

## **Samir AMIN PLEASE SUGGEST TITLE FOR PIECE**

Amilcar Cabral belongs in the pantheon of African freedom fighters. Leading a liberation struggle was only one of his achievements. He also had the best ideas for the construction of a modern, democratic, peoples' state, which would deliver on real and sustainable development.

### **Cabral's thesis: the 'suicide of the petite bourgeoisie' and the national question in Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau.**

When France, Britain and Belgium accepted the principle of political decolonisation in 1960, Portugal refused to go along. National liberation movements had no other alternative other than to wage an armed struggle. War always opens up real possibilities for the radicalisation of politics, but by the same token also lends itself to romantic illusions. A good many of the supporters of such movements in Africa and outside Africa (especially amongst Western "third-worlders") encouraged such illusions.

Although Cabral did share some of these illusions, I think his position needs to be seen in the light of the challenges faced by African peoples as they sought to shed the huge burden of colonialism. I will expand on that after first discussing Cabral's views in the context of ulterior developments in the countries concerned, Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau, but also other former Portuguese colonies. The validity of some of Cabral's theories can be put into question today.

One of Cabral's theories that needs to be reexamined is that of the "suicide of the petit bourgeoisie as a class." Certainly, the conditions thrown up by war often facilitate the display of the finer qualities of human nature, in which even the petit bourgeoisie share. Courage, solidarity and permanent contact with the peasant masses can help erase previous prejudice and ignorance.

But I remain unconvinced that once independence has been gained, social realities would change in the direction of an end to inequality: the advantages to be procured from positions of leadership are inevitably reserved for a minority, even if this group includes cadres drawn from the grassroots. The fight for socialism, in my opinion, is a very long war; the uncontested progressive historic role of national liberation movements notwithstanding, the signs were already there in the hierarchies created and the manoeuvring that went on at their very heart of these groups. The Soviet Communist Party model adopted by these groups also cemented these attitudes. How many militants, even the most courageous, could behave like unconditional or even fawning believers towards the national or local leadership? Some of the people I knew to be amongst the best militants, the most sincere towards the people, the most courageous on the military front, were sent to the front line – to a certain death in some cases – while the "chiefs" remained safe from risk. I saw then that "the petit bourgeoisie was not ready to commit suicide."

The other question concerns the Guinea Bissau-Cape Verde issue. I do not think the people of these two colonies constituted one nation – they are quite distinct. Guinea Bissau is part of West Africa - a multi-ethnic African country, similar to others in the region. Cape Verde is

totally different. It was in the Cape Verde islands, which the Portuguese inhabited from the moment they discovered them, that they later perfected the formula which was used to build America – a slavery driven plantation colony that was part of the Euro-Atlantic mercantile system. The formula was in fact defined to the last detail by the founders of the Portuguese (and later Spanish, British and French) colonisation of the Americas – slave trade, colonisation, creolisation of the colony and its administrative structures. Cape Verde is the ancestor of the Antilles and Brazil.

The electoral defeat suffered by the PAICV at the hands of the Creole petit bourgeoisie – and bourgeoisie – which had not participated in the liberation struggles - calls for a reinterpretation of what that society really is. This is certainly sad, because whatever its limits and the errors of government, it is to the PAICV that Cape Verde owes its very existence. It was the PAICV that gave its starving and barefoot people land and education. So why was it defeated? For one, it underestimated the role of the church. But there was also the arrogance in the daily behaviour of former brave fighters who had joined the administrative service. This was the explanation given to me by Pedro Pires, the PAICV general secretary. Yet the PAICV had several remarkable cadres it could count on, many more than in other African countries. I would say the same about the leftist opponents within the PAICV, who, having adopted the Maoist line, were disliked by the PAICV leadership to the point that many of them were forced to flee into exile in Portugal before returning later to the country. A page needs to be turned on these quarrels. What is important is to reconstitute a broad leftist front united around a minimal programme but retaining its diversity on the basis of mutual respect of the various groups or tendencies involved. I do not hesitate to say that this broad democratic front could include some elements who contributed to the victory of the right, either through pique or who were constrained because of the PAICV's triumphant sectarianism.

Independent Guinea Bissau quickly became like other countries in the region, dubbed “less developed” by Western agencies - that is, extremely dependent on foreign aid for the survival of their miserable state apparatus, after having given up on the project launched by Cabral and the armed resistance.

### *Angola and Mozambique*

Though Cabral was not chiefly responsible for what happened in Angola and Mozambique, he does share the responsibility with the first generation of leaders of liberation movements in Lusophone Africa, all of whom shared his idea of the suicide of the petit bourgeoisie.

Angola was as problematic as Guinea Bissau, albeit in a different manner. The MPLA was well implanted in the capital and especially in the educated classes, often metisse, a fact that the anti-white, anti-metisse nationalist demagogues didn't hesitate to exploit. The MPLA was also convinced that only a socialist path would meet the demands of the people, and included several militants who had been politically trained in the Portuguese Communist Party. The FLNA and UNITA were only tribal organisations, built around a demagogic chief with absolute power and with no political programme. Obviously, they were anti-communist and they were ready to make any and every compromise with Washington. Mobutu and even the PIDE (the Portuguese political police) in turn saw these groups as useful pawns against the MPLA. Later, when the elections pitted the MPLA against UNITA (the FLNA had disappeared in the unrest), voters said they preferred the “thieves” (MPLA) to the “assassins” (UNITA). It is true that during fifteen years in power in Luanda, the MPLA had changed, and

that corruption has become generalised. UNITA fighters continued their murderous tactics in the zones they controlled. This didn't prevent western media from spewing their ire on MPLA leaders (who were not very democratic, it is true) while eulogising Savimbi, the leader of the assassins (was he then a democrat?). Nevertheless the FLNA and UNITA existed, and UNITA is still around.

