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Africa: the Third Liberation

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Foreword

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, a former student of the University of Edinburgh, was invited by his former university and the Centre of African Studies, as part of Scotland Africa '97, to give a talk which addressed the present situation in Africa and the prospects of the future. This was done in the spirit of sharing experiences across Africa and Scotland that has been at the heart of the Scotland Africa '97 initiative.

The address proved to be so powerful and the event so well attended that it was felt important to make the address available to a wider audience. It stands as given, along with the public response given by Professor King on the same occasion.

Africa: The Third Liberation

Address by Mwalimu Julius K Nyerere, at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, on 9th October, 1997 as part of "Scotland-Africa 97".

Mr. Chairman; the Lord Provost of Edinburgh City; Your Excellencies; Friends.

It always gives me pleasure to re-visit Edinburgh, however briefly.

Not only did I learn a great deal- within and outside the University- between 1949 and 1952; I also enjoyed my time here and made many friends. So I thank you, Mr. Vice Chancellor, as well as the University Centre of African Studies and all its partners and associates in the Scotland-Africa '97 Campaign, for inviting me to come back.

I do not claim to remember all the history which was part of my course almost 50 years ago when I was here. But I did learn at least two lessons, which later reading, travelling and listening, have reinforced.

First, that the masses of the peoples in every land have time and again throughout history, experienced oppression, and have tried to escape from it- either by counter-violence or civil struggle, or ultimately by seeking personal compromises or individual physical evasion- even emigration.

And secondly, that while- individually and collectively- people can, and do, adapt as best they can to events too strong for them, they also remain incorrigibly hopeful. Sooner or later, and possibly by quite different means, individuals and communities do resume their endeavours to secure beneficial change in the economic, social and political organisation of their lives.

One thing is sure. The past of peoples and nations is always a part of their present, and the present a part of their future. The facts of the 1707 Act of Union between Scotland and England, and the Highland Clearances, are part of Scotland's past; the fact, and the result, of the recent Referendum regarding a Scottish Parliament is a knot in the thread connected to that past. I was

here when the Stone of Scone was made hot news by some Scottish Nationalists! At about the same time I visited Wales, and wrote an Essay contrasting Welsh and Scottish Nationalism. I am still rather proud of that early attempt at political analysis. But that's by the way!

One further certainty: for good or evil, change is constant, and rarely if ever painless. Indeed, in world history major change is very frequently not a peaceful process. Why should Africa be expected to be different from the rest of the world, or even (after making allowance for difference in size and timing) different from Scotland?

The slave trade in Africa lasted for centuries. This long period began with the Arab Slave Trade. After the fifteenth century, the much larger scale and more organised slave trade based in Europe gradually replaced the Arab slave caravans of West, Central and Southern Africa. But in Eastern Africa, Arab trading activities continued until well past the time of Dr. Livingstone's travels in Africa.

Much is known of- though rarely talked about- the economic benefits to the USA and to Europe from more than three centuries of their involvement in the African slave trade.

But in Africa itself it is impossible to calculate the social, economic, and political damage of many centuries of being the source of slaves for other members of the Human Race. And since slaves were merchandise, it is good to remember that it was the young, the strong and the most productive persons who were sought, and who died during the wars for procuring slaves. Often the remaining old and very young children became groups of "displaced persons" seeking to attach themselves under protection elsewhere, thus disrupting other vulnerable economic and social groups.

The end of the slave trade- in which many Scottish people played an honourable part- was no liberation for Africa. For it was followed by the Partition and Colonisation of Africa by European Nations. Formal colonisation ended only in 1990 seven years ago; Apartheid only in 1994. And, despite the work of many good and dedicated men and women, colonialism did not leave Africa prepared to become an active and equal player in the rapidly changing world community. For colonialism is inherently racist,

anti-people, (and therefore anti-democracy), and exploitative; the desires or needs of a colonised people were never allowed to prevail against those of the colonial power and its people.

