



The title of this document is indicative of what it contains. "Wananchi" is a Swahili word whose literal translation is "the owners of the land or of the country", or to put it more colloquially, "the Common Men". It is therefore very obvious from the cover that it is the common man's declaration as opposed to that of the elites, which the document is all about.

The Wananchi Declaration is the political manifesto of the Kenya Peoples' Party (KPU) - the second political party in Kenya. At first sight it would seem rather odd that there should be another political party in a developing country like Kenya where the urgent problem is that of mobilising all available resources for the supreme task of nation-building and economic development, and not to dissipate energies in organising futile political parties. There is, after all, another political party - the Kenya African National Union (KANU) - the present ruling party in Kenya. The whole phenomenon is even odder when we see that the KPU is led by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga who is on record as having been a supporter of the single party state. How can we account for this state of affairs? There are two explanations.

One, the nature of the single party itself. There has been a lot of muddled thinking and bizarre pronouncements on the one-party state. Literature and analysis on the single party has always tended to centre on the working and experiences of the Communist parties elsewhere outside Africa and during a historical period which is not directly relevant to contemporary Africa. Even in those studies done in Africa on specific single party systems, the intention has been invariably to expose these systems as not being democratic. And when these democratic weaknesses were 'found', they were immediately assumed to be the characteristics of all single party systems in Africa. Rarely has the single party in Africa been studied objectively, taking into account the objective conditions of the country, its historical antecedents as well as the wishes and aspirations of the people.

The single party system, like any other party system, is a particular type of political organisation. And as such it can be described as being democratic or otherwise depending, of course, on the extent to which it is controlled by the people. It will be democratic if it is controlled by and expresses the wishes of the people - the Wananchi. It will be dictatorial or oligarchic if it simply expresses and serves the interests of one man or a group of men. Thus,

centralisation of political power - whether in one man or a group - does not in itself constitute a democratic one party system.

It is true that some of the so-called one party states in Africa are simply euphemisms for dictatorships. The single-party has the potential of being an effective vehicle of the peoples' will and power as well as being an instrument of dictatorship of the worst reactionary type. A single party system of the type that exists in Guinea and Tanzania where the individual citizen - the Mwananchi - can fully and effectively participate in the affairs of the country at all levels, can indeed be a powerful instrument of nation building and de-colonisation.

We must not therefore confuse any concentration of political power in a state as single party system. Worse still, we should not allow others to persuade us into believing that a given country is a democratic single party system, particularly when this very persuader does not recognise another system with seemingly similar characteristics as being a democratic single party system.

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga asserts that when the KPU was formed, KANU had ceased being a democratic political party. KANU was thus not a party of the Wananchi. Another party reflecting the wishes and aspirations of the people had therefore to be found.

The second explanation is centred on the contemporary political scene in Kenya itself. Kenya's struggle for independence was one of the bitterest in contemporary anti-colonial history in Africa, comparable perhaps to the heroic struggles of the Algerians. And yet, in spite of all these losses of life, of deprivations, humiliations and exploitations which took place under British colonial administration and during the Mau Mau period, Kenya today shows no visible sign that the old master is no longer in the saddle, that things have changed, that Kenya is an African country and that the interests of the indigenous people - not the settler - are indeed paramount; that, in short, the African is himself in command of his destiny. The faces are unmistakably African but the system is, equally, very much un-African.

The first part of the Declaration provides the historical background and lists specific events leading to the formation of the KPU in 1966. Indeed, the Declaration is an incisive indictment of the KANU Government of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and his colleagues. And the critique is more pungent because it comes from a group of distinguished leaders who were at one time in the forefront of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles in Kenya, and were indeed themselves part of the original government of independent Kenya, six years ago. The KPU argues that if any changes have taken place in these six years of formal independence, they have been to reinforce rather than to change the colonial situation. What has gone wrong in Kenya?

The KPU's answer can best be presented within the context of the two prevailing theories of independence in Africa.

The departure of the colonial masters from Africa conveyed different meanings to different people. To some African leaders, independence meant nothing

more than the assumption of the African's "natural rights" to rule himself. It was, as it were, a mere changing of the Guards. Nothing really changed except the ruling elites - the Guards - now Africans instead of the colonial masters. To others, independence meant the beginning of a long and difficult road to a real self-determination and to enduring harmony between individuals in the community. And this essentially implied a radical modification of the inherited colonialy-created socio-economic and political structures, into something more functionally effective and meaningful to the people themselves.

