Nationalism in Colonial Africa
by THOMAS Hodgkin.

Friederich Mueller, 10/6

Basil Davidson

Nationalism has had a bad press in recent years; and with reason. The intellectuals had got it into their heads to distrust it. Didn't Franco invade and crush the Spanish Republic in the baleful name of "the national idea"? Wasn't nationalism the last-ditch defence of the Establishment? Didn't the working categories of bourgeois thought, and refuse to overhaul its quarrels and unite? We saw the League of Nations driven headlong on the rocks of fascism and war. We, the intellectuals, one by one fished our silly solemn symbol of "young nations" and "old nations", and go about to smash half the world for this or that nationalist lunacy. Who could foresee that nationalism would become the road to self-liberation there and we are far enough removed, in this process of self-liberation there would be a period of "bogus liberation" when the native bourgeoisie would exercise control and it was not admitted to that new world except as a restatement of their past so much as a modern notion of nation-states is not simply a choice, a fashion, a passing political tactic. On the contrary, it is the product of all those many factors which have combined, these many years, into the African awakening of our day. It is the product of Imperialism. It is the product of the gradual disintegration of tribal society, of the undermining of old chieftaincies, of the progressive nationalisation of agriculture, of the passing of tribal land tenure. It is the product of the growth of towns and cities, up and down Africa, into which the detribalisation and the quadruple its pathetic "native slums" over the past few years. It is the product, in short, of the detribalisation and the urbanisation (and, increasingly, now, of the industrialisation) of many millions of Africans, driven out of the world of their own. As Hodgkin shows, Dakar in Senegal has grown from 92,000 inhabitants in 1936 to 300,000 in 1955; Bamako in the French Sudan from 22,000 in 1941 to 100,000 in 1955; Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo from 27,000 in 1935 to 340,000 in 1955. Here in these seething conglomeration of shanties, huts, ker-chez, which the colonial government has no idea of the African National Congress, and it is in terms of building a multi-racial South African nation that they conceive their future.

This crystallisation of Africa into nation-states reflects the imperialist world that surrounds them, and therefore has a strong inevitability. Not for nothing has the union of African history, for example, withdrawn latterly before the practical struggle for self-government within national frontiers. Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana records in his autobiography how he and African leaders from the West African colonies, meeting at their West African conference in London in 1946, "had long discussions and exchanged views closely associated with the consideration of the Union of West African Socialist Republics". One of the objects of Nkrumah's victorious Convention

People's Party, according to its statutes, is "to support the demand for a West African Federation and of Pan-Africanism by promoting unity-of-action among the peoples of Africa and of African America. And on the occasion of the dissolution of the Gold Coast in 1956, that the imperial government would agree to Gold Coast independence in 1957. Nkrumah recalls, "I reflected on the long and difficult road which we have traveled toward the goal of Independence. African nationalism was not confined to the Gold Coast or the new Ghana. From now on it must be Pan-African and the ideology of African political consciousness and African political emancipation must spread throughout the whole continent, into every nook and corner of it."

Meantime, while this spreading process went on, the independence struggle in the Gold Coast rapidly became confined to the Gold Coast. Probably there was no other way: yet such was the preserving power of imperialism. The independence movement of the Gold Coast have never been concert with those of Nigeria: nor those of British Africa with French Africa. Willy-nilly, for all their ideas about internationalism, African leaders were pushed further and further into a limited nationalism; and it remains to be shown how and when they will reverse their tracks.

For the truth is that this crystallisation toward nation-states is not simply a choice, a fashion, a passing political tactic. On the contrary, it is the product of all those many factors which have combined, these many years, into the African awakening of our day. It is the product of Imperialism. It is the product of the gradual disintegration of tribal society, of the undermining of old chieftaincies, of the progressive nationalisation of agriculture, of the passing of tribal land tenure. It is the product of the growth of towns and cities, up and down Africa, into which the detribalisation and the quadruple its pathetic "native slums" over the past few years. It is the product, in short, of the detribalisation and the urbanisation (and, increasingly, now, of the industrialisation) of many millions of Africans, driven out of the world of their own. As Hodgkin shows, Dakar in Senegal has grown from 92,000 inhabitants in 1936 to 300,000 in 1955; Bamako in the French Sudan from 22,000 in 1941 to 100,000 in 1955; Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo from 27,000 in 1935 to 340,000 in 1955. Here in these seething conglomeration of shanties, huts, ker-chez, which the colonial government has no idea of the African National Congress, and it is in terms of building a multi-racial South African nation that they conceive their future.

