

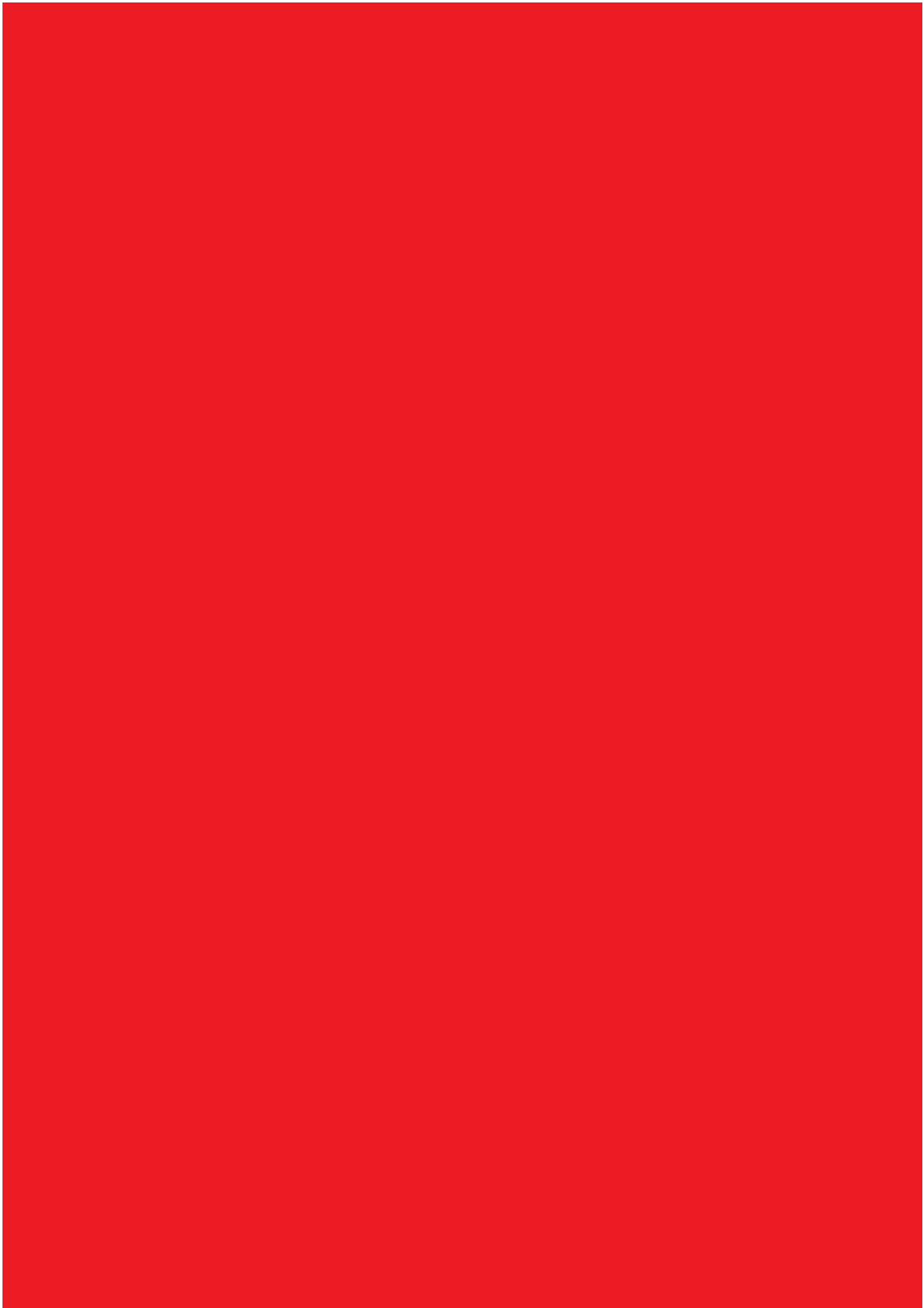


African Communist

4th Quarter 2010

Issue Number 182







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- 1 Introduction to the special issue – Chris Matlhako**
- 3 Conference Declaration**
- 6. Address by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation – Maite Nkoana-Mashabane**
- 12 SUDAN: The politics and ideological practices of democracy in Africa: strengths and weaknesses for the Left's programme – Elshafie Mohammed Elmakki**
- 15. ZAMBIA: The state of Zambian Democracy: left organisations and their role in political struggles – Neo Simutanyi**
- 22. KENYA: Political reforms and the struggle for national cohesion and social liberation in Kenya – Mwandawiro Mghanga**
- 34. DRC: Experience and conception of people's power in DRC – Tony Busselen**
- 37. UGANDA: State of politics in Uganda and the struggle for democracy – Weijagye Justus**
- 41. LESOTHO: Neo-colonialism and the new trade regimes – Tennyson Saoana**
- 44. SWAZILAND: A case study of democracy in Africa – Siphasha Dlamini**
- 46. NAMIBIA: Swapo message of support – Salomon Ilovu**
- 48. CHAD: Quelle Démocratie Pour Le Tchad Et L'afrique, Et Quels Intérêts De Classe Sert-Elle – Ley-Ngardigal Djimadoum**
- 64. The Workers' Party of Belgium – Tony Busselen**
- 69. Conference Programmes**

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SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

Conference of Left Parties in Africa

The conference committed to take forward the on-going struggles to liberate the whole of Africa from imperialism, neo-colonialism, war, poverty, disease and famine. **By Chris Matlhako**

The 1st African Participatory Democracy Conference (APDC) took place in Johannesburg in August 2008, with the support of the International Left Forum (VIF) of the Swedish Left Party (Vänsterpartiet), as part of their series on participatory democracy conferences. The conference looked at theories of development, the relationships between development and democracy, and practical manifestations of this based on country case studies. The meeting, attended by delegates representing about 30 African political parties and former national liberation movements resolved to establish an 'African platform for left and progressive forces'. This led to the formation of the Africa Left Network Forum (ALNEF).

The 2nd APDC and the 1st ALNEF meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa from 19 to 21 August 2010, were the culmination of an intense and fruitful engagement, and constituted the collective work of progressive and left forces who share a common agenda — to build a continent that is developmental, people-centred, people-driven and free of poverty and hunger. The conceptualisation and realisation of this initiative also dovetailed with the SACP's resolution to

deepen the African revolution beyond de-colonisation and to build international solidarity amongst progressive left forces.

This year marks 50 years since the commencement of de-colonisation in Africa and is denoted by celebrations in those countries, which realised independence half a century ago. Much has been achieved. But the post liberation influences of neo-colonialism and the Cold War, global trade inequalities, conflict and fragile political systems have impeded the political and economic development of the continent. In many African countries the climate of political tolerance, freedom of expression and association and mass activism has to be advanced. Poverty, inequality and unemployment remain rife.

For these and other reasons, the process of fortifying an African left and progressive platform is timely and crucial. The meeting symbolised the unity of all revolutionary forces committed to championing the complex fight for the African continent's true independence.

As President Nasser said in 1967 whilst addressing a seminar on "Africa: National and Social Revolution":

"Contemporary African reality, the

problems Africa now faces, and the strong, vigorous currents flowing in Africa demand in the first place a clear vision; a vision able both to take in the whole and to estimate correctly its component parts; so as to gain renewed strength and ensure an uninterrupted revolution on African soil" (AC No. 28, First Quarter 1967, p14).

Overall the meeting, as the documents contained in this special issue demonstrate, successfully assessed the state of democracy and development on the continent and laid a strong platform for united action for its transformation. The forms of, conditions for and impediments to participatory democracy were unpacked.

The definition, roles and responsibilities of the Left were interrogated. Serious, scientific discussions were held on the most burning issues and problems of our continent, through detailed coun-

try analyses. The conference committed to take forward the on-going struggles to liberate the whole of Africa from imperialism, neo-colonialism, war, poverty, disease and famine; to safe-guard and fortify independence; and to advance our people on the path to social progress and emancipation. The enthusiastic responses from all quarters showed how timely and necessary such a discussion was felt to be.

Naturally, physical and practical considerations made a comprehensive and all-embracing gathering, covering every country impossible, but the number of country participants will continue to grow over time. We hope the documents here will be useful to all revolutionaries on the continent! ★

Cde Matlhako is the SACP Politburo Secretary for International Relations

SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

African freedom and unity will never be delivered from above, but through the struggles of our people

Declaration by the African Conference on Participatory Democracy and the Africa Left Network Forum Meeting held in Johannesburg on 19-21 August 2010

We, delegates to the Africa Conference on Participatory Democracy and Africa Left Network Forum Meeting representing 52 organisations from 28 countries, including three Youth Formations and 28 political parties, meeting from the 19 to 21 August 2010 in Johannesburg, declare as follows:

The struggle continues!

As we mark 50 years of the decolonisation process in our continent, we note the wide diversity of experiences, of popular and democratic advances, of partial gains, of stagnation and even, in many cases, of grave setbacks and the heavy oppression of progressive forces. Everywhere in our continent the struggle for the legitimate democratic, social and economic aspirations of our peoples continues.

Centuries of anti-colonial struggle, decades of national liberation mobilisation, and 50 years of neo-colonial plunder and manoeuvring, have taught

us an important lesson — advancing, deepening and defending the interconnected objectives of national liberation, national unity, vibrant democracy and social and economic advances require ongoing struggle, popular mobilisation, organisation and vigilance.

Freedom and the unity of our peoples and our continent will never be delivered from above, but always through the struggles of workers and popular forces.

In this context we reject manoeuvres from within some quarters of the African Union to impose a hasty and top-down single African government, a “United States of Africa” cobbled together by some heads of state, many of whom lack a legitimate democratic mandate from within their own countries. The unity of Africa, the unity of our peoples will be built in struggle, bottom-up and on the basis of mobilisation against external reactionary forces and their local agents.

Contrary to the liberal myth of a new world order and of a beneficent

north bent on offering our continent a helping hand, everywhere imperialist forces, their local neo-colonial agents and their pay-masters, the transnational corporations, are active in fostering the effective re-colonisation of our continent. This persisting strategic agenda assumes many forms – the expansion of external military interventions, notably the persistence of French military bases and the expansion of Africom, working with local militarised regime; the continued and selective support of autocratic regimes; the fostering of ethnic and regional divisions; the hypocritical certification of deeply flawed electoral processes; and the deliberate undermining of the capacity of African states and their public sectors to discipline capital and to advance development.

Our continent is rich in people and natural resources, and yet everywhere our people live in poverty. Our wealth continues to be plundered, while here, as the Sotho proverb says, we are left “to share the head of an ant”.

African development and the global crisis of capitalism

Conference and the Network Forum take as a starting point the reality that for the great majority of popular forces in our countries, whether in times of so-called “boom” or bust, capitalism is a daily crisis of grinding poverty, unemployment, destruction of natural resources, hunger, and the bitter struggle for survival. There can be no stability, peace, real democracy and full human development under the dominance of capitalism — a system which is predicated on the exploitation and oppression of the great majority of the world’s peoples.

We reject the simplistic view that the ongoing global economic recession is

merely a product of the mismanagement of the global financial system by greedy bankers.

The ongoing global economic instability is an inherent characteristic of capitalism, and Africa may once again be made to pay dearly for the inherent weaknesses and evils of the global capitalist system.

We pledge to work to promote Africa’s full social and economic development premised on the needs of the African peoples and not private profits, with the protection of Africa’s labour and natural resources from a new round of global capitalist exploitation; as the global capitalist system struggles to regain its falling rates of profits. We view this as integral to the struggle for democracy and human rights in Africa.

On climate change and the destruction of our natural resources

We have noted the growing international scientific consensus that the present trajectory of global economic growth is rapidly destroying the biophysical conditions for human civilisation itself. We further noted that, while it is the economies and consumption patterns in the developed North that are the principal drivers of this deepening crisis, it is the peoples of the South who will bear the brunt of the crisis.

At the heart of the ecological crisis is a global capitalist system premised upon the expanded reproduction of private profit. Our struggle for socialism is a struggle to make social needs and not private profit the strategic priority. As such, the struggle for socialism is and has to be simultaneously a struggle for ecological sustainability.

We pledge to support all efforts aimed at developing environmentally

sustainable renewable sources of energy and a just and democratic world social and economic order.

In the search for new sources of energy and protection of the environment, we will always guard against manoeuvres by imperialism to further under-develop Africa and plunder its labour and natural resources.

Global Left solidarity

Across the world, not least in the global South, progressive and popular forces are once more realising that their diverse struggles are inextricably linked to the struggle against capitalism. We, progressive forces from the African continent, pledge to work closely with and learn from the rich experience of social movement, women, youth, indigenous, labour and party political anti-capitalist struggles.

As the Africa Left Network Forum we will work to forge more active links with like-minded forces, not just within our continent, but also with those in Latin America, Asia and everywhere else in the world.

We are encouraged by important left advances made in Latin America, and we believe that diverse left projects in that continent, including in Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador hold many important parallels and lessons for our own struggles on the Africa continent. We reaffirm our deep appreciation for the outstanding internationalist support

that Cuba has consistently provided to our peoples, and we pledge to continue to expand our actions of solidarity in defence of Cuban socialism.

Way forward

As this gathering we have resolved to intensify our interactions. To this end, we will now meet on an annual basis. To prepare for our annual meetings, and to ensure continuity and ongoing work, we have established a secretariat of the ALNEF. Among other things, we will consolidate ALNEF and its website to act as a repository of our ongoing discussions and debates.

Apart from our annual meetings, we will also convene meetings focused on sectoral struggles. To this end, we have resolved to convene in February next year an international conference on Women in Africa.

Collectively, as a network and individually as separate formations, we pledge to carry forward into our mass base the ideas, perspectives and campaigns that we have resolved upon over these past days.

Amandla ngawethu! (Power to the people!)

Ya umaal alalm wa choub eithedu! (Workers and peoples of the world unite!)

Mapambano! Bado yanaendelea! (The struggle continues!)

*Johannesburg
21 August 2010*

SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

Challenges for the state in Africa: tasks and opportunities for progressives and the Left

Building progress through the six pillars we have learnt in struggle for a better life for all, says **Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane**

Africa is at the crossroads today, between the rich experience of the 50 years since our independence, and opportunities and challenges ahead of us in our march to claiming the 21st century.

The verdict of how we have performed as a continent over the past 50 years is out there for all to see. While Asian countries like China and India are on the rise, even taking a lead in pulling us out of the current economic crisis, our continent is struggling to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at combating poverty, disease and ignorance. While some Latin American countries like Brazil count themselves among emerging global giants, our continent is yet to reverse the tide of underdevelopment and poverty facing its people.

Many have blamed this situation in Africa on our governments (and the state in general) and what they perceive as the lack of democracy. This conference is therefore a platform for progressives and the Left in Africa and the world, to engage this ongoing debate on the nature of the state in Africa, including challenges of democracy.

I am also encouraged that our focus

at this conference will not be confined to the diagnosis of our situation and challenges confronting us only, but will also attempt to reflect on tasks and concrete steps each one of us can take – individually and collectively through our organisations – to be part of our march to claiming the 21st century as the century of Africa.

My topic is: “Challenges for the state in Africa: tasks and opportunities for progressives and the Left”.

Indeed, the African state has been dismissed by some critics as predatory because of its political elite whose agenda is driven by what these critics call “the politics of the belly”, instead of serving the people. These critics even go to the extent of dismissing the legacy of colonialism as a factor behind Africa’s current predicament. They argue that the character of states on our continent today mirror pre-colonial African empires whose governments it is claimed feasted on the blood of the people, and were used by their leaders to distribute patronage and buy favours. What we have today in Africa, according to these critics, are weak and failed states that cannot perform the basics of a modern state to deliver on the needs of their

people.

At the other end of this debate are those who blame everything wrong about our state on the colonial legacy and neo-colonialism. To advocates of this position, African states are by and large led by a comprador bourgeoisie whose role is to perpetuate neo-colonial interests on behalf of their masters in the North. This self-serving comprador class, according to this view, enjoys the protection of their masters and transnational corporations who stand to gain from the underdevelopment of our countries.

To me, the answer to this difficult question lies somewhere in the middle. Nothing can compare to what European colonialism did to our continent. Not only did it fail to develop our economies and countries; it also could not build institutions on which to create a well-functioning, modern state capable of delivering on its challenges. The wellbeing of our people, including their educational advancement, was also subordinated to the interests of greed and plunder whose legacy remain visible to this day in the road and rail infrastructure whose sole purpose was to export raw materials from our continent. No sensible person, in my view, can talk about challenges facing the African state today without invoking the painful memories of colonialism. This is a fact that is difficult to deny.

At the same time, however, we have to admit that had we had a strong contingent of progressive and Left forces on this continent, perhaps the experience of the last 50 years would have been different. No one can deny that this would not have been easy in a Cold War context that was characterised by the assassination of progressive leaders and the

toppling of governments that attempted programmes that were aimed at negating the legacy of colonialism.

There is here both the objective factor of our neo-colonial reality, and the subjective factor of the relative weakness of African progressive forces compared to their counterparts in other parts of the developing world.

Therefore in thinking about the 50 years behind us and their impact on the nature and content of the African state, we have to give prominence in our analysis to this twin heritage that is: the legacy of colonialism and the Cold War context that sabotaged any progressive attempts on our continent.

We have indeed been trying to reverse this legacy, especially over the last 10 years (or so) that gave birth to the African Union and its programme of New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

The heritage of the legacies of colonialism and the Cold War, and our efforts of the last 10 years constitute the context within which we should examine the challenges facing states in Africa today and possible action areas for progressives.

There are four competing perspectives about the role of the state in Africa and other developing parts of the world which should be taken into account as we move forward and contemplate strategic interventions for progressive forces.

First is a perspective that puts nation-building and economic development before the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights. This is a perspective that wants to see strong and effective states in charge of our countries, driving development and econom-

ic prosperity, while our people are denied the freedom of association and the right to speak out against injustice. This is an approach that produced remarkable results in other parts of the world, but should not be encouraged on this continent. To us, the socio-economic development of our countries and the promotion of socio-economic rights, cannot be at the expense of and separated from the political rights of our people.

The second perspective reduces the complex challenges of the state to what is called "good governance". I must say that there is nothing wrong with good governance; and indeed we have spoken out in its favour as the South African government and in our work in the Nepad and the APRM. But we cannot reduce the work of the state simply to austerity measures and other technocratic variables of public management.

This is what the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s and early 1990s were trying to do, and they failed in this mission with disastrous consequences for our state institutions, public service morale, and the delivery of public goods. From our perspective as progressives, the work of government must be centred on the plight of our people for a better life.

The third perspective tries to harness African traditional institutions to improve the functioning of the state and reach out to communities in remote parts of our respective countries. This effort should be encouraged within the context of democratic principles underpinning our progressive understanding of the state. Traditional institutions, if well positioned and resourced, can go a long way in assisting governments to develop local communities and deliver to the people. One danger we should guard

against however, is to romanticise these traditional institutions to the point of turning a blind eye to their strategic and ideological weaknesses.

Finally, is the perspective that is rife in some parts of our continent that is informed by an ambition aimed at building a strong civil society as an alternative to the state. There is nothing wrong with an active, strong and vibrant civil society – this should be encouraged. Indeed, this civil society was also central to the democratisation wave that transformed the African state for the better in the course of the 1990s. They are a positive force necessary for Africa's renewal. But civil society should partner with the state for our good cause, because what we want to achieve on this continent cannot be the task of governments alone.

In playing its role, our civil society has to be rooted among the people, in communities. Unfortunately, and because of our relative weakness as progressives, the civil society movement on this continent is dominated by non-governmental organisation that are mostly funded from outside Africa, instead of community-based organisations, trade unions, and peasants organisations (for example). These progressive layers of the civil society movement have to be strengthened by ourselves, not by outsiders.

This then brings me to the tasks facing us as progressives and Left forces in the context of the theme of this conference. We have to continue to build developmental states throughout our continent – states that have the capacity to control their territory, consolidate our nations and Pan-African unity, develop our economies, and deliver on the expectations of our people. These states

must be about and for the people.

We should build on our experience and gains of the past. One lesson here is that we cannot hope to build sustainable countries (and states) solely on the basis of resources from our external development partners. Our developmental states must be self-reliant and self-sustaining, supported by strong economies with a solid industrial base.

In this respect, it is our strategic task to develop our forces of production, including taking a lead in land and agrarian reform and building our capacity to benefit our raw materials for domestic use and export. Continent-wide industrialisation, including taking control of our raw materials through beneficiation, will give impetus to our current drive to improve intra-trade among African countries.

At the level of communities, we have to build and strengthen institutions, systems and processes that promote local democracy and broad participation. In the case of South Africa, for example, the basic political pillar of the post-1994 democratic state is that of people-centred and people-driven government. Our definition of developmental local government is informed by the principle of what we call “working with citizens and communities”. Our long term vision of the democratic state is developmental in nature.

Our ward committee system is aimed at giving expression to people-centred government and deepening community and public participation at a local level. Presently, there are 3 895 wards demarcated across municipalities in the country. This is likely to increase to over 4 200 wards after the 2011 local government elections.

We are currently improving on our

ward committee system to tackle challenges such as its voluntary nature, their poor functionality and accountability to communities, the limited allocation of resources for their establishment and operations, and their poor coordination with other local structures like the Community Safety Forums, School Governing Boards, and the system of Community Development Workers. Our objective is to refine these ward committees to make them more developmental, accountable, participatory, and depoliticised.

The nature and content of states we want for our continent for a better Africa and a better world will have to take into account the likely impact that our regional integration agenda will have on the sovereignty of our respective countries.

At the continental level, the processes of building an effective African Union will over time result in the surrender of some of the functions of the state at national level to the continental body. When the African Union takes decisions or comes up with protocols that we ratify, these have to be respected by all of us and domesticated in our countries. The same applies to Regional Economic Communities like our Southern African Development Community (SADC). Some of these organisations have even taken bold steps towards the creation of free trade areas and custom unions with the long-term objective of building an African Economic Community.

