The prospect of impending disaster is not just a figment of the imagination. The facts are there to be seen, pointing to the past and to the present with an accusing finger and to the future with scornful laughter.


A man who has inherited a tumbledown cottage has to live in even worse conditions while he is rebuilding it and making a decent house for himself. In the same way we have to accept the existence of problems which are created by the very fact of trying to convert the colonialist and semi-capitalist economy we inherited into a nationalist and socialist economy.

- Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, 1977

We must look at our mistakes lest we fall into repeating them.


I.

To explore all of the issues, problems and prospects of every African state for the next decade would require an encyclopedia to print and an encyclopedic team of authors to write. The aim of this essay is rather more modest.

Issues or topics of overriding concern are usually defined in terms of problems. Problems in the sense that there is no reason to expect a benign invisible hand or an existing
smoothly functioning piece of state or corporate apparatus to solve them. Problems also in the sense that something can be done to resolve or transcend them. Prospects are a judgement - or in the more sophisticated scenario erecting branches of futurology alternative judgements - about how and with what future results the problems will be tackled.

Africa is not homogenous. Different constellations of issues, of priorities among problems, of plausible prospects apply to different states or even different regions and communities within any one state. However some issues relating to deep seated problems which show no signs of early resolution are common to most African states and to Africa as a region. Whether the struggle which these problems or contradictions give rise will result in transcending syntheses or blockage is a major element in prospects from the continental to the village level. Unless they are at least in part overcome then with the OECD "Interfutures" Group¹ one is:

Forced to envisage as a continuation of the present situation of virtual economic stagnation, particularly with regard to agriculture, with escalating local conflicts and external interference.

Six issues which appear to meet these tests of overriding importance and continental scope will be reviewed. Perhaps, others should be added² but it is hard to deny the following items places on any short list:

1. Food supply
2. Income distribution and access
3. Participation
4. Legitimacy of states
5. Southern African liberation
Food Supply

Most Africans do not have enough to eat. Most African states import substantial amounts of staple foodstuffs. On the first count the situation is at best improving very slowly in most states and worsening in some. On the second deterioration, not progress, is the general pattern.

Production failure has been attributed to many causes. The Sahel and Ethiopia, Somalia and Tanzania, the Mahgreb and Zambia have been affected by severe droughts. Funds for seed or fertilizer or extension services have often been lacking. Land needed for staple foods has been under export crops e.g. in the Senegal groundnut country.

But, valid as they are as parts of the explanation, these cannot be the whole. Nigeria's per capita - perhaps even absolute - food production has been on a downward trend for fifteen years. Kenya's per capita domestic food production has been drifting downward for over a decade. In the Fleuve and Casamance Senegal has plenty of land to raise food production dramatically. Nor are the cases of regular growth of food production well above population growth - e.g. Malawi, Tanzania - marked by uniform absence of drought or presence of very effective extension services or supplies of inputs.

Availability too gives rise to certain causal answers. Money for commercial imports or state financed drought relief was lacking e.g. in Senegal in the early and mid 1970's. Physical and organizational ability to distribute food to the worst hit rural areas has not existed e.g.
Ethiopia both before and after the revolution (even if for rather different reasons).

Again, true enough, but two "success" stories - Somalia and Tanzania - were marked neither by high levels of foreign exchange nor high rural incomes nor strong general transport systems nor general ability to organize and operate all state activities quickly and efficiently. The difference appears to have been in the priority given averting starvation which resulted in prompt response, concentration of organizing capacity, allocation of resources (all of Tanzania's opening 1974 foreign exchange reserves) and rapid distribution which got the food out whatever else could be said about its efficiency.

If the 1980's are a rerun of the 1970's then for most of Africa SWAPO's comment⁴ will be the best possible result:

A nation which is dependent on other countries for the food consumption of its population cannot but be a dependent hostage of the particular country which feeds its population.

Best, because for many Africans the result will in fact be death from the diseases of extreme malnutrition or literal starvation even if they are virtually within sight of ports where food could be landed - as in the Bas Congo today.

