

Development or disintegration: Which way for Africa?

by Uwe Friesecke

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During the last four years, we have become witnesses to the most awful human disaster on the African continent. Not only were the people of Africa suffering from the notorious effects of economic underdevelopment, like scarcity of food, breakdown of health systems, and the spread of old and new diseases, but we have seen a violent fall into the abyss of barbarism, that has taken on a new dimension. If nothing is done to reverse current trends in Africa, then the first half of the 1990s will have been the beginning of a true apocalypse in Africa in the 21st century, and the modern community of states will add another terrible chapter to the history of failures of human civilizations.

Liberia collapsed and disintegrated. Mozambique lived through a war that took the lives of 1 to 1.5 million people. Somalia lost tens of thousands in war during 1990-91 and between 500,000 and 1 million during the famine of 1992. This year, Rwanda turned into a killing field, claiming probably more than 500,000 victims within a 100-day period. While the media attention was focused on Somalia and Rwanda, the most brutal war continued in Angola and killed more than 500,000 people in the last two years.

Most of our western governments were and still are quite indifferent to this human suffering. The United Nations did not only fail utterly in their missions, but in most situations they played—just as in Bosnia—an active part in instigating and furthering the disaster. The majority of the general public in our countries looks the other way, goes on with their business as usual, and is quite content with the fact that leading policy circles have written off large parts of Africa as *terrae incognitae*.

The calamity of Africa at the end of the 20th century is an indictment of the immorality of our western world, which for the last 25 years has followed a policy that condemned the people of the developing sector in general, and of Africa in particular, to endure injustices that are crying out to heaven. Because the reasons for today's disaster in Africa lie neither in the natural conditions of climate, soil, or any lack of natural riches, nor in specific cultural or social weakness-

es. For each and every case, the reason can be found in the two dominant sets of western strategic policy vis-à-vis Africa:

1) International Monetary Fund/World Bank radical free trade economic policy; and

2) nineteenth-century-style colonial geopolitics. (Up until 1990, the Soviet Union followed its own colonial geopolitics in Africa and thereby added greatly to the destruction of the continent.)

This is not to generally absolve those Africans from responsibility and guilt who committed crimes against their brothers and sisters, or who corrupted themselves for the interests of the modern-day colonial powers and who lend themselves to their manipulation for the purpose of divide, rule, and destroy. But where is the power over the world economy and strategic affairs wielded? From Kigali, Mogadishu, Luanda, or Monrovia? Is that power not located in London, Paris, Bonn, New York, and Washington? So let us set the policy right in those circles; then needed changes inside Africa will be accomplished relatively easily.

Africa's hopes in the 1960s

On March 6, 1957, the Gold Coast was being released into independence and became Ghana. Three and a half years later, on Oct. 1, 1960, Nigeria attained its independence. Let us quote Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and premier of Northern Nigeria, as he welcomed independence and prayed for peace:

"The attainment of our national independence is the most important event in the political history of this country. I am most happy and proud, as every other Nigerian should be, that we have reached this state in peace, and hope that peace will continue to prevail throughout the life of our independent nation. What we have achieved today is the result of the combined efforts and cooperation of all the peoples of this country. For all my fellow Nigerians, I therefore send my hearty congratulations. May God give us the strength and determination to be of service to our nation in order to make our independence a success."

Independence was the crowning of the decades-long struggle of men and women in West Africa, who were strongly influenced by the ideas of freedom and justice inherent in the philosophy of the American System, which also became



West African independence heroes: (left) Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and premier of Northern Nigeria; (right) Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah. Along with Nigeria's first President, Nnamdi Azikiwe (photo on next page), these men were strongly influenced by the ideas inherent in the American System. Bello and Nkrumah, as well as Congo's Patrice Lumumba, were assassinated within years of the deaths of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King.



the foundation for the American civil rights movement of Dr. Martin Luther King in the '60s. Both Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, one of the founding fathers of independent Nigeria and its first President, who recently turned 90 years of age, and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the hero of Ghana's independence, had been educated in the United States. "Zik of Africa," as Dr. Azikiwe was called, came to the U.S. in 1925 as a young student. He was educated at Lincoln, Howard, Columbia universities, and the University of Pennsylvania. When he went back to West Africa, he met Kwame Nkrumah in Accra and inspired him to also go to the U.S. So Nkrumah was enrolled in September 1935 at Lincoln University.

