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Pan-Africanism and African Liberation

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Pan-Africanism is at once an exercise in consciousness and resistance. It reflects the self-expression and self-organization of the African peoples and expresses their resistance to Eurocentrism. Walter Rodney, in his attempt to grasp the content of Pan-Africanism at the time of the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Tanzania in 1974, wrote:

> Any 'Pan' concept is an exercise in self-definition by a people, aimed at establishing a broader redefinition of themselves than that which had so far been permitted by those in power. Invariably, however, the exercise is undertaken by a specific social group or class which speaks on behalf of the population as a whole. This is always the case with respect to national movements. Consequently, certain questions must be placed on the agenda, notably, the following:
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> Which class leads the national movement?
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> How capable is this class of carrying out the historic tasks of national liberation?
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> Which are the silent classes on whose behalf 'national' claims are being articulated?[1]

As an exercise in self-definition, the Pan-Africanist project has been sharpened by resistance to Eurocentrism. Pan-African self-definition has taken many forms, but it has been most clearly articulated in the project of achieving the liberation of the continent of Africa and the dignity and self-respect of all Africans. For most of the century, political independence was seen as the key to achieving liberation and self-respect. But after more than thirty years of African independence, it has become clear that the

social forces that led the independence movement were incapable of carrying out the historic tasks of social emancipation.

The assumption of power by African leaders in Africa, and by Black mayors and governors in the US and Afro-Caribbean prime ministers in the Caribbean, has not significantly improved the quality of life of the African peoples nor ended the impact of racism. It is now possible to say that the content of independence must be deepened to guarantee new relations of production. As part of the struggle for human emancipation, the struggle of the African peoples for a decent livelihood and for social justice has asserted itself as part of the struggle for social transformation and dignity. It is in this sense that Pan-Africanists such as Eusi Kwayana, who struggle in societies alongside other oppressed groups, embrace a concept of Pan-African humanism.

This new conceptualization of Pan-Africanism arose concretely out of the experiences of Pan-Africanists such as Walter Rodney, who had to clarify the real meaning of Pan-Africanism (in opposition to leaders like Forbes Burnham, who exploited the subjective forms of self-assertion to pit poor African workers against Indian workers in order to keep a small clique in power). At the intellectual level this new conceptual thrust is also an attempt to rescue the search for emancipation from the cultural vision of Europe, for example, in the Afrocentric approach to history.

Pan-Africanism, in its North American manifestations, remains constrained by the intellectual poverty of the United States and its ideological stress on great men of history. The historical record of the Pan-African movement in the West links the movement to great heroes (mostly males) such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Cheik Anta Diop, Nelson Mandela and Bob Marley. The individualism of the Afrocentric conception of history seeks to abstract these men from the social movement of which they were a part. If European power was seen as built on the genius of white males, the response must be to posit great African males. Both approaches to history denigrate the role of women.

In one sense, the intellectual poverty of the great-man-in-history approach has trapped some Africans in a search for positive role models in racist societies. It is this search for role models in response to the imperial arrogance of Europe that forced the early Pan-African writers to celebrate the great African empires of the past. Yet the depth of the economic crisis in Africa and among Africans overseas dictates that, however much Egypt was a great center of civilization in the past, the challenge of today's concrete reality is to change the wretchedness of the conditions of existence of the Egyptian and other African peoples.

Pan-African liberation at the end of the decade confronts both the falsification of African history and the intense ideological campaign manifest in the media images of Africans dying of famine and AIDS. The recolonization of the African continent in the period of the push for a united Europe (1992) and a common European home has clarified the fact that political independence and the unity of states as inscribed in the Organization of African Unity cannot be the basis of African liberation. Building a federation of Africa based on the cultural unity of the continent and the harnessing of the knowledge and skills developed by Africans over the centuries are some of the challenges that face the African peoples in the next century.

For those concerned with social transformation, the crisis has presented an opportunity to raise new questions in conceptualizing liberation in terms of real changes in human relations. After the period of guerrilla struggles in Africa there was the effort to develop the ideas of socialism as the ideology of liberation. But those states that embraced socialism used this ideology as a dogma that demobilized the producers. Ideas of modernization, though conceived of as Pan-African/Afrocentric, have emphasized catching up with Europe on European terms, and have thus left the African peoples alienated from the states established during decolonization.

All over the African world the search for cultural transformation and cultural freedom has inserted into the Pan-African struggle a new emphasis. Cultural resistance and cultural expressions reflect the deep ferment in the world of the African peoples. This ferment is manifest in a variety of religious forms that resist the consumerism of capitalist culture. In this sense the producers in Africa have challenged the intellectuals to conceptualize Pan-Africanism in ways that transcend their previous philosophical preoccupation with Europe and European standards, so that Pan-African humanism can be part of the new universal culture of emancipation.

This chapter traces the objective conditions out of which Pan-Africanism emerged in this century. The dismantling of apartheid opens possibilities for new conceptions of Pan-African liberation, and the prospect of a new political confederation in Southern Africa to organize reconstruction offers possibilities for a new kind of union based on popular groups.

Pan-Africanism in the Era of the Partitioning of Africa

The concept of Pan-Africanism has undergone many changes during this century in the face of the objective conditions of the underdevelopment of Africa and racial oppression in the West. Decisive periods in this progression are the era of the partitioning of Africa, the impact of the two world wars, the depression of the 1930s and the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, the

period of political independence, the period of recolonization under the management of the International Monetary Fund and the battles to dismantle apartheid. Given the conditions facing African people, the forms of Pan-Africanist organization changed over time, with the intellectuals being the leading spokespersons in the period before political independence. In this sense, the record of the Pan-African movement has been dominated by the reports of meetings and congresses held since 1900.[3]

Pan-African ideas have always existed at different levels, and a new task facing scholars is to organize the research necessary to understand Pan-African consciousness as it has manifested itself in village communities and been disseminated through oral history, songs, stories, dances and other cultural media. Cheikh Anta Diop, in his study of linguistics, opened one window onto the cultural unity of Africa. This unity, which was ignored by colonial scholarship, proved to be the fountain of resistance to European domination and inspired all the social movements in Africa and overseas.

