

Africa's First Nations

The Alternative to Apartheid

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Apartheid is, on the one hand, an ongoing struggle between European Dutch colonial descendants and the remnants of British colonial rule which began in 1822. The Dutch seeking to maintain separation between themselves and African nationals on the basis of color and race, while the British are pressing for integration and absorption while maintaining social systems of class separation. It is also a state sanctioned form of terror separating peoples on the basis of skin colour and race, and, thus the means by which European colonial descendants can implement the spurious claim to the right of rule over African nations without their consent. *Apartheid* must be seen not merely as a contemporary practice of repression by descendants of European colonists, but it must be viewed within the context of differing strategies to promote an imperial state system. Finally, it must be recognized as an extension of repeated colonial invasions from the Middle East, Southern Europe and Northern Europe — a colonial measure designed to divide and undermine Africa's First Nations.

The answer to *apartheid* and similar aberrations that exist elsewhere on the continent of Africa is the reunification and reaffirmation of Africa's original nations and the dismemberment of the post-colonial states. And with the dismemberment of these artificial impositions on Africa's nations will come the rebirth of Africa itself. Let the original African nations reclaim

their proper and natural place in the world. Erase the insanity of externally imposed colonial—state boundaries which only reflect European tastes and European history and divide Africa's nations. The state system which has been imposed on the nations of Africa is the source of contemporary violence and it is the means by which colonialism and *apartheid* is perpetuated and spread.

South Africa, the most obvious breeding ground of colonialism and the violence of *apartheid*, has many sympathetic endorsers within the brotherhood of states. Indeed, though the states of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Brazil, United States of America, Ecuador, and India do not refer to their government policies toward indigenous nations within their boundaries as *apartheid* their historical practice of uprooting and dividing indigenous nations and forcing these nations in their dismembered condition to reside in "reserves", "parks", "regions" or "reservations" has virtually the same implications as *apartheid*. Pushing nations into restricted territories permits the state to confiscate each nation's lands and resources. Noting this fact Russell E. Dickenson, Director of the US government National Park Service observed during a five day **World Conference on Cultural Parks Modernization often finds the resources of small native communities being absorbed by government agencies and private interest groups. In this process native people relinquish exclusive control over resources that support their life ways . . .** (*New York Times, September 24, 1984*)

Far short of "relinquishing" control, the First Nations of Africa have had their means of livelihood, their country and their political integrity stolen through the violence of European colonialism. Indigenous nations the world over have experienced the same

situation as their lands and resources have been expropriated by states and their peoples forced into small territorial enclaves. First Nations control was not given, but rather commandeered!

Just as *apartheid* in South Africa is founded on racism, political arrogance and a misplaced sense of cultural superiority so the state policies of brother states elsewhere in the world which deny the political, economic and social rights of indigenous nations are equally founded.

But such an unquestionable circumstance should not be surprising. States which practice suppression of indigenous nations within their boundaries share with South Africa the same colonial heritage. They are a class of states created as a direct result of colonial invasions over the last five hundred years. The people who govern the states of Brazil, New Zealand, Ecuador, India, Australia, the USSR, Canada and the United States of America (for example) are all immigrants — descendants of colonial populations. They claim the right to rule the territories and peoples of indigenous nations merely by *right of discovery*. Which is every bit like me saying that, *Even though I didn't know you had a house down the road. If I discover it upon simply passing by I have the right to move in and take possession — I discovered, and so I have the right to take that which is yours.* This is the basis for rule in South Africa as well.

The First Nations of Africa

Africa's nations are the human soul of this most generous yet unforgiving continent. For hundreds of human generations this land of more than 30 million

square kilometers has been the home of many peoples who have learned to live and prosper in every ecological niche. From the humid jungles, to expansive savannas, to parched deserts the first nations adjusted and were transformed by the demands of nature. Africa's nations established extensive economies, powerful religions, and intricate social and political systems. As rich and diverse as any nations in the world Africa's peoples formed a profound bond between themselves and the continent.

Hundreds of nations have thrived at Africa's breast since time immemorial. The prolific and distinct cultures of many peoples blanket the body of Africa. Some of these nations include the Alur, Kamba, Maasai, Nyanwezi and the Lambwa of the East African Interior; the Berber of the North and North West; the Hausa, Kanuri, Mende, Wolof, Zumbo, Ovambo and Ndembu of the West African Interior; Afar, Sidamo, Beja, Oromo, Somali and Shoa of the Northeast; and the peoples of the South including Hottentots, Basuto, Xhosa, Tembu, Griqua, Zulu, Herero, Ndebele, Swazi, and Shona. These and their sister nations represent Africa's natural unfolding of human civilization.

