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- THE MAN WHO PUT KENYA ON THE SKIDS
- AFRICANS GO HUNGRY IN RUSSIA



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1991 AND ALL THAT

1991 was the most significant year of change since African countries became independent three decades ago. The march towards democracy and economic liberalisation was almost universal. A new order was introduced. The West enforced its ideology as communism collapsed. But can Africa now stabilise and build a new economic future, asks Deputy Editor, Anver Versi.

1991 was one of the most significant turning points in the history of the 20th Century. More than a wind of change; this was a gale that over a period of less than two years completely altered the political landscape of the world. Hardly any corner of the globe escaped the blast.

Africa too, felt the full-force of the momentous year. The bushfire of change is still sweeping the continent.

It is still too early to predict what the consequences will be. Some analysts see a general easing of tensions and the flowering of peace; others, including the British politician, Tony Benn, predict the rise of Fascism in Europe and a bitter economic war between the USA and Japan.

Many Third World countries, such as India, Pakistan, the Gulf states and South-East Asia fear that with the ending of the Cold War, their power to influence events will be diminished. They are also worried that as resources move relentlessly towards the former USSR and Eastern Europe, their development strategies will suffer.

Africa over the next decade will be shaped very largely by events in the industrialised world. African political commentators are already warning that unless Africa moves rapidly into the economic mainstream of the world, it will become marginalised.

"We can no longer afford to ignore what is going on in the rest of the world," warned the former ECA Executive Secretary, Adebayo Adedeji recently, "ignorance of world events could be fatal to Africa's aspirations."

Let us take a closer look at the major events of 1991 and see how they will affect Africa.

The most significant event, since the end of the Second World War, was the dismantling of the Soviet Empire. President Gorbachev's attempts to liberalise and democratise the USSR took an abrupt turn with the unleashing of nationalism in the Soviet Republics. Although he survived the coup attempt by hardliners, his authority as the Union leader plummeted. Instead, Boris Yeltsin, the Russian leader, emerged as the man of the moment.

Less than a year after the fall of the Berlin wall, the former East Germans were

having second thoughts as they discovered that careers and housing were no longer guaranteed. The cost of living has shot up and, while the new free-market system promises wealth for the winners, it fore-shadows poverty for the losers.

The uncertain economic climate in Germany and many European nations has led to a rise of fascism. Neo-Nazi organisations grow in strength. The immediate targets of the racists were asylum-seekers, particularly from Africa. In France, Jean-Marie Le Pen, openly advocates the repatriation of immigrants. In the United States, neo-Nazi organisations acquired limited support.

Aid cut back

This hardening of attitudes was mirrored by European governments which cut back aid to Africa. With the introduction of the European Common Market this year, Africans and other people from the Third World faced greater limitations on their movements in Europe and refugees were more likely than not to be refused right of entry.

Most social experts expect to see a rising wave of racism towards blacks over the next few years. Britain, with its commitment to a multi-cultural society, made efforts to

combat racism, but even Britain is tightening its immigration procedures. In future, Africans will find it more difficult than ever to enter Britain, even for short visits.

In stark contrast to the rise of xenophobia in Europe, international pressure finally succeeded in forcing South Africa to abandon its apartheid policy. In a few, short months Nelson Mandela became the *de facto* leader of the new South Africa. Yet, although his international prestige was very high, his position in South Africa itself was undermined by the appalling sequence of black-on-black township violence.

The Inkathagate scandal revealed the government's hand in promoting township violence to undercut ANC support. However, for the rest of the world, it was still black Africans who were their own worst enemies.

This led to a general feeling of "Africa fatigue" among the international community. Many countries, including the Nordic states which traditionally took an understanding approach to Africa's problems expressed impatience with African in-fighting. Germany, Britain, the US and finally even the World Bank made it clear that their financial support would be withdrawn unless Africans put their house in order.

1991 was a momentous year



The end of the Cold War and the establishment of the West, under the USA, as the supreme military power meant that the West no longer felt it necessary to woo the developing countries. "In future," prophesied Henry Kissinger, "the West will be more pragmatic in its approach to the Third World."

In other words, the West will only be interested in those Third World countries in which it has a "viable economic interest" since strategic considerations are less valid. This will probably mean that the smaller or more unstable African countries will be increasingly left to fend for themselves.

The collapse of the Soviet Empire also heralded the demise of Marxism-Leninism which became a dead ideology.

In the absence of an alternative ideology, Africa will have little choice but to pursue capitalist, free-market systems. Given the fact that Africa is the least capitalised continent on earth, it seems certain that multi-national companies will gain more power.

The end of the Cold War also ushered in an end to proxy wars between the two superpowers. Both the US and the USSR withdrew their support for factions in Ethiopia, Angola, Chad, Zaire, Liberia, Mozambique and other places.

Leaders like Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko who had been propped up by US money, were dumped and left to sink or swim.

People pressure

Pressure was brought to bear on other leaders, such as Daniel arap Moi of Kenya to be more responsive to public demands.

American interest was concentrated in the Middle East rather than Africa. Exceptions were countries with rich economic potential, such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zaire and South Africa.

