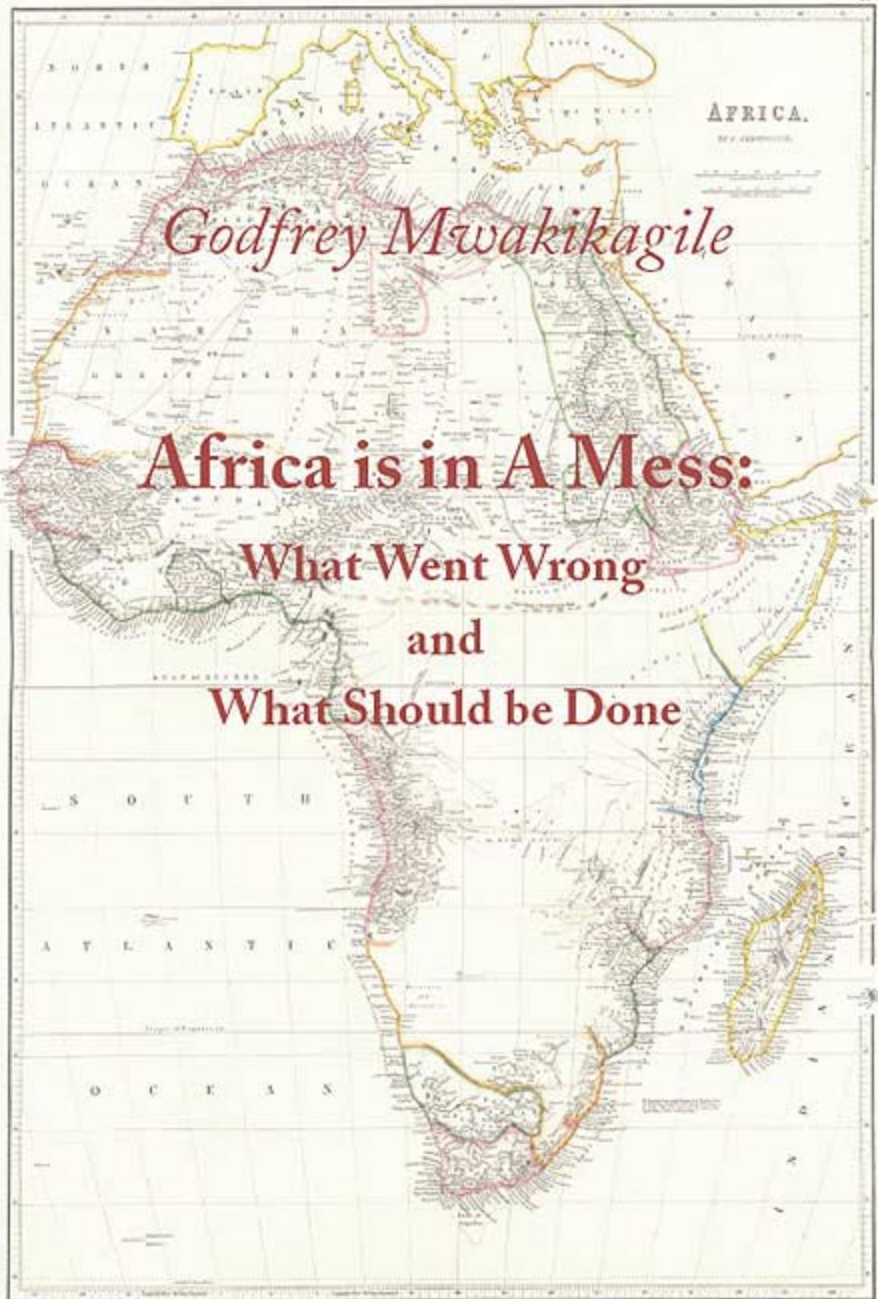


AFRICA.
BY J. J. J. J.*Godfrey Mwakikagile*

**Africa is in A Mess:
What Went Wrong
and
What Should be Done**





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What Went Wrong and What Should Be Done**
by
Godfrey Mwakikagile

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Acknowledgments

THIS WORK drew its inspiration from the struggling masses of Africa. And it is to them that I must express my deepest gratitude. Without them, I would not have written this book. And without them, there would be no Africa. Leaders are nothing without the people, although many of them think otherwise.

Two individuals I have cited in this book deserve special mention for their courage to tell the ugly truth about Africa despite their African roots. Many others have done so but the two individuals need to be mentioned for reasons that are obvious to anyone who reads this book. They are George B.N. Ayittey, a Ghanaian professor of economics at The American University in Washington, D.C., and author of *Africa Betrayed* and *Africa in Chaos*, among other works; Keith B. Richburg, a black American from Detroit, Michigan, who was the Africa bureau chief of *The Washington Post* from 1991 to 1994, during which he witnessed the horrors of our mangled continent when he covered the civil wars in Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia besides other events, most of them tragic.

His experience in Africa inspired him to write one of the most controversial books about our continent published in the nineties, *Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa*. Like Ayittey's equally trenchant works, Richburg's book has generated a lot of interest and inspired strong debate about Africa and its future among many people. As expected, both writers have been vilified and severely criticized for writing "bad" books about Africa, but have been applauded by just as many, if not by even more people for telling the truth that needs to be told.

I cannot complete this acknowledgment without mentioning the *Daily News*, Tanzania's main newspaper and one of the three largest and most influential in East Africa, where I worked in the early seventies as a young reporter in my early twenties. It was at that paper, in my native country of which I will always be an integral part, where I sharpened my writing skills. As a reporter, I wrote everyday.

And our editor, Benjamin Mkapa who years later became president of Tanzania from 1995 to 2005, also played a major role in helping me realize my ambition when he helped me to go to school in the United States where I attended Wayne State University in Detroit, and Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, in the state of Michigan. And it is in the United States where all my books have been published.

While credit goes to others for inspiration and encouragement in the execution of this project, I must also state in no uncertain terms that I assume full responsibility for everything I have written in this book. I am also fully responsible for any mistakes which may be found in my work.

It was a painful book to write. But it had to be written. One of our biggest failures is our refusal to admit mistakes and tell the truth. Just tell it. And let the people decide.

Introduction

THE COLONIAL LEGACY has always been a subject of interest to many people in Africa. It is also one of enduring obsession among a significant number of nationalists who blame our former colonial masters more than anybody else for the kind of mess we are in today. But there is an increasing number of Africans who don't do that. And they are no less committed than those who do.

This book is written from a nationalist perspective of a Pan-Africanist who does not believe that everything that is wrong with Africa today can be placed entirely on the shoulders of our former colonial masters, but apportions guilt accordingly. Some of it can be attributed to our colonial experience, and to the international system over which we have no control or influence in a world dominated by major powers especially those of the industrial West.

Although the former colonial powers are an integral part of this hegemonic control, they are not exclusively in control of the international power arrangements to our detriment. Other highly developed nations which never had colonies in Africa are also some of the main architects of this power structure superimposed on everything else in the global arena. They include the United States, the most powerful country in the world today, and the only remaining super power after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Critical to understanding what ails Africa is an objective evaluation of the situation we are in today. And anyone who takes this approach cannot honestly say that African problems are caused by external forces to the exclusion of internal factors, especially the dynamics of power engineered and manipulated by our leaders. There is just too much evidence against us, especially our leaders, to blame anybody else for our condition. The problem lies within, not without. And many of us have known this since independence. The purpose here is not to exonerate the colonialists, let alone applaud them for colonizing us, but to construct a proportional perspective on reality, and see it the way it is, however harsh it is.

One memorable incident comes to mind and is highly instructive in this context to illustrate the point I am trying to make with regard to our colonial experience. Back in 1972 when I was a young reporter - 22 years old - at the *Daily News* in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, I asked my colleagues on the editorial staff one morning: "Where would we be today had Europeans not come to Africa?"

The question was a challenge and an exhortation for us to do better as much as it was a blunt assessment, and an acknowledgment, of our backward condition. My colleagues, the entire editorial staff, broke out in laughter. The answer was obvious. It did not have to be expressed in words. Actions speak louder than words. I remember Kusai Khamisa, a senior reporter - now deceased - who sometimes served as news editor giving us assignments and functioned in this capacity on that day, admitting that I was brutally frank about our deplorable condition. Other reporters shared the same view even if they did not express it out of wounded pride. But the laughter brought out their true feelings. They were laughing at ourselves, painfully aware of our position vis-a-vis that of other nations in the world, especially those of the developed West; with Africa having the unenviable distinction as the most backward continent in almost every conceivable way in terms of technological progress and material civilization.

