

Africa's One Party Systems

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AT the moment, in many African states one-party systems are coming into being. It is important to emphasise, at the outset of this article, that *there is a considerable variety between these one-party states*. In some cases, the single party represents feudal and compradore bourgeois domination, pursuing a policy of compromise with imperialism; in other cases, it represents the domination of the right-wing national bourgeoisie which still has points of conflict with imperialism, but which has established its one-party systems by suppressing the parties of the working class and the left. In yet other cases, however, it represents a progressive coalition of forces under the leadership of the left-wing national bourgeoisie or the patriotic intelligentsia, and in which the working class is able to exercise a considerable influence.

These developments have naturally given rise to widespread discussion and have become the subject of some of the most important and most controversial arguments now taking place in Africa.

Why have these one-party systems arisen in Africa? Are they a help or a hindrance to Africa's progressive development? What are the theories put forward to explain their appearance on the political scene? How do their supporters

justify these systems? Can such systems be politically stable?

The remarks which follow in the ensuing sections of this article are concerned mainly with the mass single parties which have emerged as an expression of the national liberation struggle, rather than with the single party systems which have been established by terror and which represent a narrow ruling section of the population, propped up by imperialist finance and foreign arms.

Parties Embracing the Whole National Movement

All political parties are related to social classes, sometimes representing a section of a class, sometimes a class as a whole, sometimes a coalition of class forces. Thus, in some countries, it is not uncommon to have Workers' parties, or Peasants' parties, or Smallholders' parties. Normally, however, while the working class is not afraid of showing its class face in the name of its party, the big employers and landowners prefer to conceal the class basis of their party. We know of no political party named the Big Employers' Party, or the Party of Monopolies, or the Feudal Landlords' party. Instead we have the British Conservative Party, the Italian Liberal Party and

Christian Democrat Party, the American Republican and Democrat parties, and so on.

Whatever may be the *names* of political parties, they are all founded on the class realities of the society in which they arise. When one comes to examine the political parties in Africa, however, one is faced with a different problem than that of political organisations in the clearly divided class societies of industrialised Europe. This is particularly true of the new African states which have emerged in West, Central and Eastern Africa.¹

In a whole number of independent African states today (and this applies, too, to a number of African territories which have not yet won their independence), the political scene is dominated by one mass party which embraces not just the most politically conscious sections of the people but the whole national movement. This is true, for example, of the Convention People's Party in Ghana, the People's Democratic Party in Guinea, the Union Soudanaise in Mali, and the Tanganyika Africa National Union in Tanganyika. In some countries, for example, Uganda, Northern Rhodesia, and Kenya, one party is overwhelmingly dominant, but imperialist manoeuvres and tribalism have given rise to minor parties which, for a time, will continue to exist, though they seem fated to decline as the fight for independence is carried forward and their role becomes fully exposed.

Julius Nyerere, the President of Tanganyika, argues in his interesting thesis on *The One Party System*, that the major political parties in most African states have a different origin to the class parties in Europe or America. These African parties, says Nyerere "were formed to challenge the foreigners who ruled over us. They were not, therefore, political 'parties'—i.e. factions—but nationalist movements. And from the outset they

¹ Northern Africa—Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia—though part of the single African continent with which it has much in common, contains societies which have important structural differences from those in the rest of Africa. In brief, this region experienced a more complete development of feudalism; the growth of indigenous capitalism too, was more marked. Thus class formation, generally speaking, has developed rather more in North Africa than in the rest of the continent. In consequence, the one-party systems in North Africa present a number of problems which are not present in many other African states. It is important to note that in all four of these North African states the working class formed their own independent class parties, Communist Parties; and that in all four cases these Parties have been declared illegal by the Government of these independent states. The only other clearly established Marxist-Leninist parties in Africa are the P.A.I. (Party of African Independence) in Senegal and the Communist Party of South Africa (both of which are illegal), and the new Communist Party of Basutoland.

represented the interests and aspirations of the whole nation." Of course, the fact that these parties embrace millions of people, sometimes right down to the children in the villages, should not hide from us the fact that they represent class interests, too. They include workers and peasants, intellectuals, artisans and petty bourgeois sections, the national bourgeoisie and even some semi-feudal chiefs. Colonial oppression bears heavily on all these classes. They all suffer from the economic exploitation and political repression which is the essence of the colonial system. And, through the daily indignities they have suffered at the hands of their colonial oppressors, they have all become equally aware of the racial oppression which is part and parcel of colonialism.