From the outset, those Africans educated and literate in European languages sought to use whatever tools necessary to give expression to this unity. One of the first forms of this expression was Ethiopianism, which was invoked by African preachers both on the continent and in the diaspora to reflect African continuities via the quest for independent religious reflection. This Ethiopianism can now be analyzed in the context of the impact of the missionaries, who were paving the way for colonial expansion and partition. Christianity in its European form carried with it the cultural arrogance of Europe, in that missionaries believed that they were civilizing non-whites even if this salvation justified the slave trade and slavery. In response, preachers in Southern Africa, the Caribbean and North America articulated Ethiopianism as one of the earliest overt forms of Pan-Africanism in an effort to tap the resentment of the African masses.

This response was not, however, adequate to meet the ideological assault of capitalism in the era of monopoly. The struggle against the political, economic and cultural imperatives of imperialism sharpened the philosophical basis of Pan-Africanism in the twentieth century. And for much of the century the thrust has been to unite the subjective reservoir of African identity into a social form capable of confronting imperialism in all its forms.

Modern imperialism has its roots in the tremendous technological changes in the organization of production in Western Europe and its extension in North America. The application of science and technology to production linked factory conditions in Europe and North America to resources of raw materials and labor around the world. The expansion, domination and partition of the world that ensued in the latter half of the nineteenth century led to the partitioning of the African continent.[4] Formal division was sealed at the Congress of Berlin in 1884–85 and was part of

a larger enterprise in which the European and North American powers dominated the economies of Asia, North America, Africa and Australasia. These economic changes were accompanied in the ideological sphere by ideas of Western progress, free enterprise, democracy, Christian salvation and white superiority, packaged together and claimed as universal truths by European ideologues. This ideological project set the intellectual agenda of the twentieth century by falsifying the role played by Africans and ignoring their contributions to science, culture, philosophy and religion. A 'scientific' racism that was embryonic at the time of the slave trade was deepened to justify military expansion in Africa and to legitimate the brutal massacre of Africans and other non-whites. The ideation system of Eurocentrism was thus built on both the concrete conditions of the technical advances of capitalism and on the distortions of human development that imprisoned Africans everywhere in the cell of inferiority and insult.

The first Pan-Africanist intellectuals at the turn of the century took up the challenge to reverse the falsifications that were reproduced in European languages and culture.[5] Africans such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Edward Blyden, Robert Love and Sylvester Williams challenged the Eurocentric cultural assault, but did not have the resources to link their intellectual resistance to the cultural resistance of the African peoples. Even with this limitation, these Pan-Africanists made a fundamental contribution to the intellectual culture of Pan-African liberation.[6] W.E.B. Du Bois set a standard for intellectual inquiry and research linking Africans in America to other Africans in the West and to the African continent that has yet to be matched within the institutions of African-American studies in North America.

The first Pan-African Congresses, beginning in 1900, were marked by the appeals of intellectuals to the European powers to act more humanely towards Africans. But the impact of World War I on Europe and Africa demonstrated that the imperatives of capital accumulation wrought destruction and violence, and that the colonial metropoles would be unresponsive to appeals to reason and morality.[7] World War I also deepened the integration of African societies into the world economy and unleashed a major population movement of Africans in the West, especially in North America. The war thus brought about a dislocation by capital of the self-organization and self-mobilization of the African masses in all parts of the globe.[8]

Garveyism as Pan-Africanism Among the Producers

While intellectuals responded to the contradictions within the social system as they engaged in the reproduction of knowledge, Garveyism was the

profound response of the masses to racism, war, lynching and the imperialist partition of Africa. How to confront the ideology of white supremacy, with its military and economic consequences for the African peoples, was the challenge taken up by the Garvey movement. Thus far the nature of intellectual work in North America, with its emphasis on the role of great men in history, has studied the Garvey movement with a focus on the strengths and weaknesses of Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican immigrant who was the titular head of the movement. But closer studies of this Pan-African response would demonstrate that this movement was not the creation of an individual, but the response of a people searching for self-discovery.[9]

The nature of the Garveyite response reflected how opposition to racism and racial domination had internalized the intellectual culture of the West. Though Garveyism was one brand of Pan-African thought seeking to build a tradition of liberation on the African cultural roots of the masses, the Universal Negro Improvement Association in its very nomenclature accepted the philosophical tenets of Western Europe and North America. Nevertheless, Garveyism was the most advanced conception of Pan-Africanism in the period after World War I.

The cultural outpouring of the oppressed Blacks in the US during this massive dislocation was one of the high points of American culture this century, for it was a period when the spirit of liberation opened up the appetite of the oppressed for self-discovery. Garveyism was one component of this process, and the vibrancy of the UNIA was apparent in the way in which Garveyites brought together diverse social forces, essentially the most oppressed sections of the Black community: working people, independent trade unionists, pacifists, cultural nationalists, women liberation fighters, militant self-help groups, socialists, church organizations and a whole host of unorganized Black folk. Black workers in the US had acquired the social weight and organizational experience to push forward the claims of African liberation and Black dignity.

Garveyism used the propaganda and organizational techniques available at that time to give meaning to the claim that the UNIA spoke for the liberation of all Blacks and for the liberation of the African continent. Through the *Negro World,* whose unique brand of radical journalism reached even those unable to read and write in English, the UNIA reached Africa and became the first Pan-African movement embracing Africans both on the continent and overseas. Garveyism and the UNIA instilled in the minds of the Africans of the West the principle that their freedom was inextricably bound up with the freedom of the African continent.

In Africa itself, the objective conditions of colonial rule ensured that the UNIA did not have the mass following that it had in the US or the Caribbean, though it was one of the first organizations to have branches and

adherents all across the continent.[10] The spontaneous rebellions in Africa were still linked to the old precolonial ruling class, who resisted colonialism in order to restore their former economic and military positions. The spontaneous resistance of the Ashanti, Bambaata, Maji Maji, Nyabingi and other revolts was not then able to conceptualize resistance as a continental problem. It was in South Africa, where exploitation of mineral resources had organized segregation on a scale similar to that in the US, that the program of African redemption took root. The African National Congress, which was formed in the Union of South Africa in 1912, was one of the first organizations to emphasize the liberation of Africa as part of its political mobilization.

