

TEXT OF A LECTURE DELIVERED
BY P. A. CURTIS JOSEPH
ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 61st ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREAT
OCTOBER SOCIALIST REVOLUTION
CELEBRATED BY
THE NIGERIA SOVIET FRIENDSHIP AND CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
AT THE
SOVIET UNION CULTURAL CENTRE
SURU-LERE

6th OF NOVEMBER 1978

LAGOS, NIGERIA.

ALL NEWSPAPERS REFUSED TO PUBLISH IT.
EVEN DR. ONAGORUWA READ IT, HE TOOK IT
THE EDITOR DAILY TIMES WHEN HE WAS
THEN THEIR SOLICITOR. PUBLICATION WAS
STILL REFUSED. IT WAS TAKEN FROM HIM
AND POSTED DIRECTLY TO HIM.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen, I regard it as a very great honour to be invited as the guest speaker in this gathering organised in honour of the 61st Anniversary celebrations of the Great October revolution - a revolution which has changed the course of world history.

Permit me to give a name to my topic. I call it "CHOOSING OUR FRIENDS."

As individuals and as nations there are different motives in choosing friends. However divergent the motives may be they of course have one common root - the desire for survival which in itself has taken different shapes and forms from the beginning of human history to this day.

This desire for survival has been manifested in individuals, in groups, associations and classes; in individual nations or groups of nations with identical interests or on continental basis and so on and so forth.

Time it was that man had to battle to protect his individual self against his surroundings and some forces of nature in the very primitive stages of existence. He lived on fruits and other plants and animals that grew wild as himself for survival.

Through trials and errors, man meandered through many stages ranging from family structure, hamlets, villages towns etc until he has made the world what it is today. In all the processes he chose friends, sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly, but always guided by that strong desire to survive.

It is a matter of great regret that with man's practical experiences leading to great knowledge and achievements, man, in his different moods and interests engaged, and still engages in self destruction.

I visited Yerevan, capital of Armenia, one of the fifteen Republics which make up the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics fourteen years ago. Out of the collections of historical writings I saw in one museum, I can never forget the following: "GOD MADE ALL MEN EQUAL, BUT THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF WATER AND SOIL MAKE THEM UNEQUAL."

With this saying working on our minds, let us take ourselves back to when the early man discovered instruments to till the soil and to kill wild animals for keeping body and soul together. He later developed these into instruments of destroying his fellowmen.

Man reached a stage in which he was able to tame wild animals and birds. Some he domesticated with some enticement; some he used force to keep in captivity for use in his desire for survival. He later used these same methods to subdue his fellowmen and make use of him as slave, serf, forced-labour, employee, colonial subject and many other forms of physical and mental slavery.

Starting from individual land owner, he has gone through many processes which had led to the unequal distribution of water and soil on which lies the whole economic problems which has plunged the world into violent clashes ending in two world wars and the present tension which may result into a war of total destruction of everything, animate and inanimate, on this own dear planet.

In the prevailing circumstances, Africa has a decisive role to play in saving the world from the impending mass destruction with all the deadly weapons that are being developed and piled up daily.

And to play this role effectively, it has to do with choosing friends. And to choose the right brand of friends, Africa must know what is best for her in trusting and dealing with foreigners and being vigilant in the activities of her component parts.

There appears to be a new scramble for Africa now. Towards the close of the last century, when empire building was the pride of the British and other European countries were looking for markets for collection of raw materials and for dumping finished products, they all invaded Africa in different forms. With sheer force of arms, with unequal treaties, and what they glorified in calling civilising mission (through religion) they successfully divided Africa into colonies where "unequal distribution of water and soil" featured prominently.

Meanwhile, the United States of America, which fought the British over a century before then to gain her independence, had perfected a new method of colonialism through purely economic domination.

And this she operated throughout the western Hemisphere. It was subtle but very effective. The violent aspect of it was so manipulated that the United States would not be directly or openly involved.