In the case of SADC, we have just concluded a successful summit in Windhoek where (among others) we committed ourselves to renewing our collective energy and resources towards the full implementation of the SADC Trade Protocol, in support of the consolidation of the free trade area. We have already

achieved much in terms of trade liberalisation in this region, but relatively little in production and industrial development.

We noted with concern the huge amount of work required by SADC in effectively overcoming the daunting challenges faced by the region in bridging the limitations posed by low production capacity and lack of supporting infrastructure.

Our view is that market access alone is not enough to ensure the sustainable economic growth and development of the Southern African region. It is imperative that it be supplemented by the development of new industries and regional value chains, specifically to address supply side constraints and spur diversification, as well as cross-border infrastructural development.

Our success in overcoming this daunting challenge as SADC has serious implications for states in our region, in the long-term. This is not necessarily negative for us because, as progressives on this continent, we have always been Pan-Africanist and internationalist at heart.

We should also anticipate that the expected rise in the next two decades of countries of the South like China, India and Brazil – coupled with the relative decline of the west will tamper with the current global balance of forces. This likely change in the global political economy could be an opportunity for us if we have in place, in our countries, progressive developmental states of the nature we discussed above.

There are six cardinal principles that hundreds of years of our struggle for a better life in all corners of the globe has taught us.

The first is that we have to do what

some call “capture the state”. We cannot remain forever on the margins of society, in protest groups and other organs of civil society. We have to enter the state, be in government, through democratic means.

Second, we have learnt that we enter government not as an end in itself, but to serve our people for a better life.

Third, when we are in government, we have to transform state institutions, the society and the economy we inherit in line with our progressive vision and mission. Those of us who failed in this domain did so at their own peril. You will recall that this is one of the reasons singled out by Karl Marx for the collapse of the short-lived Paris Commune in the 19th century.

Fourth, that in transforming the state, society and economy we should expect those who will be negatively affected to resist – in some instances even resort to violent counter-revolutionary acts of sabotage.

These forces must be engaged through democratic means, and where possible, be won over to our agenda.

Fifth, our own cadreship and leadership have to be politically educated on a constant basis on what we stand for and what we want to achieve so that they remain focused on our mission. This will help discourage the tendency towards using the state for self-enrichment and patronage. The loss of our moral compass within our ranks can bring down our organisations and weaken our hegemony in society.

Finally, we must always remember that we are not alone on this continent or in the world; we are part of the Pan-Africanist and internationalist movement for a better life. We therefore have to work hard, and together, to marshal

these motive forces for change, in Africa and globally. Our organisations must be strong on the ground, with a leadership that is time-tested and committed to our cause. Our ideological orientation must help us respond to challenges before us and provide answers; and programmes we opt for have to be sound and relevant to the tasks at hand.

However, organisational strength, ideological sharpness, high-quality leadership, and sound programmes of action are not sufficient on their own without the support of our masses. We need all these pillars in place if we are to accede to the state; let alone remain in political office for a considerable period in order to transform our countries profoundly.

We also need to know who and what constitutes progressive and Left forces in Africa, and what our consensus programme of action should be. For example, while we have a common understanding of what social democrats in Europe stand for, the same cannot be said about the progressive agenda in Africa.

We therefore need to continue to im-

prove our common understand of who are the Left or progressives in Africa, and what these constituencies stand for, what is our common platform. This is a weakness whose correction will help make it possible for us to work together, effectively, towards our common goal.

Two key issues should be considered, that is: the definition of the Left and progressives in the African context, and what could constitute our minimum platform of action. This will go a long way in helping us identify the forces to mobilise and the programme to implement, once we are in power.

The past 50 years of our independence have given us a peep into the future. Our task now is to build this better future that we all want for our people.

As one Africa proverb says: "Smooth seas do not make skilful sailors". Trying times are for the hardened and the time-tested, for warriors like all of us gathered here today! ★

Cde Nkoana- Mashabane is the South African Minister of International Relations and Co-operation

SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

The politics and ideological practices of democracy: strengths and weaknesses for the Left's programme

The universality of market-economy policies in Africa is not a popular choice but a manifestation of a lack of alternative programmes, writes **Elshafie Mohammed Elmakki**

Discourses on democracy and democratisation in Africa are usually presented in the West as though they are entirely new notions and practices to Africans. Democracy is viewed, almost exclusively, as a western concept that African societies now need. Similarly, the presumption has been that democratic values and practices are alien to the African continent.

Given this mind-set, the West believes Africa's concepts of democracy should be infused with "civilised" notions of western democracy. What has been consistently ignored is that democratic values and processes have been indigenous to Africa's traditional political cultures. While the term democracy, now a western buzzword for representative government, might have been borrowed from the Greeks, democratic thought and values have never been, exclusively, Greek or Euro-American preserve. The desire for representation, inclusion and participation in public affairs as essential

elements of democracy is universal to all humans, the difference rests in the methods of attaining these goals.

The extent to which a society "democratises" is incontestably dependent on its socio-cultural milieu, whether in African, European, or Asian societies. In analysing the prospect of democracy in Africa it may be necessary to distinguish between ultimate goals and necessary instruments for achieving them. It would make sense for Africa to distinguish between fundamental right, and instrumental right. The right to vote, for example, is an instrumental right designed to help us achieve the fundamental right of governmental by consent. The right to a free press is an instrumental right designed to help us achieve an open society and freedom of information. By the same token we can distinguish between democracy as a means to an end and democracy as a goal. The most fundamental goals of democracy are probably four in number.

- Firstly, to make the rulers accountable

and answerable for their action and policies.

- Secondly, to make the citizens effective participants in choosing those rules and in regulating their action.
- Thirdly, to make the society and the economy as open, and as transparent as possible.
- Fourthly, to make the social order, fundamentally just and equitable to the greatest number possible. (*Ali . Mazuri, Albert Schweitzer, Albert Linthli and Andrew Diwhite 2001*).

If the goals of democracy are the same, while the means of achieving them differ, are there African means of achieving the same goals of accountability of rulers, participation of the citizens and facing constitutional makers in Africa? How can Africa keep the democratic goals constant while looking for democratic means more appropriate to Africa, as noted by Manure?

The second and bigger issue about democracy in Africa concerns its relationship to development. One crucial question on this is whether Africa is underdeveloped because it is primarily undemocratic? Or is Africa undemocratic because it is primarily underdeveloped? Which is cause and which is effect?

The third dimension is stability, which is treated either as part of package of development or as part the package of democracy, when it should, in fact, be treated as a kind of independent variable. Alleviation of poverty is also one of the fruits of democratised development and is one of the gains when democracy and development are jointly stabilised and truly humanised.

Democratic practice in Africa

The experience of democratic practice in Africa has been faced with many

problems. The experience was new to many African countries because the constitutions that were inherited from the colonial powers were adopted in a hurry without allowing people the chance to look for alternatives that suit African societies. For example, in former British Africa, such as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan and elsewhere, this meant the adoption of the Westminster model of parliamentary government. This was the phase of high political imitativeness as Africa imitated western forms but not western substance. There was a major disconnect between the imported institutions and the cultural realities of Africa. This imported paradigm did not work.

Democracy needs the prevalence of some essential conditions such as a fair level of education and a minimum level of economic development for it to flourish. But African societies still suffer from illiteracy and lack of development.

Again, those who took power in colonised countries were not trained in the practice of democracy. Hence within the course of their first years in power African leaders began to search for alternative systems that could lead to national unity, stability and development. Most African leaders therefore adopted the one party system which they thought would unite their people around one party within which they could practice democracy. These leaders found that western-style democracy placed people into artificial antagonistic boxes, created enemies and aimed at arousing unnecessary competition. Many of them considered the western model of democracy to be extremely narrow and even alien to African cultures, and learned that democracy is not merely about the right to vote and seize power. For them the mul-

tiparty system served to plant conflict in a society that is unstable and leads to the disintegration of society. Some, like Nyerere, Nkrumah and others, have even theorised about the advantages of the single party on the grounds that Africa had no class interests that had to be represented by political parties as is seen the west. They maintained that African societies are democratic by nature where elders sat in the shade and discussed issues until they reached agreement.

Unfortunately, this turned not to be so.

Experience with the one party system proved to be a failure, and most countries today have returned to multi-party systems. However, this return did not mean adapting to genuine democracies. The values of democracy are still absent, freedom of organisation, human rights, accountability as well as the culture of democracy are still lacking.

The Left in Africa

The Left in Africa has taken many forms with different programmes. Some African leaders during the 1960s and 1970s adopted the Marxist ideology and some were populists. There is currently no single programme for the Left.

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union was a serious blow for the Left in Africa. All forms of socialism, populism, and communism have failed to serve their societies, and in the wake of the domination of the market economy, during the last decades, all Africa countries have turned to market-economy policies. However, this was not a popular choice for all of them; rather it was a manifestation of a lack of alternative programmes. ★

Cde Elmakki is a Central Committee Member of the Sudanese Communist Party

SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

The state of Zambian democracy: Left organisations and their role in political struggles

The immediate task is to provide a class basis for political mobilisation of the poor and working class – a party to represent their class interests, writes **Neo Simutanyi**

Since the great wave of democratisation began in the early 1990s more than 100 episodes of political reform have taken place around the world. Despite some democracies surviving longer than fifteen years, many have faced backsliding or are at risk of reversals, if this has not already occurred. There may be many causes for democratic collapse, but many observers agree that poor economic performance and unequal distribution of wealth have provided the impetus for tyranny and authoritarianism on the one hand; and provoked popular democratic struggles on the other hand. However, the nature of the political system has had different impacts on political stability. For example, during the early 1990s post-communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe experienced economic distress yet did not backslide from democracy; while in Thailand robust growth did not prevent a military coup in 2006.

Democracy in Africa has had mixed experiences. The early optimism with multiparty democracy has been replaced with scepticism, cynicism and outright frustration. While the majority of African countries adopted multiparty

political systems in the early 1990s and many have held at least three elections since then, the quality of this democracy has been poor. A number of countries have experienced reversals, backsliding, rigged elections or civil conflict. Military coups have taken place in a handful of previously stable countries, such as Ivory Coast, Guinea, Gambia, Madagascar and Congo Brazzaville. In others, the new rulers did not adhere to the rules of the game: election results were routinely manipulated to suit incumbents, opposition forces were harassed or repressed, human rights of citizens were suppressed and internal democracy rarely existed. Politics was personalised and highly dependent on patronage, while many political parties lacked a class character and were not well rooted in society nor linked to civil society organisations. Many political parties were but instruments of ambitious politicians to attain state power for purposes of accumulation for themselves and their cronies, rather than political projects to advance class or social agendas for the great mass of the population.

The liberal democratic project measured by the formation of political par-

ties and regular elections may have been achieved in many African countries. But in many cases this has not advanced political rights of participation and representation. African democracy remains hollow, as masses of the people have been excluded from voting due to a number of factors: extreme poverty and deprivation, bad constitutions, unreliable voters' rolls, political repression, civil war or political and electoral manipulation. There has been little alternation in power, as political competition has been very low as opposition parties have often been weak, fragmented, factionalised and easily co-opted. Progressive opposition groups have been criminalised or banned, and their leaders detained, exiled or eliminated. Other opposition forces have been targets of constant harassment, intimidation and co-optation. Many have lacked ideological clarity and cohesion and lacked capacity to effectively compete in multiparty elections, either at presidential, parliamentary or local government levels.

It is important to take stock of the state of democracy on our continent and in specific countries. It is important to interrogate the factors that have led to low institutional development and lack of commitment to democratic values by the leaders of our countries. Why, for example, have erstwhile democrats turned dictators? Why are African leaders repudiating the constitutions they helped design? Why are African leaders extending their terms or removing constitutional term limits? Why are our ruling elites preoccupied with devising strategies of excluding large sections of the population from political participation, intolerant of dissenting views and bent on eliminating any forms of opposition? The answer to these questions lies in the

nature and content of the multiparty democratic systems we have in place. We have come to glorify the form and not content of liberal democracy. It is important that we pay attention to the content of democracy if political participation has to be meaningful.

Democracy is only meaningful if people reasonably participate and their elected representatives articulate and represent their aspirations. Participatory democracy is where the people continuously engage in the political process through voting, policy-formulation and holding their leaders to account. It is a continuous process and involves constant struggles over rights and duties. This African conference on participatory democracy could not have come at a better time, when the democracy project in Africa has seen so many reversals in countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya Madagascar, Zimbabwe and even Zambia. Power-sharing arrangements were externally imposed on Kenya and Zimbabwe after incumbents provoked violence and political stalemates. The liberal democratic project appears to have run its course. There is need to seriously examine why democracy has faltered and what the left can do.

State of democracy in Zambia

Democratisation in Zambia in the last few years can be described by its limitations. While Zambia was heralded as a model of peaceful transfer of power following the landmark elections of 1991 that saw the defeat of founding president Kenneth Kaunda, it has regressed into a semi-authoritarian and intolerant regime. The MMD (Movement for Multiparty Democracy) government that came to power on the banner of promoting transparency, good governance and

the rule of law has gone against most of the lofty ideals on which the pro-democracy struggle was waged. The problems facing Zambian democracy are located in an international context and set against the background of formal and informal institutional patterns carried forward from previous decades. While the multiparty system and holding of regular elections provides a veneer of international legitimacy, 65% of Zambians do not belong to a political party, while less than 50% have participated in Zambia's last major elections (1996, 2001, 2006 and 2008). In the 2008 presidential elections only 45% of registered voters participated representing only 32% of the eligible electorate.

In addition to poor electoral participation, are issues of low weak political parties that are largely personalised. Zambia has about 45 registered political parties, with seven (MMD, Patriotic Front, United Party for National Development, United Liberal Party, Forum for Democracy and Development, United National Independence Party, National Democratic Focus) represented in parliament. The MMD has dominated Zambian politics since it came to power in November 1991. Between 1991 and 2001 MMD was highly dominant and Zambia was described a one-party dominant system, like South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique in the region, controlling 83-87% of the seats in parliament. But the situation changed following the 2001 elections when MMD's share of parliamentary seats dropped to 46% and the opposition had a majority of seats. But because of the first-past-the-post electoral system, coupled with presidentialism, the MMD has retained power and was able to use advantages of incumbency to co-opt some opposition

groups into the ruling coalition.

While the combined opposition seats were slightly greater than that of the MMD in both the 2001 and 2006, the MMD has continued to hold on to power based on the winner-take-all electoral system. In addition to the deficiencies of the FPTP system in Zambia which has privileged the ruling MMD and excluded significant political forces from partaking in political power. But importantly, the opposition in Zambia remains institutionally weak, fragmented and not well-rooted in the people. The major opposition groups, Patriotic Front (PF) and United Party for National Development (UPND) are not different from the ruling MMD in ideological orientation and political practice. PF is now by far the biggest opposition party and led by a populist leader whose only grievance with MMD was that he was not allowed to be selected as presidential candidate in 2001. He has been able to use populist rhetoric to mobilise the political support of the urban poor and unemployed. Without a clear ideological agenda, Michael Sata performed reasonably well in the 2006 and 2008 presidential elections, coming second to Levy Mwanawasa and Rupiah Banda respectively. In the 2008 presidential elections Michael Sata obtained 38% of the vote compared to Banda's 40%.

When one considers the performance of the opposition in Zambia in 2006 and 2008 there is a temptation to conclude that the country is consolidating as a democracy and that it can be described as competitive. What is not often discussed is the content of this democracy.

There are those who argue that democracy is only consolidated if there is change in power. When elections do not produce alternation, it is argued that a

country cannot be said to be democratic in any meaningful sense.

However, in the context of Zambia the main political actors have no real commitment to democratic values. Their parties are not only personalised and undemocratic, but are not well-rooted in society. The ruling MMD and main opposition parties exhibit anti-democratic and undemocratic tendencies. The major political parties lack internal democracy. There is widespread intolerance to internal opposition and debate of party policy (the PF leader has never been elected); competition for leadership is nominal and election for leadership resented; little or no mass involvement of people in policy formulation; those who oppose the leadership or criticise party policy risk exclusion or not adopted as parliamentary candidates; most positions filled by appointment and not through elections and loyalty to the party leader as opposed to an ideology defines relationship between leaders and the rank and file.

Zambia's party system is characterised by dominant personalities, lack of funding, lack of organisational presence, absence of clear ideological orientation and incapacity to mobilise social groups. Importantly, the main political parties espouse capitalism as the panacea to Zambia's development predicament. All the major political parties agree on liberalising the economy and leaving the allocation of resources to market forces. This consensus on ideological orientation, which dismisses socialist and social democratic alternatives as unattainable and utopian, has complicated the policy debate in Zambia. The defeat of world socialism following the collapse of the Soviet Union has de-legitimised the debates on socialist orientation and de-

mobilised progressive forces who had hoped to achieve their goals through the formal multi-party democratic institutions. The newly created democratic structures were dominated by reactionary capitalist forces that re-defined rights to suit the interests of a few.

The dominance of capitalist institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in shaping economic and social policy in Zambia has reduced policy space, captured the initiatives and reduced internal capacity to devise economic policies that are in the interest of the people. The dominance of capitalist ideology in government policy has meant that the country has formulated public policies that have been injurious to the mass of the people. Liberalisation of the economy and introduction of structural adjustment programmes has had the effect of demobilising the working class through retrenchments, creating mass unemployment through the closure of state companies, reduction of wages and other workers' benefits, and mass deprivation of the poor.

Liberalisation has also demobilised the trade union movement and other popular forces that had derived some of their militancy from the existence of a large number of state employees and a post-colonial social compact between trade unions and the nationalist state.

In Zambia today hundreds of people are engaged in a permanent struggle for everyday existence. The country is littered with thousands of small-scale traders, known as *tuntembas* who eke a living on barest of income. In 2008, 80% of the Zambian population lived below US\$2 (about R 15) a day, while life expectancy is one of the lowest in the world at 38. Living conditions have

deteriorated to an extent that more than 70% of the population lack basic amenities such as water and sanitation. Social indicators have deteriorated in the last 10 to 15 years to the extent that they are only comparable to a country engaged in war.

However, in terms of performance on the liberal capitalist index Zambia is praised as an emerging economy. It has attracted more than US\$- billion direct foreign investment in the last four years, inflation is at its lowest (9%) in the last 30 years, exchange rates are stable and the copper mining sector has recorded unprecedented production. Yet very little employment has been created in the economy; social and living conditions remain precarious for the majority of Zambians; poverty remains unresolved; inequality in income and wealth is high; infrastructure is in a state of disrepair; many parts of the country are inaccessible and thousands of Zambians die of preventable diseases such as malaria.

Left organisations and their role in political struggles

The future prospects for democracy in Zambia signal fatal erosion in the short to medium term. Participatory democracy is not possible without the involvement of the left and other progressive or popular forces. As things stand the dominant forces in our political system are parties that do not represent the popular classes – the poor, working classes and the peasantry. While the all the major political parties appropriate the discourse of socialism by claiming to represent the interests of the poor and put poverty as their main policy agenda item, the content of their policies is anti-worker and anti-poor. The MMD government that came to power on the back

of the trade union movement and the Zambian working class has unashamedly promoted economic and social policies that have destroyed jobs, reduced incomes, exacerbated inequality and favoured the capitalist class.

The left in Zambia is small, fragmented and without a coherent organisation. Leftist political parties that emerged in the early 1990s have disappeared and those that still remain exist on the fringes of the Zambian political landscape. Since 1996 efforts have been made to unify left forces into an organisation and these efforts are still on-going. Left and progressive organisations, such as trade unions, cooperative associations, youth organisations and civil society organisation have been engaged in fighting for democratic space to influence political and economic reform in the direction that would benefit the majority of the Zambian people.

The Zambian trade union movement that had forged links with the MMD in the early 1990s now finds itself in an unenviable position of having to fight for workers' rights from within. The integration of the trade unions in the ruling coalition in Zambia and the destruction of the state sector have combined to weaken their bargaining power and influence on public policy. Trade unions have continued to wage consistent struggles for workers' rights and joined other progressive forces in voicing out their concerns on matters that affect the majority of the Zambian people, who include the poor and working classes. In the last five years the trade union movement has taken political positions on the nature of the government they desire and have worked to influence electoral outcomes.

The challenge facing Zambia today

is the construction of a viable left political alternative. Objective conditions exist for the organisation of a coherent left political alternative in Zambia. The mass poverty facing the majority of Zambian people and mass deprivation and destitution provide an opportunity for organisation. Levels of unemployment and underemployment, with only 10% of the labour force employed in the formal sector, provides another opportunity for left and progressive forces to strategically intervene.

While there is no political party in Zambia that is expressly leftist in both ideological orientation and mobilisation, there are leftist-oriented and progressive organisations that have been advancing a left agenda for the past 19 years. The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) led by committed communists, who had originally formed a socialist formation, have been working in the last four years to create a left platform to propagate and encourage a leftist political alternative. Its long-term agenda is to create an alternative society in Zambia that is socialist and to provide ideological content to policy debates. Specifically, CPD is committed, with other progressive forces in Zambia, to achieve the following:

- Create a platform for a left discourse on socialism as an alternative;
- Provide socialist ideological content to policy debates;
- Challenge capitalist policy prescriptions in government public policies and fight to influence policy orientation to ensure it reflects the interests of the poor and working class;
- Help form a left political formation that would organise for political power;

CPD is not naïve to the fact that organising the left is not an easy and trouble-free affair. It will require strug-

gle, it will involve political and personal sacrifice and it will come with enormous cost. We are alive to the fact that organisational funds will be required and not easily be provided by those organisations and governments who subscribe to capitalism. We know that it will take time and effort to change the consciousness of our people to realise that socialism is the only answer. Under the current political circumstances, a socialist alternative is the only one that can be popularly accepted. Only a left political formation will be able to provide content to popular struggles for democracy.