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indigenous culture, their African consciousness, their sense of distinction and originality: and it is into these specific al qualities that they have infused their ideas and things of Europe. And it is here that the onlooker, deafened by this cataract of African energy and African talk, will become aware that emerging African culture—this mingling of their ideas with our ideas, this nationalism in Africa—will not be a poor thin copy of what others have already done. The apostles of nigritude may lose their way in myths and mysticism; it remains true that the nation-states of Africa will make their own original contribution to the sum of human wisdom.

Which is as much as to say, no doubt, that Africans will take their own way towards independence. One could allude to some examples. In the Belgian Congo, the diligent and autocratic Belgians have long been labouring at the task of building "an African middle class": by which they mean a more or less numerous body of Africans who would "side with them" in exchange for social, economic, and perhaps even political privilege. Yet it turns out that the nationalist movements in the Belgian Congo—perhaps one should say proto-movements, for they are still at an early stage—have recruited their most solid adherents precisely from these "privileged strata". The dilemma here is likely to present itself to a bold and thoughtful man of the Bakongo or the Baluba peoples to name only two of the Congo's leading tribes: is it not whether to "side with the Belgians" or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty—or whether history will demand him to give his loyalty—to a Bakongo or Baluba, to a movement or to independence embracing Congo nationalism. He feels himself on the threshold of a new life, an altogether different life, certainly a better life. What will he find beyond?

It will be obvious to anyone who has given more than a passing thought to the problems of Nigeria, these last few years, that imperialism has had much less influence in this crystallisation process than most of us have previously believed. No doubt it has proved crucial to the persistence of the principal political movement of the 15 million people of Northern Nigeria has found itself in growing conflict with the principal political movements of the two southern regions. It may be convenient to recall that imperialism to the Yoruba movement, in the south, is often in conflict with the Ibo movement. But nobody need question that these conflicts have dined off the imperialist movement— that is, in fact, endemic to these old established societies and their newly-felt national consciousness.

But that is not to say that the policies of the imperial powers cannot and do not profoundly influence the immediate situation and the development of these nation-states in West Africa and of nationalist movements in other parts of Africa. Conservative and Labour colonial policy has seldom differed in more than emphasis and detail: but that is not to say that the shape and texture of these new African nations and "nations" (for some of them are still early on the road) could not and would not be very different in the circumstances of a socialist Britannia. This does not mean that constitutional advances under a capitalist Britannia are not real advances: in the sense that in African national consciousness is a step towards equality and independence. But it does mean that socialists in Britannia owe a great debt (as well as to others) to give much more serious attention to the colonial fact than they have ever been willing to give in the past. Unless we understand what is happening to the British economy and society, we have a sound appreciation of the meaning and potentialities of nationalism in Africa, we shall make a hash of our future ties with these peoples who are now becoming nations. We shall lose what chances we have and already they are slender enough — of helping our natural political allies against our natural political enemies.

This need to think about the realities of colonialism is the principle reason why Hodgkin's book is valuable and important. Here in sensibly compressed form there are set forth in clear detail a great many of the assumptions about circumstances: the policies of the colonial Powers and their contradictions, for example, that Africans in the Belgian Congo may be engine drivers and skilled workers and so on but Africans in neighbouring Northern Rhodesia may not:

The Accumulation of Capital
by JOAN ROBINSON
(Macmillan, 1956, 28/-)

Since Keynes' General Theory, two books on economics have appeared in Britain that, in the reviewer's opinion, represent major contributions to economic science. These are Professor A. W. Lewis's Theory of Economic Growth and Mrs. Joan Robinson's Accumulation of Capital. Now at last we are seeing a convergence of economists from various quarters upon the problems of long-period economic change.

