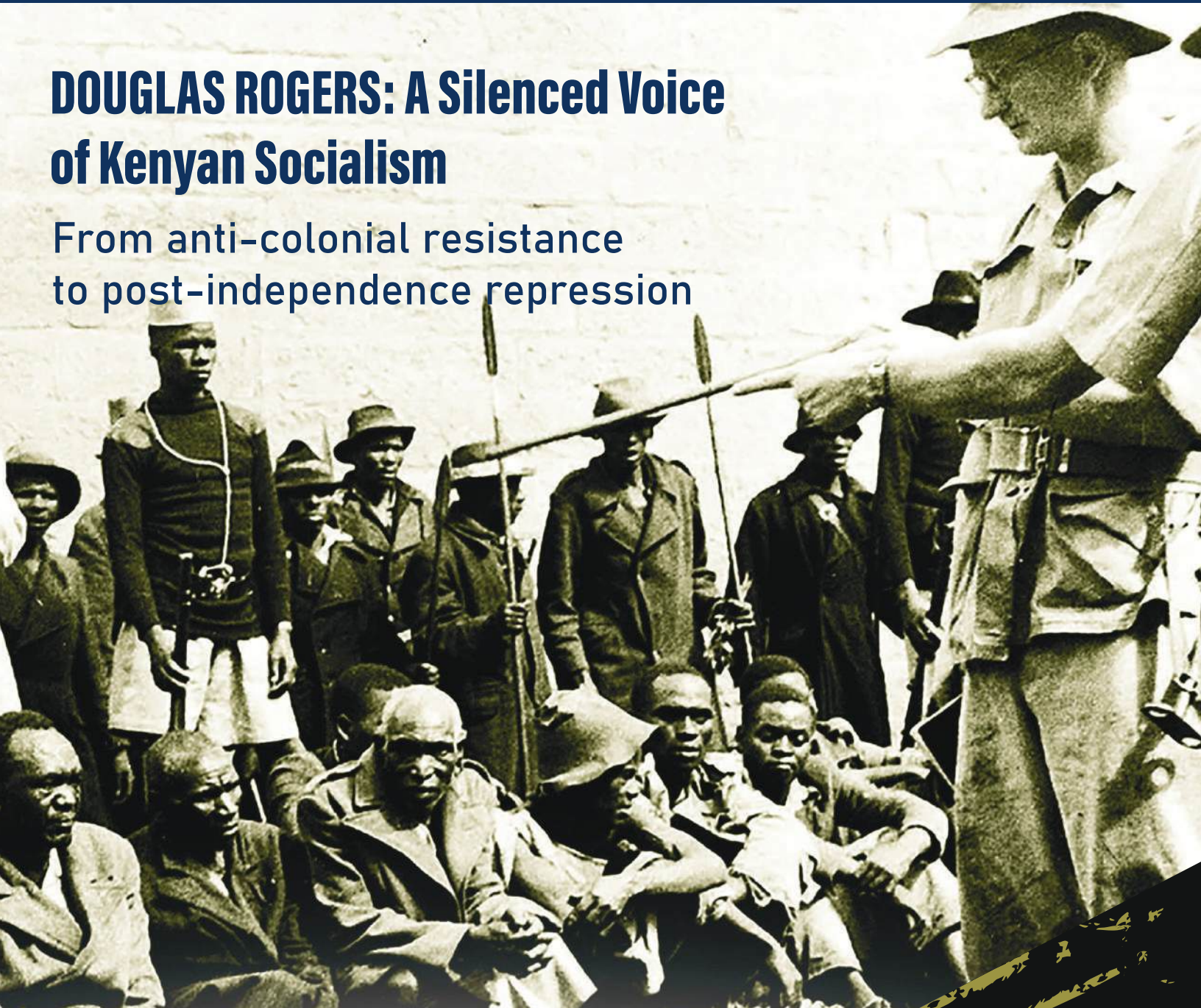


### DOUGLAS ROGERS: A Silenced Voice of Kenyan Socialism

From anti-colonial resistance  
to post-independence repression



- Capitalism and its Crisis
- Frantz Fanon and the African Revolution
- Reflections on the Eve of the Revolution, Reflections

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The Kenya Socialist aims to encourage free flow of information, knowledge and discussion which can lead to a better understanding of socialism. It will seek to:

- Promote socialist ideas, experiences and world outlook
- Increase awareness of classes, class contradictions and class struggles in Kenya, both historical and current
- Expose the damage done by capitalism and imperialism in Kenya and Africa
- Offer solidarity to working class, peasants and other working people and communities in their struggles for equality and justice
- Promote internationalism and work in solidarity with people in Africa and around the world in their resistance to imperialism
- Make explicit the politics of information and communication as tools of repression and also of resistance in Kenya

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# Editorial

The current issue of *The Kenya Socialist* is being published at a time when capitalist crises both locally and globally are intensifying. These crises are not accidental but are rooted in the structural contradictions of capitalism itself manifested through intensified exploitation, inequality and the subordination of social needs in the pursuit of profit. In Kenya, the government has failed dismally providing essential services to its citizens, instead prioritising imperialist interests through the privatisation of national institutions. This is evident in the ongoing privatisation of key public institutions like Kenya Petroleum Company (KPC), which facilitates the transfer of public wealth into private hands. As a result, critical sectors are in crisis and the majority of Kenyans are unable to meet their most basic needs.

For instance, the Social Health Authority (SHA), which was presented as a vehicle for accessible healthcare, has instead deepened hardship, pushing many families further into poverty. Similarly, in education, thousands of students remain at home due to lack of fees<sup>1</sup>, despite the government's 2024 commitment to ensure inclusive, accessible, and affordable education for all<sup>2</sup>. These failures have provided fodder for the other function of ruling class (opposition) to posture as alternatives. However, this force merely represents the same capitalist framework and does not offer a fundamental break from the system that produces these crises. Their politics remain confined within bourgeois limits. Meanwhile, the Left in Kenya remains weak, as it is difficult to distinguish it from other liberal organisations. Revolutionary ideology and discipline are notably lacking within the left groups.

Globally, the situation is no different. The deepening crisis of capitalism has pushed imperialist powers, especially the United States into increasingly aggressive and lunatic behaviour, driven by the decline of its global dominance. Unlike the post-Second World War period,

the U.S. now faces serious challenges from emerging powers such as China. In response, it continues to rely on coercion, invasion, and economic pressure. These are not signs of strength, but of a system struggling to maintain its global supremacy in the face of shifting material conditions.

This situation has compelled the U.S. state to adopt increasingly reactionary and authoritarian tendencies at home, reflected in intensified attacks on immigrants and the expansion of repressive state apparatuses. At the same time, it continues to deploy its advanced military capabilities to enforce imperial domination abroad, intervening in sovereign countries with growing impunity. A clear example is the invasion of Venezuela, in which President Nicolás Maduro was captured and taken into U.S. prison. It has similarly invaded Iran, where, in alliance with Israel, it has bombed civilian infrastructure, including schools, universities, and research centres. This constitutes clear violations of international humanitarian law. Economically, measures such as the 2025 tariffs introduced under President Trump reflect attempts to manage crisis through protectionism, targeting countries like China, Brazil, and even Kenya. These measures were designed to force the relocation of production back to the United States and reassert control over global economic power. The fact that many of these tariffs remain contested or unstable further exposes the limits of capitalism. It demonstrates that, in its imperialist stage, capitalism cannot stabilise itself but instead reproduces crisis at a higher level, increasingly relying on coercion, protectionism, and geopolitical confrontation to sustain accumulation.

It is against this backdrop that the first article examines the roots of capitalist crisis and explores pathways toward its resolution. It traces capitalism's historical trajectory, from its imperialist imposition to its recurring crises characterised by overproduction, inequality, and

1. The Standard Team 'Grade 10 admission clouded by financial struggles,' The Standard [online] 20th January 2026. Available at <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/education/article/2001538909/financial-struggles-block-thousands-of-top-learners-from-grade-10-admission?started=true> (Accessed: 9th April 2026)
2. PBS 'Ruto: We will make education affordable to all,' KBC Digital [online] 20th January 2026. Available at <https://www.kbc.co.ke/ruto-we-will-make-education-affordable-to-all/> (Accessed: 9th April 2026)

instability. While reforms such as Keynesianism have offered temporary relief, they have failed to resolve the system's structural contradictions. Neoliberalism has further deepened class inequalities. The article argues for the necessity of organised political alternatives, emphasising the role of a disciplined vanguard party in leading the working class toward socialism, where production is democratically planned to meet human needs rather than profit.

The second article focuses on Douglas Rogers, whose contributions to Kenyan and African anti-colonial struggles remain largely unknown. Through the account by his son, Nick Rogers, we see Rogers' role as a socialist journalist and advocate of Pan-African unity. His work supported Kenya's independence while promoting socialism as the path to genuine liberation. In post-independence Kenya, however, radical voices were suppressed, socialist leaders sidelined, and neo-colonial structures entrenched. Despite repression and marginalisation, Rogers remained steadfast in exposing injustice and advocating democratic socialism and African unity.

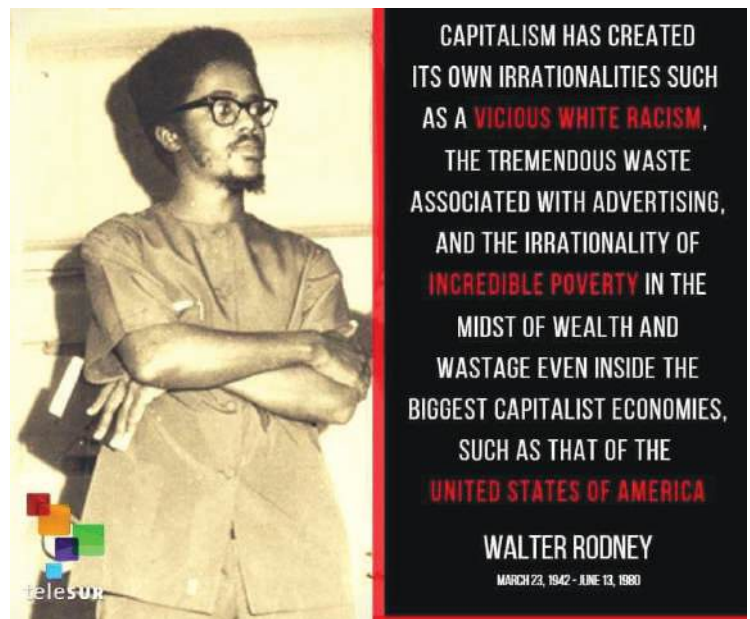
Nicholas Mwangi revisits Frantz Fanon as a crucial guide to understanding Africa's unfinished liberation. He demonstrates how post-independence ruling classes reproduced neo-colonial domination, undermining genuine sovereignty. While recent developments in the Sahel signal renewed resistance, they also raise important questions about leadership, mass participation, and revolutionary direction. Mwangi calls for the revival of Pan-Africanism as a militant, mass-based project capable of confronting imperialism and advancing a socialist future.

In the fourth article, Sobukwe Shukura reflects on major revolutionary moments in global history, from Haiti's 1804 liberation, the first successful Pan-African

revolution, to Cuba's 1959 socialist victory. He connects these struggles to Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution under Chávez and Maduro, highlighting its resilience despite U.S.-led coups, sanctions, and embargoes. He calls for renewed international solidarity with Palestine, the Sahel Alliance, and other anti-imperialist struggles, emphasising the need to defend sovereignty and advance peoples power globally.

Finally, Ukombozi Library's educational work is highlighted through its free online course launched in late 2025: Introduction to Marxist Economics, with a focus on Kenya. This course is part of a broader programme planned for 2026, aimed at both beginners and those familiar with political economy. Nicholas Mwangi outlines how the course combined theoretical learning with interactive discussions, equipping participants with tools to analyse capitalism, colonial legacies, and contemporary struggles for liberation.

### Kimani Waweru



# Capitalism and its Economic Crisis: What is the Alternative?

By Kimani Waweru

Kenya has practised capitalism from the time the European imperialists ventured into this territory. The foreigners were warmly welcomed as it is the culture of Africans. All the same, the said foreigners disrespected this welcome and conquered territory -- although with stiff resistance from the indigenous people. One thing that needs to be noted is that before the encounter with the foreigners, all nationalities in Africa lived freely with a great abundance of resources at their disposal. Hardly could one hear cases of hunger, and the established rules and cultural norms were all respected and rarely not adhered to.

Internationally, improvement of productive forces and the evolution of the modes of production facilitated the emergence of imperialism (the highest stage of capitalism). As imperialism entails conquering the weaker states and stealing their resources to maximise profit, countries in Europe embarked on this mission through which they used violence and religious indoctrination to subdue the people and acquire their territories in Africa, Latin America and Asia. In the case of Africa, a conference was held between 1884-1885 to strategise on how the imperialists could divide the continent among themselves. That is how Kenya became a British protectorate.

Their greed could not allow them to share the loot in peace and in 1914, the First World War started, which involved the various imperialist forces such as Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, USA etc. who were competing to capture new markets, new areas for financial capital and raw materials for their industry from the various colonies. Workers and peasants of the affected countries were brainwashed into supporting phony nationalism. Many of them were recruited and joined armies where they fought for their respective imperialist countries. The war catalysed a capitalist crisis and gave impetus to Russian workers to revolt against their oppressive government, which had sided with imperialists to rob them of their wealth and exploit them. Under the leadership of Lenin, workers overthrew the government and installed a new one that unchained the fetters of oppression and exploitation. The new government ended the first "world" war. During the First World War, Lenin and his Bolshevik party campaigned against it and were preaching internationalism among all workers and peasants in the world whom they aspired to mobilise against imperialism. After a concrete analysis based on objective conditions, the Bolsheviks negotiated with Germany and a

compromise was reached in which Russia gave out part of its territory.

