

RUTH FIRST

The Barrel of a Gun

Political Power in Africa
and the Coup d'Etat

Part VI: Armies in Stalemate

First published by Allen Lane The Penguin Press in 1970

Republished in 2012 by the Ruth First Papers Project

www.ruthfirstpapers.org.uk



Part VI

Armies in Stalemate

We have today two soldiers at the head of state, that is two national citizens. We are in power as cadres not as military personnel. I do not see why it is necessary to give power back to civilians, there is no problem of military government.

Captain Raoul of Congo-Brazzaville, September 1968

All the African states in which the army has invaded government – and others where the army has not yet left the barracks, but could well do so under provocation – share an incipient state of social crisis. There is a general condition of coup fertility in *Africa* manifested in four main ways.

1. There is cumulative economic crisis, because political independence alone does not enable Africa to break through the vicious circle of backwardness and dependence which is the condition of colonialism. Some states are visibly and irremediably stagnant; others have some prospects of growth, though not of real development. African states strain to find jobs or opportunity for new entrants to the elite, let alone the vast mass of conspicuously poor. Government is the principal provider of employment, but also, therefore, the principal butt of discontent. Africa's already inflated bureaucracies are confronted by each secondary school and university graduation. There is a constant flow of contestants for the top positions and top salaries in a society growing far too slowly to absorb them.

2. Political crisis *is* endemic because the temporary and shallow unity of political movements in the pursuit of political independence broke down under the fierce contests for power. Political power is more than office in local council, parliament and cabinet; it is access to the key levers of the economy. Elite leaderships in power use the state to manipulate jobs and contracts for themselves and their followers and, ultimately, to facilitate their emergence as a class. And the conflict of classes in formation can be as intense, if more elusive of analysis, than that of classes long and clearly established. A central conflict, if not the only one, soon developed between the politician-businessmen who dominated the first phase of independence,

and the power bureaucrats, the army men and the civil servants, of the second phase. But the shift from venal politicians to civil servants, however skilled, did not in itself diminish the conflict, or resolve the dilemma of these new states. These are rooted in the manipulation of the state by huge self-serving, fundamentally parasitic elites, while the economy stagnates.

In addition to these ingredients of political turmoil, many of the African states, artificially assembled in the course of conquest, combine disparate peoples; and where there is a faltering supply or an uneven allocation of resources, different sections of the elite fortify their own claims and grievances by identifying them with their particular regional or communal groupings. There are no disputes between the peoples of Africa, only between elites, Amílcar Cabral has said;¹ but in one country after another, if most notably in Nigeria, these elite leaderships have succeeded in polarizing disputes for power and the battle for the spoils along regional and – because region and community often coincide – communal lines.

When the political system is no longer able to contain these conflicts, it has a final resort to a system of reserve authority. This lies in the bureaucracy, the army and the civil service together. Colonialism made Africa essentially a continent of bureaucratic rule and control. After independence, ruling groups, unsupported by the pillars of the economy, were feeble; the bureaucracy, by contrast, was inherited virtually intact and, with direct control over the state's instruments of coercion, proved the more effectual. The last reserve of the bureaucracy has been the army, as cohesive and tightly disciplined as the political parties have been diffuse and slack.

Some African governments tried to assert the political party as against the bureaucracy, but this was done administratively, and not by popular mobilization. These governments succeeded to some extent in changing the forms of administration and even in building a new social base of political power. But as the governments of politicians collapsed, or were challenged, the institutions of power, which had been inherited more or less unaltered from the colonizers, took over control from the forces to which they were expected to be subservient.

3 and 4. Two other sets of factors swing into play in a state vulnerable to crisis, and separately or together they decide whether the army will intervene or not. The one is the role of external forces, the degree of external hostility or encouragement to coup-making. The other is the condition of the army.

Agents or Allies?

The external pressures on Africa can be silent; almost invisible, in the regular rhythm of Africa's dependence. On the other hand, they can be blatant and direct, in the shape of physical intervention; either to incite the collapse of a government and to install a new one, as in the Congo; or to protect a government, even to reinstate one already tumbled by forces within the state, as in Gabon. The elements of crisis – economic and political and military – exist to greater or lesser extent in a number of states where there have been as yet no army coups d'etat. It is the external presence that can be decisive in the rising or declining level of incidence; for the absence of coup-making opportunity, or success, is often largely a matter of the protective role exercised by outside forces.

For the West, and especially for the United States, military governments in the Third World have not uncommonly been preferred to civilian ones for their supposedly greater efficiency and resistance to 'communism'. Thus the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations heard advice like this in 1959, about Asia:

The lesson to be derived from recent political developments in South-East Asia is that in most countries of the area the hope for genuinely representative government was premature. It should be the policy of the United States to help wherever possible the officer corps of South-East Asian countries to acquire the administration and the managerial skills necessary in the new tasks they are assuming as the guarantors of their countries' stability.²

By 1965, however, the policy-makers of the United States were receiving different advice:

Armies in Stalemate

Military coups and military juntas necessarily spur modernization but they cannot produce a stable political order. Instead of relying on the military, American policy should be directed to the creation within modernizing countries of at least one strong non-Communist political party. **If** such a party already exists, and it is in a dominant position, support of that party should be the keystone of policy.³

When it came to the coup d'etat in Ghana, Nkrumah himself found the cause transparently clear. In Ghana, he said, the embassies of the United States, Britain and West Germany had all been 'implicated in the plot to overthrow my government. **It** is alleged' (he does not state by whom) 'that the US Ambassador Franklin Williams offered the traitors thirteen million dollars to carry out a coup d'etat.'⁴

The CIA is the agency whose job it has been to topple governments objectionable to the United States. There has been, among much else, the instance of Iran in 1952; of Guatemala in 1954; of Guyana in 1961; and the abortive Bay of Pigs assault on Cuba. In Ghana, as I have shown, the Western powers had every reason to seek the downfall of the Nkrumah regime. And even though no dollars need pass hands, and no secret codes pass between intelligence operators, the West has its own ways of influencing events before and after a coup d'etat, to spur its occurrence and secure its survival. But need the CIA have made the coup d'etat in Ghana? **It** is not good enough to argue that it must have done so because Western purposes ultimately benefited. The indiscriminate use of the conspiracy explanation is too easily a substitute for analysis of the deeper reasons for political crisis in Africa. The basic structures of African society in new states, Ghana and Mali included, hold the seeds of a coup d'etat within themselves. It is precisely because foreign powers and bodies like the CIA understand this well, that their interventions, even very indirect ones, are so effective.

In Africa, except in the pivotal case of the Congo, and of some very small and malleable states, like the former French colonies, the primary initiative for the coup d'etat does not seem to have come from outside, but from inside the countries themselves. The principal thrust of the CIA, and of other such external agencies, need not necessarily lie in the instigation or financing

of coups. The coup d'etat is generally a last resort. More than once, even, a coup d'etat in an African state has taken foreign powers by surprise. The intelligence and diplomatic activity of such powers have, rather, been directed to devising mechanisms of control and instigation far more devious and complex than has been credited. They are calculated essentially to influence processes already under way; perhaps to obstruct alternative, and more radical options: but essentially to circumscribe the movement that new states may enjoy. They are designed to avoid rather than to provoke emergency fire-brigade actions.

Who says this? None other than those who conduct these covert intelligence operations. The primary purpose of such operations in the under-developed world, for the CIA and related agencies, 'is to provide Washington with *timely know/edge of the internal power balance*, a form of intelligence that is primarily of tactical significance' (my emphasis). This description comes from no imagined handbook for operators, but from a record of discussions conducted by members of the Group on *Intelligence and Foreign Policy in the Council on Foreign Relations Inc.* The document was 'liberated' from the files of political scientist David Truman, Dean of Columbia College, during a student strike there in 1968. As far as I am aware, the authenticity of this document has not been disputed. It contains none of the startling disclosures usually to be found in forgeries, but rather a more convincing statement of a new and subtle approach to manipulating governments, and one which has been amply substantiated by events. The Group's members included Allen Dulles, academics, journalists, prominent New York lawyers and corporation executives. The Council on Foreign Relations receives financing from the CIA and plays an important part in policy formulation. The 'liberated' document to be published by the Africa Research Group, purports to be the official minute of the meeting held on 8 January 1968, where the discussion leader was Richard M. Bissell Jr; his subject was the nature and means of 'covert intelligence'.

Covert operations, Mr Bissell declared, fall into two classes: intelligence collection, primarily espionage or the obtaining of intelligence by covert means; and covert action, or 'attempting

Armies in Stalemate

to influence the internal affairs of other nations, sometimes called "intervention" by covert means'. Mr Bissell explained with some precision that:

the underdeveloped world presents greater opportunities for covert intelligence collection, simply because governments are much less highly organised; there is less security consciousness; and there is apt to be more actual or potential diffusion of power among parties, localities, organisations and individuals outside of the central governments. The primary purpose of espionage in these areas is to provide Washington with timely knowledge of the internal power balance, a form of intelligence that is primarily of tactical significance.

Why is this relevant ?

Changes in the balance of power are extremely difficult to discern except through frequent contacts with power elements. Time and again we have been surprised at coups within the military; often, we have failed to talk to the junior officers or non-coms who are involved in the coups. The same problem applies to labour leaders and others. Frequently we don't know of power relationships because power balances are murky and sometimes not well known even to the principal actors. Only by knowing the principal players well do you have a chance of careful prediction. There is real scope for action in this area; the technique is essentially that of 'penetration', including 'penetrations' of the sort which horrify classicists of covert operations with a disregard for the 'standards' and 'agent recruitment rules'. Many of the 'penetrations' don't take the form of 'hiring' but of establishing a close or friendly relationship (which may or may not be furthered by the provision of money from time to time). In some countries the CIA representative has served as a close counselor (and in at least one case a drinking companion) of the chief of state . . .

There were situations in which 'the tasks of intelligence collection and political action overlap to the point of being almost indistinguishable'.

In one state, the CIA man might serve as 'private adviser' to a head of state; private, so as to shield this fact from politicians of the local government. In another, the head of state might have 'a special relationship with the senior CIA officers without the knowledge of the US Ambassador because the President of the Republic has so requested it'.

Diplomacy seeks results by bargaining on a government-to-government basis, sometimes openly – sometimes privately. Foreign economic policy and cultural programs seek to modify benignly the economics of other countries [like the Papanek exercise in Ghana described in Part 5] and the climate of opinion within them. Covert intervention is usually designed to operate on the internal power balance, often with fairly short-term objectives in view. An effort to build up the economy of an underdeveloped country must be subtle, long continued, probably quite costly, and must openly enlist the cooperation of major groups within the country if it is to have much influence. On the other hand an effort to weaken the local Communist Party or to win an election, and to achieve results within at most two or three years, must obviously be covert, it must pragmatically use the people and the instrumentalities that are available and the methods that seem likely to work.

And there is more:

The essence of such intervention in the internal power balance is the identification of allies who can be rendered more effective, more powerful, and perhaps wiser through covert assistance. . . . (Typically these local allies know the source of the assistance but neither they nor the United States could afford to admit to its existence.) Agents for fairly minor and low sensitivity interventions, for instance some covert propaganda and certain economic activities, can be recruited simply with money. But for the larger and more sensitive interventions, *the allies must have their own motivation* [my emphasis]. On the whole the Agency has been remarkably successful in finding individuals and instrumentalities with which and through which it would work in this fashion. Implied in the requirement for a pre-existing motivation is the corollary that an attempt to induce *the local ally* to follow a course of action he does not believe in will at least destroy his effectiveness and may destroy the whole operation.