Whatever the weaknesses of the UNIA, its conception of African redemption spoke a language that the poor understood and the colonial overlords feared. France and Britain moved decisively to derail Pan-African linkages, and the leadership of the movement splintered when the US government moved to prosecute Marcus Garvey. But as revolutionary as the UNIA program was at the time, particularly in calling for the liberation of Africa by force, African workers and small farmers did not then have the organizational capacity then to give meaning to the call for independence. However, Garveyism planted a seed, and the urban workers, the seamen, small traders and a few intellectuals were attracted to the UNIA's symbols of racial pride. The Garvey appeal for redemption served as a beacon for a generation of Africans that used the ideas of the UNIA as a reference point in the struggle for political independence, but this struggle had to await the maturation of the social forces most capable of confronting the colonial state machinery.

The question posed earlier by Rodney in the formulation of Pan-African liberation is here relevant: Which were the silent classes in Africa on whose behalf the claims of Pan-African liberation were being made?

Pan-Africanism and Popular Resistance

By the end of World War I, after the structures of colonial administration and economic production had been established, the balance between humans, domesticated animals and agricultural land on the one hand, and wild game, tsetse flies and untamed forests, on the other, had shifted in favor of the latter.[11] One of the major problems exacerbated by colonialism was ecological imbalance, which is now being compounded by desertification, the results of soil exhaustion and in some cases overgrazing. Henceforth Pan-African liberation would have to cope with not only the absence of political independence, but also with the environmental degradation

caused by the colonial mining corporations and plantations.

After the military reverses following open revolts in the period up to 1920, African resistance went underground and then took on religious/cultural forms. Or, in the words of Amilcar Cabral, African culture went underground like a seed awaiting germination. These seeds showed themselves as independent African religions, because other cultural forms were persecuted as witchcraft. Overt opposition took spiritual forms in what is now called in academic literature the African Independent Church Movement. These movements, the Mourides in West Africa, the John Chilembwe movement in Malawi, the Ethiopian movement in South Africa, Harry Thuku in Kenya or Simon Kimbangu in the Congo sought recourse to African cultural forms to develop forms of religious expression to oppose colonial rule.

Kimbangism and other forms of resistance represented the search for a conceptual framework outside of the ideation system of the European views of reason, progress and individual accumulation. The symbols and spiritual autonomy invoked by these movements were sophisticated forms of opposition to European domination. Like the Rastafari movement in the Caribbean, these movements were revolts against oppression and part of the sociopolitical protest engendered by the presence of Europeans and the system of colonialism.[12] Current scholarship in Africa distinguishes between the form and the content of the early phase of resistance. For though the protests were couched in the language of tradition and religion, they sprang from the oppressive conditions of forced labor, land alienation, racial discrimination and colonial taxation.

As Walter Rodney wrote, 'A people's consciousness is heightened by knowledge of the dignity and determination of their foreparents.'[13] In this sense the nationalist protest of the postwar period in Africa formed a common thread with earlier resistance by those who have been derided as millenarians. It is now acknowledged that the nationalism of the anticolonial revolts that ushered in independence had its roots deep in the African past, 'and that the political parties that won independence in so many countries were only the end product of a continuous process of resistance which took diverse forms: notably, armed struggle, independent churches, welfare associations, peasant crop hold ups and strikes by wage earners.'[14]

The opposition of the popular masses to Eurocentrism and colonial rule represented a profound response, but this kind of resistance could not at that time take political leadership in the struggle for independence. The intellectual and organizational tasks necessary for the conquest of political independence were undertaken by the Pan-African intelligentsia, which had developed in the period after Garveyism. At this time Pan-African liberation was equated with political independence. This position was articulated

most clearly in the words of Kwame Nkrumah: 'Seek ye first the Political Kingdom and all will be added to thee.'

Pan-Africanism and Eurocentrism

The Pan-African intellectuals who emerged during the interwar period were confronted with a dominant European culture that centralized the changes in Europe during the Renaissance and that did not acknowledge Europe's debt to the cultures and transformations that had taken place in Africa, China and India for 4,000 years before the period of the industrial revolution in Europe. These intellectuals were therefore concerned with this distortion of human history, and, since they lacked an organic link to popular cultural resistance, they resisted Eurocentrism by pointing to the glories of the great kingdoms of Africa. The Pan-Africanists thus implicitly accepted the Eurocentric ideation system: If Europe had kings and emperors, it was necessary to draw attention to Egypt, Songhai, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Benin. Such a recollection of African greatness was a liberating experience in the era of colonialism, and served to mobilize anticolonial consciousness. This could be seen concretely in the Caribbean, where the African masses rejected the English king in favor of the African Emperor of Ethiopia. It was therefore not insignificant that the Rastafari as one form of cultural expression arose in the context of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935.

The invasion of Abyssinia was also a rallying point for Pan-Africanists everywhere, because Abyssinia was the oldest independent African society. Positive references to Ethiopia in the Bible had struck a responsive chord among Christianized Africans, so much so that when peasants in Southern Africa heard about the invasion they began to march up the continent to help to liberate Abyssinia, only to be turned back by the British. Poor and rural Africans thus responded to this invasion in ways that increased the spiritual, political and cultural bonds between Africans.[16]

The response of educated Africans all over the continent and beyond precipitated the formation of social movements calling for independence. The pre-eminent organization at this time was the International African Service Bureau in London. The group mobilized support for Emperor Haile Selassie and articulated demands for self-determination in Africa and the Caribbean. The group had a major influence on West African students, and luminaries such as George Padmore, C.L.R. James and Jomo Kenyatta were prominent. Their intellectual output proved a major inspiration to the national liberation movement. Padmore, James, Du Bois and many others contributed to the creation of a brand of Pan-African scholarship that

sought to correct some of the Eurocentric falsifications of history. It was in this anticolonial intellectual and political climate that the Fifth Pan-African Congress was held in Manchester in 1945.