Five Waves of African Colonization

Nations along the Mediterranean north-coast clashed with the first colonial invasion of the continent initiated by the Phoenicians in the middle of the last millennia. As these ancient mariners traveled from the eastern Mediterranean cites of Sidon, Byblos and Tyre they established colonial settlements at Lepcis, Sabratha, Mogador and Carthage. The second wave was led by the Greeks as they established colonies at Ptolemais, Berenice, Cyrene and Alexandria. (Page:5) By the

midpoint of the third century of the present era African nations had come to know the Romans as they established colonial settlements from just outside the "Pillars of Hercules" where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean in the Northwest to the middle reaches of the Red Sea in the Northeast.

The vanguard of Phoenician, Roman, Greek, and Arab invasions was met by the Berber who resisted these external intrusions and alien rule with enduring vigor. They successfully confined Roman settlement to the narrow coastal plain. (Page:6)

Even as earlier remnants of Phoenician, Greek and Roman colonial conquests of Northern Africa lingered the Arab-Islamic conquest rising from Medina in the sixth century of the present era extended deep into the heart of the continent and along her east coast. Islamic colonial expansion was the fourth wave.

Only West Central and Southern Africa remained unoccupied by the colonial waves from Mediterranean. Arab settlers, and Chinese and Indian merchants persisted along the eastern seaboard until the beginning of the fifteenth century of the present age.

After two thousand years of colonial invasions throughout North Africa and along the eastern coast a new wave of colonial expansion from European States began to consume West Africa and Southern Africa with the maritime expansion of the Portuguese. African nations had absorbed the four earlier invasions, but the beginning of rapid ruination throughout Africa did not commence until colonial invasions by European states in the fifteenth century of the present era — the fifth wave.

For three hundred years the European colonial invasion pressed forward unremittingly and in the beginning of the nineteenth century pockets of alien European rule (French, British, Portuguese and Turkish) began to expand throughout the continent. By the beginning of the twentieth century Britain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain and Italy had become the dominant colonial powers of Africa supplanting their less successful predecessors.

In less than 100 years (1830 - 1914) the hundreds of African nations which had resisted four earlier invasions spanning two millennia had fallen under the control of seven European states. And in less than forty-five years (1924 - 1965) European colonial possessions in Africa had been metamorphosed into forty-three separate and distinct territories operating under systems of rule defined and established by their colonial lords. During the last twenty-five years African nations have been under a state system of "surrogate colonial rule" precipitated by League of Nations and then United Nations "de-colonization".

In less than five hundred years, European colonization of Africa has transformed the most bountiful continent in the world with the most prosperous nations in the world into a continent of impoverishment, disease, terror and dislocated peoples.

While most of these nations still exist in an around their original territories, virtually all have been split or divided into many parts. And thus fragmented Africa's nations were fixed under the rule of some fifty states created during the present century.

States Denounce Africa's Nations

Viewed in the context of Africa's colonial history and the long-term practice of state suppression of nations South Africa's government policies toward Africa's nations are revealed to be a kind of disease from abroad. *Apartheid* is a symptom of a much broader predicament which besets the nations of Africa. It is not the cause of struggle and indeed, if *apartheid* were eliminated tomorrow the struggles of Africa's nations would continue. The major point of contention in Africa is between the First nations of Africa and the youthful post-colonial states which were superimposed over them.

So-called "progressive" Africans often ally themselves with the view that the state system in Africa must become the accepted system of social, economic and political organization, and, thus displace "african nations". They regard "tribalism" as the basis for hatred and division between peoples and the some fifty states that were created during the last generation. As Jason Clay observed: *If African states are to take their rightful place in the world, progressive Africans believe, tribalism must be destroyed. (Clay:2)*

It is commonplace among state authorities to denounce "tribalism" or "tribalistic acts and their effects on public affairs" Such denunciations imply a kind of superiority for those making such assertions and further, suggests that there is a superior form of human organization in the "corporate state" The rhetorical condemnation of "tribalistic acts" is particularly common in states where tribal populations or indigenous nations are visible participants in the political life of the state. The state governments of Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua,

Chile, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Kenya are examples of states where elected and appointed state officials sound their antagonism. Combined with their denunciations of "tribes" or nations, state officials pronounce the virtues of "individuals as citizens of the state". By so doing they reaffirm their denial of distinct nations within the state's boundaries. Legitimacy is conferred on the state in terms of "its" citizens.

