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### African Agenda, March 1973

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# AFRICAN AGENDA

A Voice Of Afro-American Opinion

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## Special Issue Devoted to Amilcar Cabral

### Editorial

The United Nations has declared March 21 as the international day against racism and colonialism. Even though this significant day went practically unnoticed in the U.S. — the seat of racism and imperialism — African, Asian and socialist countries observed this day with demonstrations and conferences denouncing the repressive policies of the U.S., South African, Portuguese and Israeli governments.

Amilcar Cabral, the slain leader of PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, devoted his life to implementing the U.N. resolutions on racism and racial discrimination in PAIGC's fight against Portuguese colonialism and racism in particular, and U.S. imperialism in general. The true significance for Black and other progressive people of Cabral's contributions to this fight was his scientific, class approach to the struggle in his country and the struggle between the two socioeconomic systems of capitalism and socialism. Cabral's understanding of the class theory distinguished him among many African leaders in that he recognized the class struggle as the key to liberation and progress. He understood that the racist and exploitative motives and actions of the imperialist countries were and are in direct opposition to the interests and aspirations of the African people for true independence and the right to self-determination. Applying the class theory to his country, Cabral said, "Those who affirm — in our case correctly — that the motive force of history is the class struggle would certainly argue to a revision of this affirmation to make it more precise and give it an even wider field of application, if they had a better knowledge of the essential characteristics of certain colonized peoples, that is to say peoples dominated by imperialism."

The fight against racism and imperialism cannot be won with only guns and slogans; the struggle must also be based on a sound theoretical understanding of the nature of the capitalist system (of which imperialism is the highest stage)

from a class perspective. Given the international nature of imperialism, Cabral was not just a "nationalist leader" as some U.S. newspapers reported. He had developed to a higher ideological perspective; he himself emphasized that he was an internationalist.

As progressive people take up the torch of the U.N. declarations on racism and colonialism and honor Amilcar Cabral, let us remember Cabral's words about the weapon of theory; "To those who see it in a theoretical character, we would recall that every practice produces a theory, and that if it is true that a revolution can fail even though it be based on perfectly conceived theories, nobody has yet made a successful revolution without a revolutionary theory."

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### Friends and Allies

by Amilcar Cabral

(Edited speech given at the Roman Conference on Portuguese Colonies, June 1970)

I wish to say a few words about our allies and friends throughout the world. We must say to the representatives of African unity that aid from Africa is not in correspondence with the needs of our struggle so far. We know how much the Secretary of the OAU is desirous of giving us aid and we hope that each African state will do its best to grant our needs.

In the Socialist camp we have always had a sure ally in the liberation struggle. It is the duty of the socialist camp, their historical duty, not only moral duty. And we must say that without the help of the socialist countries it would be very difficult to carry on our struggle.

It is true that we receive material from certain African countries, like Algeria for instance which gives us what it can but unfortunately it does not produce arms. We have received material in the beginning from Morocco but we must say that it is not sufficient for the struggle we are carrying out today. It is the socialist countries and especially the Soviet Union which help us particularly. We have received important aid from other Socialist countries with regards commodities such as Rumania, Bulgaria, Cuba, GDR, Hungary, and we hope that all these socialist countries will do their utmost to increase their aid because they are historical allies — our struggle is theirs.

In the other countries we must specifically mention the support developing daily in Holland, in Belgium, and in France. We must mention that in our wounded the blood of Frenchmen is circulating and this comes to us every 15 days.

We favor the creation of committees of support throughout the western world. We particularly hope that the Communist Parties in Western Europe and other left parties, and all progressive organizations anti-colonialist in principle will take all measures to help our struggle. We have received aid from the Italian Communist Party and hope that this aid will be developed.

I must call your attention to a point raised in Western Europe by some who say they intend to help us but they want to see if we are receiving aid from Communist countries. We cannot understand this. We believe that the concrete conditions of life of our people — the difficult struggle we are carrying out fully justifies the principle that we should accept aid from

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## Amilcar Cabral's Class Approach To National Liberation

Amilcar Cabral represented that new genre of progressive African leadership that emerged in the 1960's, leaders who began to advance the notion of a class approach to African liberation. Of course, this class approach was proffered by Kwame Nkrumah in his book, *Class Struggle in Africa*, but it was further developed and refined by Cabral in his book, *Revolution in Guinea*, Monthly Review Press, especially in his brilliant chapter of the book entitled "Brief Analysis of the Social Structure of Guinea". Cabral asserted that this theoretical analysis of the class structure of Guinea is relevant because PAIGC related it to the need of the national liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau.