Colonialism's social and political imprint on Africa is very relevant to Africa's present, and its future. The colonial boundaries fixed at the Berlin Conference of 1885 bore little regard to Africa's physical, geographical or ethnic realities. The story and history of the Balkan States is no surprise to Europeans. But the Balkanisation of Africa was much worse; its resultant Nation-States make less geographic, ethnic or economic sense, than the Balkan States of Europe.

Thus, as each of these colonies became a separate independent state, each found itself heterogeneous in ethnic composition, without territorial logic, with an imposed alien "common language" and an administrative structure (both frequently different from that across its "international" borders), with an elite educated in the image of the particular colonial power and without the basic conditions for rapid development.

It is impossible to do more than to illustrate the problems. At independence, Tanzania or Tanganyika then, (four times the size of Great Britain) had approximately 200 miles of tarmac road, and its "industrial sector" consisted of 6 factories- including one which employed 50 persons. The countries which had sizeable Settler or mineral extraction communities (such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia or Congo) had strong links with the world economy, but their own development was entirely concentrated on servicing the needs of the settlers or the mines in one way or another.

Again, despite the Education and Health services provided by some Christian Missionaries and later begun by colonial governments, at independence less than 50% of Tanzanians children went to school- and then for only four years or less; 85% of its adults were illiterate in any language. The country had only 2 African Engineers, 12 Doctors, and perhaps 30 Arts graduates, 1 was one of them. Many countries (such as Congo, Mozambique, Chad or Somalia) were worse off in these respects, although the situation was somewhat better in North and West Africa, where there was a second or even third generation of local people who had received higher education.

In the light of all these things, it is not surprising that social upheaval and violent conflict exist in Africa. On the contrary, it is surprising that there are many African states where a sense of nationhood- however precarious- has been built up within the new states, with social differences and economic conflicts of interests among their peoples being accommodated.

In practice, colonialism, with its implications of racial superiority, was replaced by a combination of neo-colonialism and government by local elites who too often had learned to despise their own African traditions and the mass of the people who worked on the land. External control of African economies continued, usually by the former colonial power.

There was also the manner in which the Cold War was fought out (sometimes with guns) on African soil, as the two ideological Blocs effectively manoeuvred African leaders into serving their interests- or secured the overthrow of a leader who stood in their way. The combination of Apartheid and the Cold War was devastating to the countries of Southern Africa. In the Horn of Africa the Super Powers sometimes swapped clients!

The end of the Cold War should benefit Africa; but that benefit is not visible yet. African states are still among the poorest countries in the world by a long way. Indeed, the poverty gap between them and the developed countries is getting wider and wider all the time. Yet between 1989 and 1996, African states paid about US\$224 billion in SERVICING their debts to the North; Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes 35 of the 47 world's Least Developed nations, paid on average well over two billion dollars a year! Yet the debt continues to mount; whereas in 1982 Sub-Saharan Africa owed some US\$77 billion, by 1995 it owed US\$223 billion! The largest part of that increase is the result of arrears of payments being capitalised - with the Debt Service due naturally going up all the time. Some of these billions were stolen by African Dictators installed and protected by Northern Powers to serve neo-colonial and Cold War interests.

For instance, the new Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly Zaire, has inherited an external debt of US\$14 billion. That country is totally dilapidated. That money did almost nothing for the people of the Congo. It was stolen by Mobutu and his close friends with the assistance or connivance of his American and European Allies.

We all know where that money is; not in the Congo, but in Europe, in the form of cash or property. It is being used in Europe, to make money in Europe. Is it not IMMORAL to ask the poor people of the Congo to pay that Debt?

This External Debt is now a cancer, and a destabiliser in Africa. And I am not sure that it is not now another cause of official corruption. With 40% or more of government revenues being spent every year on servicing the External Debt, Governments find it difficult to provide sufficient funds for Education and Health Services. But they must find it equally difficult, if not impossible, to service the INTERNAL DEBT, or to pay the Civil Service adequately. It would be very surprising if such a situation does not fuel corruption.