To capture the spirit of 1960, let us again listen to the Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello, from his Independence Day message to the people of Northern Nigeria on Oct. 8, 1960:

"Let us now reflect on what it means for Nigeria to be independent. Although independence means freedom, it is not the freedom of the jungle where might is right. We are not free to molest others less strong than ourselves or to trample on their rights simply because we are in a position of authority over them. Independence brings with it heavier and new responsibilities. We are now entitled, over the whole of Nigeria, to make our own decisions, right or wrong, as to how our affairs should be conducted. This is a right which we had always possessed and which we lost only temporarily for a brief period of our history. Both the British government and ourselves consider it fit now for us to resume this age-old right. We owe it as a duty to ourselves and to the future to prove ourselves worthy of its restoration.

"The eyes of the world are on Nigeria now and there are many friends who hope that we shall be the leading nation in Africa. Let me say with all the emphasis at my command that we shall never attain this goal if there is suspicion and mis-

trust among the people of Nigeria. Such an attitude cannot benefit anyone and can too easily lead to strife, as has been the painful experience of other independent nations in Africa and elsewhere.

"I appeal to the people of this Region to work for the success of the Nigerian Federation. Let us approach our common problems in a spirit of cooperation and give and take. It is of the utmost importance that all of us Nigerians, whatever our Region, should work together and pay less attention to differences of tribe or religion. . . . The government of which I am the head is solemnly pledged to support the Independence Constitution of Nigeria and to protect the federation against all divisionalist forces within and outside the country. We require the support of every one of you in order to carry out our pledge and we also need the cooperation of all other Nigerians.

"I pray God Almighty for the peace and prosperity for the Federation of Nigeria and all of its peoples."

Those were the days when, all over Africa, plans were being made to open up schools and hospitals, to build roads, expand railways, to develop industry and modern, mechanized agriculture. Nkrumah would call on his ministers and tell them to be prepared to fly young women from all parts of Africa into Accra to train them as secretaries and thereby help other former colonies to acquire needed manpower skills.

Those were the days when President Kennedy launched his Peace Corps, and young volunteers would arrive enthusiastically in Northern Nigeria to help.

In March 1962, Ahmadu Bello, who was a strong admirer of President Kennedy, announced his Six-Year Development Plan for the north, saying:

"I hope that Honorable Members realize that the most important document laid before the House during this session is the government's White Paper on the Development Plan,



One of Nigeria's founding fathers and its first President, Nnamdi Azikiwe.

which contains the Government's Program for the next six years, 1962-68. Total expenditure proposed by the government during this period is £292 million. This is the biggest program ever planned for this Region. In drawing up this program the government has taken into account the pressing need for this Region to catch up quickly with even the most economically and socially developed countries in Africa and to free ourselves as far as possible from dependence on outside forces so that the independence of Nigeria can quickly stand on the secure foundations of economic stability."

This budget had as its largest single item of expenditure, the £4.59 million for the Ministry of Education. New primary and secondary schools are set up and Ahmadu Bello University is opened on Oct. 11, 1962 as the University of Northern Nigeria.

The Northern Regional Development Corp. (NRDC), which already was set up before independence, functioned as the main vehicle for promoting industry and modern agriculture in the north of Nigeria. Thousands of loans ranging from £30 to £4,000 were made to small businessmen. Large projects in textile, sugar, building, oil processing, etc. were also set up; Kaduna, for example, became a center of the

textile industry.

The NRDC functioned as a major catalyst in agricultural projects, which by 1963 included the following:

- 1) agricultural resettlement schemes
- 2) agricultural production projects
- 3) agricultural infrastructure projects
- 4) irrigation and water supplies projects
- 5) palm products developments
- 6) tsetse fly control projects.

A second agricultural school was built for £240,000.

The question of water resources received major attention. In September 1964 a new ministry, the Ministry of Water Resources, was being established. On the occasion, the Saraduna said:

"Many new methods and new techniques have been introduced for water conservation. . . . Once we are able to do this, we can do everything humanly possible. We are not static and stagnant as some people think, but we are progressive and moving fast. With a continued encouragement to farmers, Northern Nigeria will become the granary of Africa."

Even at this early stage of independence, three large-

scale irrigation schemes in the north were planned, but they were only implemented later during the oil boom: the Chad Basin Development Authority, implemented in 1973 in Borno, the Hadejia-Jama'are River Basin Authority in 1974 in Kano, and the Sokoto Rima River Basin Authority, implemented in 1974 in Sokoto.

