodstuffs and brews. In fact, in Uganda, the petty bourgeoisie are opposed to learning African languages etc.. For example an educated Acholi can live in Buganda for years and yet will never take trouble to learn Luganda or Swahili in order to communicate with ordinary people.

The fact which must be accepted as truth about the petty bourgeoisie is that they have no respect for the peasant - work class, from which they originate. They are ashamed of it and hence of their origin. What therefore Professor Dudley Seers said some years back is very true of the African scene today. He observed that:

"If Ministers and civil servants are separated too far economically from the majority of the population, they will be unable to understand the problems of the common people, especially those of rural areas. They may hardly be able to communicate with them, let alone formulate workable policies for modernising rural society."

This is because having no respect for and confidence in the rural society. 'They will tend to be sceptical about the possibility of development, to underestimate the potential power of nationalism, to despise rural like (and rural dwellers) and disperage manual work.' (Gardiner et al, 1970:160).

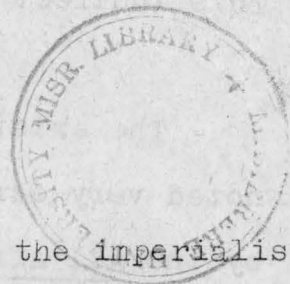
This contempt for rural society and rural dwellers by the petty bourgeoisie is clearly demonstrated by the African petty bourgeois worker. They are very reluctant to go back to the village (mukyaalo) when their husbands, for one reason or another, stop working or cease to be prosperous in towns. Being ashamed of their Africanism they spend colossal sums of money trying to Europeanise themselves (Okulabika ekizungu) by even obliterating their natural features and appearance in their keen struggle to ape their white sisters! in the name of 'looking fashionable'! to the greatest embarrassment of both the aped whites and the black patriots who believe in 'black is beautiful'. In fact the petty bourgeoisie find it embarrassing to mix freely with the worker-peasant class.

From this observation it can be seen clearly that the motive of the petty bourgeoisie is not to advance the people's culture but to merely exploit cultural sentiments as a means of achieving political ambitions.

The petty bourgeoisie are therefore the biggest enemies of the African cultural heritage which they regard as a sign of primitivity, backwardness and inferiority.

III

Lastly and not least, is the role the imperialists play in creating and fanning internal conflicts. As we have noted imperialist domination is based on the motto: Divide and Rule. The imperialists succeeded in conquering and dominating large tracts of African territories through divide and conquer. While they treated one African ethnic group as a friend and ally they engaged the other which was hostile. Meanwhile those who were not so engaged kept aloof on the basis of 'tebinkwatako'! (It does not affect me) only to fall victims later on. Secondly in surrendering political power to Africans, the imperialists had no intention of relinquishing economic control. Under formal colonial domination direct political control is essential for smoothening the process of exploitation. But when that direct control proved too expensive after the Second World War, the imperialists had to devise a new method of control which would assure them their real objective: economic control and exploitation. It was discovered that it was possible to recruit a class of indigenous allies as agents to whom political power could be handed and through whom the imperial powers





would continue to be the real rulers of the ex-colony. This indirect rule is what we now call Neo-Colonialism.

The existence of this new form of domination was noted very early at the beginning of formal independence by the All African Peoples' Conference (AAPC) held at Cairo in 1961. Neo-Colonial relationship were described as:

"The survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in the emerging countries, which become victims of indirect and subtle form of domination by political economic, social, military or technical means."  
(Machyo 1976:21)

Later Nkrumah writing about Neo-Colonialism pointed out that the state which is subject to it, 'is, in theory independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty'. But 'in reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside'. In fact neo-colonialism, like formal colonialism also operates through religious and other seemingly innocent cultural and humanitarian organisations. And in a country where the petty bourgeoisie are dominant, neo-colonial agents penetrate them, and set them against each other by exploiting their egoistic, selfish personal ambitions. The objective is either to disorganise an existing united nationalist patriotic movement based on superficial unity by exploiting minor differences among the petty bourgeoisie in order

to make it impossible to forge an anti-imperialist united front to struggle for genuine national liberation and independence. So that, as an American journalist once pointed out, behind every strife in Africa there are European powers struggling to carve out markets for themselves. I think Professor Stanislaw Andreski (1968:192) summed up the essence of neo-colonial relations very clearly. He says:

"In its economic aspects the essence of neo-colonialism is the continuation of a rapacious dictatorial and proliferating ruling clique enmasked in a vicious circle of exploitation and strife, with *laissez-faire* capitalism, tamed neither by any democratic forces nor even by a bureaucracy guided by raison d'etat and operating under conditions of insecurity which make a socially beneficent conduct of business unprofitable or even perhaps impossible."

