

Military Coups in Africa

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THE people of Africa are currently facing very difficult and complex problems, problems which are very different from those which they faced in the early post-1945 period and later, though by no means unconnected with that earlier phase.

In the first decade after 1950 Africa made great advances in its struggle for independence and an end to direct colonial government. The struggle was conducted in various forms, by mass demonstration and processions, by boycotts and strike actions, by peasant resistance to official agricultural schemes or to seizure of land by white settlers, by elections and the formation of political parties, by the publishing of newspapers and the issuing of manifestos. In a number of cases armed struggle was waged before independence was won, the longest and most bitter battles being those in Algeria (1954-1962) and Kenya (1952-1957), but armed conflict also ensued in the Camerouns, clashes took place in Morocco and Tunisia, there was a revolt crushed with appalling ferocity in Madagascar (now Malagasy) in 1947 and in Egypt (1952) armed action by patriotic officers was necessary to overthrow the corrupt regime of Farouk backed by imperialism.

Even in those African countries where armed struggle did not take place—and this, in fact, was true of most—*struggle* was nevertheless waged, and not a single African country became independent without its martyrs to the cause of anti-colonialism. No-

where did the imperialists, as they like to claim, “grant” independence to the people of Africa. Any retreat on the part of the imperialists was forced on them by the mass movement of the people. The winning of independence by Ghana in 1957 and Guinea in 1958 had a great impact on the whole of Africa. The dam of colonialism was broken; in quick succession in both the former British and former French colonies independence was secured in a number of states. Congo entered the same path in 1960, only to fall victim to new forms of domination, with the coup against the Government of Patrice Lumumba providing the example for later coups against other progressive governments in Africa.

Years of Advance

But, overall, 1960 was a year of advance, “Africa Year” as it came to be known. Soon there were to be more than thirty independent African states. That the Western powers were compelled to retreat in the face of the advancing national liberation movements, and that they recognised the need to come to terms with reality and to seek a new basis from which they could retain their economic grip and prepare for new offensives, is clear from the statements at the time by their leading spokesmen. Thus, it was on February 3rd, 1960, speaking in Cape Town, that the then British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, made his famous “wind of

change" speech in which he spoke of the "strength of African national consciousness" blowing through the continent, and compelling the British Government to "accept it as a fact."

In the same way, General de Gaulle, in a speech on December 9th, 1960, to French officers at Bled a year before the cease-fire agreement with the Algerian FLN, pleaded with his officers to understand the new situation which made it impossible to hold on to the control of Algeria. "There is" he declared, "the whole context of emancipation which is sweeping the world from one end to another which has swept over our Black Africa, which has swept, without exception, over all those which once were empires, and which cannot but have considerable consequences here . . ."

By 1964 there were 34 independent African states; there was an Organisation of African Unity with a positive Charter; and, perhaps still more significant, a group of advanced states—the United Arab Republic, Algeria, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Congo (Brazzaville), Zanzibar-Tanganyika (later Tanzania)—which were beginning to cut themselves loose from the imperialist orbit and make radical changes in their economic, social and political patterns, restricting the growth of indigenous capitalist forces, and so facilitating a march towards socialism without passing through a stage of full capitalist development.

The years 1963 and 1964 had alarmed the imperialists. In August 1963 the puppet government of Fulbert Youlou was overthrown in Congo (Brazzaville) by the mass action of the people, and a new popular government came to power. In October 1963 a widespread movement of the people helped to precipitate the fall of the reactionary government of Dahomey (through the military were able to step in and take over). A similar move of the people against the government of Gabon was thwarted when French paratroops reinstalled the unseated government. In January 1964 an armed people's uprising overthrew the government of Zanzibar. And in October 1964 the military regime of General Abboud was overthrown by a general strike and other mass actions by the people of Sudan, aided by inaction of the armed forces which, due to divided opinions hesitated to act.

Thus, in little more than twelve months, five unpopular governments had been overthrown. Only in one case, that of Gabon, which had been more in the nature of a coup from on top than a genuine wide movement of the people, had the imperialists been able to intervene openly to restore the status quo.