The Sardauna favored the extension of railways. He envisaged a rail link between Northern Nigeria and Sudan, which would be to the benefit of Nigeria's neighbors Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. He explored the idea of a trans-Saharan highway, linking Kano and Algiers. And today, 30 years later, those plans still wait for their realization.

There can be no question today, that the newly independent nations were striving for rapid economic development as a condition for freedom, justice, and the general welfare and happiness of their peoples. At the time, those aspirations of the developing sector were widely supported in the industrial countries. But history took a different turn.

Spirit of independence's early days is killed

On Nov. 22, 1963, John F. Kennedy was assassinated. One year before that, in Europe, on Oct. 27, 1962, Italian industrialist Enrico Mattei was killed in a plane crash. By the middle of the decade, West Africa's political stability was destroyed after Central Africa, in January 1961, had witnessed the assassination of Congo Republic's (today, Zaire) first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba.

In the early hours of Jan. 15, 1966, Maj. Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, who was an instructor in small arms at the Nigerian Defense Academy in Kaduna, assembled a group of soldiers whom he had been training in night exercises, and began the first Nigerian coup. The Sardauna of Sokoto and prime minister of the North Region, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, together with his senior wife, was killed on the spot. In the West of Nigeria, Premier Chief Akintola was killed. In Lagos, then the capital of Nigeria, the federal prime minister, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and his finance minister, Chief Festus Okotie-Ebohare, were killed. Also killed were a number of senior officers, the majority of them from the north. Major Nzeogwu, like many other Nigerian officers, attended the British military academy at Sandhurst, and became the first Nigerian to be trained in military intelligence.

In Ghana only a month later, on Feb. 24, 1966, the Armed Forces staged a coup to overthrow President Nkrumah, while he was on the way to China on a peace mission to try and end the Vietnam War.

Thus, in 1966, a good part of the political leadership of West Africa was either killed or ousted from power. Consequently, Nigeria, the strongest nation of the continent, only barely escaped complete destruction as a nation, after it had plunged into the depths of the Biafra civil war, which raged from May 1967 to January 1970. The young Gen. Yakubu

Gowon, as Nigeria's President between 1966 and 1975, saved the unity of the nation. Many positive achievements, such as the buildup of infrastructure, were accomplished in the following years under Presidents Murtala Muhammed (July 1975-February 1976), Gen. Olesegun Obasanjo (February 1976-October 1979), Shehu Shagari (October 1979-December 1983), and Gen. Muhammad Buhari (January 1984-August 1985), which were mainly due to the extraordinary earnings from the export of petroleum. Nigerians of the Obasanjo and Shagari administrations also played an important role during the debate about the new world economic order in the second half of the '70s.

But neither Nigeria nor Ghana has recovered from the loss of 1966. They were not allowed to conclude the journey into the lands of freedom, justice, and general happiness for their people, which they had so optimistically started out for on Independence Day. Nigeria in the 1980s and early 1990s was far from projecting the political leadership role and moral authority for Africa that it had had in the early years of independence—a leadership role typified by the late Sardauna, Sir Ahmadu Bello.

Prospects for a new world economic order are destroyed

In response to unbearable pressures on African and other developing-sector economies from the oil price rise, the deteriorating terms of trade, and the beginning debt crisis, a debate began within the Non-Aligned Movement about the need for a new, just world economic order. This went back to ideas formulated by Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* in 1967, which advanced the concept that "peace means development."

This debate was sparked in April 1975, when American economist Lyndon LaRouche put forward his proposal to replace the bankrupt Bretton Woods institutions, the IMF and World Bank, with an International Development Bank (IDB) to reorganize the world monetary system in favor of generating billions of dollars of Hamiltonian credit to advance the physical economy of the developing sector and end the depression in the industrial sector. Such a call for a new world economic order was adopted in the 1976 Colombo Resolution of the Non-Aligned Movement and put into the debate of the U. N. General Assembly in 1977 and 1978.

In Africa, the 16th Ordinary Session of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in Monrovia, Liberia, in 1979 called in its declaration for the "establishment of a new international economic order" and prepared the document which was finally adopted at the Second Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the OAU in April 1980 in Lagos, Nigeria as the "Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa." This plan was clearly designed to break the strangulation of African economies and set off the rapid development of infrastruc-

ture, advanced agriculture, and industry, with special emphasis on the development of science and technology, including nuclear technology within Africa. The plan calls for the establishment of an African Economic Community by the year 2000.

