

GUEST COMMENTARY

Africa and the Challenge of Imperialism

(Part 1 of a 4 part series)
By Thomas Cacho

Imperialism, which in the modern world is capitalist exploitation at its highest stage, continues to be the principal cause of the underdevelopment, not only of Africa but much of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. It is, in fact, only a continuation of the conquest which began in October of 1492, giving birth to the "global dialectic" which would from thenceforth predominate. A dialectic is a confrontation between colonizer and colonized. (i.e. conqueror and conquered, the developed and underdeveloped countries, North and South.)

European colonial subjugation of Africa became absolute with the division of the continent by the European powers into spheres of ownership at the Berlin Conference of 1884. Thus began capitalist imperialism in Africa in its colonial phase, that is, direct exploitation of the continent's wealth by the colonial powers through white settler or feudal representatives in the colonized territory.

Today imperialism operates in its neocolonial phase, that is, through a native bourgeoisie described by Kenyan scholar Ngugi wa Thiong'o as "nurtured in the racial womb of colonialism but now eternally ngrateful for being allowed to raise a flag and to join Europeans in looting and plundering now that the racial barriers to property accumulation have been removed."

Imperialist capital, born of Europe's Industrial Revolution which took off in the mid-1700s, quickly swept into the colonial and semi-colonial territories "dripping blood and sweat from all its pores" as Karl Marx described it, and leading to the pillage, exploitation and oppression of millions of human beings. In Africa, Asia and Latin America "large-scale massacres, deportations, expulsions of peasants from their lands, the introduction of forced labor, if not de facto slavery, all took place one after another," writes Marxist scholar Ernest Mandel. He said, "racism justifies these inhuman practices by affirming the [supposed] superiority and the 'historic civilising mission' of the white race."

"This same racism subtly deprives the colonised peoples of their own past, at the same time as snatching away their national wealth and a large part of the fruits of their labor... All this foreshadows or else faithfully repeats the most savage cruelties of Nazism, including

pure and simple genocide," Mandel said. "If the European and American bourgeoisie were so up in arms about Hitler, it was because he committed this outrage against the white race, subjecting the peoples of Europe to that which the peoples of Asia, America and Africa had suffered at the hands of world imperialism for several centuries," he said.

Capitalism's forward march was soon stalled by a period of economic collapse brought about by its own internal contradictions but also largely by certain international political and socioeconomic developments.

Most notable are: numerous 'recessions' and colonial wars of reconquest; the Bolshevik or October Revolution in Russia in 1917; other revolutionary outbreaks in Germany and Austro-Hungary (1918) and Italy (1919-1920) particularly in the industrial North; the beginning of the anti-imperialist communist

uprising in China led by Mao Tse Tung (1920); the two inter-imperialist wars known as World Wars I and II from 1914 to 1918 and 1939 to 1945; and the collapse of the free market economy in much of the Western industrialised world, leading to the Great Depression of the 1930s in the United States.

The U.S. quickly rebounded, as is always the case, from the enormous profits of war (World War II), emerging as the globe's leading industrial and military power after 1945. "The US literally had about one-half of the world's wealth as the war ended," writes Noam Chomsky, America's leading dissident intellectual. "In military power it reigned supreme. It faced no enemies in the Western Hemisphere. It controlled both oceans and large areas beyond. Rarely if ever has a state enjoyed such power and security from threat."

The implications of such

hegemony for Africa and other neocolonial and dependent territories struggling for economic independence and self-determination are of no little significance.

For in fact the ruling business elite groups in the United States understood the situation very well and were determined to keep it that way. As Kenyan scholar Ngugi wa Thiong'o writes:

"The freedom for Western finance capital and for the vast transnational monopolies under its umbrella to continue stealing from the countries and people of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Polynesia is today protected by conventional and nuclear weapons.

Imperialism, led by the USA, presents the struggling peoples of the earth and all those calling for peace, democracy and socialism with the ultimatum: accept theft or death."

To be continued.

Speaking Group Searches for Members

By Audra Robinson
Contributing Writer

If you are looking for an organization or a club to join, search no further, Burnt Toast, a local chapter of Toastmasters International, may be just for you.

Burnt Toast, a local chapter of Toastmasters, a worldwide organization that emphasizes the development of communication and leadership skills. Burnt Toast meets every Thursday at 6 p.m. at Hogart Elementary School. The meetings are held in a formal and organized manner with sessions that last no more than an hour, making it a convenient and brief escape from your regular weekly schedule.

