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CULTURE AND IMPERIALISM

by

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CULTURE IN AFRICA

AND IMPERIALISM*

A PAPER

BY

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Before discussing the effects of imperialism on culture in Africa, it is important to establish a working definition of culture so that we have a defined point of departure for, depending on one's ideological frame of reference and therefore espoused worldview, the concept will mean different things to different people.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines culture as follows:

improvement (by mental or physical) training; intellectual development; particular form, stage of intellectual development or civilization.

The definition leaves us with an abstract statement that does not take us very far. For instance, who sets the standards used to define the level of "intellectual development?" Under imperialism, the reference point would be the West and the terms would be dictated by its ruling class intellectuals. So, we would be back to the imperialist notion that people from dominating nations are "civilized" and "cultured", while those from the dominated nations are "uncivilized" and "uncultured". Alternatively, if we are enlightened and from the dominated world, we would take sides with Ntakoro's assessment of the colonizers as savages² - especially given their acts of dehumanization against the colonized people.

There are other definitions that take us some distance beyond our entrapment with the Concise Oxford Dictionary's definition, but which still leave us under unspecified. For instance, culture has often been referred to as a life-long process of social and intellectual formation among individuals and groups. Leopold Sedar Senghor once defined it as the sum total of a people's way of life, including their beliefs. At one point, Kwame Nkrumah described culture as the outer manifestation of a people's soul and personality, expressed through their artistic

and scientific achievements. W.E.B. Du Bois would have broadly shared this view, as clearly brought out in his Souls of Black Folk.

Yet another definition would look upon culture as the totality of socially transmitted behavioural patterns, arts, beliefs and all other products of human work and thought, characteristic of a community or nation.

Important as these definitions are, they fail to sufficiently emphasize the vital relationship that exists between culture, as a product of the human labour process and the economic base from which it is evolved.

In Return to the Source, the late Cde. Amilcar Cabral provides this important link - so visibly missing in the foregoing definitions - in line with the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Cabral argues that there are "strong, dependent and reciprocal relationships" that exist between "the cultural situation and the economic (and political) situations in the behaviour of human societies" (underlining his).

In fact, culture is always in the life of a society (open or closed), the more or less conscious result of the economic and political activities of that society, the more or less dynamic expression of the kinds of relationships which prevail in that society, on the one hand between man (considered individually or collectively) and nature, and, on the other hand, among individuals, groups of individuals, social strata or classes.³

Thus, culture is created as human beings relate to one another in the process of production, as they respond to their material world to provide themselves with essential and other needs of life, as they respond to the natural world to improve their habitat and as they apply their intellect and imagination to create the non-material world of ideas. To engage in production is, therefore, not only to inevitably engage in cultural action, but to engage in concrete historical action.

As Cabral rightly argues:

Whatever may be the ideological or idealistic characteristics of cultural expression, culture is an essential element of the history of a people. Culture is, perhaps, the product of this history just as the flower is the product of a plant. Like history, or because of history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production. Culture plunges its roots into the physical reality of the environmental humus in which it develops, and it reflects the organic nature of the society, which may be more or less influenced by external factors. 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 search for survival and progress.⁴

The key points that must be grasped here are (1) that culture is an essential element of the history of a people (2) that culture has as its material base the level of productive forces and the mode of production and (3) that culture is vital in a people's search for survival and progress. What Cde. Cabral is, in essence, saying is that culture and its servicing institutions constitute a very socio-political theme. They reflect the nature of the economic base of which they are a concomitant part, along with the other institutions that belong to the superstructure that supports this base and consequently, the nature of a given society's class struggle.