The spiritual and cultural bonds of the African peoples transcended the language barriers imposed by the French, Belgians, English and the Portuguese.[17] Pan-African liberation was articulated by many intellectuals, and the Négritude movement among Caribbean and French-speaking Africans also exalted the African past and the 'African Personality'. Négritude as an important component of Pan-African thought sought to grasp the cultural unity of Africa as reflected in the cultural personality of the African peoples. However, the more far-sighted of those scholars whose work embraced Négritude were aware that 'the restoration of the cultural personality of the African and black peoples in general can only be achieved through *struggle*.'[18]

At the philosophical level, unfortunately, the richness of the contributions of Pan-African/Négritude scholars has been overshadowed by those who accepted racialism by replacing one set of myths of the inferiority of the Africans with another set of myths that accepted the fundamental distinction between the races that had become a part of European culture. The centrality of history, of material conditions and the cultural expressions that formed the basis of the writings of intellectuals such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon were replaced by the concept of the 'existential African'. They accepted the vaunted rationality of Europe and argued that 'if Europeans were rational, then Africans had rhythm and emotion.' One set of myths replaced another set of myths as they reified the concept of race and gave it a place in historical terms which reinforced Eurocentrism.

The unscientific assumptions about race and the romantic outlook of some exponents of Négritude became clearer when the bearers of these ideas became a stumbling block to African liberation in Haiti and in Senegal. In Haiti, the Négritude of 'Papa Doc' Duvalier was the intellectual cover for brutal exploitation. This exploitation continued for more than two decades, with this history making it clear that the artificial classification of the division between Blacks, whites and mulattos imposes a distortion on human history.

Pan-African Liberation and the Struggle Against Racism

By the beginning of the twentieth century the exploitation of Africa and the racism of Europe had become so entrenched that race was given pseudo-scientific and theological justification. Racist philosophy produced

not only a society of individual racists but a society in which white racism was so all-pervasive that it seemed a natural fact. Societies that developed on the basis of the trade in Africans had to develop a literature to justify the slave trade and slavery. In particular, English literature laid the basis for the general European conception of Black people; 'for the Dutch, the French and the Germans did not lag behind their English counterparts in providing the stereotypes and distortions which comprise racism.'

When television and other visual media carried this distortion into film and other modern forms, racism and anti-Black ideas were given visual images of the rational white and the irrational, shuffling, docile and uncivilized African. Tarzan and his heirs thus ensured that race consciousness would be an aspect of Pan-African consciousness. This trend was clear to the far-sighted. At the turn of the twentieth century, W.E.B. Du Bois had declared that the 'problem of the twentieth century was the problem of the color line.' Du Bois was an internationalist and Pan-Africanist who linked the question of African liberation to the emancipation of oppressed peoples in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. His concept of the battle against racism was a far cry from the kind of Afrocentric scholarship that accepts the unscientific classification of the races.

As one component of the battle against oppression, the struggle around the race question occupied a significant place in the struggles of the century. Yet the category of race was itself created in the process of exploitation. It required a materialist intellectual framework to be able to perceive that the division of the world into races has been one way of justifying unequal human relations. Individual Pan-Africanists attempted to understand this limitation with the preoccupation with race, but such a breakthrough was not possible at the level of individual enlightenment: it was only possible given the maturation of the social forces most able to generate the intellectual framework of the materialist history of humanity.

Such a materialist history, one that rises above the limitations of a Eurocentric vision of historical materialism, is now possible, for not only have the African peoples retaken their place in history and are in the process of closing the last laboratory of racism in South Africa, but there is enough evidence, documents and scientific breakthroughs in all fields to write a clear history of humanity. In the words of Diop: 'The West is fully aware of this, but it lacks the intellectual and moral courage required, and this is why the textbooks are deliberately muddled. It then devolves on us as Africans to rewrite the entire history of mankind for our own edification and that of others.'[19] Diop's challenge is now being taken up by African scholars, for this task had to await the decolonization of the continent.

Pan-Africanism and Independence

The quest for political independence marked the high point of the African liberation struggle during this century. During World War II the political and social consciousness of the African poor was transformed as the war increased the demand for labor and the compulsion of the colonial state intensified. Out of this process of intensified exploitation, new social forces emerged in Africa to chart the path of Pan-African liberation. It was the spontaneous and organized activities of the workers, the poor peasants, the school teachers and traders that sped the process of political independence in Africa. The push for sovereignty even within the confines of the states carved out at ythe 1884–85 Berlin conference brought a social movement embracing all classes and strata. Whether through armed struggles in Algeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Angola and the Cameroon or the general strikes by workers and holding back cash crops by farmers, the formation of a political alliance to achieve political independence marked a watershed in African history. In turn this process sharpened the anti-racist struggles in the US. During this period the view was that African liberation was coterminous with political independence. But it was only for a brief moment, for the mass of producers learned that independence could not be built on the basis of the old colonial economy within the old colonial boundaries, and that liberation would have to be redefined.

When Ghana became independent in 1957, the French and the Portuguese were then not even thinking of giving up their overt form of colonialism in Africa. But the winds of change swept the continent and clarified the new tasks of liberation. These tasks and the links between African peoples were articulated at the All-African Peoples Congress, which was held in Ghana in 1958. This was one of the most important Pan-African congresses, for it brought together movements involved in the actual fight for independence. The armed struggles in Kenya had pushed this conference from calling for peaceful struggle for independence to the call for independence by any means. It was here also that Patrice Lumumba and the Congolese movement were able to make concrete links with other movements in struggle.[20]

Movements in struggle and parties in government in newly independent countries began to clarify the distinctions between different social forces. The leaders who had articulated a brand of Pan-Africanism/Négritude but had internalized the concepts of European development demobilized the popular masses after independence.[21] Outstanding leaders of the Fifth Pan-African Congress (in the English-speaking world) and the Rassemblement Democratique Africaine (which advocated self-rule for the whole of French

West Africa) who had formulated militant declarations they returned home to power, carrying with them the conception of modernization based on Western European consumption models.

