

Cheikh Anta Diop: a visionary who wanted fusion power for Africa

by Lawrence K. Freeman

Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State

by Cheikh Anta Diop

Africa World Press, Trenton, N.J., 1987

125 pages, paperbound, \$7.95

This little gem of a book by the great Senegalese intellectual Cheikh Anta Diop, although less well known than many other of Diop's longer books on African history and culture, is extremely relevant to the very existence of the African continent as we know it today. His refreshing and exciting approach to the industrialization of Africa stands in stark contrast to the death and destruction that are ravaging the continent today through war, starvation, and disease. It is precisely the absence of a nuclear-powered, industrialized Africa, as advocated by Diop and by presidential candidate U.S. Lyndon LaRouche, that has allowed the International Monetary Fund, through its infamous "structural adjustment programs" and "conditionalities," to bring the African continent to the brink of destruction.

One central theme of the book is the need to create a federal framework for all African countries similar to a common market. However, this is not to be seen as an empty political structure, but rather a necessity to promote massive continent-wide economic development premised on the production of billions of watts of new electrical power. For Diop, this means, first and foremost, nuclear energy. He writes, ". . . with effective control of thermonuclear reactions, the energy needs of the planet would be answered for a period of a billion—repeat, 1 billion—years." Keep in mind that this farsighted, breathtaking perspective of a nuclear-powered Africa was first put forward by Diop no later than 1960!

One can only imagine the howling and screaming from the leftists, the environmentalists, and the cultural relativists, when Diop, an African revolutionary, a freedom-fighter for Senegal, and a leading scientist, called for the unbridled

development of nuclear fusion energy.

While thermonuclear power is being developed, Diop outlined how Africa can utilize its enormous potential of unused hydroelectric energy, which leads the world in its reserves of billions of kilowatt-hours. Diop in Part II, "Compendium of Energy Sources," reports: "The Zaire River . . . by itself holds more 600 billion kilowatt-hours of annual reserve or two-thirds of the entire production of the world at the present time." He also discusses how nuclear breeder reactors, "using high-velocity sodium-cooled neutrons, are the reactors of the future for the industrial exploitation of atomic energy."

After several pages of scientific explanation of how nuclear fusion works, he discusses the relationship between hydroelectric and fusion power, which might be a bit outdated today, but nevertheless shows how his creative mind envisioned the potential for Africa's industrialization. "Production and processing centers would necessarily have to be near the sea in Africa. A territory such as Zaire would be in especially good position. Indeed, in view of what was said above, creation of thermonuclear energy will first require expenditure of an enormous amount of electrical energy for electrolysis. Hydraulic energy could prove economical for such an operation."

Hamiltonian plan for Africa

In Part III, "The Industrialization of Black Africa," Diop divides Africa into zones for industrial development and analyzes the potential for growth in those areas, as well as for various agricultural, manufacturing, and fishing products, much the same as Alexander Hamilton did for the young United States. He describes the enormously rich mineral reserves located in the Zaire River Basin, which, coupled with the untapped hydroelectric energy available, highlights the wonderful potential for this area, contrasting sharply with the deplorable "sub-human" living conditions that currently exist. Listen to what Diop envisioned:

"With its 650 billion kilowatt-hours of annual reserves of hydraulic energy . . . the Zaire River Basin is destined to become the leading industrial region of Africa, the principal

center of our heavy industry. In the final stage, hydraulic energy will supply all the electricity needed for various branches of industry using the resources of raw materials in neighboring territories: the coking coal of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), the iron of Angola and even Zaire, cobalt (65% of world production); chromium (one-third of world production); tantalum . . . cadmium, vanadium, manganese, tin, copper (overlapping from Upper Shabby into Zambia), the richest ore in the world; zinc, lead, silver, industrial diamonds, gold, uranium. . . .

