

## Social Revolutions - The Preconditions for sustainable Development and People's Democracies in Africa: A Contribution to the Anyang' Nyong'o /Mkandawire Debate

*Shadrack B. O. Gutto\**

The debate between Anyang' Nyong'o and Mkandawire in "*Africa Development*"<sup>1</sup> is too serious to be left to the two "generals" alone. Both deal with issues which are central in assessing the overall economic development in independent African countries since the 1950s. They also discuss the democratic and/or non-democratic nature of political organization and rule in these countries which have led to the different levels and speed of economic development among independent African countries. As in most analysis of this nature, prognosis, and even "prescriptions", are given on what can be done in the future to strengthen development and democracy. Anyang' Nyong'o is more responsible for the latter, albeit implicitly, than Mkandawire.

My contribution will deal with the contributions of both Anyang' Nyong'o and Mkandawire, but more with the former because his original piece and the rejoinder touch on many controversial aspects of theory and practice which Mkandawire has not dealt with in his critique. I shall hereinafter refer

---

\* Formerly lecturer in law and political economy at the Universities of Nairobi and Zimbabwe

---

1 P. Anyang' Nyong'o "Political Instability and the Prospects for Democracy in Africa", *Africa Development*, vol. XIII No.1, 1988, p.71-86; Thandika Mkandawire, "Comments on Democracy and Political Instability", *Africa Development*, Vol.XIII No.3, 1988, p.77-82; P. Anyang' Nyong'o, Democracy and Political Instability: A Rejoinder to the Comments by Thandika Mkandawire", *Africa Development*, Vol.XIII No.3, 1988, p.83-87.

to the pieces in the debate as Anyang's original, Mkandawire's comments and Anyang's rejoinder.

In what follows, I attempt to contribute to the whole debate which is centered on Anyang's controversial thesis that Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire and Malawi have experienced reasonable levels of democratic practices and that it is such relative democracy that has been responsible for what Anyang alleges to be exceptional levels of development. In my contribution I isolate and comment on five interrelated central and secondary conclusions or observations made by Anyang and Mkandawire within the debate over the former's thesis. The five issues I have looked at are:

(a) whether in Africa in general there has been a reduction in citizen participation in government since the attainment of independence;

(b) whether Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire and Malawi are or are not the models of democratic states in Africa and whether or not democracy is related to development;

(c) what I consider to be Anyang's rather simplistic dismissal of the institution of free and fair elections as an independent attribute of democracy;

(d) what I consider to be Anyang's selective attack of immigrant business communities in Africa for undermining democracy and development in Africa instead of focussing on the whole imperialist finance capital;

(e) what I regard as Anyang's idealist hope that political power can be handed over to popular democratic groups voluntarily without political, including military struggle by politically organized groups.

#### **Reducing the Political Arena of Citizen Participation in Government**

In both the original and the rejoinder Anyang laments the "disintegration of the national coalitions" a term he uses to describe the alleged apparent unity achieved during the phase of national struggle for independence. In his words:

*"Since independence, the role of the citizen in the affairs of government has systematically been reduced. The political arena has shrunk, political demobilization has become more the norm than the exception in regime behaviour and social engineering to rationalize and sustain political repression has been the preoccupation of most governments"*<sup>2</sup>.

---

2 Anyang Nyong'o, "Political Instability and the Prospects for Democracy in Africa" *ibid.*, p.72.

He follows this up in the rejoinder by making reference to an article he published in 1986 on Kenya<sup>3</sup> where the thesis was more fully developed. I have read the version of the latter article published in 1989 in "Africa Affairs"<sup>4</sup> and will make my observation based on this latter version.