Nothing of this plan has been realized. Instead, throughout the continent, economies collapsed, and the suffering of the peoples increased. Even once relatively prosperous economies like Nigeria's, whose citizens around 1980 enjoyed a decent standard of living, went into a deep and prolonged economic crisis with no end in sight. Other, weaker countries like Zambia or Tanzania just collapsed into unchecked mass poverty; still others disintegrated, like Somalia, Liberia, and, lately, Rwanda. A special case is Zaire, which is still there as a facade, but inside its whole areas have become empty.

What happened to Africa during the 1980s?

The wisdom of western economic policy formulated in Chicago and Harvard and ever so loudly preached in western capitals took its course and "SAPed" Africa's economies! That is what destroyed the continent! Almost all countries in Africa were forced to apply the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the IMF and the World Bank, and none, including the IMF's showcases in Ghana and Zimbabwe, has worked for the betterment of the countries involved. As a direct consequence of SAPs and the unchecked debt crisis, schools have been closed and hospitals shut down. Infrastructure collapsed and the formal economy disappeared in favor of expansion of the informal economy.

Agriculture and irrigation projects suffered, because the devaluation of the currencies caused the price for inputs to go out of reach for the ordinary farmer. Ten years ago in Nigeria, a tractor would cost 25,000 naira at the rate of one naira to the dollar; today the same tractor costs 1 million naira at the rate of 70-100 naira to the dollar on the black market. A water pump that cost 50,000 naira in 1984, today costs almost 2 million naira.

Most devastating has been the effect of the IMF programs on local manufacturing industries. In February 1986, there were 1,317 manufacturing industries in the metropolitan area of Kano. By the end of 1993, fewer than 75 manufacturing industries were in operation.

Interest payments of sub-Saharan African countries on almost \$200 billion of debt amount to approximately \$1 billion a month. Unicef calculated that, as a result of this debt crisis, an additional half-million children die every year.

Let us listen to Africans again as they judge the IMF/World Bank policy. The Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) from Nigeria last month responded to the renewed claim of the IMF/World Bank that their SAP policy is the only hope for the economic development of African countries, with the following declaration:

"This is the propaganda of the IMF and the World Bank

in their drive for the recolonization of Africa for a New Colonialism. We reject it very firmly and totally.

"SAP is a disastrous failure all over Africa, and the IMF must be ashamed of its role in it. After some 15 years of massive adjustment, the IMF and the World Bank cannot boast of a single success story in Africa, except tiny Mauritius Island. Their claim that Ghana is a success is contested by informed Ghanaians. Thousands of Ghanaians can still not return to make a successful living at home and their currency, the cedi, [has fallen] to around 2,000 to the dollar. The SAP in Nigeria has similarly debased the naira from one to the dollar to around 100 to the dollar on the black market.

"The catastrophic effects of SAP in African countries include the death of millions, especially children and women; drastic fall in real income; widespread hunger, malnutrition and stunted growth, excessive and pauperizing inflation; collapse of social services and falling enrollment at all levels of education; huge and rising unemployment; massive destruction of national currencies from excessive and persistent currency devaluation; declining export earnings; sharply rising inequalities; destruction of the public services from inhuman retrenchment; the deindustrialization of African countries; widespread repression needed to impose SAP on unwilling populations; the undermining of the state and threatened social disintegration from rising crimes and drug pushing permitted by greatly weakened states. Nigeria and some other African countries have fallen from middle income to low income under SAP by World Bank ranking.

"Between 1988 and 1989 alone Africa recorded a net outflow of capital to the IMF and the World Bank of \$2.7 billion. The so-called gains of SAP shown with dubious growth rates of GDP are clearly minor when compared to these serious negative effects of SAP and the crushing burden of dubious foreign debts. Only a tiny minority of Africans and their collaborators in the multinational corporations enjoy these gains of SAP; the majority of Africans only have losses and tears from the adjustment of their stomachs. . . .

"African countries should demand the immediate cancellation of all foreign debts. This is part of the reparations payment due to Africa—among other things—for 15 years of the destruction of our countries when our economies have been used as guinea pigs in the costly economic experiment called SAP, which the IMF and World Bank imposed on Africa.

"We are nobody's fools. If the IMF people deny these statements, then we challenge them to public debate on SAP anywhere in Africa. If the IMF has nothing serious to say, it should shut up and not blackmail and threaten our countries each year when our annual budgets are being prepared. The sovereignty of our countries includes the right to design our budgets and economic policies in the best interest of our countries."

