

MAPAMBANO

● STRUGGLE, SOLIDARITY AND A WORKER'S PARTY IN KENYA ●

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Kenya: The birth of "Mapambano"

Welcome to the first issue of Mapambano Newsletter. We take this opportunity to thank all Comrades who have made the publication of this first issue possible. The emergence of Mapambano marks a new step by progressive Kenyans in Kenya and abroad trying to regroup to address the deep economic, social and political crisis that has condemned millions of Kenyans to lives of permanent poverty as the ruling class and their imperialist allies continue to loot the country's resources.

The birth of Mapambano represents a new initiative by the Kenyan Left which has had no publication running for more than 10 years. Despite the urgent need for an alternative view to the capitalist perspective of news and analysis in Kenya, creating a vibrant publication to satisfy this need has, over time, been frustrated by circumstances.

The disappearance of the underground Left wing press in Kenya began towards the end of the 80s, a decade that was marked by systematic fragmentation, persecution and dispersal of active Kenyan Leftists during the Moi dictatorship. The naked brutality with which Moi's State security fought the Kenyan Left made it virtually impossible for Kenyan Leftists to organize openly. We witnessed a period when activists were literally smoked out of their holes in the underground as the dictatorial KANU regime became paranoid about political opposition.

Supply of radical publications like Pambana, Mpatani-shi, Mzalendo and others evaporated as the State rooted out underground resistance at public universities with brutality. University lecturers, students, innocent youth and workers from different sectors who were seen, suspected or imagined by the State to have been holding Marxist ideas were arrested, imprisoned, tortured, detained or forced into exile if they escaped death at the hands of blood thirsty "security Home Boys". When the crackdown on progressives and other anti-imperialists reached a climax, Kenyans witnessed with amazement one illiterate MP "ordering the arrest" of Karl Marx if he was the cause of riots at Nairobi university.

As Left-wingers licked their wounds in the aftermath of a protracted anti-Left campaign by a rabid authoritarian regime, Moi moved quickly to ban Socialist literature and other publications, a ban that remains to this day. Then during the beginning of the 90s, Stalinism collapsed in the former Soviet Union

and Eastern block countries with devastating psychological consequences for both the Kenyan Left and the International Workers' movement.

The immediate impact was that survivors of the Kenyan Left who were in a position to analyse the situation from an ideological perspective and who could move towards a possible realignment of forces became both confused and isolated as events unfolded in Eastern Europe. The situation was made much more difficult by the fact that majority of Comrades who were on the ground during this period lacked correct analysis that could enable them understand fully events that were unfolding in Eastern Europe and this also made it difficult for them to adjust psychologically.

In the middle of the confusion, the radical bourgeoisie in Kenya and other progressives within the civil society began to interpret events in Eastern Europe as a "wave of democracy" that was sweeping across that part of the European continent, a process which, they theorized, was bound to affect the political situation in Kenya and Africa as a whole in ways that, at that time, remained undefined.

Imperialist arm-twisting

The immediate effect of this "wave" was that the civil society and multiparty advocates who were fighting political marginalization by Moi went on a fresh and virulent onslaught against Moi's single party dictatorship with demands for a change of the Constitution to allow for a multiparty political system of government. British and American imperialism (which has vast interests in Kenya) saw the danger of this "wave" bursting into uncontrollable social/political chaos and silently used it to put pressure on Moi to listen to multiparty advocates. Although Moi had declared publicly that political pluralism could never work in Kenya because the country "was not yet cohesive enough", Moi became victim of imperialist arm-twisting and accepted to change the rules for Kenya to go multiparty.

Progressives within the Kenyan Left who had just emerged from prison during this period found themselves faced with two different situations - the collapse of Stalinism on the one hand and a climaxing multiparty Movement on the other. As political explanations about events in Eastern Europe went missing at the local scene and Stalinist dictators tumbled one after an-

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other, Left wing survivors of Kamiti and other prisons together with former detainees entered into deep crisis on the question of the future of Socialism as a viable political ideology. The situation was made worse by massive celebrations from the capitalist camp to mark "the collapse of communism" and "the triumph of capitalism" especially in the West.

When multi-party system was eventually reintroduced in July 1990, there was no political force that could set up a Socialist Party or any Leftist structure that could be used to further the anticapitalist struggle because the prime movers who were still on the ground were busy figuring out how they could become politically relevant in the new situation.

The struggles of the 80's, which led to one of the greatest political persecutions in Kenya after massacres by the British during the colonial revolution, was mainly focused on attacks against the one party dictatorship of Moi and demands for political pluralism. When Moi curved in and allowed for more parties to be formed, the big issue for "veterans of the struggle" during the 80s was how to find or fit into a populist structure as local commentators settled down prematurely to begin drafting Moi's political obituary. In other words, the main agenda for Comrades who survived during this period was not how to reorganize politically to expose the bankruptcy of the emergent populist parties and to lay new foundations for the struggle for socialism in Kenya. Under the circumstances, Mwakenya, which had become one of the most popular Left-oriented underground movement in Kenya's recent history, failed to surface to provide direction at a critical time of need.