The Russian revolution changed the international political and economic arena as the country rose from the status of being underdeveloped to developed, surpassing some of the imperialist countries in terms of industrial production. On the other hand, the capitalist countries continued to face one crisis after another though they used a pragmatist style to postpone the crisis. In the early 1930s, a major crisis, the Great Depression, swept through the capitalist countries but did not touch Russia. This crisis took the intervention of a bourgeois economist by the name John Maynard Keynes to mitigate. Keynes borrowed ideas from socialism and mixed them with capitalism to resuscitate the fallen economies of the capitalist countries, and in this way succeeded in stimulating demand in the economy by distributing income to the lower classes (poor). His ideas entailed giving government power to control the economy through nationalisation of some basic industries and imposing higher taxes for higher social spending. These ideas, which were named after him, and are referred to as Keynesian economics, diminished the effects of the crisis but failed to end the string of capitalist crises. This is because crisis in capitalist states, as argued by Karl Marx, is not a result of the scarcity of goods but due to overproduction. This overproduction is not needed by people but is a surplus of what can be sold at a profit.<sup>1</sup> No wonder food is destroyed while people starve because they have no money to buy it; similarly, the majority of people are homeless while many houses remain unoccupied. Though the intervention of Keynes temporarily stabilised capitalism, a group of bourgeois economists associated with the Chicago School of Economics, led by Milton Friedman and George Stigler, advanced a contrary position. They argued that capitalism could prosper by adhering to the principles of a free market, monetarism, deregulation and privatisation. Their ideas however became popular in 1970s, as we shall see later.

In USA, President Franklin D Roosevelt (1933-1938) coined a New Deal, which was about economic, social and political reforms geared to overcome the crisis. The New Deal stabilised the economy but, according to Richard Wolff, a Marxian economist, it was not simply a generous reform created by a visionary president but the result of mass pressure from below, a crisis of capitalism, and a political bargain between workers and business elites.<sup>2</sup> In short, the

New Deal was meant to save capitalism from collapsing and preventing a socialist revolution, which at the time seemed like a real possibility especially given the rise of labour militancy and the global influence of the Soviet Union.

After the Second World War period, according to Richard Wolff, the US economy emerged intact and in a better state than when it entered while the industrial capacities of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia were largely destroyed. This allowed the US to dominate the global market without significant rivals. Since the USA was not affected by the war in terms of destruction, it initiated a Marshall Plan aimed at reviving industries, building infrastructure, while stopping the spread of socialism. A total of about \$13 billion were given to 16 countries in West Europe.

In the UK, reforms were also initiated to preserve capitalism though they were resisted by Conservatives. For example, in 1943 the Conservative MP Quintin Hogg warned his fellow MPs who were seeking to block meaningful discussion about the formation of a post-war welfare state, that if they were not to give the people social reform, they would bring social revolution.<sup>3</sup> The reforms witnessed the building of thousands of council houses (affordable houses for low-income earners) and the establishment of comprehensive education (free) for the first time, thus giving low income or poor children the opportunity at higher education. In regard to health, the National Health Service (NHS) was created in 1948 to provide free universal health to all citizens.

The post-war economic boom or the Golden Age of Capitalism came to an end in the early 1970s. This decline stemmed from capitalism's internal contradictions, which were intensified by several external shocks. These included the 1973 oil embargo imposed by OPEC on countries supporting Israel during the Yom Kippur War, an event that caused oil prices to quadruple<sup>4</sup> and the collapse of the US dollar's convertibility into gold. These developments contributed to a broader economic crisis across Europe.

According to David Harvey, a key factor behind the crisis was the rising power of labour relative to capital, with strong trade unions exerting significant bargaining influence. The

results were declining profit rates for capitalists, rising unemployment, higher inflation, and a decline in living standards. In response, capitalist governments increasingly turned to ideas associated with the Chicago School of Economics, implementing restructuring measures aimed ultimately at restoring the class power of capital.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were elected as prime minister and president of Britain and the USA (two of the most powerful imperialist countries), respectively. They embarked on implementing neo-liberal policies such as privatising public institutions and services, weakening labour laws and collective bargaining, thus widening the gap between the rich and the poor. By 1985, the excessive amount of labour, in contrast to capital, had been resolved only to be replaced by another problem of excessive power of finance capital due to a stagnation of wages since the 1970s. The stagnation of wages helped the capitalists to increase their surplus.

Since wages are used to buy consumer goods, the demand for goods went down during this period. This then made the capitalists introduce debit and credit cards meant to help workers buy things, sometimes even basic necessities on credit. Since capitalism entails getting profit, the imperialists exported part of the excessive financial capital to states where labour power was being paid less, e.g. Asia, Africa and Latin America in order to get more return on their investments by paying lower wages. The capital also came as loans to some of the production industries in global South countries. Since capitalists were desperately trying to get rid of their surplus capital, their interest rates were very low as compared to interests charged by financial institutions in Asian countries. This resulted in overinvestment and overproduction, particularly of electrical goods and motor industries, triggering a crisis in Asia in 1997/8. Countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines tried to mitigate the situation by devaluing their local currencies but this only worsened the crisis. Fearing that their financial institutions were poised to lose their capital, the Western imperialists forced the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to rescue the so-called Asian countries by giving them loans that cumulatively came to more than \$100 billion. The loans were tagged with some

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1. (Anonymous) 'Karl Marx and the World Crisis', Socialist Voice No. 19 () [online] Summer 1983. Available at <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/socialistvoice/marx19.html> (Accessed: 9th April 2026)

2. Democracy At Work (2020) Great Depression & The New Deal [YouTube]. 11 June. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfUj5x\\_PwKA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfUj5x_PwKA) (Accessed: 9th April 2026)

3. Robin Clapp 'Introducing Marxism: The causes of the post-war boom', Socialism Today [online] 2nd April 2024. Available at <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/socialistvoice/marx19.html> (Accessed: 9th April 2026)

hazardous conditions (Structural Adjustment Programmes -- SAPs) such as divestiture from social welfare spending so that they could pay their foreign debt, which included the loans from the IMF rescue package.<sup>5</sup>

It should be understood that one of the factors that had contributed to the rapid growth of Asian countries' GDP was their practice of state capitalism; they protected their companies from foreign competition and this is one of the things the IMF wanted to stop. In summary, the IMF conditions did not help the people since about 10 million people lost their jobs, while about 50 million people in Asia alone fell below the poverty line.

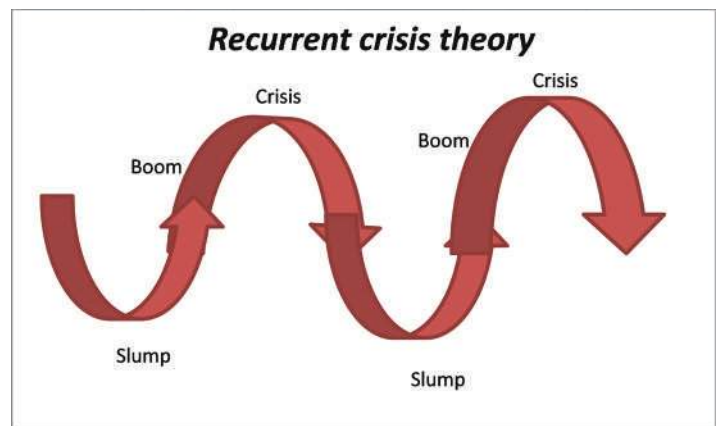
Since international capitalism is intertwined with banks, the Asian crisis affected other imperialist countries, particularly the USA, which had used surplus value from Asia to reinvest in its own country and particularly in mortgages and low interest loans. The decade of the 2000s witnessed speculation, where bonds and shares of various companies were hyped to attract potential buyers. The competition among various financial institutions, especially those specialising in mortgages, introduced subprime mortgages, where they gave loans to borrowers who would not qualify for a prime mortgage because of their poor incomes, or who had a bad credit history.

The majority of blacks and Latinos, who are victims of USA imperialism, ran to the mortgages. Since capitalism aims to attain maximum profit through speculation, the economic bubble burst, resulting in one of the greatest capitalist crises since 1930. Many big companies specialising in banking and mortgages, which few believed would one day go bankrupt, went down one after the other. The first to go down were Lehman Brothers, Citigroup Inc multinational banks, mortgage lending companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and American International Group (AIG) Insurance Company, which had secured loans for other banks and mortgage companies through a policy called Credit Default Swaps (CDS). AIG was to pay the banks in case the banks defaulted, but it failed to achieve this since it had no solid capital after it underwrote huge amounts of CDS on mortgage-backed securities. It took the intervention of the federal government to come up with a formula for rescuing the companies. Then, the government used US

taxpayers' money, most of whom the same companies had exploited.

The scenario was taunted as socialism for the rich as billions of dollars were used in this exercise. For example, \$85 billion was used to bail out AIG.<sup>6</sup> It's ironic that millions of USA citizens experience hardship in getting medical care due to a lack of insurance cover and yet the federal government assists the owners of capital who are the source of their miseries. The state sugarcoats the argument that failing to bail these multinationals out will result in an increase in unemployment, which would worsen the economic situation. This hoodwinks the poor and makes them ignorant as to their real predicament and conditions them to be passive about challenging the unfair system.

The above analysis clearly shows that economic crisis in capitalist states is endemic to the system and there is no way it can be solved without getting rid of it entirely. Through his writings, Marx has scientifically argued that capitalism cannot develop or expand without interruption as it is involved in cycles of booms and bursts. During the boom, many commodities are produced and in the beginning, huge profit is made. Nevertheless, as time goes by, the demand for commodities goes down thus reducing profit, which is the engine of the whole process, and therefore triggering a crisis. Therefore, one would ask: how can this recurring crisis, which results in massive unemployment and a compromising of social welfare, be put to an end? The



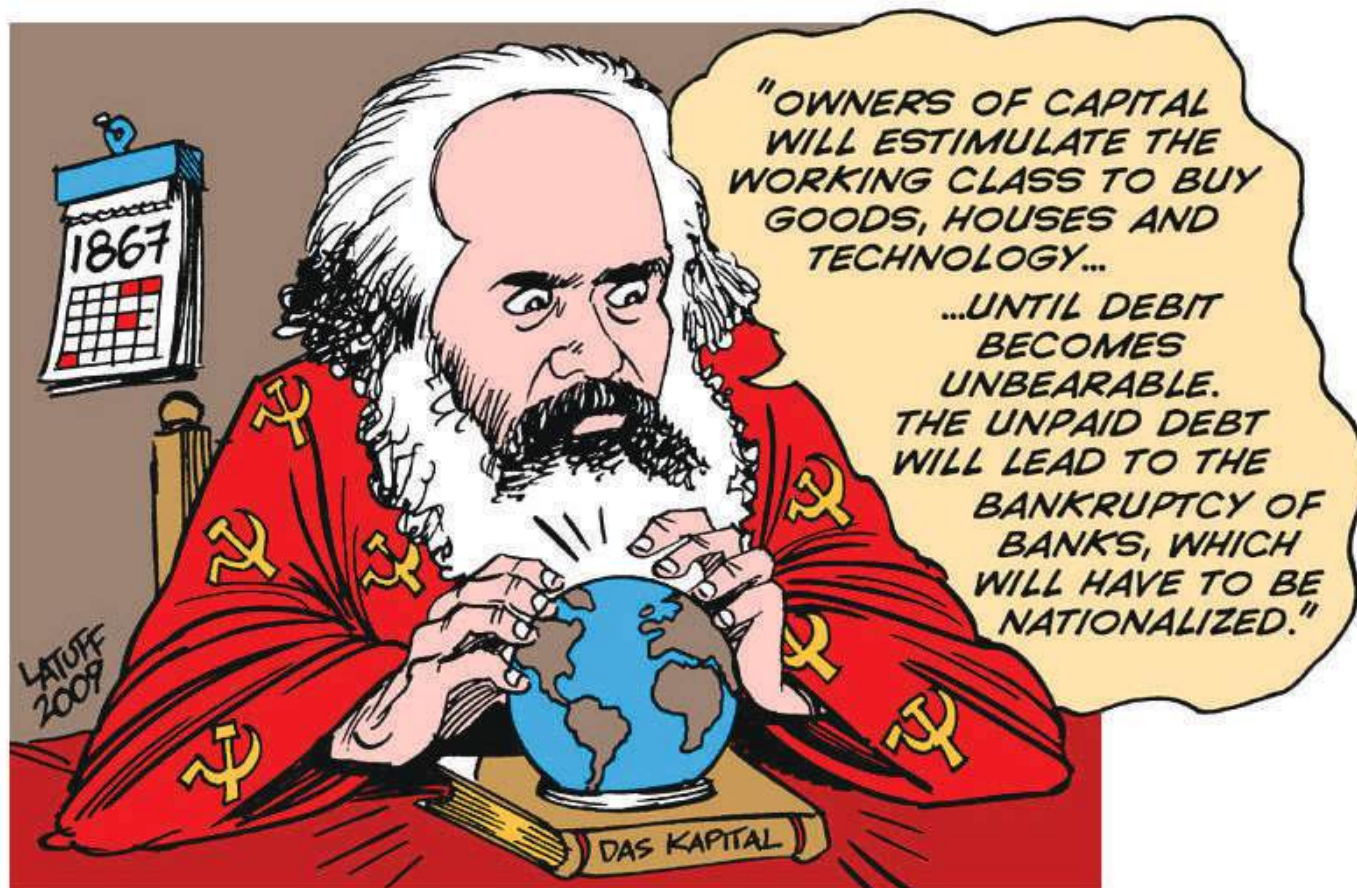
4. (Anonymous) 'The October 1973 War: How it led to the first Arab recognition of Israel', Aljazeera [online] 6th October 2023. Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/6/the-october-1973-war-how-it-led-to-the-first-arab-recognition-of-israel> (Accessed: 9th April 2026)
5. (Anonymous) '20 years since the Asian financial crisis', Aljazeera [online] 1st July 2017. Available at <https://chinaworker.info/en/2017/07/01/15138/> (Accessed: 9th April 2026)

answer lies in forming a vanguard party, which will uproot the capitalist system that creates these regular crises.

The importance of a vanguard party which can unite all the forces against capitalism is very important in the present time when people are ruled by state-backed corporations. The party, if led by ideologically sound cadres, can show the path to the elimination of exploitation of a human by a human; a dog-eat-dog society, which is the predominant model in Kenya and other capitalists states. The party will show the alternative to production where planning is prioritised in order to avoid unnecessary wastage, and the needs of the people are met. The propaganda channeled by the bourgeois and their media, that there is no alternative to the current market system, will be easily countered by such a party. The vanguard party will be guided by a high level of discipline and commitment among its members and the principle of democratic centralism will be practised. The party would have a single central leadership, lower cadres to be subordinate to higher cadres, minorities subordinate to majority and individual interests should be subordinated to those of the party. This would occur at the same time as

ensuring that the democratic involvement of all members is maintained.