Local allies, not agents, are the key. The very use of the word is a necessary corrective to the obsolete theories of external intervention in the Third World. **It** is not a matter of a few foreign plotters springing coups d'etat or assassinations on unsuspecting states. This does happen, but may be regarded as the exception rather than the rule. To make it the whole picture, or even the main ingredient, is simplistic; it distorts not only the function and purpose of foreign intelligence agencies, but above all the

tender and vulnerable condition of Africa. The CIA promotes a strategy to anticipate rather than to initiate – until, as in the Congo, the case is considered urgent. When intervention is ordered, it works because certain groups in the internal power balance want it to work; because the interests of these groups converge with those of external forces.

Not all states in Africa are of equal concern to the big powers. George W. Ball, Under-Secretary of State for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and a former United States ambassador to the United Nations, argues that the power of the poor countries is limited to creating local situations of violence and instability. They do not by themselves have the ability to precipitate great power conflict, and there are many parts of the world where 'a less anxious policy on our part would pay off'. Patterns of military aid show where the United States places its strongest hopes in Africa. Such aid goes to those states in Africa in which the United States has a 'traditional external responsibility', or special interests, and to those which 'experienced abrupt breaks with the former metropole that threatened to leave voids which Communist powers could fill'.⁶ The Congo has been one such state, of course. Ethiopia, strategic not only in relation to Egypt, but also to the Red Sea and the whole Middle East, received 77 per cent of all United States grant aid under the Military Assistance Programme to Sub-Saharan Africa for 1950-66.⁷ Kagnew station in Asmara is a United States military communications base involving some 1,000 United States personnel and their dependants. Thus it is understandable that the attempted coup d'état in Ethiopia during 1960 was put down with United States air force, military and diplomatic assistance;⁸ and that, in particular, the Emperor was able to fly back into Ethiopia through a United States-run airfield in Asmara. Thus, too, United States has aided Ethiopia in battle against the Eritrean guerrilla movement. The United States is visibly grateful for the Emperor's 'moderating' influence in Pan-African politics. Among the powers training and aiding African armies, Israel has played a phenomenal role, for its military assistance programmes currently operate in at least fifteen African states. Through its own search for allies in the Third World, Israel

has apparently become useful for the Third Country technique, elaborated by United States strategists who argue:

Israel's role ... might be reinforced by imaginative use of the Third Country technique. A free world state wishing to enlarge its assistance flow to Africa might channel some part of it through Israel because of Israel's special qualifications and demonstrated acceptability to many African nations.ⁿ

(Israel's most important assistance programmes have been in Tunisia and the Ivory Coast, Ethiopia and Congo-Kinshasa:

Mobutu had his paratrooper training in Israel, after all, and specialized units like paratroop commandos are the most effective coup-makers.)

Why such emphasis here on the United States and the CIA, in a continent formerly divided among several foreign powers not including the United States ? As Conor Cruise O'Brien has shown,¹⁰ the logic of the struggle against 'Communism' has required the United States, in Africa as in south-east Asia, to take over responsibilities abandoned by former colonial powers. In Africa, it was in the wake of the Congo crisis that the United States actively entered the political scene. Up to then, it had been largely a bystander; but after 1960 it came bit by bit to play a role as large as and often far larger than that of the former colonial power,¹¹ though somewhat different in kind. Since 1945, the Africa Research Group asserts in analysing the role of the United States in Nigeria,¹² it has been a speciality of American foundations and consulting firms to rebuild war-torn economies so that they can more easily be dominated by American companies. For the new shape of Africa's dependence is increasingly the product of huge United States financial and industrial concerns. While, for instance, the State Department was officially neutral in the Nigeria-Biafra war, the corporations were expanding their influence in the spirit of 'reconstruction'. Six months after the war began, Arthur D. Little Incorporated- which has been advising the Federal government on investment promotion and industrial policy for seven years - started work on reconstruction planning. Likewise, an American foundation sponsored Nigeria's Conference on Reconstruction and Development

during 1969. The corporations were getting in early; by the time they are finished Nigeria's dependence on them will be deeply embedded.

It was as a result of United States preoccupation with the Congo that we have the single major instance of a coup d'etat – two, in fact, in the same country, at an interval of five years – engineered by external forces. Lumumba's offence was to have asked the Soviet Union, once the West had refused, for transport for his troops to defeat the Katanga secession. The issue was not whether the Congo should have a government headed by Lumumba, Kasavubu, Mobutu or Tshombe; but whether an African state should seek an option other than dependence on the West.

In his history of the CIA, Andrew Tully – who records his considerable debt of gratitude to Allen Dulles, and others similarly placed – claims that the CIA came up with the right man at the right time. It seems safe to say that Mobutu was 'discovered' by CIA.¹³ Colonel Mobutu was assisted in staging one coup d'etat to save the Congo for the West in 1960; and in 1965 he was installed again by a second externally engineered coup. After the first coup d'etat, the army played only a caretaker role, The American commitment and presence remained throughout, to buttress the regime in office. It was the CIA that organized WIGMO (Western International Ground Maintenance Organization) to look after the aircraft used by the Congolese army and by the mercenaries whom the Congolese government hired to put down the rebellion in Orientale province. (Later WIGMO was no longer financed by the CIA, but by the Congolese government itself, from money routed to it by the CIA, so that the Congolese should appear more persuasively to be running their own country.)¹⁴ Between them, the United States and Belgium shared the role that Belgium alone had played as colonial power; a Belgian presence, in the shape of teachers, technical assistance, planters and business interests, was augmented by US financial assistance and military support. From Kasavubu to Tshombe there was a succession of governments, all United States-backed, but an increasingly unstable political system in the Congo. Tshombe's governing formula, for

instance, depended on an alliance of provincial bosses, and was producing a dissipation of central authority, with much harm to the country's economy, by the plethora of corrupt provincial officials. In 1965, on United States initiative, the army switched from being the power behind the scene, to taking direct control. Mobutu's regime, under United States tutelage, fused the power of the army with that of the new technocratic elite, and by so doing consolidated the centralized power of the state and stabilized the Congo for international capital.

FRANCE THE ARBITER

By contrast with its knowledgeable and active role in other parts of Africa, the United States, far from having instigated the coup d'etat in Gabon, as it was accused by France of having done, was taken by surprise. (That is, if the account by former Ambassador Darlington¹⁵ is the complete version: one of the consequences of Bissell-type covert operations is that information about them is sometimes withheld from the ambassador.)¹⁶ In Gabon the American ambassador had kept in constant touch with the senior army officers as well as with the French colonel and his staff who were in overall command, and his reports to Washington 'reflected what they told us, namely that the army was entirely loyal to President Leon Mba. I offer no excuses for our failure to be better informed.' For it was not the command but the junior officers who staged the coup against the president.

While it was French hostility that reversed the Gabon attempt, it was American and British acceptance that sustained two other coups d'etat, in Ghana and Nigeria. Britain suffered initially from delayed reaction to the Ghana coup, but the United States rapidly filled the breach. The close attention that US military attaches and training teams now give to the middle and junior levels of the officer corps suggest that it will not easily repeat the error made in Gabon. In Nigeria British action stabilized two post-coup sheet-anchor governments: first the Ironsi regime, which Britain's High Commissioner prompted into existence to counteract the revolt led by the young majors; and then the Gowon government, which Britain coaxed and consolidated after its own successful intercession to stop a Northern break-

away. Once the break between Nigeria and Biafra was final, and Britain and the oil companies could not play along with both sides, the purposes of Nigeria's ruling elite and the oil companies converged, and Britain committed itself to full-scale support of the Federal army. Where less crucial interests have been at stake, foreign powers have been content merely to watch the conflict and let the contestants themselves decide the issue.

When it comes to the internal power balance so scrupulously observed by foreign powers, African armies are pivotal. The African armies were the creation of the colonial powers; were moulded to the needs of the West; and have been the least decolonized, on the whole, among all African structures and institutions. In the post-colonial period, they remain bonded to the West for training and equipment and aid; their supply life-lines are not inside but outside the country.¹⁷ The African army is also a defence reserve of the Western powers. This is nowhere more strikingly seen than in the case of France and its former possessions in Africa.

France's defence policy in the independence era has been based on two needs: to maintain its own strategic position in Africa 'without an overly conspicuous deployment of forces in Africa itself'; and, as an extension of this, to reserve the right of intervention 'on behalf of' African states and regimes.¹⁸ The policy was devised after the fall of France in 1940, when French strategists reasoned that the bulk of French fighting power could have been withdrawn intact to the strategic North African platform until an African-centred resuscitation could confront Nazi power. From the lesson of its humiliation, it subsequently positioned itself to organize its defences on a Euro-African basis, and thus be able to hold its own in Allied councils as a strong military power.¹⁹ Accordingly, when decolonization came, France not only built national armies for its former possessions with the military hardware coming directly from its own resources, and with the *quid pro quo* that the African states were committed to France for supplies and training,* but it also erected

*The magazine of the French army, *L'Armée*, disclosed during 1968 that about 10400 senior officers and Ncos of the French army, marines and air

an elaborate system of defence cooperation. Thus, inside Africa, French-trained, French-supervised and French-attuned armies are France's most dependable allies; while outside, France maintains, apart from economic control, a military strike force that in an emergency can make or break an African government. The 11th Division, based in south-west France, stands ready to answer any call for help from any of the eleven African countries bound to France by defence agreements. It consists of five parachute infantry regiments, and three seaborne assault infantry regiments, with adequate provision for men and weapons to be transported by air.²⁰ The defence agreements generally carry a provision that while the African state alone is responsible for its external and internal defence, it can call on French help under special conditions.

In several instances, the defence accords included a convention relative *au maintien de l'ordre*. Limited in duration, though with renewal options, these imply a more intimate French commitment to incumbent regimes – a form of personal pact – and they define the channels of appeal and authorisation so that the local French Ambassador has a central role in determining whether French troops shall be brought in and to what use they shall be put.²¹

France's special intervention force is organized to respond within hours to calls for help from African governments; but the help, it has been made clear by France, is to be given only exceptionally. Intervention is not a duty for France. In other words, France has its own criteria. The French Minister for Information, M. Alain Peyrefitte, revealed that at the request of the legitimate African governments, French forces had intervened at least twelve times in Africa between 1960 and 1963; several times in Chad to combat 'insurgency'; in the Cameroun; in Niger in December 1963, to 'discourage' a military uprising against President Diori; twice in Mauretania; in Congo-Brazzaville in September 1962; and, of course, in Gabon.²² The spate of coups d'état in French Africa in 1966 brought a warning

force, the medical corps and the gendarmerie were employed as technical assistants in twelve Francophone countries. These -troops are in addition to the 6-7,000 troops of the French army actually stationed in Senegal, Chad, Niger, Ivory Coast, Central African Republic, Gabon and Madagascar.

from General de Gaulle to African military leaders not to spring any more, or he would cut off French aid.²³ A few years later a company of French troops, sent to the Central African Republic ostensibly on a training exercise, was thwarting a counter-coup against the regime of coup-maker General Bokassa;²⁴ France was protecting the pretender regime. By 1969 it could no longer be concealed that French legions were regularly riding out in Chad to President Tombalbaye's rescue. Sporadic actions against tax collectors and isolated attacks against 'brigands' had become sustained armed resistance under the leadership of the National Liberation Front (FROLINAT). The 'rebellion' (Tombalbaye's term) is in its sixth year. Chad's geographical position largely explains France's anxiety: it is bordered by Nigeria and the Sudan, Niger, the Cameroun and the Central African Republic. Events there could affect the whole core of Africa.²⁵ And besides, its garrison air base and defence telecommunications system at Fort Lamy are the keystones of the French military organization in Africa.