What was acknowledged by my colleagues in the editorial office that morning was equally obvious to many other Tanzanians, as well as other Africans across the continent. Our country had been independent for only ten years - we won independence from Britain on December 9, 1961 - too short a period for us to have built on our own what we had across the country by then: towns, schools and hospitals, roads and railways, office buildings and other structures, bridges and power plants, telecommunications facilities and other infrastructure. The evidence was right in front of us, staring at it everyday, a rueful reminder of our "backwardness" before Europeans came: the telephones and typewriters, even pens and paper, we used everyday as reporters, and much more, we never had until the advent of colonial rule. Toss in shoes as well, and even clothes in some cases.

We inherited all that, and much more including Western vices - not just virtues - and destruction of our continent in a number of ways, and did not even for one moment think about asking

Europeans to take back everything they brought with them when they left after independence. Why not? Because we needed all that, and still do.

It is an enduring legacy of colonial rule we probably cannot do without. Ask the Japanese how they feel about the technology they imported from the West, while retaining their culture and way of life in all fundamental respects.

This does not, in any way, justify colonial rule. It is simply an acknowledgment of reality about our condition, and dependence on the very people who conquered us and robbed us of our land and dignity. Tragically, such dependence continues today and is ruthlessly public; as we continue to rail against our former colonial masters and other imperialist nations, while they and others laugh at us for seeking help from the very people we attack so much and even blame for the mess we are in now. A lot of this criticism is warranted. But also, a lot of it is entirely misplaced. Many amongst us simply don't tell the truth about our condition and refuse to do so.

But lying to ourselves is *not* going to solve our problems. Blaming colonialism and American imperialism is *not* going to end corruption by our leaders. Nor is it going to end tyranny, tribalism, poverty and disease afflicting hundreds of millions of our people and killing untold numbers of them everyday. For example, more than 3,000 children under the age of five die of malaria in Africa everyday. Yet our countries have done little to combat the disease and other plagues of biblical proportions. Instead, we wait for Europeans, Americans, Asians and others to come up with cures for us as if we are a continent of infants or congenital idiots without a bit of common sense. And you wonder why they say we are genetically and intellectually inferior to them? What have we done for ourselves besides begging? Where is our inventive genius? Where are our scientists? When are we going to catch with the rest of mankind?

Until we face reality, and admit that the problem lies within more than anywhere else, there is no hope for Africa. Absolutely none. And an increasing number of our people will continue to remember with nostalgia the "good ol' days" of colonial rule and wish that our former clonial masters were back to rule us again.

It is that bad, and sad, more than an entire generation since independence, as millions of Africans continue to ask: Where are the

fruits of independence? What did independence bring us? The answer is obvious. In most cases, it brought us misery and suffering at the hands of our own people, African leaders, as if we fought for independence only to replace one oppressor with another.

We need another liberation. But it a liberation which some contend entails a return to the status quo ante: restoration of the imperial order, but in a much more benign form, to end our misery our leaders have simply ignored as if it's nothing.

Chapter 1.

Tragic Failure: What Next?

RECOLONIZE AFRICA. The idea itself is abhorrent, especially for people who are despised probably more than anybody else in the entire world and who are considered to be intellectually inferior to members of others races, with the backwardness of Africa being cited as compelling evidence of that. And *The Bell Curve*,¹ a book written by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein, in which the authors contend that blacks have lower IQs than whites, Asians and others, with blacks in Africa having the lowest IQs, because they have weak genes, has only "fortified" this incendiary thesis.

Yet, the two academics were unable to explain why many blacks, including those in Africa, have higher IQs than millions of whites and members of other races if black people are, indeed, less intelligent than whites and other people. They, thus, inadvertently undermined their thesis although their book has continued to fuel debate about race and intelligence since it was first published in March 1994.

Still, the truth about Africa, all the misery and suffering because of bad leadership since independence, is compelling enough to make some people, including many Africans themselves, think the unthinkable: Africa should probably be recolonized to end its misery. Let Europeans, our former colonial masters, come back and rule us again and end all these civil wars and corruption, revive the economy, maintain law and order, and develop Africa. "We have had it with our leaders," is the sentiment articulated and shared by millions across this beleaguered continent.

The call for recolonization is also made by some of the most educated Africans, all of whom cannot be easily dismissed as educated fools, brainwashed and whitewashed by their former

colonial masters. Theirs is a desperate plea for help, shared by their brethren across the continent, to save Africa before it descends into the abyss. Some believe it is already there; hence the designation, "The Lost Continent," a term used by a number of Africans themselves including former UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali from Egypt, as cited by George Ayittey, a Ghanaian professor of economics at The American University in Washington, D.C., in his highly controversial book *Africa in Chaos*² which, together with Keith Richburg's equally inflammatory work, *Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa*,³ has been described by some people as anti-African.

Since independence in the sixties, Africa has performed poorly in most areas because of bad leadership and bad policies, not because of weak genes. Most countries on the continent won independence by 1968. Yet, an entire generation later, they have little to show for all those years they have ruled themselves. No one expects a country to develop in 30 or 40 years. But no one expects it to do nothing either. There is no excuse for the kind of economic retardation that has taken place in most countries across Africa since independence. A generation is not a week. When compared to other parts of the developing world, Africa has performed miserably in every conceivable way. And statistics tell the story, a sad story.

In 1965, Nigeria was richer than Indonesia, and Ghana richer than Thailand. Today Indonesia is three times richer than Nigeria, and Thailand five times richer than Ghana. In 1965, Uganda was richer than South Korea. And in 1967, Zambia also was richer than South Korea. Zambia had a per capita income of \$200, and South Korea, \$120. After 30 years, South Korea's gross domestic product per person was more than \$10,000 in 1998, and Zambia's \$400.⁴ Yet, by African standards, Zambia is considered to be one of the richest countries on the continent in spite of all the misery, hunger and starvation ravaging this country endowed with abundant minerals and arable land more than enough to feed its entire population.

And all African countries combined have a smaller gross domestic product than that of Belgium, a country of only 10 million people, and one of the smallest in the world. By contrast, Africa's population is more than 700 million, on a continent endowed with abundant natural resources. The gross domestic product of African

countries is not only smaller but a mere fraction of Belgium's. What is even more depressing is that Indonesia, a developing country which in 1965 was poorer than Nigeria, has a bigger gross domestic product than that of all the black African countries combined. Yet, Indonesia itself was a colony, like the African countries, and won independence roughly around the same time that African countries did during the post-World War II era.

It is just as sad, probably even more so, when we look at the dismal performance of black Africa from another perspective. There are 40 black African countries out of 53 on the entire continent which includes the island nations of Madagascar, Mauritius, the Comoros, and the Seychelles, all on the Indian Ocean; Cape Verde, and Sao Tome & Principe on the Atlantic. More than half of the gross domestic product of the black African countries is contributed by only two countries: South Africa and Nigeria. That means a total of 38 black African countries - almost the entire sub-Saharan region - have a combined gross domestic product which is only about a third of Indonesia's. And the devastating impact of AIDS, civil wars and corruption makes things worse, much worse, with no relief in sight. Now, an increasing number of people are turning to churches calling for divine intervention to alleviate their plight.

Something is wrong, terribly wrong. But unlike in the past when it was fashionable for many Africans to blame colonialism and imperialism for almost all the problems our countries faced after we won independence, an increasing number of them today, especially those of the younger generation, insist on accountability within Africa itself, as they apportion guilt accordingly; instead of blaming colonialists and imperialists for the perpetual misery - thanks to tyranny, corruption, poverty and disease - hundreds of millions of Africans have to endure all their lives.

To these millions, independence has remained an abstract ideal without any concrete benefits in their lives, as they remain trapped in poverty and continue to be ravaged by disease, while billions of dollars in foreign aid, and taxes paid by the toiling masses, are being stolen and squandered by unscrupulous politicians and bureaucrats, together with their cronies and mistresses. It is clear where the problem lies. It lies within, not without. And the people are fed up. They are speaking up more and more against corrupt leaders,

even risking their lives by doing so. As Ernest Aning wrote in an influential monthly news magazine, *New African*:

Millions of dollars are stashed away by corrupt leaders, their families and cronies....The message is the same in Zaire, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, etc. Development in Africa has stagnated over the years due to turncoat politicians and soldiers who have perpetuated themselves in office by manipulating the system.

We find ourselves asking: Where did all the good people in Africa go?....What happened to the foreign exchange and the loans given for development projects? Some of these funds find their way right back in donor countries, stashed in coded accounts.