I find Anyang's "disintegration of the national coalitions" laced with idealism. Whereas it is true that in African countries which have followed the capitalist path of development, neo-colonial states, popular political participation in government and in sharing national wealth is not permitted, it is only important to view this as a *historical and class phenomena*. Viewed as such it becomes apparent that curtailing political participation of the citizenry in government and politics was inherited from the colonial era and what is being observed now is a continuation with that tradition. The broad-based popular mobilization in the struggle for independence was realized not as a means of governing but rather for the purpose of removing the foreign colonial rule. Whether or not such an alliance was to be carried out and maintained in the next phase of building a new independent society could not and cannot be assumed as Anyang' appears to do. Besides, in most African countries the "unity" that was achieved in driving out the colonial dictators was more of an alliance, a broad national united front, than a solid unity. What real unity could have been expected in a situation where people divided into different social classes, some representing *antagonistic class* interests, were forced by the historical circumstances of foreign rule to forge a common front to do away with the then main contradiction in their lives? The "unity" was destined to breakdown sooner or later after the direct colonial-rule contradiction was resolved.

It is also important in analyzing what I consider to be the natural breakdown of the "nationalist coalitions" to have a time perspective. Most independent African states are now nearing or are over twenty years old. The democratic dynamics are entirely different from those of the pre-independence era. For example more than one half of Kenya's population today, twenty six years after independence, was born after independence. They were not part of the "national coalitions" against colonial rule. They are ready and struggling for new alliances and coalitions that will help them get rid of the neo-colonial political and economic system which they have lived under all their lives.

- 
- 3 Anyang' Nyong'o, "State and Society in Kenya: The Disintegration of the Nationalist Coalitions and the Rise of Presidential Authoritarianism, 1963-1978", *Africa Development* Vol.XI, No.4, 1986, p.175-216.
- 4 Anyang' Nyong'o, "State and Society in Kenya: The Disintegration of the Nationalist Coalitions and the Rise of Presidential Authoritarianism, 1963-1978", *African Affairs* vol.88, No.351, April 1989, p.229-251.

Without belabouring the point too much, I also consider it important that in discussing the historical forces responsible for the breakdown of "nationalist coalitions" one needs to pay particular attention to the fact that independence leads to opening-up of the former closed colonies to the entire world imperialist forces. These imperialist forces naturally rush to the former colonies from all corners of the globe: from the European Economic Community (and not just the former "colonial master" only), Japan, the United States of America, the Scandinavian countries and so on. The dynamics of class formation and class struggle in the independent African states naturally feed on and are at the same time affected by such dominating and hegemonistic imperialist forces. It was inconceivable in the 1950s and 1960s that the imperialist economic crisis, the general crisis of capitalism of the 1970s and 1980s could find expression in the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF and World Bank that today terrorize the lives of virtually every African worker, peasant, lower middle-class, and intellectual.

New alliances or "nationalist coalitions" which are qualitatively different from those of pre-independence period such as what we recently (in June/July 1989) witnessed in the struggle of popular forces in Nigeria for the "Socialist Alternative to the Structural Adjustment Programme"<sup>5</sup> are what to be expected and encouraged. In other words the death of the "nationalist coalitions" that had successfully completed their historical tasks should not be mourned but instead accorded heroes' burial.

#### **More Political Accountability and Citizen Participation in Politics in Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and Malawi: the Economic Growth and Accumulation Problematic**

It is imperative that we quote Anyang's own words here in detail in order to avoid the likely response that he was misinterpreted or misunderstood. In the original, Anyang' avers:

*A quick casual look will reveal that the more participatory political systems have done much better in terms of economic growth than the less participatory ones: Kenya under Kenyatta as compared to Sudan under Nimeiri; Cote d'Ivoire under Houphouet Boigny as compared to Zaire under Mobutu. The comparison is not altogether perfect: One does not know, for example, what to do with Malawi in this scheme of comparisons<sup>6</sup>.*

And in the rejoinder, Anyang' repeats his central thesis more definitively having resolved the confusion over Malawi:

---

5 See the rich record of these struggles in, among other sources, *African Concord Weekly* issue from June 12 up to the beginning of August 1989, particularly the July 3 issue; *West Africa weekly* (the same period); *Newswatch Weekly* (the same period) and numerous dailies, weeklies and monthlies that cover Nigerian news.