France thus remains the arbiter of which regimes in Africa are to endure, and which to fall, whether sooner or later. The governments in the smaller, feeble states tend to be expendable; those in the larger and more important ones, which maintain close ties with Paris, could expect France to reinforce them in authority. France's long-standing relationship with President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast is the sonndest insurance against a successful coup d'etat there. The Ivory Coast is not only the richest of the West African states linked with France, but also France's most dependable political ally in Africa. This is not to say that the Ivory Coast is coup-proof. There was an attempt in 1963, when six ministers, including the Minister of Defence, were arrested for plotting, and the loyalty of the army was so suspect that it was sent up-country to be out of the way. But while Houphouet-Boigny lasts, France will play protector; and after he goes, in the event of any dispute over the succession, the outcome will be largely determined by the preference of the French government. Senghor's government in Senegal enjoys similar protection from France, for long-standing sentimental if not such persuasive economic reasons. As for Gabon, it has

not only uranium and iron ore, but a very influential French elite of administrators, engineers, managers and businessmen, not to speak of army advisers. Perhaps the request for French intervention during the coup there originated among these expatriates. The formal request under the defence treaty was made by Vice-Premier Paul-Marie Yembit, but twenty-four hours *after* the French had already flown in their troops. The French ambassador was kept in the dark by his own government: while he was busy negotiating a regime to succeed Mba's, the French army was going into action to restore Mba himself. The ambassador and the military attache tend to run parallel missions in an African state; in Gabon, the military mission seems to have overruled and superseded the diplomatic.

The new state has thus two link systems with the former colonial power. One is between government and government, through the diplomatic mission; the other, between army and army. (Of course, when the army invades government it is much simpler, for the soldier turned president serves both networks at the same time.) The army relationship is in many ways of longer standing and greater intimacy: because the armies were created by the European powers; and, on the whole, African armies continue to receive military aid overwhelmingly from the former colonial power, which also provides most of the military training. Foreign aid and training thus bind an army not to its own government but to an external force; for the army's concern to keep up the flow of military aid will make its interests seem to coincide with those of its supplier power. (Some argue the hypothesis that the speed with which an army jumps to the defence of a regime depends on the degree to which it is maintained by domestic sources.)²⁶

The other effect of military aid to Africa is to make African armies stronger, especially in the smaller states, than governments themselves. African armies – with the odd exception here and there, as in the Kenya-Somalia dispute – have no real external defence commitments. Thus the primary impact of military aid is internal. There is no aid as dependable as that pledged to armies, and no aid which produces such rapid and predictable results. At the same time, military aid makes African armies the

institutions in the new states which are the most sensitive to foreign pressures, and also the ones most likely to usurp the functions of government. For in the nature of the new African states building and training armies turns them into instruments for coup-making. The army has disproportionate power by default of the political system, but also by the design of external forces.

The Internal Condition of the Army

Frequently the soldiers strike at government because triggers for action have been cocked inside the army as well as outside. This happened in both Ghana and Nigeria.

To begin with, there is no such thing as a non-political army. Africa's armies are reflections of society and encompass all its interests and conflicts: because the armies do not, like the political parties, have a strong allegiance to an integrated ruling class; nor do they possess a pervasive ideological cast. The armies of Africa are agglomerations of several social groups and interests: they thus play shifting roles, and they adjust to the shifting state of African politics. Political and army triggers for a coup d'état often go off together, since the soldier acts from army grievances, but also because he identifies with his generation, his region or community, his sect (the Sudan) or his political affiliation.

The theory of the non-political army served the purposes of colonial power: an army that questioned policies or politicians might be driven to question colonialism itself, and rule would have been undermined from within by the armies which were used as extensions of the internal security force. The theory was, of course, transplanted to Africa from the domestic needs of the West European states. But even in these states, it often proved on scrutiny to be a fiction, a constitutional concept rather than a constitutional fact.²⁷ The theory broke down at times of crisis. The Ulster crisis of 1914 showed that the British army was far from neutral in politics. When the Home Rule Bill for Ireland was moving through its last stages in the House of Commons,

The Internal Condition of the Army

the Liberal administration was manifestly unsure of the support that it could command in the army. Across the Irish Sea, Ulster volunteers were drilling and secretly importing arms from abroad, supported to the hilt by conservative opinion in England; and through that winter, prominent Conservative politicians were frankly urging the armed forces to mutiny.^{28*} If the British army was sharply divided by Home Rule for Ireland, the French army was even more dangerously divided over Algeria. The Fourth Republic would not have fallen without the revolt of significant forces within the French military. De Gaulle reached the Elysee on the momentum of crisis produced by an attempted coup.

If armies have played so small a role in the recent politics of the West, this reflects the composition of advanced industrial societies and in particular the social structure of the armies themselves. Western military men, like Western civil servants, have mostly had to deal with politicians and governments whose outlooks and purposes have not been radically different from their own, so that differences between them have generally been susceptible to compromise and accommodation, and the political loyalties of the military have seldom been put decisively to the test.²⁹ The fabric of civil organization is such that the military on its own cannot offer an alternative locus of power. Ralph Miliband writes³⁰ that in the West an overt unconstitutional challenge from the army would have little chance of success unless it were staged in the face of an exceptionally weak or paralysed labour movement, and unless the putschists organized popular support into ancillary mass organizations of the right. It would need, in other words, not only a military putsch, but a Fascist movement. High-ranking officers in Germany and Italy played an important role as allies though not as initiators of such movements, because it is difficult to lead demagogic fascist-type movements from within armies. The regime of the colonels since

*Interestingly, one of the reasons privately expressed by apologists for the failure of the British government to use force against the white rebel regime in Rhodesia is the uncertain response of the British army to such an order. Whether this is a reason or merely an excuse, it does not say much for the supposedly unquestionable neutrality of Britain's armed forces.

their coup in Greece is precarious precisely because it is without the popular base characteristic of European fascist regimes.¹ The infrequency of army intervention as such in the industrialized societies of the West is thus due not to the neutrality of armies but to the nature of the social and political system. Armies in industrialized societies cannot move into politics and government without a substantial degree of support from one class or sector of the population. In Africa, by contrast, where the social structure is still unformed and the political system crumbling, neither the army nor the government that it seeks to displace has a firm social base. The intervention of the army, its physical force alone, will be both swift and decisive.

Politics is present in all armies, though it may be quiescent at times when there are no sharp clashes of interest, and when no specific opportunity for intervention has presented itself. It is, indeed, a variation on the theory of the non-political army which, far from keeping armies out of political action in Africa, precipitates them into it. This is the notion ingrained in Western-influenced and trained armies that they should be independent of government. Armies, after all, had been in existence long before politicians or political parties were allowed; and it came naturally to soldiers to see their authority as not only distinct from that of temporary African governments, but superior to it. The notion had grown that armies and governments should each be master to control their own command structures, their systems of promotion and their training methods. There might be strong political reasons for a state to diversify sources of supplies and training methods, but armies insisted that they were the best judges of these things, and that they reached their decisions solely on 'technical' grounds. To insist otherwise was interference with the autonomy of the army. In Ghana General Alexander and his officers took a firm stand on this. As for reshaping the command by retiring some officers, or promoting others, this might make for security of government, but it was interfering with the autonomy of the army – the state within the state – that insisted on its right to martial freedom, as Geoffrey Bing has picturesquely described it.³²

Armies were not without politics; the politics they adhered to

demanded the right of the army to be master in its own domain. **If** the other, civil, domain interfered with the military one, was it surprising that the army sought its own remedy? Thus the army, supposed to be the last line of defence for the nation state, was indoctrinated and exercised in precepts alien to those recognizing the sovereignty of government.

The conflict between state and army grew in direct proportion to the attempt of the new state to chart a course from the former metropolitan power; the more strained became the army's life- and supply lines, and the more undermined the rules, conventions and precedents that the African army imbibed from the metropolitan one.

Radically inclined states that have recognized the army as not only a conservative force but a potential for counter-revolution, have tried to neutralize its technical monopoly of violence by building up counter-forces and by diversifying commands. Reson has been made to special military formations like the Presidential Guard in Ghana, or popular militia as in Mali. **If** the army does not fervently support the goals of the state, however, this move not so much neutralizes as incites it. The Ghanaian army struck largely if not entirely to protect itself from the President's own Guard regiment; the young lieutenants in Mali did so, among other reasons, to clip the wings of the popular militia; Boumedienne struck in Algeria partly because one of Ben Bella's plans was to counter the army with a popular militia. In Congo-Brazzaville in 1968-9 the army saw the Cuban-trained youth movement as a counter to its own armed autonomy.

PALS FOR JOBS

The army strikes at government in defence of its immediate corporate interests, but for other reasons too. The heat of the political crisis in new states is generated largely by the struggle over the spoils between competing layers of the power elite; and the officer corps has a strong stake in the contest, since it is in itself an elite group. When the Cabinet minister, the civil servant and the university academic inherited the salary scales set by departing colonials, so too did the army officer and the police inspector. African armies deliberately preserved European

standards of pay; the former British colonies, those of Britain; and the Francophone states, those of the French army. The lieutenant-colonel of a battalion may earn as much as ten or fifteen times the starting salary of the recruit.³³ (In Britain and France the equivalent differential is about five times.)

The military have also been called the best organized trade union in African states.³¹ The result of the East African mutinies was a near doubling of Kenyan, and a near trebling of Ugandan and Tanganyikan army pay. In Togo the army was immediately increased after the coup, and in Dahomey Colonel Soglo embarked upon a rapid programme of army expansion.³⁵ In Upper Volta the military regime decided after the 1966 coup that those soldiers who had served in civilian posts should retain their military salaries, and not be transferred to the civilian wage structure where austerity cuts had been made.³⁶ The budgets of 1967-8 for Francophone Africa showed that eight out of fifteen states had provided the army with between 15 and 25 per cent of their resources.³⁷ Already uncontrollable public deficits were subjected to further strain. In Ethiopia the military consumes twice as much of the budget as does education, and twenty-eight times the amount spent on community development.³⁸ It has been calculated that, in the first fifty-six months after independence, the Congolese army received one-sixth of the state's revenue.³⁹

The interests of the officer corps lie in preserving the inflated standards of the African elite; in retaining or increasing the army's share of the budget; and in steadying the state when it shakes under stress, since it has itself such a large group stake in the budget and the economy. Michael Lee⁴⁰ considers that the characteristic African coup d'etat is a gesture of frustration by the employees of the state. The most pressing competition in the new states is over jobs in the public sector; the most valuable part of the colonial inheritance is the 'senior service', the range of roles formerly occupied by colonial administrators. Soldiers, policemen and civil servants all belong to the state as an organization, and have an interest in preserving their positions; their seizures of power are 'caretaker' actions to preserve a state apparatus from which they benefit so lavishly.

