

## ***Assesment on the Sankara Campaign and relevance of Panafricentrage in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

It is a kind of historical revenge to relate in Berlin on these topics as a panafricanist. As you all know, it was in Berlin that European leaders in 1885 agreed on the first free trade agreement of the world then in the Congolese territory. There endless discussions allow bilateral and trilateral treaties avoiding intra-European wars and making the scramble possible for the full balkanisation occupation and dispossession of Africa. Today again Germany has a potential chance to change the role of a senile Europe trapped in the crisis of the Triade by playing a different role, in multilateral affairs. That entails a more proactive and internationalist approach to African affairs, totally different from the Africom based in Stuttgart, the alignment on so-called aid efficiency of the Paris Declaration, or classic bilateral co-operation. This is among other issues conditioned by the fight against impunity, a system allowed and reproduced by the actual world order.

Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso's first president, was assassinated 25 years ago, by elements of the World order. But the identity of his killers remains unresolved. Last year his grave has been vandalised but no one was charged for the crime. Impunity perpetuates the assassination of internationalists who dare influence the development of their people towards meeting basic needs. Sankara embodied what we still cherish, a self-directed, Pan-African development totally incompatible with the actual capitalist order.

Thomas Sankara embodied the hope for change that was based primarily on the efforts of the people of his country, his fellow citizens. At 37, like Che Guevara, Sankara joined the pantheon of revolutionaries. Thomas Sankara, among other priorities, focused on agriculture and farmers to stimulate national revival. He sought to create an internal market for a variety of consumer goods accessible to the masses and meet the greatest number of basic needs. He promoted social justice, women's emancipation and changes in men's attitudes toward women as portray in this excerpt of his speech :

« Thus, women's emancipation is at the heart of the question of humanity itself, here and everywhere. The question is thus universal in character».<sup>1</sup>

Thomas took a patriotic approach to managing public funds, campaigning against debt and the impoverishment of Africa, and agitating for internationalism that challenged the subordination of Africa by the global economic system. In short, he took on many radical initiatives that confronted the norms of the global system. He quickly alienated himself from local, regional and international supporters, especially from within his own backyard in Francafrrique.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Sankara, Speech, The revolution cannot triumph without the emancipation of women, March 8, 1987

Sankara's assassination, along with eleven of his comrades, and the wave of political crimes which followed, brought a bloody end to Africa's true last revolutionary experience. No revolutionary transformation has occurred ever since, even if the radical upheavals in North Africa did overthrow regimes, they have not fully give the power to the people and yet not started to change the means of production anywhere.

The people of Burkina Faso, Africa and the international community are still waiting to find out how the assassination happened and who was responsible for it. It's likely there was a joint international and local plot behind the killing of Sankara and his comrades. For two decades his death certificate cites 'natural causes' – at the same time as a dozen of other people – no explanation for their deaths has ever been given and to this day no-one knows exactly where he is buried by the inmates obliged to dig nightly. Suspicion for the assassination falls on his best friend and «brother», Blaise Compaoré, backed by a complex network of external supporters. Minister of Justice at the time of Sankara's death, Compaoré is still president of Burkina Faso.

It is in this context, that the Sankara family and GRILA have taken a historic initiative 15 years ago. The impunity built into the system in Burkina Faso has been shaken by CIJS's (International Justice for Sankara Campaign) 16-year international campaign, Justice for Sankara.<sup>2</sup> Having exhausted all legal channels in Burkina Faso, our legal community brought the matter to the UN Human Rights Committee, which set a historic precedent in Africa and within the United Nations when is recognised the violations of the state:

