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The Barrel of a Gun

Political Power in
Africa and the
Coup d'Etat

Part III: The Successor State

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Part III

The Successor State

White Power, Black Parody

The *evolues* are well dressed and wear fashionable clothes. They meet in front of bookshops and look for new books. They read Georges Duhamel, Henri Bordeaux, Roland Dorgeles, all the modern writers. They discuss, rightly or wrongly, current affairs. You meet them in the cafes exchanging ideas on current problems with a rare exuberance.

La Voix du Congolais, writing in 1945

When government was transferred to Africans in the era of independence, there existed, in each independent state, a select circle of heirs. Except in circumstances like those in Northern Nigeria, where the new men of politics were linked with traditional sources of power, political control passed to a Western-educated elite which headed independence movements of relatively recent, effectively post-Second World War origin. These political representatives had not always been the obvious inheritors of government. Older, more traditional heads, the chiefs and the elders, had at first been used as the instruments of the colonial administration; and, after them, an earlier educated elite had expected to inherit. But these groups had either come to terms with the newer aspirants, or been beaten at the post by them. Were these conflicts between contesting social groups and heirs to power decisive and lasting? Were the different streams in the elite always separate from one another, or did they converge? How did the newest displace the older-established? What was the power base of the inheritors? Did they, indeed, possess such a base? Or were they impotent? What were their goals? Mostly, they had acquisitive aspirations, if not resources, and envious eyes fixed on the white man and his estate, together with a marked inability to conceptualize the promise of independence other than in terms of their own immediate interest.

Here and there a section of the elite had a firmer commitment to national rather than to narrow goals, but over time it encountered obstacles either under-estimated or blithely ignored. Were the failings inherent in the independence contract; or were they the consequence of an inept political leadership? Did Africa possess power that she squandered or mis-used; or did she fail because, however she might propose, other forces disposed?

AFRICA FOR THE AFRICANIZED

Under colonialism, power lay with the 'imported oligarchy':¹ the alien administration (in the last resort, its army); the representatives on the spot of government in Europe; and the powerful foreign firms that controlled the economy. Capital came from abroad, and profits were remitted there. External needs and imposed controls began to change the face of African society. The administration needed intermediaries- interpreters, clerks, policemen, junior administrators and teachers – to form a network of communication between the imported oligarchy and its subjects. Colonialism began to fashion an elite.

In West Africa, the first to fashion themselves in the image of the white man were the old coastal elites, which rose in the towns along the shore line where the trading posts were built. Up and down the coast, across the map lines drawn between French and British possessions, these old coastal families produced not only traders, but lawyers, judges, doctors, academics and other pillars of the liberal professions.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the coastal elites were no longer regarded as the ideal agents of colonialism. They had begun to show signs of trying to take controlling positions into their own hands. In any event, the colonial phase was passing from relatively simple trading operations to the more intense exploitation of land and people. Once subsistence economies had to be prompted into producing cash crops for the market, and men had to be induced to work on plantation, mine and public works, different kinds of intermediaries were needed. 'If dangerous revolts are to be obviated,' Sir George Taubman Goldie advised,²'the general policy of ruling on African principles through native rulers must be followed for the present.'

What more natural, and economical, than to confirm the traditional authority of chiefs, once this authority had been bent to the purposes of the colonial administration? The old coastal elite receded in importance. Whereas, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the Gold Coast, for instance, was well on the way to developing its own African civil service, with African administrators appointed to high authority, by 1890 the tempo and orientation of British colonization had changed.³ Members of the educated African elite were being edged not into, but out of, command; and their influence in politics, trade and religion was being curtailed. As late as the 1930s, the British in West Africa were still reducing the percentage of Africans in senior civil service posts, and were up-grading formerly African-held junior posts so that more expatriates might be employed at the centres of administration. Only in Liberia, never a colony in the same sense as the others, did the old creole elite keep its dominance up to the present day; there, its influence on government coincided with the foundation of the state itself. Elsewhere, the political ascendancy of the old elite declined – to revive briefly once again, in alliance with the traditional chiefs, in a contest with the newer generation of educated elite, over which element, in the late 1950s, was to inherit power. Yet if the political vigour of the old elite faded, its tradition of exclusiveness from the people of the interior, the uneducated, the poor and contemptible, did not die. It persists in present-day educated African prejudices and unconcern for the plight of the undistinguished mass.

For the greater period of colonial rule, the chiefs and traditional heads were the most malleable instruments of the alien government. Running the administration through the chiefs was 'colonialism-on-the-cheap'.⁴ And, of course, it also gave the chiefs new sources of authority, influence and wealth. Martin Kilson has shown, in his study of Sierra Leone, how initially the colonial administration granted chiefs a variety of financial incentives to administer their subjects. These included stipend payments, rebates on the collection of taxes, court fines, and entertainment allowances; and by 1930, such represented roper cent of the expenditure on administration. The cost undermined

the capacity of the administration to pay for the social services so needed by the local populace; and meanwhile it augmented the wealth of the traditional rulers at the expense of their subjects, enabling them to enter, and stake important claims in, the modern sector of the economy. Often the man of traditional authority and the man of wealth was one and the same person; and as traditional forms of authority and wealth began to be superseded by new sources of influence, the chiefs and their kin involved themselves to profit from the process. In this way, the new elite that grew was not entirely new, but developed in part from the old.

In the French colonies the administration encouraged the formation of *administratif* parties, based on the appointed chiefs, and particularly after 1951 when the extension of the franchise in the rural areas enabled the chiefs to swing election results, the administration supported chief-based parties to offset the influence of the *Rassemblement Democratique Africain*.⁵ In the Gold Coast, as late as 1946, chiefs played an important part. Two years later the Watson Report declared: 'The star of rule through the chiefs is on the wane.' (Though in 1949, the Coussey Committee reverted: 'We believe there is still a place for the Chief in a new constitutional set-up.') The colonial powers had been in some dilemma: was it safer to leave authority with the chiefs or entrust it to the new elite? By the time that power came to be transferred, however, the colonial governments had abandoned the chiefs as the main medium of political authority and had decided to use instead a new elite, more directly sprung from the needs of the colonial system. What were the origins of this new elite; from where had *it* sprung; and what were its inclinations?

'Instruire la masse et degager l'elite,' the French ordained in their colonies. It was Western education that disengaged an elite and drove the cleavage in colonial society between the chosen minority and the ranks of the commoners. This education at first helped traditional elites to entrench themselves in the new society; for, in the early schools, the sons of chiefs were favoured for entry above others. But the colonial classrooms soon began raising new candidates for elite status. They became

the great equalizers. Education was the ladder to a post in the administration or the rank above labourer in the money economy; and because education was free, the sons of humble parents could climb the rungs. The early elites maintained their footholds; but new entrants fast outnumbered them, and the members of the present elites in the African states are drawn predominantly from humble homes.⁶ Most rapid expansion occurred in the late 1940s, when the colonial administrators began responding to pressures within the colonies, and in the late 1950s, as independence approached.⁷ The French were careful to train only those numbers for which they were willing to find a place in their administrative structure as subordinates to European superiors.⁸ In a quarter of a century, the Ecole Normale William Panty at Dakar, the nerve centre of the African elite in the French colonies, graduated fewer than 2,000 qualified Africans, of whom a third were trained as medical assistants. Only in the late 1950s did a significant number of African graduates – apart from the privileged 'citizens' of Senegal – return from universities in France or the post-war University of Dakar.⁹

Among these and their British-trained equivalents, were the first prime ministers and cabinet ministers of the independent states: the first permanent secretaries, ambassadors and representatives at the United Nations; those at the top of academies, the professions and the civil service. Western education was the curriculum of the new elite; independence, and with it Africanization, constituted graduation. As members of the imported oligarchy left, Africans stepped in to fill their jobs, play their roles, inherit their rates of pay and their privileges, and assume their attitudes, in particular the conviction that the educated in power have a divine right to rule and to prosper.¹⁰

Between teachers and pupils alike in the colonial schools, there had been a conspiracy to groom Africans in the image of their masters. Edmund Blyden's warning at the end of the nineteenth century – that the subjection of Africans to 'unmodified European training' would produce a 'slavery far more subversive of the real welfare of the race than the ancient physical fetters'¹¹ –

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had fallen on unhearing ears. The elite wanted an unmodified European training. The early elites had to convince themselves as much as others that they could reach the standards set by the 'superior' White race; and so they insisted on competing by white man's standards for the most prestigious posts in the white man's world. What the early elite generations needed for their self-respect, later generations refused to change. White man's values were pursued not so much to prove equality, as because they were regarded as virtuous in themselves.

The educational system was geared not to Africa but to Europe. School textbooks were written and published in metropolitan capitals; students wrote the examinations of metropolitan universities. In British colonies, African children recited the tables of English kings and the dates of English wars. In the French colonies, the children chanted from a history book, 'Our ancestors were the Gauls, and they had red hair.' The language of the elite was the language of the colonial power. Education and a white collar were the gateway to the White world; and what that world practised, the pupils imitated. Before independence, these standards were regulated by the colonial order. After independence, they were retained virtually intact by an elite that needed to entrench itself behind them. In the African universities, it was African academics who resisted changes in the curricula. They showed, wrote an educational critic, a pedantic acquiescence in a pattern which was already abandoned by the new universities in Britain.¹² Indeed, the African universities clung not only to the curricula, but to the archaic traditions of their models: High table; Latin graces; those Michaelmas, Lent and Trinity terms; the separation of the sexes in bars and common rooms. With their large cement buildings in grounds splendidly landscaped, the campuses sited themselves as far as possible, in distance and attitude, from the nearest rumbustious African town, and there did their best to emulate the organized reticence of Oxford and Cambridge. Gown had to be not only superior to town, but well insulated from it.

Many African academics [wrote a critic, himself an academic], rather than ask themselves how best they can adapt their foreign intellectual baggage to the needs of their country, manifest a concern for 'keeping

the standards' of their alma mater. Their status as scholars seems to depend almost solely on their ability to demonstrate that they can write as pedantically as their European colleagues in esoteric journals, and that they can train students who are as successful as Europeans at taking highly ritualised examinations that bear little practical relationship to European conditions, much less African ones. . . . They suffocate in their gowns, say grace in Latin, quote Shakespeare and Racine (or indeed Nkrumah and Castro) while the masses remain illiterate. . . .¹³

Elite status consisted in this distance from the mob or the 'bush'. ('He's really bush', the wife of the academic, or the academic himself, will say, like the colonial did in his day, of a new countryman arrived in the town.) It lay, too, in the stifling social respectabilities and affectations of a colonial order and a colonial ruling class. Narcissus-like, the elite adored this image of itself in the shape of its colonial predecessor, and worked avidly to enhance it. The imitation was a parody not of twentieth-century society but of the nineteenth, the age of colonialism ; not of the average British or French home, but of the middle- or upper-class background or affectation of colonial officials. The deference was to manners as antiquated and as unsuited to Africa as were those steamy tropical coastal town houses of the older coastal elite, stuffed with chandeliers, four-poster beds, parlour mantelpiece knick-knacks and Victorian head-of-the-family portraits. The elite was opinionated and snobbish. It was extravagant and flamboyant. Consumption had to be conspicuous, even spectacular. Partly this was because the new acquisition of wealth and the traditional role of a wealthy, important man converged; for, much as the elitist tried to emulate the insularity of exclusive (white) society, the hullabaloo of the gregarious neighbourhood and the claims of his kinsmen invaded it. Partly, too, the conspicuous consumption was to make up for time lost when it was the white man who was busily inheriting the earth. Now that the black heirs were coming into their own the long ingrained habit of emulation found fresh spurs.

Some of the new men preened themselves in the perfection of the white man's life. Others were torn by ambivalences, admiration and resentment, aggression and subservience, need

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and rejection. The poets of *negritude* passionately rejected the ways of the white world and the pulls of assimilation. 'I feel ridiculous,' wrote Leon Damas

*in their shoes, in their dinner jackets
in their stiff shirts, their paper collars,
with their monocles and bowler hats
I feel ridiculous
with my toes that were not made
to sweat from morning to evening
in their swaddling clothes that weaken my limbs
and deprive my body of its beauty.*

Yet despite the poet's rejection, elite status in Africa is instantly recognizable in its habit of over-dress, as though the tropics were the Georges Cinq in Paris or the Dorchester in London; more camel-hair jackets and gold-rimmed spectacles for the one, and sober double-breasted suits for the other, of course, as befits such sartorial distinctions.