Independence for many of these leaders meant catching up with Europe and strengthening the old institutions of the colonial state, which were built for repression. Expanding the armed forces and the bureaucracy and building prestige projects such as airports to link themselves to the West became the barometers of progress. Because history to many of these leaders was the history of kings and kingdoms, they conceptualized development based not on the knowledge and skills of the producers but on creating the equivalent of a new ruling dynasty. One of the more crude among these leaders even crowned himself emperor.

Modernization theory and the myth of the free market became the new salvation in the era of independence. Modernization was presented in both socialist and capitalist guises, depending on the rhetoric of the leadership. This approach looked on the producers as 'traditional', as obstacles standing in the path of nation building and developing the productive forces. It was not part of the calculation of this new leadership that the collective knowledge of the people accumulated over 10,000 years should be the basis for the launching of a new society in Africa.

Recent Egyptian history provides an excellent example of how the leadership of the independence movement failed to mobilize the people on the basis of their history and collective experience. For a short while, the leadership under Nasser provided a radical alternative, partly because of the confrontation with the West over the Suez and over the question of Israel, the rights of the Palestinians and the question of African liberation. However, despite his militancy Nasser did not fully mobilize the people to the point where the social aspirations of the Egyptian revolution could carry them to new stages of social emancipation. Nasser talked about socialist construction, but he did not entrust this task to the workers and small farmers; instead he deepened his dependence on external forces while building new monuments of modernization, a large army, a huge dam and industrial projects depending on foreign expertise. Without a coherent social and political plan, Nasserism did not survive Nasser, in spite of the positive legacy of anti-imperialism under his leadership. Nasser's political heirs demonstrated that dependence on capitalist or socialist states was equal to underdevelopment and depoliticization of the poor. While it was important to show that Egypt was the cradle of human transformation, this was not sufficient to build a new society. Political retrogression and the Islamic fundamentalism prevailing in North Africa today are manifestations of the spiritual void left by the development ideology of the leaders of the independence movement.

African Independence and African Unity

At the height of the Pan-African movement, its leading spokespersons examined the question of the political union of Africa to redress the creation of ministates at the Berlin Congress. A political union based on the cultural unity of African peoples was to be the framework for a new mode of economic development. Kwame Nkrumah addressed this issue very early when he said that the independence of Ghana was meaningless outside the context of the full liberation of the continent. The imperatives of popular consciousness pushed the leaders of the new states to the formation of the Organization of African Unity. Vincent B. Thompson, in his excellent study *Africa and Unity,* detailed the compromises that went into the formation of this organization, and Walter Rodney grasped the deep roots which the concept of Pan-African unity had taken among the masses when he observed:

> It is a tribute to the momentum of Pan-Africanism that the OAU had to be formed. The idea of Pan-Africanism had taken deep roots, and it had to be given expression, if only in the form of a consultative international assembly. This indicates a higher level of continental political coordination than was to be found in Latin America during the period when the old colonial regimes there were demolished. It is also true that no imperialist power is a voting member of the organization, in the way that the United States is entrenched within the Organization of American States. Nevertheless, the OAU does far more to frustrate than to realize the concept of African Unity.[22]

The OAU as a union of states continues to support the OAU Liberation Committee, but in the main African leaders place more emphasis on the annual meeting between France and her allies in Africa than on the OAU meetings.

The various European powers in fact not only divided Africa according to regional spheres of influence, but even within African states they carve out areas for 'development': this has especially been the case in the Congo, which was stabilized to become Zaire. From the outset, the issue of the Congo was clearly a test for whether those who conceptualized liberation would stand up to external manipulation and subversion. The manipulation of the African ministates and the United Nations in the process of assassinating Patrice Lumumba is part of the historical record. Zaire became a base for subversion of African independence from the era of the assassination of Lumumba and continued to play this role up to the time of the decolonization of Angola.[23] When the white South Africans were finally defeated in Angola,[24] external forces (primarily the US) continued

to use Kamina in Zaire as a base for undermining struggles for liberation in Southern Africa. The OAU has, however, been unable to challenge the establishment of foreign military bases in Africa. The African leadership has also been silent on the conditions of racism and segregation in Europe and North America.

Not only has the OAU been committed to the inherited colonial boundaries and structures, it also buttresses the exploitative social systems that prevail across the continent. The clause of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states has been used to silence opposition in Africa to dictators who have killed large numbers of Africans. Leaders such as Idi Amin, Jean Bokassa and Sékou Touré gained international notoriety for their brutal treatment of Africans, yet African peoples on the continent could not protest. When the destruction in Uganda spilled over into Tanzania and the Tanzanians intervened, the OAU equivocated, and many African leaders gave political and moral support to Idi Amin. Many of those who theorize Pan-Africanism have forgotten a central point made by Walter Rodney: 'One of the cardinal principles of Pan-Africanism is that the people of one part of Africa are responsible for the freedom and liberation of their brothers and sisters in other parts of Africa; and indeed black people everywhere were to accept the same responsibility.'[25]

The OAU was organized to help speed the anti-colonial struggle, but the class divisions on the continent became clear as some African leaders attempted to colonize other African states. Morocco, which had supported the Algerian struggle for independence, tried to colonize the Western Sahara. This brazen form of colonialism was too much for some members of the OAU to remain silent, and when the OAU recognized the rights of the Saharwi Arab Democratic Republic, Morocco left the OAU.

The breakdown of all-class unity in the new African states was even more clear in the field of economic cooperation. Many forms of informal trade continue across borders, but this kind of trade is frowned upon by the leaders and their imperial overlords because the revenue from this informal trade circulates among the people instead of among the ruling classes and the transnational banking system. International financial institutions such as the World Bank talk about the development of market forces but discourage African markets and trade to ensure that Africans continue to produce raw materials and food for Europe and North America. Experiments in African unity such as the East African Community and the Economic Confederation of West African States foundered, because they were conceived not as instruments for political unity but as entities to facilitate greater control by transnational capital.