The ultimate goal of such party will be to overthrow the capitalist state and usher in a national democratic state, which will make sure that the sweat of workers is properly rewarded. The state will then transit to socialism where people will be rewarded according to the work they do under a principal of "from each according to his ability, to each according to their work". All the parasites that feed on other people's sweat by exploiting them will be crushed. A culture of solidarity among all the people of different races, sexes, and religions will be fostered. Economic structures, social relations and ideas that perpetuate social and class division will be consciously transformed. The masses will be empowered and will dictate how things will be run to serve humanity. Another type of democracy (working class), which entails serving the majority, particularly those who were formerly oppressed under capitalism, will rule the state and the means of production will be under the control of the people.



*Owners of capital will stimulate the working class to buy more and more of expensive goods, houses and technology, pushing them to take more and more expensive credits, until their debt becomes unbearable. The unpaid debt will lead to bankruptcy of banks, which will have to be nationalised, and the State will have to take the road which will eventually lead to communism.*

# Douglas Rogers and Kenyan Politics

By Nick Rogers



*Douglas Rogers (fourth from left) and Field Marshal Mwariama (fifth from left) pictured outside the Pan African House offices*

In 1977 when my father, Douglas Rogers, wanted to illustrate how neo-colonialism asserted control over Africa, he turned to the example of Kenya. In a first article, he discussed how the Kenyan economy was controlled by foreign companies in much the same way as had been the case under colonialism.<sup>1</sup>

In a second article, he laid out the political events that blocked any radical change from happening after the Kenyan people achieved independence in 1963 after a brutally tough political struggle.<sup>2</sup> Those events included the capture of the more radical independence party, the Kenya National African Union, by the very politicians who in the pre-independence election had stood against KANU and been backed by the colonial and white settler forces. The left wing of KANU had been isolated and forced out of the party. A few years later, the new socialist party had been banned and its leaders detained.

Two years before writing these articles, the popular socialist politician, Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, who my father counted as a friend, had been tortured and killed in a murder for which no one has ever been prosecuted – one in a string of extrajudicial killings that punctuate Kenya's political history.

The articles were part of a series entitled "Socialism Simplified", written by my father for a Ghanaian socialist newsletter published from London. The journal was called *The Dawn* and was published by the CPP Overseas Branch – the CPP being the Convention People's Party, founded by Kwame Nkrumah in 1949. From 1976 until his death

in 2002, my father was *de facto* editor of *The Dawn* and the author of most of the content. His contribution was an entirely anonymous and unpaid one – all members of the CPP Overseas Branch served on a voluntary basis.

My father was involved in one way or another with Ghanaian politics from 1956 when he was persuaded by George Padmore to travel to the British colony of the Gold Coast to serve as editorial adviser to the newly established Guinea Press. There my father had worked with Nkrumah and others in the Convention People's Party as the CPP fought that year's election campaign and resisted attempts by the opposition to frustrate the transition from self-government to full independence. On March 6, 1957, the Gold Coast became an independent country under the leadership of Nkrumah and, to signify that it was no longer simply a source of raw materials for richer and more powerful countries, renamed itself Ghana.

It is as a collaborator with Nkrumah that, in the historical record (if only in its footnotes), my father is best known. However, he also had a close involvement in the politics of Kenya, and Shiraz Durrani and Kimani Waweru have invited me to write about that aspect of his life for *The Kenya Socialist*.

I have been reading through my father's papers. They contain almost all his political journalism, including runs of the newspapers and magazines he edited, extensive correspondence, and a wealth of documents of all sorts. The papers provide the basis for this article,<sup>3</sup> in which I will focus on the newspaper my father founded and edited in Nairobi for a year from 1963 to 1964, and another journal he edited from London from 1964 to 1971. This was the pivotal period in Kenya's history when the orientation of the independent nation's political economy was set.

## British anti-colonialism

Douglas Rogers, who was born in 1919 and died in 2002, made his first connection with Kenya as part of the anti-colonial movement in Britain. Rogers was a journalist, joining his local newspaper in Romford to the east of London as a trainee when he was approximately 17 years old. He became assistant editor at the *New Leader* in late 1944. The *New Leader* was the weekly newspaper of the Independent Labour Party and the editor Rogers assisted was Fenner Brockway, already a famous opponent of British

colonialism and all imperialisms. Brockway was political secretary of the ILP as well as editor of its newspaper. When Brockway resigned as editor in 1946, Rogers replaced him in that role and renamed the journal the *Socialist Leader*.

The *New Leader* and then the *Socialist Leader* published articles by many of the principal leaders of the independence struggle in Africa. The Trinidadian anti-imperialist, George Padmore, was a frequent contributor and he was a member of the editorial committee of the ILP's theoretical journal, *Left*, on which Rogers also served.

Rogers credited Fenner Brockway and George Padmore with setting the course of his life. Rogers was involved with all the various iterations of the post-war British anti-colonial movement. Successively, secretary of the British Centre Against Imperialism (1947 to 1948); press officer and then secretary (1952 to 1954) of the British Office of the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism (that was headquartered in Paris); and a founder and the first general secretary of the Movement for Colonial Freedom (from 1954). When he returned to London in 1958, after two years in Accra, Rogers edited the MCF's monthly journal. Fenner Brockway chaired all these organisations, and George Padmore was closely involved.

A major focus of the British anti-colonial movements' campaigning was Kenya's struggle against white settler colonialism. Rogers met Mbiyu Koinange and Achieng' Oneko when they travelled to London in 1952 with the Kenya land petition that advocated an end to the racist distribution of land and economic resources in Kenya. After the declaration of the State of Emergency in Kenya in October 1952, Koinange stayed in Britain and was an important speaker and campaigner for first COPAI and then the MCF. Oneko returned to be imprisoned until 1961 by the British colonial authorities -- tried at Kapenguria, he was acquitted on appeal but remained in detention anyway.

In 1953, the secretary of the now-banned Kenya African Union, Joseph Murumbi, arrived in London having escaped incarceration in Kenya by the skin of his teeth.

It is an odd quirk of British colonialism (that did not apply in a more repressive France) that activists who could be thrown into prison by order of the governor in the British colony where they were born could escape that fate simply by turning up in the heart of the colonial power. The same principle applied to books and newspapers. Many of the publications of COPAI and the MCF (and George Padmore's books), distributed in Britain without restriction, were banned in Britain's colonies and anyone in possession of them subject to prosecution and potentially imprisonment.

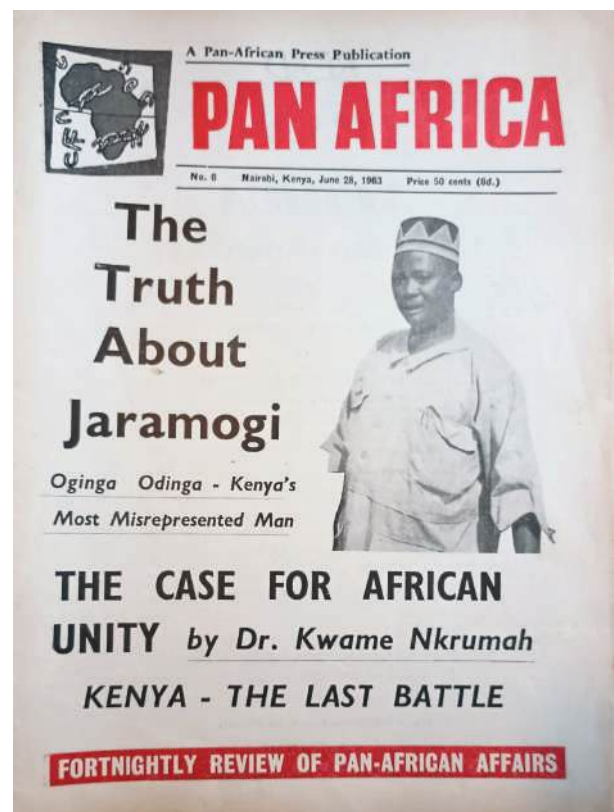
George Padmore quite correctly characterised the political arrangements in many of the colonies, regardless of the nature of the domestic politics of the colonial power (and in Britain, regardless of whether the Conservatives or Labour Party were in office), as "colonial fascism".

Rogers worked closely with both Koinange and Murumbi. Murumbi was appointed assistant general secretary of the MCF. To help the organisation stay financially afloat, Murumbi and Rogers agreed to share a single salary. They met all the leaders of the independence struggles who travelled to London. The MCF helped to organise their visits, providing a political platform, as well as leading the campaign to convince British public opinion (and especially the members of the Labour Party and the trade unions) to oppose colonialism.

It was at this time that Rogers met a young Tom Mboya when the latter came to Britain to attend a course at Ruskin College, Oxford.

### *Pan Africa*

In August 1962, Douglas Rogers travelled with his family, including an almost two-year-old me, to Nairobi at his own expense to offer his services to the Kenya African



*Front Page of Pan Africa, 28 June 1963*

National Union (KANU) -- the party Rogers considered to be leading the struggle for independence. Contrary to what some people have conjectured,<sup>4</sup> Rogers travelled without Nkrumah's blessing or even knowledge.<sup>5</sup> He was in no sense "an agent of Nkrumah".

Rogers was taken on at Pan-African Press, whose management board was composed of leading KANU luminaries. It was the only African publishing venture in a national newspaper environment that was dominated by the foreign-owned *Nation* and *East African Standard* groups. It was already publishing a Swahili-language newspaper, *Sauti ya Mwafrika*, and the *Nyanza Times* was to join its stable. Rogers planned, designed and managed the launch in April 1963 of an English-language fortnightly, *Pan Africa*. He was the editor for most of the following year.

In Kenya (as earlier in Ghana), Rogers identified himself wholly with the African struggle. He did not lead the life of a British expatriate. He and his family lived in a mixed Asian and African neighbourhood of Nairobi where there were no other Europeans. All his work colleagues and most of his friends were Africans and Asians.

During a rally in Nairobi addressed by Kenyatta, it was announced that KANU was to open membership to all races. Rogers was brought up onto the platform and welcomed as the first European member of KANU. My mother was the first European woman member.

Rogers lived on a modest salary. When *Pan Africa* engaged in a critique of the different racially based salary scales that operated for journalists on *The Nation* newspaper, that newspaper's editor assumed that Rogers must also be on a "European" salary. *Pan Africa* was able to reply: "The editor of *Pan Africa* (the only European employed by Pan-Africa Press Limited) was recruited locally, on local terms and on the same salary scale as other employees doing comparable work. Such things are possible, you know!"<sup>6</sup>

Looking through the 24 issues that Rogers edited, I am struck by how lively *Pan Africa* was. Its articles are written in an accessible, clear, jargon-free style. They range over many aspects of life and politics in Kenya and more broadly in Africa. Issue by issue, the newspaper seeks to explore new questions of vital importance to Kenyans. Rogers was obviously trying different ways to engage existing readers and attract new ones. There were even competitions -- for a free secretarial course at a local college, and to find an African name for the most popular local dance music that was called "twist".

The main concern of the first few issues was the forthcoming elections -- for regional assemblies, the House of Representatives, and the Senate -- that were spread over more than a week in May. The outcome would determine who led Kenya to independence. The colonial authorities and the white minority favoured the politicians assembled in the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). Constituencies had been created that gave areas expected to back KADU a substantial advantage over the more populous parts of the country that tended to back KANU. To form a government, KANU would have to win a much larger slice of the popular vote than KADU.

Even before the launch of *Pan Africa*, Rogers was worried that Pan-African Press would not be able to play a full part in the KANU campaign: "I found that at the Press we were unable to meet the requirements of the campaign because of a shortage of type whereas the opposition to KANU had plenty of funds and resources from colonialist sources which we were physically unable to match.

"I had worked in Ghana and knew that at their Guinea Press they had a Monotype Super-Caster which could quickly provide what we needed. I made the suggestion to our general manager, Joseph Murumbi, who immediately contacted Jomo Kenyatta. Kenyatta wrote to Nkrumah, and I wrote specifying exactly what we needed and how it could be provided.

"Nkrumah's response was typical. He told Guinea Press to cast the types I had requested and shipped them in cases by the next plane.

"Those types allowed us, by working 24 hours a day, to mount a tremendous campaign which helped substantially in winning the election and bringing about independence under the KANU banner."<sup>7</sup>

The next challenge facing KANU was to fashion a path to independence that avoided opposition threats to tear the country apart -- the struggle between KADU's regional *majimboism* and the creation of a Kenyan 'nation'. The constitution imposed by the British gave regional assemblies wide-ranging powers that potentially could frustrate a national government intent on carrying through radical changes.

Even worse, some of the KADU-controlled regions, which proceeded to elect their very own 'presidents', began to talk in terms of creating autonomous regional states and even succession. An editorial in *Pan Africa* characterised Ronald

Ngala, president of both KADU and the Coast Region as ‘the Tshombe of Kenya’ (“Kenya – The Last Battle”, *Pan Africa*, 28 June 1963).

The Congo was not the only relevant parallel. The opposition to Nkrumah had played exactly the same card in Ghana prior to independence, threatening the succession of the Ashanti region. Rogers had witnessed the violent consequences on a trip to Kumasi, the Ashanti capital, during the 1956 election campaign when several supporters of the CPP had been killed.

Rogers, in *Pan Africa*, repeatedly called the Kenyan succession threats ‘subversion’. For instance, when Daniel arap Moi, president of the Rift Valley regional assembly, declared at a rally in Nakuru, “We want complete autonomy for the Rift Valley Region,” an editorial in *Pan Africa* was headlined, “Invitation to Civil War – while the Prime Minister rallies the nation, the KADU leaders preach sedition” (*Pan Africa*, 26 July 1963).

Ultimately, it was the process that brought successive tranches of opposition party leaders (from Paul Ngei’s African People’s Party, to whom *Pan Africa* made a direct appeal, as well as KADU) into KANU that averted the threat to Kenya’s unity. It was a process that changed the political balance of forces within KANU and arguably changed its character. That, however, would only become clear after independence.