In addition to the Debt Burden, Africa's terms of trade have been moving downward almost continuously since the mid-1970s; the prices gained from its exports fell, while the prices of its imports rose. The statistics have been a little better in this decade, between 1990 and 1994 Africa's terms of trade fell by only 2.2% a year! The Uruguay Round Agreement (and the establishment of the W.T.O. which went with it) will cause Africa to lose another two to three billion dollars a year on its international trade; the estimates vary but are generally within that range. Meanwhile, Aid is declining - both as a proportion of the Gross National Product of the OECD countries and mostly in dollar terms also.

It has always been insufficient to compensate for terms of trade losses. For instance, the United Kingdom's Aid to ALL developing countries has now declined to 0.2% of this country's GNP; it was 0.35% a decade ago. The International agreed target is still 0.7%.

In the light of all these adverse changes, Africa is urged to find its necessary development capital from Foreign Direct Investment (or F.D.I.). For the time being this is, in my view, nonsense! Despite making all the tax and other concessions demanded of it as a pre-condition of such investment, Africa as a whole receives considerably less than 2% of Global F.D.I.- and 92% of that flow to Africa goes to just eight countries, half of them oil exporters! The necessary conditions for attracting FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT are simply not there yet in most African Countries.

In my view, three factors militate against economic and social growth in Africa. The first of these is corruption. This is a wide spread cancer in Africa. Its negative impact on the economic, social, and political development of our continent is undeniable. The primary responsibility for eradicating this cancer from our Societies, is our own in Africa. But I join with the NGO, *Transparency International* in pointing out that corruption involves a briber as well as a bribed, a Giver as well as a Receiver! Very few developed countries have made the giving of bribes in foreign countries illegal: a number of them classify such bribes as being tax-deductible business expenses. (And I have already hinted at a possible link between the External Debt and official corruption in Africa).

The second factor which makes business reluctant to invest in Africa is political instability. The background to this I have already tried to explain. But it is important to point out that poverty itself is a destabiliser. Some of the so called ethnic conflicts in Africa are often conflicts about jobs, land, and education opportunities. The struggle for political power is often a struggle to control the limited resources available.

If Rwanda and Burundi had more land, or became successful African Singapores, we would be hearing less about ethnic conflict between Hutus and Tutsis in those two countries. When things are not going well blaming the "Them" for our plight is very natural. And this is not confined to Africa: in a Europe of full employment there is less xenophobia.

But even if African countries were to become paragons of good governance and political stability, despite the corruptive and disruptive nature of poverty itself, foreign investors would not be coming rushing to Africa. Most African countries still lack the necessary physical infrastructure and the education and training in skills needed for rapid economic and social development. This, in my view, is the third and the most important factor militating against significant flows of Foreign Direct Investment to Africa. Until this lack is remedied through substantial and sustained investment in those areas, African countries could pass all the laws the IMF and the World Bank might prescribe, and privatise everything including their prisons, but the foreign investors will not come; instead they will go to such Asian, Latin American or East European countries where the infrastructure is more developed and the modern skills are available. A little corruption

here and there, or a little political instability will not discourage them, if they can make money!

Yet despite all the things I have been saying. I believe that Africa is now on the move towards a new liberation. For there are quite definite signs that the peoples of Africa have again resumed the struggle against tyranny, corruption, and unrepresentative government. I believe that this movement is now so widespread in Africa that it is bound to triumph, albeit gradually. Increasingly African governments are becoming and will become representative of the people; struggles against corruption are now being waged in many countries in Africa including my own. And as the current move towards cooperation and concerted action among Africa's states continue the struggle against neo-colonialism will become increasingly more effective.

The late President Mobutu of Zaire was the biggest and the most notorious of the looting leaders of Africa. He rose to power and stayed in power for more than thirty years only because he received unstinting external support- from America and Europe despite his ruthless exploitation and suppression of the peoples of Zaire.

He has now gone. But he has left the country in a state of destitution as well as economic and social collapse. President Kabila needs full support and the New Leadership of Africa will give him full support, in the hope and belief that he and his colleagues will genuinely try to lay the foundations of a state based on the principle of public honesty and the dignity and well-being of all citizens.