Who do you call in Africa when you see waste and embezzlement? Nobody! Our courts are under the thumbs of the leaders. So what is the solution? Maybe we should all start to look around and ask questions about why there have been no additional hospitals, clinics, schools, roads, jobs or any change in our economic lives over the last two or three decades.

We should look at Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and all these countries that were just like us not too long ago. What are they doing, or better put, what did they do, to change things? What did their governments do to achieve all these successes?....

In Africa, the average Joe goes into politics by any means possible to steal as much as he can. We've reached a point where the people can no longer be aloof....(But) today, well-meaning citizens stand and watch because intimidation has become too real and life-threatening.⁵

And as Maxwell Oteng, another African, also states:

A greater part of the blame on the present economic woes in our various countries should be apportioned to internal causes, especially bad political leadership. The Mobutus had a very good chance to push us away from being perpetual producers of raw materials to producers of value-added goods which would have given us control over our products. Instead, what did they do?....Until

recent years, Malaysia was an agriculture-dependent primary producer like us, but it diversified the economy and encouraged local production of goods.⁶

And in the words of yet another African, Simbowe Benson:

Mobutu's hour of reckoning has finally come. And he deserves no sympathy! For three decades, he has run Zaire as his personal fiefdom, culminating in mismanagement and institutional corruption. Zaire is a rich country....Now this rich nation has been reduced to penury while Mobutu and the Western business interests he fronts for have grown rich at the expense of the people. Laurent Kabila and his Alliance for Democratic Forces deserve our full support in their effort to unseat Mobutu and his sick regime.⁷

Initially, Kabila was seen and hailed as a liberator of his fellow countrymen from the clutches of Mobutu's kleptocratic regime. But he turned out to be no better than his predecessor and, in some respects, even surpassed him in outright incompetence. It was the same cycle all over again, and the same collective sentiment echoed across the continent about rotten African leadership. It is rotten to the core.

Things are so bad that many people remember with nostalgia "the good old days" of colonial rule when they could at least afford basic necessities and sometimes even freely express their views without fear of being locked up for simply speaking up. Colonial rule was oppressive and exploitative. There is no question about that. And it did not allow Africans to have the kind of freedom they normally would have under democracy. But when a leader like Archbishop Desmond Tutu says he had more freedom of speech under apartheid than other Africans do in independent African countries under the leadership of fellow Africans, as he said in Nairobi, Kenya, in the early nineties; then one gets a pretty good idea of what kind of mess we are in as a people across the continent.

Many older people also remember that during colonial rule, in spite of its oppressive nature and curtailed freedom, they were allowed a degree of freedom they don't enjoy today in most countries even in this era of democratization that was introduced across Africa in the early nineties following the collapse of communism and the end

of the Cold War. Whether we like to admit it or not, it is true that there was a degree of freedom during colonial rule. That is why African nationalist leaders were able to organize and form political parties and campaign for independence right under the nose of our colonial masters. It is the colonial rulers who allowed them to do that, although within prescribed limits to stifle nationalist aspirations. But they did allow our leaders to continue mobilizing the masses for the nationalist cause. Yet, after we won independence, many of our leaders went on to deny us this very basic human right, freedom of expression, they claimed to cherish so much.

Sometimes curtailment of freedom was justified to keep countries united and from splitting along tribal and regional lines; a dreadful prospect which would have become a reality had the people been allowed to form opposition parties most of which would have been tribal and regional in character, a danger that was avoided when the one-party system was established in most African countries. But more often than not, it was sheer abuse of power by our leaders which resulted in the denial of basic human rights to the vast majority of the people across Africa. And it still goes on today.

Offensive as the idea of recolonizing Africa may be, it pales into insignificance when compared to the horrors of wars and chopped limbs, massive starvation and disease millions of Africans have to endure everyday for the rest of their lives which are nothing but hell on Earth. It is not a popular idea even in Africa itself, a continent mangled by war and disfigured by disease. But it resonates well among the victims, as demonstrated by the people of Sierra Leone who were jubilant when the British returned to their former colony to virtually run the government and end the civil war which devastated the country for ten years.

The former Belgian Congo which has earned the unenviable distinction as the bleeding heart of Africa because of chaos and civil wars since the sixties, has had similar experience. Henry Louis Gates Jr., chairman of the African-American studies department at Harvard University, recalls one memorable incident during his visit to the Congo and other African countries in the late nineties which illustrates this point. During the same trip, he also visited my home country, Tanzania, where he first went in 1969 when he was an undergraduate student at Yale University and worked for one year at

a hospital in Kilimatinde in the central province which is Dodoma Region today.

During his visit to the Congo, someone had spread a rumor that the Belgians were coming back to rule the country again. He said some of the people were so excited when they heard this that when the ship in which he was a passenger arrived in Kisangani, formerly Stanleyville, on the banks of the Congo River, they formed a crowd waving tree branches to welcome the Belgians who were supposedly aboard the same vessel. To their utter disappointment, there were no Belgians on the ship who had come back to rule them again. It was no more than a rumor. But it demonstrates, in a very tragic way, the utter futility of life in the heart of Africa under the kleptocratic regime of President Mobutu Sese Seko who virtually bled his country to death during his 32 years of rotten leadership. It also demonstrates the degree of desperation among the Congolese who were so desperate that they remembered with nostalgia "the good old days" of Belgian rule and wished the Belgians had never left.

Yet, this is also worth remembering, it was the same people, the Belgians, who killed Patrice Lumumba with the help of the CIA. It was also the same people, together with other Western powers including the United States, who installed Mobutu in power and plundered the country for decades leaving it an empty shell, with the help of this arch-traitor who was as treacherous as Moise Tshombe. Still, these are the very same people some Congolese wanted back to rule them again. Yes, things had gone that bad. And that is not the end of it on this embattled continent which is so ravaged by disease and emaciated by hunger that the acronym AIDS also now stands for Africa Is Dying Slowly.

In Gabon, the small oil-rich country not far from the former Belgian Congo, there is even a political party whose leaders and supporters campaigned in the 1990s to turn their country into a province of France, the former colonial power. The French refused for obvious reasons. They knew what their former colonial subjects wanted, economic benefits from France more than anything else, at any cost, including selling their country. The same sentiment for a return to the status quo ante of colonial days is echoed in other parts of Africa by a significant number of people. They say, yes, tragic and humiliating as the idea is, colonial rule was better than what they

have to endure today under the leadership of their fellow Africans. But was colonial rule really better? It is highly debatable, and both sides continue to maintain their positions on this inflammatory subject.

The tragedy of all this is that, to many people, the misery and suffering hundreds of millions have endured for decades under their own black governments since independence provides a clear-cut answer which does not even have to be articulated. Facts speak for themselves. Just come to Africa and see for yourself, they say. You don't even need to stay long. And compare what you see today with what we had during the days of colonial rule. The answer is written on the wall for everybody to see. That is the tragedy of Africa.

Here is a continent where brother is killing brother, his fellow African brother, in senseless civil wars. It is also a continent where the leaders, at least most of them, don't have the slightest concern for the well-being of their people living in misery, everyday, seven days a week, for the rest of their lives. Not only is it a life of misery, it is living hell. And it is a continent where millions have simply given up on their lives and have to depend on handouts from international relief agencies and other donors to get a simple meal now and then; sometimes once a day or every two days, and even once a week sometimes, or never. But the reality is the same. Life is hard, very hard. And if Europeans and other foreigners can provide them with at least something, many Africans feel that these good Samaritans might as well stay. Our governments are doing nothing for us, they say. And it is a fact.

That is the harsh reality. And we have to be brutally frank about it. Such governments cannot justify their existence. They thrive at the expense of their people who already live miserable lives. And their countries are no better off than Somalia which dissolved in anarchy and has had no government since 1991. President Siad Barre's oppressive and corrupt regime led to the collapse of Somalia, the first African country to "disappear" from the map.

Since independence, most African leaders have raided national coffers, bankrupted their economies; jailed, tortured and killed their opponents, real and imagined, including innocent civilians, to perpetuate themselves in office. They are among the world's richest people in the poorest countries in the world. They are

also among the most brutal. And they continue to bleed their people to death in more than one way: ruined economies, shattered lives, summary executions and much more. African countries have become international beggars. And they have been begging since independence in the sixties. Yet, some of these very countries had the potential to develop and outstrip their southeastern Asian counterparts which are now known as the Asian tigers because of their brilliant economic performance. And the contrast is glaring.

