

African Liberation Day—1980

As this year's African Liberation Day approaches, there is much struggle focused on the questions: What has happened in the recent period in Africa? Where have the liberation struggles led and why? What are the roles of the superpowers?

In the mid-1960's and throughout most of the 1970's many drew inspiration and built righteous support for the armed liberation struggles in Africa, particularly the revolutionary wars against Portuguese colonialism (financed and armed by the U.S.) in Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Angola and against the white settler governments that preserved imperialist domination in southern Africa, especially Zimbabwe. Many hoped that these armed struggles would end differently than the early period of anti-colonial struggles in the 1950's and early 1960's, when neo-colonial black faces trained and groomed by the imperialists replaced the former openly colonial governments. Then came Angola in 1975, when, just as the Angolan people beat Portuguese colonialism guns in hand, they were ushered into the arms of Soviet domination by the leadership of the MPLA, which had led the anti-Portuguese struggle. "We don't have any colonies in Africa, we just want to help you win independence and develop your economy," said U.S. imperialism as it snatched up the former colonies of its imperialist partners in the 1950's and early 1960's, and this song was repeated by the Soviet imperialists with only the slightest changes as they too began to feast on the African people.

Now in Zimbabwe the last of this period's major anti-colonial and anti-white settler struggles has ended in capitulation, as the likes of the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Economist*, the *New York Times* and other enemies of the people greet Robert Mugabe as someone who at least can really run Zimbabwe—for them of course. The depths to which some formerly anti-imperialist African leaders have fallen is illustrated by the President of Guinea, who in the late 1960's pointed out that the only answer to the oppression of Black people in the U.S. was armed revolution. In August 1979, speaking in Harlem, he changed his tune: "Change has brought happiness to our Black brothers and sisters who are more and more rehabilitated within American society." Of course, it wasn't the brothers and sisters who changed, but Sekou Touré.

It is clear that for many who at one point seemed to be revolutionaries, the armed struggle of the masses was no more than a Visa Card to get them where they wanted. But these weaknesses can't be understood simply by saying that "the brother sold out."

The forces who took the lead in the struggles against colonialism and the white settler regimes represented *classes* and *classes* have interests—material interests and material stakes. Most of them have represented the emerging bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie who, while opposing the old imperialist set-up, restricted the masses to serve their own interests, rather than leading and unleashing the masses to thoroughly and completely rip out imperialism and the structure imposed on these countries, eliminating all its remains and every form of oppression and inequality and ultimately moving on to communism. This is true even though the leadership in most of the armed struggles was made up of people who claimed to be Marxists—a fact which testifies to the prestige of Marxism and to the revolutionary determination of the masses of people who fought these liberation wars and not to the actual political and ideological outlook of those who led most of them.

Those who justify the way things have ended up and others who don't like it but don't know what else could happen raise all sorts of objections. Some now say "Doesn't Mugabe need the U.S.?" Many others, even some of the same people, say "How could Africans have waged armed struggle without the Soviet Union? Wouldn't that mean fighting rockets with knives?" Yet it is Soviet "aid"—and the guiles and mercenaries of Fidel Castro—that have delivered up much of Africa to Soviet domination. Just how little this domination differs from that of the U.S. can be seen in the hungry comments of the U.S. imperialists—for instance in the May 2 *Christian Science Monitor* article drooling over the prospects that puppets such as the MPLA in Angola who have served Soviet

masters could just as well serve Americans if the price was right and the wind in the right direction.

The idea that only Soviet/Cuban tanks can win battles flies in the face of what reality has already proved in Africa. After all, up until the very end of the wars which drove out Portuguese colonialism, Soviet aid ranged from small to insignificant. And in Eritrea, under the heel of Soviet/Cuban divisions and their Ethiopian puppets, the people have not only successfully held off 15,000 Cuban troops and \$1 billion in Soviet arms, but have delivered such serious losses to the Soviet/Cuban Ethiopian forces that this situation can be compared to what the U.S. faced in Vietnam.