In pre-independence Clays, the cries of the intellectuals were vibrant and their needs passionate after what the continent had suffered. Influenced by the poets and philosophers of *negritude*, and by the painful awareness of how colonialism was racking African society, African students, especially those who studied abroad, talked, and even planned revolution in Paris and London, as Europe's 1848 generation had done in the same cosmopolitan meeting-grounds. In their heyday, FEANF in Paris, uniting all African students from the French colonies, and WASU and CAO for the British, were the radical leaven of the independence movements. Then came independence. Students who had been volubly dissident went home to be absorbed in the elite. Some of the most politically skilful renounced their opposition to the regimes in power and were rewarded with appropriate posts.¹⁴ Some found it too difficult to leave at all and remained in the metropolis. Sometimes victimization awaited them at home if they persisted in their radicalism. Others, when they were back home, like Mbella Sonne Diphoko's character on the Mungo River of the Cameroun, sitting beside the hurricane lamp and waiting for the first rains, remembered with longing 'the often

frivolous conversations with women, the talking and re-talking of what had been talked and re-talked ... the morning mail and the letters of the afternoon, all those books, breasts, embraces and the caresses under the indulgent look of time',¹⁵ Before they returned home, many of the students insisted on guarantees from their governments of a high wage, housing, a car. Some returned, and left again, disappointed. The younger generation wanted everything at once- jobs, security, reforms, power and adulation from the masses and their own elders.¹⁶ It was once again Awolowo's first glimpse of white-man superior: a British official, carried in a hammock, an open book on his chest, escorted by carriers, messengers and police constables.¹⁷ Pomp and circumstance, comfort, education and authority, all together: these were the rewards of the elite. When students went on strike in 1968 at Nigeria's Ife University, it was because they objected to having to return their own plates to the service counter of the student dining room. At one of the colleges in the university of East Africa, they rose in protest when asked to double up in their dormitories so as to make room for more students. The conditioning was not only to set an elite apart from and above the common people, but against them.

Yet, like an emergent bourgeoisie everywhere, the African elite identified the general interest with its own. 'I cherish politics and journalism as a career,' wrote the young Awolowo, 'and I desire advocacy as a means of livelihood.' He was writing a request to a prospering compatriot for a twelve-year interest-free loan. 'By helping me to achieve my ambition you are indirectly and even directly helping Nigeria, or even Africa.'¹⁸ Personal initiative was the key to individual success; and individual achievement, a credit to the society as a whole. Were the interests of its shining sons not paramount in any community? Within the elite, the preoccupation with personal initiative was a short step to policies that talked of African socialism but really meant private ownership - by Africans. The members of the African elite were spiritually company directors or property-owners long before they became them in reality.

African socialism and negritude served to equate elite goals with those of the people at large; but once independence had

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been achieved, the elite addressed itself single-mindedly to its interests. They had become heirs to a successor state that they had, with few exceptions, little inclination to change. They had criticized not so much the system as its incumbents. With independence, they were the incumbents.

WHITE EMINENCE

Always brooding over African society is the presence of the Whites. After independence, when they vacated political and administrative seats, metropolitan economic interests stayed behind, and so, too, did a deeply enduring subservience to colonial standards and attitudes. In many African states, the influence of White disapproval has been as inhibiting as the earlier physical omnipotence. White power could subdue by force, and corrupt with patronage, but also control with contempt. The press was and still is overwhelmingly expatriate-owned and thus influenced. 'Public opinion' is interpreted by editors trained in Western standards and served by Western news agencies. Administrators model themselves on systems devised for European conditions; and military men think of what Alexander, or Napoleon, a Sandhurst or StCyr instructor might do in their place. Direct or snide criticism from London, Paris or Brussels, wounds deeply. Approval from Europe compensates for estrangement from the poor and illiterate at home. Ghanaians had ample domestic reason to question Nkrumah's policies in the waning years of the CPP; but if anything goaded their military and civil elite into active opposition, it was the withering effect on their self-esteem of the disapproval from the White, Western world. It is never all that remote. White influences continue to renew themselves in the years since independence. The recent arrivals are international businessmen, technicians and expert advisers, rather than the administrators of earlier days. Their sojourn will be as temporary as that of those who once served out their contracts and then went 'home'. But for as long as they stay, they endorse White standards, and dispense White approval and White patronage to an elite desperately eager for approbation.

Whites also make their influence felt more permanently and

more directly. In colonial days, below the tiny but powerful group of administrators and senior officials, there were the settlers or 'expatriates' in the British colonies, the colons or the *petits blanc* in the French, who constituted significant minorities of small-scale businessmen and artisans. In the decade after the Second World War, the White population of French West Africa trebled. The rate of exchange¹⁹ gave each franc made or saved in Africa double its worth at home. Whites and their wives dominated the urban labour market and the middle posts of the administration in the colonies. In 1958, in the Ivory Coast, for instance, there were fewer than a score of top-level African administrative and technical officers. In Senegal, likewise, there were twice as many Whites as Africans in middle-level posts.

Whites living and working in the colonies made their political influence felt. Politicians were offered, or sought, the advice of White lobbies and White political groups. If the advice was followed, protection and sponsorship were not far behind. In the Congo, Whites were behind the formation of African political parties. In Gabon, rival African parties aligned themselves with rival European economic groups.²⁰ Direct White intrusion into African political activity was especially marked in the former French Equatorial colonies. Administrative officials manipulated employment and patronage as well as election procedures to prevent the spread of parties which they opposed, John Ballard wrote. 'After several years of frustration in fighting the administration, each of these (leaders) had learned to temper his ideas in favour of a partially effective compromise with official views.'²¹

When Africans succeeded to political authority as heads of government, the policies they formulated had to reckon with the presence of potential opposition of Whites – influentially placed not only in the economy but also in the administration. Some African states quite soon found themselves struggling to absorb a surplus of qualified elite members. Others were sorely understaffed and, especially in the former French colonies, drew heavily on France and the French administration. The commitment of almost all the former French colonies to close involvement with France in their economic development brought with

it the 'corollary of *political* commitment by the leaderships of these countries to the employment of French expatriates, even when indigenous university graduates were available. Furthermore the French government pays the salaries of its civil servants who are seconded to work with African governments, thus providing an important subsidy to African budgets that would be lost to Africanization.'²² Only in the Ivory Coast, where expatriate income has grown faster than the gross domestic product, and where the share of gross profits enjoyed by the large corporations has doubled since 1950, has the White population gone as far as trebling itself from 1950 to 1965. But an *eminence blanche* is everywhere present; sometimes out in the front of Ministry offices, sometimes in the rooms behind.

President Banda of Malawi, incurably sycophantic, believes in having his European advisers in the front room. He outraged young administrators and politicians when on one occasion he left the country on official business and appointed his private secretary, a Briton to act in his place. He is given to instructing his Cabinet by holding consultations with the permanent secretaries, all Whites, and then sending messages requiring Ministers to get their briefings from their officials. In Malawi until recently, the highest administrative post held by an African was district officer; in the police force, warrant officer; and in the army, second lieutenant. In many African states, if permanent secretaryships were fairly rapidly Africanized, the command of army, police and security remained the last in White hands. Major decisions hinged frequently not on the purposiveness of the independence government but on the equivocations of White officials. Above all, especially in the French territories, the ultimate arbiters in political crisis were the French military forces. This was so before independence, and afterwards. 'French military forces and the French commandants of national armies (after 1961, when separate national armies were formed . . .) were for several years looked upon as the ultimate source of power behind each regime's authority, and friendship with the French military commanders was often of greater importance to a president than good relations with the French High Commissioner.'²³

Narcissus in Uniform

Yes, I am a Francophile, the whole of Dahomey is Francophile. We like your country because we have never been asked to do this or that.

General Soglo, *Le Monde*, 30 June 1966

The Nigerian Army distinguished itself in the Ashanti Wars and other punitive expeditions which resulted in the pacification of Nigeria.

Nigerian Ministry of Information, *100 Facts About Nigeria*, Lagos, 1966

More than any institution left behind by colonialism, the armies of Africa were set in the colonial pattern. More than this, the armies of the new states were the identical armies that the colonial powers had built to keep their empires quiescent. After independence they retained, *with* few exceptions, their colonial pattern of army organization; their dependence on the West for officer training, specialist advice and equipment; and their affinity with the foreign and defence policies of the metropolitan countries. Even when Africanized and run by commanders-in-chief who were nationals of their own countries, Africa's armies were an extension of the West. Where they had gone into battle in the pre-independence period, it had been for, not against the colonial power. And, except for Algeria and to some extent Morocco, they played no part in the independence struggle.

The French and the British empires used their African armies in different ways. Britain had the Indian army as her main reserve of imperial military might, with Africa as a minor recruiting station. The West Africa Frontier Force, which was founded in 1897 as a counter to the French during the critical period of Anglo-French rivalry on the Niger, was to be Lugard's crack corps in opening and guarding the new territories; and he pressed the War Office for the 'best' officers, preferably *with* Indian or Egyptian experience. At the outset, two **W A F F** battalions were responsible for the control of something like 300,000 square miles. Then, when conquest was succeeded by

administration, the British colonial armies became local constabularies on internal security duty. Except for recruiting spurts during the two world wars, the armies were small. Between the two wars, the British-run units in Britain's African empire comprised some 19,000 Africans altogether.¹ Only in 1939, on the eve of war, did the control of the W A F F pass from the Colonial Office (in fact, the Colonial Governors, who used them as domestic trouble-shooters) to the War Office. Only after the war and the loss of India was it decided in West Africa, as in the Sudan, not to cut the force back to its pre-war size.

France, on the other hand, having no Indian army, used her colonial possessions in Africa as the main colonial reservoir of her military manpower. African armies were used to fight France's wars in Europe and to conquer her colonies around the world. Throughout the nineteenth century, Senegalese troops were used: in the Napoleonic wars, in the Crimean war, in the assault on Madagascar in 1838, and against Mexico. It was African troops under French officers who provided the bulk of the fighting force that brought French Equatorial Africa to heel. The cost of acquiring Congo-Brazzaville, the Central African Republic, Chad and Gabon, was estimated at not more than 700 soldiers killed and 1,200-1,500 wounded, of whom four-fifths were Africans.² African troops were thrown into the Moroccan war of 1912 and against the Rj f rising of 1925. And African armies not only helped to conquer the empire; they also took part in unsuccessful attempts to defend it. 15,000 African troops fought in France's war in Indo-China, up to and including the last stand at Dien Bien Phu.³ Over 30,000 were used in the war against Algeria. African forces took part in the French-British-Israeli assault on Suez in 1956.

Until 1910, recruitment into the army in French-controlled Africa was on a voluntary basis. After 1912, obligatory military service was introduced for men between the ages of twenty and twenty-eight. It was hoped to recruit a million men from French West Africa alone.⁴ But torn between the demands of the Minister of War for more men under arms, and the demands of the Minister of Production for more provisions from African village

economies to sustain an embattled France, the Governor was unable to meet the recruiting targets, and he warned that the colonies were in grave danger of revolt against the unrelenting manhunt. At this point M. Blaise Diagne, Deputy of Senegal who was later to become Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, came to the rescue of the empire. Appointed High Commissioner for the Recruitment of Troops in French West and Equatorial Africa, with powers equal to those of the Governor-General (who promptly resigned *in protest*), M. Diagne succeeded in recruiting more than the quota- or 63,378 instead of the 40,000 men required of the West African territories- in his year of office. By the end of the First World War, the French had recruited into the army some 200,000 men from a population of eleven million, compared with only 30,000 West Africans in the British forces (some 2,000 of whom were sent to fight in East Africa and were repatriated just in time to put down the Egba revolt against indirect rule).⁵ In the Second World War, however, Britain drew heavily on Africa. Over 372,000 men, including carriers and porters, were enlisted, of whom 166,000 served outside their home territories, with more than half of these in Burma.⁶ West African troops fought within Africa in the Abyssinian campaign and in Italian Somaliland.

The Second World War saw a burst of sympathetic enthusiasm for the cause of the Allies from the educated elite of British West Africa, some of whose speeches about the defence of the empire would have graced any London club.* In the French territories, the French forces were, as usual, carried along in the drift of French fortunes. French Equatorial Africa went over to the Free French cause: but in West Africa, the navy, the army and the administration opted for Vichy; and with them, the Legion Française des Combattants de l'Afrique Noire, which in 1941 held a mass parade of 6,000 – including African – legionnaires in Vichy's support. When Free French forces took their place on allied war fronts, African soldiers made up half their total strength.⁷

At home, the ex-servicemen in the French colonies were

*Though, on the whole, support also demanded the application of the Atlantic Charter to the colonies.

among the most loyal and cohesive supporters of the administration. Blaise Diagne, as chief recruiter of French African troops, had stipulated a *quid pro quo* of citizenship rights for help in the First World War. The vote was given to service veterans, men on active service and the widows of veterans who had died in the service of France. In Dahomey by 1948, some 58 per cent of an electorate totalling 54,000 consisted of ex-servicemen or serving soldiers.⁸ In 1954, one in five of the job openings in the administration of the French colonies was reserved for veterans. A decision to pay equal rates to metropolitan and overseas troops was well-timed to bring a rush of recruits for the war in Indo-China; and in Chad, for instance, there were said to be so many volunteers that a large number had to be turned away.⁹ France's armies in Africa fought the battles for empire, but they were also an opening for the unemployed. Which other branch of the economy offered steady jobs and such good pay?