But the men in uniform not only comprise one more contesting layer within the elite; they constitute a distinct corporate group curiously independent, by comparison with industrialized societies, from the social and class forces whose control is generally solidified in the state through institutions such as the army. During the colonial period, the army deployed its coercive power for external forces. This had important consequences in the independence distribution of power in Africa. Ken Post⁴¹ describes how the new state apparatus has come to possess 'a coercive power of its own, inherited from the colonial period, and this power is not the extension . . . of the economic power of some indigenous ruling class'. The politicians derived their position, Post writes, 'from their class and ethnic interests, local ones in the main, but their chief one, which integrates the rest and has a power of its own, was the party'. In political crisis, the balance of power among politicians, bureaucrats and army officers began to change. The political parties, the sources of power peculiar to the politicians, proved unreliable. Popular dissatisfaction with political nepotism and corruption, and generally with the absence of substantial improvements in living standards, eroded the backing which politicians enjoyed from local ethnic interests. 'Moreover they allowed, in many cases, the party structures to wither away, believing that control of state power was sufficient for their purposes. This might indeed have been true, in the short run, had the corporate groups, with their own sources of power undiminished, not existed.' The politicians might try to manipulate and even change the form of state institutions (as in Ghana and Mali); but in the main they were not able to establish firm control over state power and the corporate groups associated with it. The army and the civil service had a degree of autonomy from government and the political parties, and social and class forces, unknown in industrialized states. When the political parties went into crisis, the army could act independently of theirs. Thus, as Post writes, 'the weakness of the bourgeoisie in Africa, and the apparent autonomy of the organs of the state, was manifest dramatically in military coups which placed officer-bureaucrats alliances in power'. When the army struck to defend itself, and its rights to

autonomy, it was acting not as an instrument of state power, but as the power in the state. The instrument of power had itself assumed power. Power as coercion became the dominant theme, rather than power as authority.

In colonial days, the legitimacy of government lay with conquest by force and the all-pervading control of the bureaucracy. Once again power now lies in the barrel of the gun and with the control of the bureaucracy. For if army men may seize power, they cannot manipulate it on their own. Within a decade of independence, and in some countries less, Africa has travelled from colonial government to a very close copy of it. Lugard and Lyautey of the last century have given way to Mobutu, Gowon and Bokassa of this one. Once again the pattern of rule is military-bureaucratic in type.

Military Bureaucracies

Once the army seizes government, the corridors of control rarely run from the officers' mess alone. Common to most military regimes installed by coup d'etat, is a civil service-military axis in which armies have the physical power to conserve the regime, while the civil service wields effective executive power in the state. The reform coups which serve as levers for change are the exception. In Egypt, the Free Officers Movement took power to itself and rapidly appointed military men to bureaucratic tasks, while the civil service of a disintegrated and demoralized regime played a very self-effacing role. In the Sudan, where the young officer coup of 1969 took power not for the army but for a radical civilian government, one of the first steps to be taken was a purging of the old bureaucracy, lest this, finding the purposes of the new regime inimical, negate its policies through administration. In general, however, the vesting of authority in the bureaucrats is very much a reversion to colonial rule.

Like the colonial predecessor in the early stages of rule by administration, the first act of armies is to ban all politics and all political parties. A new policy must be built, the coup-makers

declare, but without politics. The epitaph suggested for Pakistan's Ayub Khan⁴² – here was a man who loathed politicians, but whose attempt to create a polity without politics foundered on his ignorance of what the political process really was about – will undoubtedly be as appropriate to Africa's arillies in govern- ment as it was to Pakistan. For the choices which arillies make in the course of outlawing politics are themselves political. 'The politicians ruined the country,' the soldiers declare, 'and we shall do better.' But what sort of policy-making does not entail political choices? What the non-political order does is not to keep out politics, but to keep out radical politics. The decision in the Sudan under the Abboud junta (where administrative methods closely followed those used in Pakistan) to employ indirect rule gave assertion to the most conservative forces in the society: tribal and community heads and local adillinis- trators. A reversion to traditional authority is just as much a political move as a progression to revolutionary or reformist authority. In Ghana the army's cry of 'no politics' did not mean, could not mean, a political vacuum; it meant pro-Western, free enterprise, elite-style politics – the very politics, incident- ally, which had led to the coup d'etat in Nigeria and other states.

The army-bureaucratic coalition which is preoccupied with the decree rather than the debate, and the letter of the law rather than popular support for it, wakes with a jolt to its narrow base of power in time of crisis. The soldiers soon enough discover that they, too, cannot really govern alone, and that they have need of power alliances. Like the political party government previously, the army and the bureaucracy have no firm social or class basis, and find that they are unable to rule for long unsupported. In Nigeria the army drew politicians into government so as to enlarge its power base when the conflict with the East, later Biafra, flared: the authority of the Gowan government was not only denied in the East, but was shaky in the rest of the country; and politicians had to be cast in the role of civilian comillissioners, or ministers, to enlist their support and that of their followers. In Ghana the government opened the doors to politicians, after the Arthur attempted coup- when the NLC

was so nearly physically defeated in the capital – and its damaging aftermath in the ranks and officer corps of the army itself. Ghana finally went back to civilian rule as much for reasons of potential army disunity as any other.

With rare exceptions, as in the coups which are planned and sustain themselves as levers for or against change (Egypt; possibly the 1969 coup in the Sudan, though it is early to say; and Ghana) the army's take-over of government has not altered substantially the social basis of power in the state. What it has done has been to bring together new amalgams of ruling groups. There have been two principal shifts in the nexus of power: first, from politicians to bureaucrats of the civil service and of the army, as well as to young educated technocrats who were not absorbed into the leaderships of the independence parties; and, secondly, in the redistribution of political power on a regional and ethnic basis.

The army can be the ladder of power for portions of the elite not previously prominent, or dominant, in government. At the crucial formative stages of Africa's new armies, it was not the sons of the traditional, professional or business elites that enlisted, but the sons of the poorer people, generally from more remote, under-developed areas. The coup d'etat catapulted into government and authority not only soldiers themselves, as new candidates for political power and economic opportunity, but also – because kinsmen and followers gravitate around men in power – others. Nigeria's new power combination, in which two of the three former majorities balance in office together with minority groups, was arbitrated by the rifle power in the army of one such minority group. Without Tiv ground forces to back it, how far would the demand for a Middle-Belt state have gone? Gowan himself emerged as a nominee of the non-commissioned officers drawn largely from the minority groups. If newer echelons of Northern power today prevail over the old emirates of the North, it is largely because, contrary to legend, it is not the Hausa who form the backbone of the lower ranks in the army, but the minority peoples of the Middle Belt. In Togo four-fifths of the army originated in the North; and though Southerners have continued to run and to dominate the civil service and

the professions, the face of Togo's government has been Northern ever since 1963, when a small group of Cabre ex-servicemen shot Olympia and displaced his Southern-dominated regime. When in 1967 Southerners, mostly Ewe, tried an administrative coup against the government, its army protectors came out into the streets with their guns, and the coup evaporated. It was after this abortive attempt to swing power Southwards again, that the army took power directly. Promises to return Togo to civilian government have been made, but broken; the army command resists elections that might immediately shift the balance of power once again to Southerners. In Congo-Brazzaville the removal of Bakongo leaders and influence from government started after the seizure of power by Captain Ngouabi, a member of the Kouyou people from the north of the country. In Congo-Kinshasa, likewise, there has been a steady exit from leading roles by the Bakongo. In Ghana the army command was more equally divided between the various regional groupings, and Northerners have not been so demonstrably advanced through the army; but eyes have been trained on the Ewe soldiers, so well represented in the officer corps and so closely identified with Ewe politicians and aspirations, lest their claims and grievances crystallize in political action through the army. Colonial security entrusted those furthest from political control with the control of force. In the period of coup d'etat, possessing the machinery of force leads to command of political power. In enough countries for this to be a significant trend, political power for minority groups has flowed from the barrel of a gun.

New contestants may emerge to compete for power, but the nature of the contest does not change. If anything it grows fiercer, the larger the circle of contestants. The entry of soldiers into government does not significantly change the alignment of social forces; what it does is to put weapons into the hands of particular elements. This is most evident in Nigeria. Here, far from blocking disunity and disintegration, the army has accelerated it. A similar pattern was evident in the Congo, between the first and second interventions of the army.

POWER DIVIDES

As long as the army remains in barracks, or drilling on the parade ground, its command structure and military discipline hold it intact – short of the pay mutiny, that is. Once an army enters government, the possession of power proceeds to divide it: army cohesion disappears as soon as the army stops performing the functions for which it was drilled. There are both political and military reasons for this. Because the armies are agglomerations of interest and social groups, once they have stepped beyond the barracks and must make policy decisions that are not defined in terms of mere military procedure, they soak up social conflicts like a sponge. Armies, indeed, have shown that they can be as prone to divisive loyalties as are politicians and parties. Once the political system divides on communal lines, the division will take the army in power with it. This happened in Nigeria; it is happening in Ghana; and it is certain to happen in Kenya should the army there try to take over government. For as Michael Lee has written: 'Ironically the more a government has striven to make its officer corps representative of the new nation, the more it makes its army vulnerable to complete collapse if the coalition of interests in the civilian sphere also breaks down.' In Uganda and Togo, by contrast, the governments rest their survival principally on the fact that ethnic composition in army and government largely correspond.

Even where communal and regional rifts do not incite division among the soldiers, however, this is no guarantee of military cohesion. African armies are unsettled at the outset, because there is acute resentment between different generations of officers, and fierce rivalry at lower levels. The officers in command positions were the men who rose slowly through the ranks and were promoted with independence and Africanization; younger men, subsequently better educated and better trained at intensive officer courses, consider themselves better qualified to command. Within the middle and younger generations, there is a promotion bottleneck. Instead of careful gradations of age and seniority, there are great clusters of officers similar in age, experience and training; and in each group the career hopes of

all but a few seem certain to be blighted. Frustration and conspiracy flourish in such armies.

If armies in power remain united, there is little that will topple them, short of outside intervention. But once armies divide from within, they are far from impregnable, notwithstanding their monopoly of violence. The Sudanese junta fell only after losing support from a significant section within the army. A mutiny of Sierra Leone's other ranks brought down the military government there.

It is essentially the seizure of power that destroys the strongest unifying feature of the army. Once shattered, the sanction against a military seizure of government is broken for ever. A major-general or a brigadier who usurps state power must expect to be emulated by a colonel; and what one colonel can do, another can copy, improve upon, or undo. The military regime will justify its particular coup by the ills, corruption and incompetence of the particular civilian government it has displaced; but the army itself will not be convinced. For once the taboo of the non-political army is shattered, the officers and the soldiers become politicized. They begin to identify not with their seniors, who have defied the rules and have thus broken the obligation of military discipline, but with their equivalents in civilian life, their army generation, their political associates or their kinsmen.

Accordingly, in Africa, every rank has had a turn at coup-making. Colonels and majors – the most competitive and frustrated career grades – are especially well placed, because colonels control the regiments, and majors the companies, and they are in touch with the men and have access to the army hardware. But non-commissioned officers as well, in Togo, in Mali and in Gabon, and in Nigeria during July 1966, have a hand. In Sierra Leone in 1968 the rank and file disproved the old adage that the army worm does not turn and, with the non-commissioned officers, found pay grievances enough initiative to lock up the entire officers corps, and set up their own temporary government.

It is rare for an entry by the soldiers into government not to divide the army, and its command, and to alienate

at least a portion of the officer corps; it is even rarer for each successive usurpation of civilian authority not to increase such divisive effects. And the longer an army stays in government, the greater the chances of the counter-coup from below.