A stormy meeting erupted at the OAU at the end of 1974 when it was time to recognise the national liberation movement as the representative of the Angolan government. The first thing I observed was the noisy interference from the Soviet representatives, present in great numbers in OAU corridors. They, and a few allied African states, declared that since the MPLA was the sole force on the ground, only it had the right to form the legal government of the country. In my opinion, this position created more problems than it solved. Moreover, it was wrong, and everyone knew it. The USA was more subtle and allowed this point to be made by its allies.

Then it was China's turn to meddle - not wanting to allow only the Soviets and Americans to have a say in the matter. The Chinese proposals – very unofficial and in my opinion initially reasonable – called for a coalition government of all three organisations in order to avoid a civil war. I myself heard the Chinese ambassador say: if the MPLA is really that strong, it will take on board the others and lead them; if it is not, a coalition government appears even more crucial. However, soon after, China's anti-Soviet feelings began to drastically colour its own approach.

There was an MPLA government in Luanda which, even if it did not control the entire country, had reconciled itself to the perspective of war to finish-off UNITA. Since it was receiving Soviet military aid (Cuba's troops came in only later), China decided to continue backing UNITA (as it had done before 1972 supposedly in order to prevent the pro-Soviet MPLA having sole domination). It thus found itself on the same side as the USA and South Africa, which had spared neither financial nor military support to the murderer Savimbi. Mario de Andrade told me much later that the coalition government would have been the best solution, but he wasn't sure whether it would have been possible. Washington was intent on sabotaging the idea. Nonetheless, had such a compromise been possible, it would have prevented 17 years of useless war. At the end of this tragic period, the Soviet Union no longer existed, Cuba had pulled back (after handing out a resounding defeat on the South Africans, which was truly magnificent), the apartheid regime had also disappeared, and the MPLA no longer troubled Washington (although the USA never forgave them and still harbours ill-will to all those who dared to resist it). Savimbi's heirs were also still around, so there was no other option other than to accept to negotiate and create a coalition government. What a sad ending.

Things appeared much simpler in Mozambique. FRELIMO was the only national liberation movement. The problems appeared later, after liberation. I had frequent meetings in Dar es Salaam with the future Vice President, Marcelino dos Santos, along with Aquino da Braganca (who died in the plane accident that killed President Samora Machel) and with the party ideologue Sergio Vieira.

Their excesses came after liberation. Since FRELIMO was essentially a northern-based group, it was ill-prepared to control the situation in Maputo, to absorb the influx of the petit bourgeoisie who had not participated in the war but who had provided a mass of cadres,. They were rapidly promoted to replace the exodus of the Portugese. One "leftist excess" was the

party's response to its authority being challenged through unpopular measures such as collectivisation. Hard on the heels of this came the new war started by the South African-backed RENAMO. While it was evident that the "partisans" of this party, acclaimed by Western "democrats" were nothing but vulgar assassins, without any programme whatsoever, their very existence was due to the mistakes made by FRELIMO. The capitulation which followed the Nkomati accords (1987) with South Africa and the opening of negotiations with RENAMO, along with the adoption of multi-party politics, had a predictably catastrophic effect – collapse.

The huge damage caused by the triumphant ideology of NGOs as representatives of civil society has been forcefully denounced by the Swede Abramson (1999). It is obvious that these NGOs were for the most part a supplementary tool in the arsenal of foreign reactionary forces (the promoters of the "new neo-liberal world order" – without government!) created and manipulated by them, and supported by the local corrupt bourgeoisie. They hardly represented the authentic voice of the people.

Angola and Mozambique have become "ordinary" African countries, members of the regional grouping called SADC. They are now firmly within the orbit of South Africa, which, although free of the noxious apartheid, nonetheless has an expansionist agenda in southern Africa to the benefit of Anglo-American capital, as has been well documented by Hein Marais (1996).

This analysis of the internal policies of the countries concerned – whose margin of manoeuvre was reduced to zero by their alignment with the demands of imperialist globalisation – necessarily includes a discussion of the kinds of regional groupings that were formed and which, far from supporting the elaboration of an authentic and independent development project, were in fact content to serve as transmitters of imperialist domination.

### **The political economy of Africa in the global system**

It is usually claimed that Africa is "marginalised". The phrase suggests that the continent – or at least most of it south of the Sahara, except perhaps South Africa – is "outside" of the global system, or at best integrated into it only superficially. It is suggested also that the poverty of African people is precisely the result of African economies not being sufficiently integrated into the global system. I wish to challenge these views.

Let us consider first some facts which are hardly mentioned by the incense-bearers of current globalisation. In 1990 the ratio of extra-regional trade to GDP was for Africa 45.6 % while it was only 12.8 % for Europe; 13.2 % for North America; 23.7 % for Latin America; and 15.2 % for Asia. These ratios were not significantly different from those prevailing during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The average for the world was 14.9 % in 1928 and 16.1 % in 1990.<sup>1</sup>

How can we explain this curiosity that Africa is apparently even more integrated in the world economic system than any other developed or developing region? Of course the levels of

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<sup>1</sup> (Source : Serge Cordelier, *La mondialisation au delà des mythes*, La Découverte, Paris 1997, p. 141. All figures from WTO 1995).

development, as measured by per capita GDP, are highly unequally distributed, and, from that point of view, Africa is the poorest region in the modern world system, its GDP per capita amounting only to 21% of the the world average and 6 % of that of the developed centres. The high proportion of Africa's extra-regional trade with respect to its GDP reflects the small size of the denominator of the ratio. Simultaneously the exports (as well as the imports) of Africa represent only a minute proportion of the world's trade. And this, is exactly the reason that Africa is considered to be "marginal" in the world system, i.e. having little importance ("the world could live easily without Africa").

