



January 20<sup>th</sup> 2023.

**CABRAL: TRIBUTE TO A GREAT PAN-AFRICANIST REVOLUTIONARY & TEACHER**

50 years ago today, on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1973, the secret police (PIDE) of Fascist Portugal assassinated Amilcar Lopez da Costa Cabral using a disgruntled cadre of the Independence struggle.

Amilcar Cabral was the iconic thinker, political leader, principal teacher, tireless ambassador, and military strategist of the African Party for the independence of Guinea and Cape Verdes (“PAIGC”). He was also a central figure in the struggle against brutal Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Mozambique and the Islands of Principe and Sao Tome. Indeed, Cabral was a leader of the wider pan-Africanist movement participating clandestinely in meetings with other architects of continental unity such as Nkrumah, Sekou Touré, Senghor, Selassie. Cabral’s internationalism left a wider “South” footprint including for example his collaboration with the Brazilian Left and the involvement of seminal educational theorist Paolo Freire in the development of education programmes in the liberated areas of Guinea Bissau.

At the time of his betrayal and assassination PAIGC had all but defeated Portugal militarily and established effective political control over most of Guinean territory. His murder could not therefore halt the momentum towards national liberation in Cape Verde or Guinea Bissau (which arrived just 5 months later). Nor could it prevent freedom for Angola or Mozambique or indeed the rest of the African continent. However, this dastardly act did deprive Africa of a relatively young and energetic leader with genuine independent insights and ability who would no doubt have played an important role in the struggle to construct a united socialist Africa securely anchored in its own culture and brotherhood able to contribute to the progress of humanity. Had Cabral not been cut down the African experience of the 79s and 80s and would probably have been less neo-colonial than it turned out to be. 20<sup>th</sup> January is thus a Black letter day for Africa and all people of recent African descent.

In 1446 when Portuguese explorers arrived at the western tip of the failing Mali empire in search of gold, they encountered the peoples of what today is Guinea Bissau. For the next 500 years through the trans-Atlantic slaving and colonialism Guinea Bissau, like the rest of Africa experienced brutal underdevelopment. Europe set Africa’s economic, social, technological, and cultural development back centuries. The Portuguese were one of the most intensely exploitative and brutally repressive practitioners of colonialism. Colonialism looted African lands and resources. It imposed arbitrary taxes to drive Africans into the cash economy. It disrupted food production and imposed cash crop production to feed industries in Lisbon including direct forced Labour. In addition to and in support of this exploitation Colonialists practiced institutional racism and violent repression of African culture. Colonialism unleashed starvation, malnutrition, unsanitary living conditions and the spread of diseases ensuring an average life span in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde of just 30 years. Only 1% of Guineans and about 3% Cape Verdeans had access to school under colonial rule. Colonialists justified their project to the Portuguese public by specious claims of assimilation and civilization of African people.

Cabral from an early age was a keen scientific observer and analyst of physical and social reality. He was an upholder of processes rather than static “facts”. He saw growth and contradiction in everything even before he was exposed to formal dialectics and theories like Marxism. He learned science from his father Juvenal and was committed to revolutionising agriculture in Bissau and Cape Verde from an early age. Agriculture was then dominated by backward Portuguese practices which produced regular famines in his

[www.smghana.org](http://www.smghana.org)

P.O. Box NT 272, Accra – Newtown Accra



## **SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF GHANA (SMG)**

homeland. He had great empathy for Africans and the hardships they experienced even though he himself born to relative privilege (to the extent that war time Guinea Bissau offered privilege to any of its “middle class”). Brilliant performance in school afforded him the opportunity to study Agricultural economics in the Metropole where in addition to professional skills he developed both the political knowledge and the commitment to free Africa from colonialism starting from Bissau and the rest of the Portuguese empire and starting from the reorganisation of production. He believed that the ‘socio-political situation is a consequence of the economic situation’. His detailed study of Bissau agriculture and producing communities in the 1970s remains the standard reference on these matters more than 50 years later. The conduct of that study also allowed him to develop the networks necessary for the political mobilisation of the Bissau people.