Conclusion: what is to be done?

There are several tasks that should occupy the African left generally and the Zambian left in particular. First, the immediate task of the Zambian left is to provide a class basis for political mobilisation. We believe that the poor and working class will need a political party to promote and represent their class interests.

A party that represents the interests of the capitalist class (such as the MMD) cannot be expected to promote interests of the poor and working class.

Second, there is need to address the national question to ensure that the country does not end up in civil strife due to inequitable distribution of national wealth. Since 2001, political mobilisation has tended to be ethnic and regional. A closer examination of the social bases of the main opposition parties suggests that they have relied exclusively on ethnic support. This narrow nationalism can be dangerous for forging a stable nation-state and nationalism. There is a need to ignite class political mobilisation to drown narrow ethnic nationalism which in conditions

of poverty can act to destabilise national cohesion.

Third, a left agenda for promotion of democracy is to organise all the popular forces, including youth, student and women's organisations. The struggles of the poor and working people will need to be coordinated by ensuring that they have a common policy platform. Currently, these energies have not been harnessed and coordinated to create a critical mass of left forces for the country.

Fourth, the left will need to coordinate their activities and network with international left forces and fraternal organisations to be effective. CPD welcomes the establishment of the Africa Left Network as timely and an important step in energising the African left. Coming at the time of a crisis in world capitalism, there is a need to put socialism firmly on the political agenda. In the spirit of this conference, we call for the democratisation of the Africa Left Network by the creation of democratic structures that will include all the important the regions of Africa.

Lastly, CPD is fully committed to

working with other left forces in Africa in creating a viable socialist alternative. We strongly believe that socialism is possible in our lifetime. We realise that we need to analyse and understand the concrete economic realities that create and opportunities for a left alternative. While others doubt the viability of the idea of socialism, we are convinced that given the failure of capitalism to resolve the fundamental social contradictions of our time, we are convinced that socialism is the only solution.

We believe that the SACP occupies an important political space in galvanising left forces on the continent. This leadership is invaluable and it will inspire us. We thank SACP for the invitation to participate in the Workshop on Participatory Democracy and defining the tasks and challenges of the African left. We salute the Swedish Left Party (VIF) for their collaboration and generous support in promoting the Africa Left Network. ★

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SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

Political reforms and the struggle for social liberation in Kenya

Building national cohesion and an active campaign against negative ethnicity are essential first steps towards socialism, writes **Mwandawiro Mghanga**

The Social Democratic Party of Kenya (SDP) has always been part and parcel of the struggle for political and reforms in the country. These include democracy and human rights. This is because, as a socialist party, SDP believes that reforms for bettering the lives of the exploited and oppressed people are progressive and necessary, even under the capitalist system. In this we agree and collaborate with other political parties and civil society organisations that are for democracy, human rights –civic and political liberties. However, the SDP does not view political and social reforms as an end in themselves. Neither does it believe that a bourgeoisie democracy is the alpha and omega of democracy. Our party has no doubt that real freedom and liberation of the working class and society cannot happen under the capitalist system. For capitalism is a system based on exploitation and oppression of person by person, which is in fact a violation of human rights. Only socialism can bring true freedom and liberation to Kenya, Africa and the world.

The history of the struggle for political and social reforms in Kenya

Historically, in Kenya, the one-party political system has been used by the ruling elite to suppress the civic and political liberties of the majority of the citizens. Thus the struggle for democracy has been a struggle to achieve the demand for a multiparty system of democracy. It is now about 18 years since the multiparty system of political governance was established in the country. This came about after long, hard and concerted struggles by the Kenyan people led by patriots and progressive forces. In the process many patriots and democracy advocates were arrested, tortured, imprisoned, detained without trial, forced into exile, expelled from educational institutions, denied employment and persecuted in all ways. Many died in custody and during mass demonstrations and actions demanding the end of the then Kenya African National Union's (Kanu) one-party dictatorship that was notorious for the violation of citizen's freedoms and human rights. The one-party dictatorship also embodied the politics and culture of negative ethnicity. It was an impediment to national cohesion as is defined in the new constitution that will be launched on 27 August 2010 at a large ceremony that will be at-

tended by leaders from many countries of Africa and the world.

The coming of multipartyism in 1992 was akin to a political revolution as it started the liberation of the society from the regime that was one of the most brutal dictatorships in Africa. Freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of press, civil and political liberties, recognition of the right of political parties to exist and operate and the growth and strengthening of the civil society are some of the concrete democratic gains that Kenyans have achieved hitherto. However, it took another 10 years before opposition parties were able to remove Kanu, the notorious party that had ruled the country since independence, from power. The defeat of Kanu then also meant the defeat of the most reactionary regime, led by the then President Daniel Moi, that was certainly a stumbling block to the entrenchment and development of the culture of democracy and human rights in the country. That is why Kenyans likened the defeat of Kanu in the 2002 elections as the second liberation.

The struggle for the new national constitution

As soon as multipartyism started becoming a reality in the country, Kenyans realised that it was also necessary to change the national constitution inherited from colonialism. The constitution had ruled the country since independence from British colonialism in 1963. It had only been changed by successive regimes to entrench dictatorship, corruption, violation of human rights and primitive accumulation, especially of land property. Kenyans required a new national constitution to reflect and conserve the new system of democratic governance with

popular demands for social justice, equity, equality and participation in accruing benefits from natural resources around communities and the nation at large. But just like it did to multipartyism, the then Moi-Kanu regime resisted constitutional reforms vehemently. Once again many Kenyans were arrested, tortured, imprisoned, detained without trial and killed before the government acceded to the people's popular demand for a new constitution by forming the Kenya Constitutional Review Commission (KCRC) led by the famous professor of constitutional law, Yashi Pai Ghai. This led to the famous Bomas Constitution that was frustrated by the reactionary forces in power then, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) led by President Mwai Kibaki, which managed to deny Kenyans a new national constitution in 2005.

However, finally Kenya now has a new national constitution. The constitution adopted in the 4 August 2010 referendum is the culmination of several processes and struggles for social and political reforms. Like multiparty democracy, the new Kenyan constitution is the collective achievement of popular people's struggles from below. However, this fact has not stopped members of the ruling class who were only recently forced by mass struggles to give in to progressive change to organise parties and celebrations to claim that they are the ones that have "given" the country the new constitution. But sooner or later their true colours will be revealed in the actual interpretation and implementation of the constitution that will be a matter of the continuation of existing class struggles in the nation. In this regard SDP's position is "Katiba mpya mfumo mpya na viongozi wapya" (New constitution, new system and new leadership). We do

not believe the existing leadership of the country has the will or ability to implement the new constitution in favour of progressive change and for the exploited and oppressed citizens who form the majority. They cannot do this because they continue to impose the capitalist system and neo-colonialism upon Kenyans. The path towards implementing the progressive reforms embodied by the new constitution is ultimately what will lead to socialism.

Institutionalisation of multipartyism

The institutionalisation of multipartyism started by the removal of section 2A from the present constitution in 1992 to allow multipartyism again 10 years later after it had been proscribed by the Moi dictatorship in 1982. Fifteen years later multiparty democracy was further institutionalised by the Political Parties Act of 2007. The new constitution of Kenya is the epitome of the institutionalisation of multiparty democracy in the country. It declares, “The Republic of Kenya shall be a multi-party democratic State founded on the national values and principles of governance referred to in Article 10” (Proposed Constitution of Kenya, chapter two article 4.2).

For the purpose of this discussion, the national values and principles of governance include “patriotism, national unity, sharing and devolution of power, the rule of law, democracy and participation of the people” (chapter two article 10.2). In fact, the new constitution institutionalises the duty for all citizens and their institutions, including political parties, to work towards national cohesion. In a country that has to confront the ugly face of negative ethnicity and all its manifestation, the creation of organisations and institutions that deal

with negative ethnicity while working towards national cohesion, is progressive.

Political parties and national cohesion

The national question in Kenya has not been resolved hitherto. The reactionary politics of negative ethnicity continue to dominate Kenyan society even after the end of one-party dictatorship and after the coming of multipartyism. In fact, negative ethnicity – so-called tribalism – is one of the greatest impediments to the development of democracy and social liberation in the country.

The post-election violence of 2007-2008 killed more than 1 000 people and displaced about 350 000. It shook Kenya and shattered the myth that the country is an island of democracy, peace, stability and development in a region bedevilled by conflict and war. As a consequence, the violence became the concern of citizens, government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations in Kenya and East African Community region. Concern was also felt in the countries of the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region, the African Union, the United Nations and the world at large. Thus the need for national cohesion cannot be overemphasised.

According to the Oxford Illustrated Dictionary the word cohesion is derived from the word cohering which means “stick together, remain united; be consistent, well-knit”. National cohesion in the Kenyan context should therefore mean national unity in the country composed of various ethnic groups including religions, languages, cultures and races. It should also mean providing space for peaceful co-existence of various and divergent political ideologies – in essence multipartyism. In this context national

cohesion is well defined in the proposed constitution of Kenya (chapter two article 10 that includes 10.2 quoted above).

Why Kenyans struggled for multipartyism

Kenyans struggled for multiparty democracy because the one-party system imposed upon the country by the Kenyatta and Moi regimes failed to build national cohesion. The one-party system was used by the two regimes to institutionalise dictatorship, violations of human rights, corruption, negative ethnicity, nepotism and social and national exclusion. Land grabbing, looting of state resources, destruction of state institutions including state parastatals, inter-ethnic conflicts, etc. were nurtured by one-party system. Organised criminal gangs have also had their origins in the one-party state. In other words, Kenyans struggled for multipartyism because it would lead to the restoration of civic and political liberties, national unity and social progress. The few years since the restoration of multiparty democracy vindicated the Kenyan popular masses. Not only are those who gained fortunes through working for the regime that persecuted citizens for demanding restoration of multiparty democracy enjoying the freedom it has brought, but even Moi himself would not wish to go back to one-party dictatorship when now he is not in power. In other words, Kenyan society has moved so far into multipartyism and is not nostalgic about the past one-party era.

What is expected of political parties

Political parties are expected by law (see the Political Parties Act of 2003 and the proposed constitution of Kenya) to fight against negative ethnicity and contrib-

ute to building national cohesion. Now that multiparty democracy is being institutionalised in the country, political parties are necessary in not only conserving and building the culture of multiparty democracy in the country but also in peace keeping and building. They should be in the forefront in the fight against negative ethnicity and in the celebration of diversity of ideas and ethnic groups and cultures in the country.

Among the seven requirements for political parties is that "Every political party shall have a national character as prescribed by an act of parliament" (such as Political Parties Act 2007 for example) (chapter 7 article 91, 1.^a).

It is also states what a political party should not do: "A political party shall not be founded on religious, linguistic, racial, ethnic, gender or regional basis or seek to engage in advocacy of hatred on any such basis" (chapter 7 article 91, 2.^a); "engage in or encourage violence by, or intimidation of its members, supporters, opponents or any other person (chapter 7 article 91, 2.b.); "establish or maintain a paramilitary force, militia or similar organisation (chapter 7 article 91, 2.c).

The spirit of the constitution and the laws flowing from it is that political parties should be institutionalised not only to play the role of building the culture of democracy and human rights in the country but of building Kenyan nation and national cohesion based on the fact that Kenya is a nation composed of people of various ethnic groups, languages, religions, beliefs and ideologies.

Classes and national cohesion

However, the SDP believes that there cannot be true national cohesion in Kenya under the capitalist system. Solu-

tions to negative ethnicity that do not genuinely deal with its root causes, particularly the lack of distributive justice, will only postpone the solution. Wherever there are classes there will, inevitably, be class struggles and class struggles are in fact conflicts in the society. The conflicts manifest themselves in various forms at different times and places and can either be passive or active, but as long as there are class divisions they will not disappear.

Class divisions in Kenyan society that transcend ethnic identity are too sharp and obvious to be ignored by anyone searching for sustainable solutions to conflicts in the country. There are people who own land the size of districts while the majority of Kenyans eke out a mere living in small and unproductive pieces of land. There are citizens throughout the country, including those who live in the slums of urban areas, without any right to land ownership, the so-called squatters. While the majority of the people in the country live in abject poverty, there is enough wealth concentrated in the hands of the privileged few which is capable of bringing about development that can put an end to poverty.

In the urban areas, the differences seen in residential locations, living standards and lifestyles clearly emphasise the brutal and shameless inequality in the society. The education system does not offer equal opportunities to children and youth but instead it is structured to increase the gap between the rich and the poor, and rural and urban areas. The rich access the best social services, clean and safer environments, political and economic power while all this is hardly accessible to the poor who form the majority of the citizens. The natural resources of the country are

used not for the benefit of the whole society but for increasing the wealth of the minority ruling elite.

In short, it is clear that the rich are far better placed to exercise the citizen and human rights denied to the poor. The class and regional inequalities not only impede peace and social justice but also national unity. Under circumstances of such glaring inequalities, it is not easy to remove the bitterness, hatred, violence, lack of patriotism and feelings and expressions of negative ethnicity that engulf the country.

The struggle continues even after the coming of the new constitution

The basic problem in Kenya has not been the absence of good laws; rather it has been the political will to implement them. The new national constitution will be the mother of very good and progressive laws in the country, especially as far as human rights and democracy are concerned. The constitution is generally a good example for Africa in many ways. However, the challenge remains in the interpretation and implementation of the laws. For in a country divided into classes like Kenya, the interpretation and implementation of the constitution and all emerging laws will be a matter of the continuation of existing class struggles. In this regard, political parties, whether in government or outside government, can play a big role in challenging the government to implement the laws depending on their ideologies that shape their vision for Kenya. Political parties can sensitise society to expose practices of negative ethnicity and to work towards national cohesion. Progressive political parties should lead by example. The SDP will interpret the new constitution to help organise the masses to fur-

ther legitimise their struggles for a new political and social order in Kenya where every Kenyan has a right to access basic needs that are defined in the constitution as economic rights. These include the right to water, health, housing, food, education and social security. Our party, among other progressive things promised by the constitution, will organise the masses to demand the realisation of progressive constitutional rights in practise and for land reforms in favour of squatters and the landless. In so doing we shall continue to remind Kenyans: “*Katiba mpya mfumo mpya na viongozi wapya*” – *New constitution, new system and new leadership.*

Problems of political parties

Political parties are necessary for the process of institutionalising and sustaining democracy and building peace and national cohesion. But creating and developing political parties in an underdeveloped country like Kenya is a great challenge. Furthermore, negative ethnicity and politics driven by money, bribing of voters and all forms of corruption, is a hindrance to growth of the culture of democracy. There are about 50 registered political parties in the country with seven of them represented in parliament. But the ‘political parties’ are more of conglomerates of individuals seeking presidential or parliamentary positions than political parties.

For political parties to play an effective role of contributing to building the culture of democracy and national unity, the need for their members, starting from the leadership, to comprehend the meaning of a political party cannot be overemphasised. Many of the problems within political parties seem to arise because individuals who form them have

not sat down to discuss and come to a consensus on the meaning and role of parties generally and their individual parties in particular.

To be a political party people must sit down and tell one another why they are a political party. And a political party is in the very least a group of people who are united by a common ideology, common vision, common discipline, common moral values and common tactics and strategies of their common struggle. The ideology of a political party is summarised in the party manifesto while the party discipline and system of governance is defined in the constitution. The code of conduct summarises the moral values that help to bind party members together in their common struggle of changing society for the better and in line with their philosophy as a party.

Consequently, a political party cannot be a political party without a manifesto. It will remain a party without its own stand and direction, a party that reacts to events initiated by others without being able to set its own agenda. Still, many registered political parties in Kenya remain without manifestos. And those who have them, they are not really party manifestos because they were written by few individuals – and sometimes even foreigners or donors – and are never studied, discussed, comprehended and internalised by the vast majority of the members, including the majority of the leadership.

The basic elements that define political parties are lacking. Kenyan political parties tend to be created, dominated and sustained by powerful personalities rather than informed and convinced members. Most of them become alive only when national elections are announced. That is why although the

leadership of all political parties is composed of members from the diverse ethnic groups of the country, they are distinguished not by ideologies but by personalities who lead them, and by their ethnic base. Hitherto, political parties in Kenya hardly distinguish between its members and its voters, between the party and the masses who identify with it, between holders of party cards and actual members of the party. To play an effective role in nation building and national cohesion, “political parties” must work to grow into true conscious and independent political parties and not just registered entities represented in parliament and local government or under the supervision of legislations and the register of political parties. The SDP is also working to address this challenge in theory and practice; this is in fact the summary of its organisational work.

Comprehending the political economy of negative ethnicity

To contribute effectively in building national cohesion, political parties should not only address the manifestations of negative ethnicity but, more importantly, address the root causes. Negative ethnicity, so-called tribalism, has been used by the elites of Kenya to perpetuate them in power since the time of colonialism. Just before, during and after national elections, the political and economic elites of various ethnic groups deliberately provoke negative ethnic feelings and even organise and sponsor violence against other ethnic groups to propel themselves to elective positions. They do this by pretending to be champions of the political, economic, cultural, land and land resource interests of their ethnic groups and areas that are purportedly violated by the members of

other ethnic groups. And since it is the ideas of those in power that dominate in a given society at a given time and place, ordinary citizens also embrace the ideology of negative ethnicity that embodies hatred, jealous and discrimination against other ethnic groups. The unresolved issues of land and land resources that embody historical injustices, have always been used to perpetuate the reactionary ideology that works against the unity of those who desire national cohesion and social justice.

On their part, the elites of all ethnic groups who are part and parcel of the problem, including that of land, are always conscious of their interests and are not prepared to help bring about just and progressive natural resources, political, economic and social reforms in the country aimed at empowering the poor, eradicating poverty and inequality, bringing about national cohesion. Doing so would mean compromising their own interests, something they are not prepared to do. Instead, they keep on preaching falsehoods about seeking political power to bring about development, remove poverty and create a just and equitable society. Yet year after year these promises prove to be elusive, leaving the country to continue simmering and erupting into cycles of conflict that many a times develop into violence.

One would expect that negative ethnicity would be less than it was 47 years ago at the time of independence from British colonialism, and that there would be more national consciousness and unity in the country. On the contrary, negative ethnicity has increased to become one of the greatest impediments to the development of democracy, human rights, peace, security and national unity. At the same time the recent his-

tory of inter-ethnic clashes and violence has shown that the belief that youth are above negative ethnicity is a myth. The youth are at the forefront in the inter-ethnic clashes that have caused deaths, refugees and destructions of property. In fact, the idea that negative ethnicity can disappear of itself without conscious effort from all Kenyan citizens and their institutions that desire peace, security, national unity and sustainable development is also a myth. People have to be deliberately educated to gain national consciousness. Once they gain national consciousness then negative ethnicity will begin to disappear and to be replaced by demands for progressive change that is beyond ethnicity.

During the struggle against British colonialism, Kenyans of various ethnic groups were united under the ideology of positive nationalism – national liberation, as they were oppressed together as a nation by colonialism. In the early years of post-colonial independence, Kenyans were united by hope and the prospect of better economic wellbeing with apparent solutions to the problems created by the colonialism oppression they had fought against. And indeed, in the 1960s and 1970s the country could be said to have been developing in the right direction, economically and in provisions of social services. During those days songs of nationalism used to be sung and the national flag was loved and respected. The stadiums throughout the country were full during national days such as Madaraka Day, Kenyatta Day and Jamhuri Day. Then there were feelings of positive nationalism among the Kenyan people, irrespective of their diverse ethnicity and culture. But when it became clear that the successive regimes led by successive presidents who established

themselves as only interested in amassing land, money and wealth for themselves, families, relatives and friends, the national consciousness expressed in the belief of a common nationhood began to crumble and disappear.

To perpetuate themselves in power to continue amassing more and more land and wealth, the presidents increasingly surrounded themselves with sycophants composed of members of their families, friends and elites of their ethnic groups who grew into a notorious group of breeding and nurturing the seeds of negative ethnicity. The reactionary trend has continued hitherto. The vacuum created by the disappearance of national consciousness was gradually filled by negative ethnicity.

The culture of competition for the control of resources for individuals at the expense of society has contributed to nurture negative ethnicity that has permeated all classes, genders, ages, religions and geographical locations. Again, as the country implements neo-liberal economic reforms and as poverty increases as a consequence among the majority of Kenyans, with the deterioration of social services and security, people tend to resort to their ethnic groups in search of social security. Thus ethnic welfare associations in cities and towns, fundraisings for medical bills, funerals, school fees, etc, have become coping strategies, which at the same time promote negative ethnic ideology at the expense of nationalism.

The beginning of the war against negative ethnicity should therefore begin by not only moralising about it but by especially dealing with its root causes – the political economy of the country that needs to be transformed to liberate Kenya from poverty and underdevelop-

ment.

Negative ethnicity in Kenya is a manifestation of poverty, backwardness, underdevelopment, ignorance and backward ideas that arise out of definite internal and external factors. This has led to the continued mismanagement of the rich and abundant human and natural resources in the country leading to inequalities and mindless competition for purportedly scarce resources. In fact, the scarcity of resources is a creation by the system that allows only few individuals to own and control the natural and human resources of the country at the expense of the majority. To begin to eradicate negative ethnicity, therefore, the socio-political and economic system must be transformed.

All this will begin to be realised in a sustainable way when the political elite controlling political power today are replaced by a democratic, progressive and patriotic leadership that is above ethnicity. The required leadership would, of necessity, be guided by, as a minimum, political ideas that embrace principles of equality, social welfare and justice for all irrespective of ethnicity, gender, age or geographical location.

