CLASS STRUGGLE HEIGHTENS IN KENYA

By

Horace Campbell

In the latest novel of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, the Kenyan writer, the setting is a feast of thieves who compare notes and vie with one another in boasting how they became rich. The novel -- The Devil on the Cross -- exposes the celebration of corruption by the Kenyan leadership who have made Kenya the epicentre of imperialist operations in Eastern and Central Africa. The procession of workers, small farmers and students who disrupt the feast is a vivid portrayal of the power of organised working class action. But as yet, the working poor in Kenya have not been organised in their own independent movement. So, despite flashes of militant action, reported struggles in Kenya are those of the intra-class squabbles between different sections of the ruling clique who have had to increase social and political repression in order to remain in power.

Soweto Equivalent

On August 1, 1982, the myth of the stable, prosperous Kenya was cracked when the reality of repression and intra-class squabbles erupted in the form of an attempted coup d'etat. This attempted coup which was an expression of the level of force in Kenyan politics, left more than one thousand Kenyans dead, and subsequently led to the burning out of fifteen thousand workers from their homes in Mathere Valley, one of the most notorious pools of reserve labour north of Soweto. The squabbles in Kenya reverberated in Washington, as the Pentagon feared that a change of regime would affect the future of one of the most important American naval bases in the Indian Ocean, at Mombasa. Since the abortive uprising the British Defence Secretary, John Nott, has rushed to Nairobi to survey the situation in order to provide more military capital to the Moi leadership.

Kenya is a rich and fertile country in Eastern Africa, bordering Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania, and is five hundred and thirty-six kilometers of coastline on the important sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. The infrastructure for economic activities in Kenya had been very developed, for the presence of white settlers in the colonial era had created an economy which exported agricultural products of coffee, tea, pyrethrum and maize. After the seizing of eight and a half million acres of the most fertile land by military conquest, the expropriated African population was corralled into reserves with 'loyal' Africans appointed chiefs. The racially hierarchical structure of the colonial society was reinforced by the importation of Indian
traders who distributed the commodities of British manufacturers while others serviced the middle levels of the colonial bureaucracy.

Democratic Assassinations

Violent expropriation of the poor Africans' land elicited a violent response from the rural poor so that today in Africa Kenya boasts of one of the predominant struggles for independence. It was in Kenya that the Land and Freedom Army (called Mau Mau) exposed the bestiality of the social democratic British who, between 1952 and 1960, murdered over fifteen thousand Africans and herded large sections of the population into concentration camps. This war in the forest, which is now embedded in the consciousness of the working people, speeded the process of constitutional decolonisation and Kenya became an independent state in December 1963. Those loyalists and Home Guards who cooperated with Britain were promoted to the top of the bureaucratic apparatus, while the British lent the Kenyans £20 million to buy back their own land. The United States with its constitutional engineering, electoral fraud and assassinations weeded out the more nationalist element of the ruling party. One of the victims, the former Vice-President, has told one side of the story in his book Not Yet Uhuru. The other side of the story has been documented by no less a person than one of the former ambassadors of the United States to Kenya, William Attwood, who in his book, The Reds and the Blacks, boasted how he orchestrated the removal of radicals from the ruling party, the Kenyan African National Union.

Kenya became the central point of transnational accumulation in the region, especially after 1967 with the radical posturings of the Tanzanian leadership. Well-known British and American houses of finance capital dominated the banking sector and facilitated the export of capital by the other transnational corporations which were entrenched in mining, quarrying, light manufacturing, commerce, petroleum distribution and textiles. The neon signs of the known capitalist firms flashed across the Nairobi skies, while the ordinary Kenyan worker faced imprisonment for vagrancy in the Kenyan capital. Even without the pass laws of South Africa, the legislation in Kenya, covering industrial relations, was outmoded and a century behind the laws governing labor-capital relations in advanced capitalist states. And, as if the laws were not enough, the British stationed permanent troops to ensure that the country was safe for investors and the tourists who came to see wild game in the Kenyan national parks.

In a country where the white settler valued the lives of dogs over the lives of workers and small farmers, the agencies of the multilateral institutions organised the regional headquarters in Nairobi so that the growing settler/expatriate community could hunt, dance, dine and gamble in the segregated manner of colonial Kenya.
Along with this large international community was the intelligence services of Israel, the U.S. and South Africa. The close relationship between Israel, South Africa and Kenya was exposed in 1976 when the Israelis used the facilities of the East African Community to carry out the aerial attack on Africa at Entebbe.