It is at this point that a good layer of the "Prison generation" began dispersing in different directions to weigh their options. A section of this group did join the multiparty bandwagon while others opted to flee to exile to reflect on what had happened. Due to lack of options, some chose to remain aloof and later joined NGO's as the multiparty culture began to take root.

The birth of Mapambano is a representation of new forces trying to re-arm politically in preparation for new confrontations with the monster of capitalism in Kenya after successes and major drawbacks in the past

Faced with acute ideological disorientation, uncertain political situation, fear of re-arrest/persecution and a search for new political roles in the post prison/detention period, it was basically impossible for survivors of Moi's torture chambers and remnants of underground movements like Mwakenya to set up a new Left wing publication to clarify political events both at home and abroad. Organized ideological opposition to Moi's regime had itself crumbled as opportunists waving the flag of political pluralism mesmerized the population with new slogans to the effect that political pluralism was the answer to the capitalist crisis in Kenya.

The prospect of Moi's departure after more than a decade of dictatorship together with hot steam that was streaming from a newly found unity under the liberal "Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD)" served to portray anybody who was still singing "the song of Socialism" look like a person who was out of touch with reality. The emergence of Mapambano at this point in time is an attempt to pick up the pieces and to inject

new life into the anticapitalist struggle in our country.

A tool to organize

Today, we are dealing with a situation where many Comrades who caught the multiparty train have been properly rehabilitated into the capitalist political framework. The defeat of the Moi dictatorship following the "Narc revolution" has seen some of these Comrades rise to the level of Cabinet Ministers from where they are in no position to oppose the rotten system. In fact, former comrades like Professor Anyang Nyong'o (Minister of Planning and National Development) have become good examples of how a Kenyan Marxist can undergo transformation to fit perfectly into the capitalist State and even become the darling of imperialism! It is notable that Professor Nyong'o is on the forefront in providing intellectual justifications for privatization of State enterprises under the cover of "foreign investments".

Some former comrades who are not in the government are sitting MPs where they have continued to support hefty salaries for MPs at the expense of the tax payer. Some of these Comrades are routinely taken for "retreats" at exclusive hotels to soften them up whenever a dirty motion is coming up for vote in Parliament. The recent "Tobacco retreat" at Mombasa that was sponsored by BAT (British American Tobacco) is the latest example.

Regardless of the historical realities in the Kenyan situation, the struggle for a Socialist Kenya must continue. Those behind Mapambano believe that a new rebirth is not just necessary but a matter of priority. The birth of Mapambano is a representation of new forces trying to re-arm politically in preparation for new confrontations with the monster of capitalism in Kenya after successes and major drawbacks in the past. Kenya is in deep political and economic crisis and the kind of revolution needed to solve this crisis will not happen if workers and the youth can not find correct clarifications and new ways of organizing.

Mapambano will not just be a tool to organize but a base where revolutionary Kenyans will be able to pool both ideas and resources to address the question of liberation of our country from the control of imperialism and local capitalist gangsters who have been running Kenya in the interest of multinational companies and personal gain as millions of Kenyans starve to death while others go without basic social services in one of the richest countries in Africa.

Mapambano Editorial Board

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENT ON MAPAMBANO TITLED "A CASE FOR MAPAMBANO NEWSLETTER" IS AVAILABLE AT THE WEBSITE OF THE "KENYA SOCIALIST DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE (KSDA). THE WEBSITE IS: WWW.KENYASOCIALIST.ORG

Joint Statement on Mapambano Newsletter

Having recognized and understood the need for an alternative revolutionary voice in the Kenyan media, we, the undersigned, have collectively decided to proceed with plans to launch the Mapambano Newsletter, a publication whose main agenda will be to provide an alternative ideological perspective of news and analysis in Kenya.

Although there is ample evidence to prove that the deformed capitalist system of government in Neo-colonial Kenya is rotten, there is no alternative press that can effectively expose the extent of this rot or show the way out of the crisis. The massive news and analysis that millions of Kenyans are exposed to lacks the revolutionary twinge that can enable Kenyans to seriously see capitalism as the main problem in our country and ignite them into joining new struggles to abolish this exploitative system.

Without an anticapitalist perspective that brings out the contradictions of capitalism in clear language and spells out the process how capitalism is responsible for the political and economic crisis in Kenya, we believe that it will not be possible for Kenyans to join the anticapitalist crusade in our country. What will happen is that liberation from this decayed system will be postponed while the suffering of the masses of the Kenyan people will be prolonged.

In the circumstances, we believe that the introduction of *Mapambano* is necessary, not just to fill the huge vacuum that exists in the media today but also to prepare Kenyans for the kind of revolution whose goal will be to overturn a political system which has given a corrupt ruling class an endless opportunity to deceive the population with ethnic politics as this "political class" engage in acts of looting and plunder of the economy. We are saddened that despite the existence of more than 45 political parties in Kenya, there is no party that can provide light to show a way out of the dark capitalist tunnel that Kenyans are stuck in. The problem is that all parties are practicing politics from a capitalist perspective.

