

PAN-AFRICAN MARXISM OR THE REDUCTION OF MARXISM TO A REACTIONARY IDEOLOGY: A REPLY TO AGYEMAN'S "PAN AFRICANISM AND THE SUPERMARXISTS".

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O. Agyeman's paper "Pan-Africanism and the supermarxists" is meant to be an attack against what he calls the "Dar es Salaam School of African Marxologists". This school (which on the basis of the paper is constituted by two people: Mishambi and myself) is castigated for the "morbid zeal" with which its members "conform to orthodoxy" and "posit a contradiction between Marxism and Pan-African nationalism (since Africans are without a nation in the real sense, this is what is at issue), proclaiming the scared paramountcy of the former". (Agyeman p. 4)⁺⁺. It is Agyeman's privilege to use sarcasm, but I shall try to refrain from his paying in kind and stick to the objective position that is derived from his argument. If he is interested in creating a school of African Pan-Africanologists at this university, that is his privilege, but he should not extrapolate those objectives to Marxist teachers.

His paper requires a prompt reply because of the manner in which it develops an anti-Marxist attack under the guise of encouraging the practice of what he would consider "reasonable" or "non-doctrinaire" (non-orthodox ?) Marxism. This non-doctrinaire Marxism would be of the kind -- one presumes -- advanced by "the proponent of the most radical school of pan-Africanism, Kwame Nkrumah", who, "declared pan-Africanism and scientific socialism to be organically complementary". (Agyeman, p. 1)

However, this assertion is not followed by a demonstration, but by another assertion of the nature of what a socialist pan-African state would be:

A socialist pan-African state, then -- in the thinking of the Osagyefo -- is the credible and viable anti-imperialist strategy, as also of African resurgence, in the continent. (Agyeman, p. 2)

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⁺⁺The page numbers in bracket refer to O. Agyeman, "The Supermarxist and Panafricanism", Mimeo, University of Dar es Salaam, 1077.

However, under the pretense and pretext of combating doctrinaire Marxism the author goes on to show that unlike Nkrumah he is not interested in marrying Pan-Africanism with Marxism. The whole paper is an attack against Marxism. It is a vicious and misleading attack because it poses as a constructive criticism. At the end of the paper, as I will show, the notion of any possibility of complementarity between Marxism and Pan-Africanism has totally disappeared notwithstanding the author's assurances that he is deeply committed to socialism. For example how can the author's pledges of allegiance to socialism be reconciled with his stated preferences:

What I am saying, in other words, is that an Africa that turned into a Japan would be preferable to an Africa that remained in its present feeble condition waiting vainly and indefinitely for a world socialist revolution. (Agyeman p. 16)

As Agyeman proves it is possible to reconcile proclamations of adherence to socialism with a preference for capitalism. The petty bourgeois as a class has excelled in this exercise. The purpose of this reply is not to attack Agyeman personally, but to denounce and expose the kind of arguments that he develops for what they are; the product or petty bourgeois intellectualism. Petty bourgeois ideology is characterized by vacillation between siding with the ruling classes and the oppressed and exploited classes. The petty bourgeois ideology that is at work in the "Supermarxists and Pan-Africanism" is not only anti-Marxist, but it is also intellectually dishonest, blatantly racist and chauvinistic. With regard to the latter, the author may well wish to ponder the words of one who did try, without success, to reconcile Pan-Africanism with some aspects of Marxism:

In our struggle for national freedom, human dignity and social redemption, Pan-Africanism offers an ideological alternative to Communism on the one side and Tribalism on the other. It rejects both white racialism and black chauvinism. It stands for racial co-existence and respect for human personality.¹

The focus of Agyeman's paper is not so much to make a case for Pan-Africanism as to attack those teachers who are applying Marxism to demonstrate the reactionary nature of Pan-African ideology and how it is used in various African social formations to freeze the class struggle. Thus Mishambi comes under attack for having critically reviewed Rodney's How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, pointing out some of the

serious weaknesses from the point of view that Rodney himself chose to write the book, i.e. "from a revolutionary, socialist, and people-centered perspective" (Rodney p. 308). I was criticised for being critical of, indeed, for dismissing Pan-Africanism as a revolutionary ideology for the workers and peasants. These are the basis upon which we were branded "super-marxists", a term which is never specifically defined but seems to be explicitly synonymous with "marxologist" "doctrinaire marxism" "defender of Marxist orthodoxy". Presumably, in opposition to these "deviationists" one would find the defenders of non-sloganeering so characteristic of student essays". (Agyeman p. 18) The reader is left to conclude that the super-marxists are the promoters of sloganeering, the result of which is to make the students "the main casualty in an educational production which might turn out graduates who have barely begun to think for themselves". (Agyeman p. 18)

It would be erroneous to conclude from the above that Agyeman is the defender of non-sloganeering Marxism. He is not and could not be for he does not even seem to know what Marxism is all about. Agyeman's notions of Marxism are reduced to quotations from secondary sources. When Agyeman alludes to class analysis or to class struggles he conveys conceptions which are straight from what can only be called bourgeois catechisms of "how to combat Marxism". One of the consistent ways in which he does this is by reducing Marxism to an unrecognizable caricature as he does for example when he summarizes the "vision" of the Communist Manifesto (Agyeman, p. 16). But what is astounding is that in the same paragraph where he states that an African turned into a Japan would be preferable he proclaims his adherence to "the vision of the Communist Manifesto" by announcing that it "has to be the ultimate goal". A brilliant exercise in petty bourgeois vacillation: from wishing "an African turned into a Japan" to wishing that it be some sort of way station on the road to "the ultimate goal" (i.e. the vision of the Communist Manifesto). We may discard this "ultimate goal" for the time being because "which society has attained it? If this is the acid test, does the world have a Marxist state yet?" (Agyeman p. 16) His answer no, ours; NO; and there will never be one for these cannot be -- for a Marxist, state. A socialist state or a communist state, yes. While there is such a thing as a Leninist conception of the State, there cannot be and will never be -- conceptually speaking -- such a thing as a Marxist state.