George Bush's famous New World Order, it is becoming increasingly clear, will be drafted by American legislators and enforced by American troops. However, the trade war between the US and Japan is certain to intensify.

These extraordinary events have had a profound impact on Africa. The cessation of proxy wars has meant that peace and growth can now come to countries like Angola and Mozambique. However, the collapse of entrenched regimes – like those of Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia, Samuel Doe in Liberia, Mobutu in Zaire, and Siyad Barre in Somalia – all of whom have been supported at some time or the other by either the US or the USSR, has created a power vacuum that has led to internal strife and violence.

In other African countries, the desire for

change has seen the peaceful transition of power to popularly elected leaders like Frederick Chiluba of Zambia.

With the collapse of the monolithic single-party systems in East Europe, African single-party countries can no longer find justification for their own systems. Kenya was virtually the last African country to bow to internal and external pressure and announce multi-party elections.

Although there has been considerable political movement, 1991 has not seen any substantial economic or social gain for Africa. In fact many countries are poorer today than they were 30 years ago.

The OAU passed a historic charter on trade cooperation during its last sitting at Abuja, Nigeria. It is committed to abolishing trade barriers between African countries. The aim is to create a viable market for African products within Africa itself and to add value to primary goods within Africa.

Economic gloom

While the intention is laudable, the practice may be more difficult. For one thing, Africa is badly undercapitalised and the prospect of attracting foreign capital at this stage seems negligible. Internal movements of money, people and goods are hampered by borders, bad communications and a plethora of currencies.

South Africa, the economic giant of Africa, is struggling to stave off recession. With the abolition of apartheid, its expenditure on schools, hospitals, housing, social services, roads etc will increase

sharply. This will mean higher taxes during a period of economic decline. South Africa will be hard put to keep its own head above water, let alone act as the catalyst for economic growth for the rest of Africa.

The writing is on the wall for Africa. It will no longer be able to rely on financial and technical support from either the West or the East. Western Europe is girding itself for a major expansion of its economy as refugees from the former Eastern bloc come streaming in. If the Yugoslavia-style ethnic wars spread to other countries, the number of European refugees will escalate.

This is why countries like Germany, Italy, France and Britain are trying to stop the flow of refugees from the Third World at source. The insistence that Third World countries improve their human rights records or lose aid is one such device.

However, by far the largest number of refugees seeking new lives in Europe are economic migrants. Africans have warned Europe that unless it helps improve the economies of African nations, the numbers of economic refugees will not diminish. Europe therefore will have to consider its Africa policy with a great deal of care if it is to avoid racial warfare in its own streets.

For Africa, 1992 could well be the last chance to get its house in order. The last 30 years of independence have produced thousands of highly qualified, highly intelligent Africans in virtually all fields of science and arts. So far, most of them have chosen to, or been forced, to apply their skills abroad. It is time they returned home and took charge, for they must know that political reform is meaningless without economic reform.

Economic conditionalities



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1991: MONTH BY MONTH

1991 was a turning point, a year of dramatic change, democracy, multi-parties, and falling Heads of State. Here *Anver Versi* chronicles the most important events on a country by country and month by month basis. New African's dramatic covers also tell the story of 1991.

JANUARY

The Gulf War looms. As American and Allied troops prepare for war from bases in Saudi Arabia, Iraq's Saddam Hussein remains intransigent, promising the "Mother of all Battles".

Kenneth Kaunda offers to mediate and secures the release of some British hostages. A hundred thousand Egyptian workers in Iraq flee the country.

Somalia: Siyad Barre is finally toppled after heavy fighting in Mogadishu and Hargeisa (28 January). United Somali Congress (USC) leader Ali Mahdi Mohammed, a businessman of the Hawiye clan is sworn in as interim president. Omer Arteh Ghalib, an Isaaq, becomes Prime Minister (30 January).

Sudan admits famine situation and appeals for food help.

Ethiopia: UN sends food ships to starving Eritrea.

Kenya: Gitobu Imanyara, editor of *Kenya Law Monthly* is detained. KANU lifts expulsion clause.

Rwanda: 150 rebel soldiers reported killed in clashes with government troops.

Liberia: OAU peace-keeping force is threatened by united rebel attack. Video showing former President, Samuel Doe, being mutilated is released.

Tanzania: 64 people are drowned as passenger coaster sinks. Multi-party advocates, including old-timers like Chief Fundikira make their move. President Ali Hassan Mwinyi celebrates election victory with cabinet reshuffle.

Chad: Hissène Habré is swept out of office by former army chief, Idriss Deby.

Djibouti: Authorities charge Ali Aref Bourhan with armed attempt to take over power. Two hundred are arrested as suspected coup plotters.

South Africa: Black on black violence escalates. ANC calls for an all-party congress, but PAC derides the idea. The ANC claims that the trial of Winnie Mandela is politically motivated. Meeting between Nelson Mandela and Chief Buthelezi is set up. ANC meets Inkatha in attempt to stop township violence.

F. W. de Klerk's son announces he will marry a coloured girl. Economic sanctions against South Africa begin to crumble. Schools are integrated. Robben Island to become a tourist resort.