COLOURING THE TROOPS

Like the Persia of Darius and Xerxes, or the Rome of the Caesars, modern empire looked about for the 'barbarians' of remote areas to do their fighting for them. In British West Africa, the model was India. Few British officers in *Africa* during the early days had not served with the Indian army, and for a while there were even some Indians in the WAFF.¹⁰ Lugard had gained his military experience in India, and it has been said that the layout of Kaduna was based on a typical Indian cantonment in the last days of the British Raj. The precedent for officer and other recruitment policies was laid in India. There, it was directed, officers should be 'confined to the small class of nobility or gentry ... it would rest upon aristocracy of birth ... to gratify legitimate ambitions ... and to attach the higher ranks of Indian society, and more especially the old aristocratic families to the British Government by closer and more cordial ties...'¹² Seeking to apply the Indian model to Africa, a Governor of Sierra Leone expressed his perplexity. There was, he said, 'no gentleman class in Sierra Leone from which men of a high sense of honour and duty could be found'.¹³ The WAFF, accordingly, had no African officers.

In India, the British army had improvised the theory of the 'martial races', and recruitment had been confined to peoples of supposedly unique fighting qualities, such as the Sikhs. Men with an urban background were distrusted and kept out of the officer corps, for they were likely to be infected with nationalist sentiment. 'The clever young men of the Universities were quite unfitted for military work . . . the army officers had long realized that the Indian intelligentsia would never make officers.'¹⁴ This reliance on so-called martial races became conventional army wisdom, as did the principle that officers should, on the whole, be drawn from one tribe or group of tribes, and ground troops from others. In West Africa, recruitment was pressed among tribes with 'warlike traditions' and 'the useful attributes of cheerfulness and loyalty'.¹⁰ These qualities were not necessarily found together. British army officers had a certain reluctant admiration for the military prowess of the Ashanti, who had mounted successive wars against them, with the last as late as 1900; but the recruitment of Ashanti into the Gold Coast regiment of the W A F F was bitterly opposed on political grounds. Armies, after all, were needed as reliable instruments against internal discontent. Between wars they were super police forces, organized for rapid deployment to put down tax revolts, labour disputes or nationalist demonstrations. Thus, it was sound policy for colonial regimes to recruit from groups with manageable aspirations. And these were generally in the economically less developed areas, where army employment offered one of the few openings to young men. The armies were built on recruits from remote tribal groups; and a careful ethnic balance, or imbalance, was developed. In Nigeria and Ghana, recruiting concentrated on the Northern areas, with the result that by the mid-1960s, about 70 per cent of the service troops in the Nigerian army were drawn from the North: not the 'true' North, but provinces like Adamawa and Benue; from the Tiv, the Idoma and the Igbirra; and from Bornu. In Ghana, northern peoples supplied 80 per cent of the non-commissioned officers until 1961. In Uganda, recruiting concentrated on the Acholi; in Kenya, it was chiefly among the Kamba and the Kalenjin, and deliberately not among the politically aggressive Kikuyu.

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Even in Tanganyika, where a great number of small tribes and the absence of any dominant majority group promoted national unity, army recruits were drawn chiefly from the Hehe and the Kuria.¹⁶

MEN OF WAR

Nowhere was the army used more ruthlessly as the tool of colonial coercion than in the Belgian Congo. The Belgians, unlike the French, the British and the Portuguese, sent no metropolitan troops for the colonial contingent. 'The Congo had to be quickly organized so that it would conquer itself.'¹⁷ The Force Publique was founded in 1888; by 1897 it numbered 14,000 men, of whom 12,000 were Congolese. Throughout most of its existence, its strength was about 20,000. By 1953 there were only 788 Europeans with the army, forming a very small corps of expatriate officers. Again, unlike its other partners in colonialism, the Belgians did not draw for recruits almost exclusively on special tribes—though they, too, sought out those 'martial races'—but followed a deliberate policy of having all ethnic groups represented in the army. There were explicit instructions that platoons had to be scrambled to contain representatives of at least four tribes.¹⁸ This was to reduce the chances of mutiny. And certainly the Force Publique attained a high degree of cohesive proficiency in 'disciplining' trouble-makers, from tax defaulters to religious zealots, acquiring in the process a reputation for strong-arm methods that verged on gangsterism. 'Who was sent into the Force Publique?' asked its Belgian commander, General Emile Janssens: 'The least promising individuals, the pupils who had been expelled from school, the refuse of the nation.'¹⁹ It was General Janssens' implacable refusal to permit any acceleration of the army's Africanization programme that provoked the post-independence army mutiny, and so placed the Congo at the mercy of foreign intervention. At independence, the Force Publique had three Congolese sergeant-majors. What plans there were for Africanization would have taken generations to fulfil. Overnight the expatriate officer corps disappeared and discipline disintegrated. General Janssens wrote on a blackboard in front of a few

hundred incensed Congolese non-commissioned officers: 'After Independence = Before Independence'.²⁰ Later that same afternoon, the first instances of outright disobedience to remaining Belgian officers began. That evening, when a column of reinforcements summoned from the near-by garrison at Thysville refused to march and arrested its officers instead, the mutiny was on; and, with it, the breakdown of the Congo's newly independent state.

It was an ex-servicemen's demonstration, demanding Africanization in the army and the granting of regular commissions to African officers, that triggered off the riots of February 1948 in Ghana and the positive action phase which changed the face of Ghanaian politics. 'The large number of African soldiers returning from service with the Forces where they had lived under different and better conditions made for a general communicable state of unrest,' wrote the Watson Commission.²¹ The ex-servicemen's march to Christianborg Castle presented a petition to the Governor. 'Your Excellency's loyal and dutiful ex-servicemen who saw active service in World Wars I and II found that 18s or 30s a month disability pension can hardly keep together the life and soul of a disabled ex-soldier, especially when he has a wife and children to look after.' The week before the riot, Danquab and Nkrumah had expressed public support for the claims of the ex-servicemen, who formed a significant slice of the population, especially as they tended not to return to their villages but to settle round the towns, and in particular the capital. A Commission had been set up to handle the Demobilization and Resettlement of Gold Coast Africans in the Armed Forces,²² but plans for re-settling ex-servicemen were thin on the ground. 'When you get home,' said the instruction formulated by the Commission, 'obey your Native Authority, give honour to age, and be willing to teach others all that you have learned without shouting about what you have done.' Ghana, with a population one-seventh of Nigeria's, had contributed half as many enlisted men.²³ Two-thirds of the soldiers from the Gold Coast had served abroad. About a third had learned army trades; but large numbers of these, among others, found themselves jobless and the war promises made to them

unkept. After the firing by police on the demonstrators, the administration declared that an increase in disability pensions had, in fact, been approved and was about to be announced when the trouble broke. But by then the police action had given an enormous fillip to the demands of the nationalist movement and its militant phase of struggle for independence.

In Nigeria, returned soldiers were resentful of inadequate pensions and gratuities (an ex-serviceman with 100 per cent disability drew only £3 a month) and at discrimination in army pay scales and general treatment. Both before and after the war, indeed, the army was a stronghold of discrimination.²⁴ From the formation of the WAFF until the outbreak of the Second World War, Nigerian soldiers had not been allowed footwear on parade or ordinary duties, only on long marches. African feet were supposedly hardened enough not to need shoes. Their uniform was deliberately made baggy: for free movement, the army decreed; but 'to make us look native', as a Nigerian soldier who rose to the rank of brigadier remarked.²⁵ The knee-length shorts (known as a longshort) were not provided with pockets, and whether this was official thinking or not, Nigerians suspected it was because the average 'native' soldier was supposed to be a thief, and the provision of pockets would encourage stealing. In the pre-war Nigerian army, the highest post a Nigerian could reach was battalion sergeant-major. A Nigerian soldier of whatever rank had to stand to attention even to a British sergeant, and he had to salute White civilians. Then there was the glaring discrimination in pay scales. 'Those who enlist expect a good salary just as their White brothers earn. To the people death knows no colour and, as such, rates of pay should be adjusted in that spirit,' wrote the *West African Pilot* during the war.²⁶

But in Nigeria, unlike Ghana, the grievances and frustration of ex-servicemen were dissipated in the multiplicity of their different organizations, each highly localized. There were, for instance, the Supreme Council of Ex-Servicemen; an organization for Lagos ex-servicemen; a National Federation of Ex-Servicemen's Associations for Nigeria and the Cameroons. Northern ex-servicemen were not even represented in the

Supreme Council, though they constituted the majority of ex-servicemen in the country at large. The returned soldiers were caught up in the regional politics that dominated Nigeria. But the region too, was sometimes not parochial enough. An attempt to organize all ex-servicemen in the Western region failed because Warri and Ilesha did not like the idea of being led by those in Ibadan, which had been projected as the headquarters.

'The brave new world they had fought for has very easily faded into the rotten world of unemployment and frustration,' wrote M. Okoye.²⁷ There was very little opportunity and sense of direction for the individual man, and Nigerian politicians were too busy with their mutual recriminations, too confused over means and ends, to consider how to use such excellent material in the national cause. The reabsorption of Nigeria's ex-servicemen was punctuated by only one outburst, which was the disturbance at Umuahia in 1951, when the town was held by ex-servicemen for a few days in protest against the requirement that they pay tax even though they were jobless. The protest was suppressed and the ringleaders were jailed; the ex-servicemen dispersed to their homes or the job queues in the towns. For them 'this is the way the world ends, not with a bang but a whimper'.²⁸

After the war and the loss to the Empire of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, Britain's African armies became more important in imperial defence strategies. They needed to be bigger, better equipped and better trained. Up to the war they had been mainly infantry battalions with conventional and often anachronistic equipment, and, apart from some African warrant officers, officered by expatriates with no great level of professionalism. If progress towards independence in the 1950s was slow, Africanization in the armies was even slower. In 1953 it was decided that the WAFF, which embraced all four British colonies in West Africa, would be broken down into constituent national forces.²⁹ This was done in 1956. It was agreed that the four governments would invite the Army Council of Great Britain to appoint a General Officer Commanding-in-Chief. And it was also agreed that Sandhurst should hold twenty places a year for West African cadets. But these places were not

fully taken up, so rigorous and reluctant were the selection procedures. The first Gold Coast cadets were sent to Britain for training only in 1953. (In East Africa, the first Ugandans went in 1959, and the first Tanganyikans in 1961.) In the period of so-called 'preparation', but also in the period after independence, the training of African officers was undertaken with the greatest reluctance. Invariably the last functions transferred to African control with decolonization were those connected with internal security or defence. When Ghana achieved her independence in 1957, no more than 10 per cent of her army officers were Ghanaian. In the Nigerian army, by 1958, there were only forty-five African commissioned officers – about half of whom had passed through Sandhurst – or one in seven of Nigeria's officer corps. In the Federal Parliament, Nigeria's Minister of Defence, Alhaji Mohammed Ribadu, was pressed for speedier Africanization. 'Our army in the Congo is being looked after by an officer who is not Nigerian,' said Mr C. O. D. Eneh. The Minister replied: 'The government is doing its best to Nigerianize as much as possible the armed forces, but Sir, as I have said in my speech, experience is very, very important because we do not want to have another Mobutu. . . .'¹

While the Nigerian army was fully Africanized only by 1965, the officer corps in the Sudan was composed entirely of nationals by the attainment of independence in 1956. Part of the officer training had been done at Khartoum's Military Academy; the rest through crash training programmes in Britain. The Sudan possessed the only army in colonized Africa to be completely Africanized by independence. This and its fairly modern military establishment resulted from its pivotal position between Britain's strategic interests in the Middle East and in East Africa.

From 1925 onwards when it was constituted as the Sudan Defence Force, the army of Sudan was carefully nurtured for its strategic role, with Egyptian officers, units and influence purged from what had started as a section of the Egyptian army. After the 1924 mutiny, the selection of officers and ranks was closely supervised. Recruits for the army were traditionally drawn not from the dangerous ranks of the educated but from respected

families propping up indirect rule, and they were trained in that 'typically imperial institution, Gordon College, Khartoum'.³²

In the Second World War, the Sudanese army saw intensive combat service on vital fronts in Eritrea and Ethiopia during the North African campaign of 1942, when it had to regain the Sudan's eastern provinces. It did not then join in any European arena of the war, but returned to the Sudan for service as a strategic reserve against Egyptian unrest.