But that was not all. There had been a significant general strike in Nigeria, embracing nearly a million workers, followed a few months later by a political crisis in connection with the general election. The

Liberation Army in Guinea-Bissau, led by Amilcar Cabral and the PGAIC, had won important gains, liberating nearly two-fifths of the territory and winning international acclaim. In Angola, the MPLA had regrouped its forces and launched a new offensive. Armed struggle was openly begun by the national liberation movement, Frelimo, in Mozambique, in September 1964; and a week later the Sawaba Party announced that armed struggle was taking place against the government of Niger. Meanwhile guerrilla war was spreading in Congo (Kinshasa).

Imperialist Counter-Offensive

It was to halt these historic advances that the imperialists began their counter-offensive in Africa. Central to their intrigues was the parachute attack on Stanleyville, in the Congo, in November 1964. On February 19th, 1965 the *Tribune des Nations* revealed the intentions of the imperialists. The landing of the paratroops in Stanleyville, it wrote, was only part of Nato's strategic plan in Africa. The aim was "a much vaster intervention which would transcend the frontiers of the Congo." The months that followed certainly confirm such intentions. There were assassinations of progressive leaders; plots to overthrow popular governments; military action to intimidate governments; attempts to confuse and divide the people by beating the drum of anti-communism, and open drives in particular countries against the most consistently anti-imperialist and forward-looking leaders.

On January 15th, 1965, Pierre Ngendandumwe, Premier of Burundi, was assassinated—and the assassin turned out to be a former employee of the US Embassy in that state. In February 1965 three national leaders of Congo (Brazzaville) were kidnapped and later found murdered, their corpses shockingly mutilated. On February 24th, 1965, one of Kenya's outstanding national leaders, Pio Pinto, was assassinated by gunmen outside his house. It is rumoured that the names of other progressive leaders in Kenya, including Oginga Odinga, Achieng Oneko and Bildad Kaggia, were on the gunmen's list.

A few weeks later President Nyerere announced the discovery of an anti-Government plot in which, it was alleged, US Embassy officials had been involved. In Congo (Brazzaville) the deposed president, Youlou, was smuggled out of the country in preparation for a new plot to restore him to power. In Malawi, all the progressive ministers were forced out of the government or compelled to flee by the President, Dr. Hastings Banda, and the country fell back into almost open British control, with British officers running the army, police force, intelligence services, and with British officials guiding

all the ministries and other key departments of State.

During the same period, US planes attached to the Tshombe forces in the Congo attacked neighbouring Uganda and violated the frontiers of Sudan. In a strong statement to the Congo Government, the Uganda Prime Minister, Dr. Obote, openly accused the United States of complicity in the attacks. A few weeks later the Guinea Government was complaining of attacks across her frontiers by Portuguese troops from Guinea-Bissau.

So serious had the situation become that in an address to the Ghana Parliament on March 22nd, 1965, President Nkrumah declared that his government had "unmistakable evidence that plans are in an advanced state of preparation for the overthrow of the progressive government of the Congo (Brazzaville) and other states by certain powers." He also stated that he had had recent discussions with the president of Guinea, Mali and Algeria, during which they had agreed "to continue to maintain great vigilance against increasing penetration of imperialists and neo-colonialists in Africa."

Military Coups

Since that warning a series of military coups have taken place in Africa, and in February 1966, President Nkrumah himself was deposed by an armed coup while he was out of the country.

An outline of the main coups and upheavals in Africa since 1963 gives the following picture:

	1963	
January 13	Assassination of President Olympio of Togo by the military, who assumed temporary power until handing over to President Grunitzky.	January 20-24
August 12-15	Overthrow of President Youlou of Congo (Brazzaville) by a popular uprising, led by trade unions and accompanied by a general strike. The army refused to fire on the demonstrators. New popular government came to power.	February 18
October 19-28	General strike and demonstrations against President Maga of Dahomey. Coup d'état led by Colonel Soglo removed caretaker government. Colonel Soglo set up new government headed by Apithy, Maga and Ahomedegbe.	November 22
December 3	Attempted military coup in Niger failed to overthrow President Diori.	
	1964	
January 12	Popular armed uprising overthrew government of Zanzibar.	January 15
		March 1
		June 18
		November
		November 25
		November 29
		December 22
		1966
		January 1
		January 2-4
		January 15
		February 22
		February 24
		April 14

Military mutinies in Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda; soon brought under control.

