

# **THINKING THROUGH AFRICAN HISTORY**

**In the spirit of 1957**

**Never Claiming Easy Victories (A Calbral)**

(DRAFT NOT FOR CITATION)<sup>1</sup>

by

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## **1. Antagonic and non antagonic contexts**

Between now and 2011 (and 2025), we shall have the opportunity to commemorate many fifty year anniversaries. From the Independence of Sudan (1956), Ghana (1957) to the assassination of Patrice Emery Lumumba (January 17 1961). By 2023-5, it will be the turn of Guinea Bissau, Cabo Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe, Angola and Mozambique to look back at 50 years of Independence. By 2030, we are being forwarned by the US government that it is embarking on a modernization of its nuclear program. Would it be malicious speculation to ask oneself if 2033 will be celebrated with joy as the 100 year anniversary of Hitler's access to power in Germany? It is not, however, malicious, to point out that humanity is closer to self-destruction today than it has ever been in the last 500 years. This essay would like to offer a way of rethinking how this march to madness and destruction can be understood, stopped and reversed. While operating within an apparently dominant context, the reality is much more complex, more like facing a

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<sup>1</sup> This is a very preliminary draft. I have tried to organize it as best I could. The problematization around the State, the Nation is part of an ongoing discussion with Michael Neocosmos and Ernest Wamba dia Wamba. In this paper, on the question of the state, as will be clear, I have not been able to bring together the various strands into a coherent whole. My apologies to the readers and to my friends Neocosmos and Wamba dia Wamba.

crossroad where issues/solutions will not be easily sorted out. And most certainly not by simply focusing on the dominant context, or only on victories. On October 15 1987, Thomas Sankara, a spirit straight out of Bandung 1955 and Ghana 1957, was assassinated. In the face of the relentless attempts to make Africans afraid or ashamed of their own histories, resilient fidelity to solidarity, equality, fraternity, justice will, sooner or later generate a history to be proud of, not just in Africa.

Given the history of the African Continent, 50 years are not only too short, but they might also end up blocking from view some of the very highlights without which, Africans could face greater difficulties understanding where they come from and where they are headed to. This 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary should be an opportunity for re-thinking the history of Africa, the history of emancipation far beyond the historical and geographical boundaries we have been accustomed to. What has been the impact of Africans in the last 500 years on the history of humanity? Given how Africans have tended to maim themselves and their memory, should one not use a wide angle lens (500 years) rather than a narrow one. With the former, it will be possible to see people, individuals, moments, processes which we would not even guess, using only the latter. In addition, one should resist the danger of looking at that history only through its last layer, especially in a context dominated by sayings which consider “history” as tantamount to having been relegated to the dump.<sup>2</sup>

Just to make sure there is no misunderstanding, the centrality of understanding African history freed from its ideological shackles is crucial not just for Africa, but for the rest of the world. If one can agree that resistance (against all forms of oppression) has been at the core of the spirit of humanity (and therefore of the spirit of 1957), then one should resist the attempts to accept a history of Africa presented as if its last sediment is the one according to which everything else shall be seen and understood.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Obviously, this focus on the last 500 years does not mean that this latter period is more important than anything that has happened before.

<sup>3</sup> Concerning the last 500 years, it has been clear that every phase of the encounter between Europe and Africa has been recounted from the victor’s perspective, and in a manner which ensured that each layer of the previous sediment/phase is seen and understood from that perspective. This has meant that the occasional victory (abolition of

We are living under a system which has proclaimed itself as the only workable one.<sup>4</sup> Globalization has assumed the mantle of Civilization as it was used at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The message is hammered everyday in multiple ways: there is no life outside of submission to globalization, The Market has been elevated to a godlike force of law. It is not possible to live, we are told, unless one joins the global economy, an economy whose foundations were built by way of wiping out countless members of the human species. The list is too long here to mention, but someday, all over the Planet, these unknown heroines and heroes shall be remembered and permanently honored through Monuments to The Unknown Humans. From humans to humans, there can be no simpler way of demonstrating fidelity. In order to do this there shall be no need to ask for permission to anybody, any structure, especially any structure dependent on the vagaries of the so-called Market. Should one be surprised today to see that the unpredictability of the Market has been mirrored by the unpredictability of certain states, from the weakest (sometimes non existing ones, “disappeared”) to the so-called strongest? Could it be that the status of “rogue” states came about because they responded favorably and within its context to the efforts made to make them friendlier and friendlier to the Market Forces.<sup>5</sup>

As we take stock of the spirit of 1957, it is crucial to try and remember some of the probable or possible connections or roots which did lead to what happened in 1957 in Ghana and in other parts of Africa and the world. I hope that by the end of this essay it will be clear why this is being done. The choices or selections have been guided by

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slavery, end of colonial rule, end of underdevelopment, and –lately—the end of poverty) of the oppressed gets reordered to fit the strategic sedimentation. It also helps to understand why there is reluctance to stir this sedimented history. Yet, as shall be seen, stirring the sediment is the only way to move toward cleansing and healing.

<sup>4</sup> True, with growing signs of awareness that it is no longer true.

<sup>5</sup> This may seem far fetched, but it is not if one looks at the process followed by Mobutu in responding to the encouragement from the Bretton Woods institutions to privatize the state.

looking for indelible emancipatory moments, and adherence to an ethic of truth.<sup>6</sup> Given these parameters, what would be the spirit of 1957?

## 2. What is the spirit of 1957?

Africa, like many other places in the world, is a world where beliefs in spirits are deeply rooted. Spirits have roots which are difficult if not impossible to encompass. If the idea is to recapture the spirit which led to the independence of Ghana in 1957, then the spirit is one characterized by emancipatory thought/thinking. Thought like spirit is beyond the physical, yet does impact the real world in ways which can be grasped.

During the last few years, the world has entered again into a period which bears similarities with previous moments of effervescence, possibilities. Moments during which, some of the most creative minds expressed themselves freely and pushed the limits of the possible beyond what was considered impossible. Yes, it does look as if we have entered the kinds of times during which Things looked like they are Falling Apart, wherever one turns: Disorganization seems to be the dominant situation: the Market, Organized Religion, So-called representative parliamentary democracy which over-represents one side over the other<sup>7</sup>. If one were to look at the historical moments when the never-ending splitting of humanity was suspended with the objective of remembering it, Bandung stands out as one such moment. That was in November 1955. But, without distracting from it, one should not forget Dien Bien Phu (May 1954)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In part, this is inspired by Alain Badiou's *Ethics: An Essay on the Consciousness of Evil*. However, this should not lead the reader to conclude that one could produce something like an ethical history of Africa.

