

## **Introduction to a Booklet on the Anniversary of Africa Day**

*“Argument suggests that, on the one hand, there was exploitation and oppression, but, on the other hand, colonial governments did much for the benefit of Africans and they developed Africa. It is our contention that this is completely false. Colonialism had only one hand – it was a one-armed bandit.”*

**Walter Rodney, “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa”**

The South African Communist Party, by its Constitution, obliges its members to educate, organise and mobilise. Educate to organise. Organise to mobilise. It is more than a slogan; it is a functional progression. The field covered is wide and varied.

The enormous tide of capitalist media and Imperialist cultural domination flows in a direction opposite to the people’s interest. The simple understanding of (to borrow Walter Rodney’s famous book-title) “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,” is a prerequisite for resistance to the apologists of Empire, past and present. Political education is struggle. Pedagogy is the revolutionary instrument.

In the tradition of the great Brazilian educationist, Paulo Freire, our liberation must begin with a true recognition of our circumstances. This is why we, Africans, need to uncover our historical and political past as well as our present problems. (As “Cde. Mzala” Jabulani Nxumalo said: “Blank pages in history should not be allowed.”)

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Africa can’t help living in the past. Its present condition was set a long time ago, when Western Europeans found out how to reinvent an institution that had been a thousand years dead in Western Europe – slavery. The West Europeans had found out how to “off-shore” their reinvented, slaver-based system of production.

Europe tries hard to forget Africa and the colossal crimes it committed there. But Africa is not allowed to forget Europe. The crime continues, in the locked, triangular, institutional relationship between Africa, Europe, and America that began in the days of slavery. What is today called “Atlanticism”, including NATO, is the direct legacy of the slave economy.

Modernised slavery was the beginning of modernity. It was the nursery where bourgeois capitalism was cultivated during four hundred years of bourgeois slavery. Even if Karl Marx had not said so (in “Capital”, Volume 1), this would still be clear to those with eyes to see.

It has now become necessary, for Europe as much as for Africa, to re-set the fixed relation that exists between them. It is not a moral obligation, nor is it compensation, but it is a practical necessity of our time. Yet this necessity is violated and contradicted every day.

Instead of peace, there is more war. Instead of reparation, there is more plunder. Instead of an end to colonialism, there is a revival of colonialism.

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The point of origin of modern developments in Africa is not, as it used to be taken in South Africa, for example, the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1652. Nor is it the “Scramble for Africa” of the 19th Century, or the Treaty of Berlin of 1885, that divided the interior of the continent among the new imperial powers of the day. Rather, the point of origin is the beginning of the modern slave trade in the 15th Century, and that is where we will, of necessity, begin. The struggle against slavery is also the origin of the anti-colonial struggle, and the pan-Africanism that continues today in the form of a struggle against neo-colonialism. In all of this we will find our strategic view.

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The best evidence of the nature of Africa’s strategic development is its own revolutionary literature, meaning, principally, the writings of the revolutionary leaders. This article will attempt to indicate where that great legacy can be uncovered, so that the history may be read from the original literature, and be understood in the terms that the protagonists, then and now, have understood it. It is in this sense that we use the word “development”. We mean here the development of Africa’s subjective view of itself, which becomes the basis for Africa’s free agency – its liberation.

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To conclude such a study as this one, we must discover the place of Africa within the world as it is now, in the second decade of the 21st Century. This is a condition of the world that is referred to as a New Cold War (with several hot, proxy wars). It could become a new American Century, like the previous one. Or, it could be a revival of something like the 1648 “Peace of Westphalia” based on co-existing, equally sovereign states. In the confrontation between these opposing potential resolutions, Africa is found in the middle, as a conceptual chessboard, and as real field of battle.

- *The above paragraphs were added as an introduction to our SADTU history resource booklet on Africa Day, for its publication in the Marx Memorial Library annual “Theory and Struggle”, 2016, under the title “Strategic Review of African Developments”.*

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