If Agyeman had an elementary understanding of Marxism he would not use terms like Marxist state. For him, as is the case with most vulgar bourgeois denunciators of Marxism there is no difference between socialism, communism or Marxism. "They are all the same". Not so. When one reads this one cannot help but wonder who is sloganeering. L. Colletti's distinctions between all these terms are to the point and eloquently stated:

The task of Marxism as a science is to "describe casual relationships". Though they are always being confused, 'socialism and Marxism are not (Colletti's emphasis) the same thing. Socialism is an end, a goal, an objective and impartial knowledge.²

This distinction is extremely important for the failures of specific Marxist-Leninist political organisations in the USA or SA to chart a correct revolutionary strategy cannot be attributed to an inherent weakness or failure of Marxism.

Of course he has a ready-made answer for those who will castigate him for not knowing anything about Marxism:

I have not undertaken this exercise just to savour the satisfaction of scoring points off these latter-day defenders of Marxist orthodoxy whose interpretive absurdities remind one of the predicament which induced Marx himself, just before he died, to painfully declare: "I am not a Marxist". The intension is rather to do battle with a dangerous dogmatism whose end result can only be the fostering of a new mental bondage among African people". (Agyeman p. 17)

Quite clever. If Marx himself declared that he was not a Marxist, what then is being a Marxist supposed to mean. If Marx himself did not know; why should he, an avowed Pan-Africanist, know: What Agyeman is trying to tell his audience is that to call one-self Marxist -- When Marx himself repudiated the term -- is tantamount to dogmatism. Worse: Marxism will "foster a new mental bondage among African people". (Agyeman p. 17). Which African people is he talking about? Is there something that the gold mine workers of South Africa has in common with the bourgeoisie of Cape Coast or Lagos?

To defend his brand of Pan-Africanism, Agyeman does not hesitate to use slanderous tactics as when he equates Africa's anti-Pan-Africanism to the "case of the Super-Marxists against Pan-Africanism" (Agyeman p. 6) He obviously knows or he should know that Afrifra was

no representative of the working class, and yet he leaves the impression that the class distinction is of no importance. This is an argument that is central to Agyeman's pan-Africanism, I shall come back to it later.

Another manner in which Agyeman's ignorance of elementary Marxism is displayed can be seen from his conception of the class struggle, the nature and the character of the contradictions that must be resolved. He compounds this ignorance by attributing to Marxism the same goals that he would attribute to Pan-Africanism. Since Pan-Africanists are interested in forging a "massive and potent African nation" so are the Marxists interested in creating a "Marxist state", a proletarian nation.

At one point Agyeman presents himself as the realist and that it is the Marxists who are the mystifiers of realities. But what is the reality that Agyeman starts with? Pan-Africanism: the construction of which is carried out entirely in his own head. He uses his conception of Pan-Africanism to extrapolate on how the Marxists are going to bring the revolution: a typical bourgeois exercise. Throughout the entire paper, Agyeman's way of posing questions and giving answers is thoroughly rooted in a bourgeois problematic.

He accuses the supermarxists of going beyond the Chinese and Soviet (sic) Marxists because of the former advocate a nationless universalism whereas the latter "think in terms of proletarian internationalism presupposing the firm and solid existence of viable proletarian nations". (Agyeman p. 7) Quite Revolutionaries start from an analysis of concrete situation, i. e. social formations. But where do pan-Africanists start from? Ideas and conceptions which are entirely taking place in their heads. Agyeman's distortions of the goals and objectives of Marxism were dealt with by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto:

The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word (emphasis added)

If Agyeman wanted to be a credible pan-Africanist he would have quoted Comrade Samora Machel on the question of proletarian inter-

nationalism and not referred to a general description of how the Chinese and the Russians dealt with this question. In a certain sense, the experiences of the Mozambiquan revolutionaries are of more immediate relevance to the conditions prevailing on the African continent because of the similarities of their historical experiences.

No one on this continent today is better placed than Machel and his comrades in arms to explain what international solidarity means. No one is in a better position to appreciate the value of the support offered by working classes from all over the world:

Another essential factor of our victorious struggle is our capacity to assume the internationalist dimension of the revolution; an isolated revolutionary struggle is bound to fail.³

In fact, for every charge made by Agyeman one finds an answer to it in the lessons drawn by the FRELIMO fighters. But of course, here again Agyeman will point out that it is the super-marxists who are not interested in "suggesting a new pan-African organization of radical states like Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau. The fact of the matter is that the subject does not interest him" (Agyeman p. 5) The question of unity is not one which is constructed out of the blue. The question of unity is one which must be based on concrete analysis of concrete historical specific situations. Agyeman has absolutely no class conception of the nature of imperialism, and because of this he can assert that the only available developmental strategy to pull off Africa's break with the international capitalist system is "a unified African rally" (Agyeman p. 7) He never poses the question of who are the natural allies of imperialism on the continent and who are the objective enemies of imperialism. Since he never poses the question of the domination of imperialism in those terms he is allowed to get away with the assertion that anti-imperialist struggle will be carried out successfully under the ideological leadership of "progressive Pan-Africanism" (Agyeman p. 5)

Assuming we go along with this kind of subjectivism, how are we going to decide on what is meant by "progressive pan-Africanism?" Which criteria are we going to use?