Zambia: Kenneth Kaunda tells *New African* that he will bow out peacefully if he loses elections.

Togo: President Gnassingbe Eyadema proposes draft constitution for multi-party system.

Zaire: Political parties increase to over 100.

FEBRUARY

Gulf States reel from shock of Operation Desert Storm. Kurds flee into mountains near Turkey, Shi'as flee to southern marshes of Iraq. Saddam Hussein survives.

Cape Verde: Aristides Pereira is defeated in first ever Presidential elections by Antonio Mascarenhas Montiero.

Benin: Multi-party elections won by union of opposition groups.

Kenya: Koigi wa Wamwere, radical politician, is charged with treason. Oginga Odinga forms new political party (NDP). Game wardens remanded over Julie Ward murder. Father of murdered girl publishes book. US Ambassador to Kenya attacks government over Human Rights. Kenya Airways flies to South Africa.

Ethiopia: Mengistu drops Marxism-Leninism and makes concessions to EPLF. Tigreans take town of Werota and Adis Zemen.

Lesotho: Military government removes King Moshoeshoe and swears in young King Mohato Seeiso as king.

Zambia: Political parties proliferate.

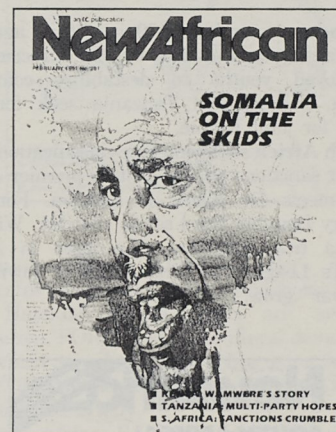
South Africa: Judge refuses to quash Winnie Mandela trial. British MPs support quick end to sports sanctions. SA police face murder charge over Sebokeng shootings. Funding row over SA "dirty-tricks" squad. Mandela and De Klerk agree to limit ANC armed activities. Massacre in Natal threatens Inkatha-ANC truce. ANC buys Shell HQ as new head-office and makes U turn over nationalism. Commonwealth cautious about lifting sanctions.

MARCH

Aftermath of Gulf War hits African economies. The EC pledges £714m in aid to Africa and promises further £150m. UN appeals for food aid for six million Ethiopians.

Liberia: Taylor, Johnson and Sawyer talk in Lomé.

Mali: Army seizes power after 170 die in riots. Musa Traoré deposed.



Benin: Mathieu Kerekou loses Presidential elections.

Ethiopia: Rebels takes Gojam Province in northern Ethiopia and claim to have killed 3,000 government troops.

Kenya: Oginga Odinga fails to register opposition party. Gitobu Imanyara accused of sedition. *Weekly Review* journalists "whipped" by politician.

South Africa: Winnie Mandela trial continues. ANC distances itself from Winnie. Violence increases as Inkatha and ANC call for peace. Police kill 11 at ANC rally.

De Klerk promises to repeal land law but rejects compensation claims from victims of land-apartheid. Thousands attend rallies marking Sharpeville anniversary. International Olympic Committee keeps SA in suspense.

APRIL

European Community discloses that 30m Africans affected by war and famine. Figures show that Europe has nine times more surplus food than Africa has in deficit. Foreign ministers meeting in Brussels under pressure to avert mass starvation in Africa. Pressure on African dictators grows.

Angola: Savimbi announces "Angola deal" to pave way for peace treaty.

Mozambique: Disclosure that US right wing organisations finance civil war. President Chissano softens stance on Marxism.

Togo: Riots rock the country. Services paralysed. Eyadema pledges reform.

Nigeria: Religious riots leave 150 dead in the north. Nigerian troops move in.

Cameroon: Anti-government riots leave 48 dead.

Sierra Leone: Liberian guerrillas raid Sierra Leone.

Sudan: Fears that upto five million may starve in the south. Tribal conflicts escalate.

1991:

MONTH BY MONTH

Ethiopia: Rebels advance on Addis Ababa. UN warns of Ogaden famine. EPLF attacks Assab.

Uganda: Army kills 400 in attack against guerrillas. Uganda accused by Moi of recruiting unemployed youths to destabilise country. Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania seek foreign finance for joint airline.

South Africa set to end race classification. EC lifts last sanctions on SA. British premier John Major meets De Klerk in London. Foreign secretary Douglas Hurd set to visit SA. Winnie Mandela trial extended. She loses in ANC Women's League elections. Fears of township "civil war" grow.



MAY

WHO says six million Africans carry the AIDS virus. Amnesty International urges Africa to end death penalty. African experts discuss continental problems at the Kampala Leadership Forum.

Zaire: Torture victim, deported by British Home Minister Kenneth Clark "may have been murdered". Ten thousand women in anti-government protest in Kinshasa.

Ghana: Government retains ban on political party activity. Opposition MFJ calls for mass demonstrations.

Sierra Leone: Government asks Britain for help to contain Liberian incursion.