The concept that a country or a region is qualified as being marginalised if its quantitative weight in the global economy is small, assumes implicitly that the logic of the expansion of the global capitalist economy pursues the maximisation of production (and therefore also of trade). This assumption is utterly wrong. In fact it matters little that Africa's exports have represented only a minute part of world trade, yesterday and today. Capitalism is not a system which sets out to maximize production and productivity, but one which chooses the volumes and conditions of production *which maximize the profit rate of capital*. The so-called marginalised countries are, in fact, the super-exploited - in a brutal manner - and therefore they are impoverished countries, not just countries located at the margin of the system.

The analysis needs therefore to be completed on other grounds. The relatively modest ratio for the developed areas – North America (USA and Canada) and Western-Central Europe (the European Union, Switzerland and Norway) is associated not only with the highest levels of development but also with a qualitative characteristics that needs to be spelled out: *all developed countries have been built historically as autocentered economies*. I introduce here that essential concept which is ignored by conventional economics. *Autocentered* is synonymous with being essentially "inward-looking", as opposed to being *autarcic* (closed). That means that the process of capitalist accumulation in those countries which have become the centers of the world system has always been – and I submit continues and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future – simultaneously inward looking and open, even in most cases aggressively open (i.e. imperialist). That means that the global system has an asymmetric structure: the centers are inward looking – autocentered – and simultaneously integrated in the global system in an active way (they shape the global structure). The peripheries are not inward looking (not autocentered) and therefore integrated in the global system in a passive way: that is, they "adjust" to the system, without playing any significant role in shaping it. That vision of the real world system is totally different from the one offered by conventional wisdom which superficially describes the world as a "pyramid" constructed of unequally wealthy countries ranking from the lowest levels of GDP per capita to the highest.

My conclusion from this conceptualisation is that all the regions of the world (including Africa) are equally integrated in the global system, but they are integrated into it in different ways. The concept of "marginalisation" is a false one, one which hides the real question. What we need to ask is not "To which extent are the different regions integrated?" but rather to ask: "*In what way they are integrated?*"

As indicated earlier, the degree of integration in the world system has not significantly changed throughout the whole of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as is suggested by the dominant fashionable discourse on globalisation. There have been ups and downs for sure, but the trend which reflects the progress of the degree of integration has been continuous and rather slow, not even accelerating over the last decades. That does not exclude the fact that globalisation – which is an old story – has developed through successive phases that should be identified as

qualitatively different from each other, each focusing on the specificities of the changes commanded by the evolution of the centers of the system, i.e. by dominant global capital.

On the basis of the methodology which I have suggested, let us now look at the various phases of Africa's integration in the global system and identify the specific ways in which integration has operated during each of the successive phases.

### **SUCCESSIVE PHASES OF INTEGRATION**

Africa was integrated into the global system from the very start of the emergence of that system, in the mercantilist period of early capitalism (the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries). The major periphery of that time was colonial Americas where an outward looking export economy was established, dominated by European Atlantic merchant capitalist interests. In its turn that export economy, focused on sugar and cotton, was based on slave labour. It was through the slave trade that large parts of Africa south of the Sahara were integrated into the global system in a most destructive way. The subsequent "backwardness" of the continent is in good part due to that form of "integration" which led to a decimation of population to such an extent that it is only recently that Africa has begun to recover the proportion of the global population of the world it probably had in the 1500s. The Atlantic slave trade resulted in the dismantling of earlier larger state formations that were replaced by smaller brutal military systems that were permanently at war with each other in the supply of slaves for the slave trade.

In America itself, the mercantilist form of integration in the world system destroyed the potential for further development in many regions. During that phase of early capitalism the highest rates of growth were achieved in areas such as the Caribbean, Northeast Brazil and, the Southern flank of the north American British colonies. No doubt if experts of the World Bank had visited these places at the time, they would have written about the "miracle": the value of Sainto Domingoue's exports of sugar was, at the time, larger than the total exports of England! The experts would no doubt have concluded that New England, which was building an auto-centered economy, was on the "wrong track". Today, Saint-Domingue has become Haïti and New England has become the USA!

The second wave of integration of Africa into the global system was that of the colonial period, roughly from 1880 to 1960. Once conquered, it was necessary to "develop" Africa. At this juncture comes in both the reasonings of world capitalism – what natural resources do the various regions of the continent possess – and the conditions prevailing amongst existing African societies. We need here to take into account here the three models of colonization that operated in Africa: First, the trading economy that incorporated the small peasantry into the world tropical products market by subjecting it to the authority of a market controlled by oligopolies, making it possible to reduce the rewards for peasant labour to the minimum and to waste the land. Secondly is the example of the exploitation of the economy of southern Africa's reserves organised around mining, supplied with cheap labour provided by forced migration coming precisely from those inadequate "reserves" which served the purpose of enhancing the perpetuation of traditional rural subsistence. And thirdly, the establishment of the economy of pillage which the concessionary companies embarked upon by taxing without the return of a farthing and reaping of products picked from afar, where the local social conditions neither permitted the establishment of "trading", nor were there mineral resources

economically abundant enough to justify the organisation of reserves intended to furnish abundant manpower. The pillage of the Congo basin belongs to this third category.

The results of this mode of insertion into world capitalism were to prove catastrophic for Africans. First it delayed – by a century – any commencement of an agricultural revolution. It enabled surplus to be extracted from the labour of the peasants and from the wealth offered by nature without making any investments in terms of modernisation (no machines or fertilizer), without genuinely paying for the labour (with the social cost of reproduction of labour being borne by the non-capitalist agricultural social formation), without even guaranteeing the maintenance of the natural conditions of reproduction of wealth (pillage of the agrarian soils and the forest). Simultaneously, this mode of development of natural resources tapped into the framework of the unequal international division of labour that excluded the formation of any local middle class. On the contrary, each time that the latter started the process of formation, the colonial authorities hastened to suppress it.