## Socialism

In the meantime, *Pan Africa*’s editorial line made the assumption that a KANU government was committed to a thorough-going “social revolution” that would rid Kenya of all vestiges of colonialism and set the country on a path to socialism.

*Pan Africa*, under the editorship of Rogers, carried a large number of articles discussing socialism and how it could be achieved in the circumstances of Kenya and Africa. There was a seven-part series by Wanguhu Ng’ang’a (*Pan Africa*, 12 July 1963 to 18 October 1963). Burudi Nabwera, later to become a stalwart of President Moi’s regime, wrote several hard-hitting articles advocating socialism.

Rogers emphasised in editorials and other articles that socialism meant the social ownership under democratic ownership and control of all the productive forces – even if the road to such a society in countries like Kenya, lacking much in the way of productive forces,

was not straightforward.

The newspaper published articles by planning experts working in other African countries that addressed some of these questions, e.g., the Polish economist, Jan Drewnowski, who was serving as professor of economics at the University of Ghana, and G Karmloff, Economic Adviser to the Ministry of Development Planning, Tanganyika.

Rogers met Oginga Odinga, second-in-command in Kanu, for the first time in Kenya. He was deeply impressed, defending Odinga in *Pan Africa* as the “man the colonialist fear” (*Pan Africa*, 14 June 1963). Rogers visited Odinga in Nyanza, writing a report entitled, “The truth about Jaramogi” that discussed Odinga’s philosophy of socialism that leant into the cooperative aspects of traditional African society (*Pan Africa*, 28 June 1963). Rogers had carried a similar profile of Jomo Kenyatta in the first issue of *Pan Africa* after meeting with Kenyatta at his farm at Gatundu (19 April 1963).

In a profile of Kenyatta’s first cabinet, appointed in June 1963, in which Odinga was named Minister of Home Affairs, Rogers suggested that the economic planning portfolio should be removed from Finance Minister James Gichuru and assigned to Odinga, who should chair a council of economic planning, with the remit to coordinate the work of other relevant ministries (*Pan Africa*, 14 June 1963).

As a mainly agricultural country with a background of fierce colonial-era struggle over the land, no sector of Kenya’s economy was more important than agriculture. *Pan Africa* in its first year devoted many articles to the topic.

Rogers accompanied JM Kariuki and GG Kariuki, the local MPs, to visit a transit centre and a land settlement. The transit centre housed Kikuyu families who had been expelled from the Rift Valley as a consequence of the ethnic instability created by the campaign for *majimbo* (a foretaste of the future violence that was to periodically disfigure Kenyan politics). The land settlement, after an initially very slow reallocation of bought-out European farms, was providing inadequate seven-acre plots of land for landless families. The conditions at both locations were pretty miserable although the two MPs, especially JM Kariuki, were able to inject an element of hope, at least for that day, into the residents’ lives.<sup>8</sup>

Rogers, in the article, laid out an alternative approach to breaking up large commercial farms and sharing out the acreage on an individual basis. He advocated cooperative

farming, with the state providing technical support. Alongside the cooperative farms, related processing industries could be established, as well as schools, medical centres and other social facilities. It was a vision of a coordinated approach that could provide prosperous and meaningful lives for people living in rural areas.

Rogers had worked on a very similar policy prescription with Joseph Murumbi in London (sometime during 1958 to 1959) – a proposal for an experimental, multi-racial, cooperative agricultural venture. And a little while after Rogers' article appeared, Joseph Murumbi, as Minister of State in the Prime Minister's office, also wrote, arguing against a return to subsistence farming. Cooperative farming would allow large economic units to be maintained and provide a basis for socialist community development.<sup>9</sup>

## Anti-colonialism

The fight against colonialism and white supremacy across the whole of Africa occupied many column inches in *Pan Africa*. The Central African Federation, which had trapped the large African majority of what is now Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe in a political structure that ensured white supremacy *in perpetuity*, and had been a target of the anti-colonial movement in the 1950s, was disintegrating. Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were heading towards independence on a democratic basis. Southern Rhodesia remained under the control of its white minority (fewer than a quarter of a million Europeans dominated 3.7 million Africans) and was being handed the bulk of the shared resources, including the military hardware, of the federation.

Elsewhere the armed resistance by the liberation organisations in the Portuguese colonies was picking up pace. *Pan Africa* covered all of this (including publishing a two-part series by Kwame Nkrumah on Portuguese colonialism). But it was South Africa and its repressive apartheid system that received most coverage. Fenner Brockway, a frequent contributor to the journal, attacked the British government's collaboration with South Africa – selling military equipment to the regime and making life difficult for opponents of apartheid who managed to escape to the adjacent British "protectorates" (Swaziland, Basutoland and Bechuanaland, as they were then called).

KANU's electoral programme promised that it would ban all South African imports. Rogers reported on retailers who were still stocking South African goods. He advocated that the government go beyond its original commitment and announce a date from which the sale of South African products would be prohibited.

*Pan Africa* launched a 'buy local' campaign in which Rogers reported on small and medium-sized Kenyan producers of the kind of consumer goods that South Africa supplied to Kenya.

One of the most difficult struggles for independence in Britain's African empire had been in Kenya. *Pan Africa* resisted calls in the supposed interests of 'reconciliation' to draw a veil over the cruel repression of the Emergency -- the term "colonial fascism" barely does justice to the killings, the torture and large-scale detentions and confinement to concentration camps of so many. In 1963 JM Kariuki published his memoir, *Mau Mau Detainee*. Kariuki admitted to joining the Mau Mau and serving as part of its urban support network. Rogers welcomed and reviewed the book in the third issue of *Pan Africa*.

Later the bumper independence 'souvenir' issue of *Pan Africa* provided a comprehensive survey of the depredations of colonialism and the courage of those who fought for freedom. Pio Pinto provided one long article and Rogers wrote two others. Rogers assessed the declaration of the Emergency to be a political scam that had aimed to suppress non-violent forms of African political expression. The scale of the repression by British forces had left many Kikuyu men with little option but to escape to the forests. Rogers judged the actions of the Mau Mau fighters to be no different to the partisans fighting German occupation during the Second World War who were lauded as heroes. The Mau Mau should occupy a similar place of honour in independent Kenya.

The articles earned Rogers a postbag of abusive letters from some Kenyan Europeans who accused him of being a traitor to his race.

## African Unity

Rogers' very first editorial in the issue of April 19 was headlined: "*Pan Africa* states its case: Socialism and African Unity". Ironically, given the title of the publication, it was *Pan Africa*'s support for African unity that eventually was to bring Rogers' editorship to an end.

A few weeks after the launch of *Pan Africa*, the Organisation of African Unity had been launched at a confer-

ence in Addis Ababa in May 1963. The issue of June 28, 1963, carried the text of Kwame Nkrumah's speech at Addis Ababa ('The Case for African Unity'). In an accompanying editorial, Rogers stated: "We believe that a united Africa pursuing a socialist policy of using the resources of the continent for the welfare of the people can create during the next few decades a great new civilisation."

It turned out that not everyone agreed. It was Rogers' old friend and the ex-general manager of Pan-African Press who led the attack on the idea that African unity was a pressing necessity. In a speech to the Nairobi Rotary Club in October, Joseph Murumbi, who had recently stood in as acting Prime Minister while Kenyatta was abroad, lashed out at the leaders of Uganda (the Prime Minister was Milton Obote) for allegedly offering resistance to East African Federation -- they "feel they might become nonentities overnight". Murumbi suggested that Kenya and Tanzania might proceed to federation without Uganda.

Then, just months after the launch of the OAU, came an attack on the very idea of Pan-African unity: "It may take centuries before this idea of a United States of Africa can be developed." And, for good measure, Murumbi attacked Nkrumah's Ghana as a dictatorship.

Rogers responded in the issue of November 1 with an editorial headlined, 'An Unfortunate Speech'. He criticised Murumbi for making off-the-cuff comments in front of "European-inspired businessman's organisation" that had damaged relations with its East African neighbour.

On African unity, Rogers said: "If Africa wishes to catch up with the rest of the world and hold its own, it has got to unite. It has got to form a United States of Africa... Mr Murumbi's pessimism would condemn Africa to centuries of backwardness and second-rate status in the world... To express scepticism about the capacity of African countries to put the interests of United Africa above individual nations is at the same level of political thinking as Mr Ngala expressed in Kenya when he put tribal loyalties before

national ones."

Rogers suggested that Murumbi "should consult his boss, Mr Kenyatta, as to the impetus which resulted from the Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in 1945 and which triggered off a new epoque of African freedom struggle."

As for the attack on Nkrumah, it was "the sort of trite, superficial observation one expects from imperialist newspapers, not from an African Minister." In the next issue, Pan Africa published a strongly worded letter from Ghana's High Commissioner in Nairobi.

Behind the scenes, Rogers came under increasing criticism for authoring and publishing an attack on a KANU minister (although the first issue of *Pan Africa* had explicitly said the journal would not refrain from doing so). Furthermore, he came under pressure to deprioritise African unity and publish more on East African Federation.

Rogers pointed out that he could only publish the material that he was sent and that there had in fact been plenty of coverage of the negotiations over regional federation, but that, in his view, federation should not be used as an excuse to undermine the drive to African unity. In fact, in correspondence with Nkrumah, he was advising the Ghanaian President that opposition to regional groupings (Nkrumah's inclination) would make no headway in East Africa.

In the issue of December 27, Rogers doubled down on this analysis: "Pan-Africanism means more, much more, than East African Federation. Federation of the East African countries is a logical outcome of the links which already exist through the Common Services Organisation and in other ways, but it will have little real political and economic meaning unless it is integrated in a total African Union..."

"A Pan-African Union, however, which controls the whole vast economic resources of Africa -- and the vast consumer market of Africa -- would be in a position to bargain in the hard terms of twentieth-century business with those powers who will not respect the right of in-

dependent states to follow the economic and political policies they feel most appropriate for themselves.”

The end came in February 1964 when Rogers was presented with an ultimatum to present the content of each issue of *Pan Africa* to a board meeting that would approve, or not, each article. His position as an independent editor was no longer tenable and he submitted his resignation with one month's notice, editing his last issue in March.

Odinga, who was part of the management structure of *Pan Africa*, tried to dissuade Rogers from resigning. Rogers replied to Odinga in a letter dated March 17, 1964: “I am sure that if I tried to continue as editor of *Pan Africa* I should find myself in constant trouble and that sooner or later I should be forced to submit a resignation again. I am a militant, radical, socialist journalist who must speak the truth as he sees it and I would prefer never to write another word than to write something I do not believe.”

Rogers also warned Odinga that the Government was ‘falling into neo-colonialist errors’: “In the last couple of weeks we have seen the military agreement between the Kenya and the British Governments which I consider totally inconsistent with Pan-African principles, socialism and non-alignment; we have seen the imprisonment of the freedom-fighter, Field-Marshal Mwariama, which to my mind indicates that the old colonialists in the police and magistracy now feel free to make a come-back; and now we have the unpleasant spectacle of the ex-colonial police chief, with the backing of the African Government, leading a campaign to evict African peasant farmers from European settler farms, large tracts of which... are uncultivated... When such things happened under the colonial government, every African nationalist rose in protest. Now we find Mzee Kenyatta's Government doing the same thing.”

## Africa and the World

Rogers' voice was not long stilled. In October, with the support of Nkrumah, he launched a new magazine from London with an office in Fleet Street. It was called *Africa and the World*, came out monthly and was distributed all over Africa, the Caribbean, the United



- *Pan Africa*, 12 December 1963: “The Big Land Grab”

States and in Europe.

It continued publication until December 1971, at which point the banning of the magazine in one African country after another had made the retrieval of sales income impossible (even when the magazine entered the country using underground methods).

However, during those seven years, *Africa and the World* established a fine reputation for forthright comment and an unblinking commitment to the cause of African liberation, socialism and Pan-African unity. The agenda first mapped out in *Pan Africa* continued.

The magazine engaged with politics in Kenya. It supported those progressive policies pursued by the new government and defended Odinga from increasingly scare-mongering attacks. However, when James Gichuru, still Finance Minister, commented in an interview that Rhodesia was not yet ready for majority rule – apparently, the Africans of that country were more politically backward than Kenyans had been – Rogers was spurred to take strong corrective action. In an ar-

title headlined 'Is the Price of Unity Too High' (*Africa and the World*, February 1966), Rogers pointed out that Gichuru was rejecting the core principle of the inalienable right to self-determination established by the African struggle for independence.

The Kenyan government responded by banning *Africa and the World* (including "all past and future issues") and Rogers was declared a "prohibited immigrant" for activities "contrary to the interests of national security". The ban lasted for a year. The debate in the Kenya parliament on the ban was a contributory factor to the split from KANU by Odinga and other left-wingers to form the Kenya Peoples' Union (KPU).<sup>10</sup>

Rogers thought the split had been premature and that the left should have carried on the fight within KANU for longer. He was concerned by the lack of support for the KPU among Kikuyu people, evidenced by the heavy defeat suffered by Bildad Kaggia in the 1966 by-elections that government forced KPU MPs to fight. However, Rogers reported developments in the pages of *Africa and the World* and carried articles by KPU politicians. As the repression of the KPU became more severe, organisers were imprisoned for unlicensed meetings (licences were a colonial-era requirement).

Bildad Kaggia was imprisoned for six months on entirely spurious grounds. Even school children were sentenced (usually by European magistrates) for the possession of 'illicit' political material (see "The Persecution of KPU", *Africa and the World*, May 1968). Rogers' magazine entered full campaign mode.

When the KPU was blocked from printing its Wananchi Declaration in Kenya, Rogers arranged for it to be printed in London and published the text over two issues in *Africa and the World* (May and June 1969).

With the banning of the KPU and the detention of its leaders in October 1969, *Africa and the World* took on the role of an organising centre for opposition to the Kenyan Government. At the beginning of 1970, for a second time the magazine was banned, and Rogers proscribed.

Rogers made his Fleet Street office available to Kenyans in London to organise an Odinga Solidarity Campaign, and a Kenya Socialist Group, helping the latter organisation produce three issues of a newspaper in Swahili and English called *Sauti ya Wananchi* (*Voice of the People*).

When a report was received of a plot to assassinate Odinga while he was in detention, Rogers arranged for a letter, exposing the risk to Odinga's life, to be sent to every MP in Kenya.