That this was regarded as a continuing function was apparent in the fact that there was only limited demobilisation of the Sudanese army at the end of the war. The loss of the Indian army – historically a key force in Britain's imperial defence system – provided an additional reason for the maintenance of the Sudanese army as an effective military unit following World War II. This was reinforced by the fact that the post-war British Labour government was not prepared, for both political and economic reasons, to offset the loss of the Indian army by an equivalent commitment of military manpower recruited and kept under arms in the United Kingdom.³³

By 1958 the Sudanese army was about 12,000 strong.³⁴ Most of the officers commissioned into it when it had been part of the Egyptian army had gone into retirement, though General Abboud (commissioned in 1918) continued to represent his generation as Officer-Commanding, and Abdallah Khalil (commissioned in the Sudanese battalions of the Egyptian army in 1910) kept a proprietary eye on the army as Minister of Defence. From 1924 to 1935, the army was run by British officers and a small number of Sudanese promoted from the ranks. Some sixty officers commissioned after 1937 or promoted during combat in the Second World War had, in the course of active service under British officers, inherited the traditions and outlook of the latter.

In 1953 the Sudan embarked on a crash programme of Sudanization. This included officer training for the army; and between three and four hundred junior officers were drawn from the secondary schools and commissioned in large batches.³⁵ The recruitment of this generation was to be the equivalent in the Sudan of the entry into the Egyptian army of Nasser and his Free Officers, when in 1936 Egypt's military academy, formerly

accessible only to members of the old Turkish families, was thrown open to Egyptians of all classes. Sudanization of the army and the civil service were part of popular political mobilization for ridding the country of British influences. The junior officers, trained in the crash programmes to Sudanize the officer corps, were part of the country's independence generation. They identified themselves vigorously with nationalist aspirations. They also scorned the generation of senior officers, as being inferior to them in education, ability and patriotic ardour. 'It is difficult for Abdallah Khalil (the prime minister) to depend on the Sudanese army because the spirit of national extremism is strong within it,' wrote the *New York Times*.⁵⁶ It was public knowledge that the army command was uneasy about the shadow of Nasser's Free Officer Movement, which hung so inevitably over young nationalist army officers. Grumbles about corruption and inefficiency in the Sudanese army led to talk among officers about the formation of patriotic groups within the forces; but the moves seemed tentative and unfulfilled.

Who joined Africa's armies? In countries as far afield as Nigeria and the Sudan, army service was considered a disreputable career for the sons of the educated and respectable. No worthy Lagotian father, no successful lawyer or flourishing trader, would have dreamt of making his son a soldier. In West Africa, particularly, the sons of the middle class or up-and-coming ranks of urban society set their sights on the elevated professions like law and medicine, or on government service. Those who joined the army, to rise through the ranks or, in the later period, to graduate from the military academies, tended to be the sons of minor officials, small farmers and petty traders. They were from families in the rural areas and small towns rather than large city centres, and were the sons of parents who could not afford to educate them further than they had already gone in the mission school. Military education, after all, was free.

The first generation of African army officers, the Abboud-Ankrah-Ironsi-Ogundipe generation, sweated their way slowly up through the ranks; and only with independence and Africanization were they commissioned and promoted to fill the posts

of the withdrawing expatriate command. This first generation of officers was generally drawn from the army education and pay services. Nigeria's General Ironsi served as a storeman in the Ordnance Department after he enlisted, and is said never to have sloped a rifle. Nzeogwu, the young major who led the January coup, referred to him contemptuously as a tally-clerk. Ghana's General Ankrah had been a mission teacher who enlisted at the outbreak of the Second World War and spent the war on supply duties, finishing as a warrant officer and getting his commission in 1947. The Sudan's Generals Abboud and Abdallah Khalil worked their way up the ranks through service in two world wars; but the Sudanese officers saw more combat than most others in British Africa. Without their service under the UN in the Congo most British African armies and officers – except for the veterans of the Second World War, who had generally been sent to Burma – would never have fired a shot in anger.

YOUNG VETERANS

The same could not be said of France's armies in Africa, which had fought so many of France's own wars. Until independence, these armies were organized to meet French military needs, with a total disregard for territorial divisions between the colonies. They were centralized at Dakar for French West Africa, and at Brazzaville for the Equatorial colonies. 'The concept of developing embryonic national armies was non-existent; the only legitimate nation was France, with its overseas departments and territories, *une et indivisible*.'³¹ The African officer corps, no less than the army, was altogether orientated to France.

Then, with the onset of independence, national armies began to be constituted for the first time. African officers who had served in the French army were appointed chief-of-staff, military adviser to the head of state, or commander-in-chief. They were African army heads, but they differed from their professional counterparts in the French army proper only in the colour of their skin. Their commitment had been to France's army and wars, and their attitudes and experience had been suitably conditioned.

Let us look at the first generation of military men. Dahomey's

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General Soglo volunteered for the French army in 1931, at the age of twenty-one. He was a sergeant-major when the Second World War came, was mentioned in dispatches during the French campaigns of 1940, and thereafter served in Morocco's Colonial Infantry Regiment under the Vichy regime, and then moved to the 6th Regiment des Tirailleurs Senegalais to help liberate French soil. He took part in the Free French landings on Corsica and Elba, and by the end of the war was Colonial Troops Staff Officer. Then, made a military adviser to the French government in 1947, he was promoted to captain in 1950 and sent to Indo-China, where he fought for five years in both the north and the south, and was awarded the Croix de Guerre. When Dahomey became independent, he became adviser on military affairs to the head of state; and, subsequently, his country's first chief-of-staff.

Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa, cousin to President Dacko of the Central African Republic, whom he toppled from power in the coup d'etat of 1964, served for twenty-three years with the French army. A communications expert, he received twelve decorations in Indo-China, and is passionately pro-French. Lieutenant-Colonel Lamizana of Upper Volta joined the army at the age of twenty, fought for two years in Indo-China and another two in North Africa. Chad's chief-of-staff, Colonel Jacques Doumro, joined the French army when he was nineteen, fought in the Second World War, and for three years in Indo-China with the French 6th Colonial Infantry. He was transferred to the Chad forces in 1961. The Ivory Coast chief-of-staff had a similar history in the French army. It was this first generation of officers, '*andens d'Indo-Chine*', who, one after another, were seconded to their country's national armies when these were constituted at independence. Their rise in the ranks had been almost as slow as that of their British equivalents, but they had had considerably more combat experience and had achieved a commitment, under fire, to French colonial aims.

More than anything else, it was the Algerian war that groomed the next generation of officers. Junior officers or under-officers were trained at the Centre de Perfectionnement des Sous-Officiers Coloniaux (Centre for Advanced Instruction of Colonial

NCOs) at Frejus and became eligible for promotion to second lieutenant after the course. Among the 15,000 troops who served in Indo-China until 1954, there were twenty officers and 900 non-commissioned officers; but by 1956 there were still only sixty-five African officers in the French army. Afterwards, training was accelerated. In 1958 the first parachutists were graduated from Dakar; and in that year, French West Africa had 500 students at military schools. The second generation of officers were thus younger and more highly educated men, trained as more specialist and technically qualified cadres. Dahomey's Major Alphonse Alley is an example. He went through army secondary school in Dakar, joined the Senegalese Tirailleurs as an officer, and was trained as a paratrooper; he was decorated in the war in Indo-China and also fought in Algeria. Alley played a leading role in the Soglo take-over of Dahomey's government in 1964-5, and became his general's chief-of-staff; then in the junior officers' coup of December 1967, he displaced General Soglo as head of state. His contemporary, Colonel Etienne Eyadema of Togo, joined the French army at the age of sixteen and fought in both Indo-China and Algeria. Now Togo's head of state, he was one of the principal organizers of the 1963 coup against the government of President Sylvanus Olympio. 'A soldier who has been taught to kill, who has an Algerian or a Vietnamese on his conscience, makes no bones about killing one or two Togolese as well,' one of the Togo coup-makers told journalists.^{as}

The 1963 coup in Togo was a direct result of French army developments in Africa. As the 1960s opened, France's defence policy was re-orientated towards nuclear strategy, and French military installations on the continent were accordingly reduced. Strategic bases were left in Algeria, at Mers-el-Kebir; in Dakar; in the Malagasy Republic; in Chad, at Fort Lamy; in Congo-Brazzaville, at Pointe-Noire; at Douala in the Cameroun; and in Mauritania, at Port Etienne: but there was a substantial cut-back of manpower stationed in Africa. French policy was to withdraw from Africa but to build, within France, a force capable of intervening at short notice abroad. African servicemen were given the option of remaining on service with the

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French army, or of taking up service with the newly constituted national armies. About 283,000 men left Africa, including Algeria, between January 1962 and January 1963 and a further decrease of 82,000 was envisaged by the end of 1963. About 20,000 men returned to their home countries, or neighbouring ones, to take up service with African armies. Changed French defence policy thus had dramatic effects in Africa. It deposited large contingents of returned ex-servicemen on small and struggling economies, and on new, tiny armies. Upper Volta, for instance, whose army in 1966 was only 1,500 strong (though at a cost that swallowed one-seventh of the country's total budget) found herself with 150,000 French army veterans, or one adult male in six.³⁹ About a third of a million French West Africans conscripted for the Second World War had been accorded privileges like the vote and parity of pensions with French metropolitan rates, and some of these ex-servicemen, particularly the non-commissioned officers, lived well in their villages. But soldiers transferred from the French army to African armies in the 1960s had to accept cuts in pay and reduced standards. Both Senegal and the Ivory Coast stepped up expenditure on the army, though they were embarked on general austerity campaigns.

Guinea had to deal with large numbers of repatriated military personnel in the first few months of her defiant vote for independence and her break with France.

Today [said Sekou Toure], they [the veterans] find an independent country. Instead of coming with courage and confidence, with energy and pride to work for their country, certain of them will say: 'If we are not given work we will do this, we will do that.' In saying this, to whom do they think they are speaking? They are speaking to the people of Guinea, to those same people who obtained the independence of their country. Do they think that the people will let them do such things ?⁴⁰

Some 500 of about 50,000 returned veterans were found government employment; and for the rest, Guinea set about trying to build a national army well integrated with the party, so that it could not easily be used against party purposes. Guinea is said

to have put one particular contingent of discharged Algerian veterans back on the plane for Paris.

In Lome, capital of Togo, Sergeant Emmanuel Bodjolle was the spokesman of returned soldiers, and he pleaded for the enlargement of the army to incorporate them. Togo's French military adviser also favoured a larger army and military budget; Olympia resisted, however. He was unwilling to tax Togo's limited resources with a military establishment out of all proportion to the country's needs and finances. He was eventually persuaded by the French officer to add 100 men to the army, but even then he planned to by-pass the French army contingent. He told the Bodjolle delegation, 'I shall use unemployed school-leavers, or people who fought for independence, and not you mercenaries who were killing our Algerian friends when we were fighting for independence.'⁴¹ Togo was the first but by no means the last occasion when French policy had cataclysmic consequences in an African state, this time through a seizure of power by discharged soldiers. But there is another important point to be made about the Togo coup. The returned ex-servicemen who faced unemployment were from the Cabre people, of a relatively poor and undeveloped region in Togo. Independence was young, and already the political class and the elites of the towns seemed to be taking the best for themselves. Well, soldiers could do something about that.

At independence, of all those belonging to the Western-groomed elite, the military looked the least likely avenue to political influence; indeed, the army was not considered part of the equation of power in African states until other sections of the elite found themselves in crisis. Then it made up for lost time.

A SPECIAL CASE: ALGERIA

At independence, Africa's armies consisted of little more than foreign-officered infantry. They were small armies: only three military establishments in sub-Saharan Africa exceeded 10,000 men (the Sudan, Ethiopia and the Congo), and fourteen were below 2,000. Of all the institutions bequeathed from the colonial period, the armies retained their colonial flavour, their

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foreign advisers and their affinity with the former colonial power longest.

Alone of Africa's armies, Algeria's was different. This was no colonial inheritance; it was an army created to wage a war of national liberation. Yet in post-independent Algeria, the army has acted as a competitor for power; the pattern of government is military-bureaucratic in type; and the political movement of the FLN has visibly degenerated. Somewhere during the course of Algeria's revolutionary war, the process of achieving popular mobilization and devising forms of popular authority for social change under an independent government withered. How did this happen ?

There were two distinct phases in Algeria's war for independence, and Algeria's liberation army was affected by them both. The first was from the outbreak of rebellion at the start of November 1954 to the Battle of Algiers of 1956-7; the second was from de Gaulle's seizure of power in France to the Evian agreement between Algeria and France which was signed in March 1962. During the first phase, the ALN (Algerian Army of National Liberation) went on the offensive in fairly classic guerrilla warfare style. The *wilayas*, or guerrilla command groups, won over extensive areas in the interior and advanced to the coastal strip. This assault culminated in the Battle for Algiers, when the capital itself became a field of fighting for the best part of a year. It was after this stage of the war that France summoned new material and tactical resources. She threw a vast army and security force into the task of 'pacifying' or occupying the countryside and the towns. France thus established her military superiority, but she ensured an irreversible shift of loyalty to the nationalists and she thus lost the battle for the political support of the Algerian people. The *wilaya* were forced to withdraw to strongholds and to mountain redoubts, and the French army built the Meurice Line: a formidable system of electrified barriers along the borders, cutting Algeria off from Morocco and Tunisia. These fortifications shut off the *wilayas* from supplies and reinforcements, and divided the ALN into the forces of the interior (the *wilayas*) and the forces outside the country. It was this division which was to

have far-reaching political consequences. The Meurice Line was completed in September 1957, and from this time onwards the French forced a rollback of the ALN; the liberation army could not translate its political support into outright military victory, while the French, for their part, had to be content with military superiority and pacification but no outright victory either.