Military group overthrew President Leon Mba of Gabon, who was restored by intervention of French paratroops.

Imperialist attack on Stanleyville and temporary defeat of popular forces.

1965

Assassination of Prime Minister of Burindi

Repression of progressive forces in Malawi.

President Ben Bella of Algeria deposed by military coup led by Houari Boumedienne, who is now President.

Anti-government plot uncovered in Guinea.

Military coup in Congo (Kinshasa) by Colonel Mobutu.

Army in Dahomey forced resignations of Chief of State, Apithy, and President of Council, Ahomedegbe.

Colonel Soglo took personal power in Dahomey.

Colonel Bokassa, Army Chief of Staff, overthrew President David Dacko of the Central African Republic.

Following demonstrations by trade unionists and the beginning of a general strike in the capital, Ouagadougou, Lt. Colonel Sangoule Lamizana, Army Chief of Staff of Upper Volta, deposed President Yameogo and assumed power.

Revolt of young officers in Nigeria. Federal Prime Minister and two Regional premiers killed. Major General Ironsi assumed power.

Deposition of President of Uganda by the Prime Minister, Milton Obote.

Military coup d'état led by Col. E. K. Kotoka seized power in Ghana while President Nkrumah was abroad. Gen. Ankrah became head of State.

Vice-President of Kenya, Oginga Odinga, forced to resign in general drive against left-wing leaders.

- May 23 Armed fighting between Uganda Government forces and the King of Buganda's forces. The king is forced to leave the country.
- June 28 Army mutiny in Congo (Brazzaville), soon brought under control.
- July 29 Second military coup in Nigeria. General Ironsi assassinated. New military government formed, headed by Colonel Gowon.
- November 29 King Ntare V deposed. Burundi declared a Republic, with Captain Micombero as head of State.

1967

- January 13 President Grunitsky of Togo deposed by military coup led by Lt. Colonel Eyadema, Chief of Staff. This followed unsuccessful revolt in November 1966, which was put down by the Army.
- January 24 Attempted military coup in Ghana, led by Lt. Owusu-Gyimah and Lt. Sulemana.
- March Plot to overthrow Government of Uganda uncovered.
- March 22 Martial law declared in Sierra Leone by Brigadier David Lansana. Detention of newly elected Prime Minister, Siaka Stevens.
- March 24 Overthrow of Brigadier Lansana in Sierra Leone by military officers. Political parties outlawed. Col. Juxon-Smith became Head of State.
- April 17 Lt. Col. Eyadema dissolved the government of Togo, and became President.
- April 17 Attempted military take-over in Ghana by junior officers, led by Lt. Arthur and Lt. Yeboah. Lt. Gen. Kotoka killed by the insurrectionists during the fighting.
- December 8-16 At the call of the trade unions widespread strikes took place in Dahomey.
- December 17 Military coup led by Commandants Kouandete and Kerekou deposed President Gen. Soglo of Dahomey.
- December 22 Col. Alley became Head of State of Dahomey, with Commandant Kouandete as President.

1968

- April 19 A revolt by junior officers in Sierra Leone overthrew the military Government of Col. Juxon-

Smith. Civilian rule was restored, and Siaka Stevens became Prime Minister.

- August 3 The army seized power in Congo (Brazzaville), under a coup led by Captain Ngouabi. President Massamba-Debat asked to form a new Government in consultation with the army.
- September 4 The Army deposed President Massamba-Debat.

From the above picture, revealing nearly 40 coups and attempted coups or government crises in six years, it is abundantly clear that the political situation in Africa is very unstable.

Understandably, therefore, a number of commentators have spoken about Africa "following the Latin American road"—the road of military coups and puppet governments, and constant changes of regime.

What is the reason for this situation? Why has the bright promise of Africa in 1960 turned into the recurrent crises of today? There are a number of factors which have to be taken into account, for this is no simple situation but one full of complexities and variations, which arise from the strivings of imperialism, the conflicts between the imperialist powers themselves, the early stage of development of the new African states, the specific features of their class structure, the new class alignments and shifts which have emerged in the post-independence period and the particular problem of tribalism. All these factors have a bearing on the situations in the different African states, on the character of the armies and the officers, and the role played by the different coups.