The bottom line of the challenge of production reads: productivity, rural/urban terms of trade, income distribution. That of availability reads: income distribution, decision taker priority to basic human needs.
For production adequate prices - to the grower, not just by the consumer - and a chance to earn a decent income and to receive basic services (education, health, water, enough law and order to be able to go about his concerns in safety) are vital. Better marketing and distribution (including something to be bought by the rural crop seller) are critical. Often knowledge and inputs must be made available (and first discovered) for really large, sustained productivity gains. All of this is in the end rather boring - except during a food crisis - and requires sustained hard work - not just during a food crisis.

As the very different cases of Malawi and Tanzania demonstrate it is not impossible. How common will it be in the 1980's?

Partly this depends on participation and legitimacy. If peasants win a say in states, they do demand attention to agriculture and rural services; if a state in Africa is seriously seeking legitimacy it can hardly be totally unconcerned with rural welfare or food availability.

The uses of adversity may also help. Shortages of foreign exchange - even in major oil exporters like Algeria and Nigeria - do concentrate the political and official mind on agricultural production and, less certainly, on those who do the producing. There will be more and more prolonged foreign exchange crises in the 1980's.
III

Income Distribution and Access

While the formal data are at best fragmentary, both they and observation reveal very wide disparities of income in almost all African states. More critical for prospects, in a majority of cases these are widening. In terms of the ratios between the top 1 or 2% of salary earners, minimum wage earners and peasants, Africa has probably already "achieved" the greatest disparities of any continent.

This is not a set of phenomena characterizing only the successful capitalist road states such as Kenya and the Ivory Coast, the newly oil rich without coherent strategies to raise the incomes of the masses, e.g. Gabon, Nigeria, or the states en voie de désintégration, e.g. Zaire. It is also true of those deeply concerned with peasant welfare, e.g. Botswana, and those seeking to build non-capitalist mixed economies, e.g. Zambia, and those engaged in serious efforts to achieve transitions to socialism, e.g. Algeria.

Accompanying and interlocking with the growing inequality are two failures: failure to make significant progress in raising the average incomes and purchasing power of the poor majorities of peasants and "informal" (residual?) sector non-agricultural workers. Failure even to develop a really broad and growing middle class of peasant proprietors, small businessmen, professionals and officials with a real stake in the system. Neither the Maoist principle of "all boats float higher" broad front advance nor the "equality of access to the elite" principle of the creative variant of capitalism can credibly be
asserted to operate in more than a handful of states. The result is the grim realities of *Petals of Blood*, and of the stark, wasteland, dump for people that is Pekine - Senegal's second largest city.

There is nothing inevitable about this. Tanzania has reduced income inequality and has made systematic advances toward basic human needs fulfilment even in a context of very low levels of attained productive forces and relatively modest (even if well above the African average) rates of growth. The same can be said of Mozambique and Somalia. While Algeria has had growing inequality - and a very open dialogue about the threat it poses - it has also made progress toward meeting the basic service access needs of the majority of its peoples, albeit not their capacity to produce and to earn the greatest progress toward creating a broad middle (petty bourgeois) class even though this is in fact an undesired by product of national solidarity and key sector surplus generation promotion.

The conditions for reversing these trends are stringent. Ceilings are needed as well as floors - given the resources available in Africa real luxury for some necessarily means real deprivation for many. Rural strategies designed to promote production and raise incomes, not extract surplus and control peasants, are equally essential. (And vital if the food "problem" is to be surmounted.) So is breaking those coalitions of elites which amount to transnational alliances (TNCs and local political/bureaucratic/managerial partners) against the workers and peasants.
Provision of services - health, education, water, housing - is in principle easier. But in fact it will not be done without the more basic changes just cited. Priority allocations of funds and personnel will not happen - it is Tanzania not Kenya which has achieved at least 60% adult literacy and millions of adult continuing education students.

