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ETHNICITY AND THE WORKING CLASS IN AFRICA:
CONSCIOUSNESS AND PRAXIS

By

Okwudiba Nnoli

The Link Between the Class and Ethnic Elements

This paper examines the relationship between the ethnic and class elements in Africa, with particular reference to the working class. On this question there are two dominant viewpoints. The approach of the "modernization" school makes an absolute of the ethnic factor and ignores the class element.¹ It argues that non-class factors tend to determine the social identities and behavior patterns of Africans, who tend to identify with different social groups in different circumstances. Thus, for example, both Harold Wolpe and Robert Melsen point out that the Nigerian workers supported the working-class leaders during the 1964 general strike in Nigeria but voted for ethnic parties in elections which took place the same year.² In Kenya, G. Bennett observes that among the workers ethnic rather than working-class identities are dominant in the political arena.³ A. L. Epstein remarks that in the copperbelt of Zambia workers engage in class-oriented actions with regard to their employment, irrespective of ethnic differences. But in other areas of social life, such as marriage, housing and friendship, the ethnic element predominates.

The argument of the modernization school hinges on the arithmetic majority of non-class behavior identifiable in African societies. But the issue cannot be resolved on the basis of mere quantification and numerical superiority. The question is not whether or not African workers are ethnically conscious on most issues of social and economic life. They may well be. The critical question concerns the major determining factor in the historical march of an African people. If it is the class element, what is the role of the ethnic factor in this historical movement? And, if it is the ethnic element, what is the place of the class factor? In other words, which of the two factors is more closely associated with the principal contradiction in the society? In an answer to this question, and with particular reference to Guinea-Bissau, Amilcar Cabral contends that ethnicity is associated with secondary contradictions: "You may be surprised to know that we consider the contradictions between the tribes as a secondary one.... Our struggle for national liberation and the work done by our party have shown that this contradiction is really not so important; the Portuguese counted on it a lot but, as soon as we organized the liberation struggle

properly, the contradiction between the tribes proved to be a feeble secondary contradiction."⁴

On the other hand, the ultra-left viewpoint neglects the role of the purely ethnic variable and reduces all analysis to the class factor. Ethnicity is perceived to serve an obscurantist and mystifying function in society for the ruling classes.⁵ In the process of explanation this point of view leaves unanswered the question why the economic and political leaders are able to manipulate the workers and peasants by preying on their ethnic sentiments. In the light of the tendency of the ethnic boundaries to shift,⁶ how did these sentiments arise in the first place?

They ignore the evidence that ethnicity services some of the interests of the underprivileged classes of Africa, albeit to a much less extent than it does the interests of the privileged classes. For example, Max Gluckman⁷ and Immanuel Wallerstein⁸ identify the crucial functions which ethnic associations perform for the African urban population. These practical functions allow appeals to ethnic sentiment to be credible. Hence, the underprivileged semi-skilled and unskilled workers who are nearly equally affected by a lack of opportunities, powerlessness, exploitation, and a lack of self-esteem are unlikely to follow the onerous path of a class-based collective act of rebellion when the possibility of individual advancement and protection still exists. Ethnicity offers a personal solution to the generic problems of exploitation and oppression.⁹ This means that under certain circumstances the ethnic element may be a crucial factor in social life. Therefore, every effort must be made to ensure that ethnic contradictions do not explode and become more important than is warranted by their objective role in the scheme of things.

In order to overcome the onesidedness of the viewpoints of the "modernization" and ultra-left schools, it is necessary to investigate the interconnection between the two universally human elements in the process of history: class and ethnicity. The close connection between them follows from the character of the ethnic system as an historical entity encompassing and penetrating all other social forms, including classes. In a sense, it is a spatial framework for class relations and contradictions. The ethnic community represents the continuity of material and spiritual cultures as well as social and everyday forms of communication in the history of definite peoples. The significance and influence of this fact should not be overlooked in the analysis of a society's development. It is what makes it possible for class actions to be successfully dressed in ethnic garb. Therefore, in order to fully understand the relationships between ethnicity and class in Africa, it is necessary to investigate carefully and concretely the connection between the present and

past sociopolitical societies of Africa to elucidate the historical origins and manifestations of the linkage.

In such an investigation the whole question of what weight to attach to the ethnic and class factors as explanatory variables becomes crucial. In several countries of Africa ethnic problems are readily apparent and very real. This visibility factor, coupled with the tendency to conceive of social reality in terms of objects of observation, magnifies the ethnic factor out of proportion to its real significance in social life. Most evidence so far indicates that the course of the history of a people is closely related to, if not directly determined by, changes in their production system, particularly changes in their productive forces and the relations of production which constitute the infrastructure of social life. While class relations are production relations, ethnic relations are not.

Therefore, ethnic relations are not part of the infrastructure of a society but an aspect of its ideological superstructure. They must then have an objective basis in the infrastructure of society: the production process. This is not to imply that ethnic relations are governed by the production process but to suggest that, like all other aspects of the superstructure, they serve certain intended or unintended functions for the production process. Although a dialectical relationship exists between the superstructure and the infrastructure of society, it is the latter which generally gives rise to the former. Therefore, as far as the understanding of the historical movement of a society is concerned, the production process has a greater explanatory capacity than the ethnic processes which it sustains. Class relations are more important than ethnic relations. An emphasis on the ethnic element may be significant for the description of social reality. This is the highest point it can attain. It cannot be the basis for the explanation of the course of the history of a society and, therefore, for a change in that course.

Thus ethnic consciousness and class consciousness are quite distinct. The one arises from real or putative kinship, cultural or linguistic ties. The other arises from ties in the production process. Sometimes, as in precolonial Rwanda and Burundi, in relations between northern and southern Nigeria, and the cases identified by Issa Shivji, the boundaries of ethnic consciousness and class consciousness may coincide.¹⁰ But this coincidence is merely one of boundaries and does not extend to the character of the two types of consciousness. This is so in spite of the fact that ethnic consciousness may lead to actions whose practical consequences are the same as those based on class consciousness: a change in the relations of production. Thus, for example, the exodus of the Igbo from northern Nigeria

in 1966 and 1967, following their massacre by the Hausa, changed the relations of production in the area somewhat as the Hausa moved into economic activities previously dominated by the Igbo. But the massacre was the consequence of ethnic rather than class consciousness. Similarly, the expulsion of the Asians in Uganda in 1972 was motivated by ethnic consciousness but resulted in a change in class relations in the country. Abner Cohen observes a similar phenomenon in the Kola trade between the Hausa and Yoruba of Nigeria.¹¹ Conversely, class consciousness may give rise to actions which have identical consequences as those based on ethnic consciousness. The apartheid system is illustrative. The African population is systematically and consciously proletarianized and exploited in the name of cultural and racial separation.