Aims of Imperialism

The first major factor which has to be taken into account is the aims of imperialism. Both the old colony-owning powers—Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal—as well as the new contenders for power in Africa—the United States, West Germany and latterly Japan—have aimed, in this post-war period to turn Africa into a source of new additional profits for themselves, striving to use the very breakdown of the old colonial system to rivet new, more indirect chains on the countries and their people and resources. Hundreds of millions of pounds from these powers have been invested, largely in mineral extraction and related industry, in banking, insurance and some fields of manufacture—but, with favourable conditions for exploitation, exceptional dividends have been paid and millions of pounds taken from Africa in the form of profits, based on the low wages of the African workers.

Huge trading monopolies from the West have

made additional millions by buying up, at a low price, the agricultural products produced by the African peasants. Further millions have been made by Western manufacturers selling their finished goods to the African people at relatively high prices, goods which are often made from African raw or semi-processed materials.

In general, it is essentially this pattern of economic relationship that the imperialists wish to maintain though some further development of light industry, processing and infra-structure is also being encouraged. It is obvious that some of the coups that have taken place in Africa help this purpose of the imperialists, but a closer examination shows that while a number of military take-overs were of obvious and specific help to them, not all were so directly of this character.

Categories of Coups

The coups tend to fall into several categories.

First, there have been the obvious moves to remove progressive governments. Such was the case with the military coup in Ghana in 1966. Similar unsuccessful attempts have been made also against the governments of Guinea, Mali, the United Arab Republic, and Tanzania.

Secondly, there have been cases in which left-wing leaders have been forced out by mainly political means, resulting in those more ready to collaborate with the imperialists gaining complete control. Such is the case, for example, with the political coups in Malawi (1965) and Kenya (1966). The *political* means in these cases have of course been backed by the military force of the state, but the armed forces have not themselves intervened or taken over.

Thirdly, there have been cases in which, *on the eve of* independence, more conservative elements have been assisted by imperialism to come to the top. This was the case with Niger as early as 1958; an attempt was made with Zanzibar at the end of 1963 (only to collapse a few weeks later when faced with armed uprising); more recently in Botswana and Lesotho (1965) British imperialism has helped traditional and conservative forces to assume control, and the same has been prepared for Swaziland. Here again, there has not been the direct assumption of control by the military, but nevertheless the full weight of the state power has been at the disposal of these working on behalf of imperialism.

Fourthly, there have been military coups not to crush a progressive government but to stop a move to the left either by removing a discredited reactionary government against which the masses were beginning to stir, or by preventing a more progressive government coming to power. This has largely been the case with the coups in Dahomey,

and Sierra Leone and, to some extent in Upper Volta.

Fifthly, there have been successive coups in Congo (Kinshasa), partly to be explained by the struggle of imperialism to hold the people back and install reactionary governments in power, but also conditioned by imperialist conflicts, especially that between the United States and the Anglo-Belgian grouping, the latter originally placing their reliance on Tshombe and the former on Col. Mobutu (though even this was complicated by the manoeuvres and shifts of different monopoly groupings within each imperialist country).

Sixthly, as was seen most clearly in the case of Nigeria, tribal conflicts have played their part and have naturally been utilised by the imperialists, although other factors are involved here, including the struggle of the people against feudal domination from the North and the efforts of the most politically advanced organisations to carry the country forward to a more pronounced anti-imperialist position.

In some cases elements of several of these characteristics are to be found. In a few, as in Togo, Gabon and the Central African Republic, the source of conflict and basis of the coup is not so immediately obvious, and would appear to arise more from the struggles between rival groups of African capitalists, with the added factor, as in Togo, of inter-imperialist rivalries.

Class Relations in Africa

No real understanding of these various developments is possible without a closer consideration of the class structures of African societies and the character of the class relations and conflicts which have arisen since independence.

In most of Africa, and especially tropical Africa, colonial rule so retarded and distorted economic growth that the formation of modern social classes—wage workers, capitalist employers and traders, wage-employed farmers, small-holders producing for the market, and intellectuals, professional workers and administrators—only really began in the past few decades and is still in progress.

The majority of Africa's rural population are not feudal peasants working for a landlord, but individuals working within the framework of a simple subsistence economy often only linked to a money economy when they periodically leave their little plot of land to take up wage labour in mines, railways, building and foreign owned farms and plantations.