On the infrequent occasions, as in Ghana, where the police have joined the army in coup-making, the partnership between the two services has been an additional source of discord and disunity. The police are nowhere as well placed as the army for conspiracy and usurpation of power; since unlike an army, which is accommodated in barracks under a centralized command, the police are dispersed through the country and are *mote* slowly mobilized, if at all, for coup action. But the police are indispensable for security and intelligence work in the hours immediately after the coup; they generally possess the best communications network, not to speak of intelligence service, with the result that police headquarters are often the choice for the headquarters of the coup-makers. Thus, in both Ghana and Nigeria, Generals Kotoka and Ironsi functioned from police headquarters. Uniquely in Ghana the police were partners, though the argument still rages about whether they were senior or junior ones, in the plot for take-over. It was in Ghana that the pre-coup regime had tried to refashion the police force as well as the army, and similar grievances rankled among army and police officers alike. When conspiracy was joined, it thus included police as well as army heads. But a reputation for graft and petty corruption made the police highly unpopular, not least with young army officers.

Back to the Barracks?

Does the possession of power corrupt as well as divide the army ? Army men may not seize power with an appetite for it – as in Janowitz's reactive coup, when officers intervene in response to the collapse of civilian institutions⁴³ – but the appetite is fed by office. The old generals, like Abboud and Ankrah, tend to grow fond of the ceremonial and the perquisites of office; then casual

profit is not enough, and business interests stir. The young officers, trim young Galahads in place of the avaricious politicians, enjoy the authority and popular awe. Compared with life at State House, in the ministries and on the diplomatic round, life in the officers' mess is meagre and secluded. And even if the soldier has intervened in government not ostensibly for his own or the army's sake, but for the government's, it is easier to step into than out of power.

Among soldiers in the act of staging a coup, it is a matter of military honour to declare that the army has no political ambitions, no inclination to cling on to power. It was General Soglo of Dahomey who stressed that the place of the army is in the barracks, not in the ministries; that the Dahomean army was not Praetorian. His disavowals of political ambition, personal or corporate, were fluent. But so have they all been: the declarations by Colonel Bokassa of the Central African Republic, Colonel Lamizana of Upper Volta, General Mobutu of Congo-Kinshasa, Colonel Eyadema of Togo. Reassuring words are issued to citizens disinclined to accept the prospect of a more or less permanent military government, and these words may often be sincerely meant; but, as the months go by, they are uttered with diminishing emphasis.

The army has no intention of confiscating power, said Colonel Lamizana the day after the coup d'etat in Upper Volta. Five months later the colonel was addressing a fierce and final warning to politicians nostalgic for power, threatening to use the force and power of the army against them. Not long after that, he announced that the army would not surrender power until it could be assured that the parties would find a way to install 'an authentic democracy'. Six months after that, he revealed in a radio broadcast that the army had decided to remain in power for a further four years. Two months later, the army had decided to remain in power for a further four years. Two months later, the army had decided to remain in power indefinitely because there was no other solution.⁴⁴ In Congo-Brazzaville, the soldiers argue that army rule is not rule by military government. Said Captain Raoul, whose junta seized power in 1968: 'We have today two soldiers at the head

of the state, that is two national citizens. We are in power as cadres not as military personnel. I do not see why it is necessary to give power back to civilians, there is no problem of military government.⁴⁵ According to the captain, military men in government are no longer military men.

After the initial coup d'etat the army is likely to move in and out of the barracks to government in successive phases. As crises multiply and political forces prove incompetent, the army steps in partly to mediate, partly to guard its own interests, and partly to reinforce a system that it supports and judges to be in its own interests. The less that is changed by the intervention of the military, the more likely the prospect that it will have to intervene again, even repeatedly. Finer has written that the only way to prevent this *perpetuum mobile* is for the military to produce a successor regime that neither needs the military nor is needed by it. This is the precondition of disengagement.⁴⁶ But the very factors which produce the army coup d'etat make it impossible for the army to produce a regime free from crisis. The change that is produced by the coup is a change at the top of government and the political system only, and the army – except under the special circumstances of Egypt and likewise of the Sudan since 1969 – is concerned and able to make no more than the most shallow of changes.

In the usual run of coups, there could be several patterns for the future, but perhaps two principal types; that of countries such as Dahomey and Sierra Leone; and that of the Congo. The former states are small and marginal to foreign interests; the latter, the focus of powerful international oligopolies. In Dahomey three interventions by the command and then a young officer coup led, finally, to the return of government by politicians, though a new crop without the corrupt and incompetent record of the predecessors. The army is back in the barracks. The political round is starting up again. Yet nothing has happened to heal the political cleavages or cure the economy. How long will it be before another coup? In Sierra Leone, the former opposition party has been installed in government; but it may come to rule in much the same way as the former government did, for conditions in the country and the patterns of politics

have not greatly altered. While in opposition the All Peoples Congress had a radical urban wing; but in power it may well try to prune this. The coup sequence could well start up again. In the Congo the coup d'etat steered by external forces has broken the old sequence of politicians tossing government between themselves, and has brought to power new cohorts which, while not altering the social base of power, fuse the army's command of violence with a strong new elite: the university graduates, civil servants, technocrats in commerce and administration and traders, with a few of the old politicians thrown in for good measure. But control lies essentially with those bureaucrats who form the strongest links with the foreign powers really in control of the Congo; behind them hovers the *eminence khaki* of the army.

The coup d'etat, which by definition precludes mass participation, is the active symptom of crisis within the power elite. The guns mediate shifts in the balance of internal power and determine who will rule temporarily, but they do not in themselves alter the fundamental character of the society. Though the power of political decision may lie in African hands, the economic resources of the country do not, and nor does political decision in so far as it affects this economic control. The conflict is over *very* secondary sources of power, while the primary power, not substantially affected by internal changes, is content to let eruptions occur, and for the most part, produce their own results. Where intervention is more prominent or direct, it is where the state is an important enclave of foreign interests; and where the army and the bureaucracy, reinforced in time by some kind of political base, are considered more reliable and more 'stable' than the existing regime.

Armies for Revolution?

For the army coup d'etat to open up and not to frustrate radical options, there would have to be not only an army programme for change, but an organized link with radical forces in the country. Between these, they would have not only to seize

power, but to safeguard a new regime while it altered the power base.

In this sense, the Free Officers' coup of 1969 in the Sudan has been distinctive. Here were soldiers who staged a coup not to place themselves in power but to produce and secure a civilian government of radical young intellectuals committed to social revolution. Whether they will succeed or not hangs – beyond the immediate danger of counter-revolution from the forces that they seek to dispossess – on whether this radical leadership can galvanize popular support for fundamental social change. For professional armies on their own, by their nature, can create neither a revolutionary mood nor revolutionary possibilities through a coup d'etat. Militarism in itself can inspire a nation only if geared to attacking or resisting another nation. Egypt is the sole instance in Africa of a coup d'etat that led to major social change; but it is also a seminal case of an army in danger of destroying the very transformations it initiated.

From the first hours of the Egyptian coup d'etat in 1952, there was a complete seizure of the state apparatus by the Free Officers; and this was followed by their conquest of the power of decision in all fields : political, economic, social and ideological. After Suez in 1956 and the nationalizations of 1961, Nasser proclaimed that the role of the army was to clear the path of the revolution. Egypt did not want politicians in the army, but the army as a whole would constitute a force within the national political process, and that process was to be devoted to the achievement of socialism. After launching the Charter of National Action, Nasser divided the military into two categories. Officers who continued with their military careers received better training and more privileges than ever previously. Officers who elected to be active in politics had to turn in their uniforms and were stripped of all privileges that came with their rank: in return, they received key positions in the state, soon constituting the great majority of senior diplomatic personnel, and forming a considerable proportion of presidents, directors and board members of public agencies, as well as occupying a large number of ministries and under-secretaryships of state,

along with crucial posts in the radio, the press and the information services. Steadily the highest state positions, in the person of the president of the Republic, but also the whole overall direction of the state apparatus and the government, passed into the hands of former military men. In the government of Sidky Soliman installed in September 1966, for instance, the prime minister was an engineering colonel; three of the four vice-presidents of the Council were senior engineering general staff officers; and half the Council of Ministers was composed of former senior and staff officers. This military domination of the political apparatus also extended to the key area of the public sector.⁴⁷

Even the Arab Socialist Union was run in officer-corps style. At three different stages of the Egyptian revolution, political movements were launched for popular mobilization: the National Liberation Rally in 1953; the National Union in 1957; and in 1961 the Arab Socialist Union, with an inner cadre corps known as the Political Organization. Each of these political movements in turn went from torpor to paralysis, intrinsically unable to stir vitality in villages, factories and neighbourhood communities. Instead of a political party running a state, Egypt's state was trying to breathe life into a party. In principle, Egypt had civilian government, since officers in government had taken off their uniforms and severed their connexions with the army; but military control and military methods persisted. There was no political cadre to lead this revolution, because political activity among committed radicals had either been discouraged or suppressed. In the final analysis, the only cadres that the regime could find were in the officer corps, or among the technocrats: and this alliance was increasingly becoming a new privileged elite.

The Egyptian army might have initiated a social revolution, but it was no guerrilla force or popular militia, with deep roots among the people. It was a conventional army, animated by orders from above. In such an army, initiative taken in the ranks is at the least insubordination; and underlings acquire the habit of waiting for commands. No more damaging style of work could be inflicted on a political mass movement. So, in

the Arab Socialist Union, leaders were men who had been selected by their superiors for leadership courses: the shock-troops of the Political Organization within the Union were picked 'by the highest possible authority', as an official of the AS U told me in Cairo; and candidates for the youth movement were selected on the recommendation of their teachers or, in the case of students, their university lecturers. It was leadership by appointment from on high; not by popular support and acclaim from below. A critic of this procedure said to me in Cairo during 1967 that a party, to initiate social change,

is generally built in the course of a struggle, and the struggle is the yardstick by which you judge militancy and leadership and choose your cadres. **I**f Nasser issues a call for militants, 30 million will respond; but how do you select them? We've had fifteen years of discouraging, even suppressing political activity from below; now the problem is how to stimulate it.

In the countryside, there was none of the fury displayed in China's struggle to get its peasants to 'stand up' and break the power of the landed rich. Land reform there was, but initiated by edict and bureaucratic action. Peasant power was passive and subdued, and resistance by the big land-owners was strong if surreptitious. Even the administrative movement was carefully modulated by such processes as giving land-owners transition periods in which to dispose of their land, or paying them compensation. Land reform achieved a certain redistribution of land and rural income, but it did not drastically alter old political patterns in the countryside, for three million agricultural labourers remained practically unorganized, and without them there was no dynamic for change in the countryside. Even when the Kamshish affair burst with dramatic clangour into the sluggish bureaucratic scene of land reform, there was more promise than performance. This affair centred round the murder in a small village of a peasant member of the Arab Socialist Union, and led to the uncovering of an intricate intrigue by a rich and influential family to conceal land holdings considerably in excess of the limits decreed by law. **I**t opened up the countryside to the scrutiny of a special Control Commission to Act against the Remnants of Feudalism: headed, incidentally, by

Field-Marshal Amer, the then army commander-in-chief. Declared policy was to break the grip of the big land-owners on the administration, on the poor peasants and even on the Arab Socialist union, since the political influence of land-owners was still largely intact in the countryside. At Kamshish the poor rose briefly to their feet; but at the top there was still the old reluctance to let any popular movement run its full course. In Egypt the process of national revolution and even industrialization went far, and the professed commitment was to socialism. Yet as Anouar Abdel-Malek has described it, the nature and training of the officer corps; its distrust of popular mobilization; its determination to remain the sole holder of power; its rejection of the role of socialists in the building of socialism; and its view of socialism as evolving not through class conflict, but by the arbitrary direction of the state – all gave control to a powerful apparatus dominated by the military, the technocrats and the administrators, and far from the mass of the people.⁴⁸

