

INTRODUCTION

The articles in this number of UTAFITI try to reorient the 'social scientific' analysis of Africa through a problematic that 'acknowledges the centrality of social struggles in processes.'

As C.S.L. Chachage writes:

Such acknowledgement amount to theorizing and examining processes from the point of view of how people continually struggle and resist all forms of arbitrariness, hierarchization and the whole question of the emancipation of the civil society from the oppression of the states and capital in general. A body of knowledge which does not reflect the social conditions of struggles through which men and women are simultaneously transforming circumstances and themselves; a knowledge which regards the majority of the people as unscientific, incapable of thinking, backward, ignorant of their own interest, superstitious, devoid of initiative or creativity, *ad infinitum*, even if socialist, Marxist or Africanist; is fundamentally oppressive, arrogant and authoritarian and reinforces hierarchization.

In his article, Chachage also shows clearly how the neglect, by development theoreticians, for the centrality of the fact that it is the rebelling masses of people who make history (including that of African development) has made them to continuously err. Theories of development, instead of informing and arming the *people's capacity* to development and self-development (to social transformation), demobilize and frustrate it. Cut from the movement of the struggles of the African rebelling masses, what is claimed to be the African vision cannot be but blurred.

Reviewing Walter Rodney's *A History of the Guyanese working People 1881 — 1980*, Bonaventure Swai also re-emphasizes the fact that even for 'history doing' one must start from the point of view of struggles of the rebelling masses of people simultaneously transforming circumstances and themselves. Historical knowledge, as a 'social and political act' must aim at making people

understand that they 'could be more than what they seem.' It is on that basis, among other things, that their capacity to make history can be stirred up. A historical knowledge — as theories of development — that tries only to make people understand that they are powerless to transform their own selves and circumstances is thus an oppressive political act.

No liberation, no independence, no socialism, no emancipation of Africans, etc. will take place on the basis of such a knowledge.

'African liberation', 'national liberation', 'African emancipation' 'African independence' 'African socialism', 'Authenticity' 'self-reliance' etc, all these calls are saying that there is in Africa, a *foreign presence* and it is dominant: *Africa is under siege!* Creative arts, political discourse, religious discourse, philosophical discourse, scientific discourse, etc, on Africa, reflect that fact: the need to struggle with the foreign presence. To be sure, there are people, even in Africa, who say laudly that without that foreign presence, *we cannot think, we cannot love, we cannot eat, we cannot play, we cannot rest*, or in brief *we cannot live*. It seems that Africa is constantly summoned by this foreign presence. The struggle, in Africa, to reduce the realm of necessity and enlarge the realm of freedom has been confronted by the foreign presence as a 'political unconscious' affecting the African people's behaviour.

Marked by that 'political unconscious', and removed from the rebelling people's struggles, what is claimed to be the African vision has been vacillating between a hysterical hostility to the foreign presence seen as truth, docility to the foreign presence seen as salvation and a zealous search for recognition by the same foreign presence (exhibitionism). Such a vision cannot, of course, guide the process leading to a new 'self-emancipating African Society.' How to avoid falling to the pressives of received sanction and conceptualize the African authentic *self-apprehension*? From *where* and with what/how can the African self-apprehension be possible? This can only be grasped through an analysis of the rebelling masses. Struggles for African Liberation in their *proper historicity* and draw certain lessons to help us confront similar problems in their present *effective historicity*.

The capacity of the African people (for genuine national independence, national liberation, people's based project of society or development) can only be grasped, evaluated and consolidated through an analysis of specific people's struggles (national or cul-

tural, class, gender etc) against domination, oppression and exploitation. What has been the African people's experience of people's capacity (working class political capacity, national bourgeoisies's political capacity, women's political capacity, etc) in struggling against neocolonialism? How, with the lessons drawn from it, can this African people's political capacity be developed to sustain African social transformation?

Normal O'Neill's and Wamba-dia-Wamba's articles focus on specific historical experiences in which the people's political capacity in Sudan and Congo-Kinshasa was highlighted. Circumstances in which the Sudanese masses of people (clearly specified in their class composition) have been struggling up to the overthrow of Numeiri's regime are analyzed. It is also clearly shown that this partial victory in no way resolved the national question in Sudan for which the rebelling masses of the Southern Sudan especially (now led by the SPLA/M) have been fighting for many years. By highlighting the limitations of the subjective conditions of struggle, the Sudanese people's political capacity has evolved a little bit.

The first mass based armed insurrection in Africa if not in the whole third world, against a newly independence' is briefly analyzed, highlighting how the leaders of the movement themselves viewed their own weaknesses which led to their failure. The self-evaluation of their experience, a political act so rare in Africa, left us with a remarkable document that has unfortunately been almost unknown for many years.

From George Rubiik's article on Guinea, it is clear also that a revolutionary regime or movement that neglects or goes against the centrality of the rebelling masses of people in the making of revolutionary history, ultimately changes into its opposite, a counter-revolutionary regime. A repressive machinery developed through the process of terrorizing the regime's opponents, could not have failed to emerge and complete, through a coup d'Etat, the reversal process.

Finally, Virginia U. Ola's review article — dealing principally with forms of consciousness as reconstructed through art forms, underlines the gender question in social practices of the African mass of people struggling to transform simultaneously their own selves and circumstances. And here too the process of development of the *women's capacity to struggle* and overcome gender

oppression is singled out as the focal point of analysis and not just a description of various alternative ideas or attitudes.

It is hoped that this number will be followed by others analysing other social struggles in which African people's capacity for social transformation has been put to test and heightened.