Whatever the various failures (which are part of the price paid in struggle) of the various organizations that have resorted to Marxism-

Leninism, at least they know that unity must be built around certain basic principles. Again Machel is more eloquent than I could hope to be:

Unity and correct political line are two essential factors of our victory, but not the only ones. For the continuity and the consolidation of the unity the political line must be constantly defended against ideological aggression and subversives.⁵

In the same message he specified what he meant by a correct political line and ideological aggression and subversives:

Lastly, refusing to correctly define the enemy, these forces sought to define a race and a people as the target of our weapons. In fact, these elements did not want the armed struggle taken to its ultimate consequences. Their true objective was to hinder the popular process of the struggle and to prevent its ideological development, their aim was to use the masses' blood and sacrifice only as a means of pressure which would lead to the replacement of a foreign exploiting class by a national exploiting class.⁵

For his own purpose Agyeman would probably like to appropriate Machel as a hero of pan-Africanism, of progressive pan-Africanism. But the two are not reconcilable. Agyeman would accept a "Marxism which is being called into use to serve the redemption of African people and not one in which Marxism becomes an absolute value to which everything, black people themselves included, is subordinated". (Agyeman p. 16) Here Agyeman reduces Marxism to a philosophy, he reduces it to the level at which he conceives of Pan-Africanism; that is, an idea. By reducing Marxism to a philosophy or another political doctrine Agyeman strips Marxism of its most distinguishing character namely that it is first and foremost a revolutionary ideology and a revolutionary theory. As such and as a science "it is the analysis of reality from the viewpoint of the working class".⁶

Furthermore "contrary to reactionary theses, revolutionary theory is unique, it is forged and developed in the struggles and experiences of all peoples and is the property of the labouring masses of the whole world."⁷ (Emphasis added)

From the way Agyeman describes all the sins of supermarxists, defenders of Marxist orthodoxy and marxologists, it would seem that Comrade Samora Machel would also qualify. And if being a supermarxist means to share the same platform as our Mozambiquan comrades then it would be false modesty to refuse such an honour. But then this accept-

ence would give our pan-africanist the satisfaction of seeing his "analytical categories" given a stamp of approval by the supermarxist themselves. Analytical rigour requires that this satisfaction not be given.

Samora Machel's perspective as well as his numerous analysis of the Mozambiquan situation would certainly jar with Agyeman's pan-africanist sensitivities. Even during that period when racism was most prominent, Comrade Machel always insisted on a correct definition of the enemy. This principled position was most clearly formulated when Machel answered the following question:

What about captured Portuguese soldiers?
What is your attitude towards them and towards white civilians who live in Mozambique?

Answer:

When we capture Portuguese soldiers we do not kill or mistreat them. Our people know that these men are participating in the war because they were forced to. They are not defending their own interests or the interests of the Portuguese people, but the interests of the Portuguese capitalists and international imperialism. Then there are the Portuguese soldiers who desert to us. These we consider our allies. Their desertion is an act of support to our struggle.

And there are whites born in Mozambique who want to join in our ranks. We do not consider these as foreigners who support us. Such a man is one of us and it is his duty, just as it my duty, to liberate Mozambique. Our policy regarding civilians is clear. We do not fight the Portuguese who are in our country because they are Portuguese. We fight the forces of colonial occupation...8

On the basis of this answer would Agyeman say that Machel is one of those Africans who "truly have a knack for carrying every adopted creed to a disease". As an example of this disease he points to the black woman in Soweto who saved the life of a white pest control overseer by sheltering him "from the host of furious Africans seeking to wreak vengeance on him". (Agyeman p. 3) And this is how Agyeman condemns the overzealous christian woman of Soweto:

It was not possible for our Soweto woman to see that God might decide the symbolic murder of that white man for all the un-christian atrocities committed by Apartheid against black

people. No, the black woman of Soweto was capable of only one form of Christian reaction -- one which conduced to her worst interests (Agyeman p. 3)

But how are the interests of that Christian black woman going to be defended? And how should they be identified? For Agyeman the class struggle in South Africa can only be resolved through a race war. Never mind the fact that the white racist regime is furthering its own brand of pan-Africanism by making overtures to the emerging black bourgeoisie.⁹

The passage quoted above illustrates one of the main aspects of Agyeman's argument which is predicated on a racialist view of Marxism. Before dealing with this it must also be pointed out that in the same passage he resorts to one of his favourite tactics of distorting Marxism by reducing it to a form of religious faith. It is a slanderous statement worthy only of the most vulgar bourgeois writers.

While Agyeman would like to see himself as a progressive pan-Africanist he is in fact expounding a vulgar version of it. It is vulgar because it fails to take into account some of the elementary principles laid down by one of the recognized founders of Pan-Africanism: G. Padmore, who reminded his readers that Pan-Africanism must "reject both white racialism and black chauvinism".

The Soweto incidence involving a black woman who saved the life of a white man is not enough, he must go on to prove that the founders of Marxism, Marx and Engels were racists.

The logic of Agyeman is as follows: Marx and Engels did not care one bit about the black man therefore why should the black man care about their theories. He could have put it more simply and said, since Engels and Marx, Lenin, Mao, Castro were not black, they and their Marxism could be of no help to the emancipation of the black man. Indeed he does say something similar to this when he writes:

We are not told what makes Marx's or Lenin's viewpoint, ipso facto, more valid than that of Nkrumah or Rodney. Is it on account of the differential colour of their skin? We must ask the Marxologists. Is colour what determines the chances of an opinion to the claim of validity? (Agyeman pp. 5-6)

Not only is this passage racialist, but it also implies that Marxism condones racism. And in order to push this point through he resorts to the quote from Engels who approved the invasion of Algeria by French troops.