<sup>7</sup> This is a reference to Chinua Achebe's novel (*Things Fall Apart*). But, as I argued in *Silences in African History*, it is not an endorsement of that view. In *Healers*, Ayi Kwei Armah offered a way of looking at African history more in line with the view advanced in this essay. Chaos theory has attracted growing interest of scientists across the traditional divide between science and social sciences.

<sup>8</sup> This latter victory was never accepted as such, not just by the French and its allies. The US went on to try and do what the French had failed to do and were finally defeated in 1975. This pattern of refusing to accept the victories of those who, by definition, must not win, can be seen also at work in the aftermath of 1804 in Haiti. There too, everything

Kwame Nkrumah was in Bandung and so was Gamal A. Nass'r who, less than a year later would nationalize the Suez Canal (1956). Imperial, colonial European rule clearly was in decline, even if, at the same time, other colonial powers, with the help of the US were doing all they could to delay the process, in particular in the Portuguese colonies, in South Africa. On the battle field and on the world stage, the era of colonial occupation was coming to an end in a way that slavery had done in the USA, just about a century before: those who had most benefited from it were beginning to find out that the costs of maintaining such a system was becoming too costly.

To capture what happened in Bandung, in November 1955, one only needs to glance at some of the excerpts of Nehru's speech at the conference. The most outstanding thought was the one of refusing to be aligned behind any of the big powers, at that time:

*I belong to neither and I propose to belong to neither whatever happens in the world. If we have to stand alone, we will stand by ourselves, whatever happens (and India has stood alone without any aid against a mighty Empire, the British Empire) and we propose to face all consequences. . . .*

He then went on to point out what the consequences could be and why he felt it necessary to stay away from a process which could only lead to a war which could only be worse than WWII:

*We do not agree with the communist teachings, we do not agree with the anti-communist teachings, because they are both based on wrong principles. I never challenged the right of my country to defend itself; it has to. We will defend ourselves with whatever arms and strength we have, and if we have no arms we will defend ourselves without arms. I am dead certain that no country can conquer India. Even the two great power blocs together cannot conquer India; not even the atom or the hydrogen bomb. I know what my people*

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was done so that those who had been enslaved during slavery remained so under the subsequent historical layer or sediment.

*are. But I know also that if we rely on others, whatever great powers they might be if we look to them for sustenance, then we are weak indeed. . . .*

*...But I do submit that greatness[as seen by the great powers] sometimes brings quite false values, false standards. When they begin to think in terms of military strength - whether it be the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union or the U.S.A. - then they are going away from the right track and the result of that will be that the overwhelming might of one country will conquer the world.*

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In the face of such exacerbation of military power, Nehru went on to make the case for non alignment by using it for the first time, and spelling out the rationale for such a stand.

*The inevitable result would be war. Therefore every step that takes place in reducing that area in the world which may be called the unaligned area is a dangerous step and leads to war. It reduces that objective, that balance, that outlook which other countries without military might can perhaps exercise.*

*Honorable Members laid great stress on moral force. It is with military force that we are dealing now, but I submit that moral force counts and the moral force of Asia and Africa must, in spite of the atomic and hydrogen bombs of Russia, the U.S.A. or another country, count. . . .*

*. . . Many members present here do not obviously accept the communist ideology, while some of them do. For my part I do not. I am a positive person, not an 'anti' person. I want positive good for my country and the world. Therefore, are we, the countries of Asia and Africa, devoid of any positive position except being pro-communist or anti-communist? Has it come to this, that the leaders of thought who have given religions and all kinds of things to the world have to tag on to this kind of group or that and be hangers-on of this party or the other carrying out their wishes and occasionally giving an idea? It is most degrading and humiliating to any self-respecting people or nation. It is an intolerable*

*thought to me that the great countries of Asia and Africa should come out of bondage into freedom only to degrade themselves or humiliate themselves in this way. . . .*

The words of Nehru in 1955 are still applicable to today's world, so vividly that, again it is better to hear him rather than summarize or paraphrase him. His words about war, how to avoid it, and his words about security and how to enhance it for all and not just for two or their so-called allies resonate as if they had been pronounced yesterday. The pertinence of his words with regard to how security was then understood still remain valid today.

*There is another thing: because of the present position in the world there can be aggression. If there is aggression anywhere in the world, it is bound to result in world war. It does not matter where the aggression is. If one commits the aggression there is world war.*

*I want the countries here to realize it and not to think in terms of any limitation. Today, a war however limited it may be is bound to lead to a big war. Even if tactical atomic weapons, as they are called, are used, the next step would be the use of the big atomic bomb. You cannot stop these things. In a country's life and death struggle, it is not going to stop short of this. It is not going to decide on our or anybody else's resolutions but it would engage in war, ruin and annihilation of others before it annihilates itself completely. Annihilation will result not only in the countries engaged in war, but owing to the radioactive waves which go thousands and thousands of miles it will destroy everything. That is the position. It is not an academic position; it is not a position of discussing ideologies; nor is it a position of discussing past history. It is looking at the world as it is today.*

The mentality of "evil is them and good is us" has been reinforced far beyond what it was in those days, arguably. Even with the end of the Cold War, it is clear that those who considered themselves the winners have been determined to push the same mentality: either one is with them or one is against them. In other words, the mindset according to

which there must be only one acceptable way of looking at the world, only one way of living, even if, in the process, it has become apparent to more and more people that such a way of living has in fact led to a way of dying. Under the disguise of standing for life it has been spreading submission to a way of dying.

How else should one look at the mind set which has been put in place with the onset of, and lethal maintenance of, capitalism? From the Market as a place of horror for those who were being sold and purchased as commodities, one has arrived at a time when that market has become THE Market elevated to something more powerful than a force of nature. The mindset has learned to adapt to the vagaries of the system even to the point of being fooled by it, all the while claiming to controlling it even though, to most people, the logic of its functioning is not understood. The modernization of the slave market into the current Market has been accomplished at a cost which no one has bothered to even try to calculate for the simple reason that no one tries to calculate the costs of something which is believed to have only brought benefits, and, we are told, not just to a few, but to more and more people. Or, more generically speaking, brought us modernity, an age, according to its propagandists, which has brought only good things to a growing number of people.<sup>9</sup> A message emphatically repeated recently (July 26, 2007, in Dakar, Senegal, by the President of France.<sup>10</sup>

To use the current language, the abolition of slavery created a legal and political framework to launder the benefits from one of the most horrendous genocides suffered by one part of humanity. Through this laundering, the door was opened for the next phase: colonial occupation of the very areas from where slaves had been drawn. The occupiers were not exactly the same entities. The Nation-States created structures like the

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<sup>9</sup> “people” often means NOT counting those who live in slums, the poorest of the poor.

<sup>10</sup> See his intervention at the University of Dakar at the end of July 2007 in which Africans are criticized, among many other things, for failing to enter modernity, or not embracing it with greater enthusiasm. Why should Africans or any group, socially, economically, politically or religiously defined adhere to something called modernity when they have bore the brunt of its growth?