Both the Proposed Constitution of Kenya and Political Parties Act 2007 prescribe how political parties should behave and how they should be governed. This is desirable especially when now registered political parties receive public funds. However, this should not be overdone so as to interfere with the internal affairs of political parties which belong to the members of the party only. It seems to me that the proposed constitution and the act go into too many details of regulating political parties as to interfere with their internal affairs. The two legal institutions even look as

if they are writing manifestos for political parties. Let political parties be with their ideologies, policies and internal democracies as long as their actions are guided by the spirit of the constitution. After all, political parties are about the voluntary unity of individuals. People are not and should not be coerced to join political parties. They should do so out of their own free will. To make laws that delve too much in governing individual political parties while at the same time allowing independent candidates to seek elective political office is to deny the people and the parties the right to make choices, and choice is an integral part of democracy.

A party does not necessarily contribute to national cohesion just because it has conformed to the regulations imposed by Political Parties Act 2007 or the constitution. For example, in terms of ethnic composition, the leadership of Kanu has always been from all ethnic groups, genders and ages. Yet during the era of the one-party system under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Moi this did not stop the Kanu government from practising dictatorship, corruption, violations of human rights, negative ethnicity and all that works against national cohesion. Even during the current multiparty era, the registered leadership of all political parties, despite the popular following of their key leaders, has always been composed of members from all Kenyan ethnic groups. But this alone has never stopped many of them from engaging in practises that work against national cohesion, including unleashing inter-ethnic violence as witnessed in the post-election violence of 2007.

The challenge, therefore, should for patriots to form or join political parties

that are genuinely committed to the principles of national cohesion with or without the prescribed regulations. Long before the Political Parties Act and even before multipartyism was established in the country, the Social Democratic Party of Kenya (SDP) was committed to working for national cohesion. Article 3 of the minimum programme of the SDP illustrates this:

“To forge an unshakable unity of all Kenyan nationalities and races:

Kenya is a country of diverse pluralism. The British colonialists and successive regimes hitherto have long used this fact to divide, rule, oppress and exploit our people through tribalism and racism. Yet the enemies of the Kenyan people are those, who through parochial and selfish motives and aims, continue to stir race against race, nationality against nationality, clan against clan, Muslims against Christians, etc., so that Kenyans may not unite to confront their common enemy, ie, under-development and exploitation of person by person resulting from the capitalist system.

To ensure and consolidate the unity of our people, the SDP shall strive to do the following:

(a) Dismantle the undemocratic and repressive neo-colonial state machinery, including the so called Public Administration, inherited wholesale from the colonial state; create a new pro-people police force, armed forces, prison system, judicial system, new democratic and pro-people laws and civil service, so that they may serve the people as opposed to individuals, tribal bigots, parochial and foreign interests.

(b) Restructure the current provincial and local government administration system, which is based on tribal and parochial interests to give room for

more participation in governance and decision-making by the masses at grass-root levels.

(c) Abolish the system and laws instituted by the colonialists and their neo-colonial heirs that divide, oppress and exploit Kenyan people along racial, ethnic, religious or any other lines.

(d) Rectify all errors committed by the previous regimes in their pursuit and conspiracy to hang onto power, including:

(i) National discrimination.

(ii) Neglect and marginalisation of some Kenyan areas and communities.

(iii) Administrative boundaries drawn along ethnic lines.

(iv) Distortion of the history of our nation.

(e) Use political education to enhance national unity by combating petty nationalism and ethnic chauvinism and inculcate into the minds of Kenyans the sense of national identity.

(f) Actively promote Kiswahili as both a national and official language.

(g) Respect and promote the cultures and languages of all our nationalities as part of our rich national cultural heritage and diversity.

(h) Combat poverty and underdevelopment while ensuring that all opportunities are open to all Kenyans irrespective of their national, racial, religious, and ideological or class background.

(i) Encourage a balanced rewriting of our history to reflect our rich ethnic and cultural diversity while, at the same time, conserving its national outlook.”

All this is also elaborated in Article 3 of Msimamo wa Social Democratic Party of Kenya (SDP) which summarise the philosophy of SDP in Kiswahili:

“SDP ni chama cha wazalendo, tena wazalendo wakereketwa. Tunapenda

Kenya yetu, tena sana. Tuna uchungu mkubwa na taifa letu. Ndiyo kwa sababu tunashirikiana na tutaendelea kushirikiana na watu wote wanaotaka kuona ukombozi wa kitaifa na maendeleo ya kisiasa, kiuchumi na kitamaduni nchini. Tunapinga ubepari, ukoloni-mamboleo na chochote kile kinachopinga uhuru, ukombozi na maendeleo ya taifa letu. Tunakataa ukabila, ubaguzi wa rangi, ubaguzi wa kijinsia, ubaguzi wa kiumri na chochote kile kinachohatarisha umoja wa Kenya na kuzuia maendeleo yetu. Tutapambania haki ya kila Mkenya kishi na kuwa na mali halali pahali popote pale anapochagua nchini. Tutakuwa katika msitari wa mbele wa kufichua na kupambana dhidi ya njama zozote zile zenye lengo la kupanda mbegu za chuki na uhasama miongoni mwa makabila ndugu ya Kenya. Kwani Kenya tuipendayo ni ya amani, salama, uhuru, utangamano na maendeleo ambapo kila mtu anaishi maisha ya kiutu bila kunyonywa, kugandamizwa na kubaguliwa kwa vyo-vyote vile. Ndiyo kwa maana tunapambania Katiba Mpya ya Kitaifa itazingatia na kuhakikisha, miongoni mwa mambo mengine, usambazaji wa mamlaka ili kuhakikisha kuwa kila sehemu na kabila itakuwa na mamlaka ya kushiriki katika kusimamia na kufaidi kutoka kwa rasilmali zilizoko karibu nao. Usambazaji wa uongozi utahakikisha kuwa wananchi wanashirikishwa kujiamulia jinsi ya kuendesha maisha yao ya kisiasa, kiuchumi, kitamaduni na kijamii kutoka mashinani na maamuzi ya kutoka chini hadi juu ya kushirikisha watu wote.”

Furthermore, the Code of conduct of SDP, binds members to, among other things:

7. “Members of the SDP shall not practise, advocate or tolerate tribalism, racism, sexism, nepotism, cronyism,

xenophobia or any form of discrimination against other persons.

8. Members of the SDP shall always and tirelessly fight against corruption and all its manifestations; they shall be guardians of justice and custodians of public property and living examples of patriotism and socialist morality.

Conclusion

The SDP continues to call upon all political parties to play a role in the struggle for national cohesion, even as defined in the constitution. They should continue to defend human rights and democratic gains Kenyan have won hitherto while collectively building the culture of democracy and human rights. The culture of multiparty democracy is premised on the fact that Kenya is not only composed of people of various ethnic groups but also of different classes with diverge political ideas and ideologies. The movement towards national cohesion, therefore, entails that all political parties and their ideologies should co-exist, operate and compete for government through free and fair elections. In this regard, there cannot be free and fair elections when the country continues to allow politics to be dominated by money: voter bribing and all forms of corruption. They are also dominated by a press owned by the ruling elite and that is vulnerable to corruption and which campaigns for the rich, reactionary, corrupt, chauvinistic and greedy politicians in power. This press lies to Kenyans that there is no alternative to capitalism and the present leadership in the country. Political parties that are genuinely committed to national cohesion should demand the end of ‘money politics’ in the country.

As far as the SDP is concerned, the struggle for national cohesion arises

from genuine concerns of dealing with the root causes of negative ethnicity in Kenya, which includes lack of distributive justice. SDP calls upon the Kenyan masses to refuse to be divided along ethnic lines but to instead unite to empower themselves to demand equitable wealth sharing in the country. There is enough land in the country to settle the landless and homeless. Land can be added to the peasants who need it and can use it to create wealth. The living conditions of the slum dwellers can be improved and slums abolished from our urban areas. Kenya is endowed with enough economic and natural resources which if conserved, utilised and distributed equitably would end the current poverty in the society and trigger social development that will uplift the living standards of all Kenyans. Rather than fighting one another in the name of eth-

nic identities, all Kenyans from all ethnic groups and political parties that identify with their cause should unite against all policies and practises that escalate poverty, regional and class divisions and negative ethnicity. The new national constitution of Kenya levels the ground in this regard. We shall continue to remind Kenyans that under the present capitalist economic and social relations the implementation of the new constitution will be elusive. Only socialism can implement the constitution in favour of the majority of the citizens of Kenya.

The struggle for social and national liberation in favour of the majority poor and exploited is the struggle for socialism. ★

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SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

Experience and conception of people's power in Democratic Republic Congo

The Marxist spirit of Mzee Kabila lives on, but his death has left the progressive movement rudderless and leaderless, writes **Tony Busselen**

Given the subject of this conference, “the left’s conception of democracy in Africa: tasks and challenges” I want to explain the relevant experience of the government of Laurent Kabila between 1999 and 2001, as we understand it.

When, after the first wave of the American-Rwandan-Ugandan aggression war was brought to a halt, Laurent Kabila made his two major speeches on the *Comités du Pouvoir Populaire* (committees for people’s power), in January and April 1999, many thought he was just improvising. Laurent Kabila had however actually just returned to a key idea of the *Conseil National de Libération* that led the revolutionary war of resistance of 1964-1965. In the programme of April 5, 1964, the CNL formulated its objectives as follows: “Restore popular sovereignty; regain national independence, restore freedom and national democracy, restore the heritage and national wealth to the sovereign people and the workers, establish a revolutionary, national and popular government.” The idea of national and people’s power is as old as the Congolese revolution. In the jungle of Pierre Mulele, in 1964-1968, the liberated vil-

lages were headed by a “Committee of People’s Power”!

To achieve its objectives, the CNL defined its political line in terms that can be found repeatedly in the speeches of cde Laurent Kabila’s from 17 May 1997 until his assassination: “In domestic policy: breaking the grip of the imperialist yoke of the USA to allow a free and democratic national life, and guarantee the territorial and administrative unity of the Congo.” “On the economic and social level: ensure to raise the living standards of the masses, develop the national economy based on scientific experiments under way in the world (that is to say, the socialist countries), plan domestic production and control, open the doors of knowledge and culture to all children of the people irrespective of sex.”

In his speeches on the CPP, Laurent Kabila insisted on two basic choices.

First: Keep the old repressive state in the service of foreign interests or create an independent state in the service of the Congolese people?

Second: Maintain an export-oriented economy, dominated by multinationals, or build a strong national and decolonised economy?

On the first question I quote Kabila: “Leopold II’s Congo Free State existed to collect rubber. The whip was daily. They looted and pillaged. They are gone and we were treated to another state, one with at its head Congolese people, but they were agents of external powers. The mission of this state was to punish always, everywhere. Under Mobutu, the country had an anti-people state, a state whose mission was to protect foreign interests. The result was extreme poverty everywhere; a damaged and extraverted economy (...) This comprador state has lasted too long. It has created a culture, habits in the field of production, of thought, in the behaviour of citizens.”

But to create a fundamentally different state apparatus from what the Congo had endured between 1885 and 1997 is a daunting task and takes time. The key concept is a radical break with the past. In his speech, Kabila spoke very clearly on this: “On May 17, 1997, power was at the gunpoint of those who have been applauded by the masses, who hunted down the last strongholds of Mobutu’s crumbling power ... The liquidation of neo-colonialist Mobutu was a necessary step that allowed the masses to have access now to the leadership of public affairs.”

Kabila said: “It is necessary to create a popular state, a state of the people, a state that thinks first and foremost about the interests of the Congo. Now we have to organise the people to take their destiny in hand. Organising the people means continuing mobilisation and putting them in power. CPPs are the people organised into organs of popular state power, they exercise direct management of public affairs at every level of government, pursuing a single goal: to be the undisputed masters of their

destiny. You do not have any master anymore. The people are the only master.”

On the second question, the popular state, radically opposed to the neo-colonial state, has as main objective the economic decolonisation of Congo, building a strong national economy, the creation of a just society without exploitation. Kabila said, “We must create a new economy for our country. This is the objective of the people’s state. The time has come to build a thriving national economy. We should produce vehicles ourselves. Where is our heavy industry? It is the mission of the state of the people, the mission of the people organised in the People’s Power Committees to create a strong economy for us to enforce respect. So our mission is to create a domestic industry. When we took office, it was to do that. The CPPs must be understood as a gigantic national patriotic movement. The Congolese coalesce around a very noble ideal. We will create a new society, just and prosperous, through a strategy: the mobilisation of the entire people around national reconstruction.”

Laurent-Desire Kabila remained all his life in the line of the people’s struggle for independence, socialism and peace. This revolutionary creed, he sang in his Hymn of the Oppressed: “The CPP are the light of the workers and peasants, as well as all other oppressed people. There is no doubt about destroying exploitation and creating a just society.” Kabila is thus the voice of the exploited and oppressed workers and peasants whose aim is “to bring down the exploitation” of man by man, which in the Marxist literature is called “creating a just socialist society”.

Thanks to the mobilisation of the Congolese people through the CPP and

through a Pan-African front where the governments of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe played an important role, Laurent Kabila was able to halt the Rwando-Ugandan-American aggression, and by December 2000 he could even force the governments of Rwanda and Uganda to conclude bilateral agreements for the withdrawal of their troops. But on January 16, 2001 Mzee Kabila was assassinated. Congolese nationalists were obliged to switch to a defensive strategy and the CPP were abolished two years later.

Why could this form of popular democracy not survive?

In the world of imperialist globalisation today, a “private” company such as General Electric has assets worth US\$782-billion. How can you have democracy in the Congo, a country which in 2009 had a gross domestic product of about US\$11-billion if the country has a neo-colonial regime in which General Electric and other multinational companies dictate the law through the orders of the IMF, the World Bank and the governments of the US, Canada and Europe?

Deciding on effective democracy for the working masses means making a class choice against the bourgeoisie. Do we want to maintain a democracy where the power of money, the power of the old neo-colonial state and direct and indirect foreign interventions decide the outcome of elections? Or do we decide to organise a new democracy, which gives the masses, the poor, have the effective means to impose the choice of the overwhelming majority? Is it possible to make the latter choice and give a

resolute orientation to the struggle without a Marxist vanguard party?

The PRP of Laurent Kabila was such a Marxist party. But since the 1980s this party has been without leadership because of the bloody repression against the maquis of Fizi Baraka. The majority of the cadres with whom Laurent Kabila had led this Communist Party were assassinated.

When the war of liberation began in October 1996, events followed so quickly and put in front of Laurent Kabila such important immediate tasks of management of the war and the state that it was impossible for him to rebuild the party. But could the popular democracy of the CPP be achieved in a sustainable way without a party which had interpreted the line developed by Laurent Kabila through criticism of the old beliefs and attitudes inherited from 37 years of neo-colonialism?

Our comrade Ludo Martens experienced this attempt at people’s democracy closely, and he noted that a long-term educational work would have been necessary to let Kabila’s views penetrate at all levels of the CPPs. It was also clear that Laurent Kabila, individually played the role of Headquarters of both class struggle and front work in the Congo, a role normally occupied by an entire party: this was made very clear when after the death of Mzee Kabila, there were no forces actively working for the continuation and deepening of popular democracy. ★

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SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

Uganda: socialist initiatives, politics and the struggle for democracy

We must enforce adherence to Uganda's constitution as a first step to participatory democracy, writes **Weijagye Justus**

Kabale Socialist Club was started in 1996. We are a reasonable and increasing number of socialists. We have both short term and long term agendas. Our short term agenda include tackling issues that affect us locally and nationally: solutions for absolute poverty, wars, corruption and nepotism, political intolerance, freedom of speech, of thought, expression and press freedom, post-election inflation and high bank interest rates and charges, healthcare, education, transport, street kids, poor sanitation, sewage and drainage systems, insecurity and environmental problems such as pollution. Our sole long term agenda is to educate the masses to be class conscious and about the socialist alternative. We are working towards formation of Socialist Party Uganda.

The present regime in Uganda is led by President Yoweri Museveni, who came to power through an armed five-year struggle and overthrowing a military government of the then-President Tito Okello Olotwa in January 1986 after the Tito Okello Junta had overthrown the regime of Dr Apollo Milton Obote. President Museveni waged a protracted armed war against Obote's government

on the grounds that Obote was elected fraudulently through a rigged election, claiming the winner was Kawanga Semogerere of the Democratic Party (DP).

But it is now nearly to a quarter of century Uganda being under President Museveni's rule. The regime itself has failed to organise free and fair elections.

The last general elections in Uganda showed that there is no democracy in the country. The oppression and suppression of candidates of opposition parties and their supporters increase as one moves up levels of elective offices and are worst in presidential position.

A report on Uganda's last elections may read like a fairy tale. The period of elections in Uganda is a period of violence, harassment, intimidation and torture on one side and merrymaking (in a form of "gifts" – alcohol, salt, pieces of soap, sugar and cash – in exchange for votes) on the other. The campaigns attract many people, especially the rallies of those candidates who are well-to-do and easy on their pockets. In Uganda money is power and we are judged by our material possessions. It does not matter whether you have ideas and initiatives and would contribute positively if elected be it at lowest electable posi-

tion. So the terrible poverty makes most people vote with their mouths and not with their conscience.

Corruption is rife. It appears a miracle for a poor but reasonable person to make it to political office. On the other hand, there is controversy when the president turns out and starts campaigning in favour of some candidate and campaigning against others on the grounds that the favoured ones are pro his party. In some parts of the country the electoral process is militarised – mainly in areas where opposition parties and candidates are contesting against with the historical allies of president's National Resistance Movement organisation (NRM) and his personal friends. These military personnel go as far as tearing down opposition candidates' posters. The government fabricates trumped capital offense charges such as treason, murder, rape and defilement against strong opposition leaders and members.

This results in violence where people lose their lives. Most contestants, especially those in the ruling party and independent candidates favoured by the state, bribe voters to the extent of buying poor voters blankets, mattresses, bicycles and hoes, in the expectation they will vote for such candidates even if it is clear that the candidate is a non-performer. Pro-NRMO candidates at parliamentary and local council (district chairpersons) levels have spent more than over Ugandan Shillings (U Shs) 900-million (US\$410 000 or R2 800 000) in these initiatives

Most party political manifestos centre on poverty – using elections to capitalise on the biting poverty in most Uganda's homes. There is this "Prosperity-for-all programme" by the incumbent president: promises of clean water,

electricity, facilitation in schools, road network and rehabilitation of hospitals and health units. Some of these are simply naked lies; others have proved to be well-dressed lies.

The "prosperity for all" programme is a naked lie as it is just a scheme to dupe the poor as poverty cannot be eliminated when there is rampant corruption in government and funds to help in delivering social services such as health and education are swindled by individuals and because they are always members of the ruling party, they are not charged – and even if this is attempted, cases somehow simply die in courts. The dressed-up lies include promises by ruling party MPs and the President to constituents that work on electricity and water supply is beginning: equipment and material for this work are delivered and heaped alongside the roads, but removed immediately after the elections.

There is talk of health programmes, education, security and peace yet in parts of Uganda these rallies cannot take place because of insecurity due to rebel activities.

Then we come to voting day. Most of the candidates and their supporters see this as a day determining between life and death. They become aggressive so as to win the election. Winning indeed is the only way by which they can recover the money used in bribing voters. Once elected they get access to public funds and embezzle it. They can, as well, raise their salaries and allowances. On polling day voters who support poor candidates and those candidates who are not favoured by the president are harassed, intimidated and sometimes beaten. Those who resist intimidation are given already ticked ballots papers by the polling officials so that when the voter then

ticks a candidate of his or her choice the ballot paper ends being invalid. Some are even denied the right to vote or are forced to vote in sight of the polling officials, while supporters of the favoured and rich candidates are allowed to vote more than once, to vote in other people's names—the dead and the absent. There is ballot stuffing such that in most polling stations where there is majority support to the ruling party, the number of votes cast is than the number of registered voters. In areas, some opposition voters' names are deleted from the voters' register.

Only in constituencies where the opposition has a massive majority – at or above 75% - do opposition candidates, especially at district and parliamentary levels prevail. In most of Northern and Eastern Uganda the ruling elite has limited support and has been unable to consistently manipulate results or intimidate voters.

During the 1996 Presidential elections, a year after Uganda enacted a new constitution, President Museveni scored 76% of the votes, and in 2001 he scored 67% while in 2006 he scored 57% - a steady decline massive electoral malpractice and rigging in his favour. These malpractices are on record among others in the High Court papers filed by presidential runners up in the last two presidential elections.

The 1995 constitution had been enacted, with legislation to limit presidential terms as limited to two of five years each. Before the end of President Museveni's second term, MPs amended the law to replace the two-term ceiling with an unlimited number of terms. This was achieved by voting each MP cash of U Shs 5 000 000 (US\$2 300 or about R15 000).

The constitution currently required that the presidential winner must win more than 50% of the vote. With surveys indicating that the president's support has declined down below this 50%, attempts are being made to persuade and bribe MPs and or district local councils to change the constitution such that whoever scores most in the next presidential election (2011) and thereafter wins the presidency.

During the last elections, the state continued coercing and manipulating local council chairpersons, whose positions under the present multiparty arrangement is questionable, to work as its agents in support of the incumbent president and extremist politicians of the ruling party. The state seduced them by buying them food, household materials and some allowances. Some were given letters appointing them President Museveni's agents without consulting them. They are facilitated by resident district commissioners, who as civil servants are supposed to be impartial.

The law on elections especially on the person of presidential candidate works in favour of the incumbent as he/she remains in office of president at the same time as presidential candidate. So it looks like two football teams playing where by the referee is one of the 1st 11 of one of the playing teams.