Two forces may lead to change in the 1980's. First the dictum of Anton Rupert, the Afrikaaner magnate "If they do not eat, we shall not sleep" may become an item in the political economic strategy of the less poor, capitalist road states e.g. Gabon, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Cameroon, Nigeria. Second, the uses of adversity may enforce such strategies on states with poor growth prospects or results - e.g. Zambia, Upper Volta, Mali, Mauritius - as a condition for the survival of legitimate, functioning politics.

IV

Participation

The OAU/ECA symposium grimly warned: the issues of freedom and justice can no longer be left in abeyance. Only yesterday, the birth of a State that respected basic freedoms was one of the most important demands in the struggle for independence. Has this erstwhile dream now turned into a nightmare in which repression and censorship condemn whole generations of Africans to silence?

and again:

The problem of under-employment and unemployment is more and more serious ... to place employment, in other words the social usefulness of men and women, at the centre ...
The no party state, increased repression, growing slums and bidonvilles, peasant retreat from the State and the market - these are the common coin of African political discussion. Without participation in two senses they will continue to be: First participation in production at high enough levels of output and fair enough levels of remuneration (whether wages or agricultural prices) to be both economically self reliant and economically important to the state. Second direct participation in decisions directly affecting peasants and workers in their villages and neighborhoods, their workplaces and primary markets and indirect participation through leaders chosen by and responsible to them in national policy making.

Without such participation access to food and to services and to income distribution cannot be tackled. There will be no effective discipline on leaders - or on TNC's - no real priority to decent rural incomes, or universal access to basic services.

This is not an area in which great success stories can be cited - in Africa or anywhere else. The problems of elitism, bureaucratism, isolation of leaders, arrogance of officials, greed of the rich are deep rooted - as is only too evident in the states in which they have been struggled against, held at bay, perhaps turned back in part, e.g. Somalia, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Tanzania, and in those in which the struggle has been made and has the backing of sincere and dedicated leaders but may well be being lost, e.g. Zambia, Botswana, Algeria.
The question for the 1980's is whether necessity will enforce the freedom to participate beyond a handful of states. Perhaps. The end of military rule may force the attention of the returning political figures to be less exclusive than before, e.g. in Nigeria and Ghana. The fact that bourgeois democracy cannot live without a broader participatory base (on production and on decision taking) than now exists may be seen in a few states e.g. Kenya, Tunisia, Senegal. The liberation movements in power may be able to hold to their genuine commitment to and practice of participation - Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau point that way as - despite adversity - does Angola, but the same cannot be said of Ethiopia. States seeking to reduce dependence - or foreign exchange crisis - through food and basic services strategies may see that production and decision participation are instrumental as well as moral necessities, e.g. Algeria's return toward auto gestion, decentralization and rural development triggered by 1972-74 explosions in the volume and cost of agricultural imports.

V

Legitimacy of States

There are not two types of polities, economies, societies in Africa - en voie de developpement and en voie de developpement dependant (ou de developpement de sous developpement). There is a third - en voie de desintegration. These are states whose basic legitimacy is either in question or is no longer in question because it is a fading memory from the past.
This category is not limited to the vicious dictatorial systems that have earned fairly approbrium: Nguema and Amin that were, Boka.

It extends to the cases in which there is no state - oppressive or otherwise - e.g. Chad. It includes cases in which a capital and a tiny propped up by a revenue earning enclave and de jure or de facto external proprietors and while the national economy, society and poli
deliquescence - e.g. Zaire.