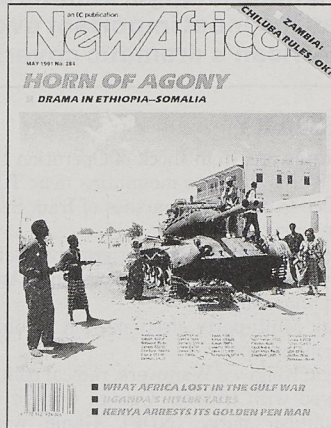
Côte d'Ivoire: Unrest grows as students plan mass protests.

Somalia: Last Briton in Somalia killed in clan fighting. Aid agencies leave. North Somalia declares independence as Republic of Somaliland. Ali Mahdi confirmed as Somali President for two years.

Ethiopia: Regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam finally collapses. He flees to Zimbabwe. Eritrea breaks ties with Ethiopia and sets up provisional government. Victorious EPRDF promise people power. Thousands flee into Sudan.

Kenya: Oginga Odinga arrested on eve of court appeal over registration of political party. Kenya offers amnesty to dissidents abroad.

Uganda: Museveni meets John Major and



delivers public lecture in London. He invites exiled Asians back to Uganda.

South Africa: Winnie Mandela convicted of kidnapping and being accessory after the fact to assault. Sentenced to six years jail but files appeal.

Mandela and De Klerk meet to discuss violence. De Klerk bans the carrying of spears by Zulus. Afrikaners warn of new Boer war against Pretoria. Inkatha raiders massacre "squatters". Government accused by Human Rights organisations of fuelling black on black violence.

JUNE

Ace Kenyan photojournalist Mohammed Amin gets caught by blast as ammunition dump explodes in Ethiopia. His colleague John Mathai, also from Kenya is tragically killed. Amin loses an arm. Civil wars extended OAU conference while UN deplores the "lost decade" for Africa.

Algeria: Demonstrations rock Algerian cities. Racist attacks against Arabs and Africans increase in France.

Zaire reopens relations with South Africa.

Zimbabwe: Opposition leader Edgar Tekere is fired by his own party.

Mozambique: Coup attempt foiled but identities of detained coup-plotters is kept secret.

Burkina Faso: One-party government dissolved.

Togo: Eyadema agrees to hold national conference on political future.

Côte d'Ivoire: Demonstrations and anti-government riots.

Somalia: Republic of Somaliland established despite protests from the rest of Somalia.

Ethiopia: Over 100 die as army ammunition dump explodes. Large scale looting of food and scattered violence. Relief work in eastern Ethiopia paralysed by violence. Food convoys head towards stricken Ogaden.

Kenya: Opposition politician Kenneth Matiba is released from detention. South African athletes invited to meet in Mombasa - turn down invitation.

Madagascar: One hundred and fifty thousand attend rallies against government. Opposition forms transitional government.

South Africa: Apartheid land-laws repealed. OAU keeps sanctions but praises pace of reform. SA army accused of giving arms to Inkatha. Population registration act is thrown out. Police prevent black students from taking over white school. Bush is ready to end sanctions.

JULY

World Bank urges "self-help" cures for Third World problems. African asylum seekers attacked in Germany.

Zambia: Kenneth Kaunda mobilises UNIP support with a series of rallies.

Angola: Ceasefire leaves political stalemate as Savimbi and Dos Santos square up for elections.

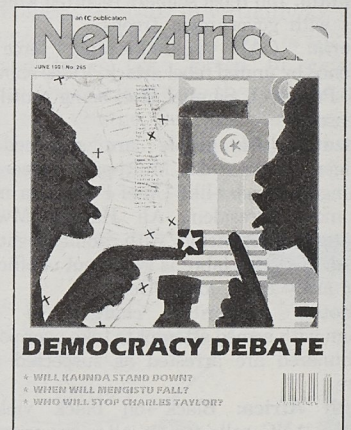
Mozambique: Government troops score major victory over rebels.

Nigeria expels British *Financial Times* reporter. Air crash kills 264 Haj pilgrims.

Cameroon: President Paul Biya bans six opposition parties.

Kenya: Political activists banned from attending Human Rights meeting in London. Boys at rural school go berserk, kill 19 girls.

South Africa: Bush lifts trade and investment sanctions. Winnie wins right to appeal. Pretoria frees 57,000 political prisoners. SA police accused of paying money into Inkatha account; army accused of masterminding train massacre. Olympics ban lifted.



AUGUST

Coup by hardliners in the USSR. Boris Yeltsin challenges coup leaders and outfaces them. Sends a team to rescue Gorbachev. This signals the disintegration of the Soviet Empire. Ramifications of BCCI scandal hit African although branches continue to trade. 5,000 die of cholera in Africa.

Zaire: Mobutu faces volley of criticism as national conference opens.

Zambia: Kenneth Kaunda mobilises rural support for UNIP as election approaches.

Togo: Eyadema suspends national conference but is defied and Kokou Koffigoh is elected Prime Minister.

1991:

MONTH BY MONTH



Nigeria: UK firms are swindled by Nigerian fraudsters over foreign exchange deals.

Ethiopia: Administration sets up new cabinet. Government denies deal with Israel over Falashas.

Madagascar: New Prime Minister opposed; over 50 protesters killed. Threat of civil war.

