

Resolution on Trade and Debt 2000

The economic effects of slavery and colonialism continue to weigh heavily on the lives of African people. African slavery and colonialism were the factors which gave rise to European civilization, rescuing its people from disease, poverty and feudal backwardness at the expense of the political, social and economic development of Africa and our people. Indeed, these factors, which include the trade in African people, constitute the primary elements of primitive accumulation or start-up capital necessary for the advent of capitalism as the world economy.

The attacks on Africa by Europe transformed Africa and Europe. The transference of material and human resources from Africa to Europe played a fundamental role in creating and elevating new social forces. Among these new forces were the newly-enriched capitalist bourgeoisie, made wealthy by the slave trade, as well as the European working class, the development of which rescued the toiling masses of Europe from feudal bondage, giving them a greater share of the value created by their labor. A vast comfortable and affluent European middle class was also created by this process, as tens of thousands of European workers entered the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie on our backs.

Hence, progress for all dynamic European social forces was gained on the pedestal of African oppression. Notably, both the European bourgeoisie and the working class, the two major contending social forces, were given birth to by the expropriation of African lives and resources. Both of these forces are threatened by the struggles of African people against our oppression. The wealth stolen from our Mother Africa by the European bourgeoisie undermined the authority and logic of the ruling, land-based European aristocracy, resulting in democratic revolutions throughout Europe and the United States of North America. This process liberated the European toilers, making them property owners for the first time in their history.

This stolen wealth of Africa also resulted in the industrial revolution that acted as an impetus for the end of slavery and the advent of direct colonialism which facilitated the expropriation of raw materials from Africa and other places. Colonialism fed the factories employing the European workers, resulting in the leap in economic development that allowed Europe to overtake the rest of the world.

Meanwhile, the impact of slavery on Africa was devastating. The slave trade destroyed the political economy of much of Africa, neutralizing and stagnating that which was not destroyed. Whole cities, especially in coastal regions, were obliterated, their escaping inhabitants being pushed by slavers into the interior. Towns and villages were overgrown without evidence of their prior existence. Some communities foolishly assumed they could spare themselves from the consequences of the slave trade by selling out their own brothers and sisters.

An inconceivable number of Africans-some estimates reach 200 million-were kidnapped from Africa, depriving Africa of farmers, scientists, healers, craftsmen, educators, religious and political leaders, poets, philosophers and musicians-indeed, all the human elements necessary for social progress and economic development. All of Africa was transformed into a vast hunting ground for human flesh. The political economy which once fed, clothed and housed Africans in Africa was destroyed and replaced with an alien political economy that fed, clothed and housed Europeans at the expense of our people and the development of our Motherland.

The parasitic European economic structures which facilitated the capture, transport and sale of African people into slavery were subsequently modified to facilitate the acquisition, transport and sale of raw materials stolen from Africa to feed the European industrial revolution, which was itself a consequence of European development due to the enslavement of African people. This was the era of European colonialism.

The growth and effectiveness of the African resistance to European oppression and exploitation made direct European colonial domination impossible. Struggles of national liberation of our people emerged throughout Africa and the world. Like Africans in Africa and abroad, the peoples of Asia and Latin America were challenging colonial white power in their homelands. The movement created by Marcus Garvey enlisted membership and support from more than 11 million Africans worldwide.

Throughout Africa-in South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Cameroon, Guinea, Congo, Rwanda, Egypt, etc.-our people were rising up, sometimes in arms against our white colonial oppressors. African resistance made it necessary for Europeans to disguise their rule and exploitation by retreating to a new form of indirect colonial rule, called neo-colonialism by Kwame Nkrumah, the first elected post-colonial leader of Ghana.

Neo-colonialism is white power in black face. It is white power that has been forced by the rising consciousness of the masses of oppressed African people to hand over the obvious trappings of formal political power, while at the same time maintaining control of the economy, which defines the limitations of African political power. Neo-colonialism rests on the same structures of imperialism that were initiated by the slave trade.

The political significance of neo-colonialism lies in its ability to hide the exploitative hand of white power by assigning the responsibility for the growing emiseration of the African masses to its allied though subordinate black puppet stand-ins. Neo-colonialism makes it difficult for the African masses to understand the role of imperialist white power in our lives. Neo-colonialism also creates the rationale for the continued division of Africa by setting the colonial borders as the domain within which neo-colonial rule and neo-colonial puppets flourish. This also creates conditions under which it is impossible for Africa to deal with its imperialist exploiters as a single entity, making it easier for our enemies to exploit each of the microstates separately.