Chartered Companies (also known as Concession Companies) to open up the geographical areas under the banner of bringing civilization.

By 1957, the colonial powers had just come off WW II and had put in place political and economic institutions (the UN and all of its ancillary structures, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). Through the UN the newly independent countries (India in 1947) were given the false hope that there was at least one arena where their voice would have the same weight as any of the others. The colonial powers and their biggest ally, the USA, were to show, over time, that such equality would not be tolerated. This latter lesson does not seem to have been learned. Worse, in too many cases, the African governments have treated their own populations in the same manner, or, at times, worse than the departing colonial powers.<sup>11</sup> From the creation of the UN to Bandung, one can see at work the context of the colonial powers trying to reassert itself and on the other the leaders of the world who are trying hard to state that there is another way of living together. Their focus was on the most visible dangers: nuclear war and annihilation of humanity. Things do not seem to have changed much, since. With regard to the colonial powers, they have learned too slowly maybe that their own survival will depend on whether they are willing to listen, seriously, in solidarity, to their former victims who have been trying to resist The Market and its ancillary structures, which include the State. Can any state, capitalist or communist resist The Market? Is it possible to see through Nehru's words a deeper warning?

### **3. Hiroshima/Nagasaki, the Atomic Bomb and the Cold War<sup>12</sup>**

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<sup>11</sup> Those who are in power or close to state power try their best to point out that, when all is said and done, Africa is actually doing much better than most would think. Poverty and corruption are not such big problems they argue. They go further: the dynamic of change (away from poverty) is actually positive, even if the statistics paint another picture. There are others who encourage everyone to aim to become rich.

<sup>12</sup> The power unleashed by the atomic bombs dwarfed and still does any of the political structures put in place until today. There is a connection between the mindset leading to slavery and later on to building the bomb. It came from the growth of a capitalist system, today encapsulated by The Market. Capitalism is to economics what nuclear power is to physics: neither is tamable. To this day, it can be said that no structure has

The manner in which WWII ended was again reminiscent of how slavery ended: it had to come to an end to the advantage of the USA, and its closest allies. The framework of how that war came to an end is worth remembering: the US was, at the time, the sole user of the atomic bomb. It was also the one whose approval was determinant in the creation of the State of Israel in the Middle East and Apartheid in Africa, both in 1948. The creation of the UN in 1945, the *Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948 were all part of the arrival of a new world, but also one which had to be controlled by those who had most benefited from colonial occupation.

The baton of imperial power was changing hands, but the system which was born under slavery had been reinforced by allowing or inciting even some former colonized (potential and future) leaders to share the spoils of colonial rule.

Bandung was a response to a framing of the world which was unacceptable. Bandung is what made possible Ghana 1957, Bandung is what made possible the birth of nationalist movements in Africa and Asia, but at the same time, the colonial powers, out of WWII, had learned that the exacerbation of nationalism could only prepare the ground for the next war. Moving away from it eventually led to the birth of the EU. Thinkers as diverse as Marcus Garvey, WEB Du Bois, George Padmore, C.L.R. James, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Cheikh Anta Diop tried, in the spirit of Bandung, to push in the direction of pan-africanism and warn against the dangers of narrow nationalism. With little success.

At the same time that nationalist movements were winning what came to be known as national anthem and flag Independence, its short comings immediately became visible, most notably, possibly, in the DR Congo under Lumumba.

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been erected to deal, once and for all, with the combined rise of the market and its most lethal enforcing instrument: nuclear power.

Within months of the independence celebrations of June 30, 1960, Prime Minister Patrice E. Lumumba and the Congolese people found themselves the most prominent targets of the refusal by the former colonial power and its allies to accept the idea that the peoples of the world could live in peace and move away, once and for all, from the practices, from the mentality which had stated that colonial rule was acceptable and that the benefits and consequences of its gains had to remain firmly, and unquestionably, in the hands of those who had most benefited from them. Patrice Lumumba's audacity was to have stated as unequivocally as he could that the practices of colonial rule were too barbaric to be acceptable by anyone, including the former colonial masters.<sup>13</sup> The virulence with which he was, first removed from power, then killed and then disposed of in an acid bath, certainly stands out as the most outrageous attempt to let the Congolese people know what would happen to anyone who dared challenging the hegemonic power of informally or formally organized capital.<sup>14</sup>

Lumumba met with Nkrumah in 1958 and thanks to that meeting shared a vision of the possible world as first broached in Bandung and then implemented with the independence of Ghana in 1957. One of the questions which must be raised is what happened to the spirit of 1957, as rooted in Bandung? The tragedy of Lumumba was not just a personal one. He knew that –and said as much-- but what we shall never know is what went through his mind. We do know from his last letter to Pauline, his wife, that he was convinced that, sooner or later, the DR Congo and Africa were going to learn and teach a history which was not written or taught from Washington, Paris or London. At some point, when exactly, it is hard to tell, it must have been clear to Lumumba that it did not matter how well he reasoned with President Kasa Vubu, with his colleagues, with the Belgians, he might as well have been on death row. It must have occurred to him that the best thing he could do was to do the best he could under the circumstances so that, at

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<sup>13</sup> In various speeches, writings, Lumumba made reference to the Enlightenment, to Christianity as if to say (and at times he did wonder specifically) how can people who call themselves Christians treat others the way they do.

<sup>14</sup> Yves Bénot, along with Luis Lopez Alvarez's *Lumumba ou l'Afrique frustrée*, on whom he relied, published (in 1989) one of the few books which unequivocally dissected how Lumumba and his followers were demonized by the Western powers.

least, for the future generations, he would stand out as an example of what emancipatory politics are about, how to build a Congolese subject immersed in, and seized by an ethic of truth. It could be argued that, to a certain degree, that stand did impact Africa and Africans. Not just because of the demonstrations which erupted all over the world upon learning of his death. As we know from the biographies of participants and leaders of the liberation movements in the former Portuguese colonies and in South Africa, Lumumba did leave an indelible mark. How do we sort out that impact, not just on the Congolese and African people, but also, possibly more importantly, on the Europeans, the Belgians and the Americans? Whether they are related or not to the small number of people who decided that Lumumba and the spirit he incarnated must, by all means, be gotten rid of, for ever.