This complexity in the relationship between the ethnic and class element arises from the fact that the two concepts consist of structural, attitudinal and behavioral components which can be separated from one another but which can also combine in various ways to produce different ethno-class patterns of behavior. Marx has distinguished between a class-in-itself whose members play a similar role in production but who are not conscious of their common interests, and a class-for-itself whose members not only share a similar role in production but who are also aware of their common interest and engage in some form of conscious class struggle. In turn each of these conceptions has structural and behavioral components. Structurally, a group's class position is determined by its place in the production process and its role in the domination of the state, irrespective of whether or not its members define their identity in those terms.

Furthermore, class consciousness is not necessary for class action. This fact is often mistaken or confused. Class action is often denied because of the absence of class consciousness. But, for example, the capitalist exploitation of surplus labor is a class action irrespective of the level of class consciousness of the capitalists. Therefore, an understanding of the class position of a group in structural terms may be used to predict patterns of behavior which may not be perceived by the actors as class oriented or consciously brought about in concert with other members of the class.¹²

The other class-for-itself combines class consciousness with concerted class action. As we have pointed out with respect to apartheid, a group may be conscious of its class position but seek to promote or change it through non-class mechanisms such as ethnic policies. On the other hand, concerted class action demands not only class consciousness but also concerted action to advance the common interests. Such concerted action may be revolutionary, reformist, or reactionary in intent depending on

the class position of the actors and their strength relative to the other contending classes at the historical point in time.¹³ Therefore, as regards class, there are four categories which can be the basis for the formulation of hypotheses on the role of class in social life: the class position, class determined behavior, class consciousness and concerted class action.

Similarly, the ethnic element in social life may be subdivided into four categories: the ethnic group, behavior in the interest of the ethnic group, ethnic consciousness and concerted ethnic action.¹⁴ The tendency of ethnic boundaries to change indicates the possibility of the existence of ethnic groups which are not conscious of their common ethnic identity, the ethnic group-in-itself. During precolonial times, for example, the Yoruba of Nigeria, although they shared the same linguistic-cultural attributes, did not share a common consciousness and identity. In fact, the different Yoruba kingdoms fought violent wars against one another. It was not until the colonial period that a common Yoruba consciousness emerged. Similarly, the distinction among the Igbo-speaking people between the Olu and Igbo gave way to a common Igbo consciousness in the colonial situation.¹⁵

Ethnicity, the Working Class, and State Power

Through the permutation and combination of the four categories of the class element and the four categories of the ethnic element, numerous ethnic-class configurations will emerge. Thus, for example, the class position may coincide with the ethnic boundary, give rise to behavior which is in the interest of an ethnic group, exacerbate ethnic consciousness or give rise to concerted ethnic action. This complexity of the ethnic-class relationship is bound to lead to analytical confusion unless the social objective of the analysis is clearly kept in view. It makes a great deal of difference, for instance, if the goal is to understand why workers choose to live in certain residential areas of a city or why they have failed to create a working-class state. The discussion of the relationship between ethnicity, the working-class, consciousness and praxis cannot be done fruitfully in absolute and abstract terms. The question, under what circumstances and by what process do workers develop or fail to develop ethnic and class consciousness and/or engage in ethnic and class action, has to be answered differentially, depending on whether one is interested in the struggle of the workers against imperialist exploitation and oppression, their struggle to seize state power or their choice of residential areas and marriage partners.

From the point of view of the politics of the common people in Africa, the relationship between ethnicity, working-class, consciousness and praxis ought to be approached within

the context of the desire of the African workers to improve their living conditions through political action. In this regard, it is becoming increasingly clear that the workers and peasants of Africa must take their political destiny in their own hands if they are to emancipate themselves from the quagmire of poverty, ignorance and disease in which they find themselves. The present ruling classes of Africa cannot be depended upon to accomplish the task. They have exhibited an obvious unwillingness and/or incapacity to tackle problems of interest to the underprivileged classes.

The question of the relationship between politics, ethnicity, the working-class, consciousness and praxis, therefore, becomes important to the extent that it enables the working class to take control of state power or prevents it from doing so. The linkage between class and state first brought to prominence by Marx¹⁶ and Engels¹⁷ has recently been reemphasized by Issa Shivji.¹⁸ In scientific terms, the concept of class does not exist outside the related concepts of class struggle and state. Classes are important scientifically because of class struggles. And class struggles are ultimately about the seizure of state power.

We have already pointed out that the course of human history is determined essentially by changes in the production process. That process is in turn linked to state power in the following manner. Increased production gives rise to a division of labor which produces different roles (classes) in the production process. Two consequences flow from this development -- one is material, the other psychological. At the material level, the disposition of the surplus from production becomes problematic. What roles in the creation of this surplus should be rewarded more than others? Similarly, at the psychological level, intense alienation develops around the various roles because of the disruption of the organic link between the actual role process and the mental picture of the end product of the total production process. How should this alienation be eliminated?

States emerge in answer to these two questions. They are the expressions of the struggles among the various classes (roles) to decide how these two questions should be answered. The triumphant classes then dominate state power using it inevitably to assign the greatest weight, prestige and share of the surplus value to their own roles in production. They also assign themselves the task of deciding what is produced, how it is produced and how what is produced is to be distributed in the society. Thus, they are able to maintain an organic relationship to the end product of the production process so crucial for emancipation from the alienation imposed by the division of labor in society. But in class societies, the class struggle is an unending one because the other classes, convinced

of their critical role in production, continually seek to dominate the appropriation of surplus value and emancipate themselves from alienation. They can only do so through the control of state power, itself a reflection of their triumph at a particular historical epoch in the struggle among classes.

Fundamentally, therefore, class politics is the struggle among classes to dominate state power through ensuring that the class role in production is dominant over the production process; it determines the pattern of distribution of rewards among the various roles in the process and occupies such a strategic position in the process that the role occupants are emancipated from labor alienation. Under the circumstances, the triumph of one class over the others in the struggle is accompanied by a complete restructuring of the production process to reflect this victory. The replacement of one ruling class by another is usually the result of a revolutionary process leading to a complete socioeconomic transformation of society congruent with the new production relations.