And let nobody be fooled by the rhetoric of the IMF or

the World Bank. Governments in Africa are being blackmailed to accept IMF policy. In the summer of 1985, the IMF demanded from the Buhari government of Nigeria to devalue the naira, literally overnight, by 60%. General Buhari refused. One week later, U.S. President Reagan sent the infamous Vernon Walters to Nigeria to talk to him "soldier to soldier." General Buhari still refused. One month later, Buhari was removed from power in a coup, which established Ibrahim Babangida as President, who subsequently devalued the naira by 60% and more, and who in the following years implemented the IMF's Structural Adjustment Program, lock, stock, and barrel.

The IMF/World Bank structures are the continuation of colonial rule by which Africa is looted for its raw materials and at the same time is prevented from developing an independent modern agro-industrial economy. In large parts of the continent, this unchecked looting process has driven the relative potential population density below the actual population density, and, therefore, has set the conditions for the type of apocalyptic developments which we are witnessing.

In Somalia, as well as in Rwanda, the IMF was absolutely instrumental in creating the conditions for the disaster to happen. In both cases the governments were pushed up against the wall and at critical moments cut off from any further funding, so that the state institutions simply collapsed and opened the way to violence, destruction and anarchy.

The nation-state is the solution

It has become very fashionable to blame the problems of Africa on the lack of democracy and the existence of dictatorially ruled nation-states. According to this theory, the colonial oppressors forced this alien European concept of the nation-state onto pre-colonial societies during the 19th century, regardless of any consideration for ethnic unity, which supposedly had characterized those societies before the European advent. The "anti-democratic, reactionary idea" of the nation-state turned out to be the "Black Man's Burden" after independence, as one of the historians, Britain's Basil Davidson, called it in his latest book.

For many of our fellow citizens, who know how to think in "politically correct" terms, this sounds logical. If only the borders of Africa could be redrawn, and every ethnic group given its democratic right to self-determination, then peace would break out for ever and the evils of nationalism be overcome. (Nigeria alone has more than 250 languages as a reflection of ethnic differentiation!)

Let us ask an African, again, how he sees this problem. Yusuf Bala Usman from the Department of History at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in 1992 wrote a paper on "The National Question in Nigerian History," in which he makes a passionate plea for Nigerian national unity and debunks the romantic view of the pre-colonial Nigeria. He argues the following against "Three Fairy Tales":

"The first fairy tale is made up of the story that before the British colonial conquest, each tribe, ethnic group, or nationality in this country, lived largely on its own, in its own sovereign kingdoms, city states, chiefdoms or village confederations under its natural rulers. According to this tale, these ethnic groups may have one or more sovereign polities, whose rulers had brotherly relations with one another. . . . The story making up this fairy tale narrates the rise of the Fulani, who are said to have established a Muslim state ruled from Sokoto, which alongside Borno, fell into what even before the British conquest could be identified as the 'Far North' alongside a 'Middle Belt' and a 'South.' But the gist of the fairy tale is that the political entities which provided the building blocks of colonial Nigeria under the British were basically ethnic polities or in other words relatively distinct and monolithic tribes under natural rulers.

"The second fairy tale is made up of the story of how the British conquered these ethnic polities by using superior military firepower and by gimmicks and tricks. The gist of this tale is that our pre-colonial polities were overwhelmed and defeated by superior European military technology.

"The third fairy tale is that the independence of this country was won by these ethnic groups, now grouped into three regions, producing political parties and political leaders, namely the NCNC [National Council of Nigerian Citizens] from among the Ibos, the Action Group from the Yoruba and NPC from the Hausa-Fulani who led the struggle for independence."

According to Usman, the reality of Nigerian history is quite different. He argues that, from all available evidence, ethnic solidarity as conceived in most of today's political discussions was not an important factor in establishing polities. The sovereign kingdoms, chiefdoms, and city-states were not ethnic entities. Usman argues that there were no Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, or other distinguished ethnic polities which could be resurrected today, because the ethnic groups like the Yoruba during the 19th century belonged to different sovereign polities. He also disregards religion as a building factor for separate political entities.

Against the second fairy tale, Usman concludes with the following argument:

"The main point here is that the relative ease [with] which the pre-colonial polities of Nigeria were conquered by the British was not primarily due to the maximum-gun. These polities, when faced with European penetration, invasion, and conquest, suffered from fatal internal weaknesses which made the task of imperialism relatively easy. In fact the evidence is that they were largely and increasingly unviable, and whether the British had invaded or not, they were likely to be replaced."