First of all for Engels, it was not only people of colour who displayed barbaric qualities. It seems as if anything that lay outside of Western Europe was branded barbaric. See for example his references to the "barbarism of the slavonic East".¹⁰

Secondly, what Engels and Marx were witnessing was the revolutionizing of social relations among the pre-capitalist formation through their contact with industrial capital, but they were clearly sensitive to the brutalization process that this entailed:

Napoleon said: "War is the Science of Barbarians". By means of that science, England has subjugated over one hundred millions of people or nearly all of the East Indian Empire, and now must subjugate the rest. . . . Hence, the majority of the representatives of the noble families are scientific barbarians; and the wars of the White and Red Roses, of Scotland and Ireland, having ceased, they must find employment in attacking distant nations.¹¹

Later on still on the same subject of the colonization of India, Marx pointed out:

England it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crime of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about the revolution. Then whatever bitterness the spectacle of the crumbling of an ancient world may have for our personal feelings, we have the right, in point of history, to exclaim with Goethe:

Should this torture then torment us
since it brings us greater pleasure?
Were not through the rule of Timur
Soul devoured without measures?"¹²

By quoting from Cesaire's letter of resignation from the French Communist Party it is hoped that the reader will draw the only possible conclusion: Marxism or Communism is of no use to blacks. The case is not as simple. First of all in view of the practice of the French CP,

any sensible Marxist would lend support to Cesaire's arguments, but the main question is what has been the practice of Aime Cesaire since he resigned from the French CP? In the struggles that the people of Martinique have waged against French imperialism, Cesaire has always sided with repression. Frantz Fanon had only scorn for the kind of politics practiced by the likes of Cesaire.¹³

As I read over what I have written so far I realize that I have trespassed one of Agyeman's warnings about the abusive use of quotations:

As is so often the case with these Marxologists, every logic, every argument, is supposed to be decisively clinched by the mere citation of a Marxian authority.
(Agyeman p. 5)

Nevertheless Agyeman proceeds to quote from his own authorities who he would like to consider as pan-Africanists. The quotes that are attributed to Earl Ofari and Angela Davis give the impression that, on the whole, they support Agyeman's political and ideological positions. Not so. Angela Davis is a central committee member of the Communist Party of the United States. She belongs to a political organization which has been famous for its revisionist political strategy. On the basis of this it might be easy to conclude that it would not be surprising that through opportunism, the CP USA would adopt a pan-Africanist line. Angela Davis however, is not a pan-Africanist and the term is not mentioned once by her in the whole interview. She does talk about black people and black consciousness. But on at last two occasions where Agyeman cites Angela Davis he stops short and therefore only give a truncated and hence distorted version of Angela Davis' position. Agyeman's footnote 42 quoting Angela Davis continues as follows:

Black people, in the way we look, the way our hair is, and all those things, are good because that is the way we are. But at the same time we have to realize that in itself cannot provide a strategy for liberation. Taken in isolation black consciousness can be used often by the ruling class, by the reactionaries to confuse our people.¹⁴

As to footnote 36 it should end as follows:

...that the struggle against racism is a struggle for their own interests, is a struggle for class unity, a struggle without which we will not be able to lay the basis for a revolutionary battle for socialism.¹⁵

Agyeman quotes profusely from Earl Ofari and in the process, again as with Angela Davis, gives the impression that E. Ofari is a pan-Africanist ideologue. Indeed Agyeman seems to have used Ofari's piece in Monthly Review as the main source for various sections of his paper. He gives the impression that he and Ofari agree on Engels' racism when in fact E. Ofari was simply trying to point out a fact that no serious Marxist would deny, namely the fact that Marxism took root in European formations and that as a result of that the founders of Marxism paid scant attention to the national movements of non-whites. "But", wrote Ofari, "as time passed Marx and Engels began slowly to rethink many of their positions of the question of national movements of non-whites". And in recognition of this Engels is quoted by Ofari as having written the following in 1857:

From the first occupation of Algeria by the French... the unhappy country has been the arena of unceasing bloodshed, rapine and violence.... The Arab and Kabyle tribes, to whom independence is precious and hatred of foreign domination a principle dearer than life itself, have been crushed and broken by the terrible razzias.... The tribes still assert their independence and detestation of the French regime.16

Agyeman's rendition of this change is not similar: Whatever modifications took place over the years in Marx and Engels view of the worth of non-Europeans, they were not of sufficient weight to "lift classical Marxism into a comprehensive social models: The seeds of conscension, sown in the early years, were to take root and sprout.(Agyeman p. 11)

I do not by all means, agree with all the analytical formulation of Ofari, but it is certain that he is not a propagandizer of pan-Africanist ideology, even if his understanding of Marxism-Leninism suffers from a pan-Africanist twist. The last sentence of his essay is quite explicit:

The utilization of Marxism-Leninism as a scientific tool of analysis certainly poses no contradictions when strictly applied to the unique conditions of blacks.17

He has articulated his position even more forcefully in his book on the Myth of Black Capitalism.

To strengthen his case Agyeman uses also W.E.B. Dubois' resignation from the socialist party in 1902 as an example of Marxists complicity towards racism in the US. As explained above he makes no dis-

inction between Marxism and socialism and a socialist Party is not Marxist. This allusion to an episode of W.E.B. Dubois' life is, like the use of A. Davis and E. O'fari quotations, intellectually dishonest because it distorts the position of these individuals with regard to the relevance of class analysis and class struggles if the emancipation of black workers and black peasants is going to be achieved.