Therefore, in all discussion of class politics this fundamental revolutionary aspect must be kept in full view and at the center of analysis. All other processes, political, economic, social, or ideological must then be analyzed in terms of their positive or negative contribution to this revolutionary process. The pattern of voting of the working class in parliamentary elections, for example, workers' strikes, their beliefs about the legitimacy and efficacy of governmental authority, all acquire a potent political and scientific force when they are clearly related to the imperatives of the working-class position in the ongoing class struggle. Similarly, the impact of ethnicity on the activities of the working class acquires an important political and scientific value. The crucial question for analysis becomes: is ethnicity an asset or an obstacle to the working class in its revolutionary march to state power, why and how?

Colonial Racism and Ethnic Consciousness Among Workers

In Africa, the prevailing system of production is the creation of imperialism. The European metropolitan bourgeoisie, already dominant in their respective foreign states, organized production in the African countries in accordance with its needs for capital accumulation, the necessity to export capital, and the search for cheaper labor and higher profits than the metropole could provide. Inevitably, the metropolitan bourgeoisie controlled the colonial state as well. The colonial economy became part of a world system of production in which the African national unit was completely alienated. Changes in the local economy were dictated from outside and the nation had no say whatever in what was produced, how it was produced and how the product was

marketed. At the level of the distribution of the surplus from local production, foreign exploitation predominated. In addition, the African people were subjected to humiliation and degradation at the political and cultural levels arising from this foreign domination of the local economy and state.

Therefore, at the national level, there was a need for collective self-emancipation in which all the local classes had an objective interest. At the level of the market, all of them suffered alienation and exploitation. However, at the level of production, the working class suffered further alienation and exploitation. Fanon's neglect of exploitation at the level of the market, and his ignorance of the revolutionary potential inherent in alienation in the production process, caused him to commit the error of assigning to the African peasantry a greater revolutionary potential in the anti-colonial struggle.¹⁹ On the contrary, this unique combination of alienation and exploitation at the market and production levels makes the working class in Africa the most potentially revolutionary anti-imperialist force on the continent.

Amilcar Cabral identifies a segment of the working class -- those who prior to the nationalist movement took an active part in initiating strikes and other forms of industrial action -- as among the most important elements of his revolutionary struggle in Guinea-Bissau. Contrary to Fanon, he found the peasantry to be exceedingly reactionary.²⁰ In colonial Ghana in January 1950, it was the Gold Coast Trades Union Congress (GCTUC) which precipitated the positive action campaign of the Convention People's Party (CPP) with a general strike involving over 50,000 workers.²¹ The trade unions in the Republic of Benin have expressed a revolutionary militancy, among the working class, dating back to 1923.²² In Nigeria in 1945, the workers mounted a thirty-seven to forty-four day strike which involved 32,600 workers who had been performing indispensable economic and administrative services.²³ Following the legalization of trade union activity in the Cameroons in August 1944, the Cameroon Confederation of Trade Unions immediately embarked on the revolutionizing of the political consciousness of the working class and the entire population as well. This culminated in a series of wildcat strikes in Douala between September 21 and 30, 1945 which led to a riot against colonialism and in which nine people were killed and twenty wounded.²⁴ Between 1956 and the time of its formation in 1947, the political party *Unions des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) threatened French colonial rule in the country. This party, founded by the working-class leaders, was the most effectively organized and popular movement of the oppressed people. Similarly, the strikes in the copper-belt of Northern Rhodesia in 1935 and 1940, as well as the prolonged ones in 1955, helped to shake up the foundations of colonial rule.²⁵

Thus, the colonialists perceived the working class and its arm, the trade unions, as a threat to the foundations of the social order on which colonial capitalist exploitation depended. Unlike the other social classes, the working class had the greatest potential for threatening the capitalist framework itself. The workers' position as urban dwellers with rural contacts and their strategic location in the process of political communication give the working class an influence in the colonial and neocolonial societies much greater than their relative numerical strength in the population would warrant. Therefore, despite their small numerical strength, the trade unions have a considerable propaganda strength and influence over the political opinions of a sizeable number of people outside the union structure. Various colonial policies served to emasculate this revolutionary potential of the working class and the trade unions. Some of these policies were designed specifically to counteract working-class consciousness, but some others were part of the general colonial strategy and tactics of subjugating the colonized population as a whole and preempting the class struggle.

Colonial racism served these latter functions. The colonialists propagated a myth of the racial superiority of the white colonizing Europeans over the black colonized Africans. By distorting, disfiguring and maligning the past of the Africans, this racism was used to alienate them from their historical and cultural roots, imbue them with an inferiority complex, cause them to reject their sense of worth and make it easy for them to accept life in the new colonial situation under subhuman conditions of oppression and exploitation. At the same time as the African way of life was being denigrated, that of the whites was being extolled. Colonial racism pervaded all aspects of colonial life, making itself felt in the pattern of residential housing, employment, remuneration, ethics, education, philosophy, science and architecture. The colonized Africans were, in various subtle and obvious ways, daily bombarded with this racist propaganda.

Although this myth did not succeed in making the colonized Africans docile objects of colonial oppression and exploitation, it succeeded in preempting class consciousness in many parts of Africa and in cultivating working-class consciousness along racial, cultural and ethnic lines. It diverted attention away from two factors inherent in the imported capitalist mode of production: the exploitation and the oppression of the working class. Workers lost sight of the unequal international, national and factory division of labor so characteristic of the imperial domination which confined them to a production-oriented ethic and discipline in which labor ceased to be a liberating activity and became an oppressive and alienating force. They became preoccupied with refuting the falsehood of the racist myth and

resisting the degrading racist policies of colonialism. These activities in turn adversely affected their class consciousness in favor of ethnic and racial consciousness.

Thus, for example, opposition to the French administration in the Cameroons during the interwar period was directed mostly at the system of the *indigénat* together with the semi-autocratic administrative powers it gave to the local administrators, prestation, the suppression of the native courts and the accompanying emasculation of the traditional chiefs. Throughout French Africa, a distinction was made between those subject to native customs and those assimilated to European law. The *indigénat*, the system of summary disciplinary punishment from which the assimilated Africans were exempt, provided the practical distinction between the two types of status. Prestation, a form of compulsory labor obligation, was also foisted on the non-assimilated population. The French used such labor extensively during the early years of their administration to build the major railway and road projects.²⁶ In fact, throughout Africa the nationalist struggle for independence was galvanized into action by the African desire to end racial discrimination in housing, salaries, public service, education and participation in political decision-making.