Although banned in the country, *Africa and the World* retained the ability to stir dissent even among KANU MPs. An article in the magazine exposing phoney accusations about foreign money made against a still-detained Odinga was raised in parliament (see "Storm Over 'Africa and the World' Article", *Africa and the World*, June 1970).

In 1971 Odinga was released. The front-page of the May 1971 issue of *Africa and the World* published 'The Picture That Shocked Kenya!', showing an emaciated and grizzled Odinga who, throughout his detention, had been kept in solitary confinement and denied access to reading or writing material. An article discussed 'The Cruelty of Kenyatta'. Indeed, those who had stood beside Kenyatta at Kapenguria (like Oneko



*Africa and the World*, Issue 47 (May 1969): KPU Programme for a Socialist Kenya

and Kaggia), or who, like Odinga, had refused to take any official office until Kenyatta was released from his own detention in 1961, seemed to suffer disproportionately from the regime's repression.

## Kenya Socialist Party

Achieng' Ouko remained detained until 1975. *Africa and the World* published its last issue in December 1971. Rogers continued to correspond with Odinga until Odinga's death in 1994. In the 1970s, he orchestrated letter writing campaigns by various politicians from around the world on behalf of those imprisoned in Kenya. He organised parallel campaigns for his comrades in Ghana where the military regime was trying civilian politicians and sentencing them to death for alleged sedition.

For a period after Kenyatta's death in 1978 and the accession of Daniel arap Moi, there were hopes for a political liberalisation in Kenya. Odinga hoped to stand for a parliamentary seat in Nyanza, but at the last minute, he was blocked.

From the end of 1981, Odinga was looking to launch a new socialist party. The constitution still allowed for multi-party politics even though KANU was the only legal party. The strategy, which Odinga discussed with Rogers, was to secure international support before announcing the bid to secure registration in Kenya for a Kenya Socialist Party. Rogers coordinated plans with Odinga, Fenner Brockway, British MPs Stan Newens and Joan Lester, and Liberation, the successor organisation to the Movement for Colonial Freedom.

On a visit to London in May 1982, Odinga, accompanied by Rogers and Brockway, met with Labour leader Michael Foot and Bernt Carlsson, General Secretary of the Socialist International to which the new party hoped to affiliate.

However, news of Odinga's plans leaked and in June 1982 the constitution of Kenya was amended (adding the infamous Section 2A) to make the country a *de jure* one-party state. The failed air force coup attempt of August 1, 1982 opened the most repressive period in



*Africa and the World*, Issue 56 (February 1970): "Africa and the World" Banned Again in Kenya

Kenya's history. Odinga was placed under house arrest and his son, Raila, detained without charge for most of the period until June 1991 (being released twice only to be rearrested).

Today Kenya enjoys a multi-party political system, but its society remains bedevilled by the consequences of the choices its leaders made in the 1960s and later. A highly unequal society, with many of its people languishing in poverty provides little reward for 60 years of independence and the hard struggle that preceded it.

In 1982, Rogers drew up, at Odinga's request, a programmatic document that would have formed the basis of a new Wananchi Declaration if the Kenya Socialist Party had ever got off the ground. I close this article with a paragraph from that document.

"The ultimate objective of socialism is that all the means of production, distribution and exchange should be brought into common ownership, under democratic control, and be administered solely to satisfy human need. Socialism assumes that all men, women and children throughout the world have an

equal right to a fair share of the bounty of the earth and everything that human ingenuity can provide.”

March 24, 2026

1. ‘How the International Monopolies Dominate the Third World’, The Dawn, October 1977
2. ‘The Intrigues of International Capitalism’, The Dawn, November 1977
3. Thanks are also due to Ismay Milford and Wairimu Gathimba, whose skill and generosity have helped me remotely navigate the extraordinarily valuable material in the Murumbi Africana Collection of the Kenya National Archives.
4. See June Milne, ‘A Great Friend of Africa is Gone’, New African, January 2003; and Opoku Agyeman (1992), ‘Nkrumah’s Ghana and East Africa’, pp 73-77.
5. Earlier in 1962 Rogers had spent three months in Accra, again with his family, invited to launch a magazine for Ghana’s Bureau of African Affairs, which due to inadequate preparation by the Ghanaian authorities, had fallen through. Rogers had left Ghana in frustration and was not in touch with anyone in Ghana at the time he arrived in Nairobi later the same year.
6. ‘Peter Pan replies to Paul Fry’, Pan Africa, 26 July 1963.
7. ‘New NLC Attack on ‘Africa and the World’ – a reply by the Editor’, Africa and the World, November 1967.
8. Douglas Rogers, ‘Report from Nyandarua transit farm and the Kipi-Wanjohi land settlement – Village of Hope – or Hopelessness’, Pan Africa, 9 August 1963.
9. Joseph Murumbi, ‘Co-operative farms, co-operative villages, mass literacy, youth brigade... These should be part of a national crusade’, Pan Africa, 20 September 1963.
10. See George Bennett, ‘Kenya’s ‘Little General Election’’, The World Today, August 1966, Vol. 22, No. 8, pp. 339-340

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# PAN AFRICA

No. 9 Nairobi, Kenya, August 9, 1963 Price 50-cents (6d)

## Village of Hope— Or Hopelessness?

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### STORY OF PLOT TO MURDER ODINGA

A STORY has reached London of an alleged plot to murder Jaramogi Odinga Odinga, the Kenyan leader, while he is in detention.

The story is contained in a letter written on toilet paper by one of Odinga's fellow detainees and smuggled out of prison.

The letter said that a new detainee had recently appeared in the prison. His name was given as Benedict Ochieng's to Odinga, but none of the KPU prisoners had ever heard of him before.

After some days Ochieng told another prisoner—*not a detainee*—that he had been put in “detention” to spy on the KPU men.

He had also been instructed to kill Jaramogi Odinga. He had been given until March 31 to complete this assignment otherwise, he said, his own life would be forfeited.

The story was leaked back to the KPU prisoners who greatly feared for Jaramogi's safety.

The letter asked for publicity to be given to the story as a possible means of stopping the plot.

At present Mr. Odinga is believed to be held a prisoner by himself at Langata army camp. The other KPU detainees are in two places, some in Kamiti Prison, Nairobi, the others at Naivasha.

But there has been a report that all the KPU prisoners may be moved to a single detention centre, possibly to Hola Camp where a massacre of detainees took place during the colonial emergency.

The fear is that an “agent provocateur” could pretend to start a fight or riot and kill Jaramogi while it was taking place. Or the KPU leader could have his food poisoned or be stabbed to death during his sleep.

When Jomo Kenyatta was in detention he was once attacked and injured during a prefabricated “fight”.

It is the knowledge of what has happened in the past that has caused fear among Odinga's supporters. There have also been several political murders in Kenya since independence, including that of Mr. Pio Gama Pinto, a prominent Odinga supporter, and Mr. Tom Mboya.

Too many political disputes in Kenya have been settled by assassination instead of by reasoned argument and democratic decision.

The only way to safeguard Odinga's life is for him to be set free together with his colleagues.

The Odinga Solidarity Committee has appealed to people to write or send telegrams to President Kenyatta, State House, Nairobi, Kenya, urging the immediate release of all the detainees.

### MPs DEMAND RELEASE OF DETAINEES

KENYA'S MPs have had no time in protesting at the detention of Jaramogi Odinga and other leaders of the Kenya People's Union.

The protests came during the first week's sitting of the new Parliament during the debate on the President's speech on the state opening of Parliament.

The first protest came from the new MP for Siyeri, Mr. Wairimu Kanja. In his maiden speech, he said he was surprised that people should be detained by an African Government.

The “East African Standard” parliamentary report said that Mr. Kanja's speech “was interspersed with applause and cheers”.

It expected that Mr. Kanja received “a standing ovation” when he declared: “I was a detainee during the Emergency and I know what it means to be detained”.

The following day a former Assistant Minister for Education, Mr. Mutua, appealed to the Government to release the people who had been detained without trial “especially that nationalist who first fought for the release of President Kenyatta, Mr. Oginga Odinga”.

Mr. Mutua also received “a standing ovation” according to the “East African Standard” when he called for the release of Mr. Odinga and other KPU leaders.

A third appeal for the release of the detainees came from an Assistant Minister for Commerce and Industry, Mr. Anyosi, who said no government worth its salt would keep anybody in detention unnecessarily. He appealed to the Minister responsible to review the cases.

Further demands for the ending of the detentions are expected to be made. If the issue were put to the vote there is little doubt that a large majority of MPs would support the release of the detainees.

Several members of the Government are also known to be strongly in disagreement with the detentions. There is an uneasy feeling in Parliament at the knowledge that men who were among the most prominent in the fight for independence should now be locked up without trial.

The locking-up of Mr. Odinga is a particularly sensitive question. He was Kenya's first Vice-President and is one of Africa's most respected public figures.

The new MPs have already shown that they intend to speak their minds on issues on which there is strong public feeling. Practically every speaker during the first week of Parliament had something to propose that the Government should do which it wasn't doing.

The Government had to listen to a continuous stream of critical suggestions on every conceivable issue in the country. Many MPs spoke of the need for Parliament to reflect the wishes of the electorate.

It was obvious that the new MPs are sensitive to the reason why their predecessors lost their seats. Some even said that they didn't wish to be voted out for the same reason at the next elections.

### South African Trial Surprise

CHARGES against 22 Africans under the Suppression of Communism Act were suddenly stopped in a Pretoria Court. But the defendants were immediately re-detained under the Terrorism Act.

The trial of 22 members of the banned African National Congress of South Africa came to a sensational end when the Transvaal Attorney-General entered the court and told the Judge that the state was stopping the case.

The accused included Mrs. Winnie Mandela, wife of Nelson Mandela,

# Frantz Fanon and the African Revolution: Pan-Africanism and the Sahelian Break

By Nicholas Mwangi

## Introduction

Frantz Fanon's work has profoundly influenced anti-colonial thought across the Global South and continues to resonate within contemporary struggles for liberation as they evolve. Yet, both in academic discourse and within certain progressive circles, Fanon's legacy is increasingly subjected to misinterpretation and selective appropriation.

As Okoth (2020) argues in his critique of Afro-pessimism, "the blatant (mis)use of Fanon is a particularly infuriating example of how the APTM distorts anti-colonial thought. By selectively reading parts of his early work (*Black Skin, White Masks*) and disregarding pretty much everything else, APTM scholars try to incorporate Fanon into the genealogy of their misguided attempt at creating a radical Black discourse. Since *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) makes for a more comfortable read than *The Wretched of the Earth* or *A Dying Colonialism*, the more important Fanon texts for the liberation movements on the continent, this results in a sterilised version of Fanon divorced from revolutionary praxis."

Okoth further, says – "APT<sup>M</sup> has reached for the young Fanon, and tried to isolate him from the rest of his oeuvre. As Wilderson himself contends: 'Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* [...] does not build upon Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*'. While the APT<sup>M</sup> is correct in pointing out that there is a difference in approach between Fanon's early and later work, this does not mean that we should prioritise the former over the latter. Nor does it mean that Fanon's early work is necessarily based on the assumption of an ontologically flat conception of Blackness. In the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon concedes that:

'Since I was born in the Antilles, my observations and my conclusions are valid only for the Antilles – at least concerning the black man at home. Another book could be dedicated to explaining the differences that separate

the Negro of the Antilles from the Negro of Africa.'

The appropriation of Fanon by some African-American scholars and activists -who reduce his thought to a hashtag, and make proclamations that Fanon himself would have fundamentally disagreed with - also begs the question of why only Fanon, singled out and isolated from all other anti-colonial thought, has been granted a cushy place in the Ivory Tower. Why is there still very little scholarship on Black revolutionaries such as Amílcar Cabral, one of the foremost anti-colonial theorists and revolutionaries of the twentieth century?

This kind of selective reading by different sections of liberals whether Afropessimists or whatever has led to a fragmentation of Fanon's political thought, divorcing his radical critique of neocolonialism and imperialism from the broader revolutionary tradition of which he was an integral part. A renewed, holistic engagement with Fanon is essential for rethinking and revitalising Pan-Africanism today and importantly in the continent of Africa.

Contemporary African geopolitics, particularly the growing rejection of Western domination by states in the Sahel, shows a major rupture with the post-Cold War neoliberal consensus. These states, are forging new regional alliances and expelling neocolonial powers, gesturing toward what some have termed a renewed call for African liberation. Their defiant stances coincide with a global shift toward multipolarity, characterized by the challenging dominance of US-led unipolar hegemony and the rise of new geopolitical actors, including China, Russia, and the BRICS+ nations. The BRICS alliance is not an ideological bloc like the Soviet Union, but its members are united by common issues that still offer an alternative to unipolar dominance.

In this emerging context, Pan-Africanism is once again being redefined not just as an aspirational ideal of continental unity but as a concrete political project rooted in sovereignty and anti-imperialism so far. Biographers such as David Macey, Leo Zeilig, and Nigel Gibson provide evidence that Fanon's support for armed struggle was inseparable from his Pan-African vision. He travelled widely in Africa during his service with the FLN, working to connect the Algerian war to movements in sub-Saharan Africa, including the Congo and West Africa. Gibson (2011) notes that Fanon consistently argued that the liberation of Algeria was not only an Algerian project but "a node in a continental chain of revolutions" (p. xx). Fanon, is still widely read in today's world as he was read in the last century.

As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o said in *Writing Against Neocolonialism* (1986, p8), "I have always argued that literature written by Africans, and particularly the literature of this period, cannot really be understood without a proper and thorough reading of the chapter 'Pitfalls of National Consciousness' in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The literature of this period was really a series of imaginative footnotes to Frantz Fanon."

And why is it important to see Pan-Africanism as a continuous political project today, using the Sahel as a case study? It is because Pan-Africanism cannot emerge from abstract theory alone and its history is testament to that when it comes to revolutions. And focusing on the Sahel because it is the most recent rupture with French neocolonialism in Africa. As both Fanon and Amílcar Cabral pointed out, there can be no real liberation without the integration of theory with praxis. Thus, contemporary movements and alliances must draw deeply from this foundational insight. Situating Fanon's ideas within the current revolutionary developments, such as in the Sahel and placing them in dialogue with other African liberation theorists provides an understanding of Pan-Africanism as a living, evolving, and contested project.