6 Anyang' Original. *ibid.* p.77.

*The countries which have had high growth rates in Sub-Sahara Africa since independence are Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire and Malawi (of the non-oil producing countries). These also happen to be countries where there have been more accountability of the state to its social base - however narrow this is - when compared to the other military dictatorships and non-party regimes. There is therefore a prima-facie case, in the context of Africa of the post independence period, to argue that where there has been respect for democratic practices (however minimal) higher rates of growth and more successful models of accumulation have been ensured".<sup>7</sup>*

In the original contribution Anyang' asserts that countries with more participatory political systems have done much better in terms of economic growth. This is the correlation that Mkandawire disputes. Mkandawire uses Malawi as an example of a country with high economic growth but with a very repressive non-participatory political system - at least as far as the majority of the popular masses are concerned. Anyang' in the rejoinder readily concedes the point, although grudgingly. That is why in the rejoinder Anyang' includes Malawi among his earlier models of "participatory political systems" of Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire. More important however, is Anyang' Nyong'o insistence on his pre-determined models in the rejoinder. He claims to see exceptional "growth rates" and "higher rates of growth and more successful models of accumulation" - at least in post-independence Africa - only in countries where there exist "more accountability of the state to its social base - however narrow this is" - and also "more respect for democratic practices (however minimal)".

Indeed throughout his contributions, Anyang' deals with "growth rates" or "higher rates of growth and more successful models of accumulation" in the very narrow bourgeois economic sense although he accuses Mkandawire of being "a good product of bourgeois economics". Even assuming that the whole problematic of development can be reduced narrowly to "growth rates" and models of "accumulation" as bourgeois economism does, Anyang's choice of countries where this has occurred with minimal democracy is unfortunate and misleading. Perhaps he could, if one is forced into empiricist arguments, have used countries such as Botswana or Senegal and not Kenya, Malawi and Côte d'Ivoire. But such empiricist approaches to analysis of historical processes is dangerous. Even for Botswana one cannot prove that it is relative political democracy that has led to reasonable levels of economic growth. What is the *structure* of the Botswana economy? What is its natural resources, levels of penetration of capital and its comparative advantages to any other country one would like to compare it with? What

---

7 Anyang's Rejoinder, *ibid.*

time frame are we dealing with? What was the level of Botswana's economic development at the time of independence compared with whatever country or countries one compares it with? What has been the social cost in class terms of the growth or accumulation that has gone on? These are some of the fundamental questions that should be dealt with in any comparisons of "rates of growth" or "models of accumulation".

Anyang' does not concern himself with these at all and in fact Mkandawire is right when he accuses Anyang' of ignoring the "structural constraints" that need to be considered in assessing the development rates of countries.

The ahistorical nature of Anyang''s analysis as shown by his choice of examples to illustrate the empiricist bent of his argument lies in his inability to benefit from the law of uneven development of capitalism. Had he addressed his mind sufficiently to this he could have understood that Kenya was, since the early 20th century, a leader among most colonies in Africa in terms of the level of material development as well as capitalist accumulation. It is not the alleged democracy under the rule of the two dictators, Kenyatta and Moi, which suddenly pushed Kenya's "models of accumulation" ahead of most non-oil producing Sub-Sahara African countries.

Thandika is right when he asserts that "the struggle for democracy must be for democracy in its own right". A democratic political atmosphere that allows for choice of the right path of development as well as the organization of human material resources to pursue that path is better than one that does not permit of such choices. But this is not the correlation between democracy and development that Anyang' seems to be discussing. Instead Anyang' is concerned with a democracy that whatever the means or cost, leads to "stability". "Accountability" is then used in a very narrow sense to mean "accountability" not to the entire citizenry but to whatever narrow social base the government works for. From this model one can easily say that all governments are democratic because there cannot exist a government without some kind of narrow social base - this includes military dictatorships and the governments such as those run by Mobutu, the Amin Dada and Obote, governments, the Bokassa "Empire" or "Kingdom", the Sergeant Doe government and even the authoritarian Moi regime in Kenya today.