The basic difference between the two types of African leadership is aptly expressed in what President Obote once termed as those who are satisfied with "limited sovereignty" and those who strive for "complete sovereignty".

The Wananchi Declaration, as well as its leaders, emphatically asserts that the present Kenya Government belongs to the former group of African leadership. And this is the reason why Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and Mzee Bildad Kaggia left KANU and formed the KPU.

Kenya's independence provides an example par excellence of successful colonialism. After some deliberately calculated hesitations and 'reservations' the British handed political power to a select group of people in Kenya who were considered "fit" and "worthy" of British trust. Those who have been tried and tested and proved to be reliable despite their noisy anti-colonial, anti-imperialist rhetoric.

While those who proved to be intractable and dangerously deviant, like Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and Mzee Kaggia, were later skilfully weeded out. In this intricate political surgery the national bourgeoisie was not alone. One certain Attwood, a former American Ambassador in Kenya - has admitted his role in no uncertain terms. There might have been others.

This same approach of subtly working on the national leadership, of attempting to corrupt it, has also been used on other African leaders like President Kaunda, Nyere and Obote, but these proved to be uncorruptable. Their sense of commitment and nationalism is too formidable a stumbling block for the imperialists to negotiate with.

In short, the KPU's indictment against the present Kenya leadership is that it has betrayed the nationalist revolution - that those who died in the forests during the Mau Mau period lost their lives in vain. The objectives for which they gave their lives have not so far been realised in Kenya, nor will they ever be as long as the present leadership is in power. Kenya is still dominated by the settlers, if not by their physical presence then certainly their values are predominant everywhere.

Indeed, even the name of Mau Mau is increasingly becoming a taboo and an embarrassment to the present Kenya Government. Its elevation to the National war of liberation or the status of a national day of dedication to the heroic struggle would be too risky to the "international brotherhood of profit seekers" who have found in Kenya "a healthy and stable economic climate" (Wananchi p. 5.). At all costs, foreign capitalism must not be frightened away - they are very important to present Kenya. At any

rate, the distribution of the fruits of independence to the national bourgeoisie has not been commensurate with the sacrifices made by the recipient during those bitter days. For example, some of the present Ministers were not even there: Hence Mau Mau is too explosive a reminder to many people in Kenya today. It's best forgotten.

The present Kenya leadership has failed not only in not responding to the colonial situation, but also in the implementation of some of their most important policies. Even the wishy-washy "African Socialism" is now a dead letter. It is worse than that. In the words of the Declaration itself: "Under the cloak of something called 'African Socialism', Kenya is moving towards one of the more orthodox forms of capitalism to be found in the world today ... it seeks the Africanisation of trade, landholding, executive positions in private companies ..." The Declaration is thus accusing the KANU Government of using the good name of socialism for capitalist ends!

What has happened during those years of Uhuru? The period has revealed fundamental contradictions in the pronouncements and actual behaviour of the new Kenya rulers. No one can accuse the Kenya leaders of not being African nationalists, yet one is at a loss to understand what has happened. Is it a case of the proverbial dictum "If you can't fight 'em, join 'em"? Or is it an example par excellence of an elite determined to hold onto power?

In 1965 Kenya Ministers were speaking the language of the masses and of the dedicated revolutionaries. For example, one junior Minister put it: "... If we are to build a socialist system in Kenya in our life time ... we must therefore be prepared to deny ourselves the consumption of the numerous luxury goods on which the bulk of the incomes of the wealthy people in Kenya is now spent." The Junior Minister later warned that if the then existing system was not changed "... within the next five years we shall have a new social class with vested interests in control."

The Junior Minister was of course right, although a bit liberal in his estimation of the time involved. For the same person, but now full-fledged Minister said in the Kenya National Assembly in 1968 that he saw "nothing wrong in a civil servant engaging in business". In the same speech he was reported as saying that he did not see why Kenya should not have a few millionaires. Something traumatic has obviously happened to the Minister during the period to compel him to radically shift his posture - from socialist to capitalist.