We are equally concerned that the ruling class is promoting ethnic politics as a matter of political survival without the alternative of class politics being put forward simply because there is no group or publication that is properly equipped to present this alternative to the Kenyan masses.

If anything, the capitalist monopoly of the media has blunted the political sensibilities of millions of Kenyans who are constantly misled into questioning the conduct of greedy politicians instead of challenging the concept of a system that promotes corruption, man to man exploitation, mass poverty, mass unemployment, land and wealth grabbing by the rich, homelessness, crime, mass deprivation, hopelessness among the youth and a host of other vices that will never be put to an end without a revolutionary upheaval.

As Kenyans who have understood the dimensions of the crisis in our country, we are disturbed that the deformed system of capitalism in Kenya is not facing any open opposition despite the obvious failures of this system and the inability of three subsequent governments to transform the poor economic and social conditions of Kenyans using this outdated system.

Both the **Kenyatta** and **Moi** dictatorships failed to use this system to advance the interests of Kenyans. If anything, the **Moi** dictatorship used this system to role backwards the gains of the colonial revolution. What we are seeing in the "emerging **Kibaki** dictatorship" is a tendency that cannot be differentiated from past dictatorships.

We are tired of watching our country being sold to imperialism through hundreds of imperialist institutions led by the World Bank and IMF without serious warning or opposition being raised. Although our economy is under the tight grip of Western multinational companies, the capitalist media is notorious in projecting these International sharks in the high seas of capitalism as "Foreign investors" whose agenda is to help develop Kenya.

Mapambano will seek to make the connection between the suffering of our people and the conspiracy linking the ruling class and forces of imperialism that are benefiting from the exploitation of human and natural resources in our country. The need to cut this connection will become much more clear if the role this link is playing in the situation is exposed and understood. The main aims of *Mapambano* will be as follows:

- To provide an alternative Left-oriented point of view of news and analysis of events happening in Kenya and the world.
- To act as a tool for political education of the people of Kenya who are currently living in a situation ripe for another revolution.
- To provide a platform for progressive, patriotic and anti-imperialist Kenyans whose views

cannot find room in the mainstream Kenyan media but whose views are relevant to the revolutionary struggle in Kenya.

- To expose the conspiracy between the ruling class in Kenya and imperialism and to outline how this conspiracy can be put to a permanent end.

- To serve as a point of reference for Kenyans seeking for a real alternative to the rotten and deformed system of capitalism in Kenya that is responsible for the suffering of millions of people in our country.

- To inform the International opinion about the revolutionary struggle in Kenya and to link up the anticapitalist struggle in Kenya with the International anticapitalist Movement that has made significant gains in the last few years.

- To provide answers to Kenyans who are tired of the system and who are looking for ways of fighting capitalism in our country.

- To show that there is an alternative system to capitalism and to encourage Kenyans to open their minds to alternative ideological thinking especially those opposed to capitalism.

- To fight the anti-socialist propaganda that has been inculcated in the psychology of Kenyans by the capitalist media for the last four decades and to defend the ideas of socialism against empty attacks from capitalist apologists and other right wing demagogues.

Our view is that *Mapambano* alone will not bring about the overthrow of capitalism in Kenya. A revolutionary Movement or Party will have to exist on the ground to lead the actual anticapitalist struggle. Our position is that the existence of *Mapambano* will point the way towards the building of a revolutionary anticapitalist structure needed to liberate Kenya and her people. We appeal to Kenyans who believe that they can play a role in the situation to link up with us for further exchanges. Our task is difficult. But we have to begin from somewhere.

1. **Okoth Osewe** – Stockholm, Sweden
2. **Onyango Oloo** – Montreal, Canada
3. **Orina Nyamwami** – Nairobi, Kenya
4. **Ronald Elly Wanda** – London, Britain
5. **Alex Owiti** – Brazil including Latin America
6. **Stephen Obaje** – Kisumu, Kenya
7. **Peter Nelson Juma** - Siaya, Kenya
8. **Dickens Kwama** – At large

A brief summery of the anti-Moi struggle in Sweden

Mapambano has not been born out of a vacuum. For keen observers who have been following political struggles linked to Kenya in the last two decades, Sweden has always been a “hot bed” of radical political activity by Kenyan exiles especially those who fled the country during the Moi dictatorship.