South Africa: Chief Buthelesi denies support from SA government. AWB leader, Eugene Terreblanche warns De Klerk of revolution. First black high-court judge appointed. Condition of right-wingers in Pretoria jail worsens. Former Communist party boss, Joe Slovo has cancer.

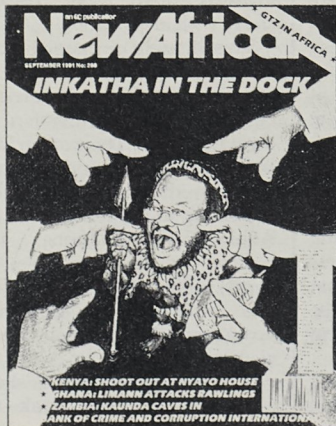
SEPTEMBER

Turmoil in USSR. Several republics declare intention of going independent. Violent ethnic clashes in East Europe.

Zaire: Violence escalates. US halts aid.

Liberia: Sierra Leonean and ECOWAS troops push into Liberia.

Mali: Tuaregs clash with Malian troops; 50,000 flee "Gadafi backed" war.



Sudan: John Garang's SPLM split over issue of separate state for the south.

Angola: Jonas Savimbi returns to Luanda after 15 years in exile. Turnout lower than expected.

Somalia: Rival factions fight for control of Mogadishu.

Tanzania: Veteran politicians, including Chief Fundikira push for multi-party system.

Kenya: Raila Odinga, long time dissident, flees country. Britain accused of ignoring Kenya's Human Rights violations. British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd joins Kenya critics.

South Africa: Nelson Mandela visits white hunger-strikers in jail. Terreblanche rides in aid of same strikers. De Klerk demands that ANC disbands armed wing as township death toll rises to alarming levels.

OCTOBER

Oxfam accuses Britain of turning its back on starvation in Africa. West declares that aid will be conditional on good government. Nigerian Ben Okri wins the Booker Prize. AIDS vaccine tests begin with Rwanda and Uganda as test sites.

Zaire: Mobutu sacks Tshisekedi as Prime Minister. Foreigners flee an orgy of rioting and looting begins.

Zambia: Frederick Chiluba, leader of opposition MMD is confident of victory on eve of elections. Kaunda claims polls will be rigged. Fifty-six die of cholera.

Nigeria: Muslim city of Kano under curfew as religious violence continues. President Babangida calls emergency meeting of National Security Council over riots. Physical battles between rival Nigerian political parties, SDP and NRC and also fights within parties.

Burkina Faso: Opposition leaders call for boycott of December elections.

South Africa: Historic milestone as the Patriotic Front is formed from ANC and PAC. Independent study blames Inkatha for political violence. SA is invited to compete in World Cup.

NOVEMBER

Trade Union leader Frederick Chiluba wins Zambian elections, ousting Kenneth Kaunda after 26 years in power. Kaunda accepts landslide defeat with good grace.

Egypt's Boutros Boutros-Ghali becomes the first African to be appointed Secretary-General of the UN.

British tycoon Robert Maxwell, with extensive business connections in Kenya, is found dead in the sea off Spain. The *Observer* newspaper publishes damning affidavit by the brother of the murdered Kenyan Minister, Robert Ouko. *Observer* owner, Tiny Rowland denies exposure was revenge for losing lucrative contracts.

Liberia: Rebel leader Taylor agrees to free movement and elections.

Cameroon: Opposition parties banned from holding rallies.

Somalia: Gunfire rakes Mogadishu as inter-clan fighting erupts. Col Aidid splits ruling USC party and challenges President Ali Mahdi Mohammed.



Kenya: Robert Ouko murder inquiry implicates key cabinet ministers Nicholas Biwott and Hezekiah Oyugi. Both are arrested. Opposition, FORD group hold illegal demonstration which is broken up by police using teargas. Key FORD members, including Oginga Odinga, are detained briefly.

South Africa: SA cricketers play their first legal series in India. Five million go on strike in trial of strength. SA to compete in Barcelona Olympics.

DECEMBER

Key republics declare that the Soviet Union is dead and form Commonwealth. American Secretary of State, James Baker warns that former USSR could be embroiled in nuclear war.

Kenya: President Daniel arap Moi amends Constitution to allow multi-party elections and sets date. Opposition complain that campaigning period is too short.

Togo: Troops loyal to President Eyadema storm Lomé and surround Prime Minister Kokou Koffigoh's residence. He and Eyadema reach a compromise to share power.

Somalia: Heavy fighting between forces loyal to President Ali Mahdi and challenger Colonel Aidid.

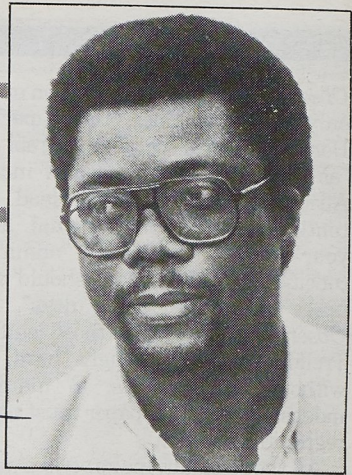
Zaire on the verge of bankruptcy. Anarchy as troops mutiny.