If we are serious about democracy and not merely in its usefulness for accumulation and growth rates even if the social beneficiaries are foreign monopoly capitalists and their local partners, then we must define democracy from a broad popular perspective. While on this point it is necessary to point out that Nigeria's economy underwent a high level of accumulation or growth in the 1970s precisely when the military dictators were in power, although it had oil, Latin American countries like Brazil had high growth rates in the 1960s under military dictatorships without much oil. Anyang''s discounting of military dictatorships from a model which he has constructed himself and one which includes all governments with reasonable "accumula-

tion" or "growth rates" with social bases "however minimal" is not consistent.

Perhaps of equal importance here is the *political implications* of Anyang's praise that is on all fours with those given by the leading servants and state persons of big monopoly capitalism such as Margaret Thatcher. For example, in the widely publicized controversial tour by Margaret Thatcher to Kenya in January 1988, Thatcher told Moi that Kenya has:

*"A strong and decisive leadership within a constitutional framework... where others have faltered, Kenya has continued to grow strong and more prosperous. We admire your country's peace and stability and policies which recognize the worth of the individual effort and personal endeavour and economy in which private industry has been encouraged..."*<sup>8</sup>.

At least Margaret Thatcher was specific in her praise of "stability" for the gain of the capitalists. She was not concerned with how that apparent "stability" has been fashioned and maintained. It is surprising that Anyang' Nyong'o who lives under the naked terror of the Kenyan state can actually cloth the *apparent* stability with "democracy". Is it that Anyang' possesses some special knowledge or yardstick for democracy which he has not disclosed that makes him talk of "democratic practices (however minimal)"?

Who says that the Kenyan, Malawian, Zairean and the masses of other fascist African states want to live under "minimal democracy" and not real democracy? Wasn't it the lack of democracy in Kenya, which is internationally known, that led to the mass protest in the Scandinavian countries in 1987, a fact which then led Mr. Moi to cancel his scheduled official visits to Norway and Sweden? When a section of the Kenyan people wanted to register a legal Kenya Socialist Party in May-June 1982 what did the government do to allow this expression of open democratic participation? University Staff Union asked in 1978-1981 to be recognized as a union and to express its right to demonstrate together with the students against imperialist monopolies that support *apartheid* in South Africa as well as continuing to enjoy peaceful exploitation of the Kenyan masses. What did the state do to the union? For those who do not know, the government changed the national constitution to declare Kenya a one-party dictatorship; the government also arrested and detained the Academic Staff Union members and banned the union. One can go on and on in providing evidence of the authoritarian nature of the Kenyan government since 1963 in order to show that it is factually incorrect to talk of democracy which led to capitalist accumulation in Kenya. Growth and accumulation for the capitalists had occurred in

---

8 Sunday Mail (Harare) Jan. 10 1988, p.11.

Kenya over a lot of blood and sweat of the Kenyan people. The people of Kenya do not want the rest of Africa to emulate Kenya's example so far.

Indeed, if one wanted to illustrate further how democracy is lacking in Kenya one could add that even academic inquiry today is heavily conditioned by the nature of the state terror. Anyang's writing on authoritarian presidentialism in Kenya conveniently cuts off at 1978 when the current dictator, Moi took over power<sup>9</sup>. Under a "minimal democratic" atmosphere I think that Anyang' could have ventured to discuss also the continuity and deepening of the dictatorship under Moi's regime.

To any casual observer, Anyang' also comes out rather confused on how he can characterize the Kenyan ruling regimes since 1963. On the one hand the article he published in 1986 and 1989 deals with "presidential authoritarianism" during Kenyatta's reign (1963-1978)<sup>10</sup>. But, on the other hand he clothes that "authoritarianism" with "democratic practices". Is this the natural eclecticism of idealism or is it something else? In the same article, one finds that Mr. Tom Mboya, an Agent of the CIA, the person who was responsible for infiltrating and destroying the militant forces in the Kenyan Trade Union Movement is treated very liberally by Anyang'. Mboya is depicted as an anti-feudalist (which is true) and progressive bourgeois (perhaps also true). But he is also said to have been above corruption! A paid agent of the CIA to destroy the progress of the working class movement, to allow the USA to fully penetrate the Kenyan economy and politics was not *corrupted*? I again find the error of eclecticism here, particularly given the present debate in which Anyang' comes out as supporting the demonstrations by militant students, trade unions and religious organizations and personalities<sup>11</sup>. More about these social groupings later.