There are two broad categories of culture; material culture and non-material culture. The former is manifested through concrete, tangible objects, while the latter is reflected and communicated through ideas. By material culture objects we mean such human tools and utilities like houses, beds, chairs, cooking pots, clothes, machines etc. By non-material culture we mean ideas, norms, beliefs, philosophies, ideologies etc., which come into being as people reflect upon their material and

natural worlds. Both aspects of culture, then, are brought into existence as human beings wrestle with their environment, in an attempt to harness its forces and in turn mould them so as to provide themselves with at least the three basic necessities in life: food, clothing and shelter. The non-material cultural expression is the attempt by the human intellect, imagination and feeling to fulfil the biological, human need to comprehend the world. This involuntary desire to understand the environment, through mastering it, ensures that human beings live without the kind of fear that leads to dependance on superstition, mystery and magic, pressurizing people to pass a vote of no confidence in their human capabilities. The search leads to the twin-need of naming what is in the environment ... exploring life ... sounding the depths of existence and in so doing, exploding the awkward silences that often freeze positive action in people. It is in this manner that fields of knowledge are carved out: Science, History, Literature, Technology, Law, Architecture and so on.

There are two major functions that material and non-material culture can be directed towards. Firstly, they can be directed towards the solution of human problems, self-realization and the fulfilment of societal needs. In other words they can be used for practical, utilitarian and social purposes. Secondly, they can be directed towards negative ends, for the purposes of showy, pompous display of objects and ideas, as a means of parading wealth and imposing power. In other words, they can be used for destructive, wasteful and anti-social purposes. Utilitarian, pro-people culture can be liberating and fulfilling. Show/parade, anti-people culture on the other hand, can be decadent, suffocating, oppressive and enslaving towards the oppressed.

Generally speaking, show/parade culture in Africa is to be found among

the members of the ruling class, especially those representing social strata such as the foreign bourgeoisie, the comprador bourgeoisie, as well as sections of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie. These social groups, as a rule, exhibit obnoxious consumerist attitudes and adopt extravagant styles of living, dressing, eating etc., just to show off their money-power. They live under obnoxious affluence, often feeding their cats and dogs with beef and milk while the poor live in a cultural environment that is stinking with poverty, crime, violence, hunger, malnutrition and disease. Many of us could, I am sure, produce example upon example of the kinds of show/parade culture "exhibitions" that we witness everyday in our midst. For example, some members of the ruling class will, in real bourgeois taste, spend thousands of dollars, Kwachas nairas, shillings ... on dinners and cocktail parties, just to show that they can outdo one of their kind in spending money. At these cocktail parties, the bourgeoisie will work their nerves to exhaustion, displaying plastic smiles to people they probably abhor, or exchanging petty gossip on the "idiocy" of their house "servants" and "maids;" but mostly, boasting to each other about their most recent wealth acquisitions.

When members of these classes give dinner, they look upon it as an occasion for the display of wealth. The dinner table is likely to be "decorated" with a line of silver knives to the right, matched by a similar line of forks to the left and accompanied by an array of drinking glasses ... for beer, water, wine and liqueur --- equipment that must be used at the correct time, in specified, affected mannerisms, such as an accepted style for sipping liqueur! One "village" mother once described how confused and terrorized she had once felt at her son's table when confronted with all this intimidating "equipment," meant as

exhibition of wealth. Instead of relaxing and enjoying the meal, the poor peasant woman had spent most of her time under confusion and embarrassment, not knowing what instrument to use and at what stage to use it. She was mesmerized by the gold, silver and crystal!

Others of these men and women of consumerist imperialist culture will accumulate houses all over the country of their residence, just to show how wealthy they are. They will own several hotel-like castles and mammoth mansions, christening them severally as "city homes", "country homes", "vacational homes" and what have you. All these, on top of what they rent out for profits! The homes will be furnished so extravagantly that the awe they create will make a poor visitor afraid to step on the carpets, or to sit on the forbidding upholstery covering the chairs. Yet others will turn cars into objects of worship, having categories of them in the home.... the "pleasure ride" type, the "special occasion" type, the "safari" type and the "shopping basket". A lady from this social class once invited me to have a look at her "little toy" and so I stood up from the sitting room and walked to the bedroom, ready to oblige, but wondering why a full grown woman should indulge in a childlike habit such as fussing over a toy. She led me out of the house, opened a garage that had an automatic door, announcing: "Here is the little pet. Isn't she beautiful?" There stood a smashing BMW, in cool lagoon blue! Disgusted by the gloating language, but not wanting to be called sour grapes, I simply asked, "Why do you call a car a toy, a pet?" "Oh, sweetheart", came the cooing voice, "I only use it when I am feeling idle." I could have thrown up.