In the sixties, the southeast Asian countries were as poor as or poorer than some African countries which are now on international welfare, dependent on donors for their very survival. They include "prosperous" ones today such as Uganda. As Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said in a speech to the United National General Assembly in February 1997, in 1965 Uganda was "more prosperous than South Korea and Nigeria more prosperous than Indonesia."⁸ So what happened? It is also worth remembering that the year 1965 when Nigeria was richer than Indonesia, Ghana richer than Thailand, and Uganda and Zambia richer than South Korea, was around the same time when all those African countries had just won independence from Britain; which means it was *not* the African governments which made those countries prosperous when compared to their southeast Asian counterparts. It was the British colonial governments which did. Ghana won independence in March 1957, Nigeria in October 1960, Uganda in October 1962, and Zambia, formerly Northern Rhodesia, in October 1964; hardly enough time - by 1965 - for the new African governments to have made any appreciable impact on their countries' economies to achieve significant progress within so few years and outstrip the southeast Asian nations.

The claim, if it is indeed ever made, that it is the black African governments which were responsible for this progress by 1965 - may be with the exception of Ghana under Nkrumah who ruled the longest among them from 1957 to 1966 - is further, in fact even more strongly, refuted by the fact that during the next 30 years after independence, economic ruin and political chaos became the rule rather than the exception in all those countries and the rest across the continent. They all ended up being the poorest in the world as they still are today.

One of the strange paradoxes about Africa is that some of the richest countries on the continent are also among the poorest. Therefore most of the poverty in those countries cannot be attributed to lack of natural resources but to bad leadership, wrong economic policies, rampant corruption, and sheer waste and mismanagement including well-meaning incompetence. And no case better illustrates the utter waste of such potential than that of Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo (a misnomer itself), under Mobutu Sese Seko, one of the most brutal, and most corrupt, dictators on the entire continent. He ruled a vast country endowed with an abundance of minerals and other natural resources including enormous agricultural potential, making it potentially one of the richest countries in the world. In fact, in terms of mineral wealth, it is the richest country in Africa, richer than South Africa. But the government did nothing with all that enormous wealth through the decades to help its own people when it was led by Mobutu - who inspired coinage of the term kleptocrat; an indictment equally applicable to most African countries. As economics editor Thierry Naudin stated in November 1996 in a leading newspaper *The European*:

In much of Africa, if a country is poor it seems bound to remain so indefinitely, and if it is rich, as Zaire is, it seems destined to be systematically plundered by a ruling minority....Zaire, which is about as large as the European Union, sits on some of the world's richest reserves of gold, diamonds, copper, cobalt and another dozen metals. The state's water resources are adequate to generate the energy required to exploit those minerals, and could also support an agricultural sector big enough to feed Zaire's population of 44 million. Nearly four decades after independence, the country might have been expected to have developed some manufacturing sector of its own.

But something is very wrong, and none of this potential has been realized. In terms of overall production and income, Zaire is back to its 1958 pre-independence levels - and now has a population three times as great. Its per capita output - under \$120 per year today, against \$377 in 1960 - is one of the lowest in the world. Like many countries in the region, since the 1960s it has swung from being an exporter to an importer of foodstuffs.⁹

The country also has the potential, like Angola, to feed much of Africa. And the Congo River has enough potential to generate electricity for the entire continent. Yet all that has gone down the drain since independence under some of the most corrupt leaders on Earth. One of the richest countries in the world has become one of the poorest, and an international beggar, unable even to feed itself, because of corrupt leadership. During 32 years of kleptocratic rule, Mobutu bled the country to death, and Zaire ended up being one of the poorest countries even in Africa itself. And the continent, of course, has the distinction of having the largest number of the poorest countries in the world. Almost all African countries are poor, desperately poor.

Mobutu's personal wealth equalled the national debt, at the very least. He amassed a fortune estimated to be between \$5 and \$10 billion and was said to be one of the five richest men in the world. When he was asked on "Sixty Minutes," an American documentary program on CBS television, how rich he was, he arrogantly responded by saying he didn't even know how rich he was, because he was so rich. His brutal dictatorship plunged the country into chaos, igniting a civil war which led to his ouster in May 1997. And the country is still torn by war.

Neighboring Congo-Brazzaville, also known as the Congo Republic or Republic of the Congo, is another country endowed with an abundance of natural resources and fertile land. It is potentially one of the richest countries in Africa and in the entire Third World like a number of African countries including South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, and Zimbabwe, besides the Democratic Republic of Congo. Relatively speaking, the people of Congo-Brazzaville enjoy a higher standard of living than their fellow Africans in many other countries on the continent. Yet, most of the country's wealth goes to only a few people, distributed on tribal basis depending on whose tribe is in power. If the president is a member of the Bakongo tribe from the south and the largest in the country, like Pascal Lissouba, a former professor, his people get the largest piece of the pie. If he is a member of the Sanga tribe, like Denis Sassou-Nguesso, from the north or from any of the other northern tribes including the Mbochi, his people grab the largest share. Even the struggle for power is fought along tribal

and regional lines, tragically demonstrated by the civil war which devastated the capital Brazzaville in a four-month civil war from July to October in 1997 at a cost of more than 10,000 lives. The country is still torn by civil war, ignited and fuelled by ethnoregional rivalries. As one senior West African diplomat in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, stated:

What you have in Congo is a very rich state in deep decay. Unfortunately, there are no saints in this picture. The name of the game in Congo is being in charge so that you and a few people from your ethnic group profit from the country's huge oil earnings.¹⁰

Neighboring Gabon is another fabulously rich country. It has a lot of oil and other natural resources more than enough for its small population of just over a million people to enjoy one of the highest standards of living in Africa and in the entire Third World. And some of them do, the elite. Because of the country's abundant wealth, large numbers of immigrants from other French-speaking African countries, and from English-speaking Nigeria especially from the east, work in Gabon, mostly harvesting cash crops. In fact, for many years, the people of Gabon had the highest per capita income in black Africa, and second only to Libya's on the entire continent. Yet, after more than 30 years of autocratic rule and rampant corruption under President Omar Bongo who has ruled the country since 1967, the Gabonese are still mired in poverty in spite of all that wealth. And because of disease and malnutrition, they also have one of the lowest life expectancies in the world, with an average man dying at the age of 25.

This is also the country where in the 1990s a political party with significant support in many parts of the country actively campaigned to make Gabon part of France, out of sheer desperation, because of misery and suffering inflicted on the people by rotten leadership since independence. To many of these people, French colonial rule was better, and they would rather be under the French again. Their own leaders, fellow Africans, have failed them miserably. It is that bad, and sad.

Other rich African countries notorious for squandering wealth include Cameroon where President Paul Biya has muzzled the opposition while enormously enriching himself; and Nigeria where

military dictator General Ibrahim Babangida amassed a fortune estimated to be more than \$30 billion, siphoned from petrodollars, making him one of the richest men in history. His successor General Sani Abacha, another despot, stole an estimated \$4 billion within five years since he seized power in 1993 from Babangida who ruled from 1983. And in neighboring Equatorial Guinea, the family of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema and their cronies have stolen billions from oil money in only a short time since the tiny west-central African country became oil-rich in the late 1990s.

Further west in the Ivory Coast, a civil war which erupted in 2002 because of ethnoregional and religious differences split the country in half and devastated what once was the richest country in West Africa and one of the most stable on the entire continent since independence from France in 1960.

In southern Africa, two rich countries have also been devastated by conflicts. Angola was destroyed by civil war which lasted for more than 25 years. During all those years, the elite also stole billions of petrodollars while doing nothing for their people. They used war as an excuse, saying the money from oil and other natural resources including abundant minerals such as diamonds, was being used to fight the UNITA rebels. After the war ended, they could no longer use it as an excuse to explain where the money was going. Yet, billions of dollars continued to disappear from national coffers, raided and drained by government leaders and their cronies.

Kenya also was one of the most prosperous countries in Africa. But after 24 years of corruption, mismanagement, and dictatorship under President Daniel arap Moi who also ignited and fanned ethnic conflicts to perpetuate himself and his cronies in power, the economy was utterly ruined; and the country became one of the poorest and most unstable on the entire continent.

Those are only a few examples of the devastation wrought, and the potential wasted, across Africa since independence in the sixties. Now, tell all those suffering millions that, by comparison, colonial rule was not better than what they have today under the leadership of their own people, fellow Africans. It is a tough proposition. Tell the hundreds of thousands in refugee camps who have fled from civil wars and who are now being fed, not by fellow Africans, but by the Europeans, the Americans and international relief

agencies that, don't worry, your own people, your own leaders, will take care of you.