As far as Dubois is concerned, it must not be forgotten that he later became an avowed communist.¹⁸ In his autobiography he does refer to his resignation from the socialist party, but in the same paragraph where he mentions the incident he wrote:

Then came war, the Russian Revolution and the fight of England, France and the US against the Bolsheviks. I began to read Karl Marx. I was astounded and wondered what other areas of learning had been ripped off from my mind in the days of my "broad" education. I did not, however, jump to the conclusion that the new Russia had achieved the ideal of Marx.¹⁹

and then of course the following confession which is almost a classic:

It was not until I saw the miracle of Modern China that I realized how splendidly and surely the world could be led by the working class; even if at times they wavered and made mistakes.²⁰

With regard to Dubois's notion of Pan-Africanism before his communist period, we are reminded by Azinna Nwafor that:

Dubois's Pan-African movement was a veritable elite movement of bourgeois black intellectuals who insisted that 'while the principle of self-determination cannot be applied to uncivilized peoples, yet the educated blacks should have some voice in the disposition of the German colonies.²¹

Nwafor goes on to analyze the class position of those who call for Pan-Africanis, and how the emerging African bourgeoisie wanted to set itself apart from the rest of the masses. This was the very strategy that the colonizers so eagerly pushed and the US ruling class advocated as a means of undermining the revolutionary potential of the Black Power movement. The very location that the organizers of the Fifth Pan-African Congress had to choose for their meeting -- Manchester (England) -- is an ironic, but telling illustration of the kind of accommodation and understanding that the colonizers and the petty bourgeoisie could reach. The Congress was forced to meet in Manchester by the colonizers whom the participants vowed to oust from the continent.²²

It is not enough to call on Angela Davis, E. Ofari, W.E.B. Dubois. Amilcar Cabral is also appropriated, again in a fundamentally truncated manner which turns Cabral into a woolly thinker and indecisive revolutionary which he never was. According to Agyeman Cabral is quoted as having lamented:

Obviously, I don't think it is possible to forge close relations between the peasantry in Guinea and the working class movement in Europe... (But) there are two alternatives: either we admit that there really is a struggle against imperialism which interests everybody, or we deny it.... (Agyeman, p. 14)

The unfinished quotation leaves the reader in doubt as to Cabral's position on the question of internationalism; but at the end of the paragraph the author resolves the doubts of the reader in the following manner:

in a world of racism in which contempt for the black race is a fundamental datum of the global system... is the much harped upon expectation of a consolidated world workers' alliance predicated on realism or on faith? And is such an expectation easier to entertain than that which posits that the mass of the world's black peoples, the most battered victims of imperialism be united to fight against domination and indignity which they all, irrespective of their economic station, share? Which is more in consonance with global realities and which is close to the mystification of the realities. (Agyeman pp. 14-15)

If this is so, how does Agyeman explain that Andrew Young the US permanent representative at the UN can walk the corridors of power in Pretoria while his "fellow black brothers" get trampled upon in the gold mines of Johannesburg. What kind of a unity can exist between an Andrew Young and the revolutionary students of Soweto? Whatever the limitations of the African peasantry's consciousness, its representatives would answer such a question in the negative. In the eastern rural areas of Zaire a muzungu is no longer just a white man, but he is a man with all the economic and social attributes that were once assigned to whites only.

But let us return to Cabral and give the full quote lest the readers of Agyeman's paper get the impression that Cabral had not denounced the kind of reactionary ideology peddled by the petty bourgeois intellectuals. The first part of the quote reads in its entirety as follows:

Obviously I don't think it is possible to forge close relations between the peasantry in Guinea and the working class movement in Europe; what we must do first is try and forge close links between the peasant movement and the wage-earners movement in our own country.²³ (my emphasis)

The second part reads:

To end up with, I should just like to make one last point about solidarity between the international working class movement and our national liberation struggle. There are two alternatives: either we admit that there really is a struggle against imperialism which interests everybody, or we deny it. If, as would seem from all the evidence, imperialism exists and is trying simultaneously to dominate the working class in all the advanced countries and smother the national liberation movements in all the underdeveloped countries, then there is only one enemy against whom we are fighting.²⁴

I would like to conclude by focusing on two aspects of Pan-Africanism. In my paper on African history and ideology I rejected it as essentially a reactionary ideology, but since the point was not fully elaborated, maybe it is worth going over once again.

Can Pan-Africanism really emancipate the oppressed masses of the continent? Can Pan-Africanism really provide the analytical tools and the ideological basis for bringing about the liberation of the toiling peasants and workers? But of course Agyeman never poses this kind of question. I cannot but agree with Azinna Nwafor when he writes:

Measured in these terms, Pan-Africanism did not offer a revolutionary choice to the emancipation of Africa from its centuries of conquest, domination, and colonial exploitation. The necessarily progressive role which the movement played in the evolution of Africa to independent status should not be underestimated: but the severe limitations of the scope and method are such that it contributed in no small degree to the disarray of the contemporary African scene and the general disenchantment with the fruits of political independence. It would seem that the storm centres of popular uprising for African emancipation were in fact headed off with the aid of Pan-Africanists, who represented themselves to the colonial authorities as the only forces capable to curbing the violence of the masses.²⁵

Let us focus the well known riots of Kinshasa which took place in January 4, 1959. As a petty bourgeois ideology Pan-Africanism could

not but blunt the rage of those who rioted in the streets of Kinshasa in January 4, 1959. The spontaneous outburst of anger brought about a swift and bloody repression from the colonizers. But as if this was not outrageous enough, the killing by the colonizers was duplicated or made worse by the attitude adopted by the rising petty bourgeoisie: an attitude which sought to demonstrate to the colonial authorities that they were not responsible for the rioting. Indeed they condemned the rioting through their mouthpiece: La Voix du Congolais. The emerging political class, in order to inherit political power, had to demonstrate its reasonableness not to the masses they were going to lead, but to those who were going to hand them power. There were struggles for independence, but these struggles were conducted by different classes at different levels. The violence of January 4, 1959 could be said to have been the single event that awoke the Belgian colonizers to reality, a reality which was quite different from the one that they had been reading or learning through their contacts with the emerging petty bourgeoisie.