In another respect, African reaction to the humiliations and frustrations of colonial racist subjugation contributed to the rise of ethnic consciousness among the working class. The necessity to eliminate the deep inferior complex engendered by the white superiority complex required an aggressive assertion of the African's own past, language, myth and culture. However, within the colonial context of the agglomeration of diverse historical and cultural entities, this meant the focusing of attention on disparate ethnic histories and the revival of ethnic pride. The activities of the Kimbanguist and Kitwala movements in colonial Zaire, the Dancing Women Movement of eastern Nigeria in 1925 and the concern of African academicians with the history and culture of their ethnic groups reflect the same reaction to colonial racism through cultural self-assertion. But one effect of this response was success in keeping ethnic sentiments aflame by bringing it to the forefront of the consciousness of the African population.

Such ethnic consciousness was reinforced by the colonialists' categorizing the African linguistic groups as tribes and by attributing to them differences in culture and ways of life. For example, on the basis of unvalidated prejudices, European companies and the colonial administration regarded some ethnic groups as more suitable for certain types of jobs. The Kru of Liberia were deemed good manual workers, the Tiv of Nigeria good soldiers and the Yoruba good clerks.²⁷ In Nigeria the British colonial authority began to separate the various

linguistic groups from one another particularly in the residential areas of northern Nigeria. Official British policy was to separate the Hausa-Fulani from the southern ethnic groups. Colonial racism intruded into this categorization of the ethnic groups. The colonizer regarded certain peoples to be superior or inferior to others depending on the similarity of their socio-political organization to that of the colonizer or on their progress in the acquisition of colonial socioeconomic fortunes. Thus, for example, the Dogon, some Bambara and Senufo of Mali, the Bete of the Ivory Coast, the Pygmies of Zaire, the Masai of East Africa and the Karamojong of Uganda were regarded as more "primitive" than their compatriots.

The colonialists' emphasis on differences among the ethnic groups to the utter neglect of similarities among them, and the pervasive colonial bureaucratic requirement that official forms should contain information about the tribal origins of the local population, also helped to generate and keep alive ethnic consciousness. The same effects were produced by the severe material difficulties encountered by African workers and the unemployed in the colonial urban areas. For example, the situation was so bad in colonial Zaire that in 1956 about 80 percent of all married workers cultivated cassava fields, 67 percent supplemented their income by fishing and most of the unskilled workers were dependent to a large degree on relatives in the villages.²⁸ Over 70 percent received packages of Chikwangu (a major local dietary food) and smoked fish. In many families, the husband was forced to return to the village as often as once a month.²⁹ In this way workers maintained significant contact with centers of ethnic symbols, rituals and pride which generated or consolidated ethnic consciousness.

Furthermore, fearing the revolutionary potentials of trade union activities, the colonialists did not permit the formation of trade unions until much later than the establishment of the ethnic associations which proceeded to preempt many of the activities which the trade unions could have performed. For example, in Nigeria legal sanction to organize trade unions was only fully granted by the colonialists in April 1939, much later than the proliferation of the ethnic associations which were formed during the Great Depression.³⁰ In Zaire the oldest ethnic organization in Kinshasa was the *Federation Kasaienne* founded in 1916.³¹ The *Federation Kwangolaise* was formed in 1925; the first Bakongo grouping was founded in 1940; and in Katanga the existence of ethnic associations date from about 1926.³² In the late 1920s such organizations as the *Societe des amis des Kasongo Nyembo et Kabongo*, *Compagnie des Batetela*, and the *Societe des Basong(y)e de Tshofe* were given official recognition.³³ But the first trade unions were not formed until after the Second World War.

These ethnic associations performed necessary social,

economic and cultural functions for the worker in a way which neither the trade unions nor even the government have been able to do. Consequently, they have secured the primary loyalty of the worker. Only much more limited functions, especially those which the ethnic associations were unable to perform, have been assigned to the trade unions; and therefore, only a much more limited and secondary loyalty has been attracted to these working-class institutions. Owing to the general phenomenon of a rural-urban drift, particularly after the 1930s, urban unemployment has become severe in most African countries. About 25 percent of the urban population is composed of the unemployed who live at the fringes of society. They rely essentially on ethnic associations for socioeconomic security and in finding jobs. The unskilled worker group is placed in a situation of exceptional economic vulnerability by the accelerating rural exodus and the creation of a veritable reserve army of unemployed in the cities. While a professionally qualified employee is difficult to replace, the unskilled worker can easily be replaced by the numerous unemployed persons willing to accept slightly worse conditions of service in order to escape the severe tribulations of unemployment. Therefore, the unskilled worker relies greatly on the ethnic associations not only to keep his job but also to help secure another in the event of retrenchment.

This role of the ethnic organizations in securing jobs for workers and helping them to ensure job security led to divisive interethnic competition which in turn created antipathies that fueled ethnic consciousness. In the Cameroons, for example, the hostility of other ethnic groups toward the Bamileke has been in part the result of the success of the latter in the competition for jobs. For example, the Douala of the coastal regions, who were the first to make contact with colonialism, initially monopolized employment opportunities in the colonial order. But by 1947, the Bamileke had outnumbered the Douala in the manual labor category. However, the latter still dominated the overall labor force. The situation changed in 1956 with the Bamileke being strongly represented in every occupational category with the exception of the arts, fishing and livestock farming. The Douala had yielded grounds to the Bamileke, Bakoko, and Beti. In 1947, most of the indigenous personnel of the colonial administration were Douala, but in 1956, the proportion had dropped to 15.3 percent, with the Bamileke constituting 25.3 percent, the Beti 18.2 percent and the Bassa-Bakoko 17.8 percent.³⁴ The tensions resulting from this rapid social and ethnic change were evident not only in Douala but also in such centers as Yaoundé, Mbalmayo, Ebolwa, Nkongsamba, Ngaoundéré, Garoua and Maroua. In the southern Bulu and Fang city of Sangmelima a major riot broke out in 1956 between the Bulu and Bamileke. Four years later a worse incident occurred in Douala between the Douala and Bamileke in which nineteen people were killed and over five thousand made homeless.³⁵