The turning point in world history was marked by the Bolshevik revolution in what was known as Czarist Russia in 1917. The first World war began in 1914. With loans from France, the autocratic Russian Czarist Government entered the 1st world war, ignoring the gathering storm of eventual violent resentments from the masses which steadily led into what is now popularly known as the GREAT OCTOBER REVOLUTION, the 61st Anniversary of which we are partly celebrating today.

The Western powers were worried, especially when the new Government, the first Socialist/Communist Government in the World, led by V.I. Lenin, denounced the war as an imperialist war and signed a peace treaty with Germany. Fourteen countries invaded the young state, but they were beaten back by a brand new corps of fighters who knew what they were fighting for.

The Western powers resorted to economic blockage. Knowing fully well that they, with their capitalist system, could only survive by exploiting labour and other countries, they were certain that the young Soviet State would soon collapse if isolated.

They were under this illusion until the 2nd World war brought out the realities that a new way of life had united fifteen nations together to emerge as a world power known as the UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS. A nation built on self-reliance and sacrifice, without colonies and surrounded by enemies. Not only that, other countries in Europe, between 1939 and 1945, had gone the same way.

Fear gripped the Western powers, most especially, America which now found herself as the leader of the Western capitalist world, having made vdry fabulous profit from sales of arms. The cold war between East and West began in earnest. It was not only meant to stop the spread of Socialism/Communism, but to revert those countries which had chosen this new system, to the capitalist camp.

The United States of America got so worried that it embarked on all forms of measures to change the course of history in the wrong way. There was the massive economic aid to Japan and Germany.

There was the wicked division of Korea into two in 1945 in which she still maintains 42,000 troops and massive military installations for land, air and ocean offensive in South Korea.

She even provoked a war in 1950 which ended in disaster for her three years later. In China she did everything to keep Chiang Kai Shek in power, but ended up by keeping him in Formosa.

She spent thirty years in Vietnam on the mission of massive destructions of lives and properties, but ended up humiliated and with hands stained with blood of defenceless children, men and women.

She embarked on witch-hunt of Communists at home and throughout the Western Hemisphere, toppling Governments through agents of death. But Cuba emerged as the first Socialist Government right under her nose.

Her Western allies with colonies became most "vigilant" and saw red in every progressive movements in their colonies. Nationalism was taken for communism. These only helped to arouse the curiosity of the colonial subjects to know more about the Socialist Countries. Now they knew more.

Eventually, they, presumably through the advice of the U.S., started to grant independence to their colonies in such a way that they could still control their economies and continue with the exploitation.

This is where question of "CHOOSING OUR FRIEND" comes in, in present day Africa when the presence of Soviet and Cuban troops in the Continent has sent so much current of panic into the circles of the capitalist countries.

Out of the press comments and statements I have read about the presence of the U.S.S.R. and Cuba in Africa, the one credited to Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, the British Conservative Party leader, is most revealing. She wondered what the Russians and Cubans were doing in Africa where they had no economic interests. She concluded that it must be that they wanted to spread the Communist ideology.

In the length and breadth of Africa there had been many statements and comments from high, medium and low places for and against the presence of Soviet, Cuba and some socialist countries in Africa.

invisible or visible foreign masters, and many made objectively in conformity with the realities of present day Africa.

I will now continue to examine the issues involved and give my own candid opinion, having in mind the best interest of Africa and the oppressed peoples all over the world in particular and in the best interest of permanent world peace in general.

The desire for survival is the orbit on which rotates the whole economic network of human existence either as individuals or as groups. Man needs three basic things to exist-food, clothing and shelter. The pursuit of these led to adventures and misadventures in competitions, both healthy and unhealthy. It created enemies and friends, wars and uneasy peace because of greed and selfishness until it finally reached the stage of **CAPITALISM.**

In a capitalist society, the fabulously rich are always in the minority while the masses are very poor. There is always conflict between the classes which are made up upper, middle and lower classes. At this stage, exploitation within the country is complete, and to maintain the status quo, there must be other territories to plunder. This is the highest stage of Capitalism called **IMPERIALISM**, which is described in a dictionary as "the policy of extending the rule or authority over other countries and colonies."