Throughout the 80s, political work was so serious that former dictator **Daniel arap Moi** could not travel to Sweden because of fear of ugly confrontations with Kenyan dissidents who had fled the country after the aborted coup attempt in 1982. These included exiles like **Onyango Sumba**, **Karundi Mathenge**, the late **Opwapo Ogae**, **Martin “GG” Ngatia**, **Waore Dianga**, **Ben Allan Nganga** and a host of other exiles who fled the country in mid and late 80s during the crackdown on the underground *Mwakenya* Movement. **Mwandawiro Mghanga**, **Shadrack Guto**, **Alex Wagunya**, **Njenga Gikanga**, the late **Dr. Mukaru Nganga**, the late **Ayioko Kisonyo Singoro** and many others who fled Kenya in the face of brutal suppression during the **Moi** dictatorship are names which will never be erased from the anti-**Moi** struggle in Sweden.

As issues of Harakati began to roll from the press, the publication posed a major challenge to the older generation of exiles whom, despite their “high calibre status”, could not produce any publication that could analyze the situation in Kenya or provide direction to the anticapitalist struggle in Kenya.

Towards the beginning of the 90s, a much younger generation of exiles started arriving in Sweden with varying political credentials. By 1996, there were over 60 Kenyans who were seeking political asylum in Sweden, time when the anti **Moi** struggle also regained momentum as the new layer of youth joined demonstrations outside the Kenyan Embassy in Stockholm to condemn human rights violations in Kenya and to demand for an end to brutal dictatorship under the new multiparty political system that **Moi** had allowed in the country.

This was the period when Kenyans like **Dick Kamau**, **Daniel Mwaura**, **Githuku wa Muirani**, **Patrick Mwangi**, **Edward Kamau**, **Dancan Kinuthia**, **Mary Githuku**, **Beatrice Kamau**, **Titus Wakaba**, **Okoth Osewe**, **Jamlik Muritu**, **Kenneth Wamburi Munge**, **Joseph Munene** *et al* joined ranks with compatriots who were already on the ground to build new political organizations that could speed up the process of bringing down **Moi**.

But towards the end of the 90s, the situation began to change. Kenyans who were fuelling the struggle as they awaited for their asylum applications to be decided began receiving deportation orders from the immigration department which claimed that they did not have enough grounds for political asylum. The situation was worsened by the position of some senior exiles like **Mr. Onyango Sumba** who refused to recognise these Kenyans as exiles because “they were not known in Kenya”. According to **Mr. Sumba**, majority of Kenyans who were in the

asylum process were economic refugees because they could not concretely justify their political work in Kenya.

In the face of attacks from the older generation of exiles who saw younger asylum seekers as “intruders” with fake political profiles, the youth constituted themselves in August 1998 and built the Kenya Youth Movement in Sweden (KYMS) so that they could wage struggle from a much more independent position. The building of KYMS was immediately followed by the launching of *Harakati*, a radical political mouthpiece that had a clear left wing perspective of politics. As issues of *Harakati* began to roll from the press, the publication posed a major challenge to the older generation of exiles whom, despite their “high calibre status”, could not produce any publication that could analyze the situation in Kenya or provide direction to the anti-capitalist struggle in Kenya.

By the time the second multiparty elections came around in December 1998, the future of Kenyan asylum seekers looked bleak. Almost 90% of them were either awaiting for their appeals to be decided after their cases were turned down or had already taken cover in the underground after their appeals had been dismissed by Immigration authorities.

The uncertainty that shrouded asylum applications was compounded by a crisis within the older generation of exiles who could not constitute themselves into a political organization that could effectively fight **Moi** because of personality differences and ideological tensions. On the one hand was the tightly-knit group led by **Onyango Sumba** and on the other was the fire-breathing group led by **Mwandawiro Mghanga** who fled to exile after the former student leader’s release from prison.

The problem was that **Mr. Sumba’s** peers like **Mr. Karundi Mathenge** refused to accept into their ranks the likes of **Mr. Mwandawiro Mghanga**, arguing that **Mwandawiro** had a “Student leader’s mentality” towards politics which they could not cope with because they were not University students. They also raised several opportunistic criticisms against **Mwandawiro** which, to the newly arrived asylum seekers, leaned more on personality differences than divergent political positions.

On the other hand, **Mwandawiro** viewed **Sumba’s** group as a “non ideological” clique which was resting on its laurels and which could not offer a political alternative to the capitalist crisis in Kenya. In the middle of these “cold wars”, the youth (many of whom were concerned about the prospects of being deported to Kenya if their asylum applications failed) sided with **Mwandawiro** to set up the Kenya Human Rights Organization in Sweden (KHEROS) as a new platform of waging struggle and defending Kenyan asylum seekers. For the youth, **Mwandawiro** was not just a role model but also a representation of the radical wing of the anti-**Moi** struggle and this image fitted perfectly well with the various agendas of asylum-seekers who were looking for political action to support their cases.

Both **Sumba** and **Karundi** boycotted all meetings in Uppsala that were called to form KHEROS. In the meantime, **Njenga Gikanga**, an exile who was linked to the *Mwakenya* movement and who had close ties with writer **Professor Ngugi wa Thiongo**, constituted a group of female followers (includ-

ing **Professor Beth Maina**) to try and frustrate **Mwandawiro's** attempt to gather forces around KHEROS. The **Gikanga-Mwandawiro** deadlock arose from Gikanga's urge to assert his authority as a *Mwakenya/Ukenya* leader who had powerful connections with **Ngugi** and **Mwandawiro's** challenge that the former teacher stop concentrating on history and instead help build a structure that could further the struggle against **Moi**.