FRANKLY SPEAKING

OLD ORDER CHANGETH NOT

The old order changeth not in Nigeria. Despite all the valiant efforts by President Babangida and his enthusiastic officials, the party governorship primaries were just as corrupt and violent as the elections in the first and second republics. Pini Jason reflects sadly on the new political culture.



One of the tasks President Babangida set himself was to clean out Nigeria's political Augean stable and create new political culture and values. He threw in a lot of effort, and bravely took on the leviathan of the entrenched political institutions.

He banned the troublesome politicians of the First and Second Republic. He established a new National Electoral Commission (NEC), whose chairman wielded executive powers. He rejected all the 13 political associations formed by the newbreed politicians and decreed two political parties – the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Congress (NRC). He even personally positioned the parties ideologically, one (the NRC) a little bit to the right, and the other (the SDP) a little bit to the left.

Babangida also wrote constitutions and manifestoes for the synthetic parties, built them party offices and doled out generous funds.

He created the Directorate of Mass Mobilisation (MAMSER), to preach his new political vision to the masses. He even founded a school of politics – the Centre for Democratic Studies – headed by a professor of political science to give the newbreed politicians tutorials on the new order.

And like a true creator, he surveyed his creation "and saw that it was good". But then he tossed the secret ballot out of the window and enthroned the open ballot system – queue behind your candidate!

Babangida was pounding his chest in self congratulation for a job well done, until 19 October, when his new experiment was put to the test. The two parties were selecting their candidates for the December governorship election, using the American primary system, and the open ballot system.

The turn-out of party members was astounding. The long queues were surprisingly orderly and the entire exercise was heart-warmingly peaceful. Professor Humphrey Nwosu, the NEC chairman and the Apostle of the open ballot system could not hide his euphoria.

On camera, he beseeched the people

present to behold the wonders of the new system. "With the open ballot system, no *Mago-Mago* [dirty tricks]!" he bellowed, and the electorate concurred. "No *wuru-wuru* [hanky-panky]", he enthused, and the crowd roared an approval.

But that was as far as Nwosu's success run could take him. Twenty-four hours later, when the results started coming in, Nigerians discovered that the panorama they were watching was a throw-back to the nightmarish First and Second Republics.

The First Republic was particularly entertaining. Thugs hired by opponents faithfully voted for you, only for you to discover during counting that all the ballots had been spoilt, thanks to the acid the thugs tossed into your ballot box. The more enterprising ones erected private election booths in their bedrooms where their faithful followers voted many times in comfort.

Hijacking ballot boxes

In the Second Republic, we eliminated multiple ballot boxes to eliminate acid votes, but we did not eliminate hijacking of ballot boxes. Indeed, the contestants employed mobile policemen who tear-gassed voters and stole the boxes. Perhaps you heard of Nigeria's foremost social critic, Tai Solarin who called it the "stolen presidency?" The rigging in the Second Republic was perfected by altering the result sheets.

Modakeke, a little hamlet of a little more than 20,000 people in Oyo State became a spot for pilgrimage for all international journalists covering the 1983 elections. Why? Modakeke returned over 500,000 votes!

We had the variants of all these, and worse in this October's primaries. A woman councillor was hacked to death. A sole administrator of one of the parties was bathed in acid by opponents. Party Returning Officers, charged with conducting the elections, disappeared with the results, resurfaced at party headquarters where they announced different results,

apparently fixed by party executives. A judge who was presiding over an election petition was forced to abandon the case under threat of death.

In all these, NEC stood helpless. After all the primaries were party affairs. But the preponderance of intra-party rigging and the intensity of the ensuing acrimony had good reasons to embarrass and sadden Babangida and his men.

The President and his men did not understand what we understood when we argued against the tedious anachronism called open ballot system. The fault has never been with the system (any system) but with Nigerians. Rigging is not often perpetrated by the ordinary voters, but by those who collate the results. The open ballot simply dragged the people through a charade the end result of which had nothing to do with the wishes of the people.

In Nigeria we dispute anything about figures. We dispute the figure of AIDS victims. We dispute census figures (wait and see what will happen to the last November census when the figures are out). We dispute goals scored in a match. We dispute the number of casualties in an accident. We dispute the number of people killed in a riot. When the World Bank rated us as the 13th poorest nation in the world, we disputed that.

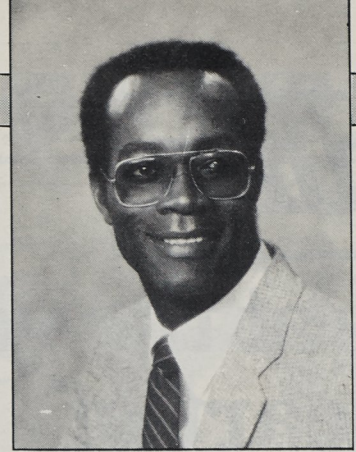
Nigerians are bad losers too. Traditionally, no Nigerian ever dies without some mysterious hand (enemies, juju, witchcraft or poison) being responsible. Death itself has become a kind of fraud, a means of rigging someone out of existence. By the same token all losses must be on account of some malpractices.