Colonialism, Ethnicity, and the Manipulation of Working-Class Consciousness

In addition to the contributions of these various aspects of the colonial situation to the emergence and perpetuation of ethnic consciousness among the working class, the colonialists manipulated ethnic sentiments among the workers to forge and reinforce such consciousness in furtherance of their goal of colonial domination and exploitation. Reuben Um Nyobe, a founder/leader of the UPC, exposes the character of this manipulation as follows:

They (the colonizers) set one tribe against another in making the one believe that they are more intelligent and the other believe they are richer and will dominate the country.... They seek simply to draw out of the peoples' hatred more profit and the prolongation of everybody's misery.³⁶

The imperialists used ethnicity as a weapon to destroy effective working-class collective action. The aftermath of the positive action strike of the Gold Coast workers in 1950 is illustrative. The colonialists arrested the majority of the left-wing labor leaders from the Sekondi-Takoradi industrial and port hub of the country and persuaded the "moderate" labor leaders from Accra and the mining centers of Tarkwa and Kumasi to reconstitute the national labor movement with the aid of the colonial Labor Department and the British Trades Union Congress. Those mainly identified with this "moderate" faction were Daniel K. Fovie, S. K. Larbi Odam and Fred Loo. Therefore, this geographical shift of the center of the labor movement was also accompanied by an ethnic regroupment of the leadership from Fanti to an alliance of the Ewe of the eastern region and the Ga around Accra.³⁷

The Nigerian general strike of 1945 is similarly illustrative. Around the time of the strike, tension had arisen between the Hausa and Igbo in northern Nigeria as a result of interethnic competition for jobs in the lower wage scales and in petty trading. In fact, in 1932 a riot had nearly erupted between them in the northern city of Jos. The general strike hit food supplies sent to the north by rail at a time, following the end of the Second World War, when high hopes and expectations of the people were already being confronted by scarcity, inflation and the continuation of the rationing instituted during the war. A severe shortage of food developed in the area. Every morning for several weeks, a long line of people waited outside the market to receive fixed rations of grain from the British district officer. The colonial authorities blamed the hardship in the north on Igbo strikers and prevailed on the northern workers to

boycott the strike on ethnic grounds. Also, they exploited the situation to incite the Hausa against the Igbo. The Hausa attack on the Igbo in the Jos communal riot of 1945 became inevitable.³⁸

In various parts of Africa, the colonialists attempted to use ethnic sentiment as an instrument with which to deny the black proletariat its basic rights. They argued that Africans were primarily tribesmen rather than industrial workers and therefore should be represented by tribal leaders (most of whom were in their pay) in industrial disputes. For example, on the copperbelt of Zambia a council of elders was first formed at the Roan Antelope mine in 1931; the council was extended to the Mufulira mine in 1935 and introduced in all mines throughout the copperbelt in 1940.³⁹ But, as was clearly demonstrated by the first copperbelt mine strike in 1935 and the second strike in 1940, the African mine workers rejected the exercise of industrial relations through tribal leaders and eventually formed trade unions.⁴⁰ Similarly, Mossi villagers in an industrial environment (the Niger Project) rejected their tribal leaders as intermediaries in industrial disputes.⁴¹ In Kenya in 1945, the colonial government successfully imposed African chiefs as intermediaries during the disturbances at the docks⁴² but, by the time a strike erupted again at the waterfront in 1955, the Kenyan workers had rejected the services of ethnic leaders and the government was compelled to work through the trade unions.⁴³ The African workers of the Cameroon Development Corporation even preferred public administrators to traditional chiefs as intermediaries.⁴⁴

However, as ethnicity later became more salient in African societies, Epstein found that in conflicts within the Mine Workers' Union in the copperbelt of Zambia, ethnic conflict had become dominant. The conflict was between the Bemba and Nyasa within and outside the trade union.⁴⁵ Smock found that subethnic factionalism had become a key factor in intraunion disputes in the Nigerian Coal Miners' Union.⁴⁶ Similarly, in his study of Uganda, Scott found that officeholders in ethnic associations were quite often union leaders as well. He also found that the bulk of union members perceived many intraunion conflicts in terms of ethnic affiliations.⁴⁷ Of the fifteen Kenyan trade unions whose internal politics were studied over a decade (1960-1970) by Sandbrook, only one, the Railway African Union, was free of ethnically-based factionalism. Even the most powerful Kenyan union was vulnerable to opponents relying on ethnic appeals.⁴⁸

Until 1954, the Kenya trade union movement cut across ethnic and racial lines. Between 1937 and 1950, the European Civil Service Union helped the Kenyan Asians to organize the first Kenyan unions among the colonized which included Asians and Africans. Union meetings provided the first interracial

meeting grounds in an otherwise rigidly segregated society. The Labor Trade Union of East Africa, founded in 1937, was the first such body, and it was followed in 1947 by the African Workers' Federation. Both were banned for their involvement in the 1947 Mombasa dockworkers' strike. They were replaced in 1949 by the East African Trades Union Congress under the leadership of the Asian, Maknan Singh and the African, Fred Kubai. Following the general strike in Nairobi and Mombassa in 1950, the new organization was proscribed as under communist influence, its leaders were rusticated and new restrictive legislation against trade unions was passed in 1950 and 1952 in an attempt to emasculate the unions. Particularly noteworthy was Operation Anvil in 1954 which led to the arrest of many labor leaders and which was especially heavily weighted against the Kikuyu.

Finally, the colonialists used ethnicity to frustrate working-class political action. For example, in the Cameroons, the trade union movement was the first African organization to gain a political foothold in the country. From its foundation, it was dedicated to the revolutionary overthrow of French colonialism. It preached the doctrine of class struggle and demanded the unification of the British and French sections of the Cameroons. In 1945, as the movement grew in political militancy, the French colonialists revived the *Jeunesse Camerounaise (Jeucafra)*, the first legal Cameroon political organization which, however, had been dormant since its formation in 1938. Its revival was intended to destroy the growing political momentum of the trade unions as well as to replace revolutionary demands with reformist ones. But it failed to generate much excitement among the public and was in fact outmaneuvered and absorbed by the trade union political movement. On April 10, 1947 this movement was transformed into the *Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC)*, a political party founded by the trade union leaders: Reuben Um Nyobe, Felix Moumie, Ernest Ouandié, Abel Kingué and others. The party enjoyed substantial support throughout the country but most extensively from the unemployed, unskilled, and semi-skilled workers, and among the Bamileke, Douala, Mungo, Bassa, Ewondo, and Bete ethnic groups.