#### **"Free and Fair Elections": A Historical political right or "a Bourgeois right"**

Closely related to the question of participatory democracy and indeed an aspect of participatory democracy is the whole issue of whether or not free and fair elections are in themselves "an answer" (not "the answer") to Africa's problems of political instability. Anyang' avers that "democracy, viewed as free and fair elections in strictly bourgeois term, is not therefore an answer to Africa's problems of political instability" (p.78 of the Original). Although Anyang' ties this categorical conclusion to his review of some works by Mahmood Mamdani, it is clear that Anyang' is convinced by the statement he makes.

---

9 See materials cited in footnotes 3 and 4, above.

10 Ibid.

11 Anyang's Original, Ibid., pp.81-82.

To be fair to him, Anyang' does not really define in clear terms what he regards as "free and fair" elections in strictly bourgeois terms. However, since he is making reference to past elections in Uganda and Nigeria, he must be taken to mean multi-party elections. It is a popular past-time of radical populist political propaganda in Africa to discuss "free and fair elections" as a mere bourgeois trick. Military dictators and their civilian counterparts also appeal to the historically determined hatred that the African masses have against the bourgeoisie (who they rightfully associate with colonialism) by denouncing all and every political practice or idea as "bourgeois".

In the context of political elections, it is important to point out that, in modern society, having representatives to most social and political organizations and institutions is a necessary universal practice. If this is so, then how to appoint or elect the representatives, particularly to organs of state and the economy becomes a matter of life and death. It is for this reason that we must fight against any ideas that try to suggest that elections are not important, particularly when they are "free and fair". All sorts of anti-democratic forces, including the bourgeoisie, manipulate and play all sorts of tricks to ensure that the outcome of free and fair elections are in their *class interests*. When Nicaragua held free and fair elections in 1984, much freer and fairer than those that returned Reagan into the White House in 1984, the U.S. imperialists denounced the Nicaraguan elections. Imperialism spends millions and millions to try and determine the outcome of elections all over the world. In other words, free and fair elections are very important and must be pursued resolutely as part and parcel of the overall struggle for political rights. There is nothing bourgeois about free and fair elections. In fact the bourgeois fear free and fair elections at least in the Third World and Africa in particular.

It is the fear of changing governments through free and fair elections that even within the Kenyan one-party state that the ruling agents of imperialism had to introduce the undemocratic, primitive and unpopular queue-voting since early 1988. The widespread popular mass boycott of the queue-voting in Kenya is a clear evidence that the people want free and fair elections through the secret ballot. But, there is more to the democratic institution of free and fair elections. In a place like Kenya, Malawi, Zaire, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal and practically all the neo-colonial dictatorships in Africa, the concept of free and fair elections would imply creating necessary conditions to allow the exercise of freedoms of thought and speech, freedom to form political parties including religious, socialist, communist ones, and to allow free and equal political campaigns to be carried out. This is *politically educational* to the masses and leaders.

It should be clear that in the Kenyan context, a lot of authoritarian laws and state practices would have to be removed as a precondition for free and fair elections. It is the democratic implications of free and fair elections that

make those who are politically involved in Africa fight so hard to win them. Free and fair elections are part of our democratic struggles, whether the bourgeois value the same rights or not.

**Immigrant Business Communities or Imperialism as a Whole: Who is our Real Enemy?**

It is most important that when analyzing the root causes and the continuing dynamics of Africa's non-democratic political practices and the economic stagnation and crisis, we identify scientifically who the main and secondary forces are in the arena. Anyang' has identified some of these forces comprising of the "immigrant business communities" who he asserts continue to export the surplus produced in Africa to foreign lands as well as "foreign powers who he sees as unwelcome political intervernors in Africa"<sup>12</sup>. Anyang' is quite right.