Thirty years after 1957, as already mentioned, in October 1987, another visionary emancipatory leader was assassinated in Burkina Fasso. Almost as if to serve as a reminder of what would happen to any leader interested in daring to side with the idea of transforming the conditions under which the Wretched of the Earth have to live under. Fifty years later, the DR Congo has not recovered from the massive destruction it has suffered. Its political leadership, at least the one currently in the top positions of the State, does not seem to show any interest in recovering from the destruction. Maybe a more appropriate question might be how does one recover, or heal, from such a massive deep wound. So deep that the Native Americans refer to it as the Soul Wound<sup>15</sup>

#### **4. Looking at DRC and Saint-Domingue/Haiti**

The Soul Wound takes us back not just to Native Americans, but to Amerindians, to Arawacks, to the enslaved people of Saint Domingue who decided that slavery could not possibly be acceptable to any human being. To be comprehended fully, the Soul Wound must be understood to have maimed all living beings, including those who were inflicting the wounds. If the spirit of 1957 can be seen as emancipatory, its nemesis was enslavement. As it can now be seen more clearly than ever before, more clearly than in

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<sup>15</sup> See Eduardo Duran, *Soul Wound*.

1957, certainly, enslavement of the spirit has remained the hallmark of the system born out of the industrialization of slavery, and it has been carried on, unabated, even when (one is tempted to say especially after) the so-called abolition of Atlantic/oriental slavery. At the risk of being repetitious, the enslaved were far ahead of the slave masters on the immorality of the system, and leaders like Lumumba and Sankara were far ahead on the issues of corruption, governance and impunity than today's NGOs, or the UN and the G8 and their allies. The narrative ordered from the latter since the Enlightenment is that emancipation from corruption, good governance, etc. can only come from Europe.

As under slavery, so today, under the iron heel of capitalism: the victims of this continuous system have to be presented as the only ones to be blamed for their situation. Hegemonic thought (*la pensée unique*), the only acceptable thought, has become so entrenched that its hegemonic (dare we say demonic?) character is not even guessed at let alone hypothesized as a possibility.<sup>16</sup> The assumption is that it has brought only blessings. Provided that those who are reluctant to join, push aside or erase the only thing they can see and remember from their own history, namely destruction and maiming, as well as their willingness and capacity to resist. If, while examining all of the reverberations of the spirit of 1957, we were to forget all of the roots which made that spirit possible, then we shall run the danger of preventing ourselves from seeing how did something so emancipatory lead to something which is almost its exact opposite (the replica of what the enslavers, the colonizers wanted to happen) of what had been fought for?<sup>17</sup> If only schematically, it is worth recalling some of the resisters, not so much for their own sake, but because in the process of resisting, they also knew that they had to create new types of relation away from what they had known. Although they may not have thought in terms of states, it is arguable that the question of a state must have been

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<sup>16</sup> How entrenched it has become can easily be seen in the manner that embedded journalists were demonized at the beginning of the war in Iraq, as opposed to those journalists who refused to be part of the invading troops. The issue of embeddedness did not first appear with the war in Iraq. Its roots go back, at least, as far back as the industrialization of slavery.

<sup>17</sup> Many South Africans, especially among the poor, the Shackdwellers of Durban, Cape Town and other places, not only ask themselves that question, but have also organized to challenge Mbeki's administration on how it has treated them. See [www](http://www).

on their minds.<sup>18</sup> How their efforts are narrated, how one decides what is narrated could help bring out more clearly what they were trying to do, as well as uncovering how fidelity to those emancipatory events has been maintained.<sup>19</sup>

In 1757, in Haiti, a man named Makandal (sometimes spelled Mackandal) was finally captured by the slave and plantation owners and burned at the stake. His activities against the latter had reached among his companions a legendary status. On July 2, 1706, a woman from a ruling family in the Kongo Kingdom, named Kimpa Vita (also known as Dona Beatriz) had also been burned at the stake for having denounced the Kongo King for allowing the slave raiders/traders to carry on with their activities, with impunity. She, in turn, was denounced by the Capuchin missionaries (from Italy at the time) as a heretic. They lobbied the king for her to be burned at the stake. These examples are being mentioned not just as icons of resistance or as proofs that Africans did understand the meaning of the words equality, liberty and fraternity. Rather it is to stress that, indeed, the enslaved were bound to have understood long before the philosophers of the Enlightenment or those who overtook the Bastille in Paris, the meanings of those famous words. More than the words: that their implementation would call for a structure (a state?) more in tune with the needs of the producers and reproducers of the well being of all the people.<sup>20</sup>

The theorizations built around various ideologies, whether under the Enlightenment or under any of its inherited variations on the left or on the right must be seen in the context of the larger lessons sent by those who from the Kongo, to Palmares (in Brazil), to Saint Domingue to Wounded Knee (just to mention in a symbolic fashion some of the most

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<sup>18</sup> This question of the state, or more precisely, how to bring about an emancipatory state has been at the centre of discussions between Michael Neocosmos, Ernest Wamba dia Wamba and myself.

<sup>19</sup> For example, in Brazil, Candomblé and the religious side of resistance seems to be more acceptable than the histories of Quilombos. In Haiti, both sides (resistance and religion) have been fused under voodoo.

<sup>20</sup> This is what could be found in common between all those figures in the Continent and beyond as well as in the various insurrections, from 1789, through 1792-94, the Paris Commune, etc. And most recently, with the Zapatistas.

memorable stations of the never ending saga of human emancipation), namely that industrialization of slavery was simply unacceptable by any human being, enslaver or enslaved.<sup>21</sup>

While that was made clear, the consequences of benefiting from such a crime have always been fudged, to say the least. Instead, what one sees from the same stations mentioned above, and further, is the hammering of the message that the only way to live today is to accept the triumph of a process which has been criminal beyond anything imagined by humanity. Whenever there appeared the possibility of reverting the process, the syndrome of abolition (of slavery, of colonial rule, of apartheid) came to the rescue, with the growing exception of Nature.

Nature is uncompromising in ways that human beings who are trespassing its principles are now being brought to heed its dire warnings of worse disasters and consequences of what has so far transpired. The tragedy, all along, it should be stressed, has been the refusal to heed the warning signs sent by other humans. Long before sophisticated instruments came along, there were people living in the Equatorial and Tropical forests of all the continents and who kept warning those who were dismantling the forests that it would ultimately lead to disaster.<sup>22</sup>

The picture of the spirit of 1957 is a complicated one, especially if one then brings in what happened in Haiti 200 years after Mackandal had been burned: Haiti saw the rise, in 1957, of Papa Doc, Henry Duvalier. For Haiti, he could be seen as a sort of precursor of Mobutu's ideology of authenticity. One could try to imagine the possibilities of what would have happened (in the DR Congo) had Aristide arrived in 1957 instead of half a century later.

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<sup>21</sup>It should be noted that, within the Catholic church, the disagreement at the highest level could not be solved despite the attempt of having the cases argued (for the King of Spain) in Valladolid by Las Casas and Sepulveda.

<sup>22</sup>Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* tragically fails to bring this point out. Presumably, such a dire documentary had to have a Hollywood-type ending if its objective was to receive accolades from the film industry, and, now, from the Nobel Committee.