Mr. Wafula Wabuge, Ambassador of the Republic of Kenya to the United States of America volunteered this explanation for his government's animosity toward "tribalism" in a letter to the editor of a major US newspaper. His faultfinding was offered as a defense of President Daniel arap Moi (a member of the Kalenjin Nation) who was being condemned as a "dictator" for his statement that Kenyans should sing after him "like parrots". President Moi was charged with failing to recognize the important role that "tribes" play in African politics. (*NEW YORK TIMES, September 1982*)

Responding to his president's critics Mr. Wabuge wrote, "The allegation that tribalism rather than nationalism is the most important factor in Kenyan and African politics is outrageous" Undoubtedly what Mr. Wabuge actually meant to say is that "statism" or the supremacy of the state is the most important factor in Kenyan political life. The Kenyan Ambassador's claim holds the state up as the dominant political reality in Africa. He incorrectly implies that Kenya is a "nation" capable of expressing "nationalism" when indeed, Kenya and nearly every other state in the world is not and never has been "a nation." Kenya is a "state" in which many nations reside either by consent or without their consent. Nations encased within state borders often express "nationalism"; and by so doing

exhibit what Ambassador Wabuge describes as "instability" and a lack of "unwavering unity" with the state.

The appearance of a "unified state" is sustained through direct or indirect coercion expressed through state laws or through the power of military forces. Mr. Wabuge reveals the applicability of this statement in Kenya when he says that President Moi "has not hesitated to exercise the necessary disciplinary measures against those who practice tribalism and other malpractices." In other words, Mr. Wabuge admits that to maintain unity among the many nations of Kenya, his government must impose measures which force the appearance of unity.

Kenya is a state with a United Nations estimated population of 17.86 million with 14% living in urban areas. (UN:40) No fewer than fifteen nations (several with populations greater than fifty of the world's states) are embraced inside Kenya's boundaries as shown in the table below. (Page 157)

Kenya's Ambassador to the United States is, I believe, too quick to denounce the political importance of indigenous tribes and nations throughout Kenya and Africa. As critics of "white settlers" would now perhaps say of Mr. Wabuge, his views are *not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute.* (Fanon:40) In practice many black African leaders who would be deflected by Kenya's Ambassador are like the "white" African leaders they would replace. And in this sense they are like the European settlers who followed the trails laid down by European explorers and missionaries. They foster the colonial world. *The colonial world is a Manichean*

world. It is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. (Fanon:40)

The Nations of Kenya (Figures as of 1979)

Nation	Population Percent	Total (Millions)
Agikuyu	20.90	3.20
Luo	12.70	1.94
Abaluyia	13.70	2.10
Akamba	11.10	1.70
Kalenjin	9.80	1.50
Gusii	5.20	.80
Ameru	5.50	.84
Mijikenda	3.30	.50
Somali	2.00	.30
Turkana	2.00	.30
Aembu	.80	.13
Taita	.80	.12
Maasai, Luyia, and Others	12.20	1.87
TOTALS	100.00	15.30

Source: Adapted from Simeon W. Chilungu's Table on Ethnic Group Distribution in Kenya appearing in "Kenya—Recent Developments and Challenges" *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 3 1985.

By denying the political importance of indigenous nations Mr. Wabuge repeats the error of former colonial administrators from England, France, Italy, Spain and

Portugal. Indeed, he presents himself as a new spokesman for colonialism in Africa just as his counterparts in State of South Africa show themselves to be pretenders to the "colonial thrown".

President Moi of Kenya is not a product of African nationalism as many would have us believe. Like his colleagues leading Zambia, Chad, Zaire, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mozambique and other *Black African States*, he is a *statist* who functions as a product of European statism — the same imperial thinking that confines Europe's First Nations (i.e. Catalonia and Basque in Spain, Scotland and Ireland in England, Samiland in Scandinavia and Alsace in France). They are simply functioning as "European colonial surrogates"; performing the role of governors over the shadowy domains of a lingering European colonial system. Like the *spoilt children of yesterday's colonialism* they are, for the most part, governing through institutions created by European states. And, they persist in maintaining state boundaries which do nothing but reflect the patterns of European established colonial history. The modern African state leader and intellectual elite *has clothed his aggressiveness in his barely veiled desire to assimilate himself to the colonial world.* (Fanon:60)