In a capitalist society there is no peace. And among capitalist countries there is no peace because of the ever present conflicting interests. The history of Europe gives a true picture of these situations in all its nakedness. So when it reached the highest stage of Imperialism, explorers, plunderers and adventurers from Europe spread to other continents to discover new lands for exploitation.

Though the exodus of those they call the "Founding Fathers" of America after a century that Columbus discovered that new world, had a religious undertone, the real motivating force was economic. And religion has always played a very effective role in conditioning one's mind to total submission for any purpose in the service of capitalism and Imperialism.

By 1664, a confederacy known as the United colonies of New England had come into existence in America. Other groups joined and became so powerful that they rebelled against the British Government and went to war in 1776 to create the foundation of what is

The progress of the United States on the way to becoming a world power was characterised by the elimination of the aboriginal owners of the land (the Red Indians), armed conflicts between the different groups of early European settlers, importation of Africans as slaves to work in plantations and the gradual economic domination of South American countries and Canada.

After the declaration of American Independence in 1776, there were many wars fought between European countries for American markets both North and South. The United States of America, in turn had to fight the European countries to preserve these markets in her own interest.

In 1823, James Monroe, U.S. President, proclaimed the "Monroe Doctrine" which aimed at keeping European powers away from the Western Hemisphere.

During the period that Napoleon created panic in Europe and after his defeat, Latin American countries that were ruled by European powers took the advantage to become independent with encouragement from the U.S. The Monroe Doctrine was therefore proclaimed to keep the Western Hemisphere under the influence of the U.S. purely for economic reasons.

Having perfected the new method of economic domination, the U.S. withdrew her forces from the small American states gradually during the Hoover and Roosevelt Administrations, gave up special privileges it claimed and cut down high tariff barriers in place of new trade agreements. And there were a series of conferences to keep the Americas together. One took place in Montevideo in 1933, one in Buenos Aires in 1936, one in Lima in 1938 and one in Havana in 1940.

With the new fear created by the "discovery" of the power of the Soviet Union during the 2nd world war, other conferences took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1942, Mexico City in 1945 and Brazil in 1947. To crown it all, the U.S. manipulated the creation of Organisation of American States in Bogota, Columbia in 1948.

As I mentioned previously, other countries in Europe established Socialist States after the war and other countries in the far East were on the way. The U.S. thinking ran riot. She introduced the European Recovery Programme, popularly known as the Marshall Plan, helping Germany to recover very rapidly.

She pumped money into Japan to check the emergence of Socialist States and made friends with dictator Chiang Kai Shek of China. She divided Korea in 1945, she planted Chiang Kai Shek in Formosa in 1949 and divided Vietnam in 1954. Needless to mention other states in South East Asia where the U.S. caused a lot of havoc.

West Germany and Japan are the richest capitalist countries today at the expense of the U.S. with its battered economy. But they still have to look for overseas markets to maintain the status.

South Korea cannot exist for one year if American capital and armed forces and Japanese capital are withdrawn. Formosa cannot exist without American capital and military might. Vietnam has been united almost immediately after the withdrawal of U.S. army and capital. And Cuba is now a powerful SOCIALIST STATE with help without strings from U.S.S.R.

Now the U.S. has turned its attention to Africa when it is evident that the new type of domination, (economic domination) introduced by its European allies is gradually being exposed and failing.

In making friends, Africa has to take into consideration the fact that the United States and her European allies build their economies by exploiting individuals and nations through what they call competition based on free enterprise, but which in fact have developed into monopoly and oligopoly which can never survive without exploitation.

Let us now scan through the activities of the Soviet Union and its influence on international development generally for the past 61 years.

