

Shiraz Durrani: Guerilla Incursions into the Capitalist Mindset – Essays with focus on Kenya 1979-2023

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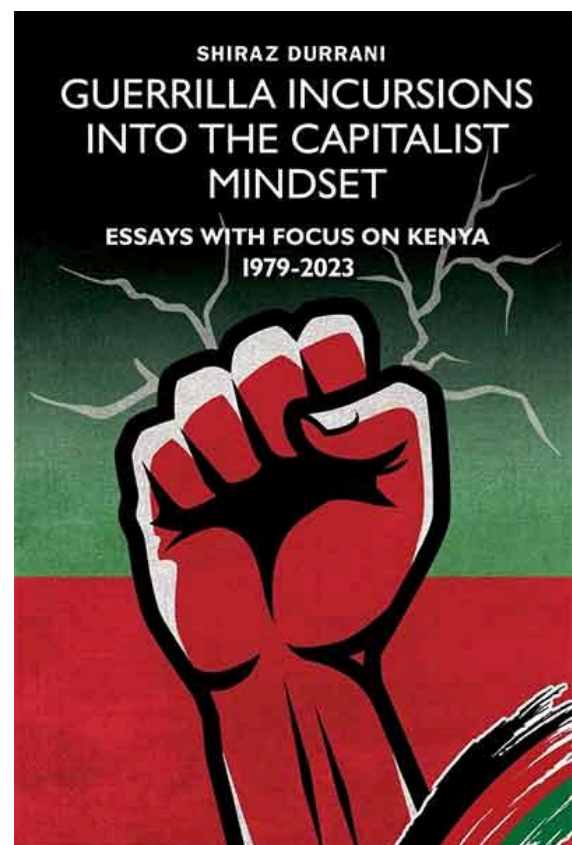
by [John Graversgaard](#)

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This book deserves to be an inspiration for all freedom-loving people in Kenya and internationally. These days we see brave people in action against the reactionary regime of Ruto. Continuing the long-time unfinished class struggle in this neocolonialist capitalist state.

The author Shiraz Durrani has for decades documented this struggle. He is a brave man standing up to imperialism and its lackeys in Kenya. He is an African with roots in the South Asian Minority and with a deep understanding of the misery of the people in Kenya, a former British settler colony. First humiliated and exploited by the British Empire and its white settlers. Then the new black bourgeoisie stole the liberation from the freedom fighters who gave their lives in the struggle.

Shiraz Durrani has the courage to write on this and the book is full of original documents from the freedom struggle. He was persecuted for publishing about the freedom fighters and had to flee from his homeland and got political asylum in the UK in 1984. In London, he and others established Vita Books which have since been published extensively. The Afro-American Richard Wright wrote in “The Color Curtain”(1956) about “the despised, the insulted, the hurt, the dispossessed – in short – the underdogs of the human race”. Shiraz Durrani saw the same, and the Kenyan people should be



thankful for his lifelong dedication to documenting the silenced freedom struggle. A history that was suppressed by the new rulers of Kenya after liberation. Kenya was formally liberated in 1963, but the power structure from colonialism was not demolished.

Shiraz got in the 60'es contact to the December Twelve Movement and as an activist, librarian, and researcher he got interested in the real history of the anti-colonial freedom struggle. A history he saw from a working-class perspective. Kenya's new rulers painted the Mau Mau movement, The Land and Freedom Army, as backward and primitive. Shying, hiding, and forgetting its radical history. A struggle where the nationalities united in a people's war. It was met with the most brutal repression by British imperialism using torture, hangings, and gulags. They also exploited so-called "tribal divisions". Shiraz has only contempt for the use of the concept of tribe, as he sees Kenya as comprised of many nationalities. They lived in relative peace but were subdued and split by colonialism. Kenya was a place with cheap labor and rich resources to exploit and combined with brute force super-exploitation was possible. In this climate trade unions played a pivotal role openly and in the underground as part of the resistance movement. The struggle was and still is a class struggle.

Shiraz has tried to shine a light on the struggle and some of its leaders like Maina Wa Kinyatti, Dedan Kimaathi, Karimi Nduthu, Bildad Kaggia, Pio Gama Pinto, and Makhan Singh. Publishing for equality and political rights brought the publishers into conflict with the neocolonial regime. In Kenya, there are about 40 languages in use and publishing other than English, the preferred language by those with economic and political power, was also a means of coming out with the message of liberation. So publishing could be an act of resistance bringing problems to the publishers. Shiraz experienced it when publishing articles on Pio Gama Pinto, and was threatened so he feared for his life and family and fled from Kenya.

The resistance under British colonialism was deeply rooted in Kenya and the freedom movement had in its high time 50 newspapers communicating about the struggle for land and freedom. Shiraz has continued to break the silence about these brave freedom fighters and their ideas.