American Military Presence

It was also during the seventies, when Kissinger 'discovered' Africa, that the U.S. moved to develop the military intelligence infrastructure which had been built by the British and the Israelis. In 1976, after the Angolan War of Liberation sent signals as to the future of capitalism on the continent, the Pentagon looked for safe allies and began lumbering the Kenyan government with outmoded F5 jets. The Kenyan armed forces were built up from a small conventional army to a counter-insurgency force of twelve thousand four hundred men with the latest counter-insurgency aircrafts and armed personnel carriers. With the tide of revolution and radical militarism spreading in Ethiopia, and with the commandism and instability in Uganda, the U.S. military sales to Kenya quadrupled between 1976-1980. This increased military expenditure was carried out under the guise of strengthening the American military facilities at Mombassa in the face of the 'Soviet threat in the Indian Ocean'. The Americans built up the island of Diego Garcia to be a major military centre with Mombassa, Kenya, as the central intelligence link between the bases spread from the Gulf to the South African port at Silvermine. In this context it was not insignificant that the Kenyan political leadership were implicated in the mercenary attack on the Seychelles in November 1981.

The close military agreement between the U.S. and Kenya imposed new demands on the working population as the military expenditure increased from U.S. $48 million in 1971 to U.S. $77 million in 1975 to U.S. $242 million in 1980. The increase meant that the working people were subsidising their own repression as the Kenyan armed personnel and paramilitary General Service Unit paraded with the toys of death. This increased expenditure placed a burden on the limited foreign exchange and this was expressed as a balance of payments problem.

The Double Crisis and the Class Struggle

The double crisis of public and external finances brought to Kenya one dimension of the world crisis of the system of capitalism. Declines in the international price of agricultural commodities compounded the problems of the country so that after the legal and illegal repatriation of profits, dividends and consultancy fees by the transnationals in Africa, there was little for the local capitalists and the political careerists who dominated the state. The double crisis was Kenya's portion of the
crisis of imperialism. In the advanced capitalist countries this crisis is expressed in unemployment, trade wars and monetary instability. But in the underbelly of the system the poor suffer from famine, drought, under-nourishment and the very reproduction of the working class is threatened. For Kenya's neighbours, Uganda and Tanzania, this crisis of capitalism has meant that the shortage of basic commodities such that items such as salt, sugar, light bulbs, toilet paper, cooking oil and kerosene are luxury items available only to those who pay the inflated prices on the magendo market (black market).

Interestingly enough, while Kenya and Tanzania claim differing ideological positions vis-à-vis the international capitalist system, both countries support the International Monetary Fund (IMF) medicine of structural adjustment programmes which lead to an intensification of the burden on the poor. The severe hardships imposed on the people of Kenya has been immense since, unlike Tanzania, the mass of the landless plantation workers are more vulnerable to the cuts in public expenditure and the dwindling social services.

Peasant War Against Capitalism

Ugandan and Tanzanian peasants have reacted to this crisis by uprooting coffee trees and returning to subsistence production as their own strike against the crisis of capitalism. This reaction has brought coercion down on the village communities of East Africa, with state policy resorting to the commandist tactics of the British during the last depression. Like the Tanzanian peasantry, the rural Kenyan farmers have adopted their own resistance to the deteriorating price of cash crops. For example, faced with the guzzling up of land by the sugar plantations, the peasants in Nyanza Province carried out large scale burning of sugar cane plantations. The fires which lit the sky sent fear to the managers such that they pleaded with the people not to burn sugar cane.

In the Cooperative Movement in Central Province the thievery by the cooperative officials has led to the classic hold up of crops, reminiscent of the hold ups of the 1930s and 40s. This thievery and the low prices for commodities led the peasants to withhold milk and coffee from the centralised distribution system which is organised down to the village levels through the cooperative movement. As in the rural areas, so also in the urban areas where the workers have begun to rebel against the state appointed trade union officials. In this regard it is not incidental that the Americans hope to set up their base in Mombasa, for it is in Mombasa that the militant dock workers have given notice that they will reject the American-British trained trade unionists who counsel workers that politics and trade unionism do not mix.
All these struggles by the working poor have been met with force by the ruling petty bourgeoisie who see their scope for accumulation dwindling. In Kenya the deteriorating resources of the state have led to a dog eat dog competition between the local capitalists and bureaucrats. The economic crisis increased social and political repression as the petty bourgeoisie leadership trampled on the small democratic concessions which were wrung at the period of independence. Democratic forms, such as parliament, elections, collective bargaining have been eroded in Kenya, with electoral fraud institutionalised in the society.