Rejecting the uncritical approach to the colonial question that abounds among many spokesmen on African liberation in this country (a critical approach is a class approach), Cabral proceeds to clarify the respective positions of different classes or strata in the Guinea-Bissau movement. Given the level of internal development in Guinea-Bissau, Cabral perceptively saw that, though the primitive communal society of Guinea-Bissau was in an advanced stage of disintegration, a disintegration that started prior to colonialism, crystallized classes had not clearly formed since most of the workers were still in possession of their means of production. A structure of cooperative property owned by the village was still intact. The Portuguese colonialists did not expropriate their communal property but exploited them through imposed unequal trade relations with the aid of bribed chiefs. However, not all chiefs were Portuguese agents. Hence, Cabral dismissed the slogan, "Land to the Toilers" as being inappropriate to the liberation struggle since the peasants already possessed the land.

Guinea-Bissau had social strata rather than social classes; yet there was still exploitation based on inequality among strata, although that was not the principal contradiction. The principal contradiction was between Portuguese colonialism united with U.S. and NATO imperialism against the whole people; hence, the need for a broad people's movement in Guinea-Bissau, PAIGC's task was to locate the position of peoples and groups on this question as a determinant of their progressiveness. Cabral recognized that this would not always be the principal contradiction since their movement was at a different stage from most African countries that have liberated themselves from colonialism and whose main social task was to fight neocolonialism via the *non-capitalist road of development*.

Cabral, evincing a Leninist-like clarity on the role of the peasant recognized that at this stage of development while the peasant was the main *national* force, the

peasant was not the main *revolutionary* force. He duly noted the *difference* between the character of the peasant movements in China, a fully crystallized class society with a history of peasant revolts and the hybrid pre-class character of the peasant movement in Guinea-Bissau with no history of peasant revolts; hence, the notion of a people's movement led by the petty bourgeoisie. Cabral refused to absolutize the role of the peasant in the movement without regard to the objective and subjective historical-social circumstances. In the real world of Guinea-Bissau, the peasant was not the initiators of the mass movement. The movement was initiated by dock workers under the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie in PAIGC, with the main weapon being urban strikes. With the ruthless repression of those strikes by the colonialists, Cabral and his comrades and compatriots were forced to switch to armed struggle in the countryside. With Cabral,



armed struggle was not a principled position; he was a lover of peace. Cabral repudiated the ultra-Leftist notion that the proletariat cannot lead "Third World" movements. However, in Guinea-Bissau, the proletariat was a small minority quantitatively and not fully crystallized as a wage worker qualitatively, and thus, at this state, was not the vanguard. He concluded that the petty bourgeoisie was the *social strata* that should lead Guinea-Bissau into history, i.e. into a class society and must fight for its future as a worker of the brain rather than develop into a tool of neocolonialist reaction. The petty bourgeois strata can avoid this inglorious path of reaction by opposing the capitalist road of development in Africa, by becoming an important transitional link in the development of the worker-peasant alliance.

Cabral was also aware of the need for a *worker-peasant alliance on an international scale* as attested by his continuous efforts to unite the three revolutionary currents, the socialist camp, the working class movement in the imperialist countries, and the national liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America. He was in opposition to efforts by ultra-Leftists to split the national liberation movement from "the socialist

countries who are our historical associates", the pivot of the worker-peasant alliance on an international scale. Cabral said, "The objective of the imperialist countries was to prevent the enlargement of the socialist camp, to liberate the reactionary forces in our countries which were being stifled by colonialism and to enable these forces to ally themselves with the international bourgeoisie."

Cabral also said that "neocolonialism is more a defeat for the international working class than for the colonized peoples." Neocolonialism results in the loss of jobs as well as the undermining of freedom in the metropolitan country. No better proof can be given to this than the fact that over a half million Portuguese workers have to leave their homeland to obtain employment as Portugal itself remains immured in Fascist stagnation. Progressive Portuguese wept at Cabral's funeral, deeming him the greatest "Friend of Portugal."

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## PAIGC

The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands was founded by Amilcar Cabral, an agronomist educated in Portugal, with several craftsmen and manual workers, in 1956. This party undertook to lead these oppressed colonies on the edge of West Africa in their struggle for complete liberation and social progress.

Cabral often spoke of PAIGC's democratic nationalist task, which, as stated in Article 4 of PAIGC's statutes, includes, "the democratization and the emancipation of people inhabiting these countries and the achievements of rapid economic and cultural progress." The party, at its inception, relied on mass, peaceful protest-oriented action. The class support came mostly from the urban working people and intellectuals. However, during the strikes of July and August of 1959, the Portuguese Colonialists murdered scores of strikers in the Pijiguiti dock massacre.