As a recent article in *The African Communist* points out: "Although many of the mass parties in Africa are under bourgeois leadership, they are not typical 'capitalist' parties in the sense that we have come to know such parties in Europe and North America. The African mass parties, besides reflecting the interests of certain local capitalists, also express the interests of the workers, peasants and intellectuals, in the common struggle of all these classes against their common enemy—imperialism." ("The One Party State in Africa" by B. Pela: *The African Communist*: April-June, 1963: Vol. 2, No. 3).

Thus all the patriotic, anti-colonial classes in African society come together and unite around the common aim of overthrowing the rule of the colonial power. It is the common experience, the common suffering, which drives all these class forces to merge their strength in one mass organisation, in a single national party. And it is the common experience that the utmost unity of their forces is required to defeat colonialism which results in the building up of these mass parties and the deep hostility felt towards any person or group which seems to break away from or be in opposition to that anti-colonial unity, that united national front of the people against colonialism.

Class Structure of Africa

It has to be borne in mind that present-day Africa presents a class and social structure markedly different from that existing in the advanced capitalist countries. Elements of all pre-socialist forms of society are present in Africa.

Strong survivals of *primitive communism* are to be seen in the strong solidarity of members of the same social unit on the level of the patriarchal family, the clan, or the village, and in the absence of private ownership in the traditional systems of land tenure.

Patriarchal slavery, in which the slave is the collective property of the patriarchal family not of the individual, still exists in many parts of Africa. (The fundamental cell of pre-colonial society in Africa was that of the patriarchal or extended family, a grouping of people related through either the male or the female line, which formed an economic unit and worked a particular piece of land under the direction of the patriarch, that is, the oldest man. This form of society developed directly out of primitive communism).

From the patriarchal society emerged *elementary forms of feudalism*, in which privileges or duties applied to the clan as a whole or to the extended family. Relations of subordination varied, from place to place, ranging from patronage to real serfdom. These forms did not arise everywhere, nor always to the same degree. There were numerous varieties and stages of transition. The impact of the European slave trade, and then of the modern colonial system, led to a certain modification of these forms of elementary feudalism, to the beginnings of the decomposition of the patriarchal community and sometimes to its complete dissolution. Over most of Africa, however, elementary forms of feudalism still exist.

Side by side with the continuation of the patriarchal community as an economic reality within the traditional subsistence economy, there has arisen a class of individual farmers, some of them rich enough to employ and exploit African wage labour. Indigenous *African capitalism* is also found in trade and commerce, in transport, hotels, and small-scale production. The effect of sixty years of imperialist rule has been to draw African society into commodity production and the money economy of imperialism. This has led to the birth of modern classes—*capitalists, cash-crop farmers, urban petty-bourgeoisie, and workers*, the latter being employed by foreign monopoly firms or by governments (originally colonialist ones).

Of course, no single African state reveals a simplified structure as indicated above. There are gradations and variations; in some territories feudalism is more powerful and has passed beyond the stage of "elementary feudalism". In some cases, an African capitalist class scarcely exists. In others, it is beginning to grow fast, though still relatively weak. But everywhere, without exception and notwithstanding the differences, class formation is taking place. The old society is in a process of dying away and the new society is coming into being. Peasants are becoming workers, their brothers (or sisters) are becoming traders, their sons intellectuals; and from the ranks of the richer peasants, the new intelligentsia and the

more powerful chiefs are arising a new bourgeoisie. In this period of social change, with new, modern class forces being rapidly developed, there is great mobility between classes and not yet a fully stratified, class society as, for example, in Britain. Class consciousness, too, is not yet developed. Often tribal sentiment is a far stronger motive force.