In what follows, I shall concentrate upon Mrs. Robinson's Accumulation of Capital, for it raises the most important complications: a spectrum of technique, economic fluctuations within the long-term process of accumulation, finance, a rentier class (who consume out of profits) diminishing returns, the theory of prices, and international trade. Thus she works into her scheme practically the whole of the conventional content of economic theory. It is truly a work of this kind and scope that is both very close and is, in places, difficult to follow. But it is very rewarding. Not least of the reader's rewards is to find familiar topics put into an unfamiliar context, thereby acquiring new and greater significance.

Historians of economic thought have often suggested that the shift of interest away from dynamics and towards static equilibrium has somewhat clogged his argument by presenting the theory of political profit. Keynes, on the other hand, was a great and general virtue in strong simple words; for the subject positively groans with them in exchange for social, economic, and perhaps even political privilege. Yet it turns out that the nationalist movements in the Belgian Congo—perhaps one should say proto-movements, for they are still at an early stage—have recruited their most solid adherents precisely from these "privileged strata". The dilemma here is likely to present itself to a bold and thoughtful man of the Bakongo or the Baluba peoples to name only two of the Congo's leading tribes: is it not whether to "side with the Belgians" or to "side against them": his dilemma is whether he will give his loyalty—or whether history will demand him to give his loyalty—to a Bakongo or Baluba, to a movement or to independence embracing Congo nationalism. He feels himself on the threshold of a new life, an altogether different life, certainly a better life. What will he find beyond?

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pon to be used against the Marxian theory of value of its powerful critique of national socialists and capitalists (a critique which the 'New Welfare' theorists of today are trying desperately to blunt the edge of); but their attack on capitalism was ethically rather than positively conceived, so that in many situations they lead to not 'Capitalism is self-destructive'. Keynes' critique of capitalism was much more effective in this genre; but, being based upon short-period analysis, it was open to the same criticisms as were 'only' short-term defects, which would be eliminated 'in the long run'.

It would be untrue to say that Mrs. Robinson provides a critique of capitalism. Her work is too soberly analytical for that. But some of its implications are disturbing for the supporters of things as they are.

One important concept in her scheme is that of a 'Golden Age'—a period of history in which, to use her own words, 'technical progress is . . . proceeding steadily . . . the competitive mechanism working freely, population growing (if at all) at a steady rate and accumulation going on fast enough to supply all available labour, the rate of profit tends to be constant and the level of real wages to rise with output per man. There are then no internal contradictions in the system. The system develops smoothly without perturbations. Total annual output and the stock of capital . . . then grow together at a constant proportionate rate compounded at the rate of increase of output per man. Much of her analysis is devoted to elucidating the conditions under which a 'Golden Age' can occur, and, more menacingly, to the consequences of these conditions not being fulfilled. The implications of this are that Golden Ages are of rare occurrence (perhaps the nineteenth century in Western Europe was one: perhaps the twentieth) and that in the absence of Golden-Age conditions we may expect falling real wages, unemployment, inflation, balance-of-payments difficulties, and various other evils. This is under-capitalism, defined as an economy in which property is owned by a small number of individuals who hire the labour of a large number at agreed wage rates and organise their work (directly or through hired managers). The excess of the product over the wages bill then appears as income from that bill, thus enabling one's sympathies for the form of society that has evolved it. The same hypothesis of unconscious bias explains the obstinacy with which the orthodox economists refuse to admit that the economy tends spontaneously to full employment, in spite of abundant evidence to the contrary.

But this state of affairs is changing. Either because the awkward facts of capitalism imperatively demand recognition, or because economists are no longer drawn almost exclusively from the comfortably-off classes, academic economics is beginning to range much more freely into the economic phenomena. Since Keynes, the subject of booms and slumps is no longer segregat-ed into a sort of ghetto called 'trade-cycle-theory' or 'economic fluctuations' (note the implication of those titles), but is likely to engage one's sympathies for the form of society that has evolved it. The same hypothesis of unconscious bias explains the obstinacy with which the orthodox economists refuse to admit that the economy tends spontaneously to full employment, in spite of abundant evidence to the contrary.