As a result today most so called “least developed countries” are, as is well known, located in Africa. The countries which today make up this “fourth world” are, for the large part, countries destroyed by the intensity of their integration in an earlier phase of the global expansion of capitalism.

Bangladesh, for example, the successor state of Bengal, was once the jewel of British colonisation in India. Others have been – or still are – peripheries of peripheries. Burkina Faso, for example, has supplied most of its active labour force to Côte d’Ivoire. If one takes into account that the two countries constituted at the time a single region of the capitalist system, the achievements of the Ivory Coast “miracle” would have had to be divided by two. Emigration impoverishes those regions from which labour flows, and thus reduces the cost of reproduction of young labour in the receiving country. The young are lost to the supplying country at the moment when they become potentially economically active. And the social cost of supporting the old is pushed back on to their country of origin when they return home. Such costs, much greater than the “money orders” or “remittances” sent home to their families by emigrants, are almost always forgotten in the calculations of our economists.

There are in fact very few countries which are “poor” and non-integrated or little-integrated into the global system. Perhaps, until recently, this might have included the North of Yemen or Afghanistan. The integration of these regions that is happening currently is similar to what happened elsewhere at an earlier period, producing nothing more than a “modernisation of poverty” - the shantytowns taking on the landless peasants.

The weaknesses of the national liberation movement and of the inheritors the colonial states date back to this period of imperial fashioning. They are therefore not the products of the pristine precolonial Africa (which had, in any case, long disappeared in the storm of integration, as the ideologies of global capitalism seek to portray them and from which they derive legitimacy through their usual racist discourse. The “criticisms” of independent Africa, of its corrupt political middle classes, its lack of economic direction, the continuation of its rural community structures, etc., all ignore the fact that these features of contemporary Africa were in fact forged in the period between 1880 and 1960.

No wonder, then, that neocolonialism has perpetuated these same features. The form that this failure took is well illustrated by the limitations of the Lome Agreements that have linked

sub-Saharan Africa to the European Union. These agreements have perpetuated the old division of labour – relegating independent Africa to the production of raw materials, at the very time when – during the Bandung period (from 1955 to 1975) – the Third World was embarking elsewhere on an industrial revolution. They have made Africa lose about thirty years at a decisive moment of historic change.

Undoubtedly African ruling classes were partly responsible for what was going to begin the involution of the continent, especially when they joined the neocolonial camp against the aspirations of their own people, whose weaknesses they exploited. The collusion between African ruling classes and the global strategies of imperialism is, however, certainly the ultimate cause of the failure.

### **Political independence**

Having attained political independence, from around 1960, the peoples of Africa embarked on development programmes the main objectives of which were more or less identical to those pursued in Asia and Latin America, notwithstanding the differences in ideological discourses that accompanied them. This commonality can be readily understood if we recall that in 1945 practically all Asian countries (excluding Japan), Africa (including South Africa) and Latin America (although with a few nuances) were still bereft of any industry worth this name – except in mining here and there. The populations were largely rural, governed by archaic regimes dominated by land-owning oligarchies or colonial regimes (Africa, India, South East Asia). Beyond their great diversity, all the national liberation movements had the same objectives of political independence, modernisation of the state and industrialisation of the economy.

There is today a great temptation to read this history as if it were a stage in the expansion of world capitalism, which was said to have performed more or less certain functions related to primitive national accumulation, thereby creating the conditions for the next stage, which we are now supposed to be entering into, marked by the opening out to the world market and competition in this field. We should not yield to this temptation.

The dominant forces in world capitalism have not “spontaneously” created the model(s) of development. “Development” was imposed on them. The vision of “development” was a product of the national liberation movements of the contemporary third world. I want to stress here the contradiction between the spontaneous and immediate trends of the capitalist system, which are always guided only by the short-term financial gain that characterises this mode of social management, and the longer-term visions that have guided the rising political forces: they are fundamentally in conflict with the former. This conflict is certainly not always radical, and capitalism certainly seeks to adjust itself to it, even profitably. But it only adjusts to it; it does not generate the movement.

All liberation movements in Africa shared this modernist vision which I qualify as *capitalist*. It is capitalist by the nature of its concept of modernisation. It is expected to produce the relationships of production and the social relationships that are basic and peculiar to capitalism: the wage relationship, business management, urbanisation, patterns of education and the concept of national citizenship. No doubt other values characteristic of advanced capitalism, like those of political democracy, are woefully lacking. All countries of the region – radicals and moderates – chose the same formula of the single party, the holding of farcical

elections and naming of a “founding father” of the Nation etc. In the absence of a middle-class of businessmen, the State – through its technocrats – was expected to be a substitute for that class. But sometimes where it existed, the middle-class would be held in suspicion on account of the priority that it would give to its immediate interests over the longer-term ones. Suspicion became, in the radical wing of the national liberation movement, synonymous with exclusion. This radical wing then believed naturally that its project was that of the “building socialism”, and consequently took up Soviet ideology.

If we consider the criterion of national liberation movements, that is “nation building”, the results are on the whole questionable. The reason is that whereas the development of capitalism in an earlier period supported national integration, globalisation operating in the peripheries of the system today works, on the contrary, in the opposite direction, towards breaking up societies. However, the ideology of national movement ignored this contradiction, having been immersed in the bourgeois concept of “catching-up” or “making up for a historic backwardness”, It conceived this “catching-up” as being possible through a passive participation in the international division of labour, without trying to modify it by delinking.