*'The refusal to lead an enquiry into the death of Thomas Sankara, the lack of official recognition at the place of his death, and the failure to correct his death certificate constitute inhumane treatment of Madame Sankara and her sons, in contradiction of Article 7 of the agreement (12.2).* But the Human Rights Committee did not retain the bidding right to demand an enquiry, nor did it demanded compensation or recognition of Sankara's burial place. Paradoxically, Burkina Faso has not provided any evidence to prove the authenticity of the burial place. The compensation offered to the family came to – around €66,231 or US\$65,000, not even the widow's normal pension since his death. Some experts estimated, due to a strange typo, that the sum was more generous (\$650,000/43 400 450 FCFA) and that the State made an effort by crossing out the word 'natural' on the odious death certificate, which claimed that Sankara had died of natural causes. Despite the amendment of the figure by lawyers and the fact that Sankara pilgrims to a grave in the cemetery are not proof that he is buried there, the Human Rights Committee declared in April 2008 that it was satisfied with its findings and had no intention of taking the matter any further.

On 15 October 2009, the legal committee of the CIJS filed a request for a subpoena and order for the DNA of the corpse in the sepulchre, erected by the Burkina Faso government, to be compared with that of Sankara's children. .<sup>3</sup> The fight against impunity must

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.grila.org/sankara\\_english.htm](http://www.grila.org/sankara_english.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Entrevue Burkina 24, Aziz Salmone Fall, <http://burkina24.com/news/2012/10/special-15-octobre-aziz-salmone-fall-prouvez-nous-que-cette-tombe-parmi-la-dizaine-issue-de-ces-assassinats-est-bien-celle-de-thomas/>

continue. Compaore is very instrumental in the actual crisis in Ivory coast as well as the kidnapping of foreigners in the Sahara, and the northern occupation of Mali. He seems to be playing several games, one side with françafrique, some with obscure integrist regional forces, another with the CIA in the AFRICOM plan to secure from Stuttgart military intelligence and geopolitical control of our continent.<sup>4</sup>

The capitalism is in crisis, even if just look as a crisis of capitalism.<sup>5</sup> I am giving the name 'supraimperialism' to the particular form of hegemon that neoliberal financialised oligopolies has imposed through globalisation during the past 30 years. Its contradictions impel it to intensify the capitalist mode of production, dispossession and predatory consumption although this is bound to be a blind alley. The most critical tension in the system will be played out between three declining centres - the US, Japan and Europe - and the emerging countries whose leading runners BRICS, are as much capable of reinvigorating capitalism as of speeding up its chances of being steered in another direction. But it is likely that their bourgeois elites will rather fall in the *moneytheism* of the actual truncated globalisation. More pain and less gain for the masses is then to be expected !

This order is increasingly synonymous with the resources sold off by transnational corporations and local business people unconcerned about the condition and fate of the Africans. The strategy of imperialistic forces to control our resources and our resistance by military power will not fade. A recent French Strategy military report for the next 30 years describe panafricanism as a threat to western interest.<sup>6</sup>

Fanon gave us a clear warning of this.<sup>7</sup> Instead in 2011, we have been presented with some 14,000 incidents of NATO combat aircraft bombing targets, often civilian, in Libya, the cold blood assassination of Ghadafi. We also saw the neo-colonial recolonisation of the Ivory Coast, the dismantling of Mali and the creeping extension of AFRICOM, for various pretexts, in the ranks of our armies and territories. Counter revolution is rampant in Maghreb; More indirect hegemony from China India and Qatar; and a mushrooming transnational big and juniors pillaging resources...land grabbing, and other forms of dispossessions in the great

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<sup>4</sup> According to some recent American findings, there at least 21 individual Offices of Security Cooperation for military activities with " African partner nations." With roughly 5000 american working full time on the field. The Stuttgart based (AFRICOM), slowly redeployed in Camp, like Lemonnier so-called only official U.S. base is now expanded by a web of activities : More details in **Obama's Scramble for Africa Secret Wars, Secret Bases, and the Pentagon's 'New Spice Route' in Africa** By Nick Turse, July 2012, in [TomDispatch.com](http://TomDispatch.com)