The current ruling classes in Africa are always eager to point out their common experience, their common subjugation they experienced with the masses. In a general sense this is true, but again oppression and exploitation took different forms according to the social and economic position occupied by the colonized people. This is a crucial question to settle in view of Agyeman's efforts to down play class differences within the black population in order to say that it is not capitalism but racism that oppresses the black people. Here I am purposely using the vague terms of "black population" and "black people" as Agyeman does. He does not actually say so in the paper, but he is very close to saying the absurd thing that capitalism is evil because it is a system "invented" by whites.

On economic differences among black people, a fact that he would wish to discard, but which is too glaring to hide he wrote:

To be sure, there are, up to a point, social and economic differences among black people. But this has to be viewed against the fact that the economic status of a black person no matter how high, does not gain him equality of social status with the white counterpart. In other words, the ranks of the world's propertied class (emphasis added) is marked by social heterogeneity crippling to the club member. (Agyeman, p. 15)

Again a typical petty bourgeois discourse which vacillates between joining the ranks of the oppressed and joining the ranks of the oppressor. What bothers Agyeman is that racism prevents "the-black-club-member-of-the-propertyied-class from being treated equally. Conveniently, he does not clarify this, supposedly because it is something which is of such common knowledge that it does not require elaboration.

It is true that during colonial rule racism stood in the way of the emerging petty bourgeoisie with such overwhelming presence that it -- one of the ideological manifestations of the capitalism -- became the main enemy to combat. Although the racism of colonial rule was aimed at the colonized population as a whole it was most vociferously attacked by that section of the population which was bound to gain the most economically by its removal, and that section of the population was in the main the future ruling class of independent Africa.

No amount of down playing class differences will demonstrate that black workers and black peasants will gain anything by allying themselves to their bourgeoisies on the basis of a pan-Africanist ideology. I have shown earlier that when their political future appeared in jeopardy the emerging ruling class ran away from its "black brothers". It happened in January 4, 1959, but it had also happened before:

After the Force Publique mutiny in Luluabourg evolues had prepared a memorandum demanding 'if not a special stature at least a special protection of the government, shielding them from the application of certain treatments and measures which could be applied to a retarded and ignorant mass.26

Believers in Pan-Africanism do not like to insist on class because that would smack of doctrinaire marxism, but there is nothing doctrinaire in demonstrating that where class distinctions do exist, these class distinctions will determine not only the social and political positions adopted by these different classes but also their ideological stance.

Some may think by now that our calling Agyeman's paper typical petty bourgeois propaganda is overly vindictive and could indeed be seen as an unwarranted term of abuse. This may be the place to deal effectively with one of the most pernicious ways in which Agyeman presents himself as deeply committed to a socialist pan-Africa". (p.15) But the sentence preceding this pledge of allegiance to socialism reads:

But I will go even further to assert the advantages of a 'bourgeois' black power achievement over an unrealizable global proletarian revolution. (Agyeman p. 15)

Again here we see at play the balancing act of the petty bourgeois; on the one hand committed to a socialist pan-African state and on the other asserting the advantages of a "bourgeois" black power. But it is on the side of the latter that the balance must be tipped since the possibility of creating the former is far from certain:

But if such a goal (for a socialist, pan-African state) were to prove unrealizable, then surely it would make sense to entertain the next best conjecture of a non socialist pan-African state, provided it contained the instruments for a great economic, scientific and technological achievements which could earn for the black man the heretofore lacking spiritual self-satisfaction of a worthy, competent and powerful people. (Agyeman p. 15)

and the next paragraph continues in the same vein: What I am saying, in other words, is that an Africa that turned into a Japan would be preferable to an Africa that remained in its present feeble condition waiting vainly and indefinitely for a world socialist revolution (Agyeman p. 16)

First of all in this paragraph, Agyeman has totally rejected the notion of any kind of complementarity between Pan-Africanism and Marxism.

Secondly, Agyeman has absolutely no sense of history when he suggests wishfully that Africa be turned into a Japan. Japan is one social formation whose characteristics are rooted in historical processes which are specific to that formation. Africa on the other hand is characterized by a combination of varied heterogeneous formations which underwent certain common historical experiences; the most important of which were slavery and colonial rule.

Finally why the example of Japan? Could Japanese capitalism have some relieving features which would make it a model to be emulated by a hypothetical pan-African state? Because it is not white capitalism therefore it might be a good system to adopt? These questions are raised because of his assertion that:

That the most important contradiction in the world of the black man is that between his total submergence,

materially and spiritually, in the haughty predominance of other races. (Agyeman p. 15)

While it may seem fairly easy to see why Pan-Africanism as an ideology is essentially reactionary if seen from a class perspective the same cannot be said when Pan-Africanism is seen as a cultural phenomenon. One often hears, especially from bourgeois writers that culture has no boundaries that culture is that fibre that brings people of different social and economic classes together. But such arguments have been made from Marxist corners too: it has been argued for example that an African (or black) cultural identity is a worthwhile corrective not only to bourgeois cultural imperialism but also to dogmatic expositions by self styled Marxists or scientific socialism"²⁷

On the face of it is difficult to deny that there is such thing as black culture, African culture just as there exists European culture, Asian culture etc. It is precisely because of this surface appearance that "culture cannot be used, could not be used as a weapon or a method for mobilization against foreign domination".²⁸

And with the logic that is characteristic of his analyses Cabral pointed out that it would be pre-posterous to believe that a liberation struggle which is fundamentally a political act could resort to methods of struggle other than political. However, it is extremely important to understand that culture has also a class character, a fact that African bourgeoisies the continent over will always try to deny.