Soon after its formation the UPC quickly gained the support of the Ngondo and Kumsze, the traditional political institutions of the Douala and Bamileke respectively. But by 1949, the French colonial administration had pressurized these bodies into withdrawing support from the party and actively opposing it. In 1948 the French organized the first anti-UPC political group, the Union Bamileke whose main goal was to counter the Kumsze which was pro-UPC at the time. Therefore, when the Kumsze renounced its UPC ties, the Union lost its existential basis and faded away. Most of the opposition to the UPC has come from scores of mini ethnic parties who had the financial support of the colonial administration.

At one time or another there were nearly a hundred such parties. They included: the *Evolution Sociale Camerounaise* (ECOSAM), founded in 1949 by Bassa notables in official pay who tried to oppose every UPC cell in Bassa homeland with an ECOSAM cell; the *Renaissance Camerounaise* created at Abong Mbang with Ewondo-Maka ethnic referent; the *Bloc Democratique Camerounaise* with Ewondo-Beti Catholic base; the *Coordination des Independents Camerounias* (Indecam); the *Association Traditionelle Bantoue Efoula-Meyong* founded on Bulu ethnic base; *Paysans Independents* among the Bamileke; *Action Paysanne* among the Bulu-Fang, and the *Union Camerounaise* among the Fulani-dominated northern ethnic groups and the Moslem Bamoun people.

Nevertheless, the UPC withstood this imperialist political plot until 1958. However, when in 1958-1959 the Bamileke rebelled against the mounting socioeconomic oppression of colonialism in their region, the UPC, which had not inspired the dissatisfaction and consequent insurrection, championed their cause. The imperialist regime and its local agents thereupon fanned the anti-Bamileke feeling in the country and used this as the major instrument with which to isolate and destroy the party.⁴⁹ A similar attempt in Guinea proved unsuccessful. There the colonial administration first sponsored the socialist party headed by Yacine Diallo from the Fouta Djallon and later by Barry Diawadou from the plateau region--both supported by the Foula of the Fouta Djallon--to oppose the radical political party of the trade unionists led by Ahmed Sekou Toure.⁵⁰

Ethnic Politics and Working-Class Consciousness

Thus ethnic consciousness among the working class emerged and persisted as a result of African reaction to colonial racism, adaptation to the necessity for socioeconomic survival in the colonial situation and the manipulation of ethnic sentiments by the colonialists. It served a dual but related function for colonialism: first as a mechanism to perpetuate the imperialist system of production which was established, maintained and transformed by the colonial state in the interest of the metropolitan bourgeoisie, and second as an instrument to prolong imperialist control of the colonial state for as long as possible, but at least until the colonial system of production was consolidated. Its major thrust was to weaken the power and solidarity of the anti-imperialist forces, particularly the emasculation of the revolutionary potential of their most oppressed wing, the working class.

The principal contradiction of the colonial situation was between the foreign control of the apparatus of state and the national desire for sovereign and independent status. Without the control of state power it was impossible to transform the colonial system of production in the interest of the working class.

However, local control of state power does not necessarily mean an end to the imperialist system of production. The latter can only be overthrown by the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed local classes who have a high level of class consciousness. All forces which tend to militate against the imperatives of revolutionary struggle or hamper the development of a high level of class consciousness are counterrevolutionary forces. In Africa, ethnic consciousness has been such a force.

It served as a mechanism for the colonized to adapt to the anomaly, alienation and hardships of the colonial situation; it contributed to the smooth functioning of the imperialist structures and therefore to the perpetuation of the imperialist structure of production. It could not be antagonistic to the aims and objectives of imperialism. And, as a mechanism for adaptation to the system, it channeled attention and energy toward reforms rather than revolution. Hence, the African working class is mostly oriented toward economistic trade unionism rather than a revolutionary struggle against the structures of imperialism. African workers separate trade union activities (economism) from their political activities (essentially reformist). But only when trade unionism and class-oriented political activities are integrated can a revolutionary working class emerge.

It is often forgotten that classes and their consciousness are formed in the course of concrete historical struggles. Some of the most important of these may not readily appear in class terms. And the ruling class may use various mechanisms to prevent such struggles from taking class lines in order to preempt class consciousness and preserve the system of production. But, this is part of the strategy of the ruling class in confrontations with the workers and the other subordinate classes. In these conflicts, the dominant class marshalls a broad arsenal of ideology, law, physical repression, straight exploitation, the process of socialization and the prevailing pattern of activities to their own advantage.⁵¹ In other words, class consciousness does not develop mechanically out of the system of material production but is significantly affected by the way the working class lives, and what and how it learns.⁵² Hence, as products of socialization into the pervasive ethnic ideology of the colonial situation, African workers internalized expectations, goals, patterns of behavior in the interethnic scheme of things, and even the discriminatory classification of their countrymen. For example, in his study of the Ivory Coast, Aristide Zolberg observes that both Africans and Europeans widely believed that certain ethnic groups were more progressive, intelligent or generally more worthy of respect than others.⁵³

Under the circumstances of this pervasive ethnicity, politics among the colonized Africans and during the neocolonial

period followed ethnic lines, particularly in countries where it was possible to gain electoral advantage by appeals to ethnic sensibilities. In Kenya ethnic divisions became the crux of Kenyan politics, especially between the Kikuyu and Luo, the largest and second largest ethnic groups respectively. The trade union movement later split along the same lines. The Kikuyu-dominated Kenyan African National Union (KANU) was associated with the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), formerly the Kenya Federation of Labor (KFL). They were challenged by the Luo-dominated Kenyan People's Union and associated Kenyan African Workers' Congress (KAWC), formerly the Kenya Federation of Progressive Trade Unions (KFPTU).⁵⁴ Later, a one-party system was able to emerge because KANU used violence and repression to eliminate the KPU.

