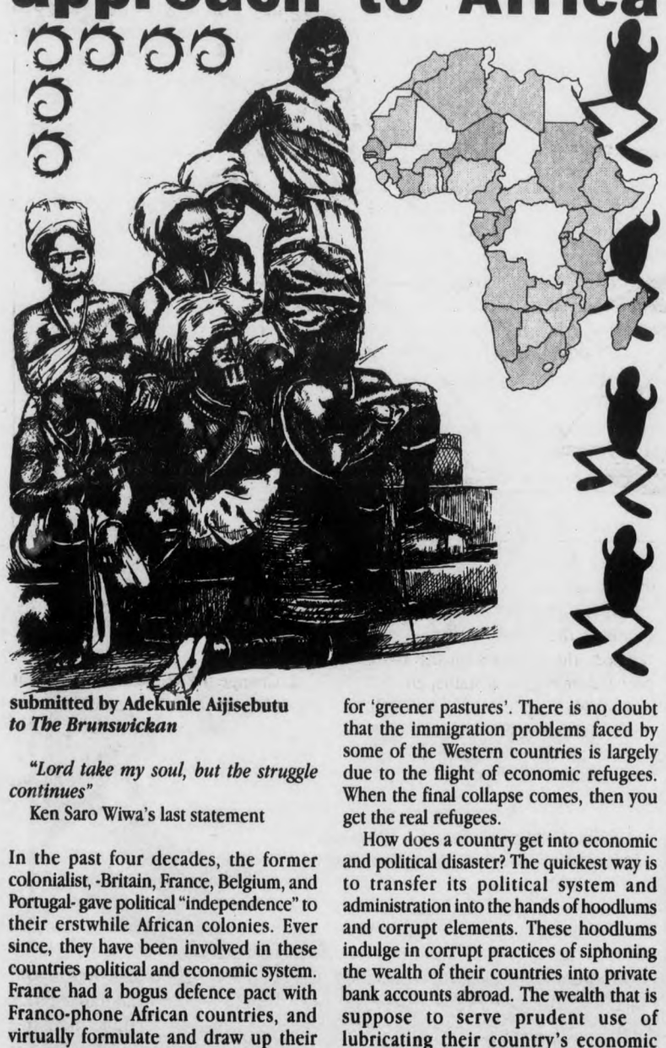
SPECTRUM

It's time for a new approach to Africa



submitted by Adekunle Aijisebutu
to The Brunswickan

"Lord take my soul, but the struggle continues"
Ken Saro Wiwa's last statement

In the past four decades, the former colonialist, -Britain, France, Belgium, and Portugal- gave political "independence" to their erstwhile African colonies. Ever since, they have been involved in these countries political and economic system. France had a bogus defence pact with Franco-phone African countries, and virtually formulate and draw up their annual economic plans and budgets. These political intervention and influence had been to ensure a continued dominance over the political and economic affairs of these countries with the goal of gaining access to their abundant natural resources and wealth.

To attain the objective of imposing your will on a people whom you have no direct control either through physical presence or political arrangement, you need to use some of them. In essence, you need an 'agent or client government' to run their affairs to your whims and caprices. The attainment of this goal that has resulted in imposition of corrupt, brute, and despotic "leaders" on these countries. Apparently, you cannot find a person with sense of worth and country, dignity and integrity to run an agenda inimical to his/her country's national interest. It is the attainment of this dubious goal was made possible partly by GREED of a member of the political class, endemic tribalism, and FEAR.

Why am I writing this essay? My goal is to tell the former colonialist and their allies, the Multinational Corporations (for whom the goal of access to cheap resources and market was designed) that the approach to Africa has to change. The current approach which was more prevalent during the cold war, does not pay both sides. Both the African countries and the West lose from it. The West being the big loser. There is no doubt that there are short term gains. These gains are eroded through the long term debilitating effect of political and economic chaos that come in the wake of many years of corrupt and irresponsible leadership, that eventually result in wars, human carnage, mass emigration, to mention a few.