Cultural identity, preservation of African culture has been one of the processes through which the ruling classes have attempted (during the post-colonial era) to maintain an artificial class alliance between the most oppressed classes of society and themselves. Cultural identity and its maintenance is a problem of the petty bourgeois intellectual precisely because of the distance that educational and economic forces have put between him and the oppressed. These educational and economic forces have drawn him away from his own culture into the periphery of imperialist culture. During colonial rule the very effective barrier of racism turned him into a cultural squatter. Torn away from his own culture, he could not become one with the imported culture. Hence the problem of identity that Agyeman is talking about is also one which must be analyzed in class terms. "Return to Authenticity" can only apply to those who have left. Authentic culture has been preserved by

the most oppressed members of society who could not by definition have an identity problem. Solidarity therefore cannot be based on culture especially if the boundaries of that culture are defined by the ruling classes. In the process of constantly reproducing their dominant position the ruling classes must produce an ideology which by definition cannot articulate the concrete and objective reality of the basis upon which the ruling class relates to the oppressed classes. Such a view of ideology says Agyeman has long been discarded, in fact from the time when Engles and Marx were still alive. If this were the case how come Agyeman cannot produce a quote from Engels or Marx and the only authority he can bring to bear his point is an obscure secondary writer R.M. Christenson.

In the paper I did not quote from what Agyeman describes as "the long-discarded Marxian orthodox signification", but it is clear from the paper that I accepted and followed Marx and Engels' definition of what is to be understood by the ruling class ideology as well as what its function ought to be in any particular social formation. In the German Ideology, Marx and Engels wrote:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i. e. the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of that relationship which make the one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. In so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in their whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.29

Quotations won't do says Agyeman, may be so. Definitely not if saying so is an attempt to negate and deny the lessons of those who have engaged in revolutionary struggles. These lessons we find them in

many places of the world, but we also find them very close to home in Mozambique.

The struggles in Mozambique against Portugal have demonstrated that even a term like culture is not something static which is there to be picked up by anybody who comes along. As comrade Simbine Machel so eloquently put it, culture in a revolutionary situation must be revolutionary. "The true culture is the revolution".³⁰

The Mozambiquans have no use for an ideal pan-African state or nation of all the progressive African countries. Their struggle is one which took place within very concrete and very real boundaries. The revolutionary transformation that they are struggling to bring about is one which can only take place in the process of struggles between classes which are part of a single social formation. To start from something which does not exist in concrete reality -- a pan-African nation -- is to engage in Utopian idealism just as it is to suggest that the Marxists are out to create a Universal proletarian nation. Not only is it utopian socialism, but it is worse because it attributes goals to Marxism or Marxist organizations which have never been put forward by them.

Pan-Africanists have a tendency to believe that there is something unique in their call for Pan-African unity. While the historical situation is certainly different and calls for different forms of political struggle. It is worth noting the manner in which Engels in his own day dealt with another movement which resembles very much Pan-Africanism: Pan-Slavism. First Engels quoted some of the demands that were issues at the time during the Slav Congress (1848):

In the name of those of us who lived in Hungary, we offered a fraternal alliance... to the Magyars, the furious foes of our race. In our alliance of liberation we also did not forget those of our brothers who sigh beneath the Turkish yoke. We solemnly condemned that criminal policy which thrice tore Poland apart... All this we said, and we demanded with all the democrats of all peoples: liberty, equality and the fraternity of all nations.

Then we felt certain of our cause... justice and humanity were entirely on our side. And on the side of our foes was nothing but illegality and barbarism. These were no empty dreams which we devoted ourselves to, but rather the ideas of the only true and necessary policy, the policy of revolution.³¹

Then followed Engels' comments:

'Justice', 'humanity', 'liberty', 'equality', 'fraternity', 'independence' -- so far we have found nothing more in the pan-Slav manifesto than these more or less moral categories, which admittedly sound very fine, but prove absolutely nothing (Engels' emphasis) in historical and political matters, 'Justice', 'humanity', 'liberty', etc., may demand this or that a thousand times over; but if the cause is an impossible one, nothing will happen and it will remain, despite everything, 'an empty dream'³²

Then on the fundamental choice that pan-Slavism implied:

Let us in any case have no illusions about this. With all pan-Slavists, nationality, i. e. imaginary, general Slav nationality, comes before the revolution. (Engels' emphasis). The pan-Slavists want to join the revolution on condition that they are permitted to constitute all Slavs without exception, and without regard for the most vital necessities, into independent Slav states. We Germans would have gone far in March if we had wanted to lay down the same absurd conditions! However, the revolution does not allow conditions to be dictated to it. Either one is a revolutionary and accepts the consequences of the revolution, whatever they may be, or one is thrown into the arms of the counter revolution and is one morning to be found arm in arm with Nicholas and Windiscgratz, perhaps entirely unknowingly and unwillingly.³³

The supermarxists are said to be pathological cases, that is, people who identify with something which does not even exist: a universal proletarian nation. As I said revolutionary Marxists do not start from something which does not even exist. To be a Marxist is to be a materialist, and a materialist can only analyze from concrete reality not from things which are "entertained" or "envisioned". Let visionaries engage in that kind of exercise.