There is little doubt that, depending on the specific characters of pre-capitalist precolonial societies, the tendency towards disintegrating had a more or less dramatic impact. In Africa, whose artificial colonial borders did not respect the previous history of its peoples, the disintegration wrought by the development of capitalist peripheries made it possible for ethnicism to survive and proliferate, despite the efforts of the ruling class to get rid of its manifestations in the immediate post-independence period. When the crises came, destroying suddenly the increase in the surplus which had enhanced the financing of trans-ethnic policies of the new state, the ruling class itself broke up into fragments which, having lost every legitimacy based on the achievements of “development”, then sought to create for themselves new political bases associated with ethnic retreat.

While a small number of countries in Asia and Latin America embarked during those “decades of development” of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a process of industrialisation which turned out, in some cases, to be competitive in global markets, in Africa “successful development” (in fact growth without development) remained within the old division of labour, i.e. largely producing only raw materials. Oil-producing countries are typical examples (other major mineral resources, such as copper suffered a long structural demand crisis), but so also are some of the “tropical agriculture” producers, such as Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya, and Malawi. These are often presented as “brilliant successes”. In reality, they have no future; they belonged to the past from the very start of their prosperity. Most of these experiences turned out to be unsuccessful growth even within the limits of the old division of labour. This is the case for most of subsaharan Africa. These difficulties were not the product of “bad policies”, but rather of the prevailing objective conditions of the period. In fact, this type of development had already existed during the colonial times and reached its ceiling by 1960. This is the case of Ghana. And the Ivory Coast “miracle” was just a matter of “catching up” with colonial West African coast achievements!

### **Reversals in the balance of forces**

What followed the erosion of the national development projects of the 1960s and 1970s is well documented.

The starting point was the brutal reversal in the balances of social forces, to the benefit of capital, which occurred in the 1980s. Dominant capital, as represented by the transnational corporations, moved into the offensive, operating in Africa through the so-called “structural adjustment programmes” enforced throughout the continent since the mid 1980s. I say “so-called” because in fact those programmes are more conjunctural than structural, their real and exclusive target being the subordination of the economies of Africa to the constraint of servicing the high external debt, which in its turn, is to a large extent, the very product of the stagnation which started appearing in the least developed countries along with the deepening crisis of the global capitalist system.

During the two last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, average rates of growth of GDP have fallen to roughly half of what they had been in the previous two decades. This was the case for all regions of the world, Africa included, with the exception of Eastern Asia. It was during that period of structural crisis that the external debt of third world countries (and Eastern Europe) started growing dangerously. The global crisis was, as usual, characterised by growing inequality in the distribution of income, high rates of profits, and therefore a growing surplus of capital which cannot find an outlet in the expansion of the productive systems.

As a result, financial alternative outlets had to be created in order to avoid a brutal devalorisation of capital. The US deficit and the external debt of third world countries were responses to the financialisation of the system. The burden had reached unsustainable levels. How could a poor African country earmark half or more of its exports simply to pay the interests of such debts, and simultaneously be requested to be “more efficient” and to “adjust”?

Let us remember that, after World War I, the payment of German’s reparations represented *only* 7% of the exports of that industrialised powerful country. Most economists at that time considered the level too high: they considered that the “adjustment” of Germany’s economy to it to be impossible! Germany could not adjust to a loss of a mere 7% of its export potential, but Tanzania is supposed to be able to adjust to a loss of 60%!

The devastating results of these policies are today well-known: economic regression, social disaster, growing instability and even sometimes total disruption of whole societies (as in Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone). During the whole of the 1990s, Africa’s rate of growth of GDP per capita has been negative (- 0.2%). Africa is alone in having such a negative growth rate. As a result Africa’s share of global trade decreased. That fact is precisely what is being qualified as being a reflection of its “marginalisation”. Instead one should speak here of a dramatic mal-integration of Africa into the global system. Conventional neo-liberal economists pretend that this is only a “hard transition” towards a better future. But how could it be? The destruction of the social tissues of a country, the growing poverty, the regressions in education and health, all these cannot prepare a better future, they cannot help African producers to become “more competitive” as is demanded of them. Quite the opposite!

This neocolonial plan for Africa is indeed the worst pattern of integration in the global system. It cannot produce anything but further decline of the capacity of African societies to meet the challenges of modern times. For sure, these challenges are to some extent new, relating to the long run possible effects of the ongoing technological revolution (informatics) and through them, the effects on the organisation of labour, its productivity and new patterns

of the international division of labour. However, all these challenges are manifested in the real world in the conflicting strategies. For the time being the dominant segment of global capital – the transnational corporations – appears to dictate what is favourable for the progress of its particular strategies. African peoples and governments have not yet developed counter-strategies of their own similar, perhaps, to what Eastern Asian countries have been trying to push ahead with. Globalisation does not offer to Africa any solution to any of its own problems. Foreign direct private investments in Africa are, as everybody knows, negligible and exclusively concentrated in mineral and other natural resource sectors. In other words, the strategies of transnational corporations do not help Africa move beyond a pattern of international division of labour belonging to the remote past. From an African perspective, the alternative has to be built in a way that combines the building of aut centered economies and societies with participation in the global system.

This general law is valid for Africa today as it has been throughout modern history for all the regions of the world.

It is still too early to know whether African peoples are moving towards that goal. There are talks today of an “African Renaissance”. No doubt that the victory of the African people in South Africa, i.e. the breakdown of the apartheid system, has created positive hopes not only for that country but also throughout large parts of the continent. But there are not yet visible signals of these hopes cristalizing into alternative strategies. That would require dramatic changes at national levels, going far beyond what is generally suggested under the headings of “good governance” and “multiparty democracy”, as well as at regional and global levels. Another pattern of globalisation would therefore gradually emerge from those changes making possible the correction of the Africa’s mal-integration into the global system.