Regardless of the frustrations and numerous roadblocks that were all defeated, KHEROS was eventually launched in Uppsala with **Mwandawiro** as the Chairman, **Okoth Osewe** as the Secretary and **Dick Kamau** as the Treasurer. Weekly political study circles along revolutionary lines also began at *Uppsala* while the new organization resolved to begin a campaign for the release of political prisoners in Kenya. **Mr. Koigi wa Wamwere** was chosen as a figurehead to be used in this campaign.

After many political activities that saw KHEROS emerge as one of the major political forces in Scandinavia, the organization entered into crisis after **Moi's** agents who had infiltrated it became active. One of the agents had a habit of taking strategic pictures of KHEROS members during socialization, a habit that one day, led to a public warning in *Skarpnäck*, Stockholm, after KHEROS hosted **Mr. Paul Muite**. KHEROS members informed the agent "to stop the habit of taking pictures" after official political events were over and when members were in situations that could be used to black mail them in the future. A major weakness was that although top KHEROS leadership knew about operations of this agent, they failed to expose him to the ordinary membership due to "lack of evidence".

When the Kenya People's Democratic Movement (KEPEDEMO) was launched by **Mr. Martin Ngatia**, **Mr. Githuku wa Muirani** and **Mr. Okoth Osewe** as a political outfit because KHEROS had limited itself to human rights issues, members of KEPEDEMO who were also members of KHEROS came under severe attacks that were masterminded by the above mentioned agent. KEPEDEMO was launched during a retreat in *Norsborg* after a well attended meeting in *Skarpnäck* to launch a political organization ended with disagreements due to lack of ideological unity. Despite lots of rhetoric, all the big shots within the exile community failed to agree on the character of the organization that was to be formed.

The tension between KEPEDEMO and KHEROS led to a lull in political activity before KHEROS disappeared into oblivion as **Mwandawiro** departed to Kenya to prepare the grounds for entry into Parliamentary politics. Asylum seekers who had banked their hopes on KHEROS as a supportive organization that could fight for their cases found themselves alone in the face of political inactivity. It is unfortunate that during this period, some women asylum seekers entered into prostitution while their male counter parts began an aggressive hunt for women to marry as a way of stopping their deportation to Kenya where they feared persecution. As the youth retreated into a search for matrimonial alternatives to prevent their deportation, the situation was also changing in Kenya. Multiparty system was already thriving in the country and although **Moi's** brutality continued, there were calls from different directions that Kenyan exiles return to the country to help in the democratization process.

By 1999, only four out of 56 Kenyan asylum seekers who were known to be in the process had been allowed to stay for political reasons. The threat that was facing asylum seekers was worsened when a top leader of KYMS began to question why the Movement should devote a lot of energy in defending asylum seekers instead of fighting **Moi**. This view angered asylum seekers like **Mr. Wamburi Munge** who were still in the process and what followed was a new split within KYMS with pro and anti-asylum seekers groupings opening a quiet internal battle for control of the organization.

The immediate effect of this war was that *Harakati* could no longer be produced and by the year 2001, the publication had stopped rolling, much to the relief of the **Moi's** regime. *Harakati*, which was being edited by **Osewe**, was a major uniting factor and without it, remnants of KYMS members who still clung to the Movement found themselves without a forum and eventually, the Movement lurched into inactivity without being officially dissolved. The whole history of the anti-Moi struggle in Sweden still awaits to be told and this summery does not constitute an attempt to write this history. Events during the 80s are not mentioned here because there has been no organized attempt to document these events from comrades who were active during this period like **Mr. Martin Ngatia**, **Mr. Ben Allan Nganga**, **Mr. Karundi Mathenge** and others.

Many lessons have been learnt in the process of struggle and there is no doubt that these lessons will serve to better the level of organization of the Kenyan Left because the monster of imperialism and capitalist class rule in Kenya requires coordination by Kenyans and other revolutionary forces across the world

Today, many political activists have basically retreated into their lives with a few elements still keeping the fire burning. After Narc came to power, the only political organizations still going are Kenya Socialist Democratic Alliance (KSDA) which also maintains a website (kenyasocialist.org) and KEPEDEMO. Former KHEROS and KYMS members have either retreated into academia, busy with economic pursuits or building families, a situation that has left little time for political work.

It is against the above background that *Mapambano* has been born. The difference this time is that *Mapambano* is seeking to bring together Kenyan Leftists at home and abroad in a major move to renew the anticapitalist struggle which has suffered a lot of stagnation because of a multiplicity of reasons. Many lessons have been learnt in the process of struggle and there is no doubt that these lessons will serve to better the level of organization of the Kenyan Left especially in Sweden because the monster of imperialism and capitalist class rule in Kenya requires coordination by Kenyans and other revolutionary forces across the world. A new government is in power in Kenya but an old system that is responsible for the suffering of millions of Kenyans is still in place.

