

MAILBOX

How to end dictatorships

In many parts of the world, the Presidency is a position of honour. Hence, as rightly fits this august office, there are certain privileges occupants of the office enjoy.

They include representing their countries in very significant international conferences, their faces appearing on the countries' currency, and naming key places within the countries' borders after them.

I wish to suggest that some of these privileges be retained by an elected President who for one reason or another finds himself out of office.

Africa is currently undergoing an unstoppable democratisation process.

Should true democracy finally take root in Africa, the continent would hardly have any dictators on the political scene come the next century.

However, if the reverse is the case, the continent would bear the brunt of dictatorial regimes for much longer.

One sure way by which political dictatorships will continue lording it over their people is the leaders' fear of losing all the privileges of the Presidency should they leave office.

Something then should be done to help these senior citizens save face once out of office.

I, therefore, suggest that elected African Presidents, who retire voluntarily or concede defeat in elections, be allowed to retain certain privileges. These may include: having their images remain on the national currencies, honouring them by stopping vehicles when they are using a highway, and permitting them to represent their countries in some important international conferences.

Unless Africa's constitutional reformers seriously consider some of these suggestions, the continent will remain strewn with dictators and leaders desperately cling onto power.

It is not opportunistic, rhetoric-filled speeches that will save Africa from a host of problems (unemployment, official corruption to mention only two), but clear-cut policies and a political will translate them into action.

Odwa Grand, Nairobi.

Church is the voice of the voiceless

The recent pastoral letter written by the Kenya Catholic bishops which has drawn scathing attacks from Kanu leaders deserves serious attention from all Kenyans of good will.

The letter was truthful, down to earth, well thought out and sober. The reaction from Kanu hawks like Education Minister Joseph Kamotho was natural since Kanu has not outgrown its culture of name-calling, denials of self-evident facts, arrogance, deception and intimidation. Their reaction was devoid of any trace of democratic tolerance which Kanu claims to embrace.

Much of what the bishops raised in their pastoral letter has been raised in other avenues and corners by Kenyans who hold the future of this country at heart and are devoted to bringing about true and genuine democratic changes through peaceful and constitutional means.

Those who ask why the bishops did not condemn the Rwanda genocide as well as "Briq" John Odongo, forget that eight Catholic bishops, hundreds of priests and nuns were among those murdered in Rwanda where the Catholic Church's relief agencies are doing much more in resettling the people than verbal communication about the perpetrators of that barbaric situation. As for "Briq" Odongo, he is a run-away Kenyan refugee of little consequence while the danger to this country is more imagined than real, and as such does not

warrant an episcopal pastoral letter.

It now appears that the Kanu Government is out to obliterate the Opposition and those it considers its enemies, real or imagined, as a preparatory exercise for the 1997 General Election.

This calls for the Church to step up her role as the conscience of the society and the voice of the voiceless, a task the Church will not successfully carry out if her house is not put in order first.

There is danger that Kanu Government may grow used to the frequent pastoral letters, or even ignore them altogether, thus reduce them to one "voice crying in the desert". Kenyans are with the bishops in their concern for the future of the country.

Dominic O. Mak'Omolo, Langata.

I am dismayed at the manner in which Education Minister Joseph Kamotho reacted to the banning of the Catholic newspaper, *Inooro*. He referred to the Catholic clergy as colonial.

First of all *Inooro* is strictly under a particular church. Therefore it involves a particular bishop and particular priests, although its contents is the concern of everybody who cherishes constructive criticism, whether a

Catholic or not.

As a Cabinet Minister such warning was not reasonable. It was very barbaric, dictatorial and colonial. In any case, Mr Kamotho has no mandate to address the wananchi of Murang'a because they did not vote for him.

The Church is the voice of God in this sensible world. A people who kill, who do not value the quality of life, who oppress the poor, are not a prophetic people.

It is not easy to prophesy because it has to be drawn from the silence of God and there is need to swim against the stream, need to pray at length and need to be without fear.

The younger generation feel proud of their nationalism which President Moi has been the championing by calling Kenyans to unity.

Now, things are different at the outlook. It is in this very time that the people called nation has to prophesy. The old should not see the young as if they have made mistaken choices.

This is the only time we have to make constructive criticism because the church that never prays for its nation, that never prays for its people is no church at all.

The church that is never prophetic is an illusion. I think before things take another turn, the Government should reconsider the decision to ban *Inooro* magazine.

Rev. Fr. Nakhero Awindi Ombitti, Kisiko - Busia-A.

MP has ignored constituency

We, the constituents of Kitui West, have not seen our MP, Mrs West, since the last General Election.

If there is anyone out there near her, would you please advise her to visit her constituents and assist in reviving the following stalled projects.

- Katnangi-Syomunyu-Kitusyani-Kwa Vonza water project.

- Mwitasyano River bridge.

- Upgrading of Yatta Health Centre to Sub-District Hospital.

- Nyayo buses on the Nairobi-Kitui-Ikutha route.

- Education Fund for children from poor families.

- Rural Electrification project for Kwa Vonza-Kitusyani-Ikutha areas.