Put yourself in their place, starving and dying of hunger and disease without any relief in sight from African leaders and governments, and yet continue to wait for help from them that will never come; and honestly say, you are now better off than you were under colonial rule in terms of getting basic necessities just to survive. Then you will understand why tens of millions of African are disgusted with their leaders; and why even some of them are nostalgic about the good ol' days of colonial rule. It is tragic, and it is humiliating to us. But the logic behind such sentiments is unassailable in its own limited context, however offensive it may be to our nationalist sensibilities; which it is. As one starving elderly Kenyan, quoted by *The Washington Post* in the late nineties, put it: "It is only you white people who can save us."

Now, argue with him about that; a desperate man who is simply saying we are begging because we are starving. We don't want to die. Our governments, our people, are doing nothing for us.

Many people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, ravaged by war, hunger and disease, articulated the same sentiment. Ted Koppel, an American television journalist, visited eastern Congo in 2001 and produced a documentary showing women who had been raped, beaten and starved by the rebels, pleading for help. It was a poignant report. They made it clear, abundantly clear, in that documentary that it was only white people who could save them from misery and suffering. Once you see and hear that, then you may begin to understand why some Congolese felt it would have been better if the Belgians came back to rule them again and maintain law and order.

Older ones remember that there was no such chaos, at least not on the scale they have now, when the Belgians were in power. Chaos ensued right away when they left after independence; a tragedy they themselves were largely responsible for, of course, when they tried to split the country by supporting the secession of Katanga Province. But relatively speaking, many people remember that they could at least get some food and other basic necessities, and some jobs, in the fifties when the Belgians were still in power. And there was law and order, even if it was for the purpose of maintaining

colonial rule and securing the interests of the Belgians and other Westerners living in the Congo; which it was.

And let me make it clear, abundantly clear. I am *not* an apologist for colonial rule. I have never been and never will be. Nor do I advocate a return to the status quo ante, with colonial flags fluttering under the tropical sun on our continent. I would rather die first than see the British back in my country Tanzania to rule us again even if they don't hoist the Union Jack. And I feel the same way about the rest of the African countries. Like most Africans, I don't want to see the Union Jack flying over Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Sierra Leone where the British are virtually back in power, or in any of the former British colonies in Africa. And I don't want to see the Tricolor back in Mali, Guinea, Senegal, Niger or in any of the former French colonies on the continent. I don't want to see any of the colonial flags defying the African sky again, or any of our former colonial masters back to rule us again, with or without the flag.

It is, of course, easier said than done if you are not the one who is starving or whose limbs have been chopped by rebels like in Sierra Leone, because your government has ruined the country's economy, failed to create jobs and provide security. Still, the idea of recolonization is as reprehensible, and abhorrent, as it is despicable, humiliating and insulting; however irresistible it may be to the victims of utter neglect. And it is millions of them in every country, although not all of them, not even the majority, subscribe to this highly offensive notion which is also deeply humiliating to us.

But something is wrong, terribly wrong, with our countries for some people to even entertain such an idea. It is a plea for help borne out of desperation, and utter destitution, our leaders have failed or refused to address adequately, if at all, since independence in the sixties. Outside intervention to help resolve Africa's crises, including alleviating hunger and ending civil wars, is sought and welcomed even by the African leaders themselves. And it amounts to a form of recolonization when the intervening powers have the final say on what should and should not be done, since they are the ones who provide us with the assistance we so desperately need. So it's really not a question of whether or not Africa should be "recolonized," but

what form this "recolonization" should take, and what it should be called.

Camouflaging the phenomenon under the guise of humanitarian assistance or partnership for development may help blunt the humiliation we suffer when we beg outsiders to help us solve our problems as if we don't have enough sense to do for ourselves what other have done and continue to do for themselves. So terminology is important. Yet, the reality remains the same in spite of the use of such clever semantics.

And let us also face this, much as we don't like it. We have lost our sovereignty to international donors and especially to multinational corporations in this era of globalization. Aid comes with strings attached. Donors pull the strings, we dance to the tune. Some of the biggest donors are our former colonial masters themselves in the West. And all the major multinational corporations doing business in Africa and plundering our resources are also owned by Westerners. We have, in a way, been recolonized; our perpetual dependence on other countries being the most searing indictment against our claim that we are genuinely independent. We hate to admit it, but we know it is true. As Julius Nyerere said in one of his farewell speeches not long before he died: "What sovereignty do you have? Many of these debt-ridden countries in Africa now have no sovereignty, they've lost it. It's in the hands of the IMF and the World Bank."¹¹

But that does not mean that he wanted us to be ruled again by our former colonial masters or by anybody else. He was simply facing reality. And the reality is that we don't have control over our lives and countries as much as we would like to have if we continue to depend on outsiders for survival and development. Even if he was the last African on Earth, Nyerere would never have said it would be a good idea for our former colonial masters to come back and rule us again. Although he conceded the loss of African sovereignty to international financial institutions and other agencies controlled by the industrialized nations, he still believed until his last days that Africa's salvation and survival depends on unity and self-reliance more than anything else. As he continued to say in the same speech, which was more conversational than formal in tone and delivery:

Africa south of the Sahara is fragmented. From the very beginning of independence 40 years ago, we were against that idea, that the continent is so fragmented. We called it the Balkanisation of Africa. Today, I think the Balkans are talking about the Africanisation of Europe. Africa's states are too many, too small, some make no logic, whether political logic or ethnic logic or anything. They are non-viable. It is not a confession....

Throw away all our ideas about socialism. Throw them away, give them away to the Americans, give them to the Japanese, give them, so that they can, I don't know, they can do whatever they like with them. *Embrace* capitalism, fine! But you *have* to be self-reliant....

Africa south of the Sahara is isolated. Therefore, to develop, it will have to depend upon its own resources basically. Internal resources, nationally; and Africa will have to depend upon Africa. The leadership of the future will have to devise, try to carry out policies of *maximum* national self-reliance and *maximum* collective self-reliance. They have no other choice....The small countries in Africa must move towards either unity or co-operation, unity of Africa. The leadership of the future, of the 21st century, should have less respect, less respect for this thing called 'national sovereignty.' I'm not saying take up arms and destroy the state, no! This idea that we must *preserve* the Tanganyika, then *preserve* the Kenya as they *are*, is nonsensical! The nation-states we have in Africa, we inherited them from Europe. They are the builders of the nation-states par excellence. For centuries they fought wars! The history of Europe, the history of the *building* of Europe, is a history of war. And sometimes their wars, when they get hotter although they're European wars, they call them *world wars*. And we all get involved. We fought even in Tanganyika here, we *fought* here, one world war (World War I).

These Europeans, powerful, where little Belgium is more powerful than the whole of Africa south of the Sahara put together; these *powerful* European states are moving towards unity, and you people are talking about the atavism of the tribe, this is nonsense! I am telling *you* people. How can anybody think of the tribe as the unity of the future?....Europe now, you can take it almost as God-given, Europe is not going to fight with Europe anymore. The Europeans are not going to take up arms against Europeans. They are moving towards unity - even the little, the little countries of the

Balkans which are breaking up, Yugoslavia breaking up, but they are breaking up at the same time the building up is taking place. They break up and say we want to come into the *bigger* unity. So there's a *building* movement, there's a *building* of Europe. These countries which have old, old sovereignties, countries of hundreds of years old; they are forgetting this, they are *moving* towards unity. And you people, you think Tanzania is sacred? What is Tanzania!

You *have* to move towards unity. If these powerful countries (of Europe) see that they have no future in the nation-states - what future do you think you have? So, if we can't *move*, if our leadership, our future leadership cannot move us to bigger nation-states, which I *hope* they are going to try; we tried and failed. I tried and failed. One of my biggest failures was actually that. I tried in East Africa and failed. But don't give up because we, the first leadership, failed, no! You try again! We failed, but the idea is a good idea. That these countries should come together. Don't leave Rwanda and Burundi on their own. They cannot survive. They can't. They're locked up into a form of prejudice. If we can't move towards bigger nation-states, at least let's move towards greater co-operation....