However, there is need for clearer identification of who the enemies to popular democracy and overall social and economic development in Africa are. On the question of the flight of surpluses that could be re-invested and some used to raise the material and cultural living conditions of the people, it is true that immigrant business communities are partly responsible whether they have their origins in Lebanon, as in the case with those in West African states, or in Asia, as in the case with those to be found in East, Central and Southern Africa. But here we should also point out that most of these communities particularly those of Asian origin, have legitimately become citizens of the states in which they live. If they are capitalists, they have a right like all local and foreign capitalists doing their business, to ensure that they expand, they expand their capitalist ventures. To that extent they should not be singled out merely because of their countries of origin or business practices for special chastisement. This would amount to reactionary nationalism on our part. The main question then is what is the capitalist class as a class engaged in both collectively and in terms of the various factions of capital? Are what they are doing leading to overall balanced social and economic development of the people or not? If the answer is "no" then given the right political conditions they must be confronted and areas of their operations brought into line with the national objectives.

If this were to be done, one would not end up singling out the "immigrants business communities" for chastisement as Anyang' does but rather one would look at the total picture and assess what the real giants of industry, mainly transnational corporations and their local allies and partners are doing as well. These are the main exporters of Africa's surplus product. These are the main bribe-givers to state bureaucrats, politicians, reactionary religious groups and even leading intellectuals so that these local groups can

---

12 Anyang''s Original, *Ibid.*, pp.81-85.

help to ensure continued imperialist dominance and exploitation. These are the owners and managers of our economies, particularly in Kenya and Zimbabwe which I am more familiar with. These are the forces that dominate in politics to ensure that no ideas opposed to big foreign capital are discussed openly or disseminated. They limit freedom of thought and speech. These are the institutions that collaborate with our anti-people governments to make and enforce laws that curtail the freedom of labour to strike under the pretext that those areas of the economy in which they are involved are "essential" to society and that strikes in a developing economy are harmful to "national-building"<sup>13</sup> and so on.

Of the foreign powers, meaning foreign governments that intervene in Africa's politics to the detriment of people's popular democracy, they do not just intervene at independence conferences or by toppling popular governments, as Anyang' correctly puts it, but they intervene *continuously* in all spheres of political, social, intellectual and cultural lives. The point is not to stop intervention altogether; this is not possible and is not good for Africa. The point is that African people should democratically exercise their sovereignty to choose who their friends and who their enemies are; what sort of intervention is good for the people with the people participating in making such decisions and how it is to be controlled by the people. In other words, we cannot afford autarky in the modern world but neither should we permit adventurers who have made self proclamations that they have a destiny to lead or that they know what forms of democracy and economic systems are good for us.

**"Movements (that) come from below, from the Belly of Society" Versus organized Political and Armed Struggle**

In the section in his original piece where he deals with "Popular Movements and the State: the future of Democracy in Africa" Anyang' attempts very bravely to come to terms with four main forces in the battle for democracy in Africa: the incumbent state armies that are "armed to the teeth"; counter-revolutionary armed struggle; revolutionary armed political movements; and the "popular movements or alliances for democracy" comprising "student movements, trade unions, churches, burial societies, etc". that "come from below, from the belly of society as it were"<sup>14</sup>.

Anyang' identifies the four forces and makes the argument that it is becoming popular for the left in Africa to take up arms in fighting the neo-colonial states, sometimes without much preparation or genuine popular demo-

---

13 Zimbabwe's *Labour Relations Act of 1986* is a classic example of such legislations made for big monopoly capital, although naturally mixed with some provisions which can be used by the workers to promote progressive forms of organization and mobilization.