Lastly, we request fellow constituents from Kitui West to vote wisely come 1997 General Election.

Kithenze Mwakavi, Ngala Mutua, Kitui.

The Editor welcomes brief letters from readers on topical subjects. They will be considered for publication only if they carry the writer's signature and box number, not necessarily for publication, but as a sign of good faith. The paper reserves the right to shorten letters. Write to: The Editor, Daily Nation, P.O. Box 49010, Nairobi.

Pluralism in Uganda inevitable

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni once said that he wondered why a leader should stay in power for more than 10 years "as if he had a monopoly of ideas". He was also once quoted as having said, "... personally I'm one of those fellows who are not very keen to remain in public life for a long time, because I have got a lot of other things to do." (*New African*, March 1986, page 9).

He is now in his 10th year as President and is trying to see that his so-called movement system of government stays in place by hook or by crook.

He has maintained that Uganda is not ripe for multi-partyism, ostensibly because it's pre-industrial, not cohesive enough and still healing political wounds.

How can a genuine and honest democrat accept that argument, when even Mozambicans who were at war with each other only a couple of years ago and whose country is the poorest in this world, are basking in glory of having successfully organised and

held free and fair multi-party elections?

The tensions and contradictions faced by South Africa were far more intractable than those in the rest of Africa, yet they were overcome and a democracy was born. This should give Museveni or any other leader no excuse. In my view, to any given society, a multi-party system would be more advantageous than a one-party one, of whatever form, as long as fair play prevails and the playing field is level.

Even if multi-partyism was not good for Uganda, the NRM leadership should have realised years ago that its advent was inevitable. The logical thing for them to have done in the circumstances should have been to educate Ugandans about the promotion of its merits and how to guard against its demerits. On the contrary, they have unrelentingly attempted to discredit and malign the system and its proponents since 1986.

George Bwayo, Nairobi.

Britain should compensate Nandis

The Nandi resistance of British colonial infiltration and domination is perhaps the most remembered of these people's historical contribution to the struggle for Kenyan independence.

When the resistance, which lasted at least 10 years, was abruptly terminated by the killing of the Nandi Orkoivot Koitalel arap Samoei by Col Merintarhagen at Kapng'etung (present day Nandi Hills), there ensued an unprecedented diaspora which saw the Nandi relocate to as far as Kilgoris in the Trans Mara District and Belgut in Kericho. Others went to Uganda and Tanganyika.

The Nandi's military prowess could not, however, be dismissed by the well-equipped British (Nandis) crude weapons notwithstanding. As a community, the Nandi have never been the same. Like sheep without a shepherd, they have been beleaguered by a haunting scenario emergent from that holocaust.

Let me hasten to say that I do not argue for the revival of the institution of the Orkoivot although there is nothing wrong with its revival. But like Ali Mazrui (*Sunday Nation*, March 26), I argue on behalf of a community that the killing of Samoei was against conventional war culture where the leaders are taken

captives.

It is this that prompts some to say that the British government should have compensated the Nandi for the irreparable loss that they suffered under them. Some Nandi today wonder whether the marital problems facing the British monarchy are not as a result of the curse of Samoei's spirit and that of his son arap Manyi who was the longest serving political prisoner.

Arap Manyi was in jail for over 40 years because the British thought he was more dangerous than his father.

The Nandi as a community and Koitalel's family should be compensated by the British for all the problems they suffered under them.

I suggest that a cultural centre, Koitalel Samoei Cultural Centre, be built at Kapng'etung (Nandi Hills town).

This could have a library and a modern theatre and a resort facility. It is of immense historical significance and relevance which the Nandi will forever cherish. Then their cultural artifacts in Britain could be housed here for future generations to appreciate their value and worth.

Seromei arap Chetulei, Njoro.

Posts move on cheques unfair

In order to avoid dishonoured cheques, the Kenya Posts and Telecommunications Corporation now insists that all of their bills be paid either in cash, banker's cheques or by guaranteed cheques.

This new requirement victimises the majority of KPTC subscribers who have been paying their bills promptly and whose cheques have never bounced.

KPTC should thus not treat all clients as equal because most clients have been paying by cheques for years without problems. It is unfair for them to refuse payments from good clients some of who will now be forced to travel for miles to pay bills which may be as little as Sh300.

They will have to go to the bank just to prepare a banker's cheque which will cost them bankers charges, and then go to KPTC office to settle the bill.

If the queue is long, one will have to go the next day which is time as well as money wasting.

I wish to appeal to KPTC to accept cheques of old good clients and also to impose heavy fines for cheque defaulters and charge them heavily for re-connection. They can even sue them for the recovery of their dues.

I wish to know through the media what the law in Kenya prescribes for persons who issue bouncing cheques and thus deliberately cheating others knowing that there is no money in the accounts.

In order to reduce numbers of bouncing cheques, I suggest that the Government should enact a law forbidding people to issue false cheques and imposing heavy fines and even jail terms for the culprits.

By doing so, everyone will be scared to give cheques which he is sure will not be honoured.

Imu Pirmohamed, Mombasa.

