

The Case of the Decorated Donkey

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THE OAU

Created in 1963 ostensibly to address problems of the people of the continent, the OAU ended up only serving the selfish interests of African Heads of State, their foreign ministers and the staff of the secretariat in Addis Ababa like Salim Ahmed Salim. The masses of the African people still wallow in poverty and disease, die in senseless wars whilst illiteracy and ignorance are on the increase. The toothless bulldog that was the OAU looked on helplessly.

These leaders were able to see the hopelessness of the body. What they failed to discern, however, is the reasons for its uselessness. If they did, they would not have deceived themselves in renaming it as AU. The OAU could not stand the test of time for one main reason. The reason was because it was founded on the basis of money. Member States were to contribute money to run the affairs of the organisation. The resources of every country are controlled by a few very wealthy individuals. Even military regimes are not free from the influence of the owners of capital. Thus, having been formed with the resources of the rich, what else could the OAU do if not working in the interest of the owners of capital and not the poor masses? Is it not the one who pays the piper who calls the tune?

The OAU would not, for instance, take firm measures on the numerous conflicts and wars in Africa because wars are a matter of big business. Producers and distributors of arms and weapons make super-profits in war situations. Part of the money they make is used to sponsor governments' contributions to the OAU. So, how can the OAU bite the finger that feeds it? In other words, the OAU was a reformist organisation, seeking to work within a world system which puts profits first and people second. Nothing can ever go on for the benefit of humankind as long as money is around. Only those who own capital can be free from want for they have the purchasing power.

AND THE AU?

The AU is to be modelled on the European Union and is the brainchild of Col. Gadhafi, the life-president (or dictator?) of Libya. Reports have it that he has already given one million US dollars to fund the transformation. It is therefore not surprising that at the summit he was seen by the other Heads of State as the boss. In fact he reportedly (and surely on the basis of his cash) wanted the house to maintain Salim Ahmed Salim, the outgoing secretary-general, in the seat to effect the transformation.

Another VIP ("Very Ignorant Personality") at the summit was the outgoing chairman General Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo. A ruthless military dictator who took power in 1967 and has since been on top there. Then there was the host, President Frederick Chiluba, who reneged on his promise to abide by the constitutional demands to step down at the end of his second term. It was only through mass protests and resignations by his party's bigwigs that it appears he will now back down. And even only three days before the summit his former close ally was assassinated and it is rumoured that the government had a hand in it.

This throws some light on the nature of the people promoting and ushering in the AU. We are told that this time a central bank, a parliament and a court will be established. The idea of an African Central Bank is a novelty, even though we have seen the African Development Bank

based in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Like any other bank, the ADB and the one to be set up by the AU have one purpose-to create profits for the shareholders who part-own the company.

As regards the continental parliament, the following example will give us an insight into what it will be doing. In Gambia the average worker earns about 600 Dalasis a month. A member of parliament gets 7000 Dalasis a month though most of the decisions taken in all parliaments the world over are anti-working class. Therefore a Gambian in an all-African parliament will undoubtedly receive more than what they are getting now. All at the expense of the poor masses.

Finally, who is an African court of justice going to try? Even those in The Hague and Arusha (Tanzania) have not done anything to the benefit of the people of the world. So what is the farce being staged? Where parliaments and courts are institutions of oppression under the profit system, banks are the places from where all evil transactions are carried out with the intention of defrauding the masses. No wonder that the Heads of State said they were turning the OAU into a "larger trading bloc".

WHICH WAY FOR AFRICA?

The operations of the AU can be predicted by considering the main programme the leaders discussed at the summit on the way forward for Africa. It was a plan called "The African Initiative" which is a merger of "The Millennium African Recovery Programme" (MAP) championed by Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and "Omega Plan" spearheaded by Abdou Wade of Senegal. The two main points of the Initiative are that democracy be consolidated and that the West should increase investment in Africa.

In our money-dominated world of today democracy can only mean the right of the rich to dictate to the poor. In the same vein increasing investment in Africa means pumping in more money to reap more profits. Investors are in search of profits, they are not humanitarians seeking to help the poor. The call for democracy and investment which the AU will implement means that governments should hold down the masses so that the rich can pillage and plunder without any hindrance.

Consciousness has many stages. The lowest stage is centred on people who think only about themselves. Selfishness. Others are a step higher. They are concerned only about their family. Then, there are those who check only their tribe mates, tribalists. Then there are the many nationalists defending their national flags no matter what. We also have the so-called Pan-Africanists, the pax romana, the white supremacists, etc. But the highest stage of consciousness has to do with those who are internationalists. These are socialists who are not limited by space. They see every issue from a global perspective. Therefore whether it is ECOWAS, OAU, AU, Commonwealth, name it, no problem can ever be solved unless the money system is booted out and a moneyless system put in place where every one has free access to any product or service. It is only then that Africans and humankind as a whole will be free from want.

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Ghana

Note from the Editors

Suhuyini reports on the African Union – the brainchild of Col. Gadhafi – and in whose interests it can be expected to operate.

This article has been reproduced from the Socialist Standard (October 2001), the monthly journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain [the SPGB is NOT an anarchist organisation]

The article is good and critical. However, the first part of the article makes the mistake of saying that the OAU was there to address people's concerns – which is in fact not the case. The OAU was a bourgeois institution set up primarily to look after the interests of the new rulers after decolonisation. This was also the response after Nkrumah was toppled in Ghana and other countries (or rulers) saw the same threat to themselves. There wasn't the people's interests at heart even in the beginning.

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