These kind of people often constitute the been-to types, who consume imported goods only and "no local products, please!" Every year, they spend bags of money on shopping sprees abroad, especially when they

have an occasion such as a wedding in the family. They have been known to send their brides-to-be, accompanied by a row of "maids" and "flower girls", to spend days or weeks in expensive hotels while shopping for wedding outfits in imperialist metropolitans such as London, New York and Paris, having left boutiques in their own countries.

At other levels such as dress, appearance and personality the consumption of "imported" show/parade culture in neo-colonial situations can assume ridiculous dimensions. I am sure that many of us have seen these cartoons walking our streets in open daylight, engaged in all manner of baffoonery, including: baking themselves in three piece suits under temperatures of up to ninety degrees plus; roasting their heads with hair straightening chemicals; wearing wigs of straight red hair on African heads and doing many other foolish things. One of these African petty bourgeoisie carriers of expensive synthetic hair once asked me, in New York, why I did not do something "more interesting" with my hair instead of wearing braids, afros and "hats" (meaning the African head gear) ! Something "more interesting" proved to mean the perming of hair, hot comb straightening and the wearing of straight hair wigs. What could I say, beyond feeling utterly contemptuous of her notion of something "more interesting !"

Pitted against this cultural world of extravagance, consumerism and inauthenticity, is the cultural world of utilitarian culture, mainly consumed by the progressive intelligentsia, workers and peasants. Only, under neo-colonial situations in Africa, the culture that the masses consume cannot even be described as utilitarian, for, most of them live under absolute deprivation. Their cultural existence operates at the very margin of bare survival. Many of them live in box houses, in tiny rooms, and hovels to be found in the sprawling slums of our neo-colonial

cities. Others have no homes at all and live in the open air, under all kinds of cruel weather conditions. These deprived poor are usually born and bred in a socio-economic-political environment (and therefore cultural environment) full of drunkenness, violence and crime - experiences that will certainly negate their positive growth as normal human beings. Others are in the rural areas where they live in semi-deserts, tiny huts (often sleeping side by side with goats, sheep and hens) that serve as bedrooms, diningrooms, sittingrooms and kitchens. They are seriously threatened by disease, malnutrition and even starvation. With death daily staring them in the face as they struggle to be, these people know a culture of suffocation.

Given the above observations, it is unanalytical, unscientific and a serious generalization to speak of: African culture, Zambian culture, Nigerian culture and so on, leaving the matter at that. We must go beyond these populist frontiers and specify the class particularity of the cultural experience that we are speaking of, thus giving it an economic base which consequently defines its practical reality. We must, further, move beyond a definition that merely reduces culture to such expressions as dancing, singing, performing acrobatics, wearing dashikis, decorating ourselves with beads etc. For, important as these expressions may be (as aspects of decorative culture), alone they do not constitute culture. They are only its manifestations, as opposed to being its essence. More than this, we must rise above the kind of derogatory conceptions that would define African culture as a return to the feudal way and view of life, where, for instance, women and children are assumed to be inferior to grown males and treated as subservient minors, relegated to the periphery of historical action. Living culture's place is not in a "museum", but at the centre of historical events, feeding them with dynamism and

new interpretations of life. Within the context of "museum" culture, so-called bogus "African culturalists" will go to such extremes as to reduce culture to the ability on the part of the male to acquire a collection of "wives" and to father children left, right and centre, without assuming parental responsibility over them. There are even those who will argue that unpunctuality and the inability to organize themselves so as to work in a disciplined manner are part of their "African culture." This is not only a bastardization of culture, but the kind of self-denigration that should be treated with the contempt it deserves.