Okoth Osewe

SOUTH AFRICA: Ten years of Democracy: Is the liberation Struggle Over?

By Ronald Elly Wanda.

Earlier this year I was ill-fated for I missed an opportunity to meet up with some of Africa's contemporary divas at Hammersmith's world famous *Shepherds Bush Empire* (formerly Apollo theatre) in West London. Amongst the divas assiduously imported from rhythmic South Africa were two of my favourites; culturally electrifying Yvonne Chaka Chaka and politically inspirational and poetically soothing Miriam Makeba, the woman whom perhaps every right-thinking African school boy at some point tunefully fell for.

Noticeably absent was **Brenda Fassie** owing to her poor health, she died three months after the event. She will be sadly missed by all who enjoyed her ecstatic and care-free style of music. The festivities were hosted by Republic of South Africa's London consulate to honour the country's 10th anniversary under Black rule and as a democratic state.

Earlier this year I was blessed with my first visit to South of Africa or *Azania*, a place chock-full with political history and social ills resulting from the devilish apartheid system. I had other prior rendezvous in Durban and later in Johannesburg, but as a political spectator I couldn't resist the temptations of comparative politicking to try and weigh whether what the English professors have painted in their thrilling lectures and engaging books is anything closer to reality. I am not implying that what the armchair professors have reported is entirely wrong. However, it is sometimes qualitatively functional to hear the story from those who actually went through it. After all, Simeon Strunsky, the essayist, perhaps had me in mind when he remarked that "people who want to understand democracy should spend less time in the library reading Aristotle and more time on the buses and in the subways".

Mandela and other leaders who led the liberation struggle abandoned the "real" fight for the people, that of social justice and equality of opportunity.

My journey from London Heathrow to Johannesburg had been a fat circus right from the start. Day one, I missed my flight, due to Expedia's (the internet travel agents) late communication to Virgin Atlantic who subsequently mishandled my E-ticket, not to mention the usual airport pressures.

Having spent a soporific night under the inept hands of Virgin Atlantic, I arrived at Johannesburg as scheduled. I was swiftly welcomed by the wonderful southern comfort (the weather not the drink!) that made me forget all about the horrible wintry English weather that I had left behind for the pitiable London inhabitants. Johannesburg's airport layout, capacity and organisation is impressive and capable of giving one a counterfeit impression of having arrived in Amsterdam, Berlin or Venice and not geographically south of mother Africa.

Johannesburg, commonly referred to as the 'city of gold', is Azania's biggest commercial centre. It is largely white and quite well to do. My stay at Sandtown district was necessitated after a lengthy exploration that left me exhausted and disappointed in failing to find a place to stay in Johannesburg amongst "abantu" (people). The neighbourhood of Sandton city (formerly

Down-town) where I briefly resided, boasts about everything that Soweto does not. Large and spacious houses, public parks which are not accessible to the general public, shopping malls, corporate headquarters, hotels and a large tax base to support ample amenities and services. Sandton city's residents are predominantly white but one can find a few and occasional blacks who are considered better-off aka "Rand-lords".

I didn't have to walk very far from my transient residence to notice the huge electrified wall fencings that were supervised by Sandton's very own police force. They reminded me of London's city police, who keep watch over London's fiscal constituency and are known for their brutality against ethnic minority communities. For a minute or so onward, I permitted my mind to wonder what it would have been like for me as a young black person or for that matter a black South African or just a black African caught by these largely white "heavy weapon-carrying" police force. Word has it that during the Apartheid regime the white dominated Police force here (when dealing with black people), were known to have employed a policy of "shoot first then ask questions later". How times have changed, I thought to myself.

As elsewhere in Africa, the changes in South Africa came after a long fight by the people. Through liberation struggles, the working class, black women and the student movements amongst other groups of people fought a bitter war to liberate black people from the slaving system of apartheid. The outcome in South Africa was that **Nelson Madiba Mandela** was released in 1990 after 27 long years in prison. South Africa had its first ever democratic election that saw black people voting for the first time in 1994. Expectedly and unsurprisingly, **Mandela** and the African National Congress (ANC) won the elections overwhelmingly and **Mandela** became the country's first democratically elected president. Having served his full term he was succeeded by the country's vice president **Thambo Mbeki** in 1999, whose mandate was renewed in the middle of this year by the South African electorate.

Ten years on, it is often common to come across books and discussion papers written by European and American armchair professors of African politics on how well South Africa is doing. I mean you walk into a library or a political or social forum and all you will see is; "The End of Apartheid", "The fall of Apartheid", "The politics of Apartheid", "Mandela", "Waiting: the White South Africans", "The concise History of South Africa." I might upset some readers, but I am of the view that there were many concessions made in the run up to the political transition of 1994.