Under such conditions, it is, perhaps, not surprising that mass national parties should arise at this stage in Africa rather than specific, clearly defined class parties.²

Against Tribalism

The need to defeat tribalism has been an additional factor influencing national leaders to strive to unite the whole people under the umbrella of the single mass party. Tribalism has frequently been denounced by African leaders and by the people's organisations, such as the All-African People's Conference, as a major danger to the cause of African independence and progress. Tribalism has played havoc in the Congo. It has brought deep divisions into the national liberation struggle in the Cameroons. It threatens to disrupt the liberation movement in Angola. It weakens unity in Nigeria. It is a fester in Northern Rhodesia. And it has been turned by British imperialism into a major menace in Kenya. For these reasons national leaders such as Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, and Sekou Touré have found it necessary to emphasise repeatedly the importance of upholding national unity and avoiding the dangers of tribalism; and they have backed their words with actions designed to weaken the power of chiefs from whom the danger of tribalism can stem.

Thus there are clearly historical reasons which explain the emergence of mass national parties in Africa, parties which command the support of the overwhelming majority of the people, which are backed by all the progressive forces in society, and which are an expression of the people's united fight against colonialism and for independence.

Theoretical Conceptions

But this is really only the beginning of the argument, for what has provoked the widespread

² The more than 40 years' existence of a Communist Party in South Africa is due to a number of special features, the main of which is that the Republic of South Africa is the most industrialised country in Africa. Consequently it has a considerable African working class (composed not only of casual migrant labour, but also of semi-skilled and even skilled workers). This working class has, to a considerable extent, become urbanised and stable as a proletariat and has, in consequence, largely broken with tribal backwardness.

discussion in Africa is not simply that all the patriotic forces in society have combined in order to win independence, but that *after* the winning of independence and the establishment of new African states and governments, the overwhelming dominance of one party remains and it very rapidly becomes the only political party in the given country, often as a result of specific legislation formally outlawing other parties or laying down the one-party system as an essential part of the governmental and state structure.

The emergence of these systems and the discussion on them has led to the writing of articles and theses by African leaders in which the theoretical conceptions behind these African one-party systems are expounded. These conceptions, developed particularly in the writings of Julius Nyerere (Tanganyika), Kofi Baako (Ghana), Madeira Keita (Mali), and Ndabaningi Sithole (Southern Rhodesia), deserve to be better known outside Africa than they appear to be. These African leaders submit the traditional bourgeois parliamentary systems to close scrutiny, and with cogent and frequently ironical argument, deliver devastating blows at liberal and Westminster conceptions of party politics. Julius Nyerere, for example, rightly draws attention to the hypocrisy of the two-party system of "ins" and "outs" practised in the West, referring to it as "football politics", since the differences between the main parties are not, he stresses, really fundamental ones. If the differences were fundamental, he points out, then it would be time for a fundamental change, and "change" in that context is a euphemism, because any change in fundamentals is properly termed 'revolution'. But once the revolution has been accomplished, whether by armed insurrection or the ballot box, then what is the point, he argues, in returning to the two-party system. If it is only to return to arguments on non-essential matters, this "must inevitably involve the hypocrisy of 'football politics'—with the government of a nation as the 'Football Cup'."

The experience of the African people in their fight for independence, and their perceptive understanding of the sham character of the rivalries between the bourgeois parties in the Western parliamentary systems, has taught them that there is nothing sacred about the two-party system.

Moreover, they feel very strongly that the tasks facing the new States after their achievement of independence are so immense that nothing short of the total mobilisation of the united people is needed. And this involvement of the whole people in actively working to revolutionise their lives, they argue, is the real basis and content of de-

mocracy. In order to secure the united effort of the whole people—and to combat both tribalism and the divisive activities of neo-colonialism—the retention or introduction of the one-party system is thought to be the most suitable. Anything which seems to cut across the people's united striving for a better life is seen at best as a luxury, at worst as deliberate treachery. The experience of Ghana, for example, seems to show that in the harsh conditions of a new state fighting its way forward to end colonialism in all its forms, an official Opposition can very quickly become a dangerous breeding ground and gathering centre for all the reactionary, backward-looking, self-seeking elements in the society and can thus constitute a basis for neo-colonialist plots against the Government.