We reiterate the point that in a neo-colonial situation where the various socio-economic classes stand in contradiction with and opposition to one another, members from different classes consume very different cultures. We are arguing that in a class society culture cannot be homogeneous. For instance, the commercial farmer consumes a very different culture from the peasant farmer, or the workers on his/her farm. The worker, lives in a dog house, while the farmer occupies a many-roomed bungalow. The government minister definitely consumes a very different culture from that of his/her driver. The university professors' cultural world is certainly very far removed from that of the worker who cleans the corridors of academia and so one could go on. Although these people may work for the same institution, live in the same country and even share a common racial origin, their economic base is not the same. It is that factor that defines their social and cultural status.

The challenge, then, is for us not to romanticize cultural experiences as if they could be informed by a uniform experience between members of antagonistic social classes. Culture is defined by realities that transcend the commonality of geographical frontiers, the sharing of a

common language and even the bonds of kinship blood. To establish this fact, it would have been useful to do a detailed analysis of the cultural blends that are consumed by the various classes of neo-colonial Africa, but the scope of this paper does not allow this. We shall focus upon the two major expressions of culture, which, broadly speaking, stand in antagonism to one another under imperialist domination, namely: the culture of econo-political power, oppression and domination on the one hand and that of resistance against impoverishment, waged by the masses against exploiters, in an attempt to achieve liberation and self-assertion. However, before we establish the focus on these two types of culture, it is important that we examine the institutions through which culture is preserved, transmitted and re-inforced in order to understand how imperialism manipulates these so as to maintain cultural and economic domination over Africa. The key of these institutions are Education (incorporating the Arts, the Sciences, the Social Sciences, the Performed Arts, Literature, Language, Music etc.), the media and religion. These institutions and others like them, come into being as individuals and the collective group produce social formations in the process of production, as they attempt to respond to social needs, as they try to develop and advance the human society. Once created, the institutions play the role of shaping both individuals and the collective group. It is, therefore, no accident that next to the economy of a dominated people, imperialism will always aim at controlling its cultural institutions or eliminating them altogether, leaving a vacuum that will facilitate the imposition of the invader's own institutions. This explains why colonialism, for instance, so ruthlessly destroyed African people's cultures and their institutions. By doing this, imperialism aims at crushing not only the dominated people's way of life, but their very "soul" and "personality" so that economic conquest can become complete,

for cultural zombies would not be in a position to put up anykind of resistance.

In this regard, Cde. Cabral observed as follows:

History teaches us that, in certain circumstances, it is very easy for the foreigner to impose his domination on a people. But it also teaches us that, whatever may be the material aspects of this domination, it can be maintained only by the permanent, organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned In fact to take up arms to dominate a people is, above all to take up arms to destroy, or at least to neutralize, to paralyze its cultural life. For, with a strong indigenous cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation. 5

Let us now look at Education as the most significant of the three cultural institutions that we discuss in this paper. Education is a key institution in the process of inculcating and promoting cultural practices. It acts as a communicator as well as a reservoir of culture. In a neo-colonial situation, it has a class point of reference. In other words, as one of the most political social institutions, education is not and cannot be ideologically neutral. "The political system that nurtures it into being ensures that it exists to serve its interests, to service its econo-political system. 6 Further, it is through such values that individuals attempt to unravel their surroundings, to reach into themselves and unto each other.

We are using, in other words, the defined aesthetics of a specific socio-cultural background, as our point of reference and even more specifically, we are projecting the worldview and ideology of a given class. And, lest we forget it, Karl Marx had a point when he stated that the history of given epoch is the history of the ruling class. Often, the education institutions that we are part of are nothing but mere servicing departments for the ideas and social values of the ruling class. 7

It is Paulo Freire who argues in Pedagogy of the Oppressed that there

are two main kinds of education; education for domination and enslavement, on the one hand and on the other, education for liberation. The first type he describes as "banking education", in which the learner is a passive recipient and the teacher a "depositor" or "banker". This type of education is characterized by a master/subject relationship between the teacher and the learner, with the former as the master and the latter as the subject. The second type of education, Freire describes as "problem-solving." In this kind of education the learner is at the centre and the teacher only works in team with the learner, acting as a resource person. Both are participants and actors, but the learner is the focus. This type of education is characterized by dialogue and debate between the learner and the resource person. "Banking education" propagates a culture of dependance, fear and silence. "Problem-solving" education nurtures a culture of reflection, experimentation dialogue and self-assertion.