All over the continent the producers searched for new sources of livelihood. However, one-party rule and state control robbed the producers of

the right to organize as workers, peasants, women, students, intellectuals or traders. This form of political leadership fomented internal divisions to the point of civil wars engulfed the continent. The politicization of region, religion and ethnicity accelerated as economic retrogression was compounded by political authoritarianism.

In the absence of real forums for democratic expression and participation, the people lost the political experience that they had gained in the period after World War II. With this demobilization and depoliticization, thinking became subversive to the point where some of the foremost intellectuals were forced to leave the continent as exiles. However, repression did not stifle their search for intellectual freedom as a component of their people's freedom. Meeting in the midst of war-torn Chad in 1989, African intellectuals assigned themselves the task of linking historical research to the democratization of knowledge and social commitment.[26]

Pan-African Liberation and the Dispersed Africans

In the midst of the contemporary economic crisis, when images of famine, war and epidemic dominate the world news, there has been a conscious effort to cut the progressive links that developed in the era of Malcolm X between African organizations and groups in the Caribbean and the US. The relations between African states and the neocolonial leaders in the Caribbean were nowhere clearer than in the context of the Sixth Pan-African Congress.

Progressive Pan-Africanists had called for a meeting of Pan-Africanists to chart a new course for liberation in the 1970s. The euphoria surrounding the congress soon abated when it became clear that the meeting was to be another OAU-type gathering with elements representing leaders like Forbes Burnham and Eric Gairy. Those Pan-Africanists carrying out the struggle for liberation in the Caribbean were excluded from the meeting, and in an act of solidarity C.L.R. James boycotted it.

This episode helped to clarify to many Pan-Africanists in the US that a line had to be drawn between those who served the interests of the working people and those who manipulated the symbols and language of Pan-Africanism to perpetuate exploitation. Inside the African-American delegation to the Sixth Pan-African Congress, the fissures over crude nationalism were about to erupt as the government of the United States sought to mobilize the negative aspects of race consciousness to support one ethnic faction in Angola. Inside the United States the popular outpouring of the civil rights movement and the positive identification with Africa

was slowly domesticated when the more internationalist elements of the civil rights movement were silenced. The elevation of Black elected representatives inside the established political structures was positive in the short run, but in the long run negative in that many of these leaders supported US policies towards Africa. A small core of Pan-African activists organized African Liberation Day to keep African issues alive and used the few resources available to combat falsifications of African history and contemporary African realities.

Pan-Africanism in the Caribbean also had to deal with leaders who had reached the summit of their ambition with their occupation of the seat of power. Moreover, in Guyana and Trinidad, the Pan-African consciousness of the working people was exploited to divide the Indian and African workers. It was in this struggle that Walter Rodney, a Pan-African, Pan-Caribbean thinker, began to conceptualize the kind of internationalism that underlay Pan-African humanism. His commitment to democratic practice and the self-organization of the African poor was a threat to those who manipulated the slogans of Pan-African unity, and he was assassinated by a government that claimed to be in the forefront of the struggle for African liberation.

In reaction to this betrayal, ordinary working people in the Caribbean sought other means of expressing Pan-African culture and politics. The retention of African spiritual values since the time of colonialism had prevented Europe from destroying the rich cultural values of the African population in the West. Whether in Cuba, Brazil, Surinam or Haiti, African religious forms survived, though persecuted by officialdom and dismissed as millenarian by anthropologists. African religious thought and practice was frowned upon all over the Americas, but this was one concrete form of resistance to Eurocentric ideas and a resource from which people of African descent could draw.

The Rastafari movement in the Caribbean exploded in religious and cultural forms to confront the social decay in the Caribbean and the alienation of the youth. Starting as a rebellion against Babylon (a word that signified oppression by both white and Black) Rastafarianism inspired an international campaign against injustice by calling on peoples everywhere to 'Get up, stand up for their rights.' Cultural spokespersons such as Bob Marley sang of the need for a new kind of African unity, and it was through the popularity of reggae music that the Pan-African ideas of a new era were spread. Reggae found a fertile base among a section of the African youth that was mobile, alert and groping for new ways to understand contemporary realities. They were aware of the cultural assault of the West and the promotion of consumer values packaged in films and music. It was part of a paradoxical unity of opposites that it was through the same West-

ern media complex that artists like Bob Marley and Alpha Blondy took their message to the youth.

The North American media had long used the cultural reservoir of Africans in the Americas to further the cause of cultural imperialism – as evident in the ways in which the United States Information Agency uses the creativity of the African-American population to sell the dream of the enterprising nature of capitalism and the myth of progress. Hence the memories of slavery, like those recounted in Alex Haley's novel *Roots,* or the essential unity of the struggles of African women, as depicted in the Alice Walker's *The Color Purple,* are packaged as products of the culture of capital. But as in all areas of cultural reproduction – art, music, poetry, dance, film and the novel – the anti-capitalist and anti-racist component of Black American music, theater and film forced itself onto the world stage and became an important aspect of Pan-African expression in the struggle of humanity to transcend racial classifications. It was in this complex of information and disinformation that cultural figures such as Stevie Wonder, Fela Ransome Kuti, Mbilia Bel, Alpha Blondy and countless others maintained the traditions of militant resistance.

Bob Marley thus inspired a generation of African youths, singing songs to mobilize freedom fighters everywhere and conveying the message of self-emancipation with the simple words:

> Emancipate yourself from Mental Slavery
> None but ourselves can free our minds.
> Have no fear for atomic energy
> For none of them can stop the time.

Pan-Africanists who kept abreast of the popular culture recognized the contribution of the Rastafari despite the contradictions inherent in deifying a deposed African monarch. In the words of one of the foremost Caribbean Pan-Africanists, Eusi Kwayana, 'The power of art that Bob Marley's music represented [did] more to popularize the real issues of African liberation than several decades of backbreaking work by Pan-Africanists and international revolutionaries.'