The people of Africa, therefore, have no special love for the "Westminster model" with its official Opposition. As Ndabaningi Sithole has stressed:

" . . . the Opposition may only be African in appearance but European in fact. The Opposition may have its remote controls in London, Washington, D.C. or Paris."

(*The Voice of Africa*: September, 1961)

Some African leaders are careful to point out that there is no special virtue in a one-party system either. Sithole warns: "Neither it nor the two-party system can guarantee democracy to the peoples of Africa and to the peoples of the world. The two-party system may be European imperialism's gateway to African countries, and, equally so, the one-party system may be dictatorship's first eggs in Africa." It is, he stresses, "*not the form but the content that counts.*" And the essential content, he stresses, which determines the character of the system is "the will of the majority."

Madeira Keita, in warning that "the system of a single party is not without its dangers", emphasises in similar fashion to Sithole that "Democracy is the management of public interests in accordance with the will of the masses, the will of the greatest number."

Pre-Colonial Africa

The dangers of the one-party system in Africa are real, indeed, as the past three years have shown only too well. Before, however, we examine these dangers, it is necessary to look at one other element in the discussion on one-party systems now taking place in Africa, and that is the relation of the modern one-party systems to traditional African pre-colonial society.

In his work, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938), Jomo Kenyatta writes:

"The starting point was the family unit. From the governmental point of view members of one

family group were considered as forming a family council (*ndundu ya mocii*) with the father as the president. The father represented the family group in the government. The next group was the village council (*kiama gia itura*) composed of the heads of several families in the village. The senior elder acted as the president of the council and this group represented the villagers in the government. . . . ”

And so the structure of primitive democracy was built up to the district council (*kiama kia rugongo*) in which all the elders participated. Over this council there was a presiding committee (*kiama kia ndundu*) composed of the senior elders of the villages. The senior elder who was most advanced in age and wisdom was elected as judge and president of this presiding district committee. From the district councils a national council was formed, which represented the whole population.

From Kenyatta's description of the pre-colonial life of the Kikuyu people it is clear that from the family unit or patriarchal family upwards, the people were represented in their governing bodies as a united people. There was a relatively simple structure; class society was in its early development; there were no political parties; a separate state apparatus had not yet emerged. Although within this form of society public matters were resolved by widespread discussion, it was, in essence, a patriarchal society in which the elders held a privileged position.

Kofi Baako, Ghana's Minister of Defence, writes:

“In the society which existed before the impact of Western Civilisation the members of this society regarded themselves as a family led by one man and assisted by a council, the members of which represented not class, economic or social, but lineages; matters affecting the welfare of the community as a whole were openly discussed by the chief and his elders and decisions taken were always made known to the entire community. If any person or persons disagreed with the decisions they made known their views to their representative elders, who in turn discussed those matters at their daily meetings.”

(*The Spark*: March 15, 1963)

Here, too, from Ghana, in Western Africa, where the form of pre-colonial society was very different to that of the Kikuyu in eastern Africa, we see the patriarchal family as the unit. The important difference between ancient Ghana and the Kikuyu people lies in the existence of the system of chiefs. The Kikuyu people had no chiefs. The ancient kingdom of Ghana, however, which represented more highly developed feudal society, had evolved a chiefly system.

“No section of the community,” writes Kofi

Baako, “regarded itself as an opposition to the established rule of the chief and his elders. Thus any such group would be regarded as rebellious and therefore not worthy to exist in the community. . . . ” As for the chief, he ruled “with popular consent” but was expected to accept the advice of the representatives of the clans or lineages. The chief, stresses Baako, was not autocratic; he could even be de-stooled in accordance with the traditional practice of the community.

Although British rule led to the Ghana chiefs being deprived of their real political and military power, and leaving them mainly ceremonial and social functions, yet says Baako, the people's traditional concept of government “did not undergo any profound change.” That concept, he argues, “was one of the rule of the people's representatives with the people's consent.”