In August 1956, before the French achieved this rollback of the Algerian forces, the critical Soummam Conference had taken place in Algeria under the very nose of the French army. It set out to bring together the *wilaya* commanders of the interior and representatives of Algeria's external delegations; though, in the event, the latter did not manage to attend, and not all the *wilayas* were represented either. This conference decreed the precedence of the political leadership over the military, and the precedence of the forces in the interior over those of the exterior. Military decisions were to be subordinated to political aims, and a collective or collegial system of leadership was to be accepted at all levels. A five-man Executive and Co-ordinating Committee (the CCE), dominated by the internal military commanders, was set up; and plans were made for a national council of the revolution, composed of delegates from all over Algeria, to act as a kind of sovereign assembly over the leadership. This Soummam conference, inspired by young *wilaya* commanders like Ramdane Abbane of Wilaya I, in the Kabilya, envisaged the growth of a dynamic revolution, in which all national forces would be enlisted in the fight for national liberation, and the army of liberation itself would grow from a guerrilla force into the masses armed and politicized. But Algeria did not develop like China or Vietnam: France increased her military effort, managing to scatter the guerrilla force in the interior, and to disrupt the chain of command so carefully built through the CCE. The CCE itself was forced to seek refuge in Tunis, where it became the precursor to a full-blown government-in-exile, the GPRA (Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne). This provisional government manned a vast external network of political and diplomatic machinery that functioned from impressive ministry buildings in Tunis, and from other

capitals, but was cut off from direct contact with the forces struggling inside Algeria.

There developed, indeed, not only a division between the armed forces of the interior and the exterior, and between the political leadership and the *wilayas*, but also a break-down, inside Algeria, of communication and cohesion among the six *wilaya* regions harassed by the French forces. Each *wilaya* was thrown back on its own military and political resources, and became virtually autonomous in its own field of operation. (Most serious of the divisions created by the isolation of the *wilayas* was the estrangement of that in Kabyle. After a purge in 1959 of young urban intellectuals and radicals in the Kabyle leadership – fomented, it has been suspected, by French intelligence – this degenerated from a stronghold of the guerrilla war, into an isolated and politically alienated camp, resentful at any signs of Arab military or political domination of the Berbers.)

Inside the country, the number of Algerians under arms was dropping under the pressure of the enemy; but across the borders, the ALN mustered some 40,000 men and a highly organized army administration. It was a democratic and political army in which officers and men drew the same pay; each unit had a political commissar ranking with the officer in charge; army journals discussed the politics of the struggle; and the army education programme taught the politics of national liberation laced with some measure of socialism. It was, thus, an army exercised in politics as well as trained – perhaps over-trained – for combat; but it was an army-in-waiting, an army in enforced inactivity. With the exception of rare infiltrations through the Meurice Line, it was cut off from the struggle in the country, and, in the years of intensive preparation but non-involvement, increasingly prone to inner intrigues and struggles for power. To the beleaguered forces of the interior, starved of supplies and reinforcements during the hardest days of the war, it seemed that the army of the exterior was not a reserve force for combat, but, inevitably perhaps, preserving its force for another day.

On the political front, the original inner circle of those who had planned the rebellion (the Club of Nine) had grown to encompass a great range of forces, combining to prosecute the

war of liberation. Among them were the representatives of the militants in the towns, workers and students, and also old-style politicians, like Ferhat Abbas, the generation of leaders who had earlier tried to extract concessions from the French and had failed, and who came to the revolution late and despite themselves, there to play the role of diplomats and negotiators abroad. With the formation of the Algerian government-in-exile, the FLN as policy-maker tended to be effaced. And when independence came, after seven years of protracted war, it was negotiated by the politicians who made up the provisional government-in-exile. They concluded the Evian agreement, with all its constraints on full Algerian independence. This limited success promptly opened all the fissures between the forces of the interior and the exterior, the army and the politicians, the divided *wilayas*, and the range of ideologies and interests which had been covered over by the all-purpose structure of the FLN and by a general failure to enunciate the goals of the struggle beyond independence.

In the acute and involved pre-independence crisis, the army under Boumedienne and the government-in-exile were at loggerheads, to the point that at one stage Boumedienne was dismissed from his command. (The order was never operative.) The army had forced a small shift leftwards in the government-in-exile, with the displacement of Ferhat Abbas (who had risen to the top after the French kidnapping of Ben Bella) by Ben Khedda. But the attempt to avoid a neo-colonial settlement through the Evian agreement failed. At this stage the army decided to settle for formal independence as the shortest road to real Algerian power.

When, on the eve of independence, with the opening of the borders, the army and the provisional government entered Algeria, they accordingly came not as a united force, but as contestants for power. They were rivals for internal political support, with the *wilayas* divided between them and from them. Nor was the provisional government itself united. At one point there were even two rival governments in Algeria: Ben Khedda's, which was recognized by thirty-three foreign states, and Ben Bella's, with headquarters first at Tlemcen, then at Oran. Civil

war was averted only at the last moment by frantic popular pressure, especially in the capital through demonstrations organized by the trade unions, and by a decision of Boumedienne that the army would support Ben Bella for as long as he did not deviate from what the army considered were the correct revolutionary paths. Ben Bella and Boumedienne thus came to power in tandem. But the real force in Algeria was the army: professional, closely-knit, and, as the army of the exterior, non-combatant in the liberation war.

The advance of the ALN on Algiers was measured, as it began asserting its authority over the *wilayas*. It dissolved them and, where they resisted, crushed them. A few decisive pitched battles even ensued. The army of the exterior was highly organized and intact. By contrast, the *wilayas* had managed with difficulty to maintain a command and an organization at all; and where they had succeeded, these had functioned erratically, clandestinely, and out of contact for years with the army and the political leaders beyond the borders. And on the eve of the transfer of power, the French tried one last manoeuvre. This was the recruitment – by moderate Algerian politicians – of a force for 'law and order', which was composed largely of 'harkis', or native auxiliaries used as counter-insurgency troops during the war. This force sent troops into the *wilayas*; the membership of which was in some instances swollen by hundreds or thousands of men, previously uncommitted to the struggle but hostile to it, and ready for any political adventure.

To the army of the exterior, there was no option but to assert its total, national command over what looked like roaming armed bands. The men of the *wilayas* were ordered to lay down their arms and abandon their wartime structure; where they resisted, they were arrested for illegal possession of weapons. The fighters of the *wilayas* were not absorbed into the army. But half a year later, the army did absorb Algerians who had been officers and non-commissioned officers in the French army; and it was said that much of the general staff in the ALN, which became the ANP (Armée Nationale Populaire) at independence, was largely created from these officers. New regions of military administration, which cut across the old *wilaya*

divisions, also played their part in bringing the control of the *wilayas* to an end.

Thus, at the very moment of Algeria's independence victory, after seven years of gruelling war, the very forces which supplied the dynamics of Algeria's revolution were displaced. The forces of the interior, liberated by a guerrilla war which might have led to a genuine popular mobilization for a new political system, were overtaken, even suppressed, by a highly centralized, authoritarian and bureaucratic armed structure. From this time onwards, Algerian independence politics were not peasant-based, as the rural revolt which sustained the war had been; nor were they fired primarily by the worker, student and intellectual militants of the cities, who in great street demonstrations and in the Battle for Algiers itself had thrown their weight behind the FLN in the face of security force terrorism. They became the contests of elite groups, among them the professional officer corps of the career army, manipulating for political and economic vantage points.

In the prosecution of the war, the FLN had combined men of disparate origins and political persuasions – prosperous middle-class merchants, members of prominent land-owning families, workers, trade-union militants, students, intellectuals, poor peasants and religious leaders. When it entered independence, it had little to offer in the way of a programme. 'We will start thinking about Algeria's economy when we are back on Algerian soil,' one FLN spokesman had said. So it was a broad but amorphous and eclectic movement, with anything but a coherent strategy for the post-independence period. When the Tripoli Programme and the Charter of Algiers proclaimed the leading role of the FLN in defining policy and controlling government, this was enshrining a myth. The FLN had been a great wartime resistance front, but it was to atrophy rapidly with independence. The real power in Algeria after independence was not the party, but the highly organized and professional army. It had grown in struggle, unlike Africa's other armies; but after independence, it was more like them than distinct from them. And Algerian politics, fired in a revolutionary struggle for independence, had produced the ashes of elite preoccupations.

Politicians in Business

. . . And I say to this Central African elite which is daily growing before our eyes: don't be ashamed to be bourgeois, don't be ashamed to become wealthy.

President David Dacko, addressing the National Assembly of the Central African Republic, 16 October 1961

'Elite' has been used as a catch-all term to describe those in Africa who were employed originally as intermediaries by the colonial power, and who later came to see themselves as its heirs and beneficiaries. Some members of the elite were born to special status and influence; others acquired it through education or economic opportunity afforded by the changing social system. Within the elite group there were several layers. Apart from the 'traditional, elite, reinforced in their authority by the colonial administration, and the coastal elites that enjoyed an early monopoly of Western education and trading opportunities, a later-educated layer took to the professions or the civil service and became a large and influential administrative elite. Others, especially from rural areas, went into the army. Some achieved membership of the elite through their role as middlemen in trade, or as employees of the import-export houses and other foreign enterprises. A vociferous generation espoused politics in the immediate pre-independence decade, earned the prestige of having negotiated the independence settlement, and, once in power, used politics to try transforming itself from elite group to ruling class. In the first phase of independence, Africa's power elite was dominated by the politicians and their party machines, but it was not confined to them; for around the feet of the politicians in power clambered not only those who exercised economic and political influence by virtue of office, leadership or business, but many more who laid claim to such.

The elite that aspired to the place of the colonialists, and the power elite that in fact came to inherit command, was not a distinct social class, for neither grouping was anchored in economic ownership and control. Neither the governing parties

nor the opposition were, in general, class-based. Majhemout Diop, the Senegalese marxist, writing on his own country, had pointed out that nearly all the leaders of the different parties were of much the same social origin, the petit-bourgeoisie or lower middle class; most, he added, had imbibed their ideology from much the same sources, a blend of African nationalism and some marxism.¹

Class formation is still rudimentary; and class characterization alone, an incomplete guide to the nature of power in the new African state. Society is stratified in complex ways, and class alignments are criss-crossed by kinship, age-group, ethnic and regional affiliations, and patron and client relationships. Though there are those, especially since they obtained control of the state as part of the power elite, who have increasingly constituted both an upper social and a ruling class, and who have found growing opportunity for entrenchment, it remains difficult to equate any one social class with the ruling class. There has been no necessary congruence between wealth and economic power, or between economic and political power, Ken Post has written.² But within the elite – and outside it too, of course – a process of class formation is in progress. 'Class formation,' Richard Sklar has written, 'would appear to be more significant than class conflict as a form of class action in contemporary Africa.'³ It is the scuffling for control of groups within the power elite that constitutes the crisis of the first phase of African independence, and that helps explain the invasion of government by the soldiers.

No bourgeoisie, in the style of Europe's early nation states, has found the power to govern alone; for indigenous ownership and controlling groups had been able to grow only in the shadow of colonial power. Since independence, as before, the large concentrations of capital have been in the hands of foreign companies. Africans have risen to be planters, traders, cocoa-brokers, timber-merchants, transport contractors, and small manufacturers. But Africa's bourgeoisie has been incapable of accumulating capital and creating economic growth independent of the giant international firms. No indigenous capital has existed to challenge the expatriate monopoly of banking,

insurance, building societies, shipping lines or large timber concessions. European banks exercise a virtual monopoly in Africa; and banks have ever been loath to lend money for African-run enterprises without 'security'. At the end of the Second World War, three large firms controlled from half to four-fifths of the main exports of Nigeria and Ghana; while three great trading companies dominated the French colonies.¹

In the years between the wars, a number of small middle-men managed to wedge themselves between the expatriate companies that monopolized the import-export trade, and the small-scale farmer-producers. In Nigeria there were about 100,000 such middle-men.⁵ But their profit margins were small. Then, after the war, the marketing boards, through which exports were handled, had power to license buying agents. The large foreign firms began to withdraw from the wholesale buying trade, and this created opportunities for Africans in at least these interstices of the economy. Now African agents, brokers, contractors and traders – among them the market 'mammies' – stepped into their own. By 1964 in Nigeria, for instance, the number of African agents had trebled. Yet, by independence, very few members of the elite had entered it as private businessmen or entrepreneurs. Where they functioned in the commercial world, it was mostly as agents and go-betweens, or as employees of the expatriate firms. Many were living conspicuously in the professions, as lawyers, doctors and academics. Many had graduated into politics. Most were manning the lower levels of the civil service and filling the white-collar jobs in the towns.