The wage earning class is growing, and probably numbers some 20 millions out of 250 million. An intelligentsia and professional and administrative class, first created in a small way to facilitate colonial rule, has been growing considerably since inde-

pendence. Differentiation is also taking place in the countryside, with the emergence, especially since independence, of a class of African capitalist farmers, employing wage labour and beginning to use more modern techniques and machines. Many of these farmers are also engaged in commerce and speculation. In the towns Africans are establishing transport companies, entering the hotel and domestic business, buying land and selling it after development, opening shops and so on. In many countries in Africa, government and even Parliament has been a doorway to economic self-betterment, individuals, utilising their new positions to enrich themselves, entering on a path of bribery, corruption, embezzlement and nepotism. Thus has developed what Fanon has termed, with appropriate contempt, "a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it."

In the struggle for independence, all classes which found themselves frustrated by the colonial system—workers, peasants, traders, small employers, intellectuals, sometimes even chiefs—came together, and, in different forms and to varying degrees, worked for independence. In some cases this unity found expression within a single national party, like the Convention People's Party in Ghana, the Democratic Party of Guinea, the Tanganyika Africa National Union in Tanganyika, and so forth.

Classes after Independence

With independence won, however, a new stage commences. Different classes supported the struggle for independence for different aims. For the new bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces which emerged as the Governments and rulers of many of the new states, the aim was usually the limited one of enriching themselves. Only in a few cases were the new States headed by democrats and patriots whose main concern was the welfare of their own people and not themselves. Consequently, in varying forms, class struggle between different social forces in Africa has emerged as a strong factor in the post-independence period. Workers and peasants who expected independence to bring them a new life and not just a national flag and anthem, with an African Prime Minister and President, are becoming restless. Their expectations have not been fulfilled—and meanwhile they see their new rulers in large cars and rich clothes, opening up new businesses, travelling abroad like emperors, salting their fortunes away in foreign banks, while thousands are without jobs, with poor homes, ill-clad and underfed. All this was clear, for example, in the massive general strike which shook Nigeria in 1964, and in the Dahomey general strike of December 1967.

Conflicts have also sharpened between different groups of the ruling circles themselves. In most cases the new bourgeois groupings have not yet reached a stage where they can be considered a complete homogeneous capitalist class. Rather, they are often rival cliques, sometimes but not always linked to tribal allegiances, and these conflicting groups vie with one another in their pursuit of the gains that can come from political domination.

These corrupt forces rely on imperialist backing—and the imperialists are naturally always prepared to use such miserable careerists and climbers. Sometimes, different imperialist powers are behind different ruling groups. This, too, increases the instability of these regimes, and facilitates the carrying through of coups d'état.

The Hand of Imperialism

The hand of the imperialists is not always immediately obvious in these coups, but clearly the CIA, the British and French intelligence services, as well as those of West Germany, have been working overtime in Africa. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to advance a kind of "theory of conspiracy" as the sole explanation of the reverses that have taken place in Africa in recent years, or foreign intelligence forces as the sole hand behind the coups.

There have certainly been plots organised by the CIA, and the intelligence services of other western powers, and it would clearly be unwise to underestimate the activities of such bodies; at the same time, it should be borne in mind that these agencies can only operate within certain given conditions. They cannot remove a government unless they have something to install in its place; and those who are hoisted into power in this way, even when they govern by absolute terror and repression, need to base themselves on specific social forces. The intelligence agencies of the west have for many years been actively engaged in plotting against the socialist countries, and if they have scored no striking successes here, it is largely because certain strata and classes (i.e. landlords and capitalists, together with petty bourgeois sections allied to these circles) no longer exist as social classes, or have been greatly diminished and are firmly controlled by the state apparatus led by a revolutionary party.

In the new states of Africa, however, there are internal forces with which neo-colonialism can come to terms. Feudal landlords anxious to maintain or regain their former economic status and privileged position in society; traders and speculators who fear the advent of socialism and wish to continue as middlemen of the big international monopolies; sections of the new élite, bribed and corrupted, in a hurry to grow rich from the fruits of

office before the undernourished millions demand a reckoning; all the hangers-on of capitalism, the career boys and diplomats, the police chiefs and generals; all the nauseating imitators of the most parasitical classes in the west. It is through these social forces that the western powers strive to extend their influence in the African states, and it is an essential aim of neo-colonialism to nurture and mould such strata.