And if the Marxism of J. Saul is of the kind that is amenable and acceptable to Agyeman let it be, but whatever the revolutionary practice of Saul is, it has not, so far, matched the revolutionary experience of the Mozambiquan comrades who strongly reaffirmed that:

Theories such as negritude and African authenticity are nothing more than theories of the dominant classes of neo-colonialism, of imperialism. Mozambiquan anti-imperialist and anti-neocolonialist culture affirms itself through a violent rupture with these racists bour-

geois and therefore reactionary theories. They are theories aimed only at diverting the working masses from the true objectives of their struggle and to serve the new exploiters, despite their being historically unmasked.34

Comrade Simbine Machel who spoke these words knew what she was talking about for the simple reason that it is precisely these theories of African authenticity and various brands of Pan-Africanism that are being broadcast from Southern Rhodesia with the direct aim of instilling doubts and suspicions among the listeners in Mozambique. Whether the source of these broadcasts is the C.I.A. or the White Regime itself is irrelevant. What these broadcasts show is that monopoly capital will resort to all available tactics in order to reverse the victories of the masses. The ideologues of monopoly capital in Africa are using precisely the kind of argument that is advanced in Agyeman's paper. He may react and say that he is no part to that kind of neo-colonial solution, but as I have shown throughout this reply; that is where it is leading to. Imamu Baraka has even gone further in his denunciation of the myth of Black capitalism in the USA: The target of his flaming pen is the black mayor of Newark, New Jersey, Ken Gibson:

He had called the dogs out. And at the same time, even as the people were getting beat, he was meeting with his stooges to put together a puppet leadership who would say be cool, praise neocolonialist Ken Gibson, and your sorrows will vanish. Columbus Homes will become a mansion. Your holey shoes will become two Mercedes Benzes. Your unemployed brothers and sisters stockbrokers in a venture yet to raise its head called puerto Rican capitalism. You heard a black capitalism aintchu?35

and further down:

Dig that. How neo-colonialism works. To get a black face to put on the black shirt and be the first nigger Hitler in the land.36

It does not require any sense of imagination to extrapolate and see that the possibility of Imperialism imposing a Hitler in Mozambique is not far fetched. Look at Chile. And one of the ideological lines that is being used from the bastion of white racists in order to destabilize the Mozambiquan regime is that of Pan-Africanist authenticity.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 G. Padmore, Pan-Africanism or Communist, Anchor Books, Double Day and C., New York, 1972, p. 355.
- 2 L. Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin, Monthly Press, New York, 1972, p. 229. The same essay, "Marxism: Science or Revolution" has been reprinted in R. Blackburn (ed.), Ideology in Social Science, Vintage Books, New York, 1973, p. 370.
- 3 Message to the 24th Session of the Liberation Committee of the OAU, Dar es Salaam, 8-14th January 1975 as reproduced in Race and Class, XVI, 4, (1975), p. 408.
- 4 Ibid., p. 408.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 406-7.
- 6 L. Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin, p. 236.
- 7 Machel, Message to the 24th Session ... Op. cit., p. 409.
- 8 S. Machel, Sowing the Seeds of Revolution, p. 64. This particular interview also appeared in the Sunday News (Dar es Salaam, April 2, 1972).
- 9 This is the famous myth of "Black capitalism is beautiful". For whom? The ruling class, of course. On this see Toussaint, "Black Bankers -- Friends or Enemies of Liberation?" The African Communist 64, 1st quarter 1976, pp. 63-74.
- 10 K. Marx and F. Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 2, p. 277.
- 11 Shlomo Avineri, (ed.) K. Marx on Colonialism and Modernization, p. 80.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 94-5
13. F. Fanon, Toward the African Revolution, Grove Press; New York, 1967, p. 139.
- 14 A. Davis, "How I became a Communist", The African Communist 61, 1975, p. 34.
- 15 Ibid., p. 35.
- 16 E. Ofari, "Marxism, Nationalism and Black Liberation", Monthly Review, March 1971, p. 20.
- 17 Ibid., p. 33.
- 18 W.E.B. Dubois, Autobiography, International Publishers, New York, 1968, third printing, 1971, pp. 57-9.
- 19 Ibid., p. 289.
- 20 Ibid., p. 306. For those who may think that Dubois is an exception they may wish to read the impressions of Langston Hughes when he travelled to Russia in the twenties. See the second part of his autobiography: I wonder as I wander, Hill and Wang, New York,
- 21 A. Nwafor, "Liberation and Pan-Africanism", Monthly Review, November 1973, p. 21.

- 22 Imamu Baraka, "Revolutionary Culture and Future of Pan-African Culture", (mimeo), Paper presented at the 6th Pan-African Congress June 19-27, Dar es Salaam.
- 23 A. Cabral, Revolution in Guinea, Selected Texts, Monthly Press, New York, 1972, p. 74.
- 24 Ibid., p. 75.
- 25 A. Nwafor, Introduction to G. Padmore's Pan-Africanism or Communism, Op. cit., p. xxxvii.
- 26 Dettes de Guerre, pp; 128-9, as quoted from C. Young, Politics in the Congo, Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 77.
- 27 A quote attributed to Rodney in Imamu Baraka's paper cited above, p. 6.
- 28 A. Cabral, L'Arme de la Theorie, Maspéro, Paris, 1975, p. 352.
- 29 K. Marx and F. Engels, The German Ideology, International Publishers, New York, eighth printing, 1969, p. 39.
- 30 G. Simbine Machel, "Opening Address" - UNESCO Conference on Social Structure Revolutionary Change and Culture - Maputo, July 19-22, 1976, (mimeo).
- 31 F. Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism", Neue Rheinische Zeitung, 15th February 1849, as quoted from D. Fernbach (ed.), The Revolutions of 1848, Pelican Marx Library, London, 1973, pp. 228-9.
- 32 Ibid., p. 229.
- 33 Ibid., p. 244.
- 34 G. Simbine Machel, Op. cit.
- 35 Imamu Baraka, "Newark Seven Years Later", Monthly Review, January 1975, p. 22.
- 36 Ibid., p. 23.