Democracy in Pre-Colonial Africa

How democratic, in reality, was pre-colonial Africa? In its earliest period, that of primitive communism, before the emergence of classes, people stood generally in equal relationship to one another and there was no domination of sections of the people by others. Even at a later stage, when classes emerged, when patriarchal slavery and elementary feudalism evolved—and, as a result, a state and weapons of coercion appeared—even then coercion and class domination were not always harsh. Often, state functions for managing the collective interests, for defence against external enemies, for the organisation of public works and collective labour, the control and distribution of food reserves and so on, was carried out mainly through custom and recognition of common interests and by moral pressure. The latter was an important factor. Sometimes it was strong enough to compel a wrongdoer to leave the clan as an unwanted outcast.

In some African societies, as among the Kikuyu, for example, there were no chiefs. Even in those societies where chiefs existed, they did not always have permanent powers. Sometimes their prerogative was restricted to allocating the commonly held land and carrying out magic rites. Other chiefs—war chiefs—held rights which were similarly restricted in scope. It was customary, too, very often, for the rights of chiefs to be enjoyed for only a limited duration.

In other words, the traditional African society tended to be democratic rather than autocratic. Individual chiefs usually had limited forces to secure obedience to their orders. A chief could seldom decide anything. He had to consult his council, which was itself subject to the influence and pressure of the people through the

medium of the meeting of village elders, or, in some societies, of the whole people.

At the meetings themselves, since class society was only partially developed, there was no question of a clash of opposing class forces. Contradictions were mainly non-antagonistic ones, as between men and women, or between young men and elders, not between antagonistic social classes.

The community discussed questions not to secure a victory for the "majority" over the "minority" but in order to reach a unanimous agreement. It was through a search for unanimity, for the highest common factor of agreement, and not through a clash between two "parties" that tribal democracy functioned.³

But how much of these early practices were still in existence in Africa at the time of the imperialist scramble for Africa at the end of the nineteenth century? Four hundred years of the European slave trade had retarded the evolution of African societies. Early forms of feudalism were the most common feature of Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. Class divisions and conflicts were not yet acute, though the elders or village headmen were becoming economically privileged.

A Dying Tradition

Imperialist rule carried this process a stage further. The dissolution of traditional society was hastened by the introduction of twentieth-century colonialism. The previous forms of tribal democracy, already undergoing modifications, deteriorated still further. The outward forms of tribal customs were retained by the colonialists, but the inner democratic content was greatly weakened. And the chiefs, who in some territories had already assumed certain autocratic powers, were turned into paid civil servants of the colonial system.

It is clear, therefore, that to talk of basing

³ This, of course, was not a uniquely African tradition. Early societies everywhere followed these practices of forms of popular control over the chief, and democratic discussion to reach unanimity. Lewis Morgan noted these practices amongst the Iroquois gens. Engels points out, in his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, that the same principles were widespread amongst the early German mark communities. G. F. Schomann (*Antiquities of Greece*) shows that at the time of Homer it was the popular assembly of the people which decided all important matters. He stresses that: "Whenever a matter is discussed that requires the co-operation of the people for its execution, Homer gives us no indication of any means by which the people could be forced to it against their will." President Sukarno has pointed out that traditional Indonesian society, too, followed these principles of consultation and unanimity: "Rather than the idea of democratic majority and opposition, our society has evolved for itself the ideas of democratic consultation and unanimity. . . ."

modern African societies on the foundations of traditional democracy is to talk of a tradition which has long been dying. The fully democratic kernel of primitive Communism only existed in the earliest stages of African society. Julius Sago, writing in the Ghanaian journal, *The Spark* (April 19, 1963), where he sharply criticises idealist conceptions which have been fostered regarding the "traditional socialist" character of pre-colonial Africa, goes so far as to state:

"The traditional collectivist way of African life is a mere illusion. . . . What is the old collectivist way of life in Africa? It wasn't a classless society. Nor were relations in it harmonious. It was a feudal system based on the hegemony of a few big families lording it over less privileged ones and even serfs. Human rights were non-existent."