## **Pan-Africanism as a Continuous Project Today**

Pan-Africanism has never been just a rhetoric of

racial solidarity; it has been a political strategy of anti-imperialist unification aimed at transforming the colonial state and the world economy that sustains it (Adi 2019). From the Manchester Congress (1945) to the All-African Peoples' Conference (1958), the project linked struggles across the continent and diaspora to a common agenda of sovereignty and change. In this sense, Pan-Africanism is best read/seen as a continuous project, periodically stalled, rerouted, or co-opted but revived whenever conditions permit renewed bids for collective autonomy and struggle.

Fanon belongs in this militant Pan-African genealogy. In *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Toward the African Revolution*, he theorised decolonisation as a continental process, showing that national independence without regional change would relapse into dependency ("the pitfalls of national consciousness"). Fanon's critique of the national bourgeoisie is explicitly a class analysis of how postcolonial intermediaries reproduce imperial domination unless countered by mass organisation and international solidarity (Fanon 2007).

Importantly, Fanon's practice matched his theory. As an FLN cadre and diplomat, he worked to link the Algerian struggle to sub-Saharan movements, traveling as an emissary, building contacts in West and Central Africa, and arguing that victories like Algeria's could only be secured through a wider African offensive (Zeilig 2016).

Looking at today's Sahel rupture through this frame, Fanon helps pose the right questions; Do these breaks disrupt the regional mechanisms of dependency (currency regimes, bases, extractive concessions)? Do they expand popular participation and political education, or centralise power within new elites? Are they building horizontal Pan-African linkages, security, productive capacity, financial autonomy, that convert symbolic sovereignty into enduring sovereignty? The Fanonian yardstick is not the fact of rupture alone, but whether rupture is organised beyond the nation, rooted in the people, and oriented to change the regional conditions that reproduce underdevelopment.

## **The Post-independence Crisis and Elite Betrayal**

The revolutionary promise of Pan-Africanism was

rapidly undermined in the aftermath of formal independence during the 1960s. Across the continent, liberation movements that had been led by radical visions of change gave way to elite-led projects of state-building and ‘development’. This is precisely the dilemma that Frantz Fanon warned of in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

The national bourgeoisie, which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime, is an underdeveloped bourgeoisie... Its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists of being the transmission line between the nation and capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neocolonialism” (Fanon 2007, p. 152).

For Fanon, elite betrayal was very structural. The postcolonial bourgeoisie, lacking an industrial or productive base, could only secure its position by mediating between the former colonial powers and its own population, thereby reproducing dependency. This theme runs through his critique of “the pitfalls of national consciousness”: political independence would be hollow if not grounded in mass participation, socialist transformation and Pan-African unity.

The trajectory of Kwame Nkrumah, for example, shows both the possibilities and pitfalls Fanon identified. Nkrumah’s early call for immediate continental unity, outlined in *Africa Must Unite* and embodied in the Casablanca bloc, resonated with Fanon’s insistence that liberation could not stop at the nation-state. But, as Fanon predicted, Nkrumah’s own regime became increasingly entangled in contradictions, caught between radical Pan-African aspirations and the class compromises of a national bourgeoisie dependent on foreign aid and investment. After his 1966 overthrow, Nkrumah himself acknowledged this tension in *Class Struggle in Africa* (1970), conceding that earlier rejections of class analysis had obscured the dangers Fanon had already warned against.

Julius Nyerere’s Arusha Declaration (1967) similarly embodied the promise of building a self-reliant socialism rooted in African communal traditions. But Fanon’s framework highlights its contradictions: by

denying the existence of classes in Tanzania, Nyerere underplayed the very dynamics of elite reproduction that Fanon regarded as decisive. Walter Rodney further argued that Ujamaa ultimately became a form of “non-scientific socialism” vulnerable to bureaucratic capture and dependency.

Amílcar Cabral, by contrast, echoed Fanon’s emphasis on class clarity and ideological struggle. His insistence that African liberation required both national culture and rigorous materialist analysis aligned with Fanon’s warning that elites would abandon revolutionary tasks unless bound by the discipline of the people. As Cabral declared, “Class suicide” was the only guarantee against elite betrayal -- a formulation that resonates directly with Fanon’s call for a leadership fused with, not above, the masses.

Even where leaders like Senegal’s Senghor or Kenya’s Kenyatta invoked “African socialism,” the tendency was toward dilution and compromise, validating Fanon’s prediction that national elites would mimic the colonial order under the guise of sovereignty. Policies such as Kenya’s 1965 Sessional Paper No. 10 entrenched capitalist dependency under the banner of socialism, a textbook case of the intermediary role Fanon described.

Thus, Fanon’s analysis provides the thread that ties these diverse trajectories together; the post-independence crisis was fundamentally a crisis of class leadership. The new elites, rather than realising the radical promise of Pan-African liberation, became custodians of neocolonial dependency.

This pattern of elite betrayal must also frame any analysis of contemporary ruptures in the Sahel. While military-led governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger present themselves as challengers of neocolonial domination. The challenge, then, is whether these breakaways can overcome the very pitfalls Fanon diagnosed, transforming a national rebellion into a Pan-African project rooted in the people.

## **Pan-Africanism in the Age of NGOs and Soft Power**

Thus, the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries saw the

reconfiguration of Pan-Africanism under the shadow of neoliberal hegemony. What once stood as a revolutionary project for continental unity and collective sovereignty has been increasingly co-opted by donor-driven initiatives, regional elites, and a burgeoning network of NGOs operating under the rubric of ‘civil society’. Market-oriented schemes such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are now promoted as flagship Pan-African achievements. But these initiatives often reproduce, rather than dismantle, the continent’s subservience to global capital. While presented as steps toward economic integration, such policies have typically failed to challenge the structural realities of extractivism, commodity dependency, and unequal exchange that define Africa’s neocolonial condition presently.

Simultaneously, a depoliticised cultural Pan-Africanism has gained prominence, one centered on shared heritage, diasporic connection, and symbolic gestures of unity. Afro-futurist festivals, media celebrations of ‘African excellence’, and state-sponsored commemorations offer a veneer of solidarity that frequently obscures the deeper, material contradictions confronting African realities. Stripped of class analysis and revolutionary content, these forms of cultural unity offer little to those who suffer the brunt of imperialist exploitation, the working poor, the landless peasantry, and the unemployed youth whose futures have been mortgaged by neoliberal reforms. The radical praxis that once defined Pan-Africanism has been replaced by Afro-optimism, a discourse that celebrates inclusion in the global economy without questioning the terms of that inclusion.

Frantz Fanon, in *Toward the African Revolution*, says that the gravest danger facing Africa was not colonialism itself, which he believed would soon be dismantled, but the “absence of ideology.” Without a coherent ideological compass, the continent was vulnerable to misdirection and counter-revolution. Fanon observed, “Colonialism and its derivatives do not, as a matter of fact, constitute the present enemies of Africa. In a short time, this continent will be liberated... The great danger that threatens Africa is the absence of ideology.” (Fanon, 1964, p. 186). His critique anticipates the contemporary reality, where much of the organised political terrain has been ceded

to NGO actors and African elites with no commitment to overturning the capitalist order.

This ideological void has contributed to a disjuncture within popular movements, a gap between those with the courage to resist and those equipped with the theoretical tools necessary to transform resistance into revolutionary rupture. In the absence of sustained political education and ideological clarity, movements have become susceptible to adventurism, populism, and celebrity activism forms of engagement that, while often well-intentioned, ultimately isolate them from the broader masses. Fanon’s warning remains relevant: “Our mistake, the mistake we Africans made, was to have forgotten that the enemy never withdraws sincerely. He never understands. He capitulates, but he does not become converted.”

## **The Sahelian Break — Towards the African Revolution**

Since the 2020s, countries across the Sahel which includes Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have emerged as epicentres of rupture against the post-independence neocolonial order. Popular uprisings and military takeovers in these nations represent more than episodic ‘coups’, as framed by Western media of what was the norm of the 20<sup>th</sup> century coups, but rather expressions of deeper crises of legitimacy for Western-backed regimes that have long failed to deliver security, sovereignty, or economic equality. As Walter Rodney noted in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), “Underdevelopment is a paradox. Many parts of the world that are naturally rich are actually poor, and parts that are not so well off in wealth of soil and sub-soil are enjoying the highest standard of living.”

The capitalist world system, which siphons wealth from the Global South to the metropolises, offers the structural explanation for this paradox fuelled by mass disillusionment with France’s continued military occupation, the collapse of state authority in the face of jihadist insurgencies, and the grinding poverty worsened by decades of structural adjustment and IMF dependency, the peoples of the Sahel have begun to push back. Their resistance reveals an intuitive grasp of Fanon’s imperative: “Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or

betray it.”( Fanon, 2007) The anger erupting across the Sahel targets not only the corrupt national elites, but also the broader architecture of international control manifested in institutions like ECOWAS, the CFA franc system, and French military bases.

As Tri continental’s dossier on The Sahel Seeks Sovereignty stresses, the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), emerged not from elite intrigues but from popular currents of resistance. Unlike the Western-backed coups of the 1960s and 1980s, which toppled liberation leaders to entrench dependency, these ruptures were propelled by grassroots mobilisation, mass protests against the CFA franc, and direct confrontations with French military convoys.

Military-led governments in Burkina Faso (under Captain Ibrahim Traoré), Mali (Colonel Assimi Goïta), and Niger (General Abdourahamane Tchiani) have responded to these popular currents by forming the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in September 2023. This regional bloc signifies a security pact and it is also part of a political realignment that openly rejects French hegemony, neoliberal austerity, and the externally imposed norms of liberal democracy.

The evolution of events was clear. As the French military presence deepened under the pretext of ‘counter-insurgency’, civilian casualties mounted and security deteriorated. Public anger swelled across the region. In Mali, mass protests culminated in two military coups (2020 and 2021), eventually installing Colonel Goïta’s transitional government. In Burkina Faso, a wave of anti-French sentiment triggered a coup in January 2022, followed by a second coup later that year led by Captain Traoré, propelled by the government’s failure to tackle escalating insecurity. Mali terminated its defence accords with France in 2022, prompting French troops to withdraw. Following closely, in January 2023, Burkina Faso demanded the expulsion of French military forces from its territory. (Peoples Dispatch, 2023).

We are not able to predict the full outcome of the unfolding struggle in the Sahel. But what is already evident, however, is that it has re-opened a space for thinking about revolutionary change on the continent. For decades, Africa has lived under the heavy weight

of unfulfilled promises of independence where political liberation did not translate into economic freedom or popular sovereignty. The Sahel moment, with all its challenges, has reopened a conversation long silenced by the dominance of neoliberal governance, Western-backed regimes, and elite-driven politics.

Historically, progressives and left forces have been wary of military coups and for good reason. The 20<sup>th</sup> century gave us more than enough examples of dictatorships that emerged from coups, derailed revolutionary momentum, suppressed people’s movements, and entrenched neo-colonialism through violent statecraft. From Mobutu in Congo to Idi Amin in Uganda, many military takeovers led to regimes that were worse than the civilian governments they replaced.

But the situation in the Sahel demands a deeper, more dialectical analysis. These recent coups have not simply been power grabs by self-interested generals. Rather, they have emerged from the ashes of popular discontent. In some cases, these regimes have openly denounced France’s neo-colonial grip, shut down exploitative mining contracts, and sought alternative geopolitical alliances.

This challenges us to reconsider a key principle; the revolutionary struggle is always about capturing political power. And this is a terrain that the left in Africa has largely lost over the last half-century. While we’ve organised from below, educated, resisted, and dreamed, we have often failed to pose a credible force to take power.

It is not to say we romanticise or uncritically support military governments. But we must also resist liberal moralism that rejects any rupture with imperialism simply because it does not fit into textbook definitions of democracy. The bottom line is this, in an age of re-colonisation through debt, militarism, and extractivism, we must welcome every effort that defends sovereignty, confronts imperialism, and opens space for people’s power to grow.

This position resonates with Fanon’s own politics in the early 1960s. In his work with the Algerian FLN, Fanon insisted that liberation could not be reduced to the adoption of European-style parliamentary democracy,

since such forms often served to mask neocolonial domination. For him, the legitimacy of a political rupture lay not in its conformity to liberal norms but in its capacity to dismantle imperial control and empower the masses. As he wrote: “The liberation struggle does not give itself the luxury of choosing its terrain; it has to engage imperialism wherever it is found” (Fanon, 2007, p. 86). He was acutely aware that, in conditions of armed struggle, the forms of politics would often be unconventional, even militarised. What mattered was not whether liberation conformed to European models of governance, but whether it created the possibility of ‘new humanism’ rooted in the people’s active participation.

The Sahel has reminded the continent and indeed the world that imperialism is not invincible. The question is, what will we do with this reminder?

That’s why Frantz Fanon’s vision offers a profound lens through which to interpret the rebellions unfolding across the Sahel. His call for a total rupture with colonial structures, for the active participation of the people in building the nation, and for resistance -- armed when necessary -- finds unmistakable echoes in the ongoing political realignments in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Again, Fanon warned, with clarity, that the post-colonial bourgeoisie would not liberate Africa; rather, they would entrench dependency, becoming intermediaries of imperial domination. In the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), we witness an emerging challenge to this model not flawless, not without contradictions, but resonant with the aspiration for genuine sovereignty.

“There is a straight line that runs from the formation of this Confederation to the pan-African sentiments that shaped the anti-colonial movements in the Sahel over 60 years ago.”

The current wave of resistance has grown from frustration with decades of neocolonial interference, particularly from France. The legacy includes the fallout of NATO’s destruction of Libya in 2011, creating fertile ground for jihadist insurgencies; the failure of French military interventions to bring security; and the economic stranglehold maintained through the CFA

franc and control over financial transactions. Further aggravating this discontent is the way France and the EU have weaponised anti-terrorism discourse to construct anti-migration barriers serving Europe’s interests while Africa pays the price. (Peoples Dispatch, 2024)

In this context, the AES has taken bold steps, announcing a regional passport, unveiling a new flag, and pushing toward deeper integration. The leadership is filled with Pan-African themes, sovereignty, and cultural renaissance. References to Thomas Sankara and Kwame Nkrumah have returned to the public imagination, and the popular rejection of the CFA franc, a symbol of French monetary colonialism, has intensified. These governments are also pivoting geopolitically, seeking alternatives to Western domination through new partnerships with Russia, China, and BRICS+ actors, signalling a partial reorientation toward a multipolar global order.