I want to say only one or two things about what is happening in southern Africa. Please accept the logic of coming together....South Africa, and I am talking about post-apartheid South Africa. Post-apartheid South Africa has the most developed and the most dynamic private sector on the continent. It is white, so what? So forget it is white. It is South African, dynamic, highly developed. If the investors of South Africa begin a new form of trekking, you *have* to accept it. It will be ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous, for Africans to go out seeking investment from North America, from Japan, from Europe, from Russia, and then, when these investors come from South Africa to invest in your own country, you say, "a! a! These fellows now want to take over our economy" - this is nonsense. You can't have it both ways. You want foreign investors or you don't want foreign investors. Now, the most available foreign investors for you are those from South Africa.

And let me tell you, when Europe think in terms of investing, they *might* go to South Africa. When North America think in terms of investing, they *might* go to South Africa. Even Asia, if they want to invest, the first country they may think of in Africa *may* be South

Africa. So, if *your* South Africa is going to be *your* engine of development, accept the reality, accept the reality. Don't accept this sovereignty, South Africa will reduce your sovereignty. What sovereignty do you have?....

West Africa. Another bloc is developing there, but that depends very much upon Nigeria my brother (looking at the Nigerian High Commissioner Ambassador), very much so. Without Nigeria, the future of West Africa is a problem. West Africa is more balkanised than Eastern Africa. More balkanised, tiny little states. The leadership will have to come from Nigeria. It came from

Nigeria in Liberia; it has come from Nigeria in the case of Sierra Leone; it will have to come from Nigeria in galvanising ECOWAS. But the military in Nigeria must allow the Nigerians to exercise that vitality in freedom. And it is my hope that they will do it.¹²

While Nigeria played a major role in ending civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and in helping restore some kind of stability to these war-torn countries, it has failed to live up to its potential within Nigeria itself. It is the richest black nation in the world, second only to predominantly black but multiracial South Africa; yet its people are among the poorest because of corruption and waste. As Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian writer and activist who was hanged by the Nigerian putative military dictator Sani Abacha in November 1985, lamented: while other oil-rich countries used their money for development, Nigeria squandered hers, with the leaders enriching themselves.¹³ Although Saro-Wiwa came from Eastern Nigeria, he supported the federal military government during the Nigerian civil war against the secession of Biafra, fearing that the Igbos would dominate his tribe, the Ogoni, and seize for themselves the oil coming from Ogoniland. Yet, he was not optimistic about the future after federal forces won the war; and wrote bitterly that "the resources of the Ogoni and other ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta could be more easily purloined while paying lip service to Nigerian federalism and unity."¹⁴ And as he said not long before he died: "My only regret is that I was ever born a minority in Nigeria."¹⁵ His fears were confirmed.

He was afraid that ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta would be ruthlessly exploited by Nigerian leaders and oil companies. And that is exactly what happened. Nigerian leaders have been looting the national treasury for decades. Most of the leaders have come from the country's three main ethnic groups: the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo, and the Yoruba. But most of the stealing has been done by military rulers and politicians from Northern Nigeria, mostly the Hausa-Fulani who have dominated Nigeria for more than 40 years since independence in 1960, even after Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba from the south-west, became president in May 1999. And most of the nation's wealth flows from oil in the Niger Delta inhabited by minority groups.

There has been some development in Nigeria, but hardly any in the areas of the ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta. And it has not benefited the vast majority of the people in Nigeria. Billions of dollars have been stolen and continue to be stolen by the leaders. They are the taproot of the problem and the main cause of the mess Nigeria is in today. The same applies to other African countries. But Nigeria, like South Africa, also has a unique role to play in Africa because of its wealth and size, and demonstrated ability to do so, however limited.

Both Nigeria and South Africa have the potential to serve as anchors of stability in their respective regions and the entire sub-Saharan region; while North Africa is left to Egypt. In East Africa, it may be Kenya or Tanzania or both, with an even greater potential if the East African countries including Uganda - as well as Rwanda and Burundi as Nyerere strongly suggested not long before he died - form a federation which has eluded them since the sixties when they talked about establishing one. And in the Horn of Africa, there is Ethiopia as the regional power.

But there is also resentment, especially in the case of Nigeria and South Africa, that the regional powers want to dominate other states, playing an "imperial" role similar to what the colonial powers did when they dominated the continent. Therefore, even this kind of "internal colonization", however benevolent, is deeply resented by the weaker countries in their respective regions in Africa. Resentment is even more bitter in the case of the former colonial powers trying to recolonize Africa, if they indeed were to be determined to reimpose imperial rule on the continent even if not in a brazen way as before.

The idea of recolonizing Africa is highly inflammatory because it implies that Africans, especially black Africans, are nothing but a bunch of idiots incapable of managing their own affairs. Sadly, it is partly true. Since independence, African governments have terribly misruled their countries and ruined their economies, turning Africans not only into international beggars but the laughingstock of the world. And just as tragic is the fact that it is the same stereotype about Africans as stupid people which was used to justify colonialism and the conquest of Africa.

Therefore, recolonization schemes are either racist or paternalistic, or both. Few, if any, are altruistic. And they all provoke furious responses, especially being labelled racist. That was the case when Gordon Frisch, an American geopolitical analyst, wrote an article saying it was time to recolonize Africa. The article was, depending on one's judgment, appropriately or inappropriately entitled, "Africa - Staring Into the Abyss: Send in the Mercenaries and Re-Colonize":

Looking at Africa today, one can't help but think of a line from Dante's *Inferno*: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here!" AIDS is devastating sub-Saharan Africa on a scale rivaling the worst plagues to ever besiege mankind. Annually, AIDS kills more people in sub-Saharan Africa than all of the continent's wars combined - 2 million in 1999, 85 percent of the world's total AIDS deaths, on top of 13.7 million Africans who've already died of AIDS. 70 percent of the world's HIV-positive people live in sub-Saharan Africa, and most will die in the next 10 years, leaving shattered families and economic devastation in their wake.

AIDS by itself is bad enough. Throw in rotten dictatorships, Marxism, corruption, illiteracy, racism, genocide, tribal and national wars, and the term "utter hopelessness" is inadequate to describe Black Africa's plight. For years we've counseled investors to avoid sub-Saharan Africa, saying it was headed down a corrupt one-way road to collapse. It's arrived. Black Africa teeters on the edge of a yawning abyss, and at the bottom lies total anarchy and chaos. Many say it can't get much worse. We say: it can and it will.

Twenty years of failed Marxist policies have caught up with President Robert Mugabe. Zimbabwe is in economic and political

meltdown due to rampant corruption, Marxism's fatal flaws, 25 percent HIV positive AIDS test rates, runaway inflation, etc. The crowning blow to this once vibrant economy was Mugabe himself; he emptied the treasury at the rate of \$1 million per day to support 11,000 troops he sent to support fellow traveler Laurent Kabila, Congo's Marxist leader. In a last ditch attempt at survival, Mugabe is lambasting every scapegoat on the planet - foreign media, the British government, the IMF, opposition political parties, white Zimbabweans, etc.

But Zimbabwe's white farmers, among Zimbabwe's most valuable assets, are bearing the brunt of Mugabe's misplaced wrath. They own 30 percent of the farmland, produce the bulk of agricultural products, employ 350,000 Blacks, and bring vital export income. Mugabe has sent state-supported thugs to attack white farmers, brutalize their black workers and grab their land "to right colonial injustices of the past."

At the end of April, Emmerson Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe's justice (?) minister said: "Within 10 days the legal framework to take land and redistribute it to the people [without compensation to white owners] will be in place and we will immediately proceed." About the same time, an unregistered Ilyushin 76 former Soviet cargo plane arrived in Harare from Marxist Angola carrying a shipment of 21,000 AK-47's for Mugabe. They were promptly distributed to police and land-grabbing squatters. Chenjerai "Hitler" Hunzvi, Mugabe's farm invasion organizer said: "All those with British passports must go back to Britain. If they don't, they will go into the ground."

Mugabe's land-grabbing contagion is spreading more rapidly than AIDS. Fear that South African Blacks could go on a similar rampage has caused the rand to plummet. It doesn't help that South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki recently joined ranks with Mugabe at a trade fair and Nelson Mandela avoids direct criticism of Mugabe. And it seems no one buys the assurances of KGB Joe Slovo's widow, Helena Dolny, that South Africa won't follow Zimbabwe into a black land-grab. Namibian Blacks are now chanting Zimbabwe's land-grab rhetoric.

In North [northeast] Africa, Ethiopia and Eritrea are in a needless, stupid war, fueled by recent Russian arms deliveries to both sides. In West Africa, the UN's feckless peacekeepers got caught in the

middle of Sierra Leone's civil war and taken hostage by murderous RUF rebels, led by Foday Sankoh. It's noteworthy that in 1997, mercenaries captured Sankoh and turned him over to Sierra Leone's democratically elected president and peace ensued. Sankoh was saved from certain execution and released last year under terms of a peace process godfathered by none other than Reverend Jesse Jackson and the United States.