The state also uses religious, tribal and ethnic differences to fuel rivalry and political antagonisms, and to neutralise opposition political power. It gives out gifts in form of executive cars and houses to the leaders of these groups, paid for – like most of the activity of the ruling party – directly from the national treasury. There is no demarcation between the ruling party, NRM, and the government. Government funds raised

and collected from taxpayers by the Uganda Revenue Authority is used for activities by NRM politicians, both individually and as a party.

The relationship between the ruling party and the opposition parties, groups and individuals is that of hatred and bitter rivalry democratic contestation, offering choices to the electorate. The opposition parties form coalitions of convenience in the hope of overthrowing the incumbents democratically.

Our assessment of the previous elections and the consequences for the next elections is that despite the fact that the opposition now enjoys more support than the ruling party, the NRM will continue to dominate. This is partly because opposition supporters are demoralised and do not vote. But it will also because of the manipulation and vote rigging we have seen and will continue to see.

This creates a sense of hopelessness for democratic possibilities. There is always a rise in rebel activities, insurgencies and violence before, during and after each national election.

We in Kabale Socialist Club maintain that for Uganda's democratic process to grow and for smooth unhindered unity and development of our country, a limit of two five-year term must be restored for the presidency. An age limit of 75 must be imposed on candidates for electoral office, at the level of Local Council 5 and parliament.

And to ensure free and fair elections, an incumbent president wishing to contest for a second term must first resign the post and leave office as well as State House. The electoral commission should

comprise of members from different political parties. Laws must be put in place so that when anyone found to have participated in rigging election in his/her favour by contravening electoral laws must be disqualified from standing for an electable office as well as holding public office.

This is where Kabale Socialist Club comes in to give a vote of thanks and appreciation to the South African Communist Party, the African National Congress and Congress of South African Trade Union for the unity shown which works to advantage not only to the people of the Republic of South Africa but also the people of the entire African continent. We thank the South African Government for giving welcoming hands to those people in countries on this continent including ours who have been given habitat here when tortured and mistreated in their home countries. We long to see such happening in our country Uganda and other neighbouring countries where there is political instability.

We look forward to a time when our government will start appreciating the emerging revolutionary left movement in the country.

On behalf of Kabale Socialist Club I wish to extend our gratitude to the South African Communist Party membership for the kind of fraternity shown in extending invitations and enabling us to attend the conferences.

Comrades never give up. The struggle continues. ★

Cde Justus is a leader of the Kabale Socialist Club.

SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

Neo-colonialism and the new trade regimes

Economic partnerships agreements, FTA, masking developmental agendas against poor countries for economic progress are key neo-colonialist tools, writes **Tennyson Saona**

Neo-colonialism is a new type of colonialism. It is the strategy imperialism uses to maintain its control over the former colonies. It manifests itself at social, political and economic spheres. During the colonial era nations were conquered by other nations – mainly the Western World powers. Their land and other means of production were taken by the conquerors. The conquered nations struggled for political independence. Colonies got political independence one after the other and in the 1960s most of the African countries attained political independence.

The former colonial masters and other world powers adopted new ways of colonising and sustaining their exploitation of the resources, human labour power and natural resources, of the former colonies and the economically weaker nations.

The aspirations of the newly independent nations had always been to acquire economic independence. Many of these developing countries have been struggling for decades to be economically independent. Progress seems to be very meagre. What is the problem? The problem could be neo-colonialism. The developed world that includes the former

colonisers has adopted unfair economic relations with the developing world. The tentacles of neo-colonialism include:

- International chain stores, transnational corporations and other conglomerates
- World Bank/IMF loans tied to neo-liberal economic policies
- Trade agreements
- International chain stores, transnational corporations and other conglomerates

With the growth of business in the developed world the chain stores, conglomerates and other businesses such as industrial firms expanded into the developing countries. These businesses are operated with cheap labour in these countries: the workers are not paid wages equal to those of their counterparts in the developed countries where these businesses originate. The labour power of workers in these businesses is not satisfactorily paid. As a result the economic development of these countries is hampered.

Frank in Coetzee (2001: 83) asserts that a class of Third World political leaders, the comprador bourgeoisie who, through colonial education or by co-optation and corruption, were sympathetic to the interests and values of the core countries, facilitated the exploitative relationship between the core and periph-

ery in the post-colonial period.

Without exploitation of the of working people of the developing countries, foreign direct investment (FDI) itself, could be good for providing foreign currency to carry out international settlements. FDI serves as a supplement to domestic saving and investment.

World Bank/IMF loans tied to neo-liberal economic policies

According to Lenin typical of old capitalism had been the exportation of goods. Lenin stated that under the new monopoly capitalism or imperialism, characterised by the dominance of financial capital, the major export became capital itself to places where it could be employed at higher rates of profit.

Directly and through organisations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), the developed world gave short-term loans to developing countries. These countries usually failed to pay back the loans because of high interests and short periods to realise any profits. The result has been that the developing countries continue to depend economically on the developed countries.

The various types of loans, short-term, medium-term and long-term, are linked with conditions that affect the internal affairs of the developing countries. For example, the BCP government of Lesotho could be in danger of being weakened by its very electorate, if the World Bank/IMF insists on the cost-recovery in social services and a monetarist approach to macro-economic policy (revenue raising, public expenditure cuts etc) to give government enough room for policy discretion.

According to Nossal (98: 231) many countries with persistent economic problems, such as high debts and low

export earnings, signed agreements with the IMF to abide by a package of policy demands called structural adjustments programmes (SAPs). Many African countries, particularly the least developed countries including Lesotho, signed such agreements with the IMF. While the SAPs might offer some temporary relief from the debt burden, they tend to cause other effects, such as inflation, distortions in the distribution of wealth, a rise in crime and a decreased sensitivity to environmental concerns.

Neo-liberal policies propagated by the IMF and the World Bank recommend adherence to:

- free market principles which include minimal government intervention,
- privatisation of state enterprises;
- a balanced budget;
- trade and financial liberalisation; and
- low interest rates.

The implementation of economic SAPs includes items that follow and those listed above:

- liberalisation of markets,
- removal of distortions in markets such as subsidies, price control and general protectionism; and
- replacement of import-substitution policies (whereby the outflow of foreign currency is restricted and the development of domestic industries is encouraged, which are usually protected by subsidies and import tariffs) by an export-oriented development strategy.

In Lesotho foreigners purchased most of the privatised state enterprises and corporations, while government held not more than 30% of the shares in each of them. The neo-liberal policies place the developing country at a disadvantage in relation to the foreign investor and these ascertain dependency of the developing country on the developed countries.

SAPs caused serious economic problems, and increased unemployment due to retrenchments and the removal of protection of certain enterprises. In addition SAPs resulted in social problems, such as denial of social services due to cutbacks in respect of pensions and health services.

Critics of neo-liberal policies contend that the Keynesian macroeconomic policies with much higher deficits can stimulate investment and economic growth. The Keynesian policies provide an alternative to neo-liberal policies. These policies encourage the government to intervene in the economy and to stimulate demand by means of high deficit spending.

It would be prudent for the developing countries to develop and/or apply the appropriate economic policies to shed the neo-colonial economic yoke.

Trade agreements

The world order has involuntarily caused economic regionalisation or bloc-formation in various parts of the world. There are bilateral and multilateral trade organisations such as, Southern African Commercial Union (Sacu), the African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa), Southern African Development Community Free Trade Area agreement (SADC FTA agreement), New Partnership for Africa Development (Nepad), Economic community of West African States (Ecowas), World Trade Organisation (WTO) and others.

Trade agreements are accompanied by SAPs. Signing of the trade agreement constrains the sovereignty of member states. Sovereignty gives political communities the rights to organise their political, social, economic and cultural lives as they see fit. SAPs limit these rights.

World Trade Organisation

By joining WTO a state places constraints on its economic decision-making.

Southern African Commercial Union

Membership of Sacu comprises Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. According to the new Sacu trade policies, with a new formula of sharing the revenue, the least developed member country, Lesotho, gets a fair share of the revenue. However, through the invitation of US, in 2003 Sacu and the US began negotiations of establishing US-Sacu-FTA (Prabhala 2004: 1). These negotiations caused great concern to Lesotho, because if the agreement gets implemented Lesotho will not get the revenue it is getting currently. According to (Prabhala 2004: 1) the Sacu members, while welcoming the trade opportunities of bridging the inequities that exist, are concerned about specific aspects of the US-Sacu FTA, which, if implemented, would seriously undermine the basic tenets of social and economic development.

Southern African Development

Community Free Trade Area agreement

This agreement was signed in 2000 as a commitment to promote regional economic integration. The official launch was set for 17 August 2008. In January 2008 Lesotho achieved an 85% tariff elimination target. Its Minister of Finance and Planning said in response to public questions that he doubted if Lesotho is fully ready because of lack of the necessary institutions to optimally support trade. ★

Cde Saoana is a Central Committee member of the Communist Party of Lesotho

SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

The state of democracy in Africa: the Swaziland case

We note the deafening silence from both regional and international bodies about the suffering of the people of Swaziland, writes **Siphasha Dlamini**

We bring revolutionary greetings from the People's United Democratic Movement (Pudemo) and the working class of Swaziland. We also express our appreciation for being invited to such an important conference.

Our organisation turned 27 in July 2010, having been established in 1983 in Swaziland, at time where the then head of state had usurped state power through a proclamation and decreed that there shall be no political plurality in the country. He banned all political parties through a draconian law that is popularly known as the 1973 Decree.

Swaziland remains a hostage to the forces of semi-feudal and neo-colonial reaction. These forces are rooted in the most primitive and backward forms of accumulation, savaging our people and looting their every bit of resources to feed the limitless greed of the ruling regime.

Our country, like most on the African continent, had the best resources, enough to sustain the economy of the small population. But all has been looted to feed the royal family and its cronies. As a result Swaziland is leading the world in terms of HIV-Aids prevalence,

has terrifyingly high levels of poverty and unemployment with poor health and education systems.

We also note the deafening silence from both regional and international bodies about the suffering of our beloved people – to such an extent that Swaziland is elected to chair important organs such as Troika in Peace and Stability by SADC. We are aware that this was a capitalist agenda and as such it led to the second banning of Pudemo and to its branding as terrorist organisation in 2008. However we can assure you that no amount oppression shall silence the revolutionary organisation to waver and succumb to such ruthless oppression.

In Swaziland there is lack of basic freedoms of association, assemble, organisation and opinion. Political parties are banned by law. Rights to associate are denied by the powers that be. The state organs are unleashed on citizens that from time to time sharpen the contradictions as expressed in the royal constitution that is not people-driven. This has been clearly evidenced by the killing of a worker, comrade Siphoshe Jele, on 1 May 2010 who was hanged inside one of the king's prisons for merely wearing a t-shirt with a Pudemo emblem.

Furthermore, the house of a member of Swayoco, which is the youth league of Pudemo, was mysteriously bombed by a commercial explosive device after a frantic effort by the royal police to coerce his neighbours to get into their houses and sleep.

Trade union activity is highly restricted. Grass root or community organisation and meetings are prohibited and can only be sanctioned by the local authorities (that is traditional leaders). There is no media freedom, the press is highly censored and muzzled. The population is not free to access information, especially if it puts the fascist regime in a bad light. State-sponsored violence is used to destroy students and youth activities.

Having said this, it is evident that there is absolutely no democracy in Swaziland and our task is to:

- Democratise all spheres of our society, particularly the state and its apparatus. The clear intention of this objective is to promote and deepen the culture of democracy in which mass participation at all levels of our society; transparency and accountability remain the basic tenets of democracy.
- Transform the economy and land ownership patterns which form the material basis of the “tinkhundla” power and are central to the dismantling of its monopoly over the country’s wealth and power for the effective empowerment of the working class and rural poor majority of the Swazi people.
- Restore meaning and essence of being a Swazi as related to dignity and freedom, to instil in our people a feeling of confidence as complete human beings and not to define themselves as second class citizens or objects of royal exploitation.

- Central to all our liberation efforts is the struggle to dismantle gender and class inequalities, which remain the heart of the “tinkhundla” aristocracy. The liberation of women and the poor shall be the main indicator of the extent to which our agenda to defeat the legacy of “tinkhundla” shall have succeeded in improving the life conditions of our people.

- Finally, we seek to reclaim our national heritage and resources, cultural pride and to promote social co-operation and solidarity among the people to overcome the divisions as having been created by the “tinkhundla” aristocracy, which makes slavery and inequalities an acceptable way of life among our people.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call for international solidarity for a practical and immediate support for our struggle. It is in the interest of every revolutionary present here that Swaziland achieves democracy and political stability, which is by extension the achievement of a democratic and stable Africa. Now that some progress is being seen in Zimbabwe, we call upon all democracy-loving governments and organisations to put smart targeted embargos on the Swaziland royal family and its friends as well as Swaziland’s top government officials so that this unnecessary and lavish spending comes to an end.

If Swaziland is not free, the neighbouring countries shall be the first to feel the pinch since our people shall ceaselessly migrate into all parts of the sub-region and Africa continent, as well as other countries of the globe. ★

Cde Dlamini is the Secretary General of the People’s United Democratic Movement [Pudemo]

SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

Message of solidarity from South West Africa People's Organisation (Swapo) to ALNEF conference

By **Salomon Ilovu**

Receive revolutionary greetings from the youth of Namibia, the Swapo Party, the Swapo Party Youth League and the people of Namibia. Namibia is currently holding a SADC Summit and I am forthrightly instructed to indicate that shared ideology has no boundaries and where there exists boundaries, it (ideology) will swiftly eliminate such boundaries in search of harmony of those that are alike and belong together. As such, when we say 'power to the people' and 'aluta continua', for us in the global periphery and the progressive movements of southern Africa, the message is clear that the struggle of the lower class must continue and intensify.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the SADC on the progress made and their achievement in the region, and HE Hifikepunye Pohamba President of the Republic of Namibia and also the President of Swapo, for his election as the Chairperson of SADC. We believe that he will contribute immensely to the growth and development of the region.

Allow me also to congratulate the SACP for hosting this important con-

ference on participatory democracy to evaluate and review progress by the Left Parties on the continent. It is upon us, as participants of democracy, to embrace the concept of participatory democracy where all stakeholders, including the electorate, are involved and consulted in decision making processes in the affairs of our states. We as partners in this fight have to share ideas and methods on how best we can promote the concept of participatory democracy, not just theoretically, but also to practice it in reality.

We are here of our own accord as commanded by our moral responsibility to our fellow Comrades in the struggle for social justice but most profoundly, because of Proletarian internationalism, we are reminded that the lower class must at all times be in solidarity with their fellow workers in other countries on the basis of a common class interest.

History, the present and the future have a symbiotic relationship, they remain interconnected and interrelated. Be, therefore, reminded that those who do not know history are bound to repeat it. Let us always remember the journey we have travelled so that we can chart

the way forward.

We must understand that we are living in difficult times, times when the enemy of the people (Capitalism) has developed more teeth to bite. We must never forget that capitalism is like feudalism, protected by democracy and the fancy names we find nowadays. We are living in times where no one bothers to investigate the deficits of capitalism. The workers still remain disregarded. The petit bourgeoisie have in fact succeeded in removing the workers from the equation of success. When organizations record high returns and productivity, the credit is given to the CEOs, Board of directors or government; little if not nothing at all is said to recognize the blood and sweat of the workers.

The recent outcome of the activities of those reckless forces of the market must be the defining moment in our struggle, what we now know as the fi-

nancial crisis is not just an event that we must understand; it is also the time when we need to redefine our position in the global political economy. The so called "invisible hand of the market" has failed as we have always maintained and articulated that it will. Whoever is not clear now that we can no longer surrender the people's lives to market fundamentalists might as well enter the gates of the unknown places. It is therefore time for us to call for collective action as we seek to address the needs and aspiration of our people who are disappointed, destitute and dissatisfied.

As the first President of Namibia, Cde Dr Sam Nujoma would end by saying "the people united, fighting for common good for all members of society, will always emerge victorious". ★

Cde Ilovu is a member of the Central Committee of Swapo Party Youth League.

SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

Quelle démocratie pour le Tchad et L'Afrique, et quels intérêts de classe sert-elle?

Par Ley-Ngardigal Djimadoum

Sommet France-Afrique à la Baule, le Président français François Mitterrand conditionnait l'aide au développement proportionnellement au progrès réalisé en matière de démocratie dans les pays africains. La démocratie a-t-elle commencé en Afrique avec le discours de la Baule ? et pourquoi cette sévère injonction du Président français ? Est-ce une position sincère ou une nouvelle stratégie de l'impérialisme français pour pérenniser sa domination ?

Plus de deux décennies plus tard le constat est amer et se révèle être un cuisant échec. Inversement, on note le renforcement des dictatures dans les anciennes colonies françaises : Tchad, Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, Cameroun, Togo, Centrafrique... Et pourtant, l'impérialisme français ou la Françafrique règne en Maître absolu grâce à ses valets qu'elle a imposés contre la volonté des peuples de nos Etats, prétendus « indépendants ». Survint alors la question : quels sont les causes de cet échec et quel type de démocratie serait compatible au continent ? Les peuples africains ne pourraient-ils pas à partir de ses lointaines racines culturelles inventer une « nouvelle forme de démocratie »

en intégrant d'autres acquis universels des luttes des peuples pour la liberté et contre les dominations et l'exploitation du capitalisme?

Naissance de la démocratie en Afrique francophone après la 2ème guerre mondiale

L'étymologie du mot « démocratie » signifie: du grec dêmos, peuple, et kratos, pouvoir, autorité. Cette compréhension fut unanimement adoptée et admise comme norme en occident et qui tend à s'imposer dans le reste du monde. La **démocratie** est donc le régime politique dans lequel le pouvoir est détenu ou contrôlé par le peuple (principe de souveraineté), sans qu'il y ait de distinctions dues la naissance, la richesse, la compétence... (principe d'égalité). En règle générale, les démocraties sont indirectes ou représentatives, le pouvoir s'exerçant par l'intermédiaire de représentants désignés lors d'élections au suffrage universel.

Les autres principes et fondements de la démocratie sont: la liberté des individus ; la règle de la majorité; l'existence d'une «constitution» et d'une juridiction associée (le Conseil constitutionnel en France) ; la séparation des pouvoirs

(législatif, exécutif et judiciaire) ; la consultation régulière du peuple (élection et référendum) ; la pluralité des partis politiques ; l'indépendance de la justice. [M.H. Hansen, *La Démocratie athénienne à l'époque de Démosthène* (1991), *Les Belles Lettres*, 1993.], [Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique I* (1835). Paris: *Les Éditions Gallimard*, 1992. Collection: *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* (tome I: pp. 1 à 506)]

Le non respect et la non application de ces principes, notamment en ce qui concerne la souveraineté et l'égalité dans l'empire colonial français, ont conduit les peuples noirs d'Afrique à s'insurger contre l'impérialisme et la domination coloniale. Dans l'empire français, ces africains, appelés « indigènes » sont considérés comme les citoyens de seconde zone. Ils sont exploités, humiliés par l'homme blanc qui se croyait supérieur et investit d'une mission civilisatrice divine. Les colonisés se sont alors organisés militairement et/ou politiquement dans les différents états de l'empire français. Au sein de cette communauté française les Partis politiques des 14 colonies d'Afrique ont opté pour les « Républiques autonomes » en 1958, puis ont réclamé leur « indépendance » en 1960.

Pendant les années sombres (1940-1944) de l'occupation de la France par les Allemands, plusieurs milliers de jeunes soldats des colonies (appelés Tirailleurs sénégalais) et originaires de différents pays de la colonie furent incorporés de force dans l'Armée française. Ces braves soldats, à leur corps défendant, ont courageusement participé à la libération de la France.

Le 30 novembre 1944, 1 280 soldats africains d'Afrique furent démobilisés et regroupés dans le camp de transit

de Thiaroye non loin de Dakar. Ils se sont révoltés pour réclamer le paiement de leurs arriérés de solde et de leurs primes de démobilisation. Une mutinerie éclate le 1er décembre 1944 mais l'administration coloniale a sauvagement réprimé dans le sang les mutins faisant officiellement 35 morts et d'autres condamnés à mort. 48 d'entre eux sont arrêtés, certains condamnés à des peines de dix ans de prison mais amnistiés plus tard en 1947 par le président de la République, Vincent Auriol. Cet odieux massacre fut le détonateur d'une prise de conscience collective de l'état d'inégalité profonde entre blancs et noirs malgré la constitution qui stipule l'égalité entre les citoyens. Les noirs étaient considérés comme les citoyens de seconde zone. Le principe démocratique d'égalité républicaine a été dissous dans le solvant du racisme. Face à la grogne des africains, pendant cette période au cours des années 1940-1944, le Général De Gaulle était contraint d'autoriser le 07 août 1944 le droit syndical en Afrique noire, une autre manifestation de la démocratie. La notion de « démocratie » ou du moins son embryon existait déjà bien avant le discours de la Baule du Président français François Mitterrand en 1990 à partir de l'année 1944 puis amplifiée à partir de 1958 avec la naissance des républiques autonomes.