But the change in Zaire is only the latest event in a whole series of wholesome changes in Africa. Very few of them hit the headlines in Europe (most are not even reported in mainstream media) but together they represent a strong current of hope for the future of Africa.

The Organisation of African Unity was set up by African states in 1963. Its name was as much an expression of hope as it was of serious intention; it was based on the principles of anti-colonialism, anti-Apartheid, and non-interference in the internal affairs of member-states. Being one of the hopeful, in a moment of extreme exasperation I later once described the OAU as a Trade Union of African Heads of State!

We protected one another, whatever we did to our own peoples in our respective countries. To condemn a Mobutu, or Idi Amin or a Bokassa was taboo! It would be regarded as interference in the internal affairs of a fellow African State!

But this is now changing. The principle of Africa's non-interference within Africa is in practice beginning to be reinterpreted. The demands and needs of Africa's peoples for peace and justice and representative government are being taken into account in the decisions and actions of the Organisation of the African Unity. Many current leaders in Africa will not accept the overthrow of civilian governments by military coups, or welcome at their meetings those involved in the massacres of minority ethnic groups in their own countries. Nor do they now feel obliged to uphold the legal inviolability of systematic, corrupt and ruthless tyrannies when the people endeavour to overthrow them.

This change of attitude is very recent; for as late as 1994 the Leaders of the genocide in Rwanda were received at the OAU Summit in Tunis without a murmur. What made that experience even more painful was the fact that it was this same Summit which also welcomed President Mandela as Head of State, representing a democratic, post-Apartheid South Africa.

The OAU has backed the ECOWAS states in their actions- military and economic-against the post-election military seizure of power in Sierra Leone. It backed the swift action by the SADC countries against an attempted military coup d'état in Lesotho. It has supported the East African countries in their sanctions against the military junta in Burundi. Far from defending Mobutu, it closed its eyes at support given to Kabila's Liberation Army by some Member States of the OAU, some of them not even neighbours of Zaire; and hastened to welcome Kabila as the representative of the new Congo at the Summit Meeting in Harare. And so on. Africa, and its leaders, are changing. |

In economic terms too there are the beginnings of change for the better. Now, new life and seriousness is being given by African leaders to intra-state economic cooperation, with social and political cooperation for specific purposes inevitably following.

SADC (the Southern Africa Development Community) is probably the most effective of the sub-regional organisations for intra-

state cooperation. The future of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) depends very much upon Nigeria, its biggest Member. It has played and is still playing a crucial role in West African efforts to secure peace and representative government in Liberia and Sierra Leone. A prosperous and democratic Nigeria would play an even greater role in the economic and political evolution of West Africa. And further, organised cooperation between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda is in the process of being revived- with the inclusion of some neighbouring states likely in the future.

Most important of all, the peoples of Africa are increasingly refusing to acquiesce in their own further impoverishment. And further, they are increasingly both able and willing to exert communal pressure on their national and local leaders.

The period of national leadership by unaccountable elites or by the military is on its way out in Africa; few of its countries are still under military rule. And change is in process. It is these changes-not expectations of massive flows of Foreign Direct Investment-which make me so confident about the future of Africa. Africa will have to rely upon Africa. African Governments will have to formulate and carry out policies of maximum national and collective self-reliance. If they do Africa will develop; if they don't Africa will be doomed. I am confident because I believe that the peoples of Africa are beginning to realise that if they want to develop, and develop in freedom, then there is no alternative to self-reliance.

A final word on Democracy in Africa. Direct multi-party periodic elections are to-day an essential part of Western Europe's democracy; but they are not the whole of it. And European experience (of Germany for instance) indicates the links between democracy and prosperity -or prosperity and democracy; - and, as I tried to indicate earlier, the links between prosperity and stability. Effective African democracy has to grow from Africa's current social and economic realities. What matters about democracy in Africa is that national and local governments be broadly representative of the needs and aspirations of their peoples; the means through which representativeness is effected may well vary at any one time from country to country and from European patterns.

The peoples of Africa- like the people of this country- need democracy. But it must be allowed to be their own form of democracy. By definition, democracy cannot be imposed from outside; nor can it be given by outsiders, however good their intentions. Pre-packaged, Coca-Cola democracy cannot help Africa.