Not that glaring inequalities in wealth and ownership did not exist. Indeed wealth was increasingly being concentrated in a few hands. In the Ivory Coast, a planter class of perhaps 10,000, including President Houphouët-Boigny himself – scion of a hereditary chief, political leader and head of government – owns large tracts of land, employs wage labour and has accumulated capital to branch into commerce and transport. In Ghana, by 1959-60, at Kumasi and Accra, the two largest towns, there were traders, with a turnover of £5,000 to £20,000 a year each, who handled direct importing from abroad.⁶ Nigeria was said in 1965 to boast half a dozen millionaires, men with incomes of

perhaps £xoo,ooo a year.⁷ In Nigeria's Western Region, the top 5 per cent enjoyed 26 per cent of the national income, though in Ibadan, the capital, the advertised wage rate for unskilled labour was ₦5. a day. The same concentration of wealth is at work in most African states. Changes in the law to allow the transfer of land to private ownership has produced strong land-owning differentials in some parts of the countryside. In Togo, by the mid-1950s, less than 5 per cent of the farmers possessed about one-fifth of the planted cocoa land. The crystallization of a bourgeoisie took place mainly in the countryside, or in trade, commerce and property, Indigenous industry was virtually non-existent. There were tiny workshops, employing a handful of men each, but no industrial enterprises worth talking of.*

According to a report on the Development of African Private Enterprise, made in 1964 for the U.S. National Planning Association by T. Geiger and W. Armstrong, the Nigerian Ministry of Commerce and Industries has estimated that 'there are roughly 200,000 Nigerian entrepreneurs, the great majority of whom are partially or wholly engaged in small retailing activities'. Their incomes are mostly low: 'a 1959 report of the Nigerian Government indicated that about 85 per cent of the African traders in Lagos earned less than 420 dollars a year – and this is probably higher than in most other parts of the country.' The same report quotes a 1963 census in Ghana which revealed 'over 100,000 enterprises of all sizes, of which 1,200 employ more than 10 people'; and it adds that most of these, as in Nigeria, are small retailers with low incomes.⁸

An African bourgeoisie was struggling fitfully to emerge, but it was having a hard time of it. Giovanni Arrighi argues⁹ that, thanks to the grip of the international corporations on African economies, Tropical Africa may not produce more than a satellite, subordinate, lumpen bourgeoisie, less and less able to stimulate economic growth independently of these corporations. 'The

*In fourteen towns surveyed in Nigeria's Eastern region, 10,728 firms employed 28,721 workers, an average of 2.7 per enterprise, including the manager-owner and apprentices. (*Development of Small Industries in Eastern Nigeria*, prepared for the United States Agency for International Development.)

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integration of Tropical Africa with the international capitalist system can be assumed to exclude the possibility of a nationalist capitalist pattern of development.' Decolonization, he claims, was the result of a conflict between two kinds of preserves in the colonies: the big companies, on the one hand, and small planters, small trading houses and marginal enterprises, on the other. With independence, the latter lost. The upshot has been the emergence of a new pattern in foreign investment. The typical expatriate firm operating in Tropical Africa is more and more what has been called the multi-national corporation, 'an organized ensemble of means of production subject to a single, policy-making centre which controls establishments situated in several different national territories'. And, to be sure, foreign investment is increasingly a device for transferring a surplus generated in Africa to the investors. Investment in mining and, of late, petroleum, absorb the preponderance of private funds. Industrial investment is concentrated either in the processing of primary products for the export market, or in import substitution. Heavy industry remains either absent altogether or, 'being export-orientated, totally unrelated to the structure of African economies'. The system of oligopolies provides no basis for the production of capital goods to promote the industrialization of Africa.

Before independence the elite found its political power, ownership and economic advance restricted by the colonial system. It demanded the protection of African business from unfair competition by foreign firms; but only the removal of colonial rule, it was thought, would open the way to African development, African control, African ownership. Political control would come first, and African economic advance would follow, it was supposed. At independence, however, the transfer of authority produced a divided system of power. The oligarchy evacuated government and administration, in staggered stages depending on the speed of the Africanization programmes. Yet economic power remained entrenched in the hands of the oligopolies. 'The problem of independence seemed to have been solved in many of the ex-French territories in a practical spirit remarkably free of doctrine,' wrote Unilever's official historian.¹⁰

'By the mid-sixties it was evident that a new future had been won for Unilever in the new Africa.' Unilever had come to terms with the new system of bifurcated power; so had its counterparts in the former French colonies, SCOA and CFAO, and its own UAC subsidiary, *Cie du Niger Française*. Beside the multi-national corporation, the African bourgeoisie was feebler than ever. Real power in the shape of economic ownership continued to lie outside the country.

Two power groups accordingly controlled the newly independent states. They worked at different levels, from different bases, with the one distinctly feebler than the other and deeply subservient to it. The successor state of the independence era looked different on a superficial level, sounded different, even craved to be more different still. But while the African elite had inherited political power, the price was a continued dependence on forces beyond its political reach; and the consequence was a lop-sided development of social and economic forces within African society.

By independence, therefore, an indigenous dominant class with power grounded in economic control had not emerged. But if the parties inheriting government did not possess an infrastructure of economic power, they promptly set about trying to build themselves one. The first phase of independence was characterized by the efforts of the power elite to use the state not only as an instrument of political domination but also as a source of economic power, in the interstices of the economy unfilled by external control.¹¹ Possession of government and the resources of the state proved the decisive means. For the state in Africa is the main source of domestic capital and its accumulation. The state plays the major role in economic activity and development. The state is the principal employer of labour, the chief dispenser of jobs, benefits, patronage, contracts, foreign exchange and license to trade. Manipulation of the offices and resources of the state by the power elite proved the shortest cut to wealth. It was political power that made possible the creation of economic power, not the other way about.

Sometimes the manipulation was a party-managed affair, as in Nigeria, where each of the major Southern parties had its

bank, business and financial structures, to make money for the politician-businessman and provide funds for the parties themselves. Sometimes individual politicians improvised their own grafts. In one country after another, African politicians came to be known as Mr Ten Per Cent. Politicians extracted such a commission for services rendered in the exercise of their office. Large expatriate firms and local contractors budgeted for the extra 10 per cent that had to be paid to politician or party in securing a contract. (The 10-per-cent rake-off has become such conventional practice in African states that when the Togo government helped the Nigerian federal government during the war with Biafra, by intercepting £7 million-worth of banknotes smuggled abroad by the Biafrans, it was agreed at a joint meeting between the two heads of state, Major-General Gowon and President Etienne Eyadema, that the Togo government receive an 'indemnity' of £700,000 – or 10 per cent of the total value.)

Nigeria's First Republic became an orgy of power being turned to profit. Political party, public and private financial interests fed greedily upon one another. The men who controlled the parties used them to commandeer business, and the business, in turn, to buy party support. The politicians come to power saw it as their right to rule, and in ruling to profit.* Government resources were freely used to acquire economic interests, and these, in turn, to command more political support. The Coker Commission Report showed how £6.3 million (24 per cent of the Western Region Marketing Board total revenues up to 1962, and one and a half times the regional government's revenue for a year) were misappropriated by the ruling party, which filled

*The former Western Minister of Finance, Oba Cladius Dosah Akran, was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for stealing half a million pounds belonging to the Nigersol Construction Company some time in 1965. So was Prince Adeleke Ademiluyi, one-time chairman of the West Nigeria Development Corporation. It was alleged before the Somulu tribunal that Oba Akran, while Minister of Finance, had improperly acquired the sum of £2,060,347 ros. *zd.*, this in two years between 1963 and 1965. The ex-minister's wife operated four bank accounts under four different names, the tribunal was told. At the time of the hearing, the tribunal was told, Akran was a retired civil servant of the Posts and Telegraphs Department, on a monthly pension of £9 3s., (*Daily Sketch*, 19 August 1967).

private or party purses behind the cover of loans, bank deposits, investments and inflated prices.¹² The business politicians did not have quite the same freedom of manoeuvre everywhere. In Sierra Leone, neither power elite nor assets were as expansive; but the bank balances of politicians were nevertheless swollen with the 'sweets of office', as a commission into corruption showed when it ordered the former premier to repay the state the sum of £771,037.* When the successor government of Siaka Stevens came to office, it announced ruefully : 'There is not much we can celebrate today, the kitty is empty.'¹³ Already by 1967, the reserves of Sierra Leone's Produce Marketing Board had been so vigorously deployed for political patronage that it was unable to pay farmers for crops.¹⁴ In Upper Volta, President Maurice Yameogo went on trial, charged with embezzling £r,212,000 during his spell of office. In Ghana, patronage was more rigorously controlled, for there was a national policy for the development of state enterprise and for the curbing of the private business sector; but the group intent on accumulating property while praising the constraints imposed by the state, often managed to elude them.

'Dash', like traditional gift-giving and jobbery, had long been a feature of West African life. The bigger the man, the bigger the 'dash' for the favour or service received. Thus there developed the Big Man syndrome, of the patron fostering his flock by his fame and fortune. The bigger the politician, the bigger the political or business manipulation. 'Corruption' in the political process was crude and flamboyant. There was the elite's old confusion between the individual and general interest, as when Nigeria's Finance Minister opened a shoe factory, but not before he had legislated tax relief for local industry and a tax on imported shoes. A puritan ethic might have inspired a firmer moral integrity, it is often suggested; but this was more than a rampant moral fecklessness. It was the manipulation of the whole system by a political group in power, which found that only by drawing on the resources of the state could capital be raised rapidly and with relative ease. Beside the financial

*A three-man commission headed by Mr Justice Foster probed the Margai government of Sierra Leone.

manipulations of the advanced world, so quick to admonish the poor for its lack of business morality, Africa's fixers were small stuff, to be sure. This was primary accumulation of capital, slow and insignificant by the acquisitive methods of earlier capitalist classes, but it was incurably damaging to Africa's pitiful resources. It was Africa's open season for primitive accumulation, in a period when the more vigorous the plunder, the sooner came the crisis of political control. Resources were too scanty in these backward and fragile economies for their dispersal not soon to be felt or noticed; and Africa, unlike the European powers in the high noon of capital accumulation, found piracy on the high seas and colonization closed to her.

The group that derived its ownership and control not from its hold on the main levers of the economy, but from the manipulation of the political system, has been called the 'political class'.¹⁵ Its members were not simply people who exploited their tenure of political office to their own pecuniary advantage. Many of them were dependent for their success as businessmen, or for their tenure of traditional office, or even civil service appointments, upon the favours of the party in power. 'It is the requirement of the role of businessmen, rather than simply the opportunities available to politicians, which forces people to become part of the political class,' one observer has written.¹⁶ The political class thus 'includes incumbents of political office but also all whose office, employment and income depend on gaining the favour of the government in power'. Its core was made up of Cabinet Ministers, members of parliament, prominent businessmen who often held directorships of public corporations, and important party officials: all those whose control of government enabled them to disburse government revenues and to use government patronage, so as to consolidate their political dominance. More peripheral groups included traditional heads, smaller businessmen, civil servants, academics and party functionaries at local levels: those not so much in control of, as dependent on, government resources, and the party in power. The party in power was able to make a bourgeoisie, newly emerged or aspirant, dependent on government; and this group, in turn, was able to make the state the instrument of its purpose.

It was the political connexions of businessmen that safeguarded and extended their economic power; and the politicians' use of state resources that built them an economic base. No wonder the political parties clung so tightly to power; they had so much to lose.

The State of Bureaucrats

If independence installed the politician-businessmen as the dominant wing of the power elite, Africanization was responsible for the prodigious growth of an administrative sub-elite and the rapid rise within the power elite of this influential bureaucratic layer. Party leaders and bureaucrats had inherited their kingdoms more or less simultaneously – depending on the pace of Africanization in one country or another – and for a while the bureaucratic elite serviced the political layer and augmented it. Initially, indeed, their roles and interests appeared indistinguishable. The power elite has even been called 'the bureaucratic bourgeoisie': Majhemout Diop used this term for the group of over 1,000 career politicians, lawyers, civil servants, sons of land-owners, traders and richer farmers that controls political power in Senegal and uses government and state positions to acquire wealth and economic footholds. But while the leading civil servants – and army commanders – owed their positions at first to the favour of politicians, they have, in the peculiar nature of the African state, acquired special corporate interests in it; and they also, significantly, represent lower and later levels of the elite. It is the combination of these two factors that has made the group of bureaucrats ever-increasingly a rival power formation to the political class, and in ever sharper conflict with it. In the crisis caused largely by the 'corruption' orgy of the politician-businessmen, the alliance within the power elite

rapidly broke down and the bureaucrats found their own road to power most dramatically through the coup d'etat. (This is not, of course, to say that their influence and special role are by any means limited to those states which have experienced a military seizure of power.)