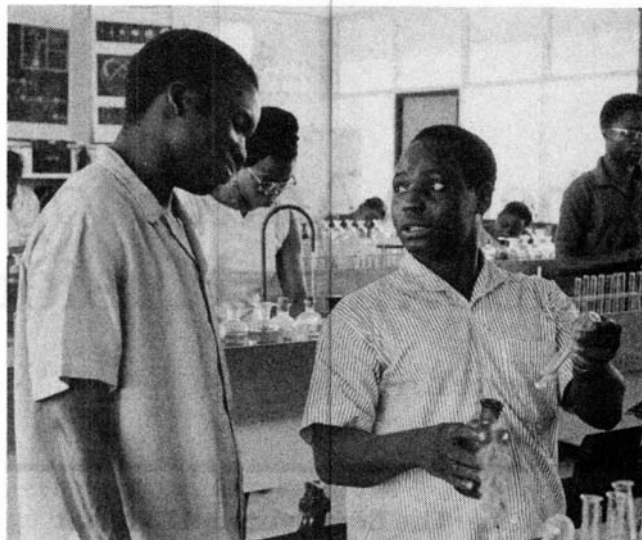
“The simultaneous abundance of hydraulically created electricity and nonferrous metals makes this region especially suited for the fabrication of specialized steels for strategic of domestic uses, having numerous industrial applications.”

Diop had no illusions about what it would take to industrialize Africa. He understood that, at first, prefabricated factories using the most advanced technologies in the heavy metal industries, electronics, etc. would have to be imported with trained foreign personnel, who would be replaced by African technicians as they in turn became trained. He had hoped that this would be part of an industrial infrastructure program that would eventually lead to establishing local assembly production plants for machines, tractors, planes, automobiles, and so on.

In the concluding section of his book, “14 Steps to African Unity,” Diop locates some of the most important functions that the sovereign state must perform to ensure the durable survival of its society. I will only cite two of the points. Number 8: “To create a powerful State Industry, giving primacy to industrialization, development and mechanization of agriculture.” And number 10: “To create the technical institutes without which a modern State cannot exist: nuclear physics and chemistry, electronics, aeronautics, applied chemistry, and so on.”

The ‘mission of culture’

When asked by an interviewer, “What is the mission of culture?” Diop replied, “Survival and creativity. Man must create to survive. To create he must ensure his survival.” Diop’s understanding of natural law flowed from his own creative-scientific mind. He said, “Man’s mission is creation.” Diop polemicized against any false notion that there would be an African renaissance without recovering the “creativity of our peoples” and against the misconception of political sovereignty without economic sovereignty. He was also keenly aware that without a national language capable of communicating advanced ideas, there was little hope that Africa would become truly sovereign. Diop rejected the simplistic “psychic” or introspective features to a Black-African cultural rehabilitation and insisted, “The cultural renaissance of our people is inconceivable outside of the restoration of both our historical past and our language to a privileged position as the vehicles of modern education, technology, science, and the creative sensibility of our people.”



A laboratory at a teachers' college in Lagos, Nigeria. Diop's program for African unity included the requirement "to create the technical institutes without which a modern State cannot exist."

Unfortunately, we are unable to probe further into his thoughts, because Cheikh Anta Diop died in 1987 at the age of 65. There is no question that Diop’s work was intended to bring into existence an economically viable and independent, federated Africa, free from the chains of imperialism. How much sovereignty each country was to have in this federation remains unclear. He also recognized that it was only by “throwing off the (iniquitous) conditions of the international marketplace” that his vision for economic development was possible. Diop seemed to orient to the “command economy” model of China and the Soviet Union as an alternative to the colonialist free trade policies of the West, but this is another subject which he does not say very much about. There is little doubt in this author’s mind that he would have easily grasped and supported the American System alternative of Lyndon LaRouche’s economic program, once it had been discussed with him.

Diop’s method and policies were not perfect, but he is a shining ray of light when compared to the labor-intensive, low-technology, genocidal policies that are being promoted in Africa today.

The survival of Africa is a moral test for the whole civilized world. It is also a test for African leadership. We know what has to be done. Diop put forth a workable program over 30 years ago. Today, Lyndon LaRouche has put on the table a whole array of infrastructure development projects that would transform the presently dying continent of Africa into a beautiful garden of economic growth, capable of supporting several billion people. What is required to save Africa, before it is too late, is a very specific quality of intellectual courage needed to implement these programs. Let us not shrink from these tasks.