## 5. What was/is at stake?

It has been clear and it is getting clearer and clearer with each passing day that the days of the US hegemony are inexorably coming to an end. As surely as the days of any preceding empire, but the equation to be resolved is still the same: will this end follow the previous pattern, namely, abolition style, by making sure that nothing much shall change with regard to the economic, financial and political structures of exploitation and oppression? Of course, a cogent argument could be made to show that things are getting worse.

Is it possible that, this time around, the crisis in which capitalism has entered shall lead some of the emancipatory forces to see possibilities which were not present before, and act on them, this time without letting go, in the spirit of fidelity to truths brought out by the likes of Mackandal, Kimpa Vita (Kongo), Boukman, Toussaint-L'Ouverture, Zumbi (in Palmares, Brazil) and thousands of others who have remained anonymous? Is it possible that, worldwide, we are on the threshold of something that has never been witnessed before? The importance of this question cannot be underestimated because, how it is answered shall also most likely determine the resolution of the equation once posed by Frantz Fanon, namely that what is at stake is the future of humanity, not which ideology shall win or lose the battle for world supremacy.

We are again facing something similar to previous situations in which those who are known to be the leaders are convinced that nothing much shall change in the foreseeable future. It happened with the enslaved population in Haiti, with Dien Bien Phu, with the Suez Canal, with the end of Portuguese colonial rule, with the end of apartheid in South Africa. From a global perspective, these unpredictable changes, as big as they were, now look more like small tremors announcing what is now slowly, but irreversibly unfolding.

And despite the appearances to the contrary, despite the efforts of some who are still thinking in terms which have been tried and failed, there are other long lasting forces

which have always believed that it is possible to live in harmony with everyone and with nature. In a world ruled by the mighty, can a weak, can a child really invent anything which might make the mighty change their minds? Can a child who has been violated in any of the innumerable and horrific ways, be listened to by the perpetrator of such a crime? Would such a person have the sense of just suspending the world in which he lives, just long enough so that he might realize the immensity of his crime and ask for forgiveness?<sup>23</sup>

Isn't the spirit of 1957 replete with these kinds of imaginary situations in which the victim has shown that the only way to move forward is to come to terms with the reality, face it in order to heal from it? Unfortunately the perpetrators of such horrendous crimes prefer to see themselves as the only possible saviors, by pretending that the system is basically sound and can be salvaged by humanitarian interventions and an International Criminal Court which will scapegoat the small fry.<sup>24</sup>

Faced by something which is undeniably evil, the perpetrator is faced with 2 options:

- not face the reality, that is pretend that the horror is not there;
- convince himself that there was no other option but resorting to the only violence which would force the victim to submit;

Indeed, the structure of production and reproduction of historical knowledge, meaning the rules which govern the state archives and how they are opened to the public illustrate

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<sup>23</sup> From books like Kourouma's *Allah is Not Obligated*, it is not difficult to conclude that capital's emancipatory virtues as envisaged by K. Marx have broken more than the links mentioned by Marx. At the same time though, it is arguable that Kourouma has gone to the other extreme, namely painting a picture in which no one, absolutely no one appears on the scene with redeeming virtues. Surely, as Armah would argue, there are still healers around.

<sup>24</sup> If any proof is necessary, just compare the ways in which the bi-centenaries of 1804 in Haiti and 1807 in London, were celebrated. In addition, when the real stories of what happened to the Mau Mau (in Kenya) or to the Herrero (in Namibia), decades have passed and the attitude becomes one of letting bygones be bygones.

both of the above options.<sup>25</sup> Now and then, one also comes across candid admissions, such as the one allegedly made by Churchill upon hearing on how the R.A.F. had bombed the civilian population in one of its infamous pacification campaigns begged to be spared the statistics and only to be shown the results. What happens, as has so often been the case, with the lost causes and their archives, oral or written? Or, more precisely, when those who are programmed to lose, but managed to win, if only briefly?<sup>26</sup>

## 6. Haiti and *Quilombo de Palmares*<sup>27</sup>

In almost any reading of the history of Haiti, at least of the kind which highlights the victory of 1804, one is reminded of the fact that it was the first black republic. The highlight ends up overshadowing the multiple and varied histories of resistance, including one of the most astounding ones, namely the history of Palmares and the attempt of the slaves to build a state which sought to reproduce the values held by those who had refused to accept enslavement.

Among the obstacles to a proper understanding of what Palmares was, is how social sciences, anthropology, history, religion combined to obscure what the citizens of Palmares did really attempt. The idea that people who had been enslaved could possibly have discovered among themselves another way of creating a state structure more in tune

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<sup>25</sup> It is only recently (more than 50 years after the slaughter) that the written archives related to Mau Mau have been open to the public

<sup>26</sup> In *Silences in African History: Between the Syndromes of Discovery and Abolition*, I answered partially by pointing out the real meaning of Trevor-Roper's famous quote about the non existence of African History. His point was not so much (as most critics seem to have understood) that there was no African history, but that, from the point of view of the British empire, and its subsequent laundered version, everything would be done to ensure that no winning history of Africa emerge. So far, arguably and sadly, he has been right.

<sup>27</sup> The phenomenon referred to here is not just what happened in Palmares, but the various instances of resistance against slavery which took the generic form of *Quilombos*.

with what they had achieved , was unthinkable, impossible. By definition, former slaves could not possibly be ahead of the slave owners, in the realm reserved for the latter.<sup>28</sup>

Without wishing to be too fatalistic, at times it does look as if long before they had been born, the fates of Lumumba, Nkrumah, Moumié, Um Nyobe, Thomas Sankara and so many other emancipatory figures had been sealed by how the system had organized itself, so that its economic and political structures did not suffer major transformations. This is not to say that whatever is pre-written shall happen as predicted, but it is meant to be a reminder that if another way of living, of being is going to assert itself, then it should be doubly aware of some of the systemic obstacles.

To put it differently. By the end of colonial rule (in Ghana in 1957), the former colonial powers were intent on making sure that no post-colonial state had the kind of power for its own autonomy which the colony actually exercised over its subjects. This understanding was, in part, what led the leaders of the liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau, Cabo-Verde, Angola, São Tomé, Moçambique to organize themselves as a way of ensuring that the transition to post-colonial rule did not follow in the foot steps of the negotiated transitions.