14 Anyang's Original, *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

cratic programmes, and that this leads to a lot of bloodshed since the state armies are "armed to the teeth". Further, he warns that the left should avoid such adventure because even Ronald Reagan sponsors armed groups to protect the bourgeoisie. Lastly, he argues that the student movements, trade unions, churches and burial societies are the truly popular movements that hold the key to the future of democratic changes in Africa. A casual reading of Anyang's characterization of the forces struggling for control of the political leadership in post-independence, neo-colonial Africa may lead one to conclude that the picture he draws is fairly accurate and theoretically sound. Indeed, his cautionary remarks to those who may hurriedly rush into adopting armed struggle as an ideal end in itself is to be well taken. Beyond that however, it must be pointed out that he may spread unnecessary fear and despondency among the people and potential revolutionary fighters by depicting the enemy of the people as invincible. The neo-colonial state that is apparently "armed to the teeth" is in fact a very weak state with a very weak army. A state that is alienated from the people because of its undemocratic practices and its demonstrated irresponsibility in the supervision of the organization of economic production, distribution and consumption is not a strong state with a strong army. Such a state with all its armed forces, including the police and intelligence services, is in fact very weak when confronted by a popular well organized political and military offensive based among the people. When faced with real fire, few of its soldiers are willing to die in defense of their own exploitation and oppression as well as that of their parents, relations and friends. Uganda has provided two examples: the fall of Amin and the prolonged fall of Obote II and Okello's make-shift outfit. But even assuming that they are capable of fighting, what are the lessons we learn from North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua and the like? No popular state, however armed, is capable of defeating a combined guerilla and people's war.

Yes there is bound to be some bloodshed, although this can be minimized depending on the ideological development, strength and discipline of the revolutionary forces. If the workers, peasants, and some intellectuals and sections of the petty-bourgeoisie did not sacrifice their blood for freedom in the early 1950s Kenya's independence could most likely have been delayed. Indeed when you reach a point of struggle where you take up arms you are quite aware and prepared that you are just as likely to die as the enemy is. This reality provides a natural check against romantic adventures. But more importantly, it is necessary to underline the theoretical foundation for political and military struggle for liberation. In 1917, on the eve of the socialist revolution in what is today the Soviet Union, the leader of that historical revolution V. Lenin, wrote in "The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution" that:

*Socialists cannot, without ceasing to be socialists, be opposed to all war. Firstly, socialists have never been, nor can they ever be, opposed*

*to revolutionary wars... Secondly, civil war is just as much a war as any other. He who accepts the class struggle cannot fail to accept civil wars, which in every class society are natural, and under certain conditions inevitable, continuation, development and intensification of the class struggle...*

*An oppressed class which does not strive to learn to use arms, to acquire arms, only deserves to be treated like slaves... A bourgeoisie armed against the proletariat is one of the biggest, fundamental and cardinal facts of modern capitalist society.*

In the oppressed and super-exploited societies of the peripheries of modern international capitalism i.e. most African countries, the above observations remain as true as ever. In assessing the conditions that produce revolutionaries and revolutionary mood among the masses "from the belly of society", to use Anyang's formulation, it is important to avoid being legalistic. Oppression and suppression of the working people is to be viewed not only by looking at the suffering meted out by the state on behalf of the ruling classes under the guise of maintaining "law and order" - breaking strikes and peaceful associations, detaining and incarcerating those who demand democracy and respect for human rights etc. - but also by the hundreds of deaths caused daily by the structural violence of the neo-colonial, dependent and subordinated capitalist system. This latter aspect is sometimes forgotten by the intellectual petty-bourgeoisie because in their stratum and among the bourgeois class no one dies of lack of proper medical care, lack of adequate or nutritionally balanced food, suffers from ignorance, confronts high infant mortality rates, lacks housing, has no means of transport. etc. The real question is whether the objective conditions and subjective factors, both internal and external, are such that the launching of a revolutionary political and military struggle is appropriate at the given time and place. The overall need for preparing for both political and military struggles is not questionable.

To use a practical example to illustrate; the Programme of one of the Kenya underground democratic anti-imperialist movements, the Kenya Anti-Imperialist Front, which I belong to, states very clearly that "Armed struggle will be imperative in the event of the neo-fascist rulers refusing to dismantle the current undemocratic social system, laws and practices which restrict the right of the people of Kenya to participate fully in politics and other areas of our socio-economic life"<sup>15</sup>. This makes armed struggle, revolutionary violence, conditional and not as an absolute goal in itself.