When a country's economy collapses it moves from political agitation, to break down of law and order, and war sometimes becomes inevitable. This situation destroies capitalism: The market. Markets become dead and take many years to resuscitate themselves. In addition to destruction of markets, you have immigration dilemma. This dilemma starts before the final collapse. As the economy disintegrates, the educated population of these countries leave in droves to search for 'greener pastures'. There is no doubt that the immigration problems faced by some of the Western countries is largely due to the flight of economic refugees. When the final collapse comes, then you get the real refugees.

How does a country get into economic and political disaster? The quickest way is to transfer its political system and administration into the hands of hoodlums and corrupt elements. These hoodlums indulge in corrupt practices of siphoning the wealth of their countries into private bank accounts abroad. The wealth that is suppose to serve prudent use of lubricating their country's economic engine and growth through provision of infrastructures (supply side economics), education (development of human capital) and even distribution of wealth to allow a wider participation in economic activities. When you expand the size of participants in the economic process you create a bigger multiplier effect that transcends beyond the country. A healthy economy engages not only the local economic participants, but the World economy.

There has to be another approach towards Africa. The type that will open the door for true and honest relationships between it and the former colonial masters and MNCs. The type that will allow the glory of capitalism to shine. Africa is a fertile and appropriate land for the seed of capitalism to blossom and grow. It is time to cultivate and develop a working relationship with the progressive elements in that continent. Those that will put its enormous wealth to judicious use by creating the appropriate environment for business: construction of infrastructural facilities, education, productive and disciplined work force, and appropriate work ethic. Corrupt leaders lack the vision and moral capital to attain these enormous task. The money they stack away in Swiss Bank is just paper money. It does not help the economy of the West and further escalates the political climate in their countries. At the end of the day, their countries become a burden to the World. The West and multinational corporations bear the loss through loss of market and waste of money on aid.

The World can no longer afford the man made carnage and human suffering that besiege this continent. It is time for this gigantic continent to be part of the World economic growth and development, and it cannot attain this under regime of terror and corruption. It's time to deliver it from the cancerous products of the cold war who now parade themselves as leaders.

I hereby appeal to leaders of the West to dislodge these corrupt leaders and open a new era that will create a long term benefit for the people of Africa, Africa as a continent, and the World at large.

Finally, I believe Canada has the moral authority to lead this initiative.

Metanoia
by John Valk

Decent Proposal

Counsellors of all stripes tell us that financial pressures place great strain on relationships, especially marriages. The prospect of losing what one, has often creates desperation. And, because desperate times lead to desperate measures, the quick fix is quickly sought.

We fall for the quick fix. It is sought for the unwanted pregnacy, only to create more emotional and physical trauma. Lotteries and video gambling become a quick fix for financial woes, only to further destroy what one already has. Making a pact with the devil, as Mephistopheles discovered, has dire consequences.

So we learn from the movie *Indecent Proposal*. Diane (Demi Moore) and David (Woody Hasselman) have a solid marriage. An economic downturn threatens their dream possession: a seaside property. Desperate, they gamble away (Las Vegas style) their last money. Then they gamble their marriage.

Billionaire John Gage (Robert Redford), living in a world where everything is bought including people, offers them financial security: one million dollars in exchange for one night with Diane. Can financial security be attained so easily, without consequences? Can their solid relationship withstand this one night? Both recognize the difference between (having) sex and (making) love: sex is physical, love impacts the emotions and the mind. Both bank on stored trust. Both come to learn a powerful lesson, but the price is enormous.

"Desperate, they gamble away their last money. Then they gamble their marriage."

Jealousy, mistrust and suspicion soon accompany every move, motive and action between Diane and David after the "night of exchange." The relationship deteriorates quickly. The million dollars is despised. Nothing has been gained, and most everything lost. Why does the relationship breakdown?

