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UFAHAMU

JOURNAL OF THE AFRICAN ACTIVIST ASSOCIATION

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UFAHAMU accepts contributions from anyone interested in Africa and related subject areas. Contributions may include scholarly articles, political-economic analyses, commentaries, review articles, film and book reviews, and poetry. Manuscripts must be between 20-30 pages, clearly typed, double spaced, with footnotes on separate page(s). Contributors should keep copies of their manuscripts. The Editorial Board reserves the right to edit any manuscript to meet the objectives of the journal. Authors must submit *two* copies of their manuscripts and a brief biographical note, including position, academic affiliation and recent significant publications, etc. All correspondence - manuscripts, subscriptions, books for review, inquiries, etc., - should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief at the above address.

COVER: Upper register: motif from twined mat (*caws*) from northern Somalia. Grass embellished with turquoise and violet yarns. Used as wall covering inside the *aqal*. Lower register: motif from carved wood Somali comb. Collected before 1898 among the Gasar Gudda ethnic group of the Luba region on the Jubba.

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JACQUES DEPELCHIN: PHD. (Stanford). Professor Depelchin taught history at both Dar-es-Salaam University and Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique. A member of the history workshop of the CEA created by the late Aquino de Braganca and the late Ruth First, Dr. Depelchin is currently the SSRC Visiting Scholar at the Institute of International Studies at Berkeley where he is working on a manuscript, *An Economic History of Zaire, 1960-1980*.

SHEILAH CLARKE EKONG: Doctoral Candidate in Anthropology, UCLA. Currently on leave of absence from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, O.A.U. in Nigeria, Ms. Ekong is planning to return to Nigeria this January to collect data for her dissertation and resume teaching.

PATRICK FURLONG: Since he submitted this article, Dr. Furlong has finished his dissertation at UCSB and is now on the faculty of Presbyterian College, South Carolina. He's the author of *The Mixed Marriages Act: An Historical and Theological Study*.

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Wend Na Maag Tenga A Yinga*

Thomas Sankara

(1950-1987)

Just before going to press, the shocking news reached us that Captain Thomas Sankara, Head of State of Burkina Faso since August 1983, had been killed following a coup d'etat. The full details surrounding the coup have not yet emerged. But we, the members of the African Activist Association, mourn Sankara's death and the circumstances surrounding his execution.

We shall always support the people's struggle for total liberation by any means necessary, yet we also believe that violence must be used as a last resort. Radio Ouagadougou has announced that the leader of the coup, Captain Blaise Compaore, deposed Sankara to put an end to his "autocratic regime" and executed him as a "traitor to the revolution". What evidence has Compaore presented to the world to support these allegations? What crimes had Sankara committed that deprive him of every man's right to due process? To be sure, we are not the ones to judge whether Sankara had strayed from the revolutionary path, but how can we not be concerned by the manner of his execution? How can we be sure that Compaore's revolutionary rhetoric masks not that same self-seeking pursuit of power that we have seen in so many other coups?

Whatever his faults may have been, Thomas Sankara stood out among leaders for the extraordinary degree to which he identified with the common man of Africa. Sankara's deep loyalty and affection for his nation and dramatic confrontations with its problems earned him the respect of progressive elements worldwide. His death comes as a great shock, and until we hear evidence to the contrary, we shall condemn Sankara's execution as another brutal manifestation of the lust for power.

* Roughly translated: "Condolences".

Editorial

This is an interdisciplinary issue with a tilt towards the liberation struggles in Africa. The time has come when no retreat or compromise is any longer possible; the people of Africa fully realize that, to paraphrase Marx, the best criticism is the criticism of arms, or in the wisdom of an African maxim: no oppressor will get off your back by pleading with him.

The freedom fighters in South Africa and those in Western Sahara take that maxim to heart by clearly defying the odds and taking up arms against a ruthless adversary. The interview of Zahra Ramadane of the Polisario and Teresa Smith of Western Sahara campaign by UFAHAMU attest to the high morale of the liberation armies in both countries.

Africa's problems can't be exhausted here even in summary fashion. But, what Tsegaye Gebre-Medhan mentioned in his poem, "Ours", about Haile Selassie's Ethiopia, can be generalized, albeit to varying degrees, to the rest of the continent:

On your head
Wind blew
In your chest
Life fluttered
In your belly
Progress rotted
Under your feet
Peasants died.

But the African martyr can never sleep peacefully in his tomb, until his blood is avenged. The process of justice can be long and tedious, but no criminal escapes with impunity. The oppressor is haunted by both souls of the dead and the living, who are constantly rising up against him.

But, the ubiquity of the souls of Africa's dead does not deter determined colonizers from utilizing all sorts of strategies. Neo-colonialism is very much alive; as an African

proverb warns "Don't be fooled by the migration of the locust. They leave their larva behind." The strategy is the same: instead of giving chase with sticks, it is with grain that attempts are made to lure Africa back to the halter and heel-ropes of yester-year. This time, the grain takes the form of aid, but no aid is value-free. The visitation of this debt-cum-aid will haunt future generation of Africans, as no country encumbered with debts will be worth its name. Palliative measures, on the part of African leaders will show its effects on the living as well as those yet unborn. The process of using our countries as pawns by the leaders to siphon off millions of dollars has a parallel in what African ethnic or clan chiefs had done by signing away muniments pertaining to the ownership of the land to agents of colonial powers usually for paltry price. The massive infusion of loans into African economies (in any case transit money to Swiss banks) is another way of repeating past mistakes. Yet our present chiefs cannot claim innocence based on ignorance of the language and customs in which transactions are made.

The articles and interviews in this issue attempt to contribute to the enhancement of such a process of liberation. J. Depelchin's piece delves into the thorny question of anti-communism and the writing of South African history. The all too well-known subterfuge of guilt by association is overused in some Western circles and one cannot but question the intelligence of its users or their lack of respect for the intelligence of others. While the African's real or imagined affiliation with communism is over-played, the Boer's explicit support for Nazism is down-played. Furlong's piece is published with a view to generate some form of discussion on this important topic. While no one should really forgive, let alone forget, the Holocaust, in the same vein, no one with any modicum of sense should keep quiet about similar pogrom perpetrated in South Africa by the moral and intellectual heirs of Nazism.

Mwase's article on Namibia takes up the economic web in which Namibia will find itself after independence, if the former League of Nations trustee is liberated before South Africa [Azania]. Entering the aesthetic domain Soremekun's discussion reveals cosmic optimism that pervades African traditions. Sheilah Ekong's analysis of Peter Ekeh's works and Umar Abdurrahman's discussion of Ekwensi's *Burning Grass*

closes the circle. And to close this editorial let us once again visit Gebre-Medhin's poem:

Time old [i.e. Africa]
with your eyes
in today's date
your feet
in pre-historic.

The hour has come, therefore, for Africa to be manumitted from the tyranny of time. For that, those in the battlefield must fight. For that, we who are away from the field spread the word. In the nomadic environment the experience of stray animals is frequent. At such times, all members of the community are called to the conference tree where the elders exhort all fast runners and the experienced to map out a strategy to retrieve the animals; hence, the importance of pooling our strings together in times of crisis. Unity is strength. The time has come for all of us to say in unison "Woza Africa."

Ali Jimale Ahmed

The present editorial board of UFAHAMU is a new one. We want to thank all those who came before us and kept the flame burning. We are especially grateful to the out-going editor and his "cabinet". Dr. Okoth is now teaching at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. Keep up the good work, Doctor!

In the same vein, we welcome the new executive committee of the African Activist Association, the parent organization of UFAHAMU, the different committees of the organization and the general membership.

We are looking forward to a great year!