Worse there are dangers that more polities when voie de desintegration. The reasons may copper prices and the Rhodesian rebels have Zambia to the brink; the heritage of Mr. Sec. Kissinger's attempts to make Angola "Sideshow to follow Kampuchea and the continued South intervention create the same dangers for Ang may be internal - in 1965 the Nigerian elite thoroughly made the misuse of public office gain the governing ideology that the Sardaur had lost legitimacy. Mauretania abandoned to the southern zone of the Sahara Democrat because it stood on the brink of losing leg home; the present Moroccan state's legitim intertwined with its annexation of the Sahara Republic that it is hard to see how it can e itself from a war of colonization it can ne carry on indefinitely without grave peril to to sustain the burden of legitimacy at home of participation and the degree of material the Ethiopian revolution in its central zon in peril by the fact that it has not been a legitimacy in the eyes of the people of the the Awash, Eritrea, and until it does is fo under siege and with a siege mentality.
Legitimacy does not require full participation nor socialism nor even full bourgois democracy. Kenya and the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Swaziland, Tunisia and Togo are legitimate. The test is a state which has, acts on and produces some results from its policies and which is responsive and responsible to substantial domestic class coalitions not to a handful of power holders, entrepreneurs of adversity and foreign backers or creditors. One element is ability for ordinary people to go about their occupations and daily lives in some security (from state officials and bandits alike). Law and order is not everything, its total absence usually guarantees there will be nothing else.

This slide of a significant number of states to the edge - or beyond the edge - of illegitimacy as perceived by their people is chilling. If it is not reversed the "scornful laughter" warned against by the OAU/ECA symposium will triumph and only the vultures (winged and otherwise, domestic and foreign) will have cause to exult. It is very hard to claw back - the post Amin course of Uganda is arduous and perilous, the desperate efforts to preserve (or recreate) the Chad sometimes look like trying to water its deserts with a tea spoon.

Two strands can be picked out. The first is solidarity with those in danger - helping Zambia break the Rhodesian stranglehold and the copper price assault; exploring ways in which Morocco can extricate itself from the Sahara and revolutionary Ethiopia overcome the heritage of hatred it has been bequeathed in what were the Imperial Outlands. The second, is more effective
waging of the liberation struggle against South Africa and its outriders - only that can avert a series of mortal challenges to Mozambique and Angola, Swaziland and Lesotho, Botswana and Zambia.

VI

Southern African Liberation

The course of the Southern African liberation struggle is critical for Africa in the 1980's (and perhaps for the nature of great power relations in the 1980's too). That view is shared by the trilateralist intelligentsia, by the Front Line States, by the Liberation Movements.

This is evident enough for Namibians, Zimbabweans, South Africans. It is also clear enough for the Front Line States who face armed raids, security costs, economic dislocations which can run as high as 25% of fixed investment and 5% of national output for "backup zone" ones like Tanzania and much more for those with recurrent forays and regular destabilization on their soil like Angola. For Africa as a whole it may seem less clear - not every state speaks or acts with the force of Algeria and Nigeria.

It is critical to African self respect - The continued existence of compulsory, legislated racism at the core of the ideology of states in Africa diminishes all Africans; its ending would demonstrate that African states could act and achieve in a cause beyond personal or national material gain.
Liberation is equally critical for external respect. It is a brutal fact that the "accusing finger" the OAU/ECA Symposium sees is seen by many who were the friends of Africa and Africans. It has cooled their desire to stand in solidarity, placed weapons in the hands of Africa's enemies, turned perceptions and phrases of hope into hollow mockeries. Just as Amin's perverted use of the slogans of self reliance and struggle demeaned and degraded the image of all Africa, so the first steps toward the liberation of Uganda and Ugandans by Africans has helped restore dignity and perceptions. Southern Africa is a similar struggle.

Finally many African states and Africans deeply need major successes to restore their own hope and faith and will to work for victories at home as well as externally. 1974-1979 have been grim years for most, the dogged battle against calamity is less daunting to maintain when there are clear battles won.

Battles - not the campaign. Zimbabwe and Namibia must be genuinely independent long before 1990 or the cost to Africa does not bear estimation. But South Africa will not be Azania by then - the process may have taken fitful first steps but the last laager will not have been broken.