Obviously, it would be against the interests of imperialism to encourage the second type of education. It favours "banking education", establishing schools among the dominated people that are in the style of educational systems in the homeland of imperialism. Such institutions are equipped to the hilt, in terms of syllabi, ideological and cultural content, to serve the purpose of imperialism by ensuring the production of "parrots". To complete the process of brainwashing, the imperialists then send the "parrots" to the metropolitan for final touches. After that the finished (note the irony!) product is brought back to Africa to constitute the 1 - 10% of the collaborating reactionary elite population, working hand in hand with the comprador bourgeoisie and the dominating ruling class in the metropolitan to ensure the imperialist enslavement of the African masses. It is no wonder, then,

that to-day the soil of Africa holds an institute such as the Kamuzu Academy in Malawi, where the cream of Malawi's intelligentsia -in-the-making is taken and schooled in "dead" languages such as Greek, Latin and Hebrew, not to mention other areas of education that can only serve the purpose of alienating them from the African masses and their problems. Teachers for the institution are imported not from the metropolitan. Malawian teachers do not feature anywhere, unless they have been schooled in bourgeois classics and can speak foreign tongues in the accent of the imperialist culture's ruling class. Imperialism has a very well-planned, systematic educational programme for the training of its targetted collaborators because through such an education, the capitalist ideology can be stamped on the mind and the personality of the learner. In this way, the ideology of creating a world for a privileged few at the expense of the majority is so ingrained that its students will die defending its "divine" rightness.

Through this kind of education imperialism has succeeded in producing African children (mostly to be found among members of the African comprador class) who, for instance, pronounce their African names in an assumed Anglo-American accent so that a name like Chipo gets pronounced as "Cheepow" and so on. In Zimbabwe one finds beautiful African names, that make perfect sense within an African cultural context, rendered into living jokes after being translated into English. Witness names such as Anyway, Whatever, Action, Smiles, Reason, Clever and so on, to which people happily answer, to the amusement of those from imperialist cultures whose language we are using to translate our personality ! In imperialist education, language is a tool for cultural conquest. Indeed, colonialism and imperialism have used it for that very purpose. Frantz Fanon was correct in observing that 'to speak a language is to assume a world, to carry the weight of a "civilization"'. For, language communicates a society's values and the worldview of those values. So, under imperialism,

language is enforced upon the dominated peoples, while their own mother-tongues are relegated to an inferior position and categorized as "barbaric". This is effected to a point where the elite of the dominated cultures become even apologetic, if not ashamed, of using their own tongues. They will go to the extent of speaking these in Ox-Bridge, Parisien and American accents to emphasize the difference between them and their masses. Up to this day, competence and outstanding performance in imperialist languages remain key determining factors as to how far a person in Africa can make it up the academic and career ladders. The importance of the languages of conquest has been so emphasized that political leaders who are masters in our languages and only semi-proficient in, say, English will opt to speak to the masses in English. It becomes pathetic to sometimes watch them sweat and stumble over English words, reading laborious English scripts, in cases not knowing where to pause for commas or full-stops. "Amin" jokes and those of colonialist chiefs who insisted on "murdering" English rather than use the African tongues that they were masters of to address "Madamu Queeni, the Horrible Mrs. Phillipu", are very expensive within the context of cultural imperialism, funny as they may be on the surface.