South Africa's *apartheid* is not a thinking machine, and it is not a body endowed with reasoning faculties. Like colonialism from which it springs, it is violence in its natural state. The long and suffering response to this violence among peoples of African nations has been to seek its reform. Hemmed in and divided into compartments the nations of Africa found themselves in a permanent state of tension in the face of an unyielding colonial doctrine. Their long apparent repose was thought by the "settler South Africans" to be a

demonstration of a long-held belief that "blacks are too dumb and backward" to rebel. And then suddenly, out of no where, the pent up energies and pains of nations struck out at their tormentors.

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The violence of *apartheid* would be met with blind violence in search of freedom. For the leaders and their followers pent up rage has seen its fratricidal side when some from one nation turned on those of another. And violence has been turned on the less strong among the "settler South Africans". The rising tide has emerged to find a plan, to give focus to the movement for national liberation. Elements of this focus have been defined within the African National Congress (ANC).

Some of the ANC's political elite call for the removal of the white-minority controlled South African government, and demand that South Africa be governed by the "black majority". And for these *what they demand is not the settler's position of status, but the settler's place.* (Fanon:60) As with the leaders of the opposition to Southern Rhodesia's white-minority government who demanded "black majority rule" the growing sentiment in the African National Congress is to achieve the same solution. Yet others call for non-violence and negotiations as if to suggest that the *rulers are prepared to step down in favor of the ruled.*

Both "black majority rule" and non-violent negotiations have been used elsewhere in Africa. And when fully pressed, as in Zimbabwe and Tanzania, new rulers do emerge. But, *wearing the king's clothes* has proved unsettling and awkward. "White" tyrants have in many instances been replaced by "Black" tyrants. And the new rulers of African states have found themselves in the uneasy position of defending values, systems of governance, economic ideas and social ideas carried over from their white colonial masters. As the President of Kenya has found, the powers of the state (economic, political and military) become the tools of "black majority rule" to preserve the state; and the system that imprisons the many nations still in search of freedom from colonial rule.

I would suggest that as Africa's past was determined by the inter-relationships between indigenous nations, so shall the future be determined — the presence of "imposed states" not withstanding. Africa continues to scream and bleed from the influence of long colonial periods which denied the importance of indigenous nations. Colonial attitudes continue to live in the breasts of many African political leaders who want desperately to be accepted as "fine examples" by the governments of former colonial masters.

It is time such political leaders of African states reject state oppression and recognize the legitimate position of hundreds of nations across Africa. Mr. Wabuge and his colleagues in the Kenyan government and other state governments should accept the natural reality of nations and tribes and recognize that the artificial states created from arbitrary colonial whims in Europe are the major factor contributing to African dislocation and African instability. It is the

war-making capacity of large, unmanageable, artificially created states which attempt to hold nations in "state bondage" against their will, and thus create instability. Nations are the historical anchor of Africa, and they are consequently the stabilizing factor in Africa's politics. Their rejection of imposed state controls are only destabilizing to the states themselves.

Those who would promote the continuing hegemony of the state system in Africa encourage growing violence and economic dislocation. To perpetuate the state is to perpetuate alien colonization of Africa's nations. Dissolution of the states will not be political regression, but a positive step toward the recognition of the settled reality of Africa's stabilizing nations. It will be a move toward redressing the balance between the factitious age of colonialism and Africa's natural political evolution.

Resuming The Balance to Repair the Ills

We have observed throughout this paper that there is an obvious connection between the movement by outsiders to colonize Africa's lands and peoples, the consequent suppression of Africa's nations and the decline of Africa's social, economic and political health. We have asserted throughout that South Africa's *apartheid* is not the cause of Africa's problems; it is rather a symptom of a greater problem. We have suggested that the "progressive" African view that *tribalism . . . is the basis for hatred between peoples within a country as well as between countries* is not only wrong headed but a view which contributes to Africa's torment. Imposed African "statism" is what ails Africa.

The underlying cause of Africa's distress is the

fundamental conflict between the goals of European colonial-states and the goals of Africa's First Nations. The states are responsible for perpetuating colonialism including the detestable South African policy of *apartheid*. States with their unmanageable and bloated bureaucracies compete with nations for the loyalty of individual Africans, but in so doing they attempt to destroy the nation using the power of the state which is in turn buttressed by the global state system. Africa's states promote the exploitation of Africa's people, her lands and resources through imported systems of government and economics which over-tax the people and the natural environment. State exploitation is directly connected to the rapid economic decline of Africa.