It was the Six Day War in 1967 which showed that the state apparatus, led by the military elite, was in danger of undermining the very state and the revolution that it was trying to lead; and which destroyed, in theory at any rate, the pretensions of the army to occupy its hegemonic position in the Egyptian state. For Egypt's military elite showed itself unprepared and incapable in war, and engaged in conspiracy to defend its privilege, by toppling Nasser if need be. After five days of crushing defeat, Nasser's resignation announcement might have left the way open to the generals to stage a coup and grab power. Instead it brought Egyptians pouring into the streets to demand Nasser's return, and refusing to be intimidated back indoors even when their own air force had batteries of anti-aircraft guns light up the Cairo sky to break up the demonstrations. Six weeks later, on the fifteenth anniversary of the coup, Nasser announced that the revolution's greatest victory would be the return to civilian life of the military elite it had brought to power. 'The obstinacy of our generation in keeping the reins of power will prevent the renewal of the people and the appearance of new leaders,' he said. 'Our generation has provided leaders for the transition period. What is necessary now is that other generations step

forward to take their place in the government of the country.' Army plotting was charged in a series of trials of top army, defence and security heads; and this forced on Nasser what sounded like a decision to break the political power of the officers and denounce the corporate leading role of the army. The popular risings of early June had given the regime, at last, the beginnings of an alternative base of support. But it is unclear how far the momentum of the June demonstrations has carried, and whether popular outburst is being shaped into popular power. If it is not, an officer corps, grown into an elite with much of the power that the state deploys in its hands, could still Wldo the social revolution that started as a conspiratorial coup d'etat. In that event, Egypt will be a convincing demonstration of the argument that a professional army, however radically attuned, is intrinsically a force unable on its own to create social revolution. This was no armed egalitarian popular movement impelled from below, and enlisting the population in action for change. The army which brought to power a lower middle class helped it use office to entrench its privileges, and to block the farftung social change which alone could build a popular base for Egyptian social revolution.

Algeria's army was follllded as an army for liberation war; its base was the poor *fellahin*; and its officer corps was trained in the political aims of the war for liberation. How the course of the war short-circuited the course of the revolution has already been described. The result was to make the army first a competitor for power with the FLN, and then its usurper, but as a bureaucratic state machine, and not as a popularly based revolutionary front.

In 1962 the Tripoli conference of the FLN adopted a programme which echoed the objectives of the Soummam conference during the war. It criticized the ideological poverty of the FLN, and pointed out that 'the amalgamation of the state institutions and the organs of the FLN had reduced the latter to a merely administrative apparatus'. A new bureaucratic class was in danger of developing, it warned. Yet nothing was done to transform the FLN, weakened by successive internal

crises from 1962 onwards. Algeria's new bureaucratic elite as born in the years of victory, as the French departed. There was a mass exodus not only of settlers, but of French administrators—though a heavy proportion of top technicians and experts in Algeria remained French throughout*—and into the vacancies stepped Algerians. Furthermore, there was a scramble for the abandoned property of the departing colons: not only for land, which was seized by their agricultural labourers, but also for cars and houses. A small but privileged group grew rapidly out of the triumph of struggle, and at a time when the FLN was exhausting itself in internal wrangles and failing as a mass popular party of the poor and oppressed.

The needle issue for the Algerian revolution was the shape of agrarian reform. The rebellion had its roots in the exploited *fellahin*, and the peasantry was the backbone of the army of liberation. But the shape of agrarian reform was by no means clear. Was there to be nationalization with or without compensation? Was it to be nationalization of land owned by Frenchmen only, or by Algerians too? Was land to be redistributed among the small and dispossessed peasantry; were peasant cooperatives to be formed, in a system of self-management or autogestion; or were state farms to be established in a nationalized sector?

In the army, the debate on independence policy had been more vigorous than in the FLN, though it was not prosecuted in public because of the inhibitions imposed by the Evian agreement. There were two principal tendencies in the army: on the one hand, there was pressure from the ranks for the distribution of the land to the poor peasantry that had been plundered of its proper heritage; and on the other, there was growing support for state farms in the interests of state efficiency and control. Ultimately the latter tendency prevailed, in this intensely corporate, professionally organized army.

*Gerard Chaliand, *L'Algérie – est-elle Socialiste?* (Paris, 1964), p. 89, wrote that in 1963 an astonishing number of administrative officers in the Algerian government were French or had been trained by the French. In the highest levels of the administration, 43 per cent were from the latter two groups, and in the second highest level, 77 per cent. Of administrators in all categories, Chaliand gave the figure of 34,097 who were members of the FLN, and 35,900 who were French or French-trained administrators.

Ben Bella himself, and the political forces that gathered round him, espoused autogestion, not least because workers' control seemed a way of developing a political force in the country independent of, and able to counter, the power of the army. There thus developed, early on, a conflict over this issue between Ben Bella in government and the army. When at the moment of Algeria's independence, French land-owners hurriedly left for France, the system of autogestion seemed to accord with reality. The Algerian state found itself with a large number of abandoned farms for which it was incapable of supplying state administrators and control. Autogestion, the handing over to workers' committees, appeared the only answer, and it happened to be the one supported by Ben Bella's circle of advisers. It was a pragmatic solution almost inadvertently reached during a time of social upheaval; and it was promoted by its advocates as the Algerian road to socialism, despite the fact that it was mostly limited to the agrarian sector. But autogestion never really worked. In the beginning it was asserted with diffidence, partly because Algeria was unsure what the French would tolerate under the Evian agreement (and for years the abandoned farms were known as *bien-vacants*: in-waiting); partly because Ben Bella's government was torn between contesting government pressures; and partly because Ben Bella himself equivocated rather than asserted one policy or another. The army was never reconciled to the idea, however. Though the March 1963 decrees for the confiscation and control of former French lands finally formalized the policy of autogestion, it was evident by then that the agricultural sector was faltering; and the army, still advocating state farms as part of a state sector, could accuse the Ben Bella regime of wasting the patrimony by uneconomic and inefficient policies.

Farmworkers, themselves involved and radical intellectuals, had been won over temporarily to the policy of autogestion, but were disillusioned by its failures and by the restraints put upon it. Ben Bella's promise of mass support in the countryside was not materializing; nor was it in the FLN, which remained in principle the pivot of policy-making, but which existed mostly in name, since both army and government considered real

political mobilization far too explosive a prospect. The unions in UGTA (Union G n rale des Travailleurs Alg riens) had their powers curbed, and were alienated by the regime; and in 1962 the Kabyle, the first region to revolt against the French, and the one which had suffered most from the war but been badly neglected by the Algiers-based government, broke into open revolt under the leadership of Hocine Ait Ahmed. As the FLN frittered away its strength in internal dispute, the army and the administration remained the only organized forces. By 1964 Ben Bella was in search of a firmer base of power, but because the FLN was not rooted in a firm policy or social base, his politics had grown increasingly manipulative. By 1964-5 he needed, Bonapartist-style, to find new allies. He contemplated several courses. One was to win over Kabyle support with a promise to release Ait Ahmed from prison and reconcile himself with the Kabyle leaders).ip. Another was to reforge the FLN so as to give its radical elements their head in political organization. Yet another was a scheme for a popular militia as a counter to the power of the army. When Boumedienne emphatically opposed this last, a compromise resulted whereby the popular militia was to be directed by the FLN, but trained by the army. (A member of Boumedienne's general staff was put in charge of the militia, and he later sided with Boumedienne in the coup against Ben Bella.)

By mid-1965 Ben Bella was preparing to stage a civilian, or political, coup of his own. This was to coincide with the meeting of the Second Afro-Asian Conference, due to open in Algiers on 25 June. Ben Bella was to make a move to the left, in which the FLN would be transformed, after the style of Cuba, into a party with a firm organic commitment to the left, including the Algerian Communist Party; with stronger disciplinary controls; and a marxist training of functionaries and the rank-and-file. It would be a decisive shift to meet worker and trade-union demands; to give autogestion a clear run over the resistance from the Ministry of Agriculture; to free Ait Ahmed, and dispense with certain right-wing ministers in the government. It would also get rid of Boumedienne as head of the army. It was to be a shift by Ben Bella in search of

a firmer base of power, but it might have opened possibilities for a new crystallization of forces for social change in Algeria.

The army coup that Boumedienne staged that month was a putsch to pre-empt the Ben Bella move. It was a blow at the top, as Ben Bella's own plan would have been: because between them, the state of apathy into which the FLN had sunk and the manipulative nature of post-independence Algerian politics, had effectively immobilized any initiative other than that taken by the army or government-in-power.

After the coup, the army created a twenty-three-man Council of the Revolution, with Boumedienne as head of state. Like the Ben Bella regime before it, it was an amalgam of individuals and interests; but the core of the new government comprised a business-military elite in which the influence of ministers Bouteflika and Mideghiri, conservative in tendency, was strong. This core came to be known as the Oujda group. The army network already present in the police and security organizations, in the ministries and in the rural administrations, was consolidated by creating a new executive secretariat of the FLN, drawn largely from the army. The role of the FLN was redefined as one of elaboration, orientation, animation and control, but not of supremacy over the state. It was the army that was to be supreme.

Some parts of the army, however, considered that it was not the army itself that governed, but a faction working with the Oujda group, a new army and civil service bureaucracy that ruled in the name, but without the full participation, of the Council of the Revolution, which was rarely summoned. In November 1967, Boumedienne's chief-of-staff, Colonel Tahir Zbiri (who had been appointed to that position by Ben Bella in an apparently abortive effort to counter Boumedienne's influence) moved tanks on Algiers in an unsuccessful attempt to unseat the Boumedienne government. It was a reaction against the new technocrats who were taking over the revolution; a protest against the control of the state by Boumedienne and his intimates without consulting those who had won the seven years' war. They had not calculated, the rebels reasoned, on

displacing Ben Bella by Boumedienne, only to have Boumedienne play Ben Bella's role.

The army began to assert its leading role in the execution of policy. Boumedienne made it clear that the emphasis would be on an efficient state. The public sector grew, and with it the civil service. The debate over the autogestion section was resolved in favour of the technocrats, who advocated close state control. It seemed by the end of 1969 that Algeria would develop along the lines of Nasserist Egypt, with the army playing the assertive role above all other forces, but in alliance with technocrats and a lower middle class risen to power, both verbally committed to far-reaching social change but trying to achieve this by state initiative alone. As for nationalizations conducted by the state, they were all very well; but as long as a privileged group was able to use its power in a state-controlled economy to appropriate a huge share of the surplus for its own high standards of consumption, the real crisis of underdevelopment would remain unresolved.⁴⁹

Has there been another way in Africa; can there be another way? Perhaps only where guerrilla warfare is the path to liberation is this likely. Thus paradoxically, the countries last to be free – Portugal's colonies and the powerful white domination regimes of the far South – as well as those already nominally independent, but which realize they have still to wage the real battles of independence – could be those states that will achieve new structures for development by building the revolution as they fight. Guerrilla warfare in its nature cannot be led by elite leaderships, nor can it be fought for elite aims; the problem, as post-war Algeria has seen, will be to conserve the revolutionary impetus generation in battle. In Guine-Bissau a totally new administration will be built: Cabral has made this clear. Development will be based on the peasantry not on the urban privileged; and the new state will emerge in the revolution as embodied in the PAIGC, the party which leads the battle and the revolution. This is in the conviction that Africa can rescue herself *only* by radical changes in her own internal structure, and by changes that have a popular base, and popular support.