What is to be done? As President Nyerere has warned, "Killing people is not a sacrament". But it is an inescapable fact that only the dynamic counter violence of liberation will bring the static violence of repression to serious negotiations for surrender of power when the power to be surrendered is vital to the repressor. Algeria, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, the Sahara Democratic Republic underline that.
International pressure is not a substitute. Until Africa has proved it can and will win by force if it cannot win by negotiation, there will not be effective international pressure - only sinister charades like the "Tarbaby" - "Sideshow II" strategy of Mr. Secretary Kissinger; brutal sellouts like the Vorster-Duncan-Benn arrangements for Rossing uranium in Namibia; half serious, half maimed ventures like the "Gang of Five" proximity talks on Namibia (and even those were possible only because the Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia was at last striking effectively and frequently).

This is not to say political consciousness is not key - without it there will be no sustained guerilla wars. Nor is it to advise lowering the pressure for international action and negotiation - quite the contrary. The goal is not Armageddon or war to the last wrecked house, burnt field and dead combatant - it is a negotiated transfer, as one had in Mozambique and Algeria. It is to warn that those who hold the triggers of power in Windhoek, Salisbury and Pretoria will not negotiate unloading them until they see the barrels of African guns much nearer and more precisely zeroed in on themselves than they do today.

VII

African Development Coordination

"Small nations are like indecently clad women, they tempt the evil minded" said President Nyerere some years ago. "Consequently, African unity is not just a slogan, a pious dream or an irresponsible ambition. It is a necessity" concluded the OAU/ECA Symposium.
The questions are why has the past been marked by debacles? How can African states move forward? The answers are probably interlocked: the debacles have largely been in respect to partially colonial inheritance schemes with only slightly modified laissez faire cores operating in a continent of independent states which - would be capitalist and would be socialist alike - were committed to national economic intervention. If that is the right reading, then ECA's continued promotion of preferential and free trade areas and ECOWAS attempt to float what remains in the last analysis a complex, complete import model integration scheme may be steps in the wrong direction.

Coordination must rest on durable common interests perceived by participants as accomplished better together than separately. These need not - one is tempted to say under African conditions usually do not - include generalized free trade. They may encompass coordinated production of specific goods which will lead to trade, e.g. Nigeria-Benin, or coordinated use of specifically identified otherwise idle productive capacity through trade, e.g. the Mozambique-Tanzania agreement, but both of these approaches are very different from, and likely to be hampered by, accepting standard customs union theory.

Further the concerns may not center on trade at all - at least not at first. The recent initiatives toward a Southern African Development Coordination dynamic launched by the Front Line States are an example. The key goal is reduction of dependence on the Republic of South Africa. The first priority is delinking transport and communication by creating a regional network. A subsidiary goal is mobilizing finance to do it. Then came an array-coordinating
exercise of "permanent sovereignty" vis à vis mineral companies, food security arrangements, balanced trade agreements, coordination of production, no one of which is seen as necessarily having more urgency or priority than the others.

This is not an accidental incoherence of approach - it is a deliberate choice of unconventional wisdom. Chairman Quett Masire underlined this in his concluding remarks:  

> Until our economies are free from the domination of the Republic of South Africa and linked regionally with one another we cannot go forward with assurance or in safety. We must ensure that the efforts of our people to achieve development, to meet their basic human needs are in a setting which gives them the greatest measure of success. That setting is Southern African regional development coordination. ... we have affirmed our determination to set out on the long journey regional level ... we believe that we have taken that first step and have taken it in the right direction.

Clearly the key goals and routes in West Africa, Central Africa and the Mahgreb are not the same as in Southern Africa. The lack of any single overriding need like that confronting the FLS may, ironically, prove a disadvantage for establishing effective coordination. But more serious reflection on what precise common interests were and how they could be met - even if this led to unconventional models more like the Andean Pact than CARICOM or SADC than EAC - would serve other regions and regional organisations better than slightly tarted up repetitions of past models.
A number of standard "problems" are noticeable by their absence from this short list. This is not necessarily because they are seen as unimportant but because they appear to be unsatisfactory ways either of posing or of tackling the problem. Five "old reliables" of this type are: ethnicity; production; neo-colonialism; efficiency; socialism.