Babangida has always boasted of an uncanny understanding of Nigerians. We almost believed him. But it has taken the devastating failure of his new democratic experiment to admit that: "I am constrained to conclude that our deepest problem as a nation is a human one."

So how can a dictatorial regime enthrone democracy, and how can a military regime that has broken all rules inspire a new culture of discipline, law and order? ■

Can Multi-partyism Save Africa?

Africa is in political ferment. Angry demonstrators are facing bullets and tear gas to demand democratic pluralism and political renewal from ossified dictators. A consensus has now emerged that military regimes and the one-party system did not, and cannot, serve the needs of Africa. But will multi-partyism usher in the elusive stability so essential for meaningful development?, asks George B. N. Ayittey.



It would be most naive to believe that the institution of multi-partyism in Africa will necessarily result in democracy. It is not the number of political parties (or the absence thereof) which determines whether a political system is democratic or not.

A de facto one-party system can exist where a large number of small, religiously and tribally-based parties are too weak to challenge the dominant party's lock on power as in Egypt, Gambia and Senegal.

The fact that the US has only two parties does not mean Nigeria must have exactly two parties to assure democracy. Nor must an African country rush off and copy the French or some other alien constitution in order "to have democracy." In every constitution, there is a cultural imprint. Africa must derive its own constitution based upon its unique culture, history and experience.

For centuries, Africa had an inimitable tradition of participatory democracy before Europeans set foot on the continent. As Julius Nyerere once remarked: "The very origins of African democracy lay in ordinary oral discussion - the elders sat under a tree and talked until they agreed."

One little known fact is that, of all the races in the world, the "primitive and backward" black Africans seem to have been the only ones who managed to build political entities in which people of all races and religious faiths could co-exist peacefully without blatant racial and religious animosity.

Romantic glorification, however, is not the issue here, nor is there an intention to claim cultural superiority. If a streak of boastful braggadocio is detected, it is directed, not at Westerners but rather at Africa's educated heads of state and elites who hopelessly could not match the feats of the "primitive" peasants.

Thus, the current emotional debate over one-party versus multi-partyism skirts the fundamental issues. More important to good government in Africa are such concepts as selection and divestiture procedures, checks and balances, rule of

law, accountability, independent councils, and participation by the people.

Any political system which lacks these concepts will become tyrannical, regardless of the number of political parties. The peasants of traditional Africa may have been "illiterate and backward" but they showed themselves to have far more political wisdom and sophistication than today's "educated" African leaders.

Almost everywhere in traditional Africa, the rulers deliberated with councils. No African chief or king could decree a law without the consent or approval of a council. New laws had to be promulgated and ratified in village assemblies for full debate by the people.

"Council meetings were open and any adult could sit on them, participate and air their opinions freely. Dissidents were not massacred or jailed. Unanimity was the rule."

There were four checks against autocratic tendencies: the "royal lineage", the inner council of advisers, the council of elders (headmen) and the village assembly. The Queen mother's duty was to scold a dictatorial chief. If she failed in her duties, she herself could be destooled.

"For any reform to be permanent and enduring, it must be based on and rooted in the principles of the indigenous institutions", said John Mensah Sarbah, an African philosopher. In its quest for a lasting system of government, Africa must borrow a leaf from Sarbah.

The only truly African way of ending the political turmoil on the continent, is to convene a national conference of representatives of all groups to hammer out a national consensus regarding the political future of the country, as was done recently in Togo and Benin.

Before a new constitution is drafted, there has to be a consensus on the nature of the state. Is it going to be a

federal, confederal or unitary state?

Confederation is the type rooted in indigenous African political culture. It guarantees the greatest amount of autonomy than under federation and even unitary-type. It was this local autonomy that generated Africa's immense cultural diversity by allowing the various tribes to cultivate and maintain their own distinctive identities. The confederal type of government should, therefore, be adopted for every African nation.

The next issue to tackle is the constitution. Indigenous Africa had its own constitutions before the Europeans arrived. Of course they were not written, but that does not mean there were none. What African leaders and elites failed to do after independence was to build upon these indigenous constitutions.

To write new ones, Africa must forget about the US or the French or any other constitution. We must create or evolve Africa's own constitution based upon its unique historical experience and culture.

A good constitution for a modern African nation is one which guarantees the freedom of its people and limits the powers of the state. In other words, a good constitution views the state as necessarily tyrannous and must therefore protect the people from the government. This principle is rooted in indigenous African tradition.

The constitution must also have a Bill of Rights to protect the people against the state. As in the indigenous system, there must be checks and balances and the principles of accountability and participatory democracy upheld by the constitution. There must be explicit language regarding the independence of the judiciary, central bank, media etc.

Copies of the constitution should be lodged with the OAU or the UN with specific instructions to the effect that this constitution cannot be recalled and abrogated by anyone without the expressed approval of the people.

If we are serious about putting a stop to military adventurism in politics, we ought to take effective steps now! ■

South Africa: Warts and all

MY TRAITOR'S HEART

By Rian Malan

Published by **Vintage 1991**,
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road,
London SW1V 2SA.
425pp. **£5.99**

If you think you have heard all about what it is like to live in contemporary South Africa, then read Rian Malan's *My Traitor's Heart*, an autobiographical account of a man's struggle to come to terms with himself and his country. It will make you think again.