As I have said, Mrs. Robinson's axioms and postulates are those of a 'capitalist society' (as described above); she does not concern herself with the economics of a socialist society. But much of her analysis is applicable mutatis mutandis to a socialist economy. The fundamental and technical hold good under socialism as under capitalism. Even if wages and profits, considered as class-in-commodities, disappear, there will remain the objectively available income and the surplus that is retained by the planning authority for social purposes. And the relation between consumption (including social services) and capital-accumulation is not utterly different; but it is under capitalism. There is no doubt that Joan Robinson's brand of economics, although it is not socialist economics, is a very sound foundation upon which to build a workable system of socialist economics.

There are no explicit references to Marx in this book. Nevertheless, Marx's spirit hovers over it. Many of the categories that Mrs. Robinson works with are closely akin to those of Marx. Her concept of social classes is very like the Marxian; wages and 'quasi-rent' play a similar part in her analysis to wages and surplus-value in Marx's. The schema of production and simple reproduction with which she starts are very like Marx's; so is her treatment of accumulation and of what Marx calls 'extended reproduction'. Much of her analysis is stereotyped in Marx's terms. There are, no doubt, many points at which the sociological economics of Marx has deeply influenced Mrs. Robinson. This, in the reviewer's opinion, is as it should be. Marxism as a body of thought is sterile; it must be dealt with and interpreted, with intellectual flexibility and in the light of recent history, can enormously enrich and stimulate our social and economic studies of today.

The TORMENT OF SECRECY

by Edward Shils

(Wm. Heinemann, 15/-.)

Professor Shils' book is a study of McCarthyism. Other eminent scholars have written on the prevalence of witch-hunt-ing in the United States, mainly from the angles of constitutional law or of classical liberal theory. Such attacks on McCarthyism have come from those who see its clear infringements of legality and who deplore the use of political and economic blackmail to suppress individuality and enforce conformity. Professor Shils does not address himself to these evils. He devotes himself to analyzing the character of the people who make up the McCarthy group and who deplore the use of political and economic blackmail to suppress individuality and enforce conformity. Professor Shils is a prominent American sociologist, but he knows as much as we do about the British academic sport of pitting the barricades to repel the gar-goneers of transatlantic social science. He has lived with us; he knows us well; he can't be said to love us to excess or to aprove our snobbery, lack of initiative and our acceptance of undemocratic social mores. But in comparing McCarthyism with whatever it is we have in England, we come out best. The "old boy" concept and the disgusting, subtle flatteries that won away the poli-tic members of our political world to the world of deference, the joint com-mittees, the dining clubs, the senior com-mon rooms, from the Commons to the Lords and Boards and beyond are all this when added to the actual and largely accepted hierarchical structure of our political and social world, and to the fact that administration is efficient and pol-i-vice. Rights and wrongs could mean that there is little profit and little power in the business of patriotism in this country. In America McCarthy could terrorise the army, blackmail shipowners and insist that what the President said
about book burning be suppressed by
the official Voice of America. In England the Empire Loyalists quietly lose their deposits.

The class aspect of all this is important. In Parliament both parties contain large numbers of conventionally well-educated people. Using class to mean social and professional educational status there is a struggle between Wykehamist Ministers and Wykehamist civil servants, nor indeed much between Ruskin and W.E.A. backbenchers and University front benches. In contrast the Congressman is, in the popular mind, and sometimes in fact, an ill-educated bigoted time-server, who, if he had any real talents would not be wasting them on the unedifying and unprofitable profession of flattering constituents, getting himself cheap rides and press publicity, and reading high school poems on “America” into the Congressional Record. For nearly one hundred years Congressmen have had something of this reputation, and so for most of this time have civil servants. But with the New Deal a new type of civil servant appeared in Washington — young, sophisticated, interested in theories, despising Congressmen quick to answer under questioning, well educated, often at the Harvard Law School and frequently enough Jewish to arouse the anti-semitism latent in all professional super patriots.