Il conviendrait ici de souligner la solidarité internationaliste prolétarienne dont a fait preuve le Parti Communiste Français (PCF). En effet, les partis politiques et des syndicats progressistes africains sont soutenus par le PCF et le syndicat affilié la CGT. Forgés politiquement à la lumière de la lutte de classe, ces Partis et syndicats africains progressistes ou communistes luttent dans le cadre de la démocratie pour l'obtention

des indépendances de leurs Etats respectifs. Dans ce foisonnement de Partis, l'impérialisme et le capitalisme français ont créé des partis satellites afin de mettre en échec les partis indépendantistes et nationalistes. C'était déjà pendant cette époque que l'impérialisme français avait élaboré sa stratégie d'exacerbation des conflits ethniques, régionalistes et confessionnels à travers ces multitudes de partis réactionnaires sans aucune assise populaire. C'est aussi durant cette période que l'impérialisme et le capitalisme français ont élaboré sa stratégie de fraude et hold-up électoraux, lesquelles recettes seront largement peaufinées et utilisées par les dictateurs africains soutenus par l'Elysée, afin de se maintenir aux trônes grâce aux pseudos élections « démocratiques »

Le dictateur Déby ou le sacre d'un despote grâce aux hold-up électoraux et au soutien inconditionnel de la France

Si la démocratie est soutenue par le principe des élections libres et transparentes par lesquelles le vote majoritaire triomphe, alors le Général-Président Déby au Tchad ne serait jamais élu à la magistrature suprême du pays depuis 20 ans. Il s'apprête par ailleurs à réitérer son quatrième hold-up électoral à la présidentielle de 2011. En effet, comment un homme de cet acabit qui sème la terreur, la désolation, la mort au sein des populations, un homme dont les seuls performances et talents dûment reconnus sont la prédation des deniers publics, le népotisme, le clanisme, la corruption, la mauvaise gouvernance... entraînant la paupérisation croissante des Masses populaires, soit plébiscité à chaque élection par les victimes ? Evidemment, non car le peuple tchadien

qui souffre dans sa chair, rejette de manière irréversible le tyran Déby. De plus, Les rapports annuels des associations des droits de l'Homme ont estimé à plus de 31000, le nombre de tchadiens assassinés par le dictateur Déby. Qui oserait croire un seul instant et en toute honnêteté intellectuelle qu'une victime puisse aduler son bourreau ?

Le despote Déby est imposé et soutenu par l'impérialisme français et ses troupes militaires basées au Tchad. En effet, à plusieurs reprises, les Forces de résistances nationales ont pris d'assaut la capitale N'Djaména, cependant hélas, l'armée française basée au Tchad est intervenue pour le sauver in extremis. Son dernier sauvetage date du 3 février 2008. Pour notre Parti, ACTUS/prpe, l'Armée française basée au Tchad est une troupe d'occupation et d'expédition coloniale punitive. Elle n'a jamais aidé à instaurer les prémices d'une quelconque démocratie mais en revanche, elle a œuvré pour l'instauration, le soutien et la consolidation de la dictature du Général-Président Déby. Une armée d'un pays dit démocratique qui fait l'apologie d'une dictature. Quel paradoxe ! Face à l'oppression coloniale française, notre Parti, ACTUS/prpe exige depuis de nombreuses années la fermeture inconditionnelle et immédiate des bases militaires françaises au Tchad.

La démocratie libérale, bourgeoise et/ou capitaliste a permis à la majorité de la population états-unienne de briser la barrière de la suprématie de l'homme blanc sur l'Homme noir. En effet, pour la première fois de l'histoire des USA, un noir, Monsieur Barack Obama ,47 ans, fut élu 44e président de la première puissance mondiale, le 4 novembre 2008. Dans ce cas précis inédit, nous comprenons la joie et les espoirs que cet élé-

ment a suscité chez les noirs du monde et particulièrement au sein des descendants des esclaves noirs et des minorités hispaniques. Cependant, près de deux ans après son triomphe, la situation économique des 40 millions d'états-uniens pauvres n'a guère changé car la crise financière du capitalisme persiste. Le Président avoue son échec : « *Nous avons donc effectué des progrès, mais, soyons honnêtes, les progrès n'ont pas été assez rapides* », L'économie, faute de croissance suffisante, peine toujours à créer des emplois et le taux de chômage officiel reste bloqué à 9,5 %, un niveau très élevé pour les États-Unis. « *L'économie se renforce, mais elle a vraiment subi un gros traumatisme, et nous n'allons pas récupérer tous ces huit millions d'emplois perdus du jour au lendemain* » [Figaro/AFP du 10/09/2009, Le Point.fr /AFP, 19.08.2010].

La démocratie libérale et son système économique de marché ou capitaliste qui régent les USA et les autres pays capitalistes, montre son vrai visage en maintenant la majorité dans la précarité et la pauvreté alors qu'une ultra minorité milliardaires sont de plus en plus riches. Le monde compte 1011 milliardaires en 2010. La fortune des 10 premiers, est estimée à 343 milliards de dollars\$ [in *Forbes: The World's Billionaires*, 03.10.10]. Selon les données 2009 du FMI, le Tchad a un PIB de 6974 47 milliards de dollars \$ soit 8 fois inférieur à la première fortune mondiale, le mexicain Carlos Slim Helú.

Démocratie libérale après la Baule ou la prédation du Tchad par le tyran Déby et sa famille

En Afrique et au Tchad en particulier, la démocratie libérale introduite après le discours de la Baule du Président Mitter-

rand a pour objectif la perpétuation du système économique néocolonial sous contrôle des multinationales pétrolières (Exxon, Shell et Pétronas) et les entreprises françaises.

La famille présidentielle du dictateur Déby et son clan détiennent l'économie par exemples : un des frères du tyran a le monopole exclusif d'importation du matériel militaire et d'équipement pour l'armée tchadienne. Dans son rapport annuel 2009 sur les dépenses militaires et d'armements dans le monde, la prestigieuse institution « Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) » indique que les dépenses militaires du Tchad se chiffrent à 436 millions\$ soit 33% de plus qu'en 2008. Le neveu du despote Déby est Trésorier Général du Ministère des Finances, alors que son beau frère Idriss Ahmed Idriss était Ministre des Finances et actuellement Secrétaire Général de la Commission Bancaire de l'Afrique Centrale (COBAC), la police des Banques de la zone Cemac. Un autre frère dirige une entreprise des travaux publics, à qui l'état offre tous les marchés publics sans offres d'appel. L'une des filles du Général Président et sa sœur sont respectivement responsables des frets et de la Direction des Douanes qui rapporte par jours plusieurs millions de francs de recettes à l'état mais qui sont systématiquement détournés afin de grossir les comptes de la famille présidentielle et son clan de prédateurs du Tchad. La démocratie libérale tchadienne est juteuse pour la famille présidentielle et son clan. Ce sont des rentiers du pouvoir.

L'impérialisme français qui prétend donner de leçons de démocratie, de bonne gouvernance en fustigeant et qualifiant les dirigeants anti-impérialistes de : « dictateurs, staliniens, totali-

taires, exécrables, non fréquentables...», n'hésite pas pourtant à fréquenter le commandant en chef du despotisme Déby. C'est un personnage effroyable, une des pires espèces politiquement et moralement que le continent ait connu. Il est de notoriété publique qu'en matière de pillage de deniers publics (malgré la prédation à satiété des pétrodollars du Tchad), la boulimie du squatteur du palais rose majestueusement dressé au bord du fleuve Chari de NDjaména, est insatiable. Il s'était même convertit en narcotrafiquant et faux monnayeur de dollar. Cette scandaleuse affaire et les crimes contre l'humanité qui ont fait la une des médias en France et en Afrique, n'ont pas émoussé l'ardeur des gouvernements français protecteurs du tyran de le couvrir et de l'absoudre de la justice: [François-Xavier Verschave « *Noir Silence, qui arrêtera la Françafrique ?* » Editions. Les Arènes, Paris, 2000. PP.151-174], [Le Canard enchaîné du 09.09.1998, N'Djaména Hebdo du 27.08.98, Le Monde du 28.06.1999, Le Citoyen (Niamey) du 22.09.1998, La Lettre du

Autre exemple récent de prédation des deniers publics par le dictateur Général-Président, est le détournement du trésor public tchadien de plusieurs milliards de FCFA pour une prétendue « rénovation » de l'Ambassade du Tchad à Paris. Les sommes faramineuses engagées par conséquent surévaluées ont stupéfait les autorités de la Mairie de Paris et l'ingénieur expert en construction de bâtiments, sollicité par les magistrats de la chambre régionale des comptes d'Ile-de-France en charge du dossier. [Sources: *Le Canard enchaîné* des 3 février et 7 avril 2010, *N'Djaména Martin*, *ZoomTchad* de mai 2010 et *Lev Post* du 5 mai 2010].

Le quotidien *TchadActuel* dans sa

livraison du 9 août écrit : « *Des curieux ont constaté que ce sont des papiers différents, circulant en parallèle pour les mêmes objectifs. In fine ce sont 7.800.000 euros qui ont été dilapidés du trésor public (c.à.d. Trésor public, le trésor parallèle de Younousmi et celui de la Présidence). Or à Paris, par la voix de Deby, il était question « seulement » de 5.000.000 d'euros* »

Pour un pays riche en pétrodollars, ressources pastorales, agricoles et halieutiques, il est inacceptable que les populations vivent dans une misère incommensurable, le tout aggravé par les conséquences des inondations et de la famine latente dans certaines régions. Le Tchad occupe malheureusement un bon classement des pays pauvres (170ème sur 179 selon le classement IDH en 2009 du PNUD). Selon la Banque Mondiale, le taux de pauvreté du Tchad se chiffre à 64% alors que les revenus du pétrole sont estimés à 50 milliards Fcfa par an [Source : *Chronique des Libertés et Droits Fondamentaux* n°55 mars 2003]. Inversement à cette paupérisation généralisée des masses populaires et à la situation dramatique, le tyran Déby et sa basse-cour de thuriféraires ont un train de vie qui rivaliserait de somptuosité et de faste avec celle de certains fortunés des pays du Nord. Cette meute prédatrice qui gouverne le Tchad est rentière du pouvoir, des guerres et du chaos qu'elle entretient savamment dans le pays. Outre le vol des deniers publics, actionnaire des sociétés, l'accumulation des biens matériels et immobiliers, le dictateur Déby se livre à une course à l'armement sans commune mesure avec les besoins réels de défense du pays. Son bellicisme et ses expéditions militaires aventureuses contre certains pays (Soudan, Congo, Centrafrique, RD Congo), inquiètent la sous région. En effet, dans son rapport

annuel 2009 sur les dépenses militaires et d'armements dans le monde, la prestigieuse institution « *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)* » indique que les dépenses militaires du Tchad se chiffrent à 436 millions\$ soit 33% de plus qu'en 2008.

Avec le pillage des deniers publics et revenus du pétrole, la détention du monopôle du commerce intérieur, les investissements, acquisitions et locations des biens immobiliers au Tchad, en Afrique, en Europe, au moyen orient, au Maghreb, en Asie (Cameroun, Maroc, Tunisie, Belgique, Mali, Dubai, Malaisie, Centrafriques, France...), avec l'argent de leur corruption par les multinationales... La famille présidentielle et le clan sont milliardaires et vivent dans un luxe insolent dont la somptuosité rivaliserait avec celle des riches personnalités du pays du Nord. Leur mépris des masses populaires, les crimes contre l'humanité qu'ils commettent, les traitements dégradant et humiliants infligés aux populations suscitent des multiples insurrections armées contre le régime depuis 20 ans. Jamais de mémoire de tchadien, le pays n'a connu une floraison des mouvements armés contre un pouvoir. Au demeurant, rappelons que les rapports annuels des organisations des Droits de l'Homme estiment à plus 31000 tchadiens assassinés par le tyran.

La lutte contre la dictature est compatible avec la lutte pour la démocratie. Le peuple insurgé a par conséquent le droit et le devoir de prendre les armes pour se défendre. C'est la légitime défense pour la survie. Ce droit inaliénable des peuples à la légitime défense armée contre toute oppression impérialiste ou gouvernementale, est stipulé en dans les articles 5 et 6 dans la déclaration universelle des droits de peuples d'Alger

de juin 1976 des pays non-alignés : « *Tout peuple a un droit imprescriptible et inaliénable à l'autodétermination. Il détermine son statut politique en toute liberté, sans aucune ingérence étrangère extérieure* », « *Tout peuple a le droit de s'affranchir de toute domination coloniale ou étrangère directe ou indirecte et de tout régime raciste* » De plus, la constitution du Tchad de 1996 encourage le peuple à s'insurger contre toute forme d'oppression. En effet, dans son pertinent préambule dit : « *notre droit et notre devoir de résister et de désobéir à tout individu ou groupe d'individus, à tout corps d'Etat qui prendrait le pouvoir par la force ou l'exercerait en violation de la Constitution* ».

Le Népotisme institutionnalisé et le mécanisme de l'instauration d'une présidence à vie pour la famille Déby

Tous les hauts responsables politiques, de l'administration publique et de l'armée sont nommés par le Général Président Déby parmi les membres de sa famille et de son clan. On les trouve dans toutes les Directions de sociétés publiques et para publiques, dans les Ambassades du Tchad à l'Etranger, dans les Institutions internationales et régionales... Un dictateur n'a confiance à personne et est toujours sur le qui vive. À cet effet, il a nommé son épouse Hinda Déby au poste de Secrétaire particulière du chef de l'Etat, un autre fils au poste de Directeur de Cabinet civil adjoint, un troisième est directeur des ressources stratégiques à la présidence ...et enfin avec une armée qui compte le plus d'Officiers au monde soit plus de 200 généraux, les ¾ nommés par décrets de complaisance présidentielle, appartiennent à la famille et/ou au clan. Dans la police et la Gendarmerie on constate la suprématie numérique du clan dans le

collège des Officiers supérieurs.

La pléthore des Partis politiques civiles et les mouvements politico militaires (plus d'une centaine), ne traduit pas l'existence d'une « démocratie » au Tchad. La majorité absolue de ces organisations sont sans véritable idéologie et programme politique nationale. De plus, elles épousent généralement les contours ethniques, régionalistes, confessionnels, parfois familiaux. Nombre de ces organisations sont fantoches car créées et entretenues par le dictateur Déby afin de s'assurer la majorité mécanique et automatique présidentielle dans toutes les élections.

Le tyran Déby n'a jamais remporté une élection au Tchad et ne pourra jamais être vainqueur d'aucune élection transparente et démocratique pour cause de ses crimes contre les masses populaires qui rejettent son pouvoir. Afin de se maintenir au pouvoir, il pratique l'établissement des fausses listes électorales sur lesquelles le nombre des votants est supérieur au nombre d'inscrits, dans certains cas, le comble de l'ignominie est atteint car le nombre des votants est supérieur à la population de la circonscription électorale. Certains militants du parti présidentiel, le MPS, disposent de plusieurs cartes électorales. L'un d'eux a même déclaré avec arrogance et fierté « *Le pouvoir est à nous, MPS. Nous ne lâcherons jamais notre Président Déby. Nous remporterons toujours car à moi tout seul, j'ai voté 4 fois* ». Une autre thuriféraire et membre du Parti présidentiel déclara récemment à Bongor dans le Sud ouest du pays ces phrases gravissimes : « *Vous opposants à son excellence président Déby, nous vous lançons un avertissement de voter à la prochaine élection présidentielle pour lui. Dans le cas contraire, vous serez massacrer* ».

Selon les observateurs neutres internationaux, l'organisation de l'élection présidentielle de 2001 ressemble à la précédente. Elle est entachée dès le départ d'irrégularités monstrueuses : recensement sélectif (à titre d'exemple, citons le cas des Tchadiens opposants ou supposés qui ont été rayés sur la liste électorale par l'Ambassadeur et la CENI à Paris malgré nos vives protestations...), votes multiples, votes des mineurs (par exemple celui d'une fillette Yeskié Adié détentrice d'une carte d'électeur n°0707, n°de série 2297774 à Moussoro ou mieux encore, du mineur Abakar Guihini, vice-président du bureau de vote au quartier Béchir II de Moussoro), bourrages des urnes, intimidations, tabassage des militants de l'opposition (cas de Mr Néotobaye Bidi Valentin, président d'un parti de l'opposition PAP/JS, qui a reçu une flèche à la poitrine pour avoir mené la campagne du candidat de l'opposition et favori des urnes, le Député Ngarléjy Yorongar. Au demeurant, rappelons que ce dernier fut embastillé plusieurs fois par le Général-Président Déby pour cause de son opposition implacable au système mafieux du régime.

Mr Burkinébé, président de l'Union des Syndicats du Tchad (UST), Mr Ngatoguam Ngarbaye, secrétaire adjoint de la Ligue Tchadienne des Droits de l'Homme (LTDH) et Mr Sayam Soulassidé de l'Association Tchadienne pour la Non Violence (ATNV), ont tous été assaillis sous un déluge de coups par les partisans du Général-Président Déby. Cette meute de fous furieux, fut dirigée par Mr Oumar Boukar, Secrétaire d'État à la fonction publique, qui a ouvert le bal de tortures en assenant le premier coup de poing à Mr Boukiré, puis a ordonné aux gendarmes de continuer les sévices dans les locaux de la police. Les

trois autres suppliciés, membres des observateurs nationaux, alertés de la distribution frauduleuse de nouvelles cartes d'électeurs par Monsieur le « Ministre boxeur », s'étaient rendus sur les lieux pour en faire le constat. Ils ont fini malheureusement par un séjour médical aux urgences de l'hôpital de N'Djaména. La barbarie du régime Déby est illimitée. Une terrifiante démocratie sévit au Tchad!

La prétendue Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI) qui est sensée piloter impartialement toutes les opérations électorales, a toujours été présidée par un membre du clan prédateur, désigné par le Général Président Déby. De plus, les membres de cette institution sont composés à majorité par les Membres du Parti présidentiel. Afin de récompenser les différents présidents de la CENI pour leurs forfaitures, le dictateur Déby a nommé respectivement M. Yoadimnadj Pascal et M. Yokabdjim Mandigui au poste de premier Ministre. Ces anciens Présidents de la CENI ont été diaboliquement performants dans les bourrages des urnes, les établissements des fausses listes électorales en privant parfois des régions entières hostiles au Président de s'inscrire sur la liste électorale, ils ont accru le contrôle et la pression sur les médias publics et privés, ils ont été les auteurs de découpages électoraux truqués, de la promulgation de loi électorale scélérate permettant de disqualifier les candidatures de certains opposants aux élections présidentielles... On a même constaté que certaines personnes décédées de longues dates ont mystérieusement voté Déby. Enfin, le régime a recours massivement à la corruption en payant des modiques sommes à certaines populations de voter pour le président sortant, Déby. Drôle

de démocratie où le despote achète les voix ! Le zèle de ces présidents de la CENI a même conduit à des menaces voire des assassinats des militants ou sympathisants de l'opposition.

Les Masses populaires tchadiennes ou du moins les rescapés subissent quotidiennement des traitements humiliants et dégradants, des viols et confiscations de leurs biens. La cruauté du tyran Déby n'a jamais été égalée dans les annales de la barbarie des dictateurs africains, comme en témoignent les exemples des femmes enceintes qui ont été éventrées et les fœtus arrachés ! (Cf. *Tchad le procès d'Idriss Déby, Témoignage à charge*. Ngarlejoy Yorongar, éd. L'Harmattan, Paris, 2003). *D'autres sources indépendantes comme celle du Pasteur suisse, Roland Hammel, dans son témoignage : [« Tchad : sait-on vraiment ce qui se passe ? » dans l'hebdomadaire Jeune Afrique n°1855 du 24 au 30 Juillet 1996]* interpelle l'opinion internationale sur la tragédie méconnue que vit le peuple tchadien.

Le 28 mai 2001, lors des élections présidentielles de 2001, six (6) candidats de l'opposition civile ont été arrêtés en pleine réunion de travail. Ils ont été torturés et interrogés dans les locaux de la police pendant une heure, puis relâchés. Le public en colère a manifesté pour leur libération. La police tira et fit 4 morts et de nombreux blessés. Des arrestations massives ont été alors opérées au sein des militants de l'opposition dans tout le pays.

L'examen des manœuvres de hold-up des voix par le dictateur Déby pendant les dernières élections présidentielles de 2006, témoigne si besoin est, de la fausse démocratie au Tchad et de l'illégitimité du squatteur du palais rose. En effet, le 14 mai 2006, notre Peuple a subi une nouvelle humiliation.

L'impérialisme français, la Françafrique déclara la guerre au peuple tchadien. Le troisième coup d'état ou hold-up électoral, après ceux de 1996 et 2001, tous soutenus par la Françafrique, vient de réussir : la proclamation de la victoire du Général-Président Idriss Déby Itno à la présidentielle au premier tour avec 77,53%. Et pourtant le premier tour du 3 mai fut massivement boycotté par l'opposition et le peuple traumatisé. La participation ridicule atteignait tout au plus 8% selon les estimations les plus optimistes des observateurs impartiaux indépendants internationaux. Le quotidien Gabonsnews du 04.05.2006 écrivait : «...À treize heures, les bureaux de vote à N'Djamena sont restés, pour la plupart, désespérément vides, a-t-on constaté. Au bureau de vote de la gare routière, quartier Naga II dans le quatrième arrondissement, considéré comme un bastion du parti au pouvoir, à la mi-journée, sur 520 inscrits, seuls 20 ont voté. Au quartier N'Djari, toujours une zone considérée comme acquise au parti au pouvoir, à 11h30, seuls 30 personnes ont voté dans le bureau du Carré 17B pour un total de 410 inscrits...».

Le boycottage des urnes par la majorité de la population a été confirmé par une forte abstention selon les diplomates et les journalistes occidentaux (Source : L'Express du 28 mai 2006). Face à la tolérance générale de l'opinion nationale et internationale, la cour constitutionnelle prise en flagrant délit de hold-up, a revu à la baisse les premiers chiffres avancés le 14 mai dernier. C'est ainsi que le taux de participation a été ramené à 53% et non à 70% initialement, et 64,67% le pourcentage acquis par le candidat Déby au lieu de 77,53% du départ.

Dans son rapport, le Vice-président de la Fédération Internationale des

Droits de l'Homme (FIDH), Dobian Assingar a qualifié le scrutin de mascarade : « *En général le taux de participation a été très faible. Nous avons noté la présence de nombreux hommes en tenue dans les bureaux de vote et la distribution massive de cartes d'électeurs le jour du vote aux mineurs...* ». Maître Delphine Djiraïbé, Coordinatrice du Comité de suivi de l'appel à la paix et la réconciliation, d'ajouter « *La non participation des populations à l'élection du 3 mai confirme que, ni un coup de force militaire, ni un coup de force électoral ou institutionnel ne peuvent être une réponse à la crise socio-politique que traverse le pays* » et de conclure avec amertume au nom du Comité « *Nous regrettons une fois de plus le refus catégorique du pouvoir, soutenu dans sa logique par la France, d'ouvrir le dialogue national avant l'élection* ».