<sup>5</sup> Samir Amin, *La crise, sortir de la crise du capitalisme ou sortir du capitalisme en crise* (Paris: Editions Le Temps des Cerises, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> In <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/base-de-medias/documents-telechargeables/das/documents-prospective-de-defense/horizons-strategiques-2012/horizons-strategiques-approches-regionales>

<sup>7</sup> «Africa will be free. Yes, but she must get down to work and not lose sight of her own unity. It was in this spirit that, among others, one of the most important points of the first meeting of All-African Peoples' Conference at Accra in 1958 was adopted. The African peoples, it was said in this resolution, commit themselves to forming a militia that will be responsible for supporting the African peoples in their struggle for independence». In Fanon Frantz, *Pour la révolution africaine*, FM/Petite collection Maspero, Paris, 1978, p172

lake region... Return to the nightmare of apartheid bloody repressions against workers in South Africa...

The barbarity is fostered by the unyielding expansion of a capitalism in crisis that replies with counter-revolution every time we make advances in our struggles. Everywhere, it leads to compromises to which the social democratic and even radical left forces succumb, afraid of putting up opposition on an uneven playing field. The instrumentalisation of multilateral forums continues. The IMF, the World Bank and WTO have been preserved, despite their obsolescence and their obvious failure, as instruments reproducing the international order. However, the latter has been slowly overtaken by a transnational order where the role of the large corporations, as well as major culturalist ditch and civilisational gaps, cannot be regulated by the G20. This means a gradual world governance by a G20 that has no democratic mandate to do so.

The African Union - that replaced the Organisation for African Unity - is for many of our fellow citizens an institution that is distant from their real concerns; it resembles a union of heads of state that cannot afford its own policies. The assassination of Gaddafi is bringing about a loss of finances for the African Union, Libya had ended up paying a third of the operational costs of the organisation as numerous countries were no longer contributing. (Officially, the AU budget for 2011 was predicted to be US\$256,754,447 of which \$122,602,045 would come from member states and \$134.152.402 from international donors).

It is not only the funding that is problematic. The debate about the sort of pan-Africanism we want to construct has not started yet. The members of the organisation still believe in the feasibility of NEPAD, a scarcely viable project left to the G8 discretion<sup>8</sup> Today, Sankara would be deploring the fact that Africa still does not have a continental developing plan and that is why we are encouraging a move in this direction by offering the alternative of pan-African self-reliance (panafricentrage).<sup>9</sup>

Pan-Africanism would gain in fact by being geared towards two requirements suggested by panafricentrage: the reconstruction of what it is to be African, our cultural unity, and a forward-looking renewal to control accumulation and develop our productive capacity. Both need to return to the question of progress and modernity and, therefore, development. 'Africanity' and the pan-African renewal could both be based on a balance between maa't and internationalism - in other words, the fertile roots that provide for a harmonious future for Africa and its diaspora. The scientific revitalisation of pan-Africanism rely on many urgent needs.

Among them, the fact that the moment has come to set up an international and pan-African conference on the land and resources grabbing in Africa, especially agricultural land, and famine. One blatant reality of that is proven by UNICEF powerless to prevent the death of

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<sup>8</sup> Aziz S. Fall, GRILA, [Annotated critique of the 200 points in NEPAD](#)

<sup>9</sup> [panafrikanismusforum.net](http://panafrikanismusforum.net) and the talk on Panafrican Self Reliance [Panafricentrage](#)

about 29,000 children under five every day - 21 a minute - chiefly from preventable causes. One child in eight in Africa dies before reaching the age of five.<sup>10</sup>

Nobody will save our people; we must do it ourselves and soon we will be one billion of whom three quarters still live exposed to various lack of basic needs. This entails admitting that the complete liberation of Africa and its diaspora has yet to be achieved.