### **Africa in the international context**

From 1960 to 1964, independent Africa was divided into two camps: the Casablanca camp (Egypt, Morocco, Guinea, Ghana and Mali) that considered that the independence “granted” had not resolved the question of national liberation. They thought that the Monrovia camp (all the other countries, satisfied with the situation) were neo-colonial states. **But they all came together within the OAU, set up in 1963.** All of independent Africa also belonged to the Movement of Non-aligned States, created in Bandung in 1955 and whose spirit found strong echos, not only amongst the people, but also within ruling classes and governments.

Severely weakened by the legacy of colonialism, the new Africa was fragile, and African societies faced a serious threat of disintegration. The dominant discourse blamed this on the “lack of maturity” of these countries, with the implicit assumption that independence had been given prematurely. The real reason for the crisis was glossed over; namely, the market. On its own, the market functions like a centrifugal force, one that disintegrates. It only ceases to do so when it is controlled by the State. In economies such as those in Africa, fragile both because of colonialism and before that the slave trade, this disintegrating effect was even more devastating than elsewhere. There was no system of production worth the name, and the market doesn’t create it. It is incumbent on the State (an instrument of society and the result of social compromises that determine its character at any given time of its evolution, even if it was capitalist in nature) to create a system of production in line with its ideology. If this is not present, market forces simply exploit the disparate segments of a system, which, because it doesn’t really exist, cannot put up any resistance. “Compradorisation” is the social,

political and ideological form that takes shape when there is no “State” to play that role. Africa doesn’t suffer from too much government; it has only had bad “comprador” rule.

Neocolonialism can only operate where there is permanent crisis. This is why it met with successive waves of nationalist and populist revolts. The first, represented by Nkrumah’s Ghana, Modibo’s Mali, Guinea and Congo, had barely died down when it was the turn of uprisings in West Africa, in Benin, then in Burkina Faso and then once again in Ghana and Mali, as well as in Tanzania and Ethiopia in East Africa, in Madagascar and then in southern Africa.

This is not Africa’s failure; it is capitalism that has failed to offer anything remotely acceptable to Africa. Today, the Bandung page has definitively been turned and the impasse has never been as dramatic. The frontal assault on the peasantry, the cornerstone of the World Trade Organisation’s liberalisation policies, has accelerated the transformation of the continent into desolate countryside and urban slums. The migratory pressure that has ensued (the new boat people) is an inevitable consequence. But the European refrain remains stubborn – that the only way African states can cooperate is to police their own frontiers.

### **The imperialist management of post colonial Africa**

#### *Regionalisation in Africa is mere window-dressing*

The principal aim of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (which became the African Union) was political: to support on the one hand the liberation struggles in Lusophone Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, and on the other hand to contain and resolve inter-government conflicts. In this respect, the OAU was a weak substitute for Pan-Africanism.

During the “development decades” (1960s and 1970s), the OAU’s duties were relatively easy, because at the time most governments had some popular legitimacy. The fruits of development strengthened the legitimacy of the former national and trans-ethnic liberation movements, which had now become ruling parties. The development of political parties was also in tandem with the emergence of a nascent middle class (a product of the progress of education) who soon developed a vast clientele in the lower classes.

The political situation today is tragically different. The erosion of people-centred development models and the diktat of liberal globalisation have brutally delegitimized the majority of African states - even the so-called democracies or facades of democracy which have followed in the wake of autocratic nationalist and populist rulers. They have been unable to restore the legitimacy of governments, simply incapable of providing their people with any kind of social progress. Africa has entered a phase of involution characterised by what is wrongly called “internal tribal wars”. These are not conflicts whose real origins lie in ethnic hostility, but rather conflicts fabricated by warlords who want to get their hands on the country’s resources (petrol, diamonds) and therefore deliberately stoke ethnic tensions. Called to the rescue, the OAU, or even the UN, have proved themselves to be totally impotent in such situations – witness the disastrous results of the intervention of ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Under such conditions, the very idea of regionalisation is nonsense.

There are several organisations of subregional cooperation, of which the leading ones are ECOWAS (Economic Community Of West African States) in West Africa, SADC (Southern

African Development Community) (which replaced SADCC - the Southern African Development Coordination Conference) and COMESA ([Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa](#)) (which followed the PTA - Preferential Trade Area) in southern and east Africa, CEAO-UMOA ((Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest - Union Monétaire Ouest Africaine) and UDEAC (Union Douanière et Économique de l'Afrique Centrale) in the francophone countries, SACU (Southern African Customs Union) and CMA (Common Monetary Area) in the Rand zone. There were also the branches of the big global institutions (such as the African Development Bank, a quasi branch of the World Bank) and other more minor institutions (the Mano River Union, the Community of the Great Lakes, the Inter-government committee for Sahel, etc.). It is worth noting that the strongest seemingly regional institutions are those that are linked to either France or South Africa (before and after apartheid).

Immediately after the independence of its African colonies, France made sure that they remained within the francophone structure, whose rigid rules excluded any autonomy in the area of financial management. This is a colonial vestige doomed to extinction under the triple onslaught of the replacement of the franc by the Euro, liberal globalisation and African involutions. But if the system were to collapse, there is nothing that could replace it effectively, either at the level of the countries concerned or of the regions they are part of.

In southern Africa, the conventions that govern customs and monetary union between South Africa on the one hand, and Lesotho and Swaziland on the other, cannot be classified as regional cooperation because the imbalance between the dominant partner and the other countries is so flagrant. SADCC, which had been set up in the apartheid era to enable southern African countries to free themselves of their dependence on Pretoria, was itself transformed after the fall of apartheid into a new organisation (SADC), which now incorporates South Africa. But this new South Africa intends to pursue the same policies towards its neighbours, over whom it has a huge industrial advantage. The question is: will they accept this unequal partnership indefinitely?