For a while, the world was sheltered from this process of political retrogression by the posters which lauded the democratic traditions of Kenya. The change of leaders from the old and corrupt Jomo Kenyatta to the young and energetically corrupt Arap Moi was heralded in the Western press as the symbol of stability. But the continuity in the society was marked by the abusive and corrupt exercise of power. Corruption constitutes one of the essential elements of the neo-colonial process of political retrogression in Kenya. The extent and scope of this corruption is such that the poor have become immune to the scandals relating to bribery, smuggling, the illegal export of game trophies or the callous export of maize by the leadership, while begging western countries for food aid. During April of this year the bank workers exposed the bribery of all the leading state officials, up to the Presidency, in the illegal export of currency.

This corruption was so endemic that the poor were saying that the corrupt leaders can only be removed with the end of the system of capitalism itself. Through underground pamphlets and in the villages a popular culture of resistance was developing. Kenyan writers and playwrights helped to deepen this culture by returning to the village community to draw inspiration from the poor.

Cultural Resistance and Repression

Initially the state moved to close all avenues of expression. The University of Nairobi, one of the centres of genuine research and inquiry, became a virtual battleground as the state continuously closed the University, hoping to lock the door to alternative forms of thought and expression. The crude and openly pro-British elements, epitomised by Charles Njonjo, the former Attorney General, attempted to dictate what should be taught at all levels of the society, what cultural programmes may or may not be staged in village theatres and school plays, what songs could be sung by bands, and more important, what materials should be used as text books. A local theatre group in Ngugi's village, which sought to instill the collective attributes needed to boost the cultural values of the people on which to build their future society, was razed to the ground, while those to whom the tele-
vision show Dallas was the ultimate art-form pushed for the 1984 mind control scenario in Kenya.

It was in the midst of this repression that one section of the petty bourgeoisie sought to silence even elements of their own class through the expediency of one party rule. The de jure declaration of a one party state in June 1982, by President Moi, provided the justification for the incarceration of scores of workers, unemployed and students, with University lecturers in particular being singled out for detention. Conducting this repression in the old Cold War anti-communist and anti-socialist hysteria, the state clamoured that the university was the harbinger of 'foreign ideologies' and the circulators of 'seditious literature'. This 'seditious literature' was supposed to be *Pambana* and *Cheche* cyclostyled sheets, circulated underground, which sought to rekindle the flames of the independence movement.

Repression bred further repression as even the spokespersons for the regime were detained as they raised questions as to the rate of detentions. It was in this period of detentions, arrests and cultural resistance that the attempted coup d'etat took place on August 1, 1982.

The entire airforce, trained and armed by the Israelis and Americans, staged a military uprising against the Moi regime. In the less than eight hours when they held the main radio station, the men and the officers of the airforce mobilised the popular opposition to the regime. The university students were the most enthusiastic supporters of the uprising and they spontaneously supported the coup. Hence, more than two hundred of them lost their lives when the American and British military personnel organised the 'loyal' elements of the army to reverse the coup. This reversal was sealed in blood. The University has been closed indefinitely so that the number of students killed cannot properly be documented.

Two of the soldiers who claimed that they led the coup fled to Tanzania, thus engulfing the Tanzanian government in the legal squabbles surrounding the uprising. In the process of the extradition hearings in Tanzania, the details of the attempted uprising showed clearly that there was no organisation and that the military upheaval was only the struggle between differing elements of the petty bourgeoisie, despite the populist slogans.

Since the attempted coup, the mass detentions have intensified, with the roadblocks and curfews bringing vividly to Kenya her portion of the world crisis. Kenya is now on the inexorable road of violence and coups, and military interventions,

*See below for extracts of this "seditious material." (Ed. K.M.)