En 20 ans de règne absolu, le Général-Président Déby n'a remporté démocratiquement aucune élection. Les Présidentielles de 1996, 2001 et 2006 ont été confisquées grâce aux hold-up électoraux supervisés par le spécialiste de fraudes électorales, agent de l'impérialisme français (la Françafrique), Monsieur Grand Eson (Cf. Ouvrages, « *Noir Silence, qui arrêtera la Françafrique* » de François-Xavier Verschave, éd. Les arènes, Paris, 2000 et « *Noir Procès* » de François-Xavier Verschave et Laurent Beccaria, éd. Les Arènes, Paris, 2001). Le Canard Enchaîné n°4463 du 10.05.06 écrit ces vérités cruelles et ironiques : « *L'armée française agent électoral au Tchad* » écrit : « *...Pas de démonstration de force, donc, mais un solide soutien logistique au déroulement de cette farce électorale, taillée sur mesure pour Idriss Déby, le vieux compagnon de route de la France. Comme lors des deux précédentes consultations, les bulletins de vote ont*

été fabriqués en France, par l'Imprimerie nationale. Puis ils ont été transportés -par avion- à N'Djamena, où ils ont été mis à l'abri, comme le reste du matériel électoral, dans des magasins de l'armée française, évidemment gardés par des soldats...français. Ces bulletins ont ensuite été expédiés dans les différentes provinces du pays grâce à l'aimable concours des avions dont dispose la France sur place. Et, tout aussi obligeamment, nos militaires sont venus récupérer les urnes pleines ou vides »

L'impérialisme Français a ainsi consacré « démocratiquement » la dictature du Général-Président Déby 1er au Peuple tchadien. La France qui a une propension à fustiger les atteintes aux « normes démocratiques » avait déjà observé en amont un mutisme complice. Elle a encouragé et soutenu la révision de l'article 61 de la Constitution qui n'autorise que deux mandats de cinq (5) pour la présidence du Tchad. Le Général-Président Déby a tripatouillé le 24 juin 2005 ce dispositif constitutionnel qui lui permet de se présenter indéfiniment aux élections, en d'autres termes, il restera Président à vie du Tchad. Voici la « démocratie bananière ou maffieuse » que défendent les impérialistes contre la volonté des masses populaires. Nous avons assisté avec colère et rage au sacre du « Roi Déby 1er du Tchad » par la France. Au demeurant, rappelons que cette révision de la Constitution a eu lieu quelques semaines après une visite furtive du Général-Président Déby à l'Elysée. Quelle curieuse coïncidence et/ou hasard de calendrier ? En l'absence d'un fort soutien ou de la bénédiction de la France, la révision constitutionnelle ne serait pas engagée car le valet de l'impérialisme obéit aux ordres du Maître.

Les critères d'appréciations universellement admis pour les élections démocratiques sont :

- La tenue d'élections libres et transparentes à échéance régulière
- Institution du multipartisme
- La liberté d'expression de l'opinion publique
- Liberté de la presse et des autres médias
- La séparation des pouvoirs Exécutifs, judiciaires et législatifs
- Indépendance de la justice
- Respect des droits de l'homme

Les élections prétendues démocratiques au Tchad, ne satisfont à aucun de ces critères susmentionnés. Ce qui confirme que notre pays il n'y a pas de « démocratie ». Cependant, hélas, les membres de la Mission d'observation et de surveillance des élections de l'Union Européenne (UE), les observateurs officiels de certaines puissances impérialistes qui ont assisté aux élections présidentielles de 1996, 2001 et 2006 n'ont toujours rien vu d'anormal. Quelle cruauté !

Les impérialistes qui sont toujours prompts à réagir vigoureusement contre les atteintes aux « droits de l'homme, aux violations des règles démocratiques électorales » en condamnant, sanctionnant économiquement et politiquement leurs auteurs, sont devenus aveugles et aphones au Tchad. Dans tous leurs rapports formatés relatifs aux élections, on trouve la conclusion une sorte de refrain nauséabond : « les élections se sont déroulées dans une atmosphère globalement positive...il n'y a pas d'incidents majeurs de nature à porter atteinte à la crédibilité du scrutin ». Nous avons ici une preuve de l'hypocrisie des puissances impérialistes, capitalistes et notamment celle de la France qui soutient et bénit à tout vent le sacre du dictateur

Déby, leur valet par excellence contre la volonté des masses populaires tchadiennes. Les dirigeants français sont aussi les premiers à envoyer leurs messages de félicitations au tyran Déby pour sa « brillante réélection » à la magistrature suprême. Ce n'est pas un hasard si la France, quelques mois avant les élections présidentielles de 2001, a débloqué plusieurs millions de francs d'aide pour moderniser le système de communication des forces de sécurité (Gendarmerie). Il est évident que cette modernisation servirait à mieux verrouiller le territoire et à mater toute velléité de contestation populaire. Enfin, le soutien de la France au tyran Déby est aussi d'ordre juridique car les différents gouvernements de l'hexagone de gauche et de droite se sont toujours opposés à plusieurs reprises lors des assemblées de la Commission des Nations-Unies pour les Droits de l'Homme, d'inscrire le Tchad en procédure d'urgence. Ce qui a permis jusqu'à ce jour au régime du Général Déby d'échapper à la condamnation.

La France de la commune de Paris et de la Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (texte fondamental de la Révolution française), qui énonce un ensemble de droits naturels individuels et collectifs et les conditions de leur mise en œuvre du 26 août 1789, a été trahie par l'impérialisme français en Afrique ou la Françafrique. Pour ce dernier, les Droits de l'homme dont la France se fait le chantre est à géométrie variable avec en filigrane un relent de racisme. En effet, pour Paris, les noirs d'Afrique de son pré-carré ne sont pas mûres ou dignes de vivre en « démocratie » car nous sommes « génétiquement » constitués que pour être dirigés par les Présidents dictateurs ou plus exactement par les « Gouverneurs délégués » de la France

à l'instar du despote Déby au Tchad. La politique de l'impérialisme français en Afrique ou la Françafrique est immuable quelle que soit l'idéologie du parti vainqueur installé à l'Elysée.

Le régime politique imposé au Tchad et dans les autres pays d'Afrique après le discours de la Baule du Président Mitterrand en 1989, est appelé « démocratie » car leurs dirigeants ont reçu le « Brevet de soumission et de la défense des intérêts impérialistes par les puissances occidentales ». C'est ainsi que malgré les crimes contre l'humanité et les crimes économiques commis par le tyran Déby, ce dernier est un « démocrate » et que dans ce pays d'Afrique règne la « démocratie » aux yeux de la France.

Le piège pour le Tchad et les autres pays d'Afrique, provient du financement de nos élections par les puissances impérialistes qui veulent à ce que leur « capital investi » puisse générer des profits énormes. En d'autres termes, les bailleurs de fonds imposent aux peuples africains leurs valets qui garantissent les pillages de nos ressources à perpétuité, bradant ainsi la souveraineté de nos états et empêchant toute politique sociale en faveur du bien-être des masses populaires. Le financement des élections serait devenu le nouvel eldorado et une nouvelle recolonisation du continent africain par les puissances impérialistes et ce, de manière « démocratique ». Il faut être de mauvaise foi pour oser affirmer que les Masses populaires africaines suppliciées par les dictateurs auraient voté pour rester sous domination coloniale par procuration sous la chape de plomb des petites créatures de la Françafrique qui font office de « Gouverneurs-généraux délégués » de la République française en Afrique.

La Présidence à vie est tacitement

instituée au Tchad. Mieux encore, le tyran prépare activement la transmission du pouvoir à une de ses nombreuses progénitures. La dynastie ou la présidence familiale est en marche. Le peuple tchadien n'accepterait jamais la consécration d'une monarchie déguisée avec les règnes des Rois Déby 1er, Déby 2ème, Déby 3ème... Au Tchad, le MPS, parti présidentiel est omniprésent dans toutes les structures de l'Etat. Il utilise les moyens matériels, financiers et militaires de l'état pour anéantir les partis d'opposition. Dans ces conditions, la démocratie bourgeoise et représentative n'a aucune signification car nous avons une assemblée monocolore avec une majorité absolue au MPS. De plus, les Masses populaires se désintéressent à une politique caractérisée par la répression et l'accroissement exponentiel de la misère, d'où les forts taux d'abstention aux différentes élections (moins de 50% pour les excellentes performances).

La légitimité démocratique des élus du Parti présidentiel, serait en cause

La démocratie participative ou locale pourrait ouvrir une brèche en faveur de la majorité des citoyens écartés des décisions relatives aux problèmes locaux. Cependant au Tchad, nous assistons depuis quelques mois sous prétexte d'urbanisation de certains quartiers de N'Djaména à la destruction des maisons des paisibles citoyens jetés par milliers dans la rue et sans indemnisations. Certaines de ces familles sont propriétaires de leurs maisons depuis plusieurs décennies. Si la démocratie participative ou les conseils de quartiers existaient, les familles victimes de ces mesures unilatérales se feraient entendre en amont en proposant de solutions adéquates. Une telle démarche est possible que si

le régime possède déjà un minimum de fondement démocratique. Ce qui n'est pas le cas au Tchad où le dictateur Déby représente les trois pouvoirs : Exécutif, Législatif et Judiciaire. Il décide de tout seul sans même consulter les députés de son Parti. Ces derniers ne sont d'aucune utilité pour lui et pour les populations dont ils sont sensés représentés.

Le Philosophe français Jean-Jacques Rousseau est l'un de ceux qui sont hostiles à l'idée de représentation. Pour lui, déléguer son pouvoir à des représentants revient pour le peuple à aliéner sa liberté puisque rien ne garantit que la volonté des représentants soit fidèle à la volonté générale. Cette crainte exprimée montre les limites de la démocratie bourgeoise représentative d'une part et d'autre part on risque de privilégier les intérêts locaux ou individuels avec la démocratie participative au détriment des intérêts généraux ou collectifs. Les exécutants des décisions arrêtées lors des discussions en démocratie participative demeurent néanmoins les élus municipaux qui appartiennent à la démocratie participative. D'aucuns proposeraient la démocratie directe afin de résoudre cette équation de la représentativité. Quel que soit le type de démocratie, notre parti, ACTUS/prpe affirme que l'élément essentiel pour asseoir la démocratie au Tchad et en Afrique, c'est d'abord développer l'éducation massive des Peuples. Eduquées et conscientisées, les Masses populaires sauront lire, comprendre, comparer les programmes politiques des candidats et voteront avec conscience pour ceux qui ne les trahiraient pas au cours de leur législature ou dans le cas de démocratie directe, elles sauraient comprendre le sens des projets en discussions ou faire des propositions cohérentes conformes aux lois existantes.

Le revers de la médaille de la démocratie directe ne serait-elle pas la primauté des intérêts locaux ou particuliers au détriment des intérêts généraux nationaux ? Alors survint la question, quels types de Partis incarneraient mieux et défendraient les intérêts directs des états et ceux des masses populaires africaines ? Pour notre Parti, ACTUS/prpe, seuls les partis d'avant-garde révolutionnaires et communistes sont à même de procéder à un changement radical c'est-à-dire initier une révolution socialiste qui détruirait l'ordre ancien de domination, d'exploitation impérialiste et bourgeoise soutenue par la démocratie représentative néolibérale imposée à l'Afrique et au Tchad. Au sein des Partis d'avant-garde révolutionnaires marxiste-léninistes, les masses populaires imprégnées de la culture de lutte de classe, sauraient placer de garde-fous d'abord dans la première étape d'une révolution démocratique nationale et populaire contre les éventuelles velléités de sabotage de certains dirigeants politiques des Partis constituant le front de la lutte contre la dictature. La participation de l'ACTUS/prpe, parti révolutionnaire communiste d'avant garde au sein de ce large front, tient compte de ces paramètres dans l'évolution politique et l'objectif final à atteindre : la vraie démocratie en l'occurrence la DÉMOCRATIE POPULAIRE. Les Masses populaires tchadiennes en sont conscientes. C'est ce qui justifie et galvanise notre détermination pour la lutte armée contre les dictatures au Tchad depuis plusieurs décennies. Aucun peuple au monde n'acceptera le sort criminel qui est réservé au peuple du pays de Toumaï, et de surcroît berceau de l'humanité.

L'impérialisme décerne le Brevet de «démocratie» aux dictatures qui défend-

ent le pacte colonial d'asservissement de leurs pays.

Les régimes des pays du Sud qui mènent une politique indépendante et anti impérialiste sont les cibles privilégiées d'attaques médiatiques, politiques, militaires et des sanctions économiques des puissances impérialistes car leurs valets et candidats aux élections présidentielles ont toujours été battus. Les Masses populaires ne sont pas dupes et restent vigilantes. Les Peuples rejettent les diktats et autres oukases impérialistes. Ils soutiennent leurs dirigeants nationalistes : c'est le cas du Président Robert Mugabé du Zimbabwe qui est devenu la bête noire des impérialistes occidentaux depuis la nationalisation des riches terres agricoles (70%) du pays détenues par une ultra minorité (4000) fermiers blancs.

Les présidents Mahmoud Ahmadinejad en Iran, Hugo Chavez au Venezuela, Castro à Cuba, Al Béchir au Soudan, Evo Morales en Bolivie, Kim Jong Il en Corée du nord... font partie de ces dirigeants du Sud qui sont vilipendés, menacés militairement par les impérialistes. Certains leaders révolutionnaires et nationalistes ont payé de leur vie. Ils ont été lâchement assassinés par l'impérialisme. Notre Parti, ACTUS/prpe rend un vibrant hommage à ces martyrs africains qui incarneront à jamais l'espoir du continent : Ce sont le premier ministre Patrice Emery Lumumba du RD Congo, les présidents, Samora Machel du Mozambique, Sylvanus Olympio du Togo, Gamal Abdel Nasser d'Egypte, Thomas Sankara du Burkina Faso, Marien Ngouabi du Congo Brazzaville, les Leaders des Mouvements de libération nationale : Chris Hanu d'Afrique du Sud, Amical Cabral de Guinée Bissao, Mario de Andrade de l'Angola, Eduardo Mondlane,

du Mozambique, Um Nyombé, Ernest Ouandié, Félix Moumié du Cameroun, Ibrahim Abatcha, Robenata du Tchad, Mehdi Ben Barka du Maroc, le Colonel Amirouche Aït Hamouda d'Algérie, Barthélemy Boganda de Centrafrique...

D'autres figures emblématiques telles que Kwame Nkrumah, président du Ghana a été victime d'un coup d'état. Il a été l'initiateur de l'OUA et pour la première fois a appelé à la création des Etats-Unis d'Afrique (EUA), il écrivait : « Nos problèmes actuels ne peuvent être résolus par les actions sporadiques, ni par de pieuses résolutions. Il ne faudra rien moins que l'action unitaire d'une Afrique unie ». Ce panafricain convaincu représente un réel danger pour les intérêts de l'impérialisme sur le continent.

Le Président sud africain Nelson Mandela quant à lui, fut incarcéré pendant 27 ans dans le bagne de Robben Island par le régime raciste de l'apartheid, un appendice de l'impérialisme occidental et de la démocratie bourgeoise.

Notre Parti, ACTUS/prpe est solidaire de ces dirigeants et de leurs peuples qui résistent courageusement aux différentes agressions dont leurs pays sont victimes. Suivant notre principe communiste de la lutte de classe, nous refusons d'être dans le même camp que les agresseurs impérialistes contre les peuples agressés du Sud. De plus, les intérêts de ces puissances dominatrices ne sont pas les nôtres car ils sont issus des pillages de nos ressources naturelles et de l'exploitation des travailleurs du Sud mais aussi ceux Nord. L'exploitation de l'Homme par l'Homme et la course aux profits des capitalistes, créent la paupérisation croissante des Masses populaires. Le capitalisme est un système qui doit être combattu sans compromission et

retenue aucune. La lutte de classe et la révolution communiste restent toujours d'actualité.

La démocratie populaire au Tchad est-elle possible ?

Face à cette situation tragique, les masses populaires tchadiennes n'ont pas d'autres alternatives que de prendre les armes pour se libérer de la tyrannie soutenue par l'impérialisme français. C'est dans cette logique que notre Parti, ACTUS/prpe soutient la lutte des Forces de résistance nationale avec lesquelles nous formons un front commun. Notre plate forme minimale est d'anéantir la dictature et assurer un pouvoir transitoire vers l'instauration d'une véritable démocratie. Cette première étape est indispensable pour nous communistes car l'avènement d'une démocratie populaire ne pourrait se faire sans la participation effective du peuple dans les décisions qui touchent à leur existence locale. Nous pensons que les masses populaires longtemps opprimées doivent s'approprier des débats sur les décisions locales. C'est ce que notre parti qualifierait de « démocratie locale ou participative ». Cette étape démocratique est une école qui permettrait à la majorité longtemps ignorée de se former politiquement.

À propos de la confusion sur la terminologie « démocratie », Lénine écrit : [*« La bourgeoisie est obligée de faire l'hypocrite et de donner le nom de « pouvoir du peuple entier ou de démocratie en générale (...) ou de la république démocratique (bourgeoise), (...) qui est en fait la dictature de la bourgeoisie, la dictature des exploités sur les masses travailleuses. Il n'est point d'autre moyen que de remplacer la dictature de la bourgeoisie, capitaliste par la dictature du pro-*

létariat »(Lénine, *œuvres, Tome 28, pp 383-388*)]. Pour nous Communistes, le rôle de notre Parti d'avant-garde révolutionnaire, ACTUS/prpe prend toute sa signification. Notre participation active au sein du front mettrait aussi l'accent sur la nécessaire lutte de classe qui conduira à l'instauration d'une véritable démocratie, en l'occurrence la démocratie populaire ou démocratie socialiste à long terme comme objectif à atteindre. En démocratie populaire, le pouvoir appartient réellement au peuple, exercé par le peuple et pour garantir ses intérêts. Contrairement à la démocratie libérale, la minorité bourgeoise et/ou compradorie détiennent le pouvoir par le truchement des pseudos élections démocratiques. Leurs représentants dans les institutions politiques (assemblées, sénats, congrès, municipalités, gouvernorats...) défendent leurs intérêts en maintenant l'ordre d'asservissement du pacte colonial et capitaliste. L'omniprésence du MPS, le parti présidentiel du tyran Déby au Tchad en est une preuve. Karl Marx disait que les révolutions sont les locomotives de l'histoire. Les masses populaires tchadiennes, exploitées, écrasées sous le joug de la dictature et de la misère ont le devoir historique de faire la révolution qui défendra leurs intérêts contre la domination capitaliste. À long terme, seule une révolution socialiste dirigée par un Parti d'avant-garde avec la participation massive de tous les travailleurs manuels, intellectuels et les paysans majoritaires au Tchad, serait à même d'instaurer une démocratie populaire. C'est l'objectif final de notre parti, ACTUS/prpe.

Conclusions

Au Tchad, le multipartisme ne signifie nullement démocratie. C'est une véritable imposture électorale et intellectuelle,

qui permet à l'impérialisme français d'imposer « démocratiquement » grâce aux hold-up électoraux, le sacre d'une dictature la plus cruelle au monde, celle du tyran Général président Déby. Cette illusion de démocratie libérale représentative se renouvelle périodiquement avec des nouveaux élus du Parti présidentiel, le MPS, puisés dans la colossale réserve des corrompus, d'opportunistes, des assoiffés de pouvoir, des carriéristes, des arrivistes et autres « compétiteurs du remplissage d'estomac ou ventrologues selon un néologisme tchadien » que le dictateur Général Président Déby pouvoir a su constituer afin de pérenniser trône.

Les Masses populaires tchadiennes n'ont pas d'autres alternatives que celle de la lutte armée pour se libérer de la tyrannie. C'est une nécessité historique et préalable. L'instauration d'une véritable démocratie populaire que notre Parti, ACTUS/prpe souhaite pour notre peuple passe nécessairement par différentes étapes, d'abord celle de ce large front au sein duquel nous y prenons activement part contre la dictature de Déby, soutenue et entretenue par l'impérialisme français. La période transitoire permettrait de créer les conditions objectives pour l'organisation des élections crédibles, transparentes et démocratiques.

Nous, Peuples africains devons nous affranchir totalement de la domination impérialiste afin de choisir librement nos dirigeants, notre mode d'organisation politique, conformes à la défense des intérêts des masses populaires. Les révolutions nationales démocratiques et populaires auxquelles nous communistes devons prendre activement part, constitueraient les jalons de l'étape vers la démocratie populaire qui est notre conception de la « démocratie » et ob-

jectif final. Seule la société socialiste permettrait l'épanouissement rapide, massif, équitable et général des Africains. Seul le socialisme avec sa démocratie populaire pourrait mobiliser les ressources naturelles et humaines afin d'accélérer la réalisation des Etats-Unis d'Afrique avec la participation effective des masses populaires dans des décisions politiques à tous les niveaux car elles en sont privées par la démocratie représentative libérale et bourgeoise imposée à notre continent.

Le socialisme est l'avenir de notre continent opprimé, pillé, avili par l'impérialisme et le capitalisme. Les Forces capitalistes unies, écrasent les Peuples. Nous communistes avons aussi

le devoir de nous unir avec les masses populaires afin de donner la riposte adéquate à cette agression. Notre Parti, ACTUS/prpe espère que la création de l'internationale communiste africaine ou Komintern africain (ICA) est nécessaire.