The results achieved by these African sub-regional organisations of cooperation/integration are meagre, to say the least. Trade has remained negligible and the intra-regional movement of capital non-existent. The adhesion of African countries to the principles of free trade espoused by the new World Trade Organisation can only aggravate the deceptive spin-offs of "opening up trade". The OAU's economic role was diluted by virtue of Africa's active participation in the Non Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 at the UN and the establishment of a "common front", representing the demands of the South as opposed to those of the North in the global economic order. Nonetheless, the OAU tried to convince member states to adopt development plans that would favour regional integration and industrialisation.

These dangers were quickly recognised by the World Bank. The famous Berg report (1981) was an immediate response to the Lagos Plan and has since become the bible of the World Bank, international cooperation institutions and governments. The only alternative offered by the Berg report was to continue the kind of "specialised development" based on Africa's "natural" advantages, in other words, to remain within the old formula of agro-mining. The weakness of the OAU's proposal was their ignorance that its implementation required an active role on the part of the state. However, the rent-owners who became the ruling classes in the African states have neither the means nor the will to go down any other path other than the agro-mining sector, from which they draw their wealth. "Regionalisation" in this

condition is not at the centre of their concerns, nor is it at that of the dominant forces in the global system. It is mere window dressing.

*The European Union/ACP (Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific countries)*

The EU-ACP grouping may occupy a minor position on a global scale, but it has real importance when it comes to the analysis of the place of Africa in the world system.

From the outset, the aim of the Lome accords was not to use external relations to effect an economic, political and cultural transformation to the benefit of the African people, but only to reinforce Europe's position in the world order, on the economic as well as geopolitical stage. In other words, the "development" aspect was only secondary, less important than the political aspect. The goal above all was to support "moderate" governments and to encourage such tendencies elsewhere. This in effect meant to subvert nationalist aspirations, which might have been tempted to use Cold War rivalry to their advantage.

In the neo-liberal era, the reorganisation of Euro-African relations has taken place within the framework of the WTO, thus consolidating the monopolies exercised by the power centres in crucial areas, including the access to natural resources and the creation of new technologies, as well as control of the monetary and financial system. From this perspective, the only use of regional associations is their capacity to provide the most profitable returns for multinational oligopolies.

Resistance to this kind of thinking could develop in Africa for the following reasons:

- i) The regions and those countries unlikely to provide dividends are automatically excluded from the potential benefits of regionalisation;
- ii) The growing polarisation and exclusion will generate further migrations, which will be even more difficult to manage because neoliberalism bans the free circulation of workers.
- iii) This plan implicitly integrates military alliances, which makes recalcitrant countries from the South vulnerable.

The way it has been conceived, the regionalisation of Euro-African relations is perfectly compatible with the management of internal conflicts that erupt in an Africa that has been marginalised by social disintegration.

It was clear that during the 1960s and 1970s the underlying thread beneath the various cooperation conventions between the EU and African nations was the European concern to maintain its supply of tropical agricultural produce as well as of mining and petroleum resources. In tune with the WTO rhetoric, Europe threw its weight behind the structural adjustment panacea that was being proclaimed as the universal economic cure. Local authorities sometimes tried to resist, because these policies were alienating much of their base, thereby undermining their legitimacy. However, the external debt burden and government corruption further reduced their capacity to fight back and to implement any corrective measures, thus forcing them to submit to the daily orders from international institutions tasked with dealing with the crisis. The so-called "initiative for severely indebted poor nations", formulated by the World Bank and enforced by the European Union, is part of the plan to recolonise the continent.

The fruits of this association are not sweet. The gap between per capita GDP in sub-Saharan Africa and that in other developing countries has been steadily increasing. Add to this the flight of capital from Africa abroad (to the North, especially Europe) which overtook the amount of capital coming in, both public and private. Moreover, instead of the much-vaunted redistribution of income, i.e. the trickle down effect, there was only more inequality, which in turn resulted in a huge wastage of investments (because priority was given to expensive investments destined for the privileged classes).

The marginalisation of Africa in international investments is the final nail in the coffin. Even though the European Union provides half the external financial needs of ACP countries, the proportion of aid could only be maintained by increasing the amount of public aid, while at the same time the opening up of African economies resulted in the disinvestment of private capital.

Finally, the European Union doesn't seem to have an environmental policy which takes into account dealing with the destruction of the environment in Africa. In the current negotiations between the European Union and ACP countries under the aegis of the Cotonou convention, ACP formulated the *directives*, but the *mandate* was set down by the European Commission. According to a study commissioned by the Cotonou Monitoring Group, conducted by the European Research Office, there are quite a few differences between the two sides, but not on substantial issues. The negotiations focus on the modalities of the implementation of free trade zones with Europe from 2008, which presupposes an accelerated rate of intra-African economic integration. There is growing resistance to these projects (called APER - Annual Performance Evaluation Report), which are so reminiscent of the colonial equation between Europe and Africa. Voices are being raised with authority and resonance at African social forums and at the assemblies of peoples' movements. This resistance has also echoed with some governments, especially Nigeria.

A defining characteristic of our times is the way agriculture is being transferred by the mounting penetration of international and local capitalism. In Africa, this pressure translates into dispossessing the majority of the continent's farmers who still benefit, albeit under dramatically changed conditions, from access to land. The agrarian question (in the sense of access to land by all farmers) is at the heart of the challenge to marry democratisation and social progress. Imperialist capitalism is incapable of providing a solution to this crucial problem for societies in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The aim of the "land privatisation" model proposed- or rather imposed - is to maximise profits for transnational agro-businesses such as Monsanto, as well as for more recently arrived local capitalist farmers. International "cooperation" encourages all initiatives that are geared to this objective and discourages any attempts to express the resistance of the farming majority.