Like the Nobel Prize winning South African writer Nadine Gordimer, Malan is probably best described as a radical rather than a liberal, but I doubt he would place much importance on such distinctions. Any satisfactory sense of self-identity is a luxury in short supply in South Africa today according to his appraisal: "I am a white man born in Africa, and all else flows from there."

This is Malan's first book. He is a journalist by profession. Like the best African writers, he is acutely aware of the historical context in which he writes. He has good cause to, being one of the Malan clan "which have been present at all the great dramas and turning points in the history of the Afrikaner tribe": from first landing on African soil, through wars against the Zulus and the British, to the present. "It seems to me, looking back on history, that all of South Africa's agony is rooted in Dawid Malan's ancient act of self-binding," he says, referring to an eighteenth century relative who scorned the fury of his family to elope with a black woman, yet turned eventually into a "race-hating white savage".

The author is related to D. F. Malan, the so-called architect of apartheid, and General Magnus Malan, the country's infamous former Minister of Defence. Yet, at just 14 years old, he writes to the *Johannesburg Star* newspaper protesting at another black death in police custody. He later finds himself living out the white liberal contradiction – outwardly condemning apartheid while living off its profits and harbouring deep-seated fears of the black culture he patronises; while his father asks him: "What gives you the right to call yourself an Afrikaner?"

He tries to escape the surreal circumstances of living in a white paradise floating in a sea of black hate, but finds himself returning after eight years of

self-imposed exile in the US, unable to deny the conflict within himself and determined to come to terms with it: "I ran away because it was too strange to bear, and when I came home it was stranger than ever. Everyone had blood on their hands." He sets out to write a history of his family but ends up trying to explain the present instead.

What makes this different from any other breast-beating, conscience-stricken white South African's story is its lack of sentimentality or self-pity, its honest and unsparing vision, a scrupulous attention to telling detail and a determination to question everything – including himself. In attempting to exorcise his personal demons he becomes a seeker of truth who ruthlessly hunts down hypocrisy wherever he finds it.

"My Traitor's Heart contains words and sentiments that make the cynic squirm with their honesty and the intellectual cringe with their directness. Malan does not shrink from the horrors that characterise South African life."

My Traitor's Heart puts contemporary South Africa under the microscope. Malan, because he has nothing to lose, dares to ask questions others would rather avoid. It is his only recourse. In so doing, he sours any easy hopes that might still be held of the so-called New South Africa in this work which is topical, relevant and desperately real.

Malan sees life in South Africa as a collection of confounding contradictions that nobody should be allowed to deny. He attacks its sacred cows, both black and white, and the hypocrisy and oppression that is endemic to it. "One of the township's most prominent black journalists chuckled bleakly when I asked him why the full story of the arson attack on Winnie Mandela's home had never been written. 'You write it,' he said. 'You're white, you might get away with it.'"

You could say Malan plays the devil's advocate and at times he seems to revel in that role. His objective is to make everybody feel as uncomfortable with themselves as he

does. And he usually succeeds.

As a member of the white tribe of Africa, there is much in Malan's character of the straightforward bloodmindedness peculiar to the outlaw Afrikaner culture which imposed itself so brutally on the landscape and people of southern Africa, who believed "a weak and doubtful man would soon be a dead one".

My Traitor's Heart contains words and sentiments that make the cynic squirm with their honesty and the intellectual cringe with their directness. Malan doesn't shrink from the horrors that characterise South African life as he has experienced it. "Are you sick and confused?" he asks of the reader, having catalogued another assortment of atrocities by both black and white.

One doesn't have to imagine what tortures the author put himself through to drag this out of himself, and he doesn't spare his readers the details. Like the best autobiographical writing, it appears spontaneous but is cleverly constructed to carry the reader on the author's journey into "the heart of darkness" of his country, aided by the characters he conjures up from the archives of newspaper libraries, the crime desks of police stations and the memories of tribal elders.

Malan is a journalist who learnt his trade the hard way, as a crime reporter in Soweto. He tells the factual in fictional detail, bringing the reader close enough to smell the sweat and blood as the drama unfolds. *My Traitor's Heart* is a sprawling epic, carried along by the power of its subject and peopled by real life characters who assume mythical proportions in the hands of a skilled storyteller.

There is Simon Mpungose, a.k.a. the Hammerman, a Zulu outcast from his clan turned terroriser of the white society that imprisons and brutalises him; George Wauchope, Black Consciousness activist who survived a total of 578 days of detention without trial only to die at the hands of UDF rivals; and Neil and Creina Alcock who settle in the wastelands of Msinga and become revered legends among their Zulu neighbours. These stories, and many others, confound and taunt the reader's assumptions, leaving you confused and dissatisfied with what you thought about South Africa before you picked this book up.

But Malan also gives an insight into what is possible if more South Africans could see things as they are, not as they would wish them to be. In *My Traitor's Heart*, South Africa is revealed as a place where self preservation is a dominant factor when it comes to truth telling. Malan has had the courage to tell it as he sees it.

David Vick