It is the KPU's contention that the present Kenya leadership has in fact joined the ranks of the capitalist exploiters. And it was this say - and tragic - realisation which led "true nationalists", like the members of the KPU, to "press for economic and social changes to carry out KANU's earlier pledges to the people. They wanted more than the replacement of a few white faces with black". (Declaration, p. 3.)

But Kenya's case is not unique in contemporary independent Africa. Perceptive foresight was one of Franz Fanon's rare gifts. In 1961, Fanon clearly saw the emerging phenomenon of the great betrayal of the masses by the leaders for whom they

once willingly gave their lives. The leader who, once independence was declared "... far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie". (Wretched of the Earth, p. 134)

There is a wise Swahili saying "Kuwani Muone": grow (in age and maturity) and you will see (the reality). But for those who are involved spectators, they see the Kenya reality with shame and bitterness.

The Declaration warns those "who drive to their large new farms, their smart houses or their cocktail parties in their big new cars", that they cannot "fob the people off with a flag, an anthem and a Parliament ...". The KPU leaders seem to argue that the present Kenya leadership has forgotten that the very nationalist forces which compelled the mighty colonial power to release the Father of the Nation, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, are still at work in Kenya, and no one in Washington, London or Bonn can stop them. The present Kenya leadership must come to grips with this reality, or it too will have to go the way of the colonialists. No one can stand in the way of the masses - the Wananchi. Ironically, it is Mwai Kibaki, the present Kenya Minister of Commerce, who four years ago made this somewhat prophetic statement: "The choice and challenge before us is this: shall we use the political power we have inherited to bring about the necessary transformation to socialism or are we just to join and swell the ranks of those very few who are now wealthy and comfortable? The future course of development of our nation depends on what choice we make now. One thing I am sure of is that in this fight for economic liberation the peasants and the workers will never let go"

What does the Declaration propose for Kenya? In the first place it "invites all Wananchi to join its ranks". (p. 3.) The KPU is the party for the masses - the common man. It also provides a general formula for nation building and decolonisation, and for true independence and not for "limited sovereignty". The KPU proposes democratic socialism as the only appropriate method of development for Kenya. "Our goal is a democratic, socialist state, without exploitation by a privileged few" (p. 3) The Declaration minces no words on the definition of socialism nor on the role of nationalisation. Socialism entails putting "economic power into the hands of the people". The social and economic institutions

of the country must be utilised for the benefit of the Wananchi. "Of course the most important machinery in making capital contribute to growth will be public control or ownership of the means of production". (p. 10) And in a neat sentence, the Declaration almost casually asserts: "The KPU will see to it that the banks and insurance companies are nationalised". (p. 9.)

The settler-European dominated education system must be thoroughly cleansed of these alien and bourgeois values. The new socialist system must reflect the African presence in Africa. All in all, the Declaration proposes a thorough overhaul of present Kenya society. It commits itself to the proposition, already made by another socialist African political party - TANU - that if Africa is to be truly developed then it must be by Africans and under African terms. Thus, the KPU like her sister party TANU, is committed to the policy of socialism and self-reliance. "We have to learn to think for ourselves, to work out what is realistic for us". (p. 16)

The Wananchi Declaration is one of Africa's serious statements of African problems and their possible solutions. It does not provide answers to these problems: it is rather a bold statement of intentions based on clearly thought-out alternatives. But is the KPU capable as a party to implement these proposals? Does the Party have the support of the masses? These are difficult questions to answer since Kenya has never had an election since 1963. But judging by the amount of pressure put on the KPU and its personnel by the KANU Government, by the almost impossible conditions under which the KPU is working (it is not allowed to hold meetings); indeed, judging by the manner in which the municipal elections of August 1968 were handled when no single KPU candidate managed to fill in his nomination form correctly (!), and yet the Party is still a threat to the KANU Government, one rather feels that the KPU is a political force to be reckoned with in the contemporary Kenyan political scene.

Jaramogi Odinga and Mzee Kaggia belong to that increasingly rare breed of African political leaders that this continent has seen. Dedicated to the cause of the masses, principled and uncorrupted in their ideals and objectives. This is also the group to which Presidents Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere, Nasser, Obote, Nkrumah and Keita belong. It is also this group which is the main target of neo-colonialist and imperialist intrigue. These leaders deserve the complete dedication and service of all true African revolutionary nationalists.