Ethnicity covers a multitude of evils - and goods. A border war, a clan skirmish, a national "objection" to marginalization in a multinational state, regional loyalties ... It is very often a manipulated - even if quite real - consciousness. Legitimacy and participation are better ways of posing the challenge - and especially of meeting it. So is Southern African Liberation if the "problem tribe" in mind is the Boers or the "savage clan" the Selous Scouts.

Production in the abstract begs too many questions. Assuming food, income distribution and participation can be achieved, then production of the goods and services most needed is likely to follow. Resources will remain scarce but that is precisely the reason it is unhelpful to call for more production without specifying what? for whom? why? how? where?

Neo-colonialism - or its more advanced form, dependent development - is very real. But to talk of tackling it requires posing questions about states, decision takers, participation, income distribution. Otherwise one at most chops away rough corners - Kenya is quite good at
tough micro negotiation - or punches a feather pillow -
the internal logic of the Zairean state precludes tough
external economic negotiation. It does not deal with the
context of change nor with who benefits.

Efficiency is a goal. But it is a dependent or instrumental
goal - efficiency in the pursuit of some basic, substantive
goal. It is not copying European management - pace
McKinsey and Co. - nor European social democracy's
smooth running state corporate bureaucracy - pace
Gunnar Myrdal and Jan Tinbergen. It cannot be discussed
outside the objective correlative of a time and place
and set of decision takers with time, resource and
accomplishment constraints.

Capitalism in Africa is most unlikely to be African
capitalism. Adjectival socialisms are usually variants
of facism. There is little to suggest either President
Nyerere or President Toure has judged wrong in these
assertions. But that is not the same thing as arguing
that the form of the challenge is planning socialist
revolutions. In the first place, the six challenges
cited would - do for that matter - confront African
states in transition to socialism just as starkly (if
perhaps somewhat more manageably) as they do those seeking
a transition to domestic capitalism. In the second place,
if socialism is the first step to an answer, then facing
food, income distribution and participation squarely
will demonstrate the limits of dependent capitalist
development and create the conditions to launch a coherent,
mass based transition to socialism. Especially in much
of West Africa those conditions simply do not exist today,
and will not be created by intellectuals' affirmations.
In Beginning

The purpose of projecting the future from the present and past is - or ought - to be to change it. A futurologist, therefore, should presumably end "in beginning" and not "in conclusion".

In fact, the prospects sketched are more uneven and uncertain than uniformly grim or forbidding. That does suggest that President Nyerere's dictum "To plan is to choose, choose to go forward" is relevant. Bas Congo famines, the lunar landscapes of Pekines, the consignment of majorities to the worlds of Petals of Blood, Amins and Nguemas, the lengthy survival of Smiths and Mudges, the grounded planes and closed borders of East African Non-Communities are not inevitable. The adverse external settings likely to confront Africa and most African states during the 1980's do not invalidate that - challenges can bring forth responses, external penetration can give rise to national resurgence.

As one concerned with the course of events in Africa one can only echo Gramsci's letter from prison counselling "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will". As a futurologist one should perhaps conclude with the bemused comment of the first recorded practitioner - Pliny the Elder - when his predictions went wrong:

Out of Africa there is always something new.
NOTES


8. op.cit. p.3

9. ibid, pp.2,6.


11. op.cit. p.4.


16. With EAC dead beyond resurrection, Tanzania perceiving itself as Southern African, the Horn in continuing conflict it is hard to see a viable East African body emerging for some years.


Professor Green has been a student of the political economy of Africa since 1960 and a member of Southern Africa solidarity and support groups since 1955. He has been a faculty member at the University of Ghana, Makerere University and the University of Dar es Salaam, has served as a consultant to the governments of Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Botswana and Swaziland and was Economic Advisor to the Tanzania Treasury over 1966-74. He has been in twenty seven African countries and has written nearly a hundred reviews, articles, monographs, chapters and volumes. Dr. Green is currently a Professorial Fellow of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex and is serving as a consultant to the Commonwealth Secretariat and the economic secretariat of SWAPO and is a member of the Southern African Development Coordination London Liaison Committee.