The Dependence Struggle

In sharp contrast to the swift and incisive blows of the coup d'etat stands the popular passivity, even torpor, during and after the action. Here and there strikes, demonstrations and trade-union pressure have precipitated the fall of a government, but nowhere have their initiators proved strong or persistent enough to make a direct bid for power. In Congo-Brazzaville, in Dahomey and in Upper Volta, general strikes toppled unpopular regimes; but, except in Congo-Brazzaville, and there only temporarily, the trade unions simply invited the military to assume power, and their role subsided or was effaced with the advent of army government, or a new government installed by the army. The active unions appear to have been those of the better paid state-employed workers, including civil servants; and perhaps their interests have not been so distinct from the military-bureaucratic formations risen to power through the coup for them to assert contrary pressure. Where the soldiers themselves have staged coups d'etat for reform purposes, however vaguely elaborated, the coups were aborted early on, as in Nigeria, or over the course of some years, as in Congo-Brazzaville, because the army reformers could find or create no social forces able to alter the patterns of elite politics. Coups d'etat occur because governments are too weak to rule, but radical forces too weak to take power.^{so}

If armies either block radical options or are unwilling on their own to open them, where lie the sources for change in Africa ? Is a strategy of social revolution possible in areas other than those like Guine-Bissau, and the embattled south of Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia and South Africa, where armies not of professional soldiers but of armed radicals are making the revolution in the struggle ? It may be asked: is a social revolution necessary? And the answer must be: to break dependence, yes. For dependence is embedded not only in external controls and direction, but also in the absence within new countries of Africa of popular initiative, participation and production. This is not to say that independence has brought no change at all to Africa.

But what development there has been, has been unbalanced. The progress in education has only intensified the crisis: for the products of the new schools have grown more demanding; but the economy, no more self-supporting. Appetites have grown, but not the means of sustenance.

We need a last, brief but close look at the decolonized state.

The conflict in which the coup d'etat is the short-cut answer is over very secondary sources of power. Old forms of dependence have altered; new ones have emerged. National colonialisms have made way in the last decade for the giant multi-national corporations. And the principal purpose of these corporations is not the export of capital to exploit cheap labour in the colonies; it is to concentrate investment at home, so as to expand production in the metropolitan country, and to 'organise the market as a colony'.⁵¹ Africa, like Latin America and Asia, has been incorporated into the economic structures of the new imperialism.

Imperialism [writes Gunder Frank of Latin America] is not only this or that foreign country exploiting Latin American economies; it is the structure of the entire economic, political, social, yes, and cultural, system in which Latin America and all its parts, however 'isolated', find themselves participating as exploited partners. . . . Development cannot radiate from the centre (the capitalist world) to the periphery (the underdeveloped world). The periphery instead can develop only if it breaks out of the relations which have made and kept it underdeveloped, or if it can break up the system as a whole.⁵²

By 1965, halfway through the development decade, aid had reached the point where the poor borrowing countries were transferring to their rich donors more for the service of existing loans than they were receiving in new ones. Within only five years of independence, the outward drain from Africa has begun, and Africa can do little about it. When it increases exports of primary products, prices tend to fall on the world market. When it tries to industrialize, the rich industrialized countries place restrictions on the importation of African-made goods. Aid is no answer; it deepens dependence. As for industrialization, the multi-national corporations are directly involved in such economic development as does take place in the new

states, and their presence has deepened the structural dependence of the separate African economies on the advanced capitalist centres of production. Heavy industries remain absent; those industries that are developed are for import-substitution goods. The structural weakness of African economies makes them dependent for their foreign exchange earnings on the export of primary products.

With the exception of the oil-producing countries and certain metal producers, underdeveloped economies relying on sales of primary products have, since the end of the Korean-war boom, experienced a slowing down in the rate of growth in total earnings. In the case of Tropical Africa, while the value of exports rose about 55 per cent between 1949 and 1955 it rose only 15 per cent between 1955 and 1960, and lately the position has probably worsened.... As Tropical Africa is principally an agricultural producer, though her world position is strongest in minerals, it is safe to assume that a steady and rapid expansion of exports in future is highly unlikely. A few individual countries with important mineral deposits will, of course, represent the exception to the general rule. Imports, on the other hand, have been growing faster than exports, with the result that, in recent years, there seems to be no surplus in the trade account for Africa as a whole. When investment income paid abroad and 'services' are taken into account, Tropical Africa has a considerable deficit on current account.⁵³

These dilemmas of development have been common to African states whether they have professed some form of scientific socialism or have been content to offer no prescription at all. Even in the Ivory Coast, deep in the embrace of French capital and French foreign policy, and claiming an economic miracle of West German proportions, the strategy of economic growth based on close links with international capital illuminates the African dilemma. Year by year there has been a favourable trade balance; but the picture is one of French prosperity in the Ivory Coast, not of African prosperity, for the economic boom has left the great majority of Ivoirians untouched. In 1965 private funds transferred abroad amounted to twice the total of foreign aid and private capital which came into the country. Ivorian aid to France is gathering momentum!⁵⁴ African economies may grow under the prompting of the corporations,

but dependence will deepen, because their policies are not directed to African self-sustaining growth.

The new phase of dependence has set the economic dilemmas of the newly independent state, but it has also moulded political shapes within. Bourgeoisie and peasantry, worker and white-collar clerk, red-tape administrator and unemployed: what roles do they play while the army leaves the barracks for government?

With the underdevelopment of its economies, has gone the cramping of Africa's bourgeoisie, its indigenous capitalist class. Africa's economies have joined modern capitalism too late, in its old age of monopoly, to get good shares or good seats. The bourgeoisie in Africa is not the dominant class that it *is* in Europe and America. What industrial development has taken place is the result of foreign capital, foreign technology, foreign initiative. In the shadow of the corporations, the African bourgeoisie's growth has been stunted and faltering. A local commercial bourgeoisie has grown, on import-export businesses, and real estate speculation, but the African entrepreneur is dependent on the patronage of the corporation, whose middleman he becomes, or on the African state, for capital is accumulated slowly and painfully unless it accrues from state sources. The long-talked-about fundamental contradictions between the roles of the 'national' and the 'comprador' bourgeoisie have proved largely a myth; neither branch of the family has grown to decisive influence or size, let alone dominance.

If the new shapes of dependence have cramped the growth of Africa's bourgeoisie, they have done the same to its working class. Arrighi⁵⁵ has produced compelling descriptions of the tiny, stunted working class, but even more significant, a cogent analysis of the trend which will continue to block its growth. In all Tropical Africa, only eleven out of every 100 members of the labour force are in wage employment; and this includes migrant labour, so that the proletariat proper is even smaller. Everywhere government is the largest employer of labour. In Nigeria, for example, four in every ten wage-earners are typical white-collar workers, such as teachers, sales personnel and office staff. In the last ten to fifteen years, wage employment has been relatively static in Tropical Africa.⁵⁶ In some countries, indeed,

the working class has shrunk in manufacturing and service-industry jobs.⁵⁷ Majhemout Diop has written of Senegal: 'It can be said that as long as a new economic and industrial policy is not introduced, the Senegalese working class will develop very slowly.' He suggested that this working class be called pre-proletarian; it lacks the noteworthy characteristics of a proletariat proper.⁵⁸ Samir Amin has said⁵⁹ that because urbanization has not been accompanied by industrialization, the popular urban masses of Africa's rapidly grown cities have not become a proletariat. The smallness, the slow growth and the heavy white-collar composition of the working class in Africa is no accident; it flows from the capital-intensive investment policies of the international corporations.⁶⁰ These require relatively less labour, which is correspondingly higher paid, and also a different composition of the labour force. Accordingly, Arrighi argues, Africa's working class falls into two main strata. The first consists of the workers who inherited colonial salary rates and live a middle-class style of life. The second is made up of those in the lower strata, close to the peasantry from whose ranks they sprang when they were forced off the land in the massive rural exodus that colonialism prompted; they have never been fully incorporated into the urban economy, but are the under-employed and under-paid, or the altogether unemployed, of the urban slums. In the opinion of Arrighi and Saul, these lower strata really belong to the peasantry (and exist in part outside the wage economy). The small minority of the upper stratum, on the other hand, earning three to five times as much, is closer to the elites and sub-elites in bureaucratic employment; this combined category they term the 'labour aristocracy'. The term, they suggest, could be improved upon; and the documentation on which a thorough class analysis must be based is clearly incomplete. But it is crucial to scrutinize African society for those groups whose interests converge with the politics of the corporations; and for those whose interests are deeply antagonistic, and would provide the forces for a second revolution, to break dependence. As the argument runs,⁶¹ the power base of the new state and what stability it achieves must be sought in a consistency between the interests of the corporations, and groups

other than the feudal, land-owning or bourgeoisie, which themselves either do not exist or are insufficiently solid to constitute the power base. **It** is the African elite, sub-elite and privileged stratum of the working class which owe their emergence and their consolidation to corporation capital-intensive policies, that promote the rapid income-growth of these labour aristocracies while restraining the absorption into the wage sectors of the migrant or near-peasant worker. What will break dependence and solve poverty; and who would resist such a policy? Africa needs not foreign capital-intensive, but domestic labour-intensive policies; not the squandering or extravagant consumption of savings, but their investment for capital accumulation. (Capital-intensive policies domestically generated might be another thing, but such a choice is unreal: capital-intensive development can come at this point of time for Africa only from abroad. For domestic capital-intensive policies, labour-intensive programmes must prepare the ground.) Such surplus as Africa produces is repatriated abroad as the reward of the corporations, or devoured by the elites. Any attempt to reallocate the surplus and the elite share, in a drive for primary accumulation, would hit directly at the elite groups that have benefited most from the pattern of growth without development. They would strive not to change but to perpetuate the existing order.

SPRINGS OF CHANGE

From where could change come: from worker-led insurrection, or peasant armies marching to power? The argument – which is the more revolutionary: the peasantry or the working class? – has grown stiff and obstinate with a choice posed in absolute terms. Which peasantry is meant; and what are the spurs to peasant action? For, like Africa's workers, the peasantry is not as homogeneous and undiversified as the labels on the pigeon-holes might suggest.

Eight in every ten Africans remain subsistence or near-subsistence farmers on the land. These are Fanon's disinherited, the wretched of the earth; but, he also argued, they are the revolutionary class of the continent. How disinherited are they, how revolutionary? And, as that is an unreal question so bluntly

posed, where and when and how is peasant insurgency to come? For it *is* not one countryside but several. Here the peasantry has risen to its feet and seized guns. There, it has appeared to offer no challenge to authority or policy. And while it is certain that if the countryside does not change, nothing in Africa will, outside the shuffling of power-seeking groups in the capital, it is not certain that the change will be induced solely or largely by peasant action. 'We are a country of peasants,' Amilcar Cabral has written⁶² of Guine-Bissau, fighting to free itself from Portuguese colonialism. 'Does it represent the main revolutionary force? I must confine myself to Guine: the peasantry is not a revolutionary force. Which may seem strange, particularly as we have based our armed struggle for liberation on the peasantry. A distinction must be drawn between a physical and the revolutionary force. Physically the peasantry is a great force . . . but we have trouble convincing the peasantry to fight.' In Kenya it was the peasant rising of the Kikuyu that ignited the Mau Mau struggle; and the unemployed and wretched of the towns who supplied and sustained it, until these links between urban slums and the forests were severed, and the rising defeated. It is these dispossessed who will demand a settlement with the political elite which rose to office on their sacrifice, and then abandoned them.