Pan-African Liberation and the Struggle Against Apartheid

By the closing decade of the century, South African apartheid stood as a major stumbling block to the liberation and political development of Africa. South African expansion and military intervention challenged Africa

and humanity to resist the last vestiges of white supremacy, but in order for this challenge to register as part of the thrust for a new universalism, it was the task of African people to take up the struggle for liberation. And indeed, Africans in their daily struggles to affirm their dignity ensured that the questions that kept Pan-African liberation alive were the questions of social transformation of the region after apartheid was ended and the full independence of Africa achieved. The politicization and mobilization of the South African youth represented the pivot of the repoliticization of the oppressed masses in Africa.

That the question of apartheid was internationalized beyond the Pan-African constituency was in no small measure because of the spread of the self-organization and self-mobilization of the youth, workers, clergy, and women. The rise of grassroots governance dictated that the conception of liberation had gone beyond the question of majority rule or the issue of Africans replacing whites in the old state apparatus. Political struggles, ideological debates, armed confrontation and the international campaign for sanctions against South Africa sharpened the internationalist tenets of Pan-Africanism and exposed the negative brand of a nationalism based on a narrow all-class appeal. For this reason those who articulated a limited vision of Pan-Africanism were sidelined in one of the most important Pan-African struggles this century.

Pan-Africanism continues to be a potent force for mobilizing the poor, and this can be seen in small instances such as in the aftermath of the death of Samora Machel of Mozambique, when the cultural outpourings of the masses pushed the leadership to withstand apartheid. This Pan-Africanism from below is different from the intellectual and philosophical formulations of modernization, which condemn the producers to poverty. The failure of the International Monetary Fund and its African allies has shown that an alternate mode of economic development is necessary to achieve the social emancipation of Africa.

The South African resistance, in struggling to assert the dignity and self-worth of Africans, embraced the kind of race consciousness promoted by early Pan-African scholars, but developed beyond that point when those in the struggle saw that what was necessary was the creation of a democratic, nonracial society. This was, and remains, a challenge to humanity, because no models for this kind of democracy exist. The ideological and political tools necessary for creating this kind of society were instead being sharpened in the midst of the worst repression. So profound was the political transformation of this process that all the slogans and forms of struggle of previous eras had to be reevaluated. This necessity emerged all the more clearly after those movements that fought for independence retreated from the power of the popular masses once in power. Guerrilla movements,

whether in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Angola or Uganda, had been able to win military victories, but these victories did not empower the mass of the producers. The espousal of Marxism-Leninism as a state ideology remained empty because these attempts at following 'scientific' doctrine were not based on the history and culture of Africa.

The crisis in Africa with famine, war and destabilization enabled those in the forefront of African liberation to analyze the pitfalls of the leaders of the independence era. It required an understanding of the transformation of the cultural values so that the knowledge of the producers could be harnessed the new forms of association would be based on their capabilities. The dynamics of destabilization, disinformation, war, IMF management, external subversion and psychological warfare existed all over the African world, and the people showed by their collective resistance that the African liberation struggle can advance the liberation of humanity. In this search for a new social order Pan-African liberation was part of a new universalism and Pan-African humanism.

The Challenges Ahead

The tasks of African liberation are formidable and require a new theory of social reality. Small steps are being made with the social commitment of those African intellectuals who see liberation not as the work of individual leaders but as part of the process of self-mobilization and self-organization of the African peoples. New forms of consciousness have appeared at each period in the struggle for African liberation – often taking the form of attempts to hold on to the precolonial cosmic world. This kind of consciousness by itself cannot take the people forward, and an urgent task is to link the development of science and technology to the skills and knowledge of the African peoples. Cheik Anta Diop, as a nuclear physicist, was most sensitive to the dialectic of the positive and the negative in the traditional African forms of transmitting knowledge. He drew attention to the need to harness the positive without reinforcing the negative:

> The system of initiation whereby knowledge is transmitted in African societies is typically Egyptian. Yet this system which is generalized in African societies is not the best way to transmit or generalize scientific knowledge. Nor does this system allow for critical examination of scientific theories. This has been extremely harmful to the technological and social development of traditional black societies.[28]

This challenge was posed in the face of the scientific 'rationality' of

capitalism, which has been used to justify the irrational destruction of human beings and the natural environment. Diop's work was part of a larger discussion of African cultures in relation to social transformation, but unfortunately the domestication of African-American scholarship in North America seeks to cut off young African-Americans from the study of Africa. The study of Africa in Africa and overseas will be part of the effort to galvanize the African peoples to make an original statement on social emancipation.

The lessons of the past century are that even the most advanced Pan-African thinkers had tended to despise African cultural expressions, whose content was equated with the ignorance and superstition of the Periphery, while viewing knowledge as being transferred from the European Center. Wamba dia Wamba, in his analysis of the relationship between culture and revolution in the African world, has observed:

> It seems like none of the modernizers in Africa has dared to learn from the surviving communities of gatherers and hunters: what had made the latter able to defy all the processes – since the agricultural revolution – which give rise to despotic communities? The whole dynamics of ameliorative therapy, i.e. man taking over nature to struggle and transform it, has been taken for granted. The whole knowledge process, in imperialist-dominated Africa, has been organized through a social epistemology emphasizing mimetism (mimicry) of the West or the East, routine mechanical learning through diffusionism. One of the results is that even institutions and practices that generate famine, chronic disease, deserifications are seen as developmental. Problems, shortcomings, crises, etc., experienced elsewhere, become not only difficult to avoid, but impossible to perceive ahead of time.[29]

Wamba dia Wamba has thus joined Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Eusi Kwayana and Ngugi wa Thiongo, who understood that cultural transformations were at the core of liberation. These individuals, though trained in Western institutions, were part of the embryo of a new intellectual culture which strove for the emancipation of Africans and all oppressed peoples. They form a link with a new intellectual culture that is trying to transcend the ideological constraints of Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism, understanding that 'African paraphrases of models developed elsewhere, and intended to be Afrocentric, have not been discontinuous with, for example, Western civilization.'[30]

The experiences of this century have sharpened the concept of liberation beyond the achievement of independence. With the defeat of apartheid, the major stumbling block to African political unity and social development has been removed. Popular participation, cultural freedom and the development of new forms of social existence remain part of the

task to place Africa on the road to alternative forms of economic organization. The political unity of Africa is an elementary precondition for the task of economic change so that the African peoples everywhere can draw strength from the freedom and cultural strength of Africa.