We never cease to be appalled at the incredible ignorance and denial displayed by the supposedly "civilized" world toward resolution of Africa's problems. Africa has immense economic potential, but is its own worst enemy and needs help. All the best intentions, trade negotiations, debt forgiveness, and blue helmets, are wasted efforts and ineffective. What is the solution?

Before any political solution can work, law and order, almost totally lacking in sub-Saharan Africa, must prevail. To accomplish this, as history has proven time and again in Africa, the most effective means is by the use of mercenaries. Neither the UN nor "civilized" governments have the mandate or the will to do the job.

Once peace has been "made," then perhaps the UN could participate in "keeping" it. Then, African governments should invite former colonists back as partners in running their countries, developing their economies and educating their people. The "politically correct" hacks of the world will bristle at these proposals, but millions of Africans are dying while the "politically correct" civilized world looks on in ignorant smugness. When all ivory tower theories fail, try something that has proved workable.¹⁶

Hysterical hyperbole aside, such as the outlandish claim that land-grabbing by black Africans is spreading faster than AIDS, this highly inflammatory article still raises fundamental issues and underscores the need to come up with practical solutions to Africa's plight *now*. The author also makes another hyperbolic statement that Africa's plight will definitely get worse, implying that nothing can be done about it by the Africans themselves short of external or divine intervention; a loaded statement indeed whose racial implications can be easily understood even by some of the most hopeless mental weaklings across the racial divide. However, none of this can change the fact that Africa is indeed is a mess because of the failure of the

Africans themselves to solve their problems and help themselves as other people do. And the fact that such articles are written at all, about Africa's predicament, and in such a tone, clearly demonstrates the gravity and magnitude of the continent's misery and suffering, and the utter futility in trying to solve these perennial problems the way African leaders have tried to do, if at all, since independence. The biggest failure has been in the economic arena.

Socialism proved to be a disastrous failure even in my own country, Tanzania, despite successes in a number of areas - such as free education and free medical service - under the leadership of President Julius Nyerere. And the expulsion of non-indigenous Africans such as Asians by Idi Amin from Uganda, and of Europeans from Zimbabwe which President Robert Mugabe tried to justify by publicly saying that "Europeans are not indigenous to Africa," has only compounded the problem. Yet other Africans have either applauded these leaders or simply looked the other way; although there is definitely a need to address the land question in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and other parts of the continent, but in an orderly way. Nor will Africa's problems be solved by antifoign sentiments or hostility towards anyone who is considered to be an outsider and therefore "does not belong here."

Hostility towards Asians in Kenya, even in Tanzania, through the years has also forced a significant number of them to leave the only countries they have always known as home. Even among the indigenous tribes themselves, there is intense hostility towards each other in many countries across the continent, leading to ethnic conflicts, political instability, chaos, and retarded economic growth, as many leaders fan the flames of tribal hatred to perpetuate themselves in power and favor members of their own tribes. And that is only the tip of the iceberg of Africa's myriad problems.

Non-Africans who boldly suggest that Africa should be recolonized to end its misery are automatically denounced as racist. And Africans who do so commit the unpardonable sin of being traitors. Yet, both raise the same fundamental issue: African governments have failed to solve the continent's problems, and millions continue to suffer and die as a result of such incompetence and utter neglect. Compared to the former colonial masters, African leaders have not only been a total failure but a disaster and a disgrace.

Therefore our former masters should come back and rule us again. They were bad, but our leaders are worse, much worse. That is the argument used by some people who risk the danger of being ostracized and even lynched as traitors, but who, out of desperation, see it as the only solution to their miserable condition.

Many people dismissed the article by Gordon Frisch as racist. But there were others who saw it as a blunt assessment of Africa's harsh reality and not as racist garbage. And in response to his critics, Frisch had this to say:

I have lived internationally for many years, on several continents, including Africa. I met and developed many friendships in all those places, including Blacks....Many remain good friends to this day and it has never occurred to me to differentiate between them on the basis of race....

The article I wrote on Recolonizing Africa derived its inspiration from several directions. Yes, I saw Frederick Forsythe's article having a similar theme, and I mostly agreed with it.

Also, a few years ago I spent a few hours -off the record - talking with two Black Africans, who had quite lofty positions with the UN in Geneva. They had PhD's, were highly educated, and they were greatly concerned about the future of sub-Saharan Africa. One was from the Ivory Coast, the other from Nigeria, and we had a totally frank talk about the mess that is Black Africa.

Astoundingly, and with no prompting from me, they said sub-Saharan Africa's only hope was a return of colonialism in some form. We all agreed that apartheid-like attitudes should never play any part in any recolonization. But there were many good aspects to the era of colonization in Africa, I saw it firsthand when I worked there. The positive aspects should be welcomed and encouraged, the negative discouraged and prohibited, simple as that.

Most of my views and inspiration for the article were derived from personal experience. I lived in Africa for a number of years and worked with Black, White and Arab Africans on a daily basis. My firsthand observations led me to suggest recolonization as a possible constructive solution to sub-Saharan Africa's problems. I was directly involved in training Blacks in Africa and there is no question that most are extremely eager and willing to learn and work. They just

need the opportunity and they are not receiving it under the utterly corrupt leadership they must endure. Their own leaders are their downfall. This is not racism, this is fact, it couldn't matter less what color the leaders are. There are similar faults in White-ruled countries too, it's just that it's worst in Africa. The reasons are bound up in Marxism, corruption, nepotism, etc., the many things we talk about on a daily basis.

There is much negativism in today's world against multi-national corporations, and some of the criticism is indeed well-founded. But the flip side is that multi-national corporations also probably offer the last best hope many Third World countries have to conquer poverty, disease and corruption. Multinationals bring money, expertise, opportunity, jobs and build infrastructures. No alphabet agency in the world - IMF, World Bank, UN - can offer a fraction as much....

I certainly left a part of my soul in Africa. It is a wonderful continent with many wonderful people and I have mostly very fond memories of it. Regrettably, it is deteriorating beyond anything imaginable and I am immensely saddened to see it. I do what I can to help the situation, through talks, articles, correspondence, etc. But until Africa gets its politics sorted out, no amount of external help will accomplish anything significant.¹⁷

It may be easy to dismiss the author of the article as a racist in disguise, at best, even if he's not a racist at all. But it is not easy to dismiss as fiction the facts he presents; facts which are shared by millions of Africans who know the harsh reality of our continent as a miserable place even if it's not living hell on earth. There are pockets of tranquility and stability, even prosperity, across the continent, but not many. For tens of millions, it's utter destitution.

Dismissing all these people as liars is a tough proposition. And it defies common sense. Africa's utter desperation assumes another dimension when some of the African leaders themselves including diplomats, even if grudgingly and privately, concede the imperative need for the restoration of the imperial order under the Union Jack, the Tricolor (French national flag) or whatever, in one benign form or another, as the only hope of salvation for Africa, with no other practical solution to the continent's plight in sight. Some

have bluntly said so, and even in public, especially in the most traumatized countries.

Sierra Leone provides a classic example of such national trauma which has compelled many people in that country to remember with nostalgia "the good ol' days" of British imperial rule, and wish the British had never left. One of them was the country's prime minister himself, of all people, who publicly and in front of news reporters suggested, without blinking an eye, that Sierra Leone should return to the status quo ante and become part of the British imperial order; for all practical purposes assume the status of a colony or a protectorate, and may be even become part of Britain itself. Such is the desperation that pervades the land, however dim the prospects of integration with the former colonial power. But even the utter futility of such a dream could not constrain the honorable prime minister from making the bold assertion that Sierra Leone should indeed become part of Britain:

There was a vivid moment a couple of years ago during the first stage of the British intervention to support the struggling government of Sierra Leone. Its prime minister asked a visiting British politician, in the presence of journalists, if it might be possible for his country to become part of the British Empire again. Most of those present believed the Sierra Leonean leader was serious. The problems of African societies are so huge, so deep-rooted, that the few honest and decent politicians despair. They grasp at any straw to rescue their countries.¹⁸

In a very tragic way, Sierra Leone is Africa, and Africa is Sierra Leone. So is Somalia, Congo-Brazzaville, the Central African Republic, Kenya, and Angola. And so is Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Kinshasa - the so-called Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nigeria. Each of them, at one time or another, has been or still is a microcosm of what Africa has failed to be. The words of President Henri Konan Bedie of the Ivory Coast, although meant to convey exactly the opposite message, are appropriate in this context:

For the image of Africa, the omnipresent media coverage of violence carries risks. The danger, in effect, is that Congo, like Zaire

before it, will appear as a condensed representation of Africa, and that by optical illusion, the image of one destabilized subregion replaces the image of an entire continent, which is come to be seen as bloody and burning.¹⁹

We may object to generalization, as President Bedie does. We can point out the fact that Africa is a continent of 53 countries. All of them have not collapsed, and all of them are not burning and bleeding. All that is true. But it is also true that many of them *are* burning and bleeding. And several others are in imminent danger of collapse because of corruption, tyranny, tribalism, nepotism, waste, mismanagement, wrong policies and outright incompetence.