Having been shown the colonialists would resort to the most dastardly crimes, the party immediately began preparation for armed struggle, beginning in 1963. At this stage Cabral revealed his profound theoretical understanding on the role of the peasants and other classes in the national democratic revolution. The party program called for the organization and the education of the peasantry as the principal force along with the small working class to lead the movement. Moreover, the new program called for the democratic unity of all ethnic groups, social strata and anti-colonials within the party. Cabral clearly recognized the need to strengthen co-operation with progressive nationalist

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## News Briefs

New York — Each year on March 21 the solemn observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination marks the anniversary of the tragedy of Sharpeville in which the South African police opened fire on peaceful demonstrators, killing 69 people and injuring over 200 in 1960. After this event the U.S. Imperialists moved quickly to support the South African racists by increasing their investments over 100% from the previous year. Since that time the U.S. imperialists have invested large amounts of money in South Africa. An important action this year by the U.N. will be a conference by the ILO of the U.N. to mobilize trade unions and workers groups against the South African government.

\* \* \* \* \*

Addis Ababa — The ministerial council of the Organization of African Unity, recently met to prepare for the organization's summit meeting in May and promulgated the following policy declaration reaffirming Africa's equal role in International Affairs:

Africa's right to participate fully in seeking solutions to major world problems;

An appeal to other African states to follow the example of Uganda, Congo, Mali, etc. in breaking relations with Zionist Israel;

The Soviet-American talks, and the general trends toward detente to inter-state relations were profoundly praised;

Collective security systems, now being discussed in Finland for Europe should be extended to all other areas of the world;

Africa's determination to rid itself of foreign economic control and to rid itself of unequal relationship between it and the imperialist powers.

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organizations of other Portuguese colonies. In societies where tribalism and communalism is the prevailing social organization, where commodity production relations are distorted and underdeveloped, a correct scientific and democratic solution to the tribal question is a necessity if one is to avoid inter-tribal warfare.

The 1960 Soviet-sponsored United Nations declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial people and countries became the international legal basis for holding that the possession of colonies is an international crime, thereby giving the colonial subjects sanctions for using any means at their disposal, including military, to end this oppression. Since 1963, PAIGC has made notable and irreversible gains. During his New Years Message to the Vanguard Party and the Valiant people of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands in 1969, Cabral stated that "we have now freed from colonial domination more than two-thirds of our country and more than half our population, and we are now developing production, education, health facilities and trade in our liberated areas."

Cabral and the party repeatedly said that the measure of success ultimately depended on the National liberation forces attitude toward the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries and the democratic forces within the capitalist camp.

No little attention should be paid to the forces of peace and democracy and social progress in its untiring assistance to the National liberation movements. Cabral always paid special attention to the fact that without this moral, diplomatic, and material support, the victories in the anti-colonial struggle would not be long-lasting. Speaking at the Rome International Conference in support of the people of the Portuguese Colonies, June 27, 29,

1970, Cabral unequivocally stated that "we have consolidated our relations with the anti-imperialist forces all over the world. Visits to the socialist countries and talks held there have led to a better organization of the aid given by these countries, and all of them, in particular the Soviet Union, are ready to make valuable contributions to our struggle."

On January 20, 1973, this immortal of revolution, this giant son of African liberation, was brazenly assassinated months before his party was to declare their liberated areas independent. PAIGC's long-term program, as stated in Part VI, Section 2, calls for "Economic activity to be governed by the principle of democratic socialism." Life has proven Lenin's prediction that "in the impending decisive battle in the world revolution, the movement of the majority of the population of the globe, initially directed towards national liberation, will turn against capitalism and imperialism."

Presently PAIGC is led by Aristides Pereira, Acting General Secretary of the party who is continuing the struggle against the Portuguese colonialists.

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### The Role of Culture In The National Liberation Struggle

Amilcar Cabral, the late Secretary General of PAIGC, made significant theoretical contributions to the clarification of the role of *culture* in the development of the national liberation movements. Cabral stressed that the value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological plane of the physical and his-

torical reality of any society, including those that are dominated, or dominating. At any moment, depending on internal and external factors determining the evolution of a dominated society, cultural resistance may take on new forms (political, economic, armed) in order to fully contest foreign domination. Thus, it is understood why imperialist domination, like all other foreign domination, for its own security requires cultural oppression and the attempt at direct or indirect liquidation of the essential elements of the culture of the dominated people.

Cabral acknowledged the fact that the multiplicity of social and ethnic groups complicates the effort to determine the role of culture in the liberation movement. However, it is important to recognize the decisive importance of the *class* character of culture in the development of the liberation struggle. There are strong, dependent and reciprocal relationships between the *cultural* situation and the *economic* and *political* situation in the given society. In fact, culture is always the more or less conscious result of the economic and political activities of that society, the dynamic expression of the kinds of relationships which prevail in that society — on the one hand, between man and nature and, on the other hand, among individuals, groups of individuals, social strata or classes.

"Like history, or because it is history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production. History allows us to know the nature and extent of the imbalances and conflicts (economic, political and social) which characterize the evolution of a society; culture allows us to know the dynamic syntheses which have been developed and established by social conscience to resolve these conflicts at each stage of its evolution, in the search for survival and progress" (Amilcar Cabral, 1970 Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture, p. 5).