Integrity and fidelity are never frivolous. Gambling them has huge costs. Sexual fidelity between partners, something our modern culture trivializes, is the highest form of commitment. Sexual intimacy is the deepest of human intimacy and vulnerability. It demands commitment and trust. That trust, which takes years to build, and is vital for two people to grow and florish, can be broken in an instant.

Trust, once broken, can, however, be re-established. It comes not by partners forgetting what happened. It comes rather, as David discovered, by partners forgiving what happened. Diane came to recognize that love has more to offer than money.

Past deeds cannot be changed, but the present can. The first step is the forgiving. That would be a more decent proposal.

The Left Jab

But You Can't Change Human Nature
by Nik Carrier

So what is the most common objection to the vision of socialism? 'Socialism will never work, you can't change human nature.'

Before answering this point directly, it's worth noting just *how* this argument is used. Whenever conservatives are confronted with protests against exploitation and oppression, they always turn to the human nature argument. War? Well it's human nature to fight. Racism? It's human nature to fear 'outsiders' and people who are 'different' The oppression of women? Human nature again: men and women are 'naturally different'.

Slavery, too, was once supposed to be a product of human nature. It was the nature of blacks, it was said, to be slaves. The same with feudalism, and usually God was brought into back up the argument. Remember the words of the hymn:

The rich man in his castle
The poor man at his gate
God made them high and lowly
And ordered their estate.

It was the God-given nature of some people to be lords and others to be serfs. 'Human nature', God-given or otherwise, has always been the favourite alibi of the oppressors.

But what is this unchanging human nature supposed to be? Clearly human beings do have certain more or less fixed and permanent needs. To survive at all they need air, food, drink, shelter, etc. They also have sexual and emotional needs. To live humanly, rather than just exist, they need social contact, affection, love and a measure of freedom. However none of these features of human nature will cause the slightest problems for socialism. On the contrary, socialism will meet these permanent human needs immeasurably better than capitalism or any other previous form of society.

But of course this is not what people mean when they bring up the question of human nature. They mean that human beings are 'naturally' selfish and greedy and this will make a society of solidarity and equality impossible.

Again it is important to know the source of this idea. It comes from the Christian doctrine of original sin and has no scientific basis whatsoever. In fact even in our present society it's not difficult to observe numerous acts of kindness, generosity and self-sacrifice which would be impossible if people were selfish by nature. But under capitalism these features of the human personality are obscured because a society based on production for profit encourages greed, indeed demands it, at every turn.

More generally, the point is that it is the material social conditions in which people live that shape their personality and behaviour. As Marx put it, human nature is nothing but 'the ensemble of social relations'. The proof of this is seen in the enormous differences in what people in different societies have thought of as 'natural'. To the American Indian, private ownership of land was 'unnatural'. To the 18th-century landowner it was the most basic human right. To the Ancient Greeks, homosexuality was the highest form of love. To the Victorian Englishman it was the lowest. To the traditional Hindu, arranged marriage has been the norm for centuries. To most Westerners it now seems 'unnatural'. Change the social conditions and you change human nature'.

Even more important is Marx's point that it is not just that changed circumstances produce changed people, but that people change in the process of changing their circumstances. You can see this in an ordinary strike. Most strikes begin because workers want more money. But as the strike goes on, feelings of solidarity and collective pride often grow and become just as important as the original issue.

Revolution is a strike writ large. In a revolution millions of people stand up for the first time and take control of their society. Their 'human nature' will grow accordingly. 'Revolution is necessary', wrote Marx, 'not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.'

If anyone is interested in discussing this or other relevant issues, please contact Chris at 454-9233. This week's meeting of the UNB Socialists' club is entitled "Truth Behind McKenna's Economic Miracle" and is held on Tuesday, November 28 in Room 109 of MacLaggan Hall.

WOMYN

"Once you live with the issue of women in the landscape for a while, you find that you cannot separate them from the notions of peace, spirituality, and community. As women, we must learn to become leaders in society, not just for our own sake, but for the sake of all people. We must support and protect our kinship with the environment for the generations to come."

China Gallant