Once the dominated cultures have been schooled in imperialist ideas - particularly at the level of the reactionary elite - they find no shame in copying the dominating cultures and especially the image of their ruling class. Thus one will find, for instance, elite males in neo-colonial Africa dressed in three piece suits and even in a few known cases, wearing bowler hats and carrying umbrellas - British ruling class style - in the steaming heat of 90 ° plus. The women will, in turn, roast their hair with chemicals to make it straight so that they can, if the occasion demands, toss it about as they speak - western style. These are the cartoons that Frantz Fanon once referred to as "walking lies". They are people who are actively engaged in the process already referred to as passing of a vote of no confidence in themselves and their cultural heritage. Paulo Freire has correctly argued that 'cultural conquest leads to the cultural inauthenticity of those who are invaded'. He says :

Cultural conquest leads to the cultural inauthenticity of those who are invaded; they begin to respond to the values, the standards and the goals of the invaders

In cultural invasion it is essential that those who are invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own; for the more they mimic the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes.

For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those who are invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority. Since everything has its opposite, if those who are invaded consider themselves inferior, they must necessarily recognize the superiority of the invaders. The values of the latter thereby become the pattern of the former. The more invasion is accentuated and those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, talk like them.⁸

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the radio are stamped with the images of the ruling class, relegating the masses to the background, from where they are depicted as passive watchers of a passing history - a depiction that is completely ahistorical, for it is the masses who are the real actors in the process of production. And, as we have already argued, the process of production is, in the final analysis, the factor that pivots history and development forward. Having curtailed the masses off the pages of the newspapers and magazines, the imperialist media proceeds to aggressively stamp the pages with images of ruling class culture and make these the reference point of the dominated people. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the films and advertisements that are splashed on most television screens. Hours upon hours of the viewers' time are taken up by such films as "Dallas", "Dynasty", and "The Colbies" and other soap operas that present America as one long episode of material paradise. This fictional America of Hollywood intrigue and moral decadence among members of the ruling class is not the real America of the majority. A representative American world would at least show workers, labouring in the factories and other industries for long hours, on very little pay, most of them going home to the ghettos at the end of the long hours of toil. Hollywood soap operas do not show us the millions of homeless Americans, the poorly fed, and the semi-literate poor. They do not show us the slums of Newark, New Jersey, Harlem the impoverished world of native American reservations and such like images of cultural deserts. So, the African audience consumes this Hollywood propaganda, the imperialist lies, provided through the courtesy of rich business advertisers - a world that undermines their very being, even as it feeds them with the mythical "American dream".

Business advertisements, whether in newspapers, the radio, or the television, carry equally aggressive propaganda, parading the cultural world of the invader in dress, eating and living styles for mass consumption. The language in which they are conveyed is so psychologically and ideologically damaging that it can

make the poor feel like criminals for being unable to afford what is on "sale". For instance, there used to be a radio and television advertisement in Kenya that went like this:

"Mothers who love their children give them ribena".¹⁰

Implied is the fact that mothers who do not give their children ribena because they are too poor to afford it do not love their children. At that time a bottle of ribena of approximately 350 mls. cost about 20 shillings. An average workers' salary was then 300 shillings a month and so a bottle of ribena was completely out of reach for such a person. The masses meet these and other images wherever they look. Images of products like coke, fanta, sprite, sparletta etc. are splashed across the bodies of the buses that they queue for and on the walls of the buildings that they clean, so that wherever they turn, they are feeding on the consumerist world of their oppressors. The cultural images that the masses feed on in a neo-colonial situation are cruel, demeaning and oppressive.

As if this were not enough, the masses often find themselves placed in a position where they are forced to produce culture for the consumption of and in the taste of the ruling class for entertainment and other purposes. Witness what goes on in some tourist resorts. The masses are made to entertain the tourist through acrobatics, dances, songs etc. The dancers, often dressed in stone age gear, constituting of paraphernellia such as animal skins and feathers, adorning bodies painted in obnoxious colour schemes and other kinds of wild decorations (to project the image of the "bush" African), will dance their feet sore to the amusement of the watchers. At the end of the day, the money they sweat for finds its way into the pocket of the rich ones who employ them as dancers and acrobats. They go home tired and hungry. Some of the African countries who promote tourist culture are known to be popular attractions for providing "virgin boys and girls" for the kind of tourist who has such inclinations. The imperialist press in some metropolitans have actually been known to carry such advertisements, reeking as they do of dehumanization. In tourist culture and the advertisements that promote it, human beings are turned into commodities for consumption by the wealthy.