La Komintern africa doit faire partie intégrante du Mouvement communiste international (MCI). Tous ensemble et avec détermination, nous propulserons les luttes des peuples vers la libération totale du continent de la domination et de l'exploitation impérialiste et capitaliste. ★

Par Djimadoum, Secrétaire Général de ACTUS / prpe

SPECIAL ISSUE: **AFRICA LEFT NETWORK CONFERENCE**

Contribution of the Workers' Party of Belgium

The struggle against neo-colonialism and imperialism in Africa is inextricably linked to the struggle for socialism in Europe, writes **Tony Busselen**

The National Council of the Workers' Party of Belgium greets the first conference of the Africa Left Networking Forum (ALNEF) entitled "The Left's Conception of Democracy in Africa: Tasks and Challenges". We thank the South African Communist Party and the Sudanese Communist Party for the opportunity they offer us to be with you and to learn from the experiences and analyses of the communist parties and democratic organisations in Africa.

For us, Belgian communists, the struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism and the imperialist policies of domination and re-colonisation by US and European multinationals is inextricably linked to the struggle for socialism in Belgium and in Europe. Our Belgian capitalists drew a very important part of their power and capital from the colonisation of Congo-Kinshasa, and from their mandated territories Rwanda and Burundi.

King Leopold II of Belgium seized, conquered and colonised – with the approval of the major European states – an area in the heart of Africa that was more than 80 times as large as Belgium. To recoup its initial invested capital and

to increase his personal wealth Leopold II installed a terror regime for the Congolese people. People had to look for rubber in the forest and if they refused or if their harvest was insufficient, they were violently punished. The Belgian demographer Léon de Saint-Moulin estimated that between 1880 and 1920, 5 to 10 million Congolese, i.e. 33% to 50% of the population, disappeared. They were murdered, died of hardship or fled to neighbouring countries. To this day, comrades, this regime is defended in our country. Former Foreign Minister and former European Commissioner for Development, Louis Michel, said of Leopold II on July 22 this year: "a visionary and a hero who used the methods that were in use at the time".

And our capitalists made money, comrades, a lot of money: the value of the shares of companies active in Congo was in 1928, 26% of the total value of listed companies on the stock market in Belgium. By 1955 it had increased to 44%. The average profit rate of all colonial enterprises together was for the period 1950-1955 30%. For the mining companies it was even 50 to 60%. And so, thanks to the plundering of the colonies of central Africa and the ex-

plottation of its Belgian working class, a powerful bourgeoisie was created in little Belgium. For these people Congolese independence was unacceptable and inconceivable. In the end, under pressure from the Congolese people and the international community, especially the Soviet Union, they organised elections. But it was the Congolese nationalists led by Patrice Emery Lumumba who won these elections. The Belgian bourgeoisie did not reject any act of cowardice, intrigue or brute force to defeat the nationalists. And for this it could fully count on the support of US imperialism, which had taken the lead in Africa after the Second World War. The cowardly assassination of the elected Congolese leader Lumumba, was followed by a merciless terror campaign against all nationalist Congolese. Serious historians speak of 300 000 to 1-million Congolese dead who fell to the Belgo-American repression between 1960 and 1965. And so was established the Mobutu dictatorship that was to last 36 years, by the direct, bloody intervention of the Belgian and US military aided by white mercenaries. Until 1990, comrades, Mobutu was the main ally of US imperialism in the region and the great friend of the Belgian leaders. Only after the end of the Cold War his bosses begin to criticise him and to look for a successor. Following six years of fruitless palaver, one of the few surviving Lumumbist leaders from the sixties, a revolutionary and a Marxist, Laurent Desire Kabila, was able to use the excessive self-confidence and the many contradictions within the imperialist camp to chase Mobutu away on 17 May 1997 after seven months of armed conflict.

Our party had already been in contact with Mzee Kabila in the 1970s. Laurent Kabila was in 1964-1965 with

Pierre Mulele and Gaston Soumaliot in the leadership of the revolutionary wing of the Conseil National de Liberation, which tried to coordinate the different fronts of the nationalist resistance that had at the time already liberated two thirds of the country. After this opposition was brutally beaten down, Laurent Kabila founded the Popular Revolutionary Party (PRP) in 1968. Like Pierre Mulele, who was cruelly murdered in the same year, Kabila had indeed come to the conclusion that a national democratic revolution could not be conducted without a revolutionary Marxist party. During 17 years Kabila led with the comrades Kibwe Cha Malenga, Gabriel Yumbu, Mashado and other leaders of the PRP a liberated zone in the region of Fizi Baraka on the border between South Kivu and North Katanga. Mobutu's troops, aided by mercenaries and the CIA organised a bloody repression. One after another, the revolutionary leaders were killed, and eventually the PRP and the maquis of Fizi Baraka were completely destroyed around 1985.

As a young communist organisation, from the 1970s we had contact with the PRP. When after a decade of preparatory work we organised the Foundation Congress of our Party in 1979, the delegation of the PRP, led by Laurent Kabila himself, was the only international delegation that was present. Besides working in the Belgian working class, learning from the Congolese revolutionaries who were actually struggling against the Mobutu regime was from the beginning one of the basic orientations of our party. In 1979 Laurent Kabila asked our party to save the history of the maquis directed by Pierre Mulele. In 1980, Ludo Martens, president of our party until 2008, began collecting testimonies and

documents to analyse the maquis that Pierre Mulele, former education minister in the government of Lumumba, installed and led in the Kwilu region, 300 km away from the capital Kinshasa, between 1963 and 1966. This work resulted in the book *Pierre Mulele, la seconde vie de Patrice Lumumba (Pierre Mulele, the second life of Patrice Lumumba)* published in 1985. Many Congolese patriots have recognised this work as a standard Marxist book on their country. It contains a thorough analysis of the colonial period, a class analysis of Congolese society and economy around 1960, a history of the resistance in the 1960s and a detailed description of the experience of the Mulele-led resistance and the conclusions Pierre Mulele and his comrades drew from these experiences. The book ends with the description of the betrayal and the dreadful conditions in which Pierre Mulele was murdered in October 1968, an assassination ordered by Mobutu.

The book helped a generation of members of our party to develop an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist consciousness and to feel solidarity with the struggle of the peoples in the Third World, in Africa and particularly in Congo-Kinshasa. Some comrades developed close ties with opponents of the Mobutu regime in the Diaspora. Some visited one or more times the country itself. In the early 1990s, our newspaper published a monthly supplement entitled “Congo-Kinshasa”. During the Rwandan genocide we organised a solidarity campaign with the Rwandan people. And afterwards we launched a campaign to help build a new Rwanda. More than 100 young Belgians travelled to Rwanda to observe the reality of the country to be able to bear witness afterwards in Bel-

gium and to organise solidarity. It quickly appeared that within the Rwandan Patriotic Front pro-imperialist forces led by Kagame had taken the lead and many progressives; some members of the RPF had to flee the country. When, in 1997, Laurent Kabila, with his rich experience and in a historic period in which imperialism felt omnipotent, succeeded in overthrowing the Mobutu regime and took a nationalist stance, we defended this fight and we also went to the Congo. For eight years our comrade Ludo Martens spent most of his time in the country. He witnessed the struggle of the Congolese nationalists, led by Laurent Kabila, to recover their independence, stolen by treachery and violence in the sixties.

The Workers Party of Belgium is a party of 4 000 members. In last elections this year, we obtained 2% of the vote. In the two big industrial cities, Antwerp and Liège, it was 4%. But for us the class struggle is the most important terrain.

Today, most of the big struggles in Europe are defensive struggles against the economic and social attacks, which are ordered, directed and coordinated by the European Union (EU). These attacks follow the Lisbon Treaty and target three main domains of the social configuration: social security, judged as too costly; the labour market, judged as too rigid, and education, judged as badly suited to the demands of the employers.

The EU set itself the objective of becoming the most dynamic and competitive economy in the world. This implies outperforming the USA. In the fields of social security and labour market, the USA are “far ahead” from the point of view of European big capital. After the crisis of 2008 the EU imposed drastic austerity programmes that foresee mas-

sive public sector lay-offs and forcing down wages.

When the government wages an ideological campaign to prepare the minds and to get the support of the trade-union leaders, we launched a counter-offensive based on arguments. At that step, we addressed mainly the trade-union circles to build a resistance front inside the trade-union structures. We provided a precise and Marxist analysis of the plans, published in our theoretical journal *Marxist Studies*. Afterwards we produced popular brochures.

But it is not only important to have a good analysis, it must above all be understood by the public.

The aspect of communication also plays an important role. Our campaign is centred around a general profile, a specific slogan, and a popular demand.

- The Party adopted as general profile the slogan: “ People before profit” . It is a slogan which was set by the central committee as the Party’s banner slogan for five years.

- The specific slogan which we have chosen for the campaign against the generation pact was: “600 000 unemployed people, why work longer?” (There are 600 000 unemployed people in Belgium). This slogan has the advantage of gathering into one single struggle the young and the elderly, those who have a job and those who don’t. Moreover, it points at an obvious contradiction in the plan and opens the debate on the hidden motivations of the government. Finally, one tackles a problem of society in an advantageous way: some are working to death while others are condemned to unemployment. The choice of this slogan revealed itself as very judicious. With this slogan, we struck a chord and reinforced the spirit of resistance in the

trade-unions and with the masses.

- The Party also decided to propagate a popular demand. We have demanded the right to early retirement at the age of 55, with a compulsory hiring of young unemployed. This demand also expresses the same concern of uniting young and old in a common rejection of postponing retirement.

Armed with these two weapons, we confront the many studies that the governmental and employers’ institutes had provided to prove that it was unavoidable to work more.

Since the crisis in 2008 the attacks on workers have become worse. The central question has become who will pay for the crisis: the workers or those who are at the source of the crisis: the big capitalists?

It is on the basis of the experience of our work in the class struggle in 2005 that a year ago we launched a major campaign advocating a millionaire’s tax. This is a very reasonable demand: we say rich people in Belgium should pay a tax of 1% on what they own above €1-million (about R10-million), 2% what they own above €2-million and 3% above €3-million. This is a tax that only hits the 2% richest Belgians. They will not eat a sandwich less per day, but such a tax will deliver €8-billion in revenues for the state.

With this campaign we focus the debate on the issue we want: who are the real capitalists and why they should pay for their own crisis. This way we prepare the spirits for the coming class struggle to defend workers’ rights against the agenda of the new government.

World capitalism is in crisis and the struggle of communist parties in the heart of capitalism is a struggle for the socialist revolution. Our struggle is

closely connected with national democratic revolutions in the Third World and in Africa, to pave the way for socialism.

The South African Communist Party and the Sudanese Communist Party, promoters of this conference, have a history twice as long than ours. We want to learn from our older brother parties in Africa.

In a situation of unequal and adverse power relationships, the South African Communist Party has accumulated extensive experience with regard to increasing the hegemony of the working class within society, starting from a strategy of national democratic revolution. It has a long tradition of political education, progressive journalism, revolutionary trade union struggle, popular mobilisation and people's power, work among the peasants in the rural areas, cooperatives and armed struggle, from which we can learn.

Our comrades of the Sudanese Communist Party in recent months proved yet again their militancy through the victory of the doctors' strike in the Sudanese hospitals. The doctors went on strike because the Basjir government, despite the huge revenues of the state from the Sudanese oil sector, had no money left to improve the poor infrastructure of the health sector in their country. Despite severe repression, they gained an important victory.

Africa is a continent where the crisis

of world capitalism strikes very hard. Africa is also a continent with an enormous potential of natural resources, including its young dynamic population that is undoubtedly the most important. We are convinced that this century, after centuries of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism, will be the century of the liberation of Africa. The solution can only come from the organised left and can only be found in the direction of socialism.

Therefore, this conference is of historic importance and we are very grateful that we can attend.

Our party will also do everything possible to support this ALNEF. In Belgium and in Europe there an African Diaspora that gives us the possibilities to be in contact with African anti-imperialists and communist militants who we will bring in contact with the ALNEF. We will also put at the service of the ALNEF the analysis and knowledge that is present in Belgium and in Europe. And finally we will prepare to be organise anti-imperialist campaigns in solidarity with our partners from ALNEF when there are important struggles that happen in Africa. ★

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**Programme of the 2nd Africa Participatory Democracy
Conference, 19-20 August 2010, Johannesburg
"Our conception of democracy in Africa: Tasks and
Challenges"**

THURSDAY, 19 AUGUST

Singing of The Internationale – Chair: Chris Matlhako, SACP Secretary for International Relations

Welcome, acknowledgements and messages from fraternal parties
– Cde Crosby Moni, SACP Central Committee Member

Official Opening address: "The Left's conception of democracy in Africa: Tasks and Challenges" – Dr. Blade Nzimande, SACP General Secretary

Keynote Address: Challenges for the state in Africa, tasks and opportunities for progressives and the Left – Minister Maite Nkoane-Mashabane, SA Minister of International Relations and Cooperation

Panel 1

Democracy - Opportunities, Dangers and Political tasks for the Left in Africa
– Cde Gwede Mantashe, ANC Secretary General

The impact of the global capitalist crisis and political program of the Left in Africa – Cde Jeremy Cronin, SACP Deputy general Secretary

The politics and ideological practices of democracy in Africa. Strengths and weaknesses for the Left's new program? – Dr. ElSafie Mohamed El Maki Ahmed, Communist Party of Sudan

Panel 2

Crisis of political conditions in African states, the experiences and spaces for Left organising – Cde Femi Falana, National Conscience Party, Nigeria

Experiences of popular participation: The process of building up an African regional school of Via Campesina in Maputo – Diamantino Nhamposha, Via Campesina, Mozambique

Democracy and Development, the practice of participatory democracy
– Cde Lennart Kjorling, Left International Forum, Sweden

The state and practice of locally inclined democratic politics in Uganda's last election – Cde Justus Tukwasibwe Weijagye, Kabale Socialist Club, Uganda

Discussions of the Political Report

Panel 3

The situation of left organisations, their role in political struggles in Africa
– jimadoum Ley-Ngardigal, Chadian Action for Unity and Socialism, Chad; Jean-Pierre Merabahizi, UDF-Inkingi, Rwanda; Karar Kamaleldin Ahmed, Ethiopia; Neo Simutanyi, Center for Policy Dialogue, Lusaka, Zambia

FRIDAY, 20 AUGUST

Chairperson: Joyce Moloji-Moropa

Panel 4

Trade unions, Civil Society and their role in Africa's struggle to deepen democracy

– Iqbal Jhazbhay, ANC, Experiences of Somaliland in the Horn; Yunus Carrim; Mwandawiro Mghanga, Social Democratic Party of Kenya; Akanyang Magama, Secretary General, Botswana National Front; Cosatu; Mohamed Jmour, Patriotic and Democratic Labour Party of Tunisia;

Presentation of draft motions on Cuba, Palestine, Western Sahara, Sudan, Somaliland and Somalia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, on Peace in Africa, immigration, climate change, gender struggles in Africa, against militarisation and Africom – Cde Solly Mapaila, SACP Secretary for Organising and Cadreship Development

Presentation of the draft Participatory Democracy Conference declaration and adoption – Cde Solly Mapaila, SACP Secretary for Organising and Cadreship Development

Summary of the main conference outcome

Closing Remarks – Mussie Ephrem, Left Party of Sweden; Crosby Moni, SACP

**Programme of the Africa Left Networking Forum (ALNEF)
1st Conference, 20-21 August 2010, Johannesburg
"The Left's conception of democracy in Africa: Tasks and
Challenges"**

FRIDAY, 20 AUGUST

Singing of The Internationale

Opening and welcome to the 1st ALNEF Conference – Dr. ElSafie Mohamed El Maki Ahmed , Communist Party of Sudan

Welcome address – Mr. Ebrahim Ebrahim, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation

Acknowledgements and messages from fraternal parties

Political Report of the 1st ALNEF Conference

"The Left's conception of democracy in Africa: Tasks and Challenges"
– Jeremy Cronin, SACP Deputy General Secretary

Discussions of the Political Report

Conference adjourns

Cultural Evening

SATURDAY, 21 AUGUST

Presentations on the state of Democracy in Africa: the Left conception, tasks and challenges

- Discussions**
- Communist Party of Benin (PCB), Benin
 - Botswana National Front, Botswana
 - Parti africain de l'Indépendance/Parti pour la démocratie et le socialisme (PAI/PDS), Burkina Faso
 - Revolutionary Communist Party of Côte d'Ivoire, Côte d'Ivoire
 - Communist Party of DRC, Democratic Republic of the Congo
 - Communist Party of Egypt, Egypt
 - Social Democratic Party of Kenya, Kenya
 - Communist Party of Lesotho, Lesotho

Presentations on the state of Democracy in Africa: the Left conception, tasks and challenges

- Discussions**
- Party Of The Congress For The Independence Of Madagascar, Madagascar
 - Solidarité africaine pour la démocratie et l'indépendance (SADI), Mali

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- National Conscience Party, Nigeria
- Communist Party of Reunion, REUNION
- United Democratic Front Inkingi, RWANDA
- Parti de l'Independence et du Travail, Senegal

Presentations on the state of Democracy in Africa: the Left conception, tasks and challenges

Discussions

- African National Congress, South Africa
- Congress of South African Trade Unions, South Africa
- South African Communist Party, South Africa
- Communist Party of Sudan, Sudan
- Pudemo, Swaziland
- Kabale Socialist Club, Uganda
- ACTUS CHAD

Lunch

A brief reflection on experiences of liberation movements in Africa

Discussion

Adoption of International and Solidarity Motions:

- Motion in solidarity with Cuba
- Motion on peace, democracy and social progress
- Motion in support of Sudan
- Against a new frontier of Western conflict in Iran
- Motion in support of Palestine
- Solidarity with Swaziland
- etc

Proposals on common political actions and ALNEF way Forward

- common actions in working class mobilisation
- coordination of ALNEF and future conferences
- Solidarity and internationalism

Summary of political outcomes

Presentation and Adoption of the 1st ALNEF Conference Declaration

Closing Remarks



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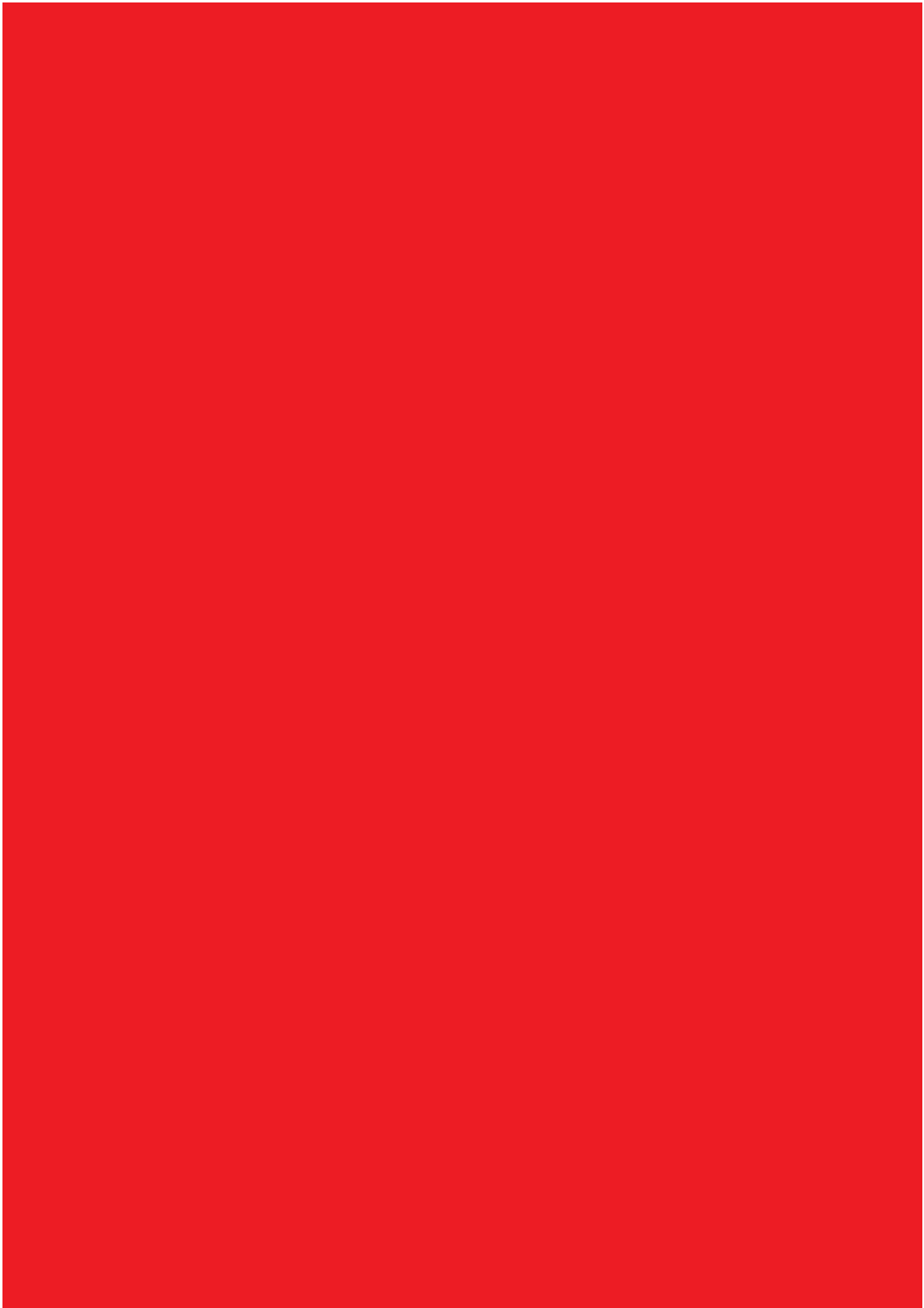
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