Armies in Africa

The role of the armies in Africa is of particular importance. Under colonialism, these armies were never entirely safe for the imperialists. As early as 1895 and 1897, there were mutinies of African troops in the Congo, and a revolt by Sudanese troops in Uganda in 1897. After the first world war, in which thousands of African soldiers fought outside their homelands, the returned soldiers were often a centre of discontent with colonial rule. After the second world war this was even more clearly to be seen. "Things will never be quite the same again" complained a special report on the returned African soldiers, submitted to the Governor of Kenya in April 1946. This report described mass meetings of 10,000 ex-soldiers being held to voice their protests about working conditions. Such open displays of dissatisfaction were not limited to Kenya. In February 1944, members of the Congolese armed forces mutinied at Luluabourg Barracks; In February 1948, ex-servicemen demonstrating in a procession in Accra, Ghana, were fired on by the police, and several were killed; and in 1951, Nigerian ex-servicemen seized the town of Umahia and held it for several days as a form of protest.

Basically, however, whatever may have been the spirit of revolt of some of the rank and file men in periods of unrest, these armies were thoroughly indoctrinated with the colonialist spirit, were used to crush anti-colonialist revolts, to fire on strikers, and generally to do the dirty work for their imperial masters.

In the post-1945 period, and especially in the past ten years, the Western powers have taken special steps to try and influence the armies of Africa and to nurture troops and especially officers who would co-operate with imperialism. The majority of independent States of Africa have tended to send their officers for training to the military schools of the United States, Britain, France and West Germany—and to draw their instructors from these countries. Reports in 1964 showed 1,500 Africans receiving military training in France and 700 in Britain. It has been estimated that one-sixth of Ghana's officer corps were trained at Sandhurst. A number of African officers are also being trained at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in the United States. Apart

from the military aspects of this training, which is directed to fitting in with the strategic aims of the Western powers for future conflicts with socialist countries as well as to hold down national liberation movements, the officers receive during their course of instruction a certain ideological training and moulding which makes them more ready material for use on behalf of the neo-colonialist manoeuvres of the Western powers. In Sandhurst and Camberley in Britain, in St. Cyr in France, in Fort Bragg and other military academies in the US, an opportunity is provided to the imperialists to make the acquaintances of the military leaders or future leaders of the new states. In this way, they are able to sort out the sheep from the goats, to select those who are most likely to prove corruptible and pliable. It is no accident that in most cases the reactionary military groups which have come to power in recent years in Africa have been composed mainly of personnel trained in Western military academies.

Sandhurst Mentality

A typical example is Col. A. A. Afrifa, one of the leaders of the coup d'état in Ghana. In his autobiography he reveals how, at Sandhurst he became a loyal supporter of imperialism, completely caught up by the "mystique" of the Commonwealth and won over by the flattering treatment he was given during his training in Britain. Thoroughly taken with the fact that he trained alongside "lords and princes," he declares: "I have been trained in the United Kingdom as a soldier, and I am ever prepared to fight alongside my friends in the United Kingdom . . . How could we be friends belonging to the Commonwealth and stay out in time of Commonwealth adversity, and when this great Union is in danger?" Thus does neo-colonialism seek out and mould its men.

Once trained, these officers are kept in touch with Western influences through the body of advisers, arms instructors and so on who are sent to the new African states as part of technical aid schemes, military agreements, alliances etc.

Figures for 1964 showed 3,000 officers and NCO's seconded from the French Army or contracted to train and advise the armed forces of the African states. From Britain, some 600 officers and NCO's were similarly engaged. A 1966 estimate of the number of American military personnel serving in Military Assistance and Aid Groups in Africa was 250. Understandably, as the Western military expert, W. Gutteridge, has commented, "the armies of new states tend to retain their colonial flavour, their foreign advisers and their affinity with Europe longer than do the civilian public services."

The Western powers also wield military influence by means of the presence of their troops in some

African countries, the establishment of military treaties, and the use of bases.