Again, as mentioned the BRICS nation is not necessarily an ideological bloc fond of the Soviet Union but is held with shared interests and issues. It has expanded to include new members, presents itself as a platform for a more equitable global order, and its appeal has grown in Africa.

China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has offered large-scale infrastructure financing on terms that Western donors have consistently withheld. Russia’s re-engagement in Africa, driven by security partnerships, military training, and anti-imperialist posturing, has gained traction, particularly in Sahelian and Central African states, rejecting French neocolonial military presence. Meanwhile, India and Turkey have expanded trade, cultural ties, and strategic investments across the continent. This shift has opened a limited but notable diplomatic and economic breathing space, allowing African states to negotiate with greater leverage, at least in theory as Western dominance persists.

Multipolarity, for all its challenges and nuances, has opened a strategic window to reimagine Pan-Africanism in concrete and practical terms. The return of political non-alignment, the pursuit of currency and financial sovereignty, the formation of regional defense pacts, and the push for continental industrialization could be

tangible possibilities.

As Fanon reminds us, “During the colonial period the people are called upon to fight against oppression; after national liberation, they are called upon to fight against poverty, illiteracy and underdevelopment. The struggle, they say, goes on. The people realize that life is an unending contest” (Fanon 2007).

This is the challenge and the opportunity of the current moment in the Sahel. As the world looks on, it is not the AES’s break with France alone that must be evaluated, but whether it can complete genuine liberation, which requires not only a radical political agenda but also the active participation of the masses and thus a total break away with Neocolonialism structures as Frantz Fanon advocated. It is now 100 years since the birth of Frantz Fanon. A century on, his warning that colonialism and its local collaborators would persist in new guises remains a relevant rallying call.

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**“And it is clear that in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms; colonization and decolonization a simply a question of relative strength.”**

~FRANTZ FANON

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# Reflections on the Eve of the Revolution, 2025

By Sobukwe Shukura

The Eve of the Revolution has new meaning as we prepare to resist in a critical battle against imperialism in the Western Hemisphere. As 2025 ends and a new year begins, a desperate belligerent US imperialism imposes a naval blockade that threatens the sovereignty of Venezuela, South America, and the Caribbean. A blockade that challenges Brazil, Russia, China, India, Iran, Azania/South Africa and other (BRICS) nations' rights to trade with their partners in the Global South.

As we once again on January 1 commemorate two of the greatest revolutions in Turtle Island aka the Western Hemisphere, and more particularly the Caribbean Islands, we remember Haiti and Cuba: <https://aaprp-intl.org/eve-revolution-haiti-cuba-pan-africanism-internationalism/>

The Haitian Revolution, 1804, liberated all enslaved people on the island of Hispaniola. The indigenous people called the island Ayati.

The island is separated by mountains, The French occupied what today we call Haiti and the Spanish occupied the other side of Hispaniola, now called the Dominican Republic. Haiti became the first successful National Liberation in the Americas, where all people were free, the first successful Pan-African Revolution in the era of European settler-colonial expansion. Haiti fought successfully against the French, the Spanish and the British.

Cuba was a settler-colony of Spain, the island had countless African rebellions against slavery (like the one led by Sister Colada) <https://www.afrocubaweb.com/carlota.htm> This Island of the indigenous Tainos resisted their Spanish invaders. These struggles paved the way for the national liberation movement against Spain, led by great figures like Hosea Marti and Antonio Maceo. Maceo refused to allow Cuba's national liberation against Spain to be separated from the Cuban African population's liberation from slavery. There was no compromise. The US, under the Platt amendment in 1901, imposed a neo-colonial state on Cuba after the Spanish-American war, severely limiting Cuban sovereignty. A new era of national liberation struggle began with renewed vigour, including Communists, socialists, nationalists, urban and rural workers, peasants, students and women. In 1953, the July 26 Movement struck against the Mocada Barracks, though unsuccessful it shook the Barista regime and laid the foundation for the armed phase of

revolution in Cuba.

On January 1 1959, the Cuban revolution defeated US neo-colonialism, bringing forth the first Socialist State in the Hemisphere.

Venezuela is historically linked to both these revolutions. Haiti gave human and material support to Simon Bolivar during the national liberation struggles in South America against Spain in the 1800s. They asked but one thing; liberate the enslaved.

During the Venezuela Revolution under Hugo Chavez, Cuba provided medical and social workers to aid underserved Venezuelan communities. Venezuela helped to supply much needed oil to Cuba and its neighbours under the PetroCaribe program. Cuba and Venezuela formed the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) alternatives to the Imperialist dominated Organisation of American States (OAS).

During the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti that killed more than 200,000 people, Cuba sent more than 1,000 doctors to save Haitian lives and Venezuela sent millions of Bolivars in aid. Chavez cancelled all of Haiti's debt to Venezuela. He stated he did it in the spirit of Haiti's contributions to Simon Bolivar and Bolivarian struggles in South America.

During this same earthquake, the United States sent the military to protect property and precious minerals while Haitians were dying in the streets.

The US history in Haiti and Cuba give us tremendous insight into US imperialism in the region. Haiti was boycotted by several European powers in the 1800s. It was isolated and boycotted by the United States starting from when it was under Thomas Jefferson. Haiti was not recognised by the US until 1862, some 58 years after Haitian independence in 1804.

The US military occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934. They robbed Haiti of its gold reserves, transferring their gold to the National City Bank, the modern day Citigroup.

They backed dictators like Jean Claude Duvalier and his son. When the people democratically elected Jean Aristide

in 1994 and again in 2004 the US engineered his forcible removal using their local proxies in 1991 who couldn't defeat him in an election. Aristide was kidnapped a second time in 2004 and forced into exile for eight years in Azania/South Africa. He was denied entry not only to Haiti but to any part of the Caribbean. Yet Haitian resistance against US Imperialism continues.

Cuba was embargoed soon after their revolution in 1959. In 1962 Cuba was under a blockade by the United States, preceded by the 'Bay of Pigs' invasion conducted by US-sponsored mercenaries in April 1961. Cuba has survived over 200 assassination attempts on Fidel Castro and a US economic blockade for over six decades because of international solidarity and the unshakable people's defence of the Revolution. Cuba has offered unconditional solidarity to the world against imperialism. From armed resistance in Angola, Mozambique, Congo and Namibia to Cuba's armies of doctors serving the Global South countries throughout the world, the Caribbean, Africa and even in Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic.

After the revolutionary election in 1999, Venezuela drew the wrath of Imperialism. In 2002, Chavez survived a coup attempt supported by the United States, who recognised the illegitimate junta government immediately [https://youtu.be/J1k065Qe9IE?si=v4VHxqDnzqJ\\_5nbIv](https://youtu.be/J1k065Qe9IE?si=v4VHxqDnzqJ_5nbIv). But within days the people returned Chavez to power. The PSUV has

successfully defended their people's power through several election cycles including the recent reelection of President Maduro in 2024, which US Imperialism again sought to overturn. Venezuela has endured attempted coups, regime change attempts, and assassinations. Their gold was frozen in British banks. Venezuela oil revenues were stolen in the United States. Venezuela was declared a special threat to the United States under President Obama. Yet, Venezuela still stands.

On this "Eve of the Revolution", we must stand with Venezuela and the Global South. We must stand against Western Imperialism in Africa, in support of the PAIGC PAI TERA RANKA Coalition, and PRS in Guinea Bissau and the Sahel Alliance of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. We must stand with the people of Western Sahara. In Asia we must stand with Palestine and the axis of resistance. These are the front lines. The settler-colonial United States has gathered at the doorstep of Venezuela. Let us gather on this "Eve of the Revolution" as the Haitians did August 14, 1791 and in the spirit of the July 26 Movement of 1953 in Cuba. The Venezuela Bolivarian Revolution is a product of struggle against imperialism in the Western Hemisphere, from the indigenous and African resistance to the Haitian and Cuban Revolutions.

Forward to a new year of the people's struggle in 2026.  
Victory is Certain!



*Revolutionary leader Fidel Castro (center, in military fatigues) marches through the streets of Havana with fellow guerrilla fighters and supporters following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in January 1959, marking the fall of the Fulgencio Batista regime and the emergence of a new revolutionary government.*

# A Marxist Curriculum for Understanding Capitalism in Kenya

By Nicholas Mwangi

Ukombozi Library and the Marx Memorial Library held a study course in 2025 on ‘Introduction to Marxist Economics – A Kenyan Perspective’, a six-part curriculum designed to situate classical Marxist political economy within Kenya’s historical and contemporary realities

Drawing on the works of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, and later Marxist scholars, the curriculum connects theoretical concepts — value, primitive accumulation, crisis, monopoly capital, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, imperialism, and neo-liberalism, to Kenya’s colonial formation, post-independence political economy, and present crisis.

It further proposes that such a curriculum equips working people, students and activists with analytical tools to interpret and transform their conditions.

## Introduction: Why Marxist Political Economy in Kenya?

Kenya’s contemporary crises, rising debt, austerity budgets, youth unemployment, food insecurity and mass protest raise foundational questions about the structure of its economy. Official discourse frames these crises as policy failures, corruption or temporary imbalances. But such explanations obscure deeper structural dynamics rooted in capitalism’s historical development.

‘Introduction to Marxist Economics: A Kenyan Perspective’ responds to this gap. The curriculum integrates classical Marxist theory with Kenya’s lived realities, spanning colonial dispossession, post-independence state capitalism, structural adjustment and contemporary neo-colonial finance. Rather than presenting Marxism as an abstract doctrine, it grounds theory in Kenya’s historical trajectory, from land alienation in the “White Highlands” to IMF-influenced fiscal reforms.

The course is structured in two six-week parts, combining textual study (including Capital, Wages, Price and Profit, and Imperialism: The Highest Stage

of Capitalism) with guided discussion and Kenyan case studies. Its pedagogical method emphasises collective analysis, reflecting Marx’s insistence that theory becomes a material force when grasped by the masses.

## Wages, Inflation and the Labour Theory of Value

The first class confronts a dominant economic claim: that wage increases cause inflation. Mainstream frameworks often invoke a “wage-price spiral”, suggesting that workers’ demands generate price instability. By contrast, Marx’s labour theory of value argues that labour is the sole source of new value under capitalism.

In ‘Wages, Price and Profit’, Marx demonstrated that wages represent the value of labour power, determined by the socially necessary labour time required for workers’ subsistence. Surplus value arises because workers produce more value than they receive in wages. Inflation, therefore, does not originate from wage struggles but from shifts in distribution or monopoly pricing power.

Applied to Kenya, this argument challenges narratives for price rises. Recent minimum wage adjustments have lagged behind rising living costs, while inflation has been driven primarily by external shocks (fuel and wheat imports), currency depreciation, speculative pricing, and fiscal expansion linked to debt servicing. Kenya’s labour share of national income remains comparatively low, reflecting weakened bargaining power rather than wage-driven inflation.

By situating inflation within monopoly and monetary structures, the curriculum reorients analysis toward class struggle. Wage gains reduce profit share; they do not mechanically raise prices. This reframing is vital in a context where public discourse often delegitimises worker mobilisation.

## Primitive Accumulation and the Colonial Formation of Kenya

The second class turns to primitive accumulation —

Marx's term for the violent historical separation of producers from the means of production. In *Capital*, he described this process as written "in letters of blood and fire". For Kenya, primitive accumulation was neither metaphor nor abstraction; it was colonial policy.

British conquest institutionalised land alienation, particularly in the fertile central highlands. The imposition of hut and poll taxes compelled African households into wage labour. The Imperial British East Africa Company exemplified early corporate imperialism, blending commercial monopoly with state-backed coercion.

Policies such as the Swynnerton Plan (1954) restructured African agrarian systems by individualising land tenure and integrating smallholders into market relations. Post-independence land redistribution largely favoured elites, reinforcing class stratification rather than reversing dispossession.

Primitive accumulation did not end with independence. Contemporary land grabbing, privatisation of communal resources, and megaproject-driven displacement reflect ongoing accumulation by dispossession. The curriculum shows how capitalism reproduces its foundational violence in new forms.

### **Crisis, Competition and Monopoly Capital**

Marx identified cyclical crises as inherent to competitive capitalism. Technological innovation allows early adopters to secure temporary super-profits, triggering booms followed by overproduction and slump. Crisis restores alignment between price and value.

However, as Vladimir Lenin argued in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, the concentration of capital transforms competition into monopoly. Monopoly capital can hold prices above value, displacing crisis onto weaker firms and peripheral economies.

Kenya's colonial annexation coincided with this global transition. The building of the Uganda Railway was less a civilising mission than infrastructure for imperial extraction. In the post-colonial era, multinational corporations and international financial institutions continue to shape Kenya's accumulation regime.

Recent crises — including the 1990s liberalisation shock and the 2023–24 debt-austerity cycle, illustrate how monopoly and finance capital externalise adjustment costs onto labour. Crisis becomes not an anomaly but a mechanism for restructuring in favour of dominant capital.

### **The Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall (TRPF)**

The fourth class addresses one of Marx's most debated propositions: the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. As capitalists invest in machinery (constant capital) relative to labour (variable capital), the source of surplus value narrows. Profit rates tend to decline, though counteracting factors, intensified exploitation, wage suppression, foreign trade, may offset the trend.

Kenya's deindustrialisation offers a contemporary lens. Manufacturing's share of GDP has stagnated or declined, while growth has concentrated in finance, real estate, and ICT -- sectors prone to speculative volatility. Structural Adjustment Programs aimed to restore profitability through privatisation and trade liberalisation but deepened dependency and informalisation.

Foreign trade and capital export -- key counteracting tendencies — tie Kenya into global value chains where surplus is realised abroad. Debt-financed infrastructure, such as the Standard Gauge Railway, creates temporary stimulus but burdens public finances long term.

Understanding TRPF clarifies why austerity persists despite growth rhetoric. Falling profitability in production shifts accumulation toward speculation, debt and rent extraction, intensifying exploitation of workers and taxpayers.