Usman points out that it would be a dangerous illusion to try to dismember Nigeria in an attempt to bring those 19th-century polities back.

On the third fairy tale, Usman sets the record straight and reminds us that it is an historical fact that Nigeria's independence was won by movements and organizations which were part of a broad pan-West African and pan-African movement for freedom and independence. He says, it was not the rights of some pre-colonial polity that were restored with Nigerian independence, but that Nigerian citizenship and Nigerian territory were restored to the people who were formerly colonial subjects to the British.

Usman concludes:

"It was as a part and parcel of the West African and African movement for independence that we regained our sovereignty, the right to be citizens and the rights over our territory and its resources. It is only by ever deepening our absorption within this movement that we can ensure our individual and collective survival in the 21st century."

This debate is of utmost importance for the future of Africa. Contrary to the fashionable propaganda referred to before, it is the sovereign nation-state which is the means to overcome ethnic divisions, because the citizen is uplifted to locate his identity in the good for the country and not for any ethnically or religiously defined group. To demand so-called "democratic rights" in terms of ethnic group interests, means to break up the already very weakened nations in Africa and destroy the possibility that some stronger countries could take the lead in resisting the ever-deepening neo-colonial looting of the continent.

This is the significance of the ongoing campaign against Nigeria. Fraudulent claims of an ambitious individual for the presidency, who made his money at the goodwill of the military, are being used by outside interests to stir up passions along regional and ethnic divisions and are designed to paralyze the government in the face of urgent tasks inside the country and in the regional and international context.

So far, the government was able to confront the attempts for this destabilization successfully, among other factors, because it focused the debate in the country through the National Constitutional Conference (NCC) not just on the question of which type of institutional arrangements will be best for ruling Nigeria, but also because the delegates first debated and resolved the question of the nation. For some weeks they struggled with the question whether unity should be kept or not. In the end, the delegates from all different parts of the country reached agreement that unity was Nigeria's most precious good and that nobody was prepared to pay the price of giving it up in favor of so-called special interests.

This reflects a quality for political leadership and statecraft in Nigeria that is based in the tradition of the fight for independence and which is carried forward by people who were the very young generation in those days. To exemplify this, let us listen to Chief Ojukwu, the former leader of Biafra, whom we recently asked:

"What is your vision of Nigeria?"

He answered: "The Nigeria I see must be a Nigeria that has a worldview. A Nigeria that contributes, not just consumes. A Nigeria that takes its full responsibility of statehood. A Nigeria that is justifiedly—and I use the word 'justifiedly'—jealous of her own sovereignty, actually where our primordial instincts will be subsumed in the new nation. I look for a Nigeria certainly that will not just be the biggest and most populous in Africa. No, I would like to see a Nigeria that takes also the first responsibility on African issues. I would like to see a Nigeria that would be the first, whenever there are refugees moving about in Africa and people are starving. I want Nigeria to be the first, before others come in and help. I want a Nigeria that is at peace, because only in peace can we develop. I would like a Nigeria, finally, which all black men on the Earth would point at with pride. This is what we would like to be like. Whenever that happens, obviously Nigeria would be a better place."

So, the nation-state is not the problem in Africa: It is the solution.

The problem is the degeneration of the international order which denies the sovereign nation-state the right to exist. Since the Gulf war, increasingly, the international order has lost the moral standard for civilized behavior among nations. International relations are being determined by the arbitrariness of power, not by the standards of justice and the ideals of the common good for the family of man.

The only way for Africa into the 21st century, which would at last give its people justice, is to pick up the fight for real economic development that was so optimistically launched in the 1960s and then frustrated and sabotaged by the stupidity and arrogance of power in the West.

To conclude, let me turn to an African friend again and ask him what we should do. It is Adamo Ciroma, who, as a young man, stood at the side of Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna, and who today is the honorable minister of agriculture in Nigeria. I asked, "Excellency, do you have a message for the United States and Europe?"

Answer: "You know, it used to be the conventional wisdom for countries to abstain from interfering in each other's affairs. . . . Especially since the destruction of the Soviet Union, a certain international arrogance has risen and is widely telling everybody what to do to solve their problems. . . . When we choose a path to solve our problems, I think that a certain amount of respect ought to be attached to what we do."

Now let us fight to return international relations to those principles of mutual respect and to the principles of the inalienable rights of men.

Then, I am confident, Africa will find those leaders who are going to steer their nations and people into a happier future in the 21st century than Africa experienced in those 120 years that are drawing near their end now.