It is not without interest to note here that Alan Winnington, in his book on *The Slaves of the Cool Mountains*, shows how in China primitive democracy was a serious barrier to the development of modern democracy. In a chapter significantly entitled "Battle Against Primitive Democracy" he describes the efforts in one village of the Wa—a primitive people practising slavery—to establish a co-operative. This they do with the aid of the Party political workers. But the first obstacle they have to overcome is that of the traditional unanimous vote obtained by the moral subordination of the villagers to the headman. By patient work and discussion, they encourage the villagers to take their own initiative and make their own decision. *The result is not unanimity but a clash of opinion, the emergence of a majority and a minority.* And the majority of villagers vote against the inclusion of the headman in the co-operative—for the headman owns eighteen slaves.

In other words, once social classes have emerged—no matter how embryonic—traditional forms of democracy begin to deteriorate and to become disguised forms of domination, by headmen or elders. The domination may commence as a moral factor, but in itself it assists the establishment of an economically privileged section which becomes the politically dominant class. In outward form, early democratic practices may continue, but in their actual content they increasingly represent the domination of a class.

And this, generally speaking, is what happened to traditional African democracy.

Class Struggle Inevitable

Therefore, important as may be the traditional methods of democracy—and it would certainly be useful to carry forward and make use of what-

ever is positive in these earlier forms in Africa—the question of the one-party systems in Africa today must be examined mainly in relation to modern African society and the emergence of new classes. In examining these questions we need to see how the one-party systems have functioned in Africa, the role of the working class within them, and the future perspective for these parties.

These problems cannot be seriously examined apart from the class forces which exist today in Africa. As we have seen, mass national parties have come into existence in Africa because of certain specific historical reasons. It is the stage of African society, the simultaneous existence side by side of elements of all the known forms of human society, the relatively limited growth of modern class forces, the dangers of tribalism and of neo-colonialist disruption, which have welded the people together into a united army of national independence in the form of the single mass party.

Yet, however embryonic modern class society is in Africa—and it is more developed than some theoreticians are prepared to admit—classes are in a process of formation in Africa and conflicting class interests exist.

Madeira Keita admits that “we obviously cannot assert that Negro African society is a classless society”, but he nevertheless claims that “the differentiation of classes in Africa does not imply a diversification of interests and still less an opposition of interests.”

This is broadly true in so far as the struggle against colonialism is concerned, for all patriotic classes are concerned to end colonial rule. But once independence has been won and the battle is unfolded to reconstruct the economy, to carry through fundamental land reform, to uproot the imperialist monopolies, and to decide whether the the path of development should be capitalist or non-capitalist, divergence of class interests is bound to grow and sharper class conflict is inevitable. Such conflicts need not necessarily lead to a violent collision of opposing class forces, yet struggles there will be—against the forces of patriarchal slavery and feudalism, and between the growing working class and the new bourgeoisie.

The African working class, together with the mass of the peasantry, and with the support of patriotic democrats amongst other sections of the people, will strive to carry its country through to the completion of the tasks of national liberation and on towards socialism. To accomplish this task, the working class cannot confine itself to being a *subordinate* force in a single mass party whose ideology and leading personnel are predominantly those of other classes, especially that of the bourgeoisie. To open up the way to the construction

of socialism requires a party led by socialists, by those who, on the basis of the scientific teachings of Marxism-Leninism, are capable of leading the whole people through the complex and difficult task of completing their national liberation, overcoming the plots of neo-colonialism, winning their country's economic independence, and, through the creation of independent national democracies, make it possible to avoid the path of capitalism and to take the shorter, more direct route to socialism.

Working Class Must Lead

The mass national parties in Africa, as we have seen, are coalitions of class forces. In none of them has the working class yet emerged as the undisputed leading force. The defence of working class interests, the maintenance of the most consistent fight against imperialism, the carrying through of fundamental land reform, the completion of national liberation and the passing over to the construction of socialism require that the working class assumes a leading position, *either within the single mass party or through the formation of a separate organisation.*