On reflection, it could also be argued that few were those who not only understood the consequences of such an understanding, even fewer were those who were willing to push it to its ultimate consequences, and spell it out. At the theoretical level only Frantz Fanon

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<sup>28</sup> This mindset has continued and can be seen at work wherever colonial rule left its mark. For example, in South Africa, in order to prevent a so-called blood bath, apartheid and its allies tried to slow down the process of change because the assumption was that the blacks would do to the whites what the latter had done to them, but only worse. Once, with the freeing of Nelson Mandela, the predictions were proved wrong, the process of freezing post-apartheid ensured that as much as possible of the benefits and consequences of the apartheid regime were kept in place. The TRC could have been something completely different in healing terms had it been freed from the shackles of the post-apartheid state, by then run by the African National Congress. The ANC leadership ended up being trapped into an understanding of history which prevented the emergence of a healing process freed from state interference. All of the written and unwritten agreements were meant to ensure that a post-apartheid state did not diverge to drastically from what its predecessor was.

and Amilcar Cabral did. With the latter stating that the only thing the colonized petty bourgeoisie could do was to commit suicide as a class. This does not mean that others, along the way, did not articulate a similar kind of thinking. Quite the contrary: as can be seen through the current awakenings not only in Latin America, but also among social groups in various continents whose silence and accommodation to the dominant system had been considered as submission. Indeed, if anything has been learned over the past 50 years, it should be the cautionary warning that just because a given people has not expressed (say, in a written form) its emancipatory thinking, such thinking has therefore never existed.

The combined histories of all the former Portuguese colonies can be said to have proved the impossibility of creating an autonomous state and, at the same time, think that such a project could survive under the global dominance of capitalism. The single exception of Cuba would deserve a whole paper.

The way in which Native Americans and Africans looked at humans (not just themselves) has always been an inclusive, harmonious way. Africans and Native Americans see themselves as part of Nature. As more and more voices are beginning to understand that the capitalist genocidal mentality (CGM) has been at the root of the destruction of the Planet, more and more people are willing to listen to other voices, especially if these voices have never benefited from the destructive process, and, because of their history, do not intend just to speak up in order to take over. In the long history of resistance to the CGM, more and more resisters are beginning to understand the necessity to join together in order to create a different mindset, one which will ensure a definitive rupture with the currently dominant one while, at the same time, creating a basis for building a world characterized more by principles of solidarity than by principles imposed by charity.

Any given society generates values which over time become the source of inspiration, at all times, whether in war or peace. Such deep seated values are usually inculcated by resorting to formal and informal methods. For Africa, one of the values which can be argued to exist in almost all societies is solidarity. In all the instances of insurrection against enslavement, the resisters did try to think through, as well as bring about

structures (states?) which would be responsive to the necessity to build different ways of being, of living, of producing and reproducing the well being of everyone, of making sure that the distribution of such well being did not violate the vary values which made possible the victories against enslavement mentality.

## **7. Dissecting our history without fear and refusing to claim easy victories**

In the conclusion of his book on Lumumba's life and death, Yves Bénot quotes Luis Lopez asking himself what other big leaders of the day (e.g. de Gaulle, Eisenhower) would have done had they been in Lumumba's shoes, and had been faced with the withering hostility he encountered?<sup>29</sup> At one level the hypothetical question is irrelevant, but at another level it is highly relevant if one is willing to look at word history as having gone badly awry from quite a long time ago, but certainly from the so-called days of discoveries. It is not irrelevant to ask oneself what could the world be today if it had not been run under the principle of competitiveness as the best way of organizing economic, social and political relations between segments of humanity and between humanity and nature.

Through the twin syndrome of discovery and abolition we are constantly reminded, and not just by brutal force, violence and other softer modes of enforcing submission, that the weak, the Africans who came out of slavery or colonial rule, cannot by definition discover anything, including how to resolve the contradiction between the never ending desire of capital to force everything into its submission and the never ending desire of the living/being for emancipation.

How does one refuse the grammar of history as recounted by those who want to make sure that history is always written according to the rules of the winners? If one looks

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<sup>29</sup> Bénot, Yves. *La mort de Lumumba ou la tragédie congolaise*, Editions Chaka. Paris. 1989, pp. 179-80, citing Luis Lopez Alvarez, *Lumumba ou l'Afrique frustrée*. Paris. 1964. pp. 121-2.

back at our multiple story telling attempts, one will find that trying to tell the history of resistance away from the existing grammars (i.e. the dominant ones and the ones trying to throw away the dominant ones), one will find people, groups which did try to do that, but like the history of Haiti, there is something which, somehow seems to also encourage to move away from what was tried and did not work. Ironically, why and how it did not work is often part of the story telling of the ones who, absolutely, want to make sure that the other way does not get to be known. This section shall focus on a part of the history which is part of the spirit of 1957, but which, at the same time, most people would rather not talk about. Namely, the part that liberation movements as a whole would rather not divulge or even discuss because such a discussion would tarnish the image of the winner. An image which must conform to the ideal projected by the self-proclaimed discoverers/abolitionists. It is this contortion which, in the end, has been extremely corrosive of emancipatory politics as envisioned by Liberation Movements, and as best synthesized by Amilcar Cabral when he pointed out that the only solution for a colonial petty bourgeoisie aiming to lead a liberated continent was to commit class suicide, that is to say, to stop being at the service of the forces seeking to reproduce the colonial project without the original colonizers.<sup>30</sup>

One of the legacies of colonial rule as illustrated by globalization is to have created and consolidated an understanding of Africa as, on the one hand, a provider of raw materials or resources, and on the other, of a continent incapable to think for itself. The devastation created by this kind of reality meant to facilitate and reproduce a continent submitted to predatory forces has not been measured. The collapse of the Soviet Union has further reinforced the idea that no system can be better than capitalism and the mindset nurtured by it. The temptation to let go and accept this kind of *fait accompli* must be resisted. If only for the following reason: a crime can never become, by virtue of the passing of time, its opposite. Evil cannot become its opposite simply because more and more people have accepted the propaganda that it is not. Yet, one of the characteristics of the times under which we are living is the relentless attempt by the

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<sup>30</sup> Every time one mentions Cabral, one should also think of Sankara because the latter carried on from where Cabral left.

owners of globalization to keep insisting on cleansing the historical record. It is as if the same owners of the system are trying to launder evil into its opposite. No matter how hard it is tried, evil cannot be laundered into good.

These laundering exercises will continue. After all, we do live in the era of global corruption, brought about by the commoditization of everything, including consciences. In the end humans are like nature in its resistance to the predatory activities of anti-nature, anti-life systems. Nature, however, is much less compromising than humans, in its never ending resistance. From what happened in the Quilombos or Haiti, and what has continued to happen, one should remember that resisting a system without relying on its own value system is the only victory which shall bring about a lasting global transformation from the current triumphalism. And so, the battle against laundering humanity into something which is less and less recognizably so, must be joined. Would it be illogical to suggest that it be led by those who have been treated for longer than any other segments as not being part of humanity?