Status anxieties (and the frustrations and aggressions resulting from them) are now an important rival to the constitutional theories of Freud in the literature of American psychology. In respect of the desire of Congressmen to injure the whole profession and the arts, the status thesis is not unhelpful; here it is brilliantly handled by Professor Shils. Scientists suffered at the hands of McCarthy because they are (a) intellectualists, (b) because they have their own internal standards of judging facts and men, and (c) because they are the guardians of secrets. Secrecy, whether or not it is warranted drives the McCarthyites mad. Like all ideas they are incensed by the career of the labour leader, Larkin — of sports-stars, war heroes, and band-leaders. The story of Jim Larkin — of life-stories of men with less social assets — is not clear. The historian, Mr. Fox inevitably draws special attention to this aspect of Larkin’s significance by devoting about half his book to the heroic strike-days of 1907 and 1913 in Dublin, while he skips very briefly over Larkin’s nine years in America and his later activities in the Dail, as a member of the Dublin Corporation, and as General Secretary of the Union of Ireland. Even in dealing with the events to which he devotes most attention, however, Mr. Fox does not always give more than a one-sided picture of the situation. The traditional and bitter mistrust between national and Catholic workers, which Larkin tried determinedly and with great success to overcome, is written off as “sectarianism”, and although this is what it was, seen from the point of view of the class-war line-up which Larkin was trying to bring about, Mr. Fox’s phraseology is too simple to describe such complex and deeply-rooted group attitudes; Larkin’s achievement would seem greater, not less, if its background were more scrupulously presented. Again, Mr. Fox adopts without question Larkin’s own view that the government acutely tried to split the Irish workers, but his account is wilfully misinterpreting the Dublin strike as a nationalist demonstration and sending troops to stir up trouble between Orange and Green factions of the working class; there is no evidence for this, and it seems at least as likely that the civil and military authorities assumed out of sheer obtuseness and force of habit that the Dublin disturbances had nationalistic causes, and reacted in their traditional way.

Mr. Fox tries to take a wide view, so that his eulogistic tribute to Larkin succeeds in re-creating something of the atmosphere of the period; it is all here, the violent oratory at mass meetings, the brawls between strikers and blacklegs, the law-courts hopelessly prejudiced against labour leaders, even such titbits as the revealing fact that police “always made a dead set at any musical instruments when the strikers marched to a band”. On the other hand the purpose nowadays of a book like this — apart from the recognition that performing an act of piety to a lost leader’s memory — is not clear. The historian, even the social historian, will not have much use for it. And the times are surely past when the working class public, even the labour public, felt itself set apart from society in general and identified itself exclusively enough with the labour movement to form a market for this sort of party-literature; when it wants to read now is life-stories of men with less social purpose and more societal appeal than Jim Larkin — of sports-stars, war heroes, and band-leaders. The story of Jim Larkin will appeal, naturally, to those who knew him, and to those who have been inspired by the ideas he stood for, but a wider public can only be reached by the Labour Movement if it realises that this particular genre of propaganda for socialism has no future, but as the work of Socialist Nationalist Movements among impoverished colonial peoples Larkinism may have a new lease.
This chapter examines nationalism in Africa as an idea and movement, beginning with consciousness among people who share similar history, territory, culture, political and economic affiliation, hopes and aspirations in ways that see them as unique and different from others. The chapter looks at the various forms of expression of oneness and uniqueness of various African peoples in their migrations and settlement, through wars of resistance and liberation, culminating in independence in 1957 in Ghana and in the 1960s in the majority of African states. Keywords. Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU). African nationalism was overtly anticolonial. For these nationalist movements, energy was concentrated on gaining freedom rather than planning how to run a country once freedom was achieved. Overthrowing colonial regimes was quite difficult, so these leaders could not afford to spend manpower, funds, and effort planning how to govern their new nations if they were successful. Postcolonial Nationalism in Africa. Each African nation took a unique path toward independence. Hodgkin, Thomas. Nationalism in Colonial Africa. New York: New York University Press, 1957. Joseph, Richard, ed.