In Nigeria politics has been based on a precarious balance among the ethnic forces represented by the various political parties. Therefore, while the federal capital Lagos was the center for labor and wage policies, important powers accrued to the regions, and later states, which had their own civil services and labour departments. Therefore, the national trade union movements and their semi-autonomous regional and state branches had to engage in precarious balancing acts between the national and regional or state interests which involved them deeply in all major political problems and power struggles of the country.⁵⁵ For example, during the early sixties, two breakaway unions emerged from the Nigerian African Mineworkers' Union, the first major trade union on the Jos minefield. They were the Hausa-dominated Northern Mineworkers' Union and the, mainly Birom, Middle Belt Mineworkers' Union, which leaned toward the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), and the alliance of the Action Group (AC) and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) political parties respectively. Thereafter, the Nigerian Mineworkers' Union consisted primarily of the Igbo who supported the alliance of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU).⁵⁶

In 1962 the NPC government of the northern region, fearing that the southerners (who concentrated in the industrial centers of Kano, Zaria, Kaduna and Jos and who constituted the bulk of the trade unions in the north) would become the subservient instrument of the southern political parties, encouraged the formation of a Northern Federation of Labor (NFL) under the leadership of Ibrahim Nock, a northerner. In the 1964 general election the NFL gave its support to the NPC in opposition to the central labor movement which backed the opposing alliance. When the eastern region seceded from the Nigerian Federation on May 30, 1967 as Biafra, the unions there renounced their affiliation to the central labor movement to form the Biafran Trade Union Confederation (BTUC). More recently, unions have begun to organize within the boundaries of the state governments

set up in 1967 and expanded in 1976. For example, in the first nine months of 1971, seventeen unions registered using the name of a state in their description; these included the Kwara State Washmen's Association and the Western State Stone, Sand and Gravel Blasters and Diggers' Union.⁵⁷

In order to win the support of the workers and unemployed in their ethnic homelands, political parties often attempt to ensure an advantageous redistribution of employment and promotion opportunities in their favor. In the process, interethnic hostility among the workers is intensified and ethnic consciousness among the working class reinforced. In Nigeria the northernization policy of the NPC government of the northern region had the same effect during the late fifties.⁵⁸ Similarly, when the northerners demanded a share in the federal public service commensurate with their political power in the federal government (even if it meant the appointment of northerners less qualified than southerners to positions of authority), southern resentment and resistance were strong. This created interethnic antipathies in the federal civil service.

Furthermore, in the absence of conflicting ideological platforms, ethnic political parties depend for their support on promises to provide social welfare amenities for their ethnic followers. A ruling party then uses governmental power to perform some of the functions hitherto performed by the ethnic associations: widening opportunities for employment, education, good medical services and other forms of social security. Ethnic group loyalty is consolidated and the ruling party's mass base strengthened when amenities are provided to the ethnic group as a whole without disrupting established patterns. Such a politicization of interethnic competition for social services sharpens the ethnic consciousness of the population. A similar effect is produced by political violence, such as the Nigerian civil war, interethnic massacres in Rwanda and Burundi, the assassination of Tom Mboya in Kenya and the selective massacre of the Acholi and Langi by Idi Amin in Uganda.

Progress, Reaction and Working-Class Consciousness

Richard Sklar has correctly observed that in Africa ethnic movements are created and instigated to action by the new men of power in furtherance of their special interests which are time and again constitutive interests of the emerging social classes.⁵⁹ Ethnicity becomes a mask for class privileges. Epstein found that, in the conflicts within the African Mine-workers' Union in the copperbelt of Zambia, ethnicity masked struggles between groups of different occupational status; that the conflict between the Nyasa and Bemba within the union was a clash of economic interest rather than one based on traditional

hostility.⁶⁰ Scott has found in Uganda that behind the ethnic mask lay conflicting elite interests rather than traditional animosities.⁶¹

In neocolonial Africa ethnicity obscures the struggle among the various local classes, between those classes that have an objective interest in the preservation of peripheral capitalism under imperialist hegemony and those, such as the working class, opposed to imperialist domination and plunder of the nation. The privileged, ruling, local bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and comprador elements have interests which are sharply in contrast with those of the overwhelming masses of the population, the peasants and workers. They perform supervisory and intermediary roles in the production process at the local level which, although dependent on those of the metropolitan bourgeoisie are, nevertheless, less alienating and more highly rewarding than those of the other local classes and only marginally more alienating and less rewarding than those of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Their goals are limited to improvements in their material gains from production through the control of the local apparatus of state and do not include the elimination of the exploitation of the masses in the neocolonial system of production. As regards the principal contradiction of neocolonialism -- foreign domination of production and the national demand for economic independence -- they range themselves on the side of foreign domination. Their objective interests in the neocolonial scheme of things do not permit a revolutionary transformation of the neocolonial mode of production for the benefit of the masses.

Ethnicity serves to obscure their parasitic role in production and their privileged appropriation of the products of production. By shifting emphasis away from the exploitation and dehumanization arising from the appropriation of the surplus from production along lines of the relations of production, ethnicity helps to ensure the perpetuation of the economic system which guarantees their privileges. Class consciousness is aborted and with it any revolutionary assault on the system of privileges. Most of the neocolonial regimes of Africa are reactionary. Their ruling classes are the major beneficiaries of both the neocolonial system of production and the associated inter-ethnic scheme of things which are, in turn, inimical to the progress of the working class. The present ruling classes cannot be expected to make fundamental changes in the prevailing socioeconomic system. Such changes must be brought about by the underprivileged classes. Seibel's findings show that they are the least inflicted with the ethnic virus.⁶² Cohen has observed that in post-civil war Nigeria, only the trade unions have continued to maintain a multi-ethnic leadership and organization.⁶³ These interests are objectively antagonistic to the inherited economic and privileges.

This link between the system of production and ethnic consciousness suggests that, on the question of working-class consciousness in Africa, a distinction be made between reactionary and progressive regimes. The former seek to maintain the fundamental elements of the interethnic scheme of things and/or the neocolonial system of production. Their approach to policy is to reform rather than replace the inherited socioeconomic system. On the other hand, the latter seek to abolish the imported imperialist production process and the sociopolitical and cultural relations arising from and sustaining it. They are motivated by the desire to respond in a fundamental way to the aspirations of the oppressed and exploited masses of their people. All national activities are made part and parcel of the general anti-imperialism of the regimes and are judged by their contribution to this struggle. They believe that only revolutionary transformations of the neocolonial societies will liberate their vast majorities from poverty, exploitation, ignorance, disease and low productivity.

In the reactionary states, the anti-colonial collaboration of the working-class organization and the leading political parties gave way at independence to a struggle for domination between them. This in turn led to the political emasculation of the former in many of the countries and the rise in their influence over state power in a few states. With the achievement of political independence, divergent views on economic independence, Africanization of jobs and improvement of the standard of living of the rural masses replaced the unanimity of views on the pre-independence slogans of freedom, equality and self-determination. Local reaction came face to face with local progress in a struggle for power.