Cabral observed that whatever may be the condition of a people's subjection to foreign domination, it is generally within the culture that we find the seed of opposition, which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement. An objective analysis of the cultural reality gives a measure of the strengths and weaknesses of the people when confronted with the demands of the struggle, and therefore is a valuable contribution to the strategy and tactics to be followed on the political as well as on the military plane. The national liberation movement must be able to preserve the positive cultural values of every well-defined social group as well as to achieve the blending of these values in the service of the struggle, giving a new, national dimension. On the other hand, the armed liberation struggle requires the progressive liquidation of the remnants of tribal mentality and the rejection of social and religious rules and taboos

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## Recommended Books

1. *Revolution In Guinea. Selected Texts*, by Amilcar Cabral. Monthly Review Press.
2. *Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle*, by Amilcar Cabral. An excellent speech given at Lincoln University, Pa. Oct. 1972. Copies can be obtained from the Political Science Dept. of Lincoln University.
3. *National Liberation and Culture*, by Amilcar Cabral. Copies can be obtained from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.
4. *The Liberation of Guinea*, by Basil Davidson, Penguin African Library.
5. *PAIGC Actualites*. A quarterly English edition of PAIGC's Information Bulletin. This quarterly English translation reviews the struggles of PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau. Edited by Information Center of the Liberation Support Movement, P.O.B. 338, Richmond, B.C., Canada.

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Harold S. Rogers ..... Editor  
Bert Phillips ..... Art Editor

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everyone and we must say clearly that we are not anti-communist. Those who wish to help us should do so but they should not raise conditions.

Others are concerned that we may leave our old friends in order to find new ones. This concern should be left aside. We need old friends and new ones. Nobody should fear for us if we do not fear for ourselves. The basic principle of our struggle is that those who are struggling for freedom and independence must first be free in thought and action. We are sure that our friends in Western Europe will understand this principle. We are absolutely convinced our struggle is an act of solidarity towards all people in the struggle for national freedom, but also for all people struggling in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America in the general framework of anti-imperialism.

We hope that all opinions, all tendencies which meet here in Rome for solidarity with us will find here a basis for the unity of the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggle.

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## Class Approach

Already, opportunists are trying to distort the importance of Cabral's life. The Washington Post contended that Cabral's movement was based on the lumpen proletariat, the declassed elements. Maybe they have not read Cabral's own words when he said:

"Next come the declassed. The really declassed people, the permanent layabouts, the prostitutes, and so on have been a great help to the Portuguese police in giving them information; this group has been outrightly against our struggle, perhaps unconsciously so, but nonetheless against our struggle."

Some reactionary U.S. Black nationalists contend that Cabral was a Pan-Africanist despite the fact that the Pan-African movement in Africa has evolved into the anti-imperialist movement where national and social tasks have become inextricably intertwined. Cabral rejected the Neo-Pan-Africanist notion that objectively splits the three revolutionary currents mentioned above and also splits the anti-imperialist front. Moreover, Neo-Pan-Africanism is a rejection of the Leninist slogan for the unity of workers of all countries and all oppressed peoples.

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that inhibit development of the struggle (i.e. nepotism, social inferiority of women, mystical practices incompatible with the rational, national character of the struggle, etc.).

Cabral maintained that for a true idea of the role of culture in the development of the African liberation movements, a distinction must be made between the masses of the people who preserve their culture, and the social groups who are "assimilated" or culturally alienated. Portugal's divisive policy of "progressive assimilation" was a failure in Africa. Ninety-nine percent of the indigenous population was untouched by Portuguese culture. Cabral contended that the masses of Africans never lost their cultures under colonial domination. The regaining of African identity, the "return to the source", is more applicable to those who are culturally alienated than to the masses. It came as no surprise to Cabral that movements such as Pan Africanism and Negritude were propounded outside Africa. "More recently, the Black Americans' claim to an African identity is another proof, possibly rather a desperate one, of the need for a "return to the source"... (Amilcar Cabral, "Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle"). *Root identity*, in which the biological element is the main determinant, should not be confused with *actual identity* in which the socioeconomic element is the major determinant. The latter is most decisive in terms of content and form of identity, as Cabral continuously stressed.

The foundation of the national liberation movement rests in the inalienable right of every people to determine their own history. The objective of national liberation is, therefore, to reclaim this right, usurped by imperialist domination. National liberation takes place only when the national productive forces (labor, natural resources, industry, etc.) are completely free of all kinds of foreign domination. "The liberation of productive forces and consequently of the ability to determine the mode of production most appropriate to the evolution of the liberated people, necessarily opens up new prospects for the cultural development of the society in question, by returning to that society all its capacity to create progress." (Amilcar Cabral, 1970 Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture)

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