In South Africa it is argued that Africa's people must decide between eliminating *apartheid* or suffering major economic collapse. In Kenya, it is argued that Africa's people must decide between supporting and nurturing the state or suffering major economic collapse. In Nigeria, it is argued that the state under the European imposed control of the Hasau-Fulani must be maintained or all of the nations inside Nigeria will suffer from major economic collapse.

Africa's states promote the exploitation of Africa's people.

The choice invariably placed before the peoples of Africa's nations is the continued toleration of violent colonialism or cataclysmic breakdown. Such warped

thinking ignores the role played by colonialism in the form of states in rapid economic decline. State mismanagement of Africa's resources has resulted in dramatic drops in food production, deforestation and consequent declines in animal populations as well as increases in widespread starvation among Africa's people. The World Watch Institute noted in its 1986 review of the State of the World: *More than 40 percent of Africans live in countries where grain yields per hectare are lower today than they were a generation ago.* (Brown:189) Most of Africa's states have been in existence for only a generation or less. The choice first stated is not a choice at all. Africa's nations are being forced to accept both the violence of colonialism and cataclysmic breakdown.

A more proper choice is between the corruption of colonialism and economic collapse, and Africa's First Nations and rebuilding the balance between the needs of human beings and the requirements of the natural environment. Africa's nations maintained a careful balance between their needs and the demands of Africa's natural environment for hundreds of thousands of years. What was true for those thousands of years is no less true now: Africa and her people must be as one. To be one, Africa and her peoples must exist in balance according to the conditions of Africa, not according to some way of thinking and exploitation born in other parts of the world. Just as the fifth wave of colonialism compounded errors through "decolonization" and the formation of the African state system, colonialism has compounded economic and ecologic errors with development strategies which have consistently failed. The economic, social and political experience and knowledge of Africa's nations is essential to Africa's recovery from a generation of political

corruption, economic decline and ecologic destruction.

The solution to Africa's colonial aberrations, like *apartheid*, political instability, economic decline and ecologic deterioration is in the reaffirmation of "local" decisions by African nations. Just as it is true that *If the economic decline affecting Africa is to be reversed, each country will need an environmentally based development strategy*, (Brown:193) so it is true that Africa's nations must resume the primary responsibility for determining the future of Africa.

State power rests on the backs of African nations.

Partial steps in the direction of defining an African strategy for arresting the decline were taken during the Southern African Development coordination Conference in 1980. Conceived and promoted by Tanzania's President Julius K. Nyerere the nine states of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the South African occupied territory of Namibia met in Lusaka to commit their countries to *work harmoniously to integrate their economies and gradually to reduce their dependence, particularly, but not only, on the Republic of South Africa.* (Nsekela:Introduction)

Recognizing that Southern African states were *deliberately incorporated -- by metropolitan powers, colonial rulers and large corporations -- into the colonial and sub-colonial structures centring (sic) in general on*

the *Republic of South Africa* (Nsekela:3) these African leaders offered a new program of self-reliance and regional cooperation as the formulae for eliminating *apartheid* and economic dependence on South Africa. The Lusaka Declaration was the first solid demonstration of Africans defining African solutions. But, the major flaw in thinking which has doomed Southern African state intentions was the omission of ideas which would place emphasis on the role of African nations in the plan of self reliance. Even the most insightful of African state leaders failed to recognize the centrality of Africa's First Nations to Africa's social, economic and political ills.

To resume their proper role, African nations must eliminate the state by denying the state their endorsement and support. African nations must turn to themselves for economic, social and political decisions and not to the state. State power rests on the backs of African nations. It cannot exist without the support of nations. Just as the economic and political power of South Africa's government and its policy of *apartheid* rests on the labor of citizens of African nations, so it could not exist if that labor were denied. Instead of working for the states, Africa's people must labor for their nations and, thereby, resume their full commitment to their own nations.

By abandoning the state system and reaffirming Africa's First Nations the violence of *apartheid* cannot exist. Black African state leaders will have to recognize that they are an obstacle and not an aid to Africa's renewal. Failing to recognize this, they hazard the prospect confronting their "nationalistic brothers". Africa's First Nations will overcome the crumbling states. The fifth wave of colonialism will have come to

an end; and Africa will be Africa again.

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