In East and Central Africa, when the colonial administration was under fire during the 1950s, it was facing peasant revolt against government schemes for agrarian change. The pressures of the peasantry at the periphery were at least as important in forcing a shift of colonial strategy as were the demands of the elite at the centre.⁶³ Rural struggles have been sharpest in the countries penetrated by white settlers. Algeria's war for independence was fought by the peasant *wilayas*, but it was the middle-class elite that captured their victory. Peasant struggle is important. But so is a crystallized ideology and leadership for independence, too. In the Congo after independence, the rural mass in the Eastern provinces where 'the mood in the villages reflected a stunned sense of betrayal'⁶⁴ by the politicians, and peasant agriculture went into a catastrophic decline after 1960, peasant rebellion set up an alternative government. The year

of the rebellion in Stanleyville saw the assault on city government from the countryside, for the rebel army came from the peasantry; towns did not fall from within but were captured from without by their peasant-based armies. That rebellion might have been 'a social movement which had revolutionary tactics but lacked a revolutionary strategy',⁶⁵ yet it took a combination of fighter-bombers from the United States, the enlistment of white mercenaries, and the Belgian-United States paratroop drop on Stanleyville to defeat it.

West Africa's peasantry is different in kind from the peasantries of Kenya, Algeria and the Congo. Across huge regions, there has emerged neither a land-owning aristocracy nor a dependent agricultural force, for there has been little dispossession of the land. The revolution in the countryside will lie principally not in the acquisition of holdings from those who have too much, but in the revolutionizing of production by those who live their lives on the land, and win so little from it, for themselves or the economy. In general, the pattern of land-ownership and cultivation is based on the family and the community. In some regions, land has been brought within the market economy, and marked inequalities of wealth are developing. But in most, especially in West Africa, the peasantry is in the main neither spectacularly wealthy nor desperately poor; on the average they are middle peasants.⁶⁶ In Nigeria's Western region, where political divisions have been refined along class lines further than in most other areas of West Africa, there are acute inequalities in income, wealth and land-holding. A gentry class has emerged on the land, and an impoverished peasantry. But as yet there has been no sharp confrontation between landlord creditors and tenant debtors, because there is not yet much rural indebtedness, and there is no landless agricultural proletariat.⁶⁷ Landlord-tenant relations are still criss-crossed by family and kinship ties and obligations. Peasant resentment expressed in tax riots is directed at government and the politicians, not at the landed bourgeoisie; conflicts, however fierce, have remained parochial, and peasants have not acted as a social force beyond the confines of their own communities.

The countryside has been left by the privileged in power to

wither in its poverty, and the peasantry has found, or used, no way to change the politics that are pursued in the cities. The peasantry is immobilized for struggle by its dispersal in small local communities, by its being subject to parochial authority; by the vagueness of its political purpose and aims; and by the fact that, while the poorest and most abandoned, the peasantry is in many ways the least touched by crisis. The land fulfils basic consumption needs, even if these are pitifully low; and when there is national crisis at the centre, peasant peripheries remain relatively untouched.

The patterns of Africa's dependence will not change until its peasantry 'stands up', as China's peasantry did. But it may need the mobilization of the urban working and unemployed poor, who are the close cousins of the peasantry; for through them, urban unrest could filter as rebellion into the countryside. Poverty becomes poverty by contrast; it is in the towns, where the privileged live their flashy lives, that the poor and the despised grow most easily disaffected. Searching for the springs of revolution in Guine-Bissau, Amilcar Cabral⁶⁸ delineated a group – 'we have not yet found an exact term for' – composed of young people newly arrived in the towns, with contacts both urban and rural, who make a comparison between the living standards of their own families and those of the Portuguese. It was from the ranks of these that the first guerrilla fighters of Guine-Bissau were trained. They fight a traditional colonial enemy, of course. The ways and means at the disposal of those seeking and needing change in independent Africa are far different. But the spurs to action for change could similarly come for a new power base, linking a mobilized peasantry with the organized ranks of the dispossessed in the towns.

Settling the revolutionary potential of any force in Africa solely by a genetic-type investigation into the social origins of leadership or rank-and-file runs the risk of becoming a futile exercise in theoretical abstraction.⁶⁹ Instead, one must seek out those groups which share a dependence on, and an interest in, the perpetuation of the neo-colonial economic system, whether in the long or only the very short term; and they must be seen not only in statistical tables but in action. Whose

interests require preserving the internal structure of the new state; whose interests cry out for the dismantling of the structure? Who strikes to fight his way into the ranks of the privileged; and who to link with those forces that can transform the state of dependence?

Could Africa's omnibus political parties be radicalized from within? Is there not a role for army officers, linked with revolutionary intellectuals and a popular front, as in the Sudan, to join and defend the cause of change? These are real, not rhetorical questions; and they have, essentially, to be posed and answered in Africa, where conditions may lead people to think that the continent is ripe for revolution, but where the other ingredients are largely missing: the instruments and perspectives of change.

In Chad the armed forces led by Frolinat represent not only those left to perish in neglect but those who seek in their deprivation an instrument, if not yet a sustained ideology, for change. But discontent alone is not enough. Those hunting jobs and privilege could dissipate themselves in acrimony against their more successful competitors, through conflict within and around the elite; or they could generalize social protest and raise it to significant heights of action for a radical alternative. The jobless could be immobilized by despair; or they could find the energy of protest, even rebellion. In Africa, governments that were yesterday harassed by unemployed school-leavers will in future be besieged. The unemployed are overwhelmingly the young; 'applicantship' for a job has become a way of life. The cooking pot in the shanty town or crowded back street of the capital no longer stretches to feed the unemployed living on the under-employed; and those beaten by the city must retreat to the countryside, which they left not long before because it, too, offered too little. Even among Africa's large and plastic middle class, frustration could grow to ferment; because although the declarations of 'stability' proliferate, the better life grows more and more elusive. For many who see their place among the privileged, the system is closing up. There are plush positions in the burgeoning government bureaucracies, banks and commercial offices; but not for them. Their rebellion

Armies in Stalemate

could evaporate into accommodation, as those who protest their disability find room at the top. But accommodation at the top is already crowded, let alone unlimited. A compact of the intellectuals and the bitter young men of the cities trailing links with the countryside could be explosive in changing discontent into organized dissent.

The recognition of the need for change is far from the ability to realize it; but disciplined political movements could, in turn, translate disenchantment with the record of Africa's independence into a drive for real change. Such will not happen, however, until new forces seize the initiative from the privileged elite and the climbers towards privilege, who have so disqualified themselves from the right to rule.

As for rule by the soldiers, this by its nature is emergency action that can have no permanence. The soldiers hold the ring while new internal power amalgams are arranged. They achieve no real alternatives, only postponements of solutions; for while the crisis and the conflict of dependence are temporarily frozen, the 'stability' promised by the military meanwhile shores up dependence itself.

If the 1960s and the 1960s were the years of independence excitement and euphoria, the 1970s are likely to be sober, chastening years. There have been failures of direction not only among those who promised an African paradise on earth, if they were entrusted to run it, but also among those seeking a genuine independence, who had a faulty understanding of the African reality, and of the new crucial corporations and powers. The political compromise of the old imperialisms was conceived, and presented, as total victory over them; and attention was diverted during the celebration of independence from those elements within African society that would ensure not the opportunity for but the impossibility of a changed life for the great majority of Africans.

This book has concentrated on the shape of power inside Africa; not on the power over Africa exercised from outside by investment capital, credit, trade and diplomacy. That is another book, and a required companion to this one. It would have to probe how important these coups have been to continuing foreign

control over the continent's economic infrastructure. It would have to trace the relations of multi-national corporations with African governments; the activities of the diplomats and crypto-diplomats, and the planners, technicians and advisers. **It** would have to scrutinize how Western government and business-investment strategies have been planned and pursued, pre-eminently by the United States.

In 1964 United States capital directly invested in Africa amounted to less than four per cent of capital from that country directly invested abroad. But throughout the African continent, as in Latin America and Asia, there is evidence of mounting American involvement by American money. The multi-national corporations, most of them based in the United States, are richer by far than the individual African states. Ranking African states (gross national product) and corporations (gross annual sales) Nigeria comes thirty-ninth on the list after General Motors, Ford, Standard, Royal Dutch, Shell, General Electric, Chrysler, Unilever, Mobil *Oil* and others. Ghana is seventy-eighth after Union Carbide; and apart from Algeria (sixty-first) and Morocco (sixty-fourth), there are no other countries in the first hundred.

A United States spokesman* has said:

The large companies are very big and increasingly are becoming global in their pursuit of international business. It is imperative that both the large companies and governments re-evaluate their relationships and adjust them to the inter-dependence that exists. They both have tremendous economic power. But the nation state is dominant *in* the political sphere and the multi-national company has access to the world market and is dominant in the commercial sphere. *They need one another.*

How they have used one another *is* the contemporary story of power over Africa.

Recent statements by United States spokesmen, including the Nixon state-of-the-world address, have served notice on African governments that they should count on less aid in the future and look instead to private interests for help in 'developing their countries'. The 1960 United States Foreign Aid Bill gave birth

* Herbert Salzman, Assistant Administrator for Private Resources, Agency for International Development.

to a publicly funded but privately controlled Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPI C) to insure and further subsidize United States investors. In the 1970s the American foreign-aid programme is to be reorganized so as to transfer control over it even more explicitly to United States corporations. A report released by the presidential panel headed by the former President of the Bank of America recommends that the United States make more use of such international organizations as the United Nations and the World Bank in order to facilitate investment with fewer political problems.* The World Bank particularly has announced plans to expand its activity in Africa.

In November 1969 a Business International round-table meeting took place in Addis Ababa. (Business International is an influential information-gathering arm of United States corporations.) The talks were off the record, said Business International's executive vice-president, 'with the entire leadership of less developed countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America'. *African Development* commented that 'behind the scenes information reveals that this is the beginning of a big new American raid on Africa. . . . Judging by the talks in the corridors, the American raid, when it really comes, will be on an unprecedented scale. . . . The Americans are asking a higher price than the old, flexible colonial traders ever did.'

The World Bank has recently opened an office in Nigeria uniquely to concentrate on that one country. American aid to Nigeria continued throughout the war; Nigeria still benefits from the biggest U S-aid programme in Africa; and the postwar reconstruction plans for Nigeria were mapped out in the back rooms of American foundations, corporations and consulting firms. How can United States economic advisers and investors not try to maintain and revive systems in which international business can best function? The coup d'etat often presents them with the finest opportunity. It did in Ghana, where Harvard's Development Advisory Service re-vamped the economy. In Brazil after a recent coup d'etat a North American university academic admitted that he had, in an official capacity to the

* This new investment strategy is discussed in *International Dependency*, by the Africa Research Group.

The Dependence Struggle

Brazilian government, drawn up the *plan* for the economy. He added that the Americans had been awaiting this opportunity for years. It is striking how the coup d'etat in Africa, with rare exceptions like Egypt, the Sudan and Libya, converges towards the stabilization of the situation for overseas capital.

The government of Africa, in the hands of the politician- manipulators, or the less flamboyant but infinitely more parochial soldier-rulers, is not on the whole tyrannical, but bumbling. Time and again it makes false starts, and spreads false hopes. Condemnation there must be; but compassion, too, for those who talked so boldly about freedom but had so little freedom of manoeuvre. The soldiers illuminate the foundations and the failures of the new states of Africa. Those who have usurped government to consolidate the political system have been driven openly to reveal the armature of state power that supports them; the more it is revealed, the more puny it is shown to be, for its essential supports are not inside but outside Africa. As for the soldiers who seize government to reform or radicalize it, their success or failure will depend on the popular forces for change that they release within Africa; not on the force of armies or the power that flows out of the barrel of their guns.