Before the great October Revolution of 1917 Russia was an underdeveloped part of Europe. It had an Empire dominated by the Czars, their families and a few favoured people who were fabulously rich while the masses suffered all privations. The nation itself was very poor as there were very few industries and she, with the Empire provided markets for the industries of Central Europe.

The Great October Revolution introduced what is known as control of the means of production and distribution by the people. In other words: Planned Economy, which eliminated all forms of competition and monopoly, the systems that lead to internal contradictions and the need to seek overseas markets. That was after the new state successfully defeated supporters of the old order and their supporters from fourteen countries and became known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Incidentally some of these countries, which took part in invading the new state have taken the same path after the 2nd world war. The light has shone on them.

The first 5 years Development plan was introduced in 1928. As I said earlier, the western powers thought that by isolating the new state, it would collapse. But this new way of life, this new form of economic planning abolishing all forms of exploitation of man by man, of country by country and which finally nailed the last coffin of the idea of Empire building, was much underrated. They never thought any state could develop, become great and powerful without oppressing and exploiting others. It never happened in history before then.

Within twentyfive years after the first 5-year plan, the Soviet Union was able to wipe out illiteracy, mobilize human and natural resources for the common good. These only became known in her performances during and after the 2nd World War leading to the defeat of Hitlerite Germany and Japan.

Since then the all-round developments, never seen in history, have been growing by leaps and bounds, all based on self-reliance and self efforts. In comparison with the U.S. and once powerful European countries, the U.S.S.R. is only 61 years old.

She launched the first spacecraft (SPUTNIK) to circle the earth in 1957, She sent the 1st man into space in 1961. In 1966, the 1st space craft soft-landed on the moon from the Soviet Union. We can from these achievements see how rapid science developed in the Soviet Union within forty years in a once very poor underdeveloped country with an empty treasury in 1917, followed by war against internal and external enemies and without borrowing money or importing experts from anywhere. This is a miracle of the 20th century.

The U.S.S.R. is the first country in the world to completely wipe out illiteracy, unemployment and to introduce free education at all levels, thus creating equal opportunity for all and bringing out the best in man to work selflessly for the common good.

Between 1961 and 1967. I visited the Soviet Union about ten times and I have been in eight out of the fifteen Soviet Republics, visiting institutions of learning from nursery to University. I visited farms, factories, Government offices holiday resorts, newspaper offices, homes of high officials, workers and farmers etc etc. I have been in all communist countries in Europe except Albania. I was in the Peoples's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. And I was able to see the new relationship between states. Even when there are differences they are of a very different form from those within the capitalist countries who fight for overseas markets and territories purely for economic reasons.

At this stage we will have to go back to that question posed by Mrs Margaret Thatcher about what the Soviet Union and Cuba want in Africa. To be able to have a clear idea about this we have to examine the bases of how and why the Soviet State was created.

The Industrial Revolution which started in Great Britain in the 1700s marked a turning point in human history.

Slavery in human history passed through many stages from ancient times. It changed into serfdom in Europe in the 1300s. It started again when the Portuguese started exploring Africa in the forties and bringing black people to sell as slaves in Europe. In the 1500s, Africans were captured by the Spaniards and taken to the Spanish colonies in America to work in plantations. By the 1600s, using African as slaves had become fashionable in America. That brutal aspect of slavery ended in the 1800s.

The Industrial revolution (apart from prisoners of war being used as slaves) changed the form of slavery. Man learnt the technic of exploiting the labour of his fellow man.

Workers were being used for 12 to 14 hours a day. Even children of 10 worked for 10 to 14 hours a day.

As is typical in human history, changes were taking place, either out of convenience of employers to give their employees some measure of education to improve production or through agitation by employees.

By near the close of the 18th century, industrialisation had spread to North America and Capitalism had taken deep root and paved the way for IMPERIALISM. Karl Marx, a German, was born in 1818. He grew up with this confused system of man's exploitation of man and country domination of country where very few become very rich and the vast majority live in penury with wars always breaking out.