Not only is the state in Africa the main source of domestic capital and its accumulation, and the principal employer of labour; but government service is the ladder to promotion and thus to economic status for by far the largest number of the top and lower levels of the elite. Half the wage-earners of West Africa are employed in the public service, which includes the civil service and the public corporations. Of Nigeria's total labour force, 75 per cent are employed in agriculture: but of the rest, 62 per cent, or 300,000, are employed by government, with 122,000 of these in federal or regional ministries; 80,000 working for local government; and the rest in the public corporations, the army, the police and the railways. In five years of independence, Nigeria's civil service increased by one-half again, and some ministries quadrupled in size.² In Ghana, by 1960, there were 60,000 trained professionals: one in six was self-employed; and of the remainder, two-thirds were employed in the public sector, leaving only 8,000 in the private.³

Alongside this phenomenally swift growth of the government-employed elite, went an equally rapid rise in elite status and living standards. When expatriates left the civil service Africans stepped into their posts to inherit their rates of pay. Discrimination in the scales of reward had been one of the principal grievances of the emerging elite. Now the civil servants of the independence government clung tenaciously to expatriate rates of pay. In Nigeria, where the average national *per capita* income is £29 per annum, university graduates commence their careers with salaries of over £700, which rise to £3,900 for superscale posts, while a ministry permanent secretary receives at least £2,500 in basic salary. And the civil servants demanded not only expatriate pay, but colonial privileges, like the system of subsidized rentals, car allowances and a free passage to England each leave! In Western Nigeria, 2.4 per cent of the government's recurrent expenditure has gone on basic car allowances to its

civil servants.^{4*} In Ghana, government expenditure rose four-fold between the mid-rgs0s and the mid-rg60s. In part this was due to the expansion of social services; but it was also because African civil servants insisted on equality with expatriates, who had been paid according to the salary scales of the metropolitan countries. Africanization thus multiplied many times the openings for African members of a 'red tape' middle class, and produced unprecedentedly rapid career opportunities for the top men: in ten years an exceptional civil servant could rise to the highest rung of the bureaucratic ladder. In Nigeria, the average age of permanent secretaries is thirty-nine; their rise has been meteoric, and their influence has soared with their status and income. Down in the ranks of the administrators, too, salaries and privilege have been vastly inflated. If the lower levels of the administrative elite are not equal partners of the power elite, they are at least among the prime beneficiaries of state policies which unquestioningly adopted the salary structure left behind by colonialism, and so perpetuated, even promoted, the yawning gap between the living standards of the elite and sub-elite and those of the great popular mass.

Independence thus brought immediate gains to a new and relatively privileged class of administrators which, as it grew, began to consume a greater and greater share of the national product, and to precipitate an uncontrolled expansion of public spending on non-productive activity. Perhaps this process is most dramatically revealed in Algeria,⁵ where at the end of the war for liberation, 800,000 colons quit the country within eight months, and Algerians had immediately to replace the departed administering and trading class. Of 450,000 jobs outside agriculture in the mid-1960s, 180,000 were filled by skilled and manual workers, white-collar workers, small entrepreneurs and executives in the urban economy; the rest went to the civil

• Nothing seemed too much for this group. In March 1968, during the war, the Association of Civil Servants called on the Nigerian Federal military government to shoulder direct responsibility for their motor-car advances instead of arranging them through private finance houses. This, as an irate correspondent pointed out to the *Sunday Post* (3 March 1968), when the government's estimates, drafted by these same civil servants, showed a period of national austerity.

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service and the army. Apart from the 120,000 military – Algeria has one of the largest armies in the Third World with twelve soldiers to every 1,000 inhabitants – the administration recruited 150,000 new civil servants. In the Maghreb as a whole – however different the pronounced state policies of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco – in the decade between 1955 and 1965, the number of manual and white-collar workers and artisans rose by only 30 per cent, whereas the number of executives and civil servants earning relatively high salaries multiplied six times. Side by side with this extraordinary inflation of administrators, important and petty alike, and all with privileged living standards, agricultural production in Algeria was dropping, urban unemployment rising and the number of productive jobs growing only imperceptibly. Samir Amin writes⁶ that the most striking characteristic of the years in Algeria from 1963 onwards was the sharp rise in public expenditure despite the sudden drop in the level of the country's economic activity. Indeed, the fall of Ben Bella from power coincided with the most acute financial crisis.

In one independent state of Africa after another, there developed this vast and proliferating elite of administrators. Its appearance gave countries very different in their professed political purpose and commitment a common cast, for it was not the size of these administrative cohorts that was alone significant; it was that they battered on the state, and vigorously defended their right to do so, at a time when the resources of these states were needed for the more productive side of their economies, and the productive springs themselves, as Samir Amin calls them, were stagnating.

A few years after independence the state seems to be swallowing its own tail. Each year African governments spend more of their revenues on their own employees. The neutral phrases of the ECA reports⁷ describe the steady growth of the 'public sector'; how central government revenues and expenditure each year account for a greater share of the gross domestic product. (The figures generally available relate to central government expenditure only, and not to regional or provincial governments as well, and so the picture is under-stated into the bargain.) Two items have come increasingly to dominate expenditures:

public debt repayments (which *in* the Congo, for instance, grew from 1.7 per cent in 1963 to 30.4 per cent in a handful of years) and recurrent administration. A close look at government budgets produces a hair-raising picture. Gerard Chaliand ⁸ has taken just such a close *look*. Senegal's budget for 1964-5 showed that just under half (47.2 per cent) of the total was absorbed by administrative salaries. A finance commission duly castigated itself, and called for a restructuring of the budget. Running costs, it pointed out, were greater than income; and, as a result, 'we have not been able to devote one franc for investment and we have had to resort to loans to finance the national plan'. But Senegal was no exception. In the Cameroun, administration swallowed 18,550 million CFA francs, and capital expenditure only 1,409 million. The official report on the budget assured the country that the expenditures were 'strictly necessary' for the 'normal' functioning of services.

In the Central African Republic, 8r per cent of the budget went on the civil service; and of that, 58 per cent on civil service salaries alone. In Congo-Brazzaville, the expenditure on government personnel rose 88.8 per cent in four years, to constitute 62 per cent of the budget. The population is 826,000; and on 1 January 1964, there were 10,931 state employees. One detailed set of figures may be cited, for the Ivory Coast. There, the civil service in 1964 comprised 28,314 persons, including army personnel.

Army	7,100
Education	7,405
Public health	3,510
Interior	3,082
Agriculture	2,500
Finance, economic affairs and planning	1,808
Public works	1,559
Justice	754
Ministry of Armed Forces	291
Foreign affairs	147
Presidency	66
Supreme Court	62
Ministry of State	30
	28,314

Omit the 6,000 servicemen and some 6,000 teachers not on the top salary scales, as well as certain other employees not usually classified as civil servants, and there remained rs,000 civil servants, or less than 0·5 per cent of the total population of 3,750,000 in the Ivory Coast. Yet between them, this 0·5 per cent absorbed 58 per cent of the budget. In Dahomey civil service salaries absorb 64·9 per cent of the budget. That country holds the record. As for Ghana, Guinea and Mali, those countries showed the same bureaucratic extravagance. In Guinea, administrative expenditure rose by 80 per cent between 1959 and 1962; in Mali, by 60 per cent; and there, salary structures inherited from the colonial era had hardly been altered.⁹

Chaliand's close look at budgets and trade balances produces yet another alarming set of figures characterizing these states as dominated by a small government-employed elite which lives in the style to which its French colonial predecessors were accustomed. In 1964, in the fourteen former French colonies, six times as much was spent in importing alcoholic drinks as in importing fertilizer. Half as much was spent on perfume and cosmetic imports as on machine tools. Almost as much went on importing petrol for privately owned cars as on the purchase of tractors; and five times as much on importing private cars as on agricultural equipment. The resources of the new states were being devoured by a tiny group whose demands distorted the budgets and the economies of the states they governed. It was Rene Dumont who commented that the cost of African presidential and ministerial establishments was probably higher, in relation to national income, than the cost to France of the Court of Louis XVI in 1788.¹⁰

In the Central African Republic, the budget report reflected smugly, if rather too soon, that

the policy of *austerity* [my emphasis] is general in French-Africa, but while numerous countries have arrived at this state of affairs by the unfortunate road of revolution or coup d'etat, it is very agreeable to see that in the CAR the national solidarity and political maturity of the population allows the government to reorientate in this way.

In that country, as in Dahomey and Upper Volta, it was the imposition of so-called 'austerity' measures that precipitated the strikes which brought those governments down and the army to power. The cry of 'austerity' was implausible, even insulting, from notoriously profligate politicians. Yet, significantly, the unions that led the strikes were composed largely of civil servants and other government employees, for these comprise the largest and best organized of those in wage employment, and while, beside the squandering of resources by the politician-businessmen, their wage and bonus demands could have been nothing but just, in the tug-of-war between politician-businessmen and the privileged administrative elite, the greatest proportion of the national income continued to be appropriated by parasitic and unproductive groups, oblivious to the needs of the common people and ranged against any real development policy.

BUREAUCRATS AGAINST POLITICIANS

The tug-of-war between different levels of the elite grew stronger as the experience of independence lengthened, and the politicians rapidly lost their grip. The speciousness and brevity of the independence struggle itself had endowed the political class that came to power with little moral authority. And as it squandered this along with the coffers, it opened itself to challenge and displacement by other competing groups within the elite. Such conflicts have not been fundamental, however, in the sense that different branches of the elite have had divergent policies for their country. The quarrel has been between 'ins' and 'outs' for the same prize, the control of power and patronage.

Elite competition has not always been the trigger, nor the single or central motive, for every army intervention; but in several it has played an important role in precipitating the collapse of a government and, after the military has acted, installing another. If competing elites have not always directly made a coup – because it takes a complex of factors to do so – they have generally taken advantage of it. For the 'outs' in the elite groups, coups become a swift way 'in' to power.

And, to be sure, the first generation of politicians had seen to it that there was virtually no other way to displace them. Among

the elite groupings not accommodated by the political class in power were opposition politicians belonging to the generation of agitational independence politics. In addition, the large second-generation elite which consisted mainly of administrators often better educated and qualified than the men in office, saw the first-generation leaders as part of a closed corporation. *Les anciens* occupied the positions of real power. In Senegal, young civil servants talked of politics as 'a basket of crabs'.¹¹ They knew that dissent from the party leadership would mean the loss of their jobs. So they avoided politics, but returned, degrees in hand, expecting the best jobs and the fullest opportunities through the administration. In Upper Volta, there was the same criticism about *les anciens* in power. And when the coup came in January 1966, it seemed to have brought a significant number of the second generation elite to office. In Dahomey, the coup that forced Maga out of office and placed General Soglo in power was almost certainly engineered by a group of young second-generation elite in the government, trade unions and educational establishment. For three months, until Soglo withdrew from political power in January 1964, the government was dominated by a dozen or so second-generation technocrats. When Soglo re-emerged at the head of the Dahomeyan government in December 1965, there was a wholesale house-cleaning that again brought a group of young technocrats to the fore. The new Soglo government included two doctors, an engineer, the director of a public corporation, a former teacher, and administrators or technicians for the rest.¹²

With independence, the strategic command posts of the society had fallen to politics, and there, to the ruling party. The rewards of the successful politicians had been disproportionate to all others, including those of the technicians and the administrators. When the politicians fell, or were removed, the pivot swung from politics to administration as the principal point of entry to the power elite. The bureaucracy, civil service and army became the new road to power, and the administrators, in uniform or in tailored suits, the new power-bureaucrats.

Post argues¹³ that the parties and politicians running the state are always threatened potentially, at times actually, by two

corporate groups whose existence is determined only partially by social class. These are the bureaucrats and the army officers.

In more developed class systems their class affiliations are clear; these are usually with the bourgeoisie, though in the case of army officers they may be with a landowner class. In West Africa classes are just forming. During the colonial period many sons of peasant farmers managed to get the education essential for entry into the bureaucracy or army.... The present senior bureaucrats are recruited not through the class system but by the state, through a relatively classless educational system. Their careers are based on their symbiotic relationship with the state. They share its power with the politicians, but the relationship is frequently an uneasy one. The bureaucrats and army officers are corporate groups in that they have their own sense of community, their own consciousness, their own values.... The power of the politicians lies with the party; that of the bureaucrats in their technical expertise in managing the state....