Western trained African officers are not all corrupt; and not all are prepared to be pawns of neo-colonialism, but there are sufficient to fulfil the purposes of those who strive all the time to keep the African countries tied to the skirts of imperialism. From a class point of view, the officers are of mixed social origin. Some are the sons of Chiefs, some are from families of rich farmers or traders, but some come from more humble positions. Within modern Africa, however, when class formation is taking place rapidly, and when the movement from one step in the social ladder to another is being climbed quickly by the most ambitious men, origins are not always as important as intentions.

The armies themselves, by Western standards, are pitifully small. Since independence, they have been somewhat enlarged, but still remain very modest. Zambia has about 3,000 soldiers, Tanzania and Uganda about 2,000 each, the Ivory Coast some 4,000 and Ghana about 9,000. Some of the French-speaking states have less than 1,000 troops. Even Nigeria, with 50 million people, has an armed force of less than 10,000. African states with larger armies are the UAR, Algeria (where the army was based on the anti-colonial forces created during the war for liberation), Congo (Kinshasa), the nucleus of whose army (35,000) was the reactionary Force Publique, trained and officered by the Belgians to become later the tool of those who murdered Patrice Lumumba, and Ethiopia, whose army of 35,000 is largely trained by US officers. Most African armies are very weak in armour and have limited air forces.

Danger Persists

Though weak in themselves, these armies can nevertheless play a key role in the African states since they are often the most—and sometimes the only—organised force capable of taking decisive action. In many African countries the big national parties which helped to build mass support for the struggle against colonial rule start to run down after independence. Their leaders become members of Parliament, Government ministers, heads of departments in the State apparatus, and so on. The party branches cease to function effectively. The party, in effect, grinds to a halt, usually retaining its character as a movement of support for the leaders, but with no effective machinery for organising or acting quickly in a crisis.

In such conditions, it is relatively easy for a small but determined group of officers to march its men to a few key points in the capital and take over power from political leaders who have no other

machinery to oppose them, and no organised political party which can be called on to rally resistance to the putchists.

What adds to the danger to the African states is the aim of the imperialists, in alliance with the white settler governments of South Africa and Rhodesia, and the collaboration of Portugal, to hold on to the whole of southern Africa and use it as a base to conspire against the independent states to the north. Alongside the steps to absorb Malawi, Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland, go the threats to Tanzania and Zambia, two states which stand in particular danger today.

Revolutionary Organisations Needed

The era of military coups in Africa is by no means over. As already explained, the general political and economic situation in most African states is very unstable, and the striving of the imperialists, coming into clash with the growing discontent of the people, can produce further critical situations in a number of countries.

As regards the small group of more advanced African states, they, too, are not yet out of the wood. Generally, they are states with small populations, not economically strong, and faced with very complex economic and political problems. They are finding, in practice, the need to develop their political organisation to meet the new conditions. The big mass national parties that were able to help win independence are not suited for the new phase, which requires vanguard parties with a firmer and more clear ideology, and a socialist perspective. In short, the new situation requires the creation of revolutionary organisations. These may emerge from the existing political parties which generally have a mixed class basis.

Revolutionary organisation will also assist in creating a stronger revolutionary state and armed forces, dedicated to the purpose of defending national independence and opposing imperialism in all its forms.

It is significant that in Guinea, the leadership of the Democratic Party reacted to the coup against President Nkrumah by deciding to establish a workers' and peasants' militia to defend the country and the State. In the UAR reactionary officers who, in last year's fighting and since have proved themselves to be irresolute, out of tune with the aims of the Government and people, or even ready to serve imperialist interests, have been purged from the armed forces.

Alongside the economic, political and military changes that the advanced African states will need to make in order to uproot imperialism com-

pletely, they will need, too, co-operation from one another, and the solidarity of the progressive forces throughout the world.

In the other African states, most leaders of which tend to act as neo-colonialist puppets, there will be sharper clashes in the future leading to the overthrow of such governments so that the people can embark on a real road of radical economic and social change. In those states still under white minority rule—Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, South West

Africa, Rhodesia and South Africa—the perspective is one of growing armed conflict and the eventual defeat of the oppressors. All these three phases of struggle are intertwined and represent three aspects of a common problem—the battle to end imperialist exploitation of Africa and open the way to socialism.

Africa is now entering what is, in many ways, the most decisive stage of her battle for liberation. She needs, and must receive, in the most diverse forms, the utmost solidarity of the rest of the world.