The resultant struggle followed two patterns. First, in countries (such as Nigeria, Kenya before the suppression of the KPU, Benin before the Kerekou regime, Camerouns, pre-Mobutu Zaire and Uganda) where ethnic formations were big enough to exert strong political influence, the reactionary political leaders employed ethnicity in the struggle against the trade unions. In these countries both government and industry shared the suspicion that there was a link between trade unionism and radical politics. They sought, therefore, to foist a conservative and reform-minded leadership on the trade unions and to eliminate working-class radicalism by promoting ethnic consciousness. In their roles as the largest employers of labor, it was in the interest of those governments to keep organized labor at loggerheads. In Nigeria, for example, until 1976 the federal government was unwilling to encourage trade union unity.⁶⁴ In Kenya an intimate union-party relationship existed during colonial times. After the attainment of independence, it was disrupted by ethnic forces. In Nigeria the collaboration between the Trades Union Congress and the NCNC ended in 1950,

while in the French Cameroons strong working-class ideological orientation by the unions made the labor movement hostile to the petty bourgeoisie-oriented parties.

Nevertheless, the working classes in most of these countries have remained politically radical. The success of ethnic reaction has proved very temporary. Where the labor unions have been emasculated, the masses have remained politically progressive supporting the most progressive parties of the petty bourgeoisie possible. And labor unions are being revived along politically progressive lines. In fact, in pre-Kerekou Benin all coup leaders had, if they were to capture and keep power, to come to terms with or offer concessions to the unions.⁶⁵ The latter have also been the major supporters of the present anti-imperialist regime in the country. In Nigeria the workers successfully resisted the military government's efforts in 1977-78 to control the character of the new United Labor Congress (ULC), thereby ensuring that the new body maintained a working-class posture.

Second, in other countries such as Ivory Coast, Senegal, Upper Volta, Youlou's Congo, Gabon, Niger, Chad, Togo, Mauritania, Mobutu's Zaire, the Central African Republic, and Kenya after 1969 (where the ethnic groups are either not powerful enough to be politically influential or have been significantly repressed into submission to central authority), the reactionary political leaders have employed various non-ethnic policies in an attempt to emasculate the working-class movements. As traditional procedures such as the general strike were suppressed, trade unionists were, in many cases, forced to work from within the dominant single party. By the early seventies national parties had absorbed the labor unions.⁶⁶ In Senegal the ruling party gave the union ten percent representation in all governmental, legislative and political organizations. In Mauritania the secretary-general of the union was, for a time, appointed minister without portfolio to represent the workers. In Gabon the union was recognized in 1975 as a specialized part of the political party and charged with the function of facilitating communications between the workers and the government.⁶⁷ Under these conditions the unions became economic in approach, focusing on enterprise grievances and collective bargaining, worker education, vocational training, cooperatives, credit unions, health services and leisure-time activities.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the history of the past suggests that such setbacks of the working-class drive for political influence and power may only be temporary. Workers have shown a high degree of political resilience and radicalism. For example, in spite of the repression of the Youlou regime in the Congo, the workers acted in concert with the youth to bring it down in 1963. In August 1968, Major Ngouabi captured power in the country essen-

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tially because of the support of the trade unions, he had awarded pay increases of up to 40 percent to the low-income workers, and up to 20 percent for the middle-grade civil servants.⁶⁹ The November 1958 coup in Sudan was the result of popular pressure organized by the working-class party and supported by the trade unions, students and the Gezira tenants. Labor-sponsored coups have occurred in Upper Volta and also in Mauritania, while serious hostility between the union and the party has taken place in Senegal, Ivory Coast and Chad.⁷⁰

On the other hand, in the progressive states the trade unions act as a school for revolutionary anti-imperialist action to widen the scope of the education, culture and technical know-how of the workers, peasants and intellectuals, and to lift the ideological consciousness of the leaders and political activists to the level required to build a new progressive and non-exploitative society.⁷¹ The principal mission of trade unionism is to raise the level of class consciousness of the workers, to create a proletarian consciousness and to promote the growth of production on a daily basis. Most important of all, it is to maintain pressure on the revolutionary political leadership to ensure that it does not renege from the national task of ending exploitation, national economic dependence, the inherited privileges and the distorted patterns of consumption and resource use.

Only in countries where party and union activities interlock, and the political party carries on an intensive and extensive propaganda against ethnicity, is the working class able to free itself from the ethnic infection. For example in Guinea, during the 1953 Conakry strikes (which lasted sixty-six days), Sekou Toure emphasized the unity of African workers, the irrelevance of ethnicity and the need for the cooperation of rural workers in industrial action. The impact of the campaign was profound. Union membership in Guinea rose from 4,000 in early 1953 to 20,000 in 1954 and 55,000 in 1955.⁷² The strike also had important political consequences because trade unionists also led the *Parti Democratique de Guinea* (PDG). Within less than two years of the strike, the PDG leaders displaced the leaders of the ethnic and regional associations from the elected union offices. The wage earners who joined the trade unions perceived them as part of the party, and all industrial action was seen as political. The PDG leaders in turn acquired a technique of protest, an ideology and a knowledge of mass organization that deeply influenced their anti-imperialist campaigns during the colonial and neocolonial periods. The Tanzanian and Ghanaian experience closely parallel that of Guinea. The party and union presented a common front in the campaign for independence. Their emphasis was on national homogeneity, the elimination of vested interests and national reconstruction in the interests of the masses.⁷³ Nkrumah's Ghana and Tanzania carried their anti-

imperialist union activities into the post-colonial period.

In conclusion, therefore, the problems posed by ethnicity for working-class consciousness and praxis cannot be solved outside the solution of the problem of revolutionizing the externally imposed system of production. Both problems have their foundation in the structures of imperialism and have persisted and intensified as these structures have matured. Consequently, the strategy of replacing ethnic consciousness and praxis among the working class with their class equivalents must be part and parcel of an overall strategy against imperialism. In this regard there is no substitute for a working-class political party motivated by the objective interests of the workers, dominated and guided by them and devoted to the implementation of progressive policies. The peasants, workers, petty traders and the unemployed of Africa, under the political leadership of the working class, are the only dependable instrument in the simultaneous struggle against ethnic sectionalism and the neocolonial system in Africa.

Notes

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