This task is also sharpened by the economic and social marginalization of African peoples in South America. The cultural resistance of African peoples in Brazil, Cuba, Haiti and the rest of the region provide a fertile base for real multiracial democracy. Thus far, however, even those social movements aspiring to achieve democracy continue to predicate development on catching up with Europe and North America. But the models of consumption of the culture of capitalism reserve this mode of consumption for a small minority of humanity in Europe, North America and Japan.

Pan-African liberation in the twenty-first century is thus inscribed in the struggle beyond the culture of capital and the effort to lobotomize humanity into mindless consumers. The liberation of the African peoples is linked to the liberation of other oppressed peoples and sharpens the elements of Pan-African humanism. A Pan-Africanism that seeks to reproduce the chauvinism of European racial categorization has been unable to inspire the kind of humanism necessary for emancipation from racism: the battle against racism cannot continue to accept the unscientific category of race.

Pan-African liberation is not only linked to the quest for a new social system, but also one in which the development of the productive forces is not simply linked to the production of goods but also the creation of new human beings. This perspective of free men and women, of cultural freedom, of harnessing the positive knowledge of the African past, now forms part of the conception of the struggle for Pan-African liberation in the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. Walter Rodney, 'Towards the Sixth Pan African Congress,' in Horace Campbell, ed., *Pan-Africanism,* Toronto 1975.
2. This challenge has been taken up in part by the new direction of research in Africa. See notes of 'A Working Group on the Cultural Dimension of Development in Africa', Bulletin of the Third World Forum, African Office, Dakar, Senegal 1987. See also Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism,* New York 1989.
3. Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan African Movement,* London 1974. See also Vincent B. Thompson, *Africa and Unity: The Revolution of Pan Africanism,* London 1969.
4. The element of racism in the process of partition is analyzed in Walter Rodney, 'The Imperialist Partition of Africa,' *Monthly Review,* (April 1970), pp. 103–14.
5. The images of Africa among African intellectuals in the West are analyzed by Bernard Magubane, *The Ties That Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa,* Trenton, N. J. 1987.
6. Mildred Fierce, 'African American Interest in Africa and the Interaction with West Africa: The Origins of the Pan African Idea in the USA', Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1976.

7. W.E.B. Du Bois, 'The African Roots of the War', published in *On the Importance of Africa to World History,* New York 1978. This pamphlet, written in 1915, predated Lenin's theses on imperialism and drew attention to the way in which the competition over Africa helped the precipitate World War I.
8. Tony Martin, *The Pan-African Connection: From Slavery to Garvey and Beyond,* Dover, Mass. 1984.
9. For an elaboration of the social forces involved in the Garvey movement, see Tony Martin, *Race First: the Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association,* Westport, Conn. 1976.
10. Robert Hill and Gregory A. Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans: The Garvey Movement in South Africa, 1920–1940,' in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, eds, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa,* London 1987.
11. Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History,* London, 1977.
12. The themes are explored in my book *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney,* Trenton, N.J. 1987.
13. Walter Rodney, 'The African Revolution', in Paul Buhle, ed., *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work,* Detroit 1981.
14. Ibid.
15. These themes are developed at length in the book *Eurocentrism* by Samir Amin, New York 1989.
16. S.K.B. Asante, *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1934–1941,* London 1971.
17. Eunice Charles, 'Pan-Africanism in French-Speaking West Africa 1945-1960', African Studies Center, Boston University.
18. Quoted from an interview with Cheikh Anta Diop, in Ivan Van Sertima, ed., *Great African Thinkers,* New Brunswick, N.J. 1989.
19. Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality?,* Mercer Cook, ed., 1974, p. 115.
20. Interview with A.M. Babu on how Tom Mboya was made the chair of the All African Peoples Conference in 1958. Babu related the impact of the Kenyan and Algerian struggles on the deliberations of this conference and the influence of Frantz Fanon as a diplomatic representative of the FLN at this meeting. That the Kenya Land and Freedom Movement was a Pan-African movement and saw itself as such is only now being recorded. See Maina wa Kinyatti, *Kenya's Freedom Struggle: The Dedan Kimathi Papers,* London 1987.
21. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* New York 1961.
22. Walter Rodney, 'Towards the Sixth Pan-African Congress', p. 26.
23. Kwame Nkrumah's book of the same name gave some indication of the levels of external involvement in the Congo when the West landed paratroopers to prop up puppet rulers. The importance that the US placed on Zaire can be seen from the book by B. Kaib, *The Congo Cables,* London 1982.
24. The relationship between Cuba and the sovereignty of Angola has to be written in the context of the historic defeat of the South Africans at Cuito Cuanavale. See one short essay by this author in *Monthly Review,* April 1989. The relationship between Cuba and Africa has received both negative and positive responses in the Pan-African movement. For a detailed position from the point of view of an exiled Afro-Cuban, see Carlos Moore, *Castro, the Blacks and Africa,* Berkeley, Calif. 1989.
25. Walter Rodney, p. 12.
26. Report of the seminar Methodological Issues Facing African Historians, CODESRIA Bulletin, Volume 1, 1989.
27. W. Ofuatey-Kudjoe, *PanAfricanism: New Directions in Strategy,* Washington, D.C. 1986.
28. Quoted in Van Sertima, ed., *Great African Thinkers: Cheikh Anta Diop,* p. 245.
29. Wamba dia Wamba, 'Some Remarks on Culture, Development and Revolution in Africa', Mimeo, Dar es Salaam 1989, p. 2.
30. Ibid., p. 1.