### **8. How many (ideological) lines are there to healing humanity?**

All of the liberation movements went through crises and came out of them stronger or weaker. The issue here is not so much to revisit the validity or not of the crises, but to revisit them as one of the obligatory paths toward healing as a whole. On February 3, 1969, Eduardo Mondlane was killed by a parcel bomb. To some his assassination was made possible because of the internal fighting which was then going on in Frelimo. Ideologically, it later came to be known as the struggle between the two lines, opposing on one side (the revolutionary line) Mondlane, Samora Machel, Marcellino dos Santos, Joaquim Chissano, etc. and on the other (the reactionary line) Uria Simango, Nkavandame, etc. More than thirty years later, Frelimo is still in power, but it would be difficult for anyone to pretend, today, that the current leadership of Frelimo could be

described as revolutionary. The re-writing of Felimo history, and, by the same token, of Mozambican history has begun along new ideological fault lines.<sup>31</sup>

Whichever form is taken by this manifestation of post-Cold War vengeance, one should not be distracted by the larger picture, one which has been a constant for all struggles against oppression and exploitation: namely the severe punishment which has been inflicted on people who have dared to free themselves. It has happened to the Africans who were taken to the Americas, to those who freed themselves in Haiti, to the Native Americans who tried to retain sovereignty over their own land. Sever punishment was inflicted to the Congolese people, starting with Lumumba and going on with his disciples, well known and not so well known. Then Mondlane (1969), then, four years later, in 1973, Amilcar Cabral suffered the same fate as Mondlane and Lumumba. It can be said that from 1957 to this very day, every single African country which dared challenge the established order has paid the highest price for what the established order considered a case of *lèse-majesté*, offending the king. This has applied with even greater virulence to those countries which went further by aligning themselves with “the” ideological foe of the day: communism.<sup>32</sup>

A NATO member, Portugal, had been defeated by the combined efforts of the liberation movements. The military coup in Portugal in April 1974 brought the losing war to an end and led to the September 7, 1974 Lusaka Agreement between Mozambique and Portugal. Mozambique became independent in June 1975. All the predictions of immunity to change, by the leaders of the Portuguese colonies and their allies, from Rhodesia to South Africa, suddenly became meaningless. The blacks had overthrown a white regime, whose leadership had vowed that such a thing would not happen in a thousand years. On the other hand, the famous “winds of change” announced by Prime Minister McMillan in his famous Cape Town speech of 1960, finally hit home.

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<sup>31</sup> Among the most recent authors: Jacinto Veloso, Valeriano Ferrão. The re-writing, unfortunately is going ahead full steam in multiple ways

<sup>32</sup> Given the virulence of the vengeance, Cuba’s survival is astounding.

Shortly after their defeat in Vietnam in 1975, the US decided that it was time to stop communism's advances everywhere, but, in particular, in Southern Africa. The situation in Angola was, to say the least, confused, but in November 1975, the MPLA assumed power, with the help of the OAU and the military support of a small but strong Cuban contingent which repelled attacks from Zaïre and South Africa. In April 1976, then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, traveled to Southern Africa to make sure that whatever gains were achieved by countries like Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde or São Tomé were reversed to fit what the US and its allies were ready to concede. More than 30 years later, it would be difficult to deny that, on the whole, from its own perspective, the US has succeeded in all of those countries, one might even add, beyond its wildest expectations. But history keeps changing, and the US is no longer in as dominant a position as it used to be, anywhere in the world.<sup>33</sup> Arguably, because what was on the agenda 30 years ago, still needs to be resolved: emancipatory politics is still the only politics worth fighting for. To some Lenin's question *What Is To Be Done?* remains as important as ever, but one could also think of modifying it because of the challenges faced by a humanity being forced to become more like a modernized slave than a being emancipated from the legacies of a system unable to free itself from the shackles of commoditization. In today's world *What Is To Be* is just as challenging and could possibly be more pertinent than Shakespeare's *To be or not to be*.

In the liberation movements there were many individuals who kept asking themselves the same questions which are being asked today. By singling out Aquino de Bragança (ADB) and Mario Pinto de Andrade (MPA) I am not seeking to encourage or promote the search for people with exemplary qualities. I came to know one well enough over a short period at the CEA at the Eduardo Mondlane University, between 1979 and 1986, when he was killed in the same plane crash that killed Samora Machel. I met MPA, for the first time, after ADB's death, but I had heard of him through ADB. Hopefully, there will be someone who shall undertake a full scale biography of both, not so much from the point

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<sup>33</sup> The best documentation can be found in the trilogy by Chalmers Johnson, *Blow Back*, the *Sorrows of Empire* and *Nemesis*. In addition to this any daily reading of the *Wall Street Journal* or annual reports of the *World Bank* or the *International Monetary Fund*.

of view of what they have done as how they thoroughly thought through issues, problems, etc. There is no doubt that both would be asking questions about the future and the past which would be interlinked. One such question would be how to heal from the past as the only way to ensure that one enters the future completely healed.

Aquino de Bragança, originally from Goa, always insisted that he was anti-anti-communist which is a variation of Nehru's stated principle in Bandung: I am not a communist and I am not an anti-communist. A physicist by training, he became a journalist and, possibly, Samora Machel's favorite diplomat, especially when the missions were delicate. His knowledge of the who's who of liberation movements was legendary. His loyalty to Samora Machel was unquestionable, but he was also willing to stick his neck out for people whom he thought had been wrongly accused and condemned. Now and then, he would think loud about the direction of the country. He would make it clear that while he was a loyal party member, he felt it necessary that Frelimo should keep forging its own path, avoiding following the direction of a given line simply because that was the official line. Above all he was a great advocate of debates, open debates. He could not accept what he described in Portuguese as *o marxismo de cartilhas*.

Not quite translatable in English, but best rendered as the Marxism from the catechism. In French it would be called *la langue de bois*. In their honor and in the memory of all those who, like them, fell while believing in a humanity free from ideologies, their tradition could best be carried on through a dissecting of history and histories as one would in a workshop. Always searching for the best solution to a problem seen from a multiplicity of angles, while avoiding to maim others and oneself.

Mario Pinto de Andrade is another comparable figure, not only because he was one of the founders of the MPLA, but because of his constant search for doing better than whatever prevailed, at the time, in the organization in which he was working. Born in Angola, he was a co-founder of the MPLA. In 1974, with others dissatisfied with the direction taken under Agostino Neto, he created *Revolta Activa*. He was forced to leave Angola and, later on, became a Minister of Culture in Guinea Bissau. These are the personalities of

the interstices, i.e. the ones who were not known, but who, at the same time, kept thinking how to do things differently. Both never were comfortable with the idea that real solutions to their problems could only come from Moscow, Havana, Beijing or Washington.

From their own experiences, whether in Portugal, France or Algiers, whether in the CEA at the Casa do Imperio, they knew that fighting colonialism successfully had to be carried out on many fronts, the most important ingredient being an unwavering commitment regardless of the cost. The certainty in Nehru's affirmation in Bandung, namely that he would never compromise on fighting for India, on India's terms can be found, almost in so many words in Amilcar Cabral's well known, and often cited, uncompromising commitment to dedicating his life for the freeing of his own country.