If indeed it is accepted, as Anyang' does, that political power, state control is central to any form of organization and reorganization of society, then those who declare that they wish real changes to take place must be willing

---

15 Kenya Anti-Imperialist Front Programme (1986).

to adopt all necessary means and methods of struggle to ensure that the popular masses and their movements do actually seize or assume control of state power. To wish, as Anyang' does, that "the state as it is constituted will either try to avoid or somehow give way to "students organizations, trade unions, churches and burial societies"<sup>16</sup> is tantamount to dreaming. Will such state power be given to the popular mass organizations as rewards for their moral argumentation or the loudness of their prayers or the shrilling voices of their mourning for the dead?

Of course, there is no denying that these are the popular democratic voices and mass organizations which must form part and parcel of the new revolutionary alliance. But they need to be armed with revolutionary ideas so that the process of political organization can take place among them. Simply to hope that a coalition of these groups is capable of seizing political power and establishing genuine popular democracies is ridiculous and is not born out in any example of struggles against imperialism.

Anyang' points out an undeniable factor today: the managers of the imperialist world have learnt the art and science of guerilla armed struggle and that they use this to protect the interests of imperialism. Because of this, he warns, one should not necessarily consider any and all armed struggles as popular and democratic. This is true. But it needs to be pointed out that guerilla war is an art and scientific method of struggle used by the weak non-state groups against state armies.

Since it is a scientific method, any one can use it for good or for bad. Imperialism uses it against popular people's democracies while revolutionaries use it against repressive rule of the minority classes in order to establish popular people's democracies. In the law of revolutions there cannot be a real genuine social revolution, the toppling of one form of class rule and its replacement with another form of class rule antagonistic to the previous one without a serious counter-revolution being waged. To avoid going into too much detail, it suffices to point out that the concept and historical meaning of a people's revolution is *qualitatively* different from a counter-revolution waged to restore dethroned exploiters. The one is popular in that it expresses the people's will and lasts, although temporary reverses may occur, while the other, the reactionary counter-revolution, is only expressing the interests of a minority exploiting class and is therefore unpopular. The fact that the counter-revolutionary organizers may be able to use money to buy a few oppressed people to fight for them as the United States of America's leaders and leaders of the *apartheid* regime of South Africa have been able to do in Mozambique, Angola, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Cambodia, etc., and were able to do in Paris (1871), the Soviet Union (1917 to the early

---

16 Anyang''s Original, Ibid., p.81.

1920s), Korea (1950-53), Cuba (1960 up to now!), Vietnam (1954-1970s) etc. should not lead us to abandon the necessity of organizing armed struggle against fascist dictators who are enemies of democracy. In fact imperialism even resorts to more desperate and open wars against people's revolutions as the Korean, Vietnamese, Grenadan and Angolan examples demonstrate.

The lessons to be learnt from all this is that when making a genuine popular revolution, simultaneously prepare for fierce counter-revolutionary pressures. Revolutions must be defended with arms. If the bourgeoisie are busy hunting down those who merely hold revolutionary ideas, even if they don't translate these into action, what would restrain them from unleashing real terror when their power, their rights and privileges to exploit the people and to live as parasites on the sweat of the toiling masses is destroyed?

### Words of Conclusion

Peter Anyang' Nyong'o has done well to put his thoughts on paper and to try to defend them. This has provided us the opportunity to contribute to this urgent search for a better immediate and long term future for the African working people. Mkandawire did well to begin taking Anyang' up on some of these issues that are controversial and should not be treated as lightly as Anyang' attempted to do. Ultimately, I see real social revolutions, the movement from the present stagnant dictatorships to national democratic revolutions and then to real socialism, as the path Africa seems headed for. This is a historical phase in the progression of social struggles in the former colonies of the imperialist phase of capitalist development and is not merely unfortunate circumstances Africa has found itself in by accident. There is no running away from it. It is unavoidable. Journeying on this path is, however, not automatic nor is it easy. It demands resolute revolutionary commitment in *ideas* and *action*. The revolutionary African intellectual has a responsibility to join and struggle on the side of the oppressed masses. In other words, I do not see a way out of Africa's current political and overall development crisis in some ideally concocted adjustments to the existing order in order to satisfy some minimal goals of "growth" and "accumulation" by the capitalist class.