The politician-businessmen in office were intent on rapid acquisition and the manipulation of political control for their patently personal economic ends; the soldiers and the administrators – and their counterparts in the managements of expatriate firms – persuaded themselves that they were the agents of rational 'development' and 'efficiency' in management. Civil servants have always nursed a deep resentment of the politicians. The politicians were the upstarts. The civil servants had a function to perform before the politicians entered the scene. They have expertise; the politicians generally do not. The politicians arrive in office talking about making a clean sweep (though they usually sweep anything but clean); civil servants were trained in attitudes that make adaptation and change unsettling. Ideology is rejected. Civil servants, drilled in the notion that political contest should be free and open, with the administration itself disinterested, were quick to accuse the politicians of defiling the neutrality of the service and its incumbents by using government for their own narrow ends. Like its imperial mentor before it, the African civil service develops a contempt for political movements. Its inherited mystique is that efficiency solves all problems; politics is a dirty game, and government would be better off without it.

The Successor State

The civil service does not act directly to seize state power. But once the military does that, it is the civil service that cossets the new regime in its shaky first hours and makes sure it survives. Dahomey and Upper Volta are the outstanding examples of coups triggered by the corporate interests of bureaucrats; and Togo, of a coup by soldiers acting directly in their own interest. But even where coups have not been immediately instigated by either of these corporate group interests, the two have merged very soon after the seizure of power. For while the invasion of government by the soldiers need not be precipitated directly by competition within the elite – any crisis can cause the coup d'état – in the actual rearrangement of the power structure caused by the coup, there is a shift in dominance, temporarily as in Ghana or more permanently as in the Congo, from the politician-businessmen of the power elite to the power bureaucrats.

It was, in fact, *in* the Congo that the conflict between these two mainstreams of the elite bureaucrats, the army included, rose earliest and swung the pendulum of power furthest into the hands of the power bureaucrats.

The pre-independence handing-over period was exceedingly brief, and the political parties had not time to build popular bases. The only Congolese party with a serious claim to national leadership, the MNC led by Lumumba, was overthrown by a conjunction of external and domestic forces before it could assert its hold on the state machinery. Perhaps the major internal cause of the Lumumba government's fall, indeed, was the challenge to the politicians, to the whole nascent political class, from lower ranks of the elite, the army and the Congolese clerks of the civil service.¹⁴ When the Force Publique mutinied under strong Belgian-officer provocation, this was because it saw no immediate prospect of a share in the fruits of independence.^{15*}

*According to Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo* (Princeton, 1965), p. 315, a soldiers' petition said: 'There will be two branches of Congolese independence. First there will be . . . the class of the great Congolese leaders and their white counselors. These will benefit from all the advantages of the new independent state. . . . A second dishonoured wing, which will include the inferiors, the criers of "Vive Independence" will be and remain the servants of the first branch.'

It was the mutiny and the breakdown of the administration that gave the Belgians the pretext for their intervention and that undermined the authority of Lumumba and his government; had Lumumba been able to rally the army, and so possibly deal with the Katanga secession, there might have been no necessity to call in the United Nations. Without an effective army, the central government was impotent. A few months later, during the United Nations operation, and with the complicity of UN officials, the first military coup led by Mobutu swept the Lumumba government from power. In the subsequent period, the army did not rule directly, but it backed a government of commissioners drawn from the small university-educated elite. Government was conducted by *cabinet de coulisses*,¹⁶ manoeuvring in aisles and back rooms. Apart from the foreign governments and companies, the major power-brokers in the Congo were the men who controlled the army, the police, the security services and 'other channels of communication with friendly foreign powers',¹⁷ The Binza group included Mobutu as head of the army, security police chief Nendaka, head of internal security Kandolo, Foreign Minister Justin Bomboko, and president of the National Bank, Albert Ndele. The group owed its effectiveness to a political situation where power derived from control of the key political resources in the central government structure at the capital. This, says Crawford Young, was an anonymous coalition, whose existence did not even become widely known until mid-1962, a year after it had started functioning.¹⁸ After the 1964 crisis caused by the Eastern Province and Kwilu peasant rebellions, Tshombe was brought to power; but in the following year, Mobutu staged his second take-over, this time with carefully laid plans to build a political base for the army-run regime.

The swing from politics to bureaucracy-and-army as the centre of power is graphically illustrated in the careers sought by young educated Congolese. On the eve of independence, only three Congolese had reached the top level of the administrative hierarchy (there were 4,642 Belgians in those grades), and so there was a massive exodus of junior Congolese civil

servants into politics. There were no outlets in the administration, and politics seemed the answer. Of 137 deputies in the 1960 assembly, sixty-six had been public employees; as had thirty-one of the eighty-four senators.¹⁹ After 1960, the trend was sharply reversed. The university graduates, the best trained members of the younger generation, went not into politics, but into the bureaucracy. It was through the administration and not through the polls that the Congo's new political class was emerging. A certain fusion of interests had occurred between pre-independence politicians and the men running the administration; but the characteristic of post-1960 Congo politics is the rapid recruitment into the new power elite of petty officialdom. Its first instinct was to proliferate the administrative machinery. The number of provinces was increased from six to twenty-one: each with a government; its own administrative personnel; its administrative and political clients; and an assembly of around 700 members. In the urban centres there grew a commercial class born of speculation, inflation, administrative corruption and trafficking in licences for commodities. The new ruling class in the Congo contained, at the political level, some 1,500 important and profitable posts; some 11,000 high-ranking administrative posts, and nearly 100,000 middle ones; and, in the army, some 23,000 men, of whom less than 1,000 were privates or corporals.²⁰ The administration had been the guiding force in colonial days; once again the single most important source of power lay in the civil service, with the army behind it. Mobutu's second regime turned to reinforcing government at the centre and building a political base for the army through the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution, organized along the lines of the mass independence parties.

THE DECLINE OF THE PARTIES

When the soldiers struck, what became of the parties ?

Some of the independence parties achieved an impressive measure of popular support from the men of property and trade in the towns, from the articulate in the professions, from the lower ranks of the elite among the civil servants, including

the teachers, from those newly arrived in the towns, whose voluntary associations maintained close links with their rural communities, and from local communities where the new politicians acted as intermediaries, rather like the political bosses among new immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²¹ The traders, especially, were formidable financial and political backers of the new parties, from the CPP, where the mummies of the market-places first helped install, and then topple Nkrumah, to the Ivory Coast where to this day the party headquarters are situated in the middle of the market, the heart of trading power.

The parties were not all alike. There were the elite parties that relied on an existing social elite, with chiefs and headmen prominent pillars of support. There were the mass parties which recruited on the basis of political commitment rather than of social status and which aimed to carry out not only a political transfer of power but a social revolution as well.²² In Ghana there was a distinct shift of political dominance away from the older, more highly educated and better entrenched elite, to the 'veranda' boys of the CPP, the products of the primary rather than the secondary schools. There, as in Guinea and Mali, where the trader and rural bourgeoisie was feeble, a younger outgrowth of the elite came to power. In Nigeria, on the other hand, and in the Sudan, traditional heads and traditional support formed an influential amalgam within the power elite. In Mali and Guinea, the trade unions were active in the independence parties; methods of mass campaigning and mass organization were developed; the parties acquired a more radical ideology; and union leaderships were well integrated into the party structures at independence. In Nigeria, by contrast, the parties of the new southern elites had lost their radical momentum even before they came to power. Shrewdly timed constitutional reforms focused political energies on competition by election, and diverted the popular mobilization that the unions were just beginning to achieve. Within the independence movement, the Zikist radical wing and trade-union militants were alike defeated in attempts to influence the shape of the political system that

emerged through constitutional negotiation.^{23*} There was a shift of political gravity from mass organization to regional assemblies built on communal constituencies, at the same time that the unions began to fragment and so recede in political influence. Of 425 MPs elected to the regional assemblies in 1951, only eight were trade-unionists. Eight years later, in the Federal Parliament of 312 MPs, there were only six. In the French colonies, skilful direction by the French government and their man in French West Africa, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, broke the back of the radical wing of the independence movement, except where it survived to comprise the governments in Guinea and Mali, and to some degree in Niger and the Cameroun. In the Ivory Coast, Houphouet-Boigny showed himself a master at embracing his radical opposition to suffocate it in the bosom of his party. Critics were invited into the Assembly or into government, and student unions that proved too difficult to buy were adeptly out-manoeuvred and displaced by government-approved bodies.²⁴

In the transfer-of-power formula, the balance of old and new elites, the type of independence party – mass or elite – and the base of party support, differed from one state to another; but these distinctions faded into insignificance in the face of the military challenge, for the parties of all types had begun to atrophy with independence. There were several reasons.

The anti-colonial independence parties were built on the assumption that there was an interest and goal common to all colonial subjects, the elite and the common men alike. And so there was, up to a point. But few if any political leaders, of elites or commoners, identified the point at which, or the direction in which, interests diverged after independence.

The mass party had been built in the pre-independence period as the party of the potential nation: the nation would be realized through the unity and functioning of the party. The

* Mukwugo Okoye, the secretary-general of the Zikist movement, wrote of the 1949 Convention of the NCNC where Dr Azikiwe led the party's condemnation of the Zikists and ridiculed those who were Political prisoners at the time: 'After preaching revolution for a decade he [Dr Azikiwe], a successful businessman and a man of pleasure, was terrified when he saw one.'

mass party and, after independence, the one-party state were created to strengthen the power of the newly liberated 'nation' or people. There had to be one united party; for party proliferation or opposition within the 'nation' was a source of weakness.²⁵ Thus the parties reconciled divergent standpoints in the common interest and goal of independence. Auxiliary organizations were built, of women, youth and of trade unions, but they had little autonomy to mobilize support in their own right.^{26*} If the party declined in vigour and representativeness, its supporting bodies inevitably did so as well. Rooted in the notion that the party equalled the state, and the state the party, and that both expressed the will of the undifferentiated people, the mass party, and its successor the one-party state, presumed a high degree of clarity of political purpose, and a high level of consciousness and mobilization on the part of the 'people'. What ideology there was did not wear well, however, with the experience of independence. Membership of the party was elusive. It was a matter more of loyalty than of organization, a question of feeling an association rather than of holding a party card. Within the party, divergent social and economic interests developed; and it was hard to convince the rural poor and the urban unemployed that politicians and administrators in well-paid posts shared, or understood, their needs. It was not only that politicians waxed manifestly prosperous in office, but that they distorted the party to turn themselves into a new economic class.

The absence or incoherence of an independence ideology and development programme was the first major reason for the decline of the independence parties. The second was the shift of gravity from party organization to state, from the ways of popular mobilization to the methods of the administrator. When the party came to power, its leading cadres deserted it for government and other state jobs. The state asserted itself over the party, not the other way about. Once again, as in colonial days, bureaucratic methods dominated over the political. The

²⁶ In Mali, for instance, when the leader of the youth was dismissed from the party's leading committee after a disagreement within the party, the maximum age limit within the youth section was lowered, and the youth branches were brought under the direct political control of the party.

leader of the party became head of state. The committee of the party became the cabinet. Local party leaders were given key posts in local administration. The local party branch blurred indistinguishably with the local administration. Even when the intention was to avoid abandoning methods of popular mobilization, the party was so milked of its promising cadres for government roles that mobilization became virtually impossible. In office, the party could use state patronage as a substitute for organization, and a state decree, instead of promoting popular support. There were parties enough governing in the name of the people, but they did little or nothing to provide the people with the means of participation. On the whole government continued to function much as it had done during the colonial period, as a centralized and hierarchical system of administration.²⁷ Even in the states of maximum mobilization, where the party grew into a popular institution, it was nowhere really successfully transformed into an effective system of mobilization. Neither Guinea nor Mali had had much of a civil service, so the party emerged by default as almost the sole instrument of rule, responsible for many services normally within the sphere of the administration.²⁶ Even in Mali the huge network of party organization seemed to spend most of its time relaying directives from the centre; how effective it was at local mobilization it is difficult to say.²⁹ In Ghana the CPP ceased after some years to be a 'tangibly separate organization'; far from transforming Ghana it came to reflect all the cleavages in the country.³⁰

Government and party thus drew weakness from one another. Government was centralized in the capital and fairly rudimentary in the provinces; likewise the party had a large head and under-developed limbs. Because political party, government and power elite were almost indistinguishable, a blow against the one was liable to bring down all three.

The apparent ease of the army coup in Africa must be seen in conjunction with the fragility of the power system. Physical take-over was all too easy. The government had all too few defences. Control of administration and party were centralized in the capital. Government was often concentrated in one man, the president, who was simultaneously head of state and leader

The State of Bureaucrats

of the party. Kidnap the president, or occupy the State House in his absence, as in Ghana, and you captured the state with little more than a single knock-out blow. The military strike for power – given minimum logistical planning and a united officer corps, or at least a sufficient section of the corps, behind the coup – was practically certain to \$UCceed. Army officers would successfully displace the politicians. Their cousins, the civil servants, would manage the state for them. A new partnership of bureaucrats in and out of uniform, the power bureaucrats, would rule triumphant – until it came up full tilt against the complex factors which had triggered a crisis of government in the first place.