President Henri Konan Bedie himself was overthrown in December 1999 because of the despotic nature of his regime and discrimination against northerners and Muslims, stripping some of them of their citizenship in a xenophobic campaign that threatened to plunge the country into chaos. One of the victims was Alassane Ouattara, the most prominent northern politician and former prime minister under the country's first president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny who rule the country for 33 years since independence in 1960. He died in December 1993.

A Muslim, and born in the Ivory Coast, Ouattara was barred from running for president in the 2000 general election on dubious grounds that he was not a citizen because his father supposedly came from neighboring Burkina Faso. It didn't matter that the former prime minister was born in the Ivory Coast, as was his mother and may be even his father, and had all along been accepted as a citizen just like the rest of his fellow countrymen, until President Henri Konan Bedie launched this vicious campaign against northerners, the vast majority of whom are Muslim.

Discrimination by southern Christians, who have dominated the government since independence, against northern Muslim ethnic groups was one of the main causes of the civil war which erupted towards the end of 2002 and almost destroyed the country. It split the country in half, north against south, and claimed thousands of lives in only four months. And the conflict continued in 2003 and beyond in varying degrees. Yet the Ivory Coast was one of the most stable countries on the entire continent, and one of the most prosperous. It

had the most dynamic and vibrant economy in West Africa, attracting tens of thousands of workers from all the countries in the region including Nigeria, the continent's giant nation and one of its richest.

But in only three months, it was almost consumed in a conflagration of ethnic and religious hatred that could have been avoided had President Laurent Gbagbo, a former history professor, used just a little bit of common sense to treat all Ivorians as equal citizens and upheld democratic rights; instead of pursuing xenophobic policies against northerners which pushed the country to the brink of disaster. And he won a rigged election in 2000, with less than 50 percent of the vote, and therefore had no mandate to rule. France, the former colonial power, intervened and averted a catastrophe. The government in Paris sent troops to help the Ivorian army in its campaign against the rebels, despite the claim that they would play a neutral role as observers to oversee the implementation of a shaky peace accord signed by the two sides.

Sierra Leone was not so lucky. Britain, the former colonial power, did not intervene early to neutralize the rebels who plunged the country into anarchy. But it is also in Sierra Leone where the script is being written of the unfolding drama in the quest for a renewed imperial role by the former colonial powers to restore peace and stability, and good governance, in their former colonies in Africa. And Britain did just that, in Sierra Leone, setting a precedent, as much as Sierra Leone itself set a precedent other African countries may follow in seeking salvation from their former imperial masters through partial renunciation of their sovereignty; if the former colonial rulers and technocrats from other industrialized nations assume an increasingly prominent role in running the economies, and the civil service, of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa as a mandatory condition for aid. Otherwise they get nothing. It's tough love corrupt African leaders and bureaucrats hate, but which they must accept if our countries are going to develop, and if they continue to depend on foreign aid just to survive, let alone thrive.

The question is whether or not the former colonial powers really want to play such a role if they are invited, given the kind of mess Africa is in today. As Charles Onyango-Obbo, managing editor of the Ugandan daily *Monitor*, wrote in the weekly *East African*:

I have a friend who has given up on the Kampala government. Nothing new there. What is striking are the reasons for his despair.

He says he can understand why the Uganda government is so corrupt. What he can't comprehend is that it lacks even the vision of a "good" corrupt government, because it is not doing anything to help people produce more and create more wealth so that it has something more to steal tomorrow.

Last week in London, I encountered this same despair in several reports in the British press on the murderous rebellion in Sierra Leone. These reports quoted local people begging the British to return and recolonise the country.

It was for the usual reasons. Unlike the British colonialists, past and present Sierra Leonean leaders and rebels had raped the wealth of the country and put nothing back. In between bouts of looting, they passed the time chopping off the hands and legs of the people they had robbed.

The British rulers at their worst as colonialists were still better than past and present Sierra Leonean rulers at their best, some people reasoned, obviously driven to that extreme position by desperation.

The fact that Britain sent troops who salvaged the beleaguered UN peacekeeping operation in Sierra Leone - and in the bargain organised the rag-tag bands that passed for the government army and its allied militia into a force which rolled back the advances of the dreaded RUF rebels on the capital, Freetown - helped British reputations quite a bit too.

One can understand where some of that nostalgia was coming from, since the British were once overlords in Sierra Leone. However, across the Atlantic in the US, I encountered similar arguments.

Last Wednesday (May 31, 2000), in an opinion piece carried by *The Wall Street Journal*, the marvellously acerbic George B.N. Ayittey argued for making Sierra Leone a UN colony. The only effective long-term solution to what he called the "disaster in Sierra Leone," he argued, "is to declare a UN trusteeship or protectorate over [it], just as a bankrupt company is placed in receivership. Like Somalia, Sierra Leone is a failed state, its government hijacked long ago by gangsters."

However, all is not lost. Striking a more positive note, *The Washington Post* on the same day, in an editorial entitled "Africa's Hidden Hope," began by noting the problems.

Whereas malaria has been defeated in many parts of the world, in Africa it has increased by around 60 per cent in the past 30 years. Because conditions are so bad, they discourage investment, and so up to 20,000 African professionals leave the continent every year in search of greener pastures in the West. About 250 million Africans live on less than \$1 a day, and more than two million of the continent's children die before their first birthday each year.

The Post nevertheless found hope in a new World Bank report, which notes that since the early 1990s, 42 of the 48 sub-Saharan states have held multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections. Growth averaged 4 per cent in the second half of the 1990s, compared with slightly higher than 2 per cent for 1981 - 94.

These numbers are, of course, meaningless in most of Africa, because they are cooked up. *The Post* found the usual suspect, Botswana - which, it opined, had "shown that remarkable success is possible; Botswana's economy is among the fastest-growing in the world."

So, will an Africa broken by suffering and all manner of miseries submit to colonialism? I have my doubts.

Even if it did, the reason Africans can be sure that they will continue to be the rulers of the continent, and have the freedom to fight wars and starve their people, is that I doubt that any of the old European colonial powers or USA, would actually want to run the place the way it is today. Our curse, in that sense, is also our saviour.²⁰

But our saviour is also our curse. As we continue to run the place the way it is today as a dilapidated, mangled continent under inept leadership, because our former colonial masters don't want to come back and rule us again; we also continue to descend into the bottomless pit unless we rescue ourselves with good leadership. That is where the problem lies: bad, incompetent, rotten leadership we have endured in most countries across the continent since independence.

Although it is a "blessing" in disguise that most of Africa is a ruined place and has therefore scared even some of the most daring

former colonial masters away from us and from even thinking about recolonizing the continent, thus sparing us the agony and humiliation of imperial domination once again; nothing, absolutely nothing, is going to stop millions of desperate Africans from remembering with nostalgia "the good ol' days" of colonial rule when there was at least law and order, and peace and stability, without which life becomes living hell on Earth. They wish happy days were here again. Those were the days, the halcyon days, when the imperial flag fluttered under the African sun. I remember the Union Jack when I was growing up in colonial Tanganyika in the fifties -I was under ten then -but can hardly recall those "good ol' days," if they indeed were.

And while a significant number of Africans continue to plead, beg, and even pray for the return of our former colonial masters to restore imperial order, thousands of others are fleeing in the opposite direction, away from Africa, to Europe and America, and even to other countries, in search of better life. They are saying, "Any place but here." And they even vote with their feet, risking their lives walking across the Sahara desert for one year, and swimming across the Mediterranean to get to Europe; which to them is paradise on earth after leaving "hell" that Africa has become. And many others have left Africa for good, no apologies.

But there are always those who try to find excuses for Africa's tragic failure. They include Westerners, as we learn next.

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