Economically, neo-colonialism prevents the development of a necessary all-African national economy by locking the economic life of our people within the same colonial borders which were created with no other logic than to facilitate the transfer of our wealth from Africa to Europe, North America and increasingly Japan. Neo-colonialism prevents Africa from developing a single trade strategy and leaves Europe and North America with the sole ability to set prices for African imports, exports and all trade. It is the necessary condition for the continuing massive expropriation of African wealth by Europe and North America.

Neo-colonialism contributes to the economic crisis with which Africa now finds itself confronted. Today only seven percent of Africa's formal trade takes place within Africa itself, meaning that 93 percent of African trade is simply continued expropriation of African resources by our historical oppressors and exploiters. Additionally, 83 percent of the Gross National Product of the combined African countries goes to pay debt which has been accumulated by the neo-colonial rulers of Africa through the rigged European created and dominated trade relations born of slavery and colonialism. This means that Africa has access to only 17 percent of its own resources after paying the manufactured debt. Once the neo-colonial primitive petty bourgeoisie takes its cut from this, the African masses are lucky to achieve five percent of what they have produced.

The incredible resources extorted from Africa, including the debt, create profound crises of existence for our people and political crises for the primitive petty bourgeois neo-colonial rulers. Many of the imperialists in North America, Europe and Japan are also experiencing loss of profits due to African instability and the unavailability of African markets due to the massive debt incurred by individual African microstates.

This has led to a movement among liberal imperialists to forgive the debt. It is a demand which is increasingly being taken up by reformists all over the world, some of whom are very radical in their articulations. However, it is not in the interest of the African workers and poor peasants to ameliorate our situation under imperialism by begging to forgive a debt forcibly imposed on Africa in the first place.

We, the organized, conscious, revolutionary African workers understand that the array of reformists calling for a reorganization of trade relations and relief from the current debt as a solution to our exploitative relationship with imperialist white power are actually left-apologists for imperialism. They represent a far-seeing sector of the international white ruling class which recognizes that in addition to the current crisis of imperialism, the unfair trade relations and overwhelming debt burden in Africa and other current and former colonies, lead to objective conditions that contribute to the development of revolutionary consciousness among the oppressed masses of Africa and the world which will hasten the total overthrow of imperialism altogether. We, the African working class, understand that movements organized solely around the issue of moderating our exploitation actually serve to divert energy and attention away from the real task of overturning our relationship with imperialism altogether. Our task is to destroy the structures of imperialism through which we have been bound to poverty, ignorance and ever-growing misery since slavery.

We call on all forces who are truly interested in participating in the transformation of the exploitative trade relations between Africa and the imperialist powers to join with us, the African workers aligned with the poor peasantry, in developing our revolutionary capacity to overthrow imperialism and its neo-colonial representation in Africa.

Moreover, we call on all Africans worldwide, in Africa and wherever imperialism has dispersed us, to build independent African organizations grounded in the working class and poor peasantry and connected to the African Socialist International. It is the African Socialist International which will unite our efforts to liberate and unite our Motherland and African people throughout the world under the leadership of African workers.

African revolutionaries, militants and progressives; peoples of the world: join with us, the conscious African workers of the world in our efforts to eradicate the debt of Africa and inaugurate new, fair trade relations by correctly addressing the question. It is not Africa which is in debt to Europe and North America; it is Europe and North America which owe a debt to Africa and African people for Europe's very existence and development. African revolutionaries, militants and progressives; peoples of the world: join with us, the conscious African workers of the world, in our demand for reparations as a proper response to the exploitation of Africa and African people worldwide.

In every African community — throughout Africa, in every village and micro-state within the artificial colonially-created borders — the cry for reparations from European imperialism is becoming the the answer to the trade and debt inequities by conscious workers and poor peasants.

Africans throughout the world — in the Caribbean and South America; in Europe, Canada and North America — will organize confrontations of every form and intensity, demanding reparations for the slavery, genocide, theft of human and material resources; demanding reparations for the millions of us imprisoned in the colonial jails and prison dungeons; for the elders who died too early and the children who will be born without hope for a fruitful future.

This is our response, the response of African Internationalists, to the issues of trade and debt. It is a response that correctly defined the contradiction and moves closer to revolutionary conclusions. It is not a plea for charity, based on the assumption of a beneficent imperialism. It is not a cry for clemency that ignores the fact that the turgid breasts of the European woman feeds her baby with the milk expropriated from the breasts of African women made barren by the parasitic nature of imperialism.

The demand for reparations is the demand by African workers and all the African toiling masses that imperialism must pay; that Europe and North America — indeed all responsible for and benefiting from the historical basis and current condition of African exploitation and impoverishment — must take responsibility for the parasitic relationship that has brought wealth and happiness to them at our expense.