This project requires a bold reorganisation of the forces of change, especially our youth who, despite their capacity for outrage and reaction, have lived through more than two decades of depoliticisation and political disaffection, state disengagement from economy, by the diminishing field of vision of many of our more and more fragmented political parties mired in scenarios of artificial pluralist democracies and co-opted civil society. 'Panafricentrage', is a doctrine that draws on its reactivated roots. It can be expressed on the one hand in terms of a philosophy that stresses *maa't* (Not the goddess as such, but merely what it symbolises, in its sense of cosmic, terrestrial and personal balances, honesty, integrity, truth and social justice) and the rediscovery of our historic, socio-cultural and political programmes for regulation. On the other hand, it also depends on a practice of integrity that leads to pan-African and internationalist autocentred progress, which is ecological and not sexist, and which can contribute to a multi-centred world. Here the quest is for a genuine balance, an equilibrium very different from the one the world capitalist system pretends in vain to implement. It will never be reached such a balanced state because of classes, social and nations antagonist interactions, which impose a comprador horizon to our nation-States. Panafricentrage instead is a historic materialism, and a historic *maa'terialism* which begins with the historic conditions of material existence of Africans and understands their process of balanced transformation and reproduction in order to achieve a revolutionary praxis.

The devices of neoliberal recolonisation must be tirelessly fought, as much with land grabbing as with rapacious commercial crops or the introduction of GMOs. One of the battle fields is the issue of world food and for Africa this is an issue of prime importance. The world's current food production could easily feed the planet, but much of the cereals - 40 percent - is used as concentrated fodder for cattle to provide meat for the most affluent. Stock exchange speculation on rice, maize and wheat increase prices and hunger. To the contrary Autocentred development requires agrarian reform and self-sufficiency in food. The only solution for a true revolution in Africa.

We advocate, therefore, not sustainable, but endurable development. Let us briefly identify the immediate strategic horizons that condition the future struggles of Africa and its diaspora and that are likely to help them triumph with the help of internationalists from the North:

- Self-sufficiency in food, agrarian reform, modernisation of agriculture to the rhythm of each society; markets with goods for mass consumption, to satisfy basic needs ( here we are

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<sup>10</sup> [UNICEF](#)

not talking of a so called food security built by the agribusiness model, but rather a self sufficient agriculture that allow food sovereignty.

- Nationalisation of resources conditional to popular, patriotic participation
- Light industrialisation that complements the agriculture and the rebalancing of urban/rural income. Diversified and as much as possible ecologically modes of industrialisation articulated on regional integration and complementary poles
- Regional and continental integration accelerated by complementarity and levelling out.
- Backing patents and technology that are within our grasp and our means.
- A central bank, a continental currency;
- Continental parliament for the main issues regarding development and security.
- A continental army and a civil brigade for prevention of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction.
- South /south, Tricontinental cooperation against speculation, with internationalists from the North who share with us the fight against impunity, illicit amassment of wealth and the violation of human rights.
- Collective fight against paying the debt; disengage from programmes capping poverty-prsp etc.. and weigh up how to reform the international institutions in favour of internationalist cooperation with a 0.7%,untied ODA.
- Full emancipation of women and change of male mentalities.
- Democratic repolitisation of the people and their own organised efforts to counter imperialism, comprador regimes and anti-progressive behaviours. Active participation of young people in socio-political mechanisms for the making and implementation of decisions.
- Decipher the irresponsible, ostentatious consumerist behaviour and rediscover ways of living solidarity.
- Safeguard natural and environmental resources, by living ecologically and with a social conscience.
- Steer the energy of the progressive diaspora and the life forces of the continent towards Panafricentrage.

- Arrange the return to Africa from the Americas and elsewhere of the African diaspora
- Work for a progressive, humanist, multi-centred world and for the preservation of common 'goods' via a development that is both responsible and of the people.

Nobody can predict the outcome of these struggles; the immediate future will rise out of the disruption of the balances of power - the socio-political, economo-cultural, gender and generational. In the meantime, it is a question of consolidating the gains, broadening the scope of a social, humanist and progressive (and, if possible, a creative socialist) response to the unilateral market model with its global apartheid. We must advance into our future, eyes open, uncompromisingly and without nostalgic attachment to the past.

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