The national bourgeoisie will naturally strive to ensure its own class domination of the State, the economy, and of the political party. In those countries, as, for example, Egypt, or Tunisia, where the right-wing national bourgeoisie, sometimes in alliance with comprador sections, has emerged as the dominant force, the working class and its communist parties have been suppressed, and the one-party system has been clamped down *as a form of control over the working class and the general democratic movement.* In these circumstances, the one-party system, far from being a form of political organisation which helps to unite the whole people against imperialism and neo-colonialism, becomes an instrument for the suppression of the democratic majority of the people by a small upper crust, a capitalist minority. Such regimes, increasingly dependent on repression to maintain their power, deepen the divisions among the people, produce disharmony between the people and the Government, and thus weaken the very national unity whose name has been invoked in justification of establishing a one-party dictatorship. Under such conditions, the possibilities of imperialism strengthening its influence increase; and for that very reason it gives every encouragement to the anti-communism of such parties and governments.

Similarly, in a number of states in French-speaking Africa, one-party systems have come into being on the basis of suppressing the genuinely democratic organisations, both political

and trade union, in the interests of a ruling group which still leans heavily on imperialism and which hopes to appropriate for itself the richest fruits of independence.

Thus, in those African states where the working class is excluded from all influence in the State, where imperialist puppets or reactionary local capitalists rule, the one-party system becomes a serious threat to the people and to their endeavours to complete their national liberation. But in other states, as for example, in Ghana, Guinea and Mali, where patriotic democrats play the leading role, where the working class exercises a considerable influence and is able to have more say on governmental policy and in defence of its own class interests, and where the national bourgeoisie is either weak or does not enjoy undivided dominion over the State and the economy, the one-party system may, under certain favourable conditions, make possible the further growth of working class influence and the extension of Marxist-Leninist ideas within the single mass party to the stage where these forces enjoy majority support and thus make possible a special form of development.

The more progressive African one-party systems are, in a way, an arena in which the working class and national bourgeoisie struggle for mastery. The two classes are united in the one party in their common aim of upholding national independence and defeating neo-colonialism. But within the one party they are in conflict concerning the future development of society. As long as it is possible for the working class to preserve its own class independence within the mass national party, to defend its own class interests, to champion its own working class views on all questions concerning the economic, social, political and ideological development of the nation, to study, discuss and propagate the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, then the working class will be able to support the maintenance of such a party whose progressive transformation into a party based on scientific socialism will become possible.

The Decisive Factor

If the working class, by its consistent work, its example of courage, self-sacrifice and clear-sighted policy, is able to become the decisive leading force within the single party, then the

formation of a separate party of the working class will not be necessary. In such circumstances, it is the national bourgeoisie which will try to disrupt the mass party, to break it up, to escape the control of the working class and to pursue a different policy by seeking to establish its own separate party. And it will receive every encouragement in doing this from the imperialist powers and their intelligence departments.

If, on the other hand, the working class finds that within the single mass national party the developing capitalist class is assuming dictatorial control of the party, increasingly limiting the activities of the working class, turning more and more to attacking the working class and its democratic allies, and striving to turn the new nation on to the full capitalist path and to tie it to the heels of imperialism, then it is inevitable that the working class will seek to establish its own political party, legal or illegal, which can defend its own class interests and, at the same time in alliance with all other progressive forces, uphold the widest interests of the nation as a whole and save it from betrayal.

The question of a single party or of two or more parties is not one of abstract, absolute principle. *The decisive factor is what is to be the character of the single mass party? What will be its composition, its leadership, its policy, its ideology?* In the conditions of present-day Africa, and because of the favourable world situation in which the forces of socialism are increasingly determining the direction of the march of all mankind, it is possible that in a number of African states we will see the emergence of a new kind of mass revolutionary party, anti-imperialist in inspiration, embracing all the progressive forces of the nation, and progressively being won for the ideology of scientific socialism. Lenin, in his discussions with Mongolian leaders in 1921, envisaged a somewhat similar development in Mongolia; and this, in fact, took place.

It would obviously be wrong to be dogmatic as to how the one-party systems in Africa will evolve. The above comments are simply an attempt to indicate the conditions under which these single mass parties have come into existence and the problems which they now face. There are many aspects of this whole question which require further discussion and argument. It is hoped that this article will contribute to that end.