During the meeting, the Toastmaster chooses a topic, called a "table topic" or subject for the night. Members are chosen randomly to give their opinion on the subject. There are also three main speakers that have prepared speeches on the same topic, these members are given five minutes to deliver their speech and are judged by evaluators who are Burnt Toast members as well.

Evaluators look for grammar, nervousness, eye contact, and the usage of "Ah's". The evaluations are constructive and positive are no means offensive. Everything is done in a very professional and friendly way. "The main purpose of Toastmasters is to develop communication skills and leadership, this builds self-esteem," says Sharon Johnson, president.



Sharon Martin (sitting) is amused by Marcia Washington (standing) who gave her evaluation at a recent meeting of Burnt Toast.

Photo by Savoy/LVS-Voice

Burnt Toast competes with other Toastmaster clubs and are a force to be reckoned with. Competition is fierce but Burnt Toast always makes the grade above the rest. You'll find plenty of ribbons on display during their meetings to prove this.

Burnt Toast is nearly three years old and already boasts more than 40 members making it one of Nevada's newest and

largest clubs. The group was founded on May 19, Malcolm X's birthday, by Faye Duncan - Daniels, who works for Constable Bob Nolan, and others from the community that wanted to be "Afrocentric 365 days a year".

Said Sharon Martin, a charter member, "here at Burnt Toast, we celebrate Black History weekly the topics chosen are

MAMA'S BOYZ by JERRY CRAFT



Vucanovich Honored at 1996 Lincoln Day Dinner

By Nichole Davis
Sentinel-Voice

Rep. Barbara Vucanovich was honored for her 13 years of public service during the 1996 Lincoln Day Dinner at the Palace Station Hotel attended Friday by more than 700 guests.

"I thought today was Groundhog Day, I didn't know it was Barbara Vucanovich Day," said the outgoing Republican representative at the Clark County Republican Party's largest fund-raiser.

"This a job that I have enjoyed very much; I'm going to miss it," Vucanovich said.

Vucanovich announced last year that she would not seek reelection. Congressional observers agree that she is rated among the ten most powerful members of the majority party.

At Friday's dinner, it sounded as if she was playing partisan politics when she described President Clinton as the "liberal lawyer."

Vucanovich said that Democrats are trying to capitalize on the tide of conservatism that's sweeping the nation.

Democrats are "trying to talk from the middle and work from the left," she said.

Rep. John Ensign, R-Nev., gave the keynote address where he outlined what he felt were the five main campaign issues of 1996.

Welfare reform, a balanced budget, the environment, crime and jobs were the issues the Republicans should run on, Ensign said.

Ensign urged Republicans to be more than just the antitheses of the Democrats.

"We cannot just be the party that is against Bill Clinton, against Democrats," Ensign said. "You've got to be pro-active."

"We have to make America and Nevada feel good about where we want to take them," he said.

Vucanovich received numerous gifts and awards during Friday's festivities including a proclamation from Gov. Bob Miller, who was not in attendance, a branding iron from the County Commission and a one-ounce silver medallion from the State Treasurer's office.

Vucanovich, who first ran for office at the age of 62, is the mother of five children.

Numerous members of the Black Republican Roundtable, headed by Bob Bailey, the former Bush cabinet member and prominent local businessman, attended the event. They filled two tables and sponsored an additional table for the Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Committee. The youths were invited to the dinner and a Saturday campaign management class.

Afrocentric", she said, "Burnt Toast is not to be taken as a negative, the name was put to together like this: To toast, or to give thanks to ancestors, those that came before us and to be Burnt as in to be brown and toasted. That's how we get Burnt Toast."

Burnt Toast's members are eager and proud to be part of what they call a positive community based organization. One of Burnt Toasts' newest members enjoys the challenge of speaking and being active in the community.

Elonda Potter, a rookie Burnt

Toast member, said that Burnt Toast is a "great inspiration and it helps me to achieve the goals that I want to accomplish".

Burnt Toast members invite all that are interested to join them at a minimal cost. If you desire to sharpen your communications skills or even defeat the fear that most people have of public speaking, then you should get involved! Burnt Toast invites you to join them Thursdays at 6 p.m. at Hogart Elementary School.

For further information contact Sandra Johnson at 893-8180 or just stop by the meetings.