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as the Kenyan leadership trample on the civil rights of the vast majority of the population. No amount of external finance or of military presence or marine landings can plan the class struggles in Kenya. The seeds planted by the Land and Freedom Army now need to be fertilised by a working-class organisation. The all class politics of the nationalist era has come to a close in Africa. The Kenyan leadership is closing the door with blood on their hands.


Kuhusu hao wenzetu, tujuavyo sisi, wengu kizuizini. Ya kweli iliivuma fununu hivi karibuni kwamba hawe wasomi wana kufunja sheria ya Kenya; basi waachilie huru! Tunaisihi serikali ya Kenya kuwafungu zina thabiti na kuwarudishia kazi zao.

Tunayachapisha chapa haya maandishi kutoka PAMBANA kama kumbukumbu ya hao ndugu shupavu, kwa vile tunaamini kwenda kila Mkenya ana haki ya kutoa maoni yake bila hofu ya kutezwa na kusingizwa. Yamekana eti PAMBANA ni maandishi siri saliti. Lakinari, havi kuvunja haka kutoa maoni yake, maoni inayotellowa katika maendishi hana tunayadhania kuwa ya kweli, na ya hofu wakulima wadogo, wafanyi kazi, wanaafu na umma nzima nchini Kenya kuwa wanavyotendewa na ukebera Merikani na ukoloni mambo leo, papo hapo nchini yao. Hivi ndivyo yalivyo mambo.

K.M.

PAMBANA

Msimamo Wetu

Wakenya tumehainiwa, na mapinduzi tuliyoyamwagia damu nyingi
ili kuikomboa nchi yetu sasa yamepotoshwa na kunajisiwa. Leo, baada ya miaka 22 tangu chama cha KANU kiundwe, na miaka 20 tangu tudanganywe kwa uhuru wa uongo, hali ya maisha yetu imezoroteka kabisa kabisa. Hawa viongozi wetu majambazi wamelitupilia mbali jukumu lao la kuyaongoza maisha yetu na wametutendea jina jii kubwa hata kuliko ile ya wakoloni: wametunyamizisha kwa nguvu, na wame­tupokonya haki yetu ya kushiriki katika harakati za taifa letu. Haki zetu za kujieleza, za kusema tunapotaka zote zimezorotia jaani.

**KANU na serikali.** Wameuchafua uchumi wetu, wameufuja ushirikiano wetu, wameleta mafarakano baina yetu huku wakituibia na kurundika pesa nyingi ya taifa. Wamewapa wabeberu nchi yetu ili waifanya chombo cha siazo za uchumi na kuhusu undani wa taifa letu. Waendelea kuwa muhimu hutumika hali zake ya kusaidia katika kutokana na kuboresha majeshi yetu ya kutumia makosa kutoka nchini, na kutokana na mapambano ya mapinduzi ambayo yalibadilisha uongozi vya wakoloni. Wameweza kusaidia watu ambao wana imetangaza tuvuna yao na uwanja wao kwa uchumi wa taifa letu, na hilo zinafshe katika KANU, wakati wameza kupata utumwa cha upya marupendo zake.

Huu, ndugu zetu SI. Kwa hivyo sisi Wakenya hatuna njia nyingine ya kufuata isipokuwa kuanza upya ili kuyaendelea, kwa maeneo tena mapambano ya mapinduzi ambayo yalizimwa na hawa vibaraka vya wabeberu. Mwito mpya umetujia, mwito unatuambia tuvunje minyororo ya ukimya na kustahimili, tuungane na tujita yao kama mpambano wa kulioka na kulijenga upya taifa letu. Hili linahitaji vita, vita baina ya kutaka. Ni lazima uzikamiliana kwa hili!

**Uhuru wa kweli.** Kwa hivyo sisi Wakenya hatuna njia nyingine ya kufuata isi­-pokuwa kuanza upya ili kuyaendelea, kwa maeneo tena mapambano ya mapinduzi ambayo yalizimwa na hawa vibaraka vya wabeberu. Mwito mpya umetujia, mwito unatuambia tuvunje minyororo ya ukimya na kustahimili, tuungane na tujita yao kama mpambano wa kulioka na kulijenga upya taifa letu. Hili linahitaji vita, vita baina ya kutaka. Ni lazima uzikamiliana kwa hili!