If remembering is not going to be about celebrating what does not deserve to be celebrated, then one should make sure that how one remembers does lead to histories which bring about healing of our communities, small and big ones.

There are too many stories of repression, torture, disappearances in the liberation movements which have remained either unanswered or answered in the same manner that the apartheid leaders responded to the challenge posed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Until African liberation movements (if necessary through the state they inherited) decide to heal from their own self inflicted wounds, it will be difficult if not impossible

to expect those who most benefited from slavery and colonial rule to move toward any form of reconciliation or reparation, as anyone could see at the UN Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, just a few days before September 11, 2001.

How can one scream for reparation from those who benefited from slavery and colonial occupation, and not do the same from those who are in power in Africa? Shouldn't healing start from home? Shouldn't healing start with the recognition that , yes, there are people who were executed allegedly for being the enemy's agent, but they were not.

Even with regard to those who were, shouldn't there be a forgiving process leading to a healing? Shouldn't it be possible for those in charge of states be able to come out and say that, yes, the state can err.

But in the process of political transformation something did not quite go as planned. For people like Aquino and Mario de Andrade it was not sufficient to be alerted in avoiding bringing into the organizations practices which, directly or indirectly, reproduced colonizing practices of discrimination, division, privileges. The construction of organizational structures had to be freed from those practices too. In all organizations, but especially in the PAIGC and Frelimo, there was a keen awareness of the necessity to apply emancipatory politics to the very manner in which it structured itself, especially with regard to how the transition to state power took place. Cabral, for one, had insisted that independence in Guinea-Bissau take place without conferring with the colonial master.

## **9. What has been transmitted, what has been learned?**

As I have tried to say and as those of the Bandung-1955-57 generation were also trying to say, human experience, as it relates to emancipatory politics, is always much larger than what one will find by focusing on just one slice of that reality. Resistance to oppression and exploitation is deeply imbedded in all of humanity. It has been there from millions of years ago and it shall continue regardless of which side. It is sheer demagoguery to pretend that only some people have an understanding of how to bring an end to the twin sicknesses of oppression and exploitation.

It is not enough to mention Bandung even if, for some, it resonates in the same manner the mention of Spartacus does. What is it in Bandung 1955 which signalled something new, what is it that one can say was viewed, as an **event**, and then led some world leaders to practice some sort of fidelity to it?

It is possible, even if they do not mention it themselves, to see in the Zapatista movement in Mexico something reminiscent of Bandung, in the sense that a group of people, this time in Mexico, stated that they would not stop their work till the poor got to be heard, not just in a charitable manner, but as a human being equal in value to any of the most wealthy individuals in Mexico or beyond. Forced to mention his inspirers, Sub-commandante Zero has difficulty sorting out who and how he has learned to always be on the side of those who are teaching them. Among the certainties are the necessity of shrinking the letter E in their acronym, i.e. making the army less and less important. On this issue, he is on the same page as billions of people who would like to see the disappearance of armies. He is on the same page as President Aristide when he suggested that Haiti should get rid of its army since it had been one of the institutions most responsible for inflicting the worst suffering on the people of Haiti.

In visionary terms, the closest movement which comes to Cabral's emancipatory vision is the Zapatistas. Could Cabral and his companions have implemented their vision? In the thick of the Cold War? Probably not.<sup>34</sup> One could even say, certainly not, because, as it can now be seen, the winner of the Cold War has realized that the only way it can keep winning is by keeping the Cold War mentality going. Which is to say: keep finding mortal enemies of the US and its allies. But even the Cold War shall reach a point where it will become a shackle, even to its greatest beneficiary. However what is driving the cold war, or rather, what is left? There was a time communism, or anti-communism, was the operational mantra. Given the defeat of communism, what is the US seeking to achieve in Iraq? As Alan Greenspan has reminded everyone, including G. Bush, it is oil. Oil is to the world economy what slaves were to it 200 years ago.

#### **10. Toward healed histories to be embraced without fear/shame**

Over the past 50 years, from the spirit of 1957, as independent states in Africa were coming up, the colonial powers had organized their economies to ensure that the colonial entities could not possibly challenge the world constructed over and on the legacy of

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<sup>34</sup> The proof was, so to speak, Sankara's assassination on October 15, 1987.

slavery and colonial rule. One of the 500 year legacies has been the divisiveness or, if one could use such a word, the splitting apart of humanity which culminated in the splitting of the atom, the ultimate instrument because, like genetic modification in biology, it has been the ultimate trespassing of nature.

How serious this trespassing has been can only be seen by examining issues like how to dispose of nuclear waste. Such as it exists the problem dwarfs the human capacity to deal with it, but it is this last sediment which preoccupies the environmentalist while no one seems to realize that long before nuclear waste appeared on the scene, it became acceptable because large segments of humanity had been treated as waste, disposable, useless.<sup>35</sup> If the human (read African) mind were to succeed in putting on humanity's agenda the issue of dealing with the issue of wasted humanity, then the issue of nuclear waste could become manageable. Healing from our wounds and wounds inflicted to others, especially first to those who have been closest to us. The long process of learning from so many battles, so many struggles must be done without using sifting devices which disconnect those who were torn apart. The process of healing must be conducted with respect for humanity, without distinction, respecting the dignity of others and self. Those who refuse to heal shall eventually heal because that call is the most powerful instinct and because it is universal, it is also the one which had been assaulted with all the arsenal which could be mustered by those who consider themselves above the rule of law.

There must be resistance to the temptation to rise to the bait of showing interest in being counted as the counters/discoverers want to count. As the Zapatistas have been saying, the horizon must not be the horizon of those who have shown time and again to be limited in their understanding of the Planet: it is much bigger than the one they see and they try to force one to see, to the point of making one not see oneself as one is.

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<sup>35</sup> The way in which HIV/AIDS epidemic has been handled, like hunger and, now, poverty, it is clear that capitalism has decreed large segments of humanity dispensable.

The only war worth fighting, as Fanon hinted a long time ago is the one for saving humanity. The planet is one and so is humanity. To heal means to be whole again. The state in place during Fanon's time and the state in place today do not differ much: more than ever before they have become the tools of the Market. The equation is still the same (and possibly worse) : will those who consider the poor, the slaves, the colonized, in short those who, in their eyes, do not count, could indeed be the ones who would best understand why, when and where things did go wrong. Are the "discoverers" willing to allow that the "discovered" could have been, many times in the past, on the verge of discovering the answer to a political and economic system which has only known how to devour whatever it encounters on its path? A healing process which does not address the question of how to move away from structures which have been directly or indirectly linked to the CGM will only lead to impasses.