Religion is the other institution that is used for cultural and ideological domination under imperialism. Religion mystifies the objective material reality, creating dependance on superstition and fate. As "the opium of the masses" religion shrouds reality, burrying believers in clouds of mysticism, superstition, fatalism and dependance on supernatural powers. The believers pass a vote of no confidence in their ability to change their material reality for the better, happily singing abdicating songs such as, "This world is not my home. I am just passing through. My treasures are laid down way up beyond the blue" etc. etc. This they sing while their oppressors take over wealth on this earth. The sweat of the workers and peasants creates this earthly "heaven" for the rich.

The history of Christianity in Africa is steeped with blood, racialism and oppression from the days of the Slave Trade to this era of Apartheid South Africa. Under colonialism the bible was used as a tool for conquest, alongside the gun. Witness that up this day, the Dutch Orthodox Church in Apartheid South Africa even justifies the inhuman world of racial discrimination and economic deprivation of the majority African people by a small minority of whites, using quotations from the bible to do this. Indeed imperialism has often been christened by bourgeois historians, "Christian civilization." Today Africa must boast the highest population of Christian converts, representing an incredible array of religious denominations. J.S. Mbiti is, ironically, right when he observes that Africans are the most religious people in the world. They have the monopoly of " spiritual wealth," but remain destitutes and beggars in terms of material wealth. Religion is indeed one of imperialism's "gifts" to the oppressed and it has been internalized to the extent of becoming a way of life.

From the foregoing, it is clear that under imperialism the institutions of culture are used for the purpose of facilitating the domination of the oppressed. The institutions constitute a part of the superstructure which is clearly designed to cement the economic base that the superstructure supports. It is therefore obvious that to achieve cultural liberation, the dominated people have no choice other than that of dismantling the oppressive economic base that gives rise to oppressive cultural institutions. It is for this reason that Cabral has said:

The liberation of the productive forces and consequently 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.....
.....
Thus it may be seen that if imperialist domination has the vital need to practise cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture.¹²

Under imperialism, the exploited masses of neo-colonial Africa might go beyond where Cde. Cabral left off and assert that the creation of a society based on the principles of scientific socialism is an act of culture. Why does one say this?

This paper has made it clear that imperialism has imposed on the masses of neo-colonial Africa a culture of domination, through a capitalist economic system. The oppressed masses continue to fight and struggle against this, historically creating a culture that is dialectically opposed to that of imperialist domination - that of resistance against domination. However, their full victory over cultural imperialism will only be ascertained by the creation of an economic system that does not breed cultural imperialism. There is only one alternative to the capitalist mode of production - that of the scientific socialist mode of production. Thus, the only logical choice for the creation of a

true popular culture for the masses of Africa is the adoption of the latter economic system. This will, in turn, produce people who have the "capacity to create progress" and who are able to evolve a new humanitarian culture that affirms the dignity of human beings.

NOTES

1. Concise Oxford Dictionary, (New York : OUP, 1964 edition), p. 231.
2. Niakoro, an old peasant woman character, in Ousmane Sembene's novel, Gods' Bits of Wood, refers to French as the language of "savages".
3. Amilcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture" in Return to the Source : Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral, Eds. African Information Service (New York & London : Monthly Review Press, 1973), p.41
4. ibid., p.42
5. ibid., pp 39-40
6. Micere Githae Mugo, "The Battle of the Mind", in UFAHAMU, Edited by Kyalo Mativo (Los Angeles: UCLA, 1984), p. 241.
7. ibid., p. 242.
8. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (New York : the continuum Publishing Corporation, 1983), pp. 150 - 151.
9. N.B. "Dallas", "Dynasty" and "The Colbys" have remained on the Zimbabwean television screen for the last three years.
10. A sweetened grape fruit drink.
11. V.I. Lenin, "Socialism and Religion," in On Socialist Ideology and Culture (Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1965) pp. 24-43.
12. Amilcar Cabral, op cit , p. 43.



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