Ni jukumu letu kusimama wina na kukataa kata-kata kuwafuata hawa viongozi wasaliti kama vipepo. Ni haki zetu ya ubinadamu kusema tunaloamini, kuze mawazo yetu na kukutana tunapotaka.
HIZI NI HAKI ZETU; si mambo ambayo yanahitaji ruhusa ya PC au DC. Ni haki zetu ambazo lazima tuzichukue, tuzitumie, kwa hiari au kwa nguvu, kwa ruhusa au bila ruhusa.


Katika kutimiza lengo hili, Chama cha Desemba 12 kimechagua kuanzisha gazeti la kwanza la mapinduzi -- PAMBANA. Siku zote hizi hakujakwua na gazeti ambalo ni SAUTI ya wanoonyonyo asa na kudhulumiwa, ambalo linasimamia na kupiganja matakuwa na mahitaji ya Wakeuya wanaonyonyo, Wakeuya wanaosongea bila kiasi. Tangu leo basi sisi tumechukua unaotokana na vitendo halisi na siku za kuwajumuisha, kuwaunganisha, kuwapa moyo na kuwazinduka wa vitendo huo la wakulima. Pambana hili lina lengo la kuwajumuisha, kuwaunganisha, kuwapa moyo na kuwajumuisha, kuwaunganisha, kuwapa moyo na kuwazinduka wa vitendo huo la wakulima.
2. Wafanyi-kazi katika kupinga mishahara duni tunayopewa kwa nguvu za wabeberu na sheria zinazokataza migomo;

3. Wafanyi-Giashara wadogo katika kudhidi/Kupinga Kugandamizwa na kampuni za kigeni;

4. Mamiliioni ya watu ambao hawana kazi katika kupigania kupata kazi;

5. Waalimu na wanafunzi katika kukataa elimu ya kikoloni inayonufaisha wanyonyaji tu;

6. Mabingwa wa kazi Wakenya katika kupinga ubingwa wa uongo tunaoletewa kutoka ng'ambo.

7. Wasomi na waandishi wenye msimamo katika kuvikataa vi-kwazo vya serikali vya kuyana maandishi yenye maana na manufaa kwetu;

8. Wasio na mashamba katika madai yao ya kupata mashamba;

9. Maskini na watu wote katika kupinga bei na kodi zinazopanda bila kiasi na mishahara inayozidi thamani;

10. Umma wote unaodhulumiwa katika kupinga serikali hii ya kibaraka na sheria zake za kutunyanyanya.

Kwa jumla basi, gazeti hili litajadili mambo yote ya maana juu ya maisha na maishilio yetu, kuzindua na kueneza mwa nguvu za wabeberu na wabeberu huzificha, kuzifichua na kuvikataa vi-kwazo vya serikali vya kuyana maandishi yenye maana na maana yote za wabeberu, na vibaraka vyao wa Kenya, kuyalinda na kufikia vi-kwazo vya serikali vya kuvikataa vya kibaraka na sheria zake za kutunyanyanya.

KAMBI YA MAJESHI YA AMERIKA: Ina Haana Gani Kwa Wakenya?

Siku zote tunajua kwamba tabaka la wanyonyaji hapa Kenya, kwa sababu ya uhalifu wao unaowafanya wawagoge watu wao na majeshi yao wenyewe, imebidi waweke vikosi vya majeshi ya wabeberu katika kambi za majeshi ya Kenya kama Kahawa na Nanyuki ili kuwalamu. Lakini, kwa mara ya kwanza tangu tupate "uhuru," tunaona wabeberu (Waamerika) wakijijengea kambi zao wenyewe huko Kilindini, Mtongwe, n.k.

Swali linalotukabili sasa ni: Kambi hizi za majeshi ya wabeberu zina maana gani kwetu? Kambi hizi zinatuonyeshi:


4. Kwamba Kenya imetumia mkataba wa kishenzi, mkataba wa kisaliti na ubeburu wa Kiamerika Kuyaua mapambano ya kujikomboa ya Afrika, na hasa ya Afrika Kusini ili makaburu na ujumbe waendelee kututawala.


Basi ndugu yetu, ikiwa sisi Wakenya hatutemashama kwa nguvu moja kuwafanya huu ubeburu wa Amerika na nchi nyinge za kizungu, tutaka kuwafanya wabeberu na ukumbuka yakanuno nga wanayotaka, kuwafanya na kutumia ukuomozi na kuwafanya za kizungu.