Mandela and other leaders who led the liberation struggle abandoned the "real" fight for the people, that of social justice and equality of opportunity. For instance, the laws in South Africa today are formally 'colour-blind' and in some cases even promote affirmative-action in favour of black people; however from what I saw in Soweto and Durban, the country remains an inequitable society. The latest United Nations (UN) research has also categorised it as still amongst one of the most unequal in the world. Indeed, not so long ago a government minister was quoted as saying: "South Africa is sitting on a social time bomb", clearly reflecting the concerns of the majority of poor black South Africans. It is clear that the ANC has abandoned its core roots and energy- the poor people.

ANC party was born socialist but later adopted capitalism and endorsed the neo-liberal agenda, whose fruit we know is exploitation of the people. The ANC's economic policy emphasises on market liberalization and tight government control on

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Capitalist perception of society should go

In his prologue of the concubine, it seems Elechi Amadi sums up our political picture with dramatic effect. I paraphrase. "The thunder god sits in his grove, then naps between rainbows up above while justice suffers within the people who know not which way to go".

Our country, much praised as peaceful, has passed-out. So much has been carried away from the utopian dreams which were touted by the very leaders who have led it down the path. With **President Kibaki's** style of recycling political rejects to run key government departments, abetting crime by sparing corrupt ministers who shift blame when caught *in-flagrante-delicto*, mortgaging the country and its projects for a pittance and promoting joblessness through massive lay-offs, the remedy lies in addressing the reasons as to how a new bogus government could have been elected into power by millions of Kenyans.

If a minister signs a document without proper perusal then shifts blame when things grow red then he should be sacked. But wait, why can't such a hypocrite be pricked by his conscience and do Kenyans pride by kissing his job good bye? Wait further, what if his boss fails to sack him simply because of political arithmetic put forth at the expense of national interest? As the appointing authority, the voter feels cheated when their leader slaughters national concerns at the altar of sectarian (read mount Kenya Mafia or NAK) slough.

Narc should embrace a young untainted leadership with the willpower to perform and with a pro-people approach to virtually all aspects of socio-economic and political development. At the

ballot box, we shunned a **Moi**-driven system that sanctioned accumulation of wealth, assassination of radical ideals and their proponents, land grabbing and promotion of joblessness especially among the youth.

Although **Moi's** regime was vanquished, the biggest mistake Kenyans made was to vote-in a carbon copy of the old regime! Narc started "with a broken leg" bickering over distribution of portfolios under the illegal M.O.U instead of how the voter could get even a single meal consistently. Nothing has changed in Kenya. Our current crop of leaders are either a product of a pathologically corrupt and inept alumnus or a protege, son or political sidekick of some former dirty goons who were running the government. The opposition bench is empty because KANU, which claims to be the main opposition party, is toothless.

The imbalance created by the "economic warlords" of this system must be addressed before things go apocalyptic. The political lords had quarantined the masses like lepers leaving them in dire need of the most basic human necessities. These leaders are embalmed in the daub of a senseless capitalist system in which the monthly budget of a rich man's pet can feed two families effectively for a month. The sure therapy for our country is a complete departure from the capitalist perception of society to a system that can put the control of the country's wealth on the hands of the producers of wealth ie the peasants and workers who toil everyday.

Stephen Obaje

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spending has meant that the working class and the poor who are mostly black South Africans, have to bear the cost of its conservative economic policy. ANC switched from policies of nationalisation and started talking with a privatisation accent. The same can be said about Kenya where *wainchi* (people) are suffering as a result of NARC's wholehearted endorsement of IMF and World Bank's prescriptions.

...we need to defeat capitalism and replace it with socialism in order for Africa to fully realise democracy.

I recall one prominent South African panellist during a socialist seminar in London that I chaired, noting that: "Post Apartheid policy makers drew all wrong lessons from 'international Experience', and hence have prepared to amplify rather than correct apartheid and capitalism's main economic distortions".

The compromises made by the ANC government since its birthday in 1994 has not delivered higher living standards to the *Bantu* (people). The party's systematic ideological conversion has condemned many people who are already poor into further poverty. **Professor Heather Deegan** in her book "*The Politics of the New South Africa*" agreeably notes that "When it comes to education, the legacy of apartheid is still evident in many places. Many children continue to study under the tree, in dilapidated buildings and without appropriately trained teachers. Some schools are hollow shells without even the most basic equipment and few textbooks."

For if we are to truly judge whether present day South Africa is democratic or not you need to look at the primary essence of democracy. The essential aspirations of democratic ideals are that decision ought to be taken by the people. Secondly, this means that the mass of the people should have some say in what they want to be, and not just told what they are. Thirdly, this decision should be genuinely the people's, it should not be manipulated by propaganda, misinformation and irrational fears. Fourthly it should, to some extent, reflect the peoples considered opinions and aspirations. In my view none of the above tenets are evident in present day South Africa. This is because the only way we are going to fully realise democracy in Africa is when socialism will prevail.