This offensive to globalise agriculture marched in tandem with that of the WTO, with fake promises that the markets of both the North and South would be opened up for trade of food and agricultural products. At the centre of the dispute between Northern countries (the USA and Europe are in total agreement over this, despite some minor disputes) and the Global South is the issue of agricultural subsidies. Small wonder the WTO was at a total impasse in Doha. The sharp rise in prices of food products highlights the gravity of the underlying institutional drama.

The aim of major capitalist countries has always been to gain exclusive control of the globe's principal resources, including petrol and uranium, and to prevent their competitors (China in

particular today) from getting the same. This concern is at the heart of the “cooperation” accords between Europe and Africa. Niger for example has been flooded with “aid” aimed primarily at corrupting the government - not to address the fact that it is one of the poorest countries on the continent! - and to prevent a nationalist party from taking over the country and its uranium mines (now controlled by the French Commission on Atomic Energy) located in a region situated between Algeria, Libya and Nigeria.

*The rhetorical packaging of the discourse on Euro-African cooperation*

On the one hand there is the usual mantra of democracy, good governance, poverty reduction and humanitarian aid, and on the other hand the reality, which makes for double standards. This has to do with finding ways to manage conflicts (and not co-development) which are a result of the deliberate exclusion of Africa from the concert of nations. NEPAD ([New Partnership for Africa's Development](#)) did not produce any results either, just another kind of rhetoric.

**The alternative: South South cooperation in the perspective of delinking**

If the Global South wants to go on the offensive it has to destroy the monopolies, which are the means by which imperialism perpetuates itself.

For the oligopolists of the new financial plutocracy to remain in power they have to maintain control of the financial weapons through which they exercise their monopoly, both internally (which allows them to rake in substantial profits) and internationally (in order to keep the periphery submissive). The compulsive need for capitalist centres to retain exclusive control of the planet’s natural resources is simply not viable. It is put into question by the development of the South. The WTO’s attempts to monopolise technologies and information by reinforcing industrial and intellectual property rights will certainly end in failure, if only because many Southern countries have mastered these new technologies. The South is not the same place as it was during the Bandung era, when it was totally devoid of any means of autonomous development. Today, it can easily outstrip the North and develop new kinds of cooperation, including in trade and technology. “Bandung-II”, whatever the form it might take, is already in the works.

Defeating imperialism with its new “advantages” means choosing an auto-centred development, delinked from the global system. Once again I do not mean this in the sense of an absurd and completely closed economy, but in the way I have defined it as the rejection of submission to the pressures of external relations, thus prioritising internal development and social progress. This is a non-negotiable precondition.

Delinking can only be possible when the party in power (as opposed to comprador governments) benefits from the support of a genuine social base. This is as true today as it was in the past. Certainly, delinking has evolved over the years. In the Bandung period, it was synonymous with industrialisation within a strictly national framework, even in modest-sized countries. While it can remain national for continent-sized countries, it requires now other forms of intense regional cooperation between partners, based on complementarity of smaller nations. This is not a “common market” model, but rather one of associative partnerships with an economic dimension (planned, in the sense that peoples’ demands are incorporated into government policies). ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América

- Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) is perhaps the first example of this kind of association.

### **What conclusions should one draw from this discussion?**

A close look at developments discussed suggests that the achievements appear meagre and that the expectations of the glorious struggles waged by their people were not met. The petit bourgeoisie in none of these countries has committed suicide, but has instead become the backbone of a pathetic comprador government, devoid of a political programme and functioning under imperialist - especially European - domination. Cabral tried mightily to avoid such an outcome and for this he amply deserves to be called one of the most audacious leaders of the first generation of African freedom fighters.

Cabral didn't just put forward a facile theory on the "suicide of the petit bourgeoisie" – he spelt out the conditions. For Cabral, the decisive role played by the peasantry in the anti-colonial war would lead to a massive social bloc bringing together peasant leaders and intellectuals, thereby neutralising, as it were, the passive segments of the petit bourgeoisie. Cabral didn't just theorise, he actually implemented it in the liberated regions of Guinea Bissau.

Similarly, I perfectly understand the impulse behind Cabral's espousal of the "Guinea-Cape Verde, one nation" idea. Colonisation has always divided peoples, pit one ethnic group against the other. All liberation movements took the opposite position, rightly affirming the unity of the people. In this sense, the peoples of Guinea and Cape Verde were related peoples, united against a common enemy, "one people", almost. However, the quasi-negation of the diversity inherent in the African peoples inevitably had negative consequences, because once the euphoria of independence had subsided, the politicians who emerged from the petit bourgeoisie which did not commit suicide proceeded to restore their image and substituted the development process, which had lost credibility, with a new legitimacy based on diversity - ethnic and other kinds.

The history of contemporary Africa is that of the battle between progressive forces, who from 1960 to 1975/80 (the Bandung era) wanted to rebuild their countries, and for this reason chose an independent, potentially socialist path (Mali, Ghana, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Benin, Congo Brazza, Burkina Faso, etc.) and those forces on the side of neo-colonialism, backed by foreign powers. The liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies and Cabral's philosophy and actions were at the forefront of progressive forces during that period. I have written about this battle in 'L'Eveil du Sud' and at this juncture would like to recall the reasons why those movements ran out of steam, creating in the process the conditions for the re-colonisation that is still prevalent. Imperialism today needs Africa for its natural resources and the peoples of Africa are impediments to the exploitation of that wealth.

Africa has to begin the second wave of liberation, which can only advance if it two-pronged:

- a) To embark on an audacious campaign of industrialisation, which barely took root during the Bandung era
- b) To insure that this industrialisation goes in tandem with the reconstruction of a peasant economy based on the access of all to land.
- c) On these two points Cabral's thought has never been as relevant.

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