Cabral built a political vehicle; African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) in 1956 as the vanguard for unifying the dispersed and fragmented struggles of the exploited and oppressed in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. His tactics moved from adopting a peaceful solution to colonialism to the adoption of insurrection and armed struggle by 3 August 1961. This change in tactic become intensified after the belligerent Portuguese government as part of numerous hostile methods of suppressing resistance massacred 50 dockworkers on strike at pidgiguiti. Cabral understood that despite the differences in ethnic, tribal, and social relations, everybody needed to be mobilized under one banner to defeat colonialism and imperialism. Based on this idea He dedicated himself to a strategy of a united struggle against Portuguese colonialism and the building of Pan Africanism. He asserted that ‘so long as imperialism is in existence, an independent African state must be a liberation movement in power, or it will not be independent’. Cabral was involved in the formation of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and worked closely with Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (MLSTP) all within the framework of the Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies (CONCP).

He had a programmatic and methodological approach to the national liberation phase of the struggle.

As Basil Davidson puts it “He raised an army, led and taught it how to fight, gave it detailed orders, supervised its every major action; but he did all this, by the habit of his practice, through a process of collective political discussion”.

50 years after his assassination Cabral’s example illuminates the path for people struggling against the decadent capitalist order and in search of a different paradigm to true liberation. An approach to struggle in which the masses are the protagonist of the qualitative change we require. He was a popular educator able to break complex concepts into simple terms for his combatants, most of whom had no formal education. His most famous quotation is drawn from his general directives to combatants of the PAIGC “Hide nothing from our people, tell no lies.... claim no easy victories; but all the time explain, discuss, debate, argue, learn and above all lead” now more than ever is relevant and a guide to all anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist forces.

In November 2018 the Socialist Movement of Ghana (SMG) together with other collaborators established the Amilcar Cabral School (ACS). The school’s focus is to provide a physical space where progressive organisations in West Africa and beyond with a secular outlook can gather to expand their collective knowledge and deepen their understanding of class as the defining characteristic of social being while

[www.smghana.org](http://www.smghana.org)

P.O. Box NT 272, Accra – Newtown Accra



## SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF GHANA (SMG)

addressing issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and the other subordinate identities through which people experience social oppression. ACS seeks to organize and promote training activities that connect with organised struggles, worldwide, for qualitative change of society.

The school was named after Amilcar Cabral because he represents and embodies the method, methodology and pedagogy that we are committed to. His scientific and materialist framework for comprehending reality helped in deepening an understanding of the material structure of his society. Indeed, as a theoretician organically linked to the people's liberation movements, Cabral refuted dogmatism and challenged the Eurocentric approach to the development of theory. He would frequently admonish his comrades "do not confuse the reality you live in with ideas you have in your head". Correct ideas must emanate from practice, and it is in practice that we test the validity of ideas. Cabral made major theoretical contributions to the framework for studying social phenomenon and reshaping concepts such as culture, nationalism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, race, and class struggle.

Amilcar Cabral, believed that the individual's reality does not stand in isolation to others. The principle of the interconnectedness of reality consequently led him to embracing the necessity of internationalism and solidarity amongst the worlds oppressed and exploited people.

On 50yrs of the demise of one of Africa's most celebrated thinkers and fighters Amilcar Cabral, we reflect once again over his homage to Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah during the latter's funeral in Conakry, Cabral said of Nkrumah that he would rise again each dawn in the hearts and determination of all freedom fighters and in the action of all true African patriots. Cabral could have been speaking of himself so dearly do we hold his example and teaching.

We are emboldened by Cabral's ideas and practice as a call to action in our fight for the attainment of human centred production relations crucial for the progress of humanity and the further development of society.

Long live Amilcar Cabral!!

Yaw Appiah-Kubi

for General Secretary