### **Imperialism and Neo-colonial Continuities**

Lenin defined imperialism as the monopoly stage of capitalism, characterised by finance capital, export of capital, and division of the world among great powers. Kenya's colonial history exemplifies classical imperialism; its contemporary debt regime reflects neo-colonial continuation.

Post-independence governments operated within global financial structures shaped by the Bretton Woods institutions. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank imposed Structural Adjustment Programs that privatised public assets and curtailed social spending.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, geopolitical competition has diversified external influence. Chinese infrastructure loans under the Belt and Road Initiative coexist with Western financial conditionalities. Yet the structural logic remains: export-oriented production, externalised surplus, and debt-servicing burdens are borne domestically.

Imperialism today extends into digital and technological spheres, where global platforms capture data and value from peripheral markets. Kenya's celebrated "Silicon Savannah" remains embedded within transnational circuits of capital.

### **Keynesianism, Bretton Woods, and the Rise of Neo-Liberalism**

The curriculum's final class situates Kenya within the post-1945 world order. The Bretton Woods Agreement institutionalised a dollar-centred monetary system promising stability through managed liquidity. Yet Marxist critics argued that monopoly pricing and unequal exchange would perpetuate structural imbalance.

For Kenya, the promise of development through state-led growth gave way to debt crisis in the 1980s. The Volcker Shock and falling commodity prices precipitated austerity. The neo-liberal doctrine -- "the market knows best" -- masked the power of monopoly and finance capital while dismantling welfare provision.

The resurgence of austerity politics in 2024–25, marked by regressive taxation and IMF-linked reforms, reflects continuity rather than rupture. Popular protests signal renewed awareness that fiscal crisis is rooted in structural dependency, not merely administrative mismanagement.

## **Conclusion**

This curriculum demonstrates that Marxist political economy is neither antiquated nor foreign to African contexts. By scientifically embedding theory within Kenya's historical experience, it bridges academic analysis and popular education.

Kenya's trajectory illustrates the durability of capitalist contradictions. Colonial dispossession laid the groundwork for wage labour; post-independence elites entrenched dependent accumulation; neo-liberal reforms deepened class stratification; and contemporary debt regimes reproduce external control.

The curriculum analysed here offers more than theoretical instruction. It equips learners to interpret Kenya's crises through the lens of Marxist political economy,

It demands collective struggle for economic sovereignty and democratic control over production.

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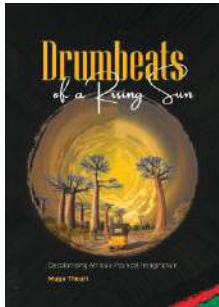
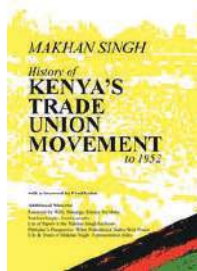
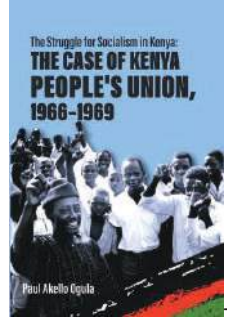
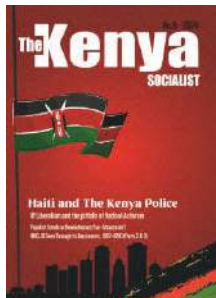
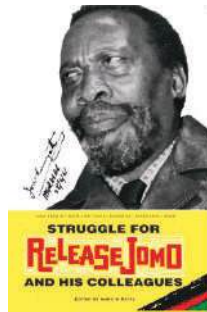
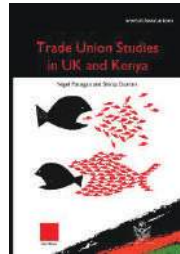
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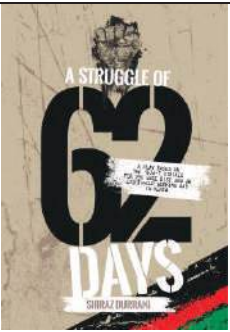
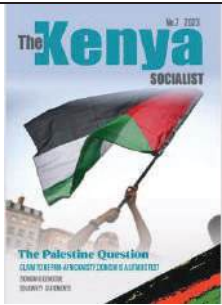
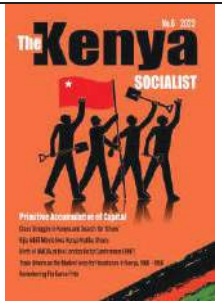
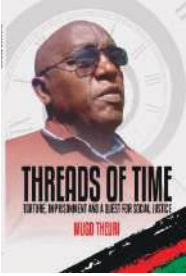
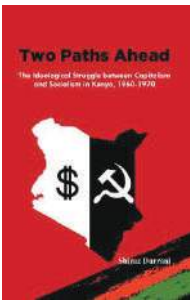
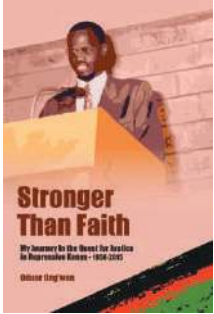
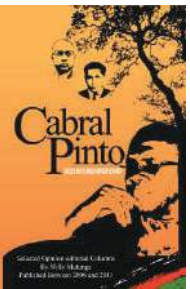
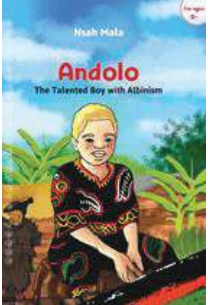
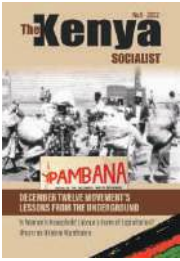
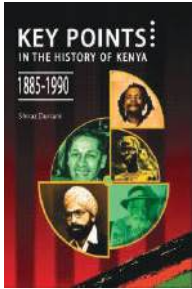
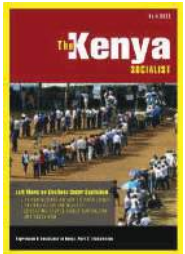
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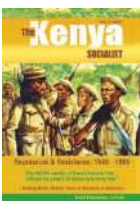
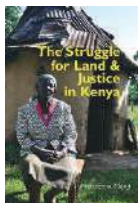
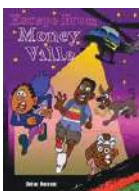
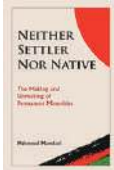
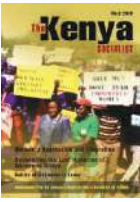
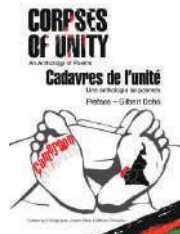
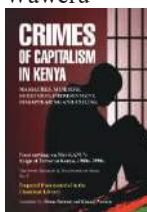
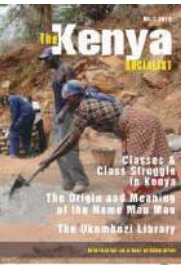
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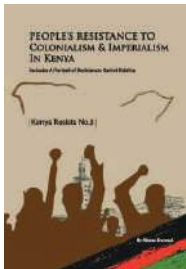
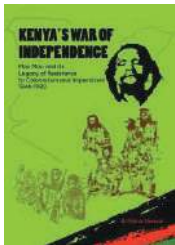
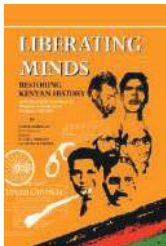
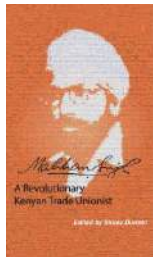
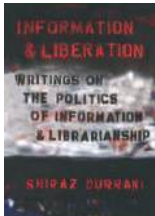
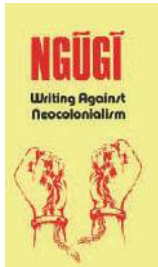


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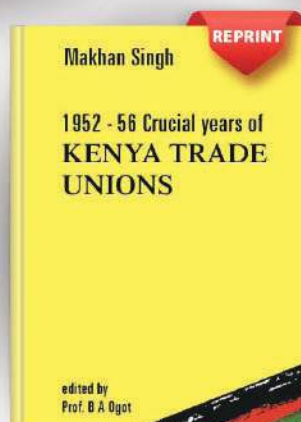
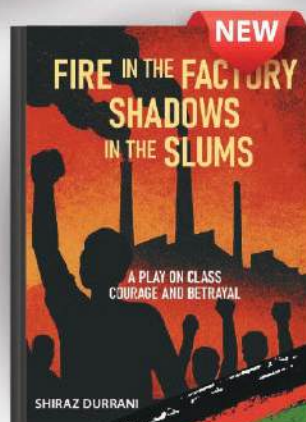
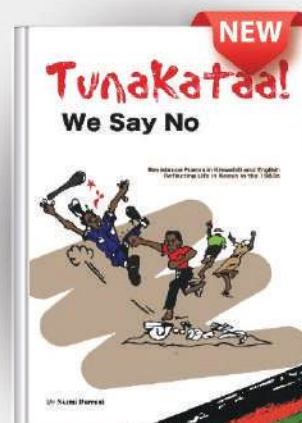
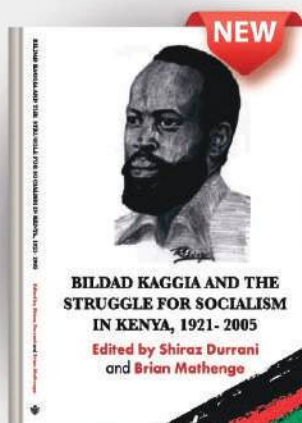
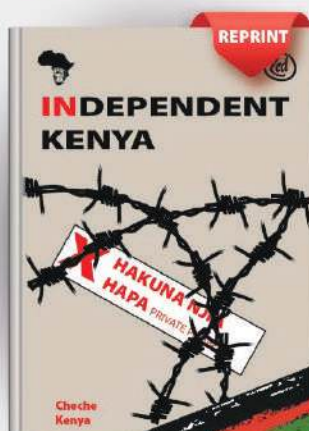
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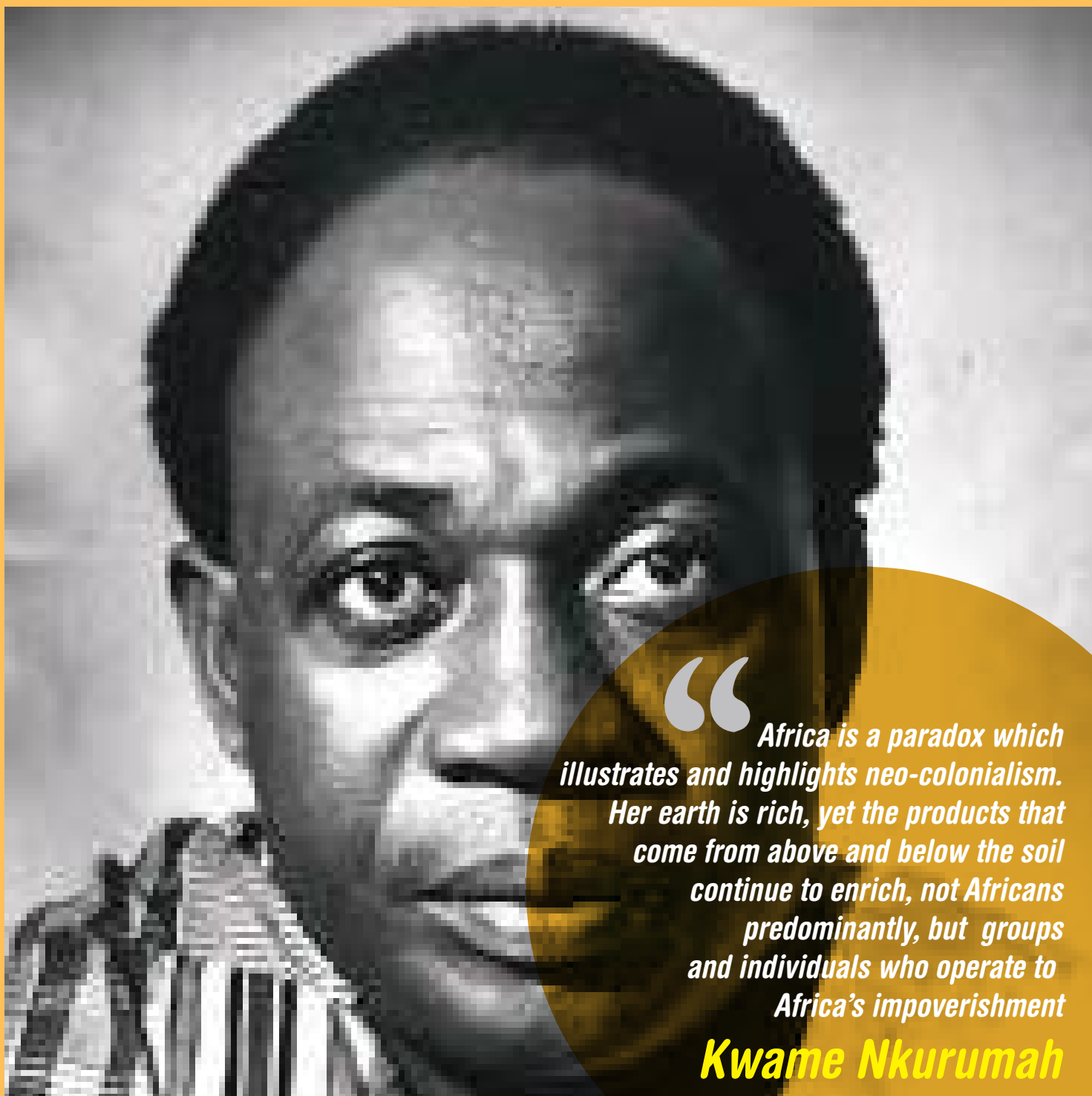
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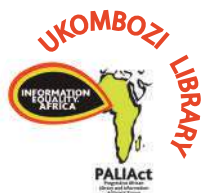
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*Africa is a paradox which illustrates and highlights neo-colonialism. Her earth is rich, yet the products that come from above and below the soil continue to enrich, not Africans predominantly, but groups and individuals who operate to Africa's impoverishment*

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