Mr. Chairman. The whole world is going through a period of very rapid change, carried forward by technological developments about which we often know nothing and understand less, yet the effects of which none of us can escape. You in Scotland, and we in Africa, are being brought closer together all the time, even without our knowing it. But knowing more about each other, about our respective hopes, problems, and aspirations, we may all be better able to contribute towards the building of a human community in which all of us would like to live.

I thank all those who have organised and participated in Scotland Africa '97 for their work. May its fruits be many, and long-lasting.

Thank you!

Mwalimu Nyerere: *Africa: The Third Liberation*

A Response by Kenneth King

Mwalimu, High Commissioners Shareef and Ulenga, Lord Provost, Friends, Students and Colleagues:

Those who don't know Swahili usually know just two words. Both are intimately connected to our speaker.

The first is *Mwalimu* - Teacher - and after his lecture tonight we can all understand perfectly why he still carries this as his preferred title wherever he goes. Heads of State current and retired are called many things, but I can't think of any who has been given the name of one of the world's most crucial but frequently most under-regarded professions, and who has breathed respect and status into that term throughout his life. Enthusiasm, humour and the provision of memorable phrases and frameworks for us to go on and develop on our own. But like the best teachers, he is always learning, always reading new material, and he seems genuinely more fascinated by our questions and our views than by his own talk or lecture. (As President, he made a point of just dropping in to the national university to listen to the students and to join in the debates of the day. Even as a student himself, he was a teacher: at his first admission interview here in Edinburgh he was told by the professors who advised him- "You must take a foreign language, Nyerere"; "I already am", he said. "You mean you want me to take **two** foreign languages- English and something else?!" (Nyerere won the argument)

But unlike most teachers, he has seen his class-size grow over the years. This particular classroom (and it must be one of the longest in the world) has had a House Full notice on it for several days. But you have seen why- his message and his challenges appeal to the young and to the old- to students and to policy makers- to those from this country who have worked in Tanzania or elsewhere in Africa- and to those who have never been there. In a real sense, his message and analysis is not just for Africa, despite the title of the talk; it is relevant for Scotland and for OECD countries. His classroom has become global; it has become the world.

His visit, coming in the year of Scotland Africa '97, is most fitting, because, as you have heard, he acknowledges the negative in

Africa- the reality of strife and suffering- but he sees very clearly a New Africa emerging, self-reliant and independent of aid and charity. He has always been aware of the enormous richness and diversity of Africa's contribution to the world. Just as we in Scotland have been aware during these last many months of celebrating the multiple connections between Scotland and Africa, and have delighted in Africa's arts, culture, and intellectual creativity.

The second word most non-Swahili speakers tend to know is also linked indissolubly to our speaker. *Ujamaa*- togetherness, community, socialism. It speaks to his life long vision of building together, whether of the school with its productive village or neighbourhood, of the university with its city, or of individuals within their supportive communities. But *Ujamaa* also explains his early search for unity within East Africa, and his on-going commitment to Pan-Africanism. Today, it drives his vision of an expanding Southern African Development Community- SADC from the Cape to Nairobi, and his search to give more living room to the communities in Rwanda and Burundi. It inspires also the People-centredness of the newly founded Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation.

Ujamaa also has very strong resonances with the principles of the Commonwealth, cutting across ethnicities, colour and creed, and emphasising common beliefs in humankind. Hence it is particularly appropriate that Mwalimu has spoken tonight in a lecture that links City and University, and in a spirit that will commend itself to the leaders who will be here in two weeks' time.

Finally, *Ujamaa* is about the supremacy of the moral economy. It is about the importance of human values, integrity, and commitment to the other. These concerns with our neighbours and with equity in our shared development have shone out from much that he has said to students and staff during the day and to all of us tonight.

Class, can I ask you to thank Mwalimu for bringing us together this evening, and for inspiring us to plan for a great deal more between our countries. We shall need an even bigger classroom when we invite you back in ten years' time!

Asante Mwalimu!

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