A brilliant scholar, he studied law in the Universities of Bonn and Berlin and obtained a doctorate degree in philosophy in the University of Jena, in 1841. He was very much concerned with the unjust situation in Europe in particular and the world generally.

He analysed human society following sequence of natural sources from historical stages leading to war, inflation, depression etc. And worked out a solution that would put the means of production and distribution under public control. To achieve this, all workers and oppressed peoples of the world must be organised to unite to fight and take over the reins of Government and establish a new world economic system that will banish for ever, all forms of poverty, exploitation, ignorance and war.

He was persecuted and haunted from place to place until he died in Britain in 1883. But his great admirer, friend and financier Engels, and many others who saw with him helped to keep his ideas alive. So much that no study of economics can be complete without having knowledge of the economic principles on which Marx idea of a new world are based.

Out of Karl Marx later disciples was V. I. Lenin of the old Russia, who modified idea of having a universal take over of public means of production and distribution. To wait until the whole world could be mobilised in this direction would take very long time. It was then better to start in one country. And he saw oppressed Czarist Russia as a fertile ground for such an experiment.

Like Karl Marx, Lenin was very intelligent and qualified as a lawyer after a lot of difficulties due to his revolutionary activities. But unlike Marx who had to work mostly alone, other marxist groups abounded in Europe and within Russia. So when he was exiled, revolutionary activities continued. He had to start a newspaper "ISKRA" in Germany in collaboration with other marxists, copies of which were regularly smuggled into Russia.

Anyway, to cut a long story short, the revolution took place in 1917 and started the all-round developments I mentioned previously. From the real back ground of the development of Marxist Socialist ideology, the ultimate aim is to create a new world free from any form of man's inhumanity to man, extreme rich and extreme poverty, colonialism, domination and all forms of evil that have impeded humanity in creating a world free from fear, from ignorance, from wars and poverty.

As contributions to achieve these aims, the Socialist countries are duty bound to help peoples who struggle for freedom, for economic independence, against forces of imperialism without any strings attached and without any hope of economic gains; and without imposing themselves on any country.

That is why when the corrupt Batista Government of Cuba - once a haven of prostitutes, gamblers and American millionaires - was overthrown by Fidel Castro who established a people's Government, the U.S.S.R. came to her aid when invited and has helped her to maintain its independence and become very powerful.

Angola, Mozambique, Congo and all the freedom fighters in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Southern Africa and other parts of Africa who want to build independent economics and establish popular Governments owe their existence to the socialist countries led by the Soviet Union. They are fulfilling voluntary international obligations to rid Africa from all forms of exploitation.

The growth of Socialist countries from 1917 has put a stop to Global imperialist wars and stopped imperialists from using force of arms to plunder weak countries of Africa.

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What the imperialist countries want in Africa is quite clear, the U.S. that once led the world in wealth now has a sagging economy. She wants to make new type of friends in Africa as she has made in Latin America and in Asia.

She recognises two Korea. The South she maintains with massive personnel, economic and military aids. Creating fake industries, mostly assembly plants, producing commodities marked as "made in the Republic of Korea". While the North-Democratic People's Republic of Korea - surely and steadily grows in every aspect of its development with purely local industries and army based on independence in politics self-reliance in the economy and self-defence in war.

American and Western assistance tend to keep a few people fabulously rich, supported and retained in power by a strong army, always teleguided by the Central Intelligence Agency which works through individuals, multinational companies and direct Government controls in forms of aid and advisers.

While I sound a note of warning on CHOOSING OUR FRIENDS in Africa, I will also like to sound a note of silent warning to the people of Nigeria that so many evil forces are working in the country to penetrate into every aspect of our existence and make us an object of ridicule and tragedy in our very exalted position in the leadership of Africa.

Let me take this opportunity to send greetings and congratulations to the Government and peoples of the Soviet Union for the wonderful and unparalleled achievements and in aid to less privileged countries, in their efforts to have kept the world out of a third world war and for their efforts to unite all progressive forces against the forces of reaction, aggression, oppression and intimidation.

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