In this light, it is easy to comprehend what two (amongst Mbeki's many critics) say. **Professor Dani Nabudere** and his colleague, **Professor Patrick Bond** argue that persuasive powers of the World Bank and IMF's intellectual arguments are partly to blame for the fact that the ANC as a liberation movement disappointed its constituents just months after seizing State power.

The exchanges I received whilst in Soweto were enough to make me defend the view that the poor men and women in the townships have got no reason to smile. For the poor are still poor and the *Rand-lords* as in Sandton are still getting richer. The liberation struggle will continue, we need to defeat capitalism and replace it with socialism in order for Africa to fully realise democracy. After all we are the richest continent in the world, why are the masses continuously in poverty?

Let the rich pay for free health care for Kenyans, not workers

Providing free health care to Kenyans should be one of the major objectives of a government that claims to care for her people. Charity Ngilu, Kenya's Minister of health airlifted MPs to a "retreat" at the coastal city of Mombasa to bribe them so that they could vote for the a Ksh 40 billion free health bill that she had masterminded. The private sector has estimated that the free health care proposal will cost Ksh 121 billion, accusing Ngilu of under-estimating the budget. Although the idea looks brilliant, it is the source of funding the free health care service

that holds the key to its success. Ngilu's original idea was that the bill should be funded by civil servants and teachers who were supposed to cough Ksh 7 billion through "harmonization" of their salaries; increased taxation on tobacco, mobile phones, alcohol, flower farms and chemicals which was to raise Ksh 11 billion; increased contributions by employees and employers through direct deductions on salaries (Ksh 10 billion) and contributions from the informal sector known as *Jua kali* (Ksh 10 billion).

Kenyan workers are already staggering under the weight of multiple taxes and to burden them with further taxes in the name of "Free health care for Kenyans" is to show that the ruling class and their allies have no limitations when it comes to exploitation of poor workers who are in reality, living from hand to mouth.

Under the current political system in Kenya, the best source of funds to finance

this ambitious project are the big multinational companies that are exploiting the wealth of the nation thereby controlling the Kenyan economy and the wealthy members of the ruling class whose incomes are running into millions of Kenyan shillings.

The other difficult route to free health care is for Kenyans to replace the political system so that the government can take over control of wealth producing institutions to finance social services. Capitalism is not famous for providing free services to the exploited and even the much talked about free primary education in Kenya is heavily dependent on aid money from imperialist countries whose companies are running businesses in Kenya. The idea of a free health care for Kenyans is good but let the rich pay, not poor workers.

Millionaire MPs and the case of Njonjo Mue

On November 30th 2004, Mr. James Njonjo Mue, a radical young lawyer born after "flag independence" was arrested after ripping off a flag from a Minister's Mercedes Benz at Kenya's Parliament buildings. When he was taken to court two days later, he started singing the national anthem, prompting Chief magistrate Aggrey Muchelule to order that the lawyer be taken for mental examination.

But before he was taken away, Njonjo Mue attacked MPs riding Mercedes benzes worth Ksh 17 million when a family of six in Kenya was living on Ksh 48 a day. He lambasted MPs for being taken to Mombasa by BAT (British American Tobacco) to be bribed to pass poisonous laws on Kenyans while he also attacked the "fake government" of Kibaki for watching while Kenyans were being raped, robbed and murdered. Before he was taken away for "mental examination", he said that Kenyans had declared that they wanted back their country and advised the Magistrate to hand out the harshest sentence he wished because he was guilty as charged.

Njonjo Mue's rage is just the tip of an iceberg. Many young people are "burning" with anger when they see the kind of looting and plunder the Narc government is facilitating while millions of Kenyans are going without food. Prices of basic consumer commodities continue to rise after the government lost control of prices to big business with devastating consequences. Corruption scandals involving the ruling class continue to be brushed aside and all signals are that the Narc government is incapable of transforming Kenya.

As the Njonjo Mue story continues to circulate, the fundamental issue is how to organize politically to confront looters who have taken over Parliament and who are calling themselves "representatives of the people" in today's Kenya. Njonjo Mue was speaking on behalf of millions of Kenyans especially the restless youth and workers currently unable to intervene to liberate Kenya from the hands of thieves and murderers and to end foreign control of our country.

Joel Okello

Harakati CDs now available

During its existence, a revolutionary Kenyan organization called the "Kenya Youth Movement in Sweden (KYMS)" produced 11 hard copy issues of a publication called *Harakati*. So far, past issues of this publication have not been available. We are pleased to announce that a progressive comrade has now compiled all the issues of *Harakati* into a CD which are available at a small contribution. The CD also contains statements which were issued by KYMS and is a valuable archive for those seeking to understand the politics of KYMS at a time when suppression by the Moi dictatorship was still very much alive. For details on how to get the CD, send mail to: mapambanofront@yahoo.se

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