So behind these internal strifes and conflicts in post-colonial Africa are neo-colonial relations.

In conclusion let us emphasise that behind internal conflicts in Africa are the imperialist powers using the African petty bourgeoisie as their allies and reliable agents. For the imperialists these conflicts are necessary because they divert the attention of the masses of people from the real cause of their poverty, degradation and suffering. This diversion of attention means that the masses of African people cannot see their real enemy - the imperialist. Conflicts are

necessary for the imperialists because a united strong Africa with complete control over its natural resources is a threat to continued prosperity, economic and political power and therefore military strength of Europe which relies on the exploitation of African resources to maintain its international status. For the fact is that without African cheap raw materials western Europe becomes a doomed world. So European statesman and finance capitalist circles aided by the US have to make sure that they have free access to African resources. For as Frantz Fanon (1963:76) clearly and correctly asserted. '... European opulence is literally scandalous, for it has been founded on slavery, it has been nourished with the blood slaves and it comes directly from the soil and from the sub-soil of the underdeveloped world.' Of Africa.

Conflicts are necessary for the petty bourgeois class because that is how this class can manage to exploit the confusion to enrich its individual members at the expense of the toiling masses of the peasants and workers of Africa. Thus for every internal conflict that any African country experiences the biggest beneficiaries are the foreign capitalists who control the exploitive network, and the local beneficiaries are the petty bourgeois governing clique who pocket the largest share of the crumbs left over by the imperialists.



From the foregoing it follows that the first enemy of the African people is the imperialist, the second enemy is the governing petty bourgeois class which has mortgaged the country and the people to foreign interests in return for personal enrichment. For as it has been correctly asserted: 'In the post-colonial period African political parties' led by the petty bourgeoisie, 'have served primarily as instruments of self-interested control in the service of the ruling group'. And that because of this, it is the venality of party politicians' which 'has sometimes been the trigger to action undertaken by the bureaucratic elements of the civil service and military, though,... - generally not in the interests of structural transformation. (D.P. Ghai 1973:142). Because, since the bureaucrats and the military are also members of this class 'structural transformation' could only undermine the basis of their personal accumulation of easy wealth through corruption etc.,

Let us, therefore, note that Fanon (op.cit:124) rejected the idea that these petty bourgeois leaders who have dominated the African scene since independence are mere intermediaries and therefore incapable of leading the people to genuine structural transformation. He says:

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

Nkrumah (1970:63) also correctly accused this class of being allies of the international finance capitalists. Its governments have therefore become policemen of the imperialist, multinational corporations. Accordingly, 'It is the indigenous bourgeoisie who provide the main means by which international monopoly finance continues to plunder Africa and to frustrate the purposes of the African Revolution'.

The solution to Africa's internal conflicts must therefore be seen in terms of a class struggle between the progressive patriotic intelligentsia which represents the genuine interests of the people and the country on the one hand, and the petty bourgeoisie who serve the intermediary role between the foreign forces of oppression, suppression and exploitation of the country and the people. What course the struggle has to take was therefore very well summed up by Saul interpreting the arguments put forward by Gundar Frank:

He says:

"....tactfully, the immediate enemy is in fact the locally dominant classes, though strategically imperialism is undoubtedly the major enemy of progress and the long-run target. Until this question of which class shall control the state is settled it would be a mistake to pay exclusive attention to rallying "the people" against imperialism."

Because, unless we take seriously local or internal contradictions and boldly confront them, 'anti-imperialism may merely remain rhetorical and vague, (while nationalist slogans may be manipulated by the most