QUOTE FOR THE DAY

"Might of man over man must be limited, first by the law which binds everybody and second by the social contract" - *German ambassador Bernd Mutzelburg while launching a Civic Resource and Information Centre at the Goethe institut.*

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Ambition is so powerful a passion in the human breast that however high we reach we are never satisfied - *Nicoto Machiavelli, Italian political philosopher, (1469-1527).*

THE CUTTING EDGE

By WATCHMAN

Is anything more aggravating than suffering from the inefficiencies of our beloved KPTC than reading of massive increases in postal charges? The Corporation's newest technique is to demand that you pay your bill before they send it. Wilson C. Noreh got a warning of cutoff unless payment was made by April 4. The bill was franked April 13. Colleagues Wamahi Muya had to pay by April 16, according to his bill mailed on April 20. Perhaps best of all, Charles Abebe was billed this week for trunk calls made on May 5 and 7, 1995.

You thought government bureaucracies just wanted your money, didn't you? Not the Commissioner of Lands in Nairobi? For 10 days a city accountant has been begging that office to accept banker's cheques for payment of land rents. Sorry, say the clerks, we can't find the title/folder/card. Thus doth our good name tarnish a little further.

A pipe-burst in Nairobi's Akirinyaga Road has caused a large crater; motorists are wrecking their cars, traders losing business. It happened six weeks ago and the City Council's lone contribution to date has been to dig a big hole in the footpath. Is this better or worse than the crew sent Tuesday to a sewer emergency on Umoja One estate who refused to move a finger unless residents paid them Sh5,000?

Obscene, Mrs Ammann calls it. What's that? Barry White tickets at Sh2,500, a night at the Taita Hills Hilton for Sh4,300 and Bally & Watson shoes at Sh4,900 in a country where many of these lucky enough to have jobs make under Sh4,000 per month.

Stagecoach/Kenya Bus Shave promised to respond swiftly to complaints but when a Nairobiian left a message about an incident outside the New Stanley Hotel, MD Malcolm Stewart failed to call back. What happened was simple: at 8 am last Friday bus no. 609 nearly knocked our correspondent into the hereafter. Six months earlier the same man wrote to the company about a similar incident. He didn't get a response then either.

If you are put on hold by the IUN High Commissioner for Refugees in Nairobi the tune they will play you is *Home on the Range*. Is that appropriate or insensitive?

Seems a gentleman from Si Kilungu Location failed to attend the funeral of one of his best friends. He told inquiring mourners: "Why should I? He won't attend mine."

Have a funerary day, won't you!

• Observations of two or three paragraphs to Watchman, Daily Nation, PO Box 49010, Nairobi or fax to 214047.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Thursday, April 27, the 117th day of 1995. There are 248 days left in the year.

Highlights in history on this date:

- 1941 - Athens falls to German invaders after 180 days of Greek resistance in World War II.

- 1949 - India and Ireland become republics with India accepting to stay in the Commonwealth while Ireland refuses.

- 1950 - Communist Party is outlawed in Australia. Britain recognises Israel.

- 1960 - Syngman Rhee resigns as President of South Korea. Togo becomes independent republic.

- 1960 - The French colony of Togoland gains independence as Africa's smallest free nation.

- 1963 - All roads leading to Somalia are closed to civilian vehicles in Kenya's North-Eastern Province which is under a state of emergency.

- 1972 - Dr Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first President, dies in exile in Guinea Bissau.

- 1972 - US *Apollo 16* spacecraft and its three astronauts make safe landing in Pacific after journey to moon.

- 1974 - Soviet Turbo-prop-Airliner crashes after takeoff from Leningrad airport, and all 108 persons aboard are killed.

- 1981 - The High Court grants Mr Odongo Oromo leave to apply for orders to issue a notice of motion to rescind the decision of the returning officer declaring Gordon Jalango Anyango a candidate in the Bondo by-election.

- 1986 - Tanzania and Malawi sign an agreement giving land-

locked Malawi more access to the port of Dar es Salaam.

- 1988 - Kenyans are free to debate on which voting system should be used in future elections, says National Guidance and Political Affairs Minister James Njiru.

- 1989 - In an unprecedented move, Kenya's Parliament unanimously passes a vote of no confidence in the Vice-President and Minister for Home Affairs, Dr Josephat Karanja who is also the Leader of Government Business in the House.

- 1989 - Bangladesh officials say at least 500 people died during rash of Tornados and heavy rains.

- 1990 - Nicaragua cuts value of its currency in half to boost its economy.

- 1990 - Martin Shikuku, former Butere MP, is suspended for six months by the Butere Kanu sub-branch.

- 1991 - Former Malava MP, Joshua Angatia, is roughed up by Kanu youthwingers in Kakamega, the venue of a "show-down" rally called by leaders from Western Province where both Masinde Muliro and Martin Shikuku and Oginga Odinga's National Democratic Party (NDP) come under heavy criticism.

- 1991 - First 250 Kurdish refugees move into US-built camp. Gunmen spray automatic-weapons fire at poolside terrace where President Violeta Chamorro was attending a party.

(Compiled by WILLIAM KARANJA AND AP)