What is going on in Africa today is part of what's going on in the whole world. The U.S. and the USSR are scrambling for its wealth and strategic locations as part of their overall scramble for a global showdown to settle who gets what on a world level. While many bourgeois forces would carry out vacillating resistance to imperialism in the previous decades, today the wind is blowing very hard and the weak are bending. The only thing that could enable a Guinea or an Angola to stand up to the mortal threats and empty promises of the two superpowers is by unleashing and relying on the masses in a way that the bourgeoisie who live off the masses can never do, even though such forces have played and could play a more progressive, if vacillating, role, especially under the firm leadership of the proletariat.

But does this prove that revolution in Africa is impossible and that Africans may as well sell themselves to the Soviets—or once again to the U.S.—for weapons which they will be allowed to wield in the service of the new op-

pressors? Just the contrary. It proves that the revolutionary wars which have been so heroic so far have not sufficiently tapped and brought forward the revolutionary heroism of the people. It is not that revolution has failed, but that it has not gone far enough, and not that revolutionary leadership has led only to new oppression, but that the African people need even more thoroughly revolutionary leadership.

The meddling of these superpowers, too, while it brings misery, also brings further opportunities for revolution. Africa, and the African masses are increasingly being pulled into the whirlpool of international events. All this, in the context of sharpening rivalry and impending war between the superpower blocs, makes the situation all the more volatile and opens up new revolutionary possibilities.

The flame of revolution in Africa, far from dying out, is spreading. Fresh forces are bursting into battle in French West Africa. Soviet domination is bleeding in East Africa. And South Africa, that Grand Wizard of white colonial domination, is once again being shaken. The struggles in Africa over the last decade have had one lasting effect that in fact is more important than the setbacks they have suffered—they have inspired and propelled forward millions of people around the world, including within the U.S., one of the two main pillars of oppression in Africa.

In the current world situation, the need for genuine revolutionary leadership to steer through the storms stands out all the more as the key to victory. For this reason, as part of intensifying the worldwide struggle against imperialism, revolutionaries on all continents, while supporting every sort of blow—even vacillating resistance—against the imperialists, will give special encouragement and support to the development of proletarian communist leadership in the struggles everywhere, including in Africa.

Kalamazoo, Michigan

A Tornado Hit— But Capitalism Was The Crippler

Explosions everywhere, buildings crumbling, debris flying, the dead and injured buried under tons of rubble. Later a curfew and troopers with guns stalking the streets to prevent "imminent looting."

This was the aftermath of the killer tornado that struck Kalamazoo, Michigan on Tuesday, May 14, leaving 5 dead, hundreds injured and more than 1,000 without homes.

Immediately after the tornado, the people of Kalamazoo emerged from where they had been taking shelter. The main concern was for human lives—to search for possible survivors in the rubble and to get the injured to hospitals. In the neighborhoods, teams of 10 or so people went from door to door to make sure no one was hurt. On every street where there were downed traffic lights people spontaneously jumped in to direct traffic.

The ruling class's dogs were in the streets too—hundreds of police, deputy sheriffs, state troopers—up to 600 by nightfall. And what were they doing? In some cases, the pigs just stood around scratching their asses while the people took charge. But more typical was an incident at Gilmore's, a big department store, where a wall had fallen burying 5 workers beneath it.

Bystanders had rushed to the collapsed wall digging as fast as possible through the rubble where they could see the arm of at least one victim; they were frantically trying to get her out. James Gilmore, one of the millionaire owners of the store stood by passively, never attempting to help. The police arrived, and began pushing people around and barking orders. One state trooper climbed up on the rubble heap *right on top* of the buried victim. He shouted threats and orders at the people to stop their rescue attempts! What did it matter that someone was dying under his feet as long as the rabble was kept away

from the clock radios, men's suits and winter coats that were lying strewn all over Gilmore's?

The downtown area was put under a "state of emergency" (read: martial law) with a 9 p.m. curfew and passes were required for anyone to enter the area. One woman, carrying an injured child, was told by police that she *could not cross* the downtown area to get to a hospital a few blocks away. Instead she had to walk around, a much longer distance. Workers at the Hilton, made to work past the curfew over their protests, were told by police that they would have to "run a gauntlet for being out on the street without a pass." Several people were arrested for curfew violations.

The number of police stationed at big stores like Gilmore's and at the Industrial Bank Building made it clear what these pigs were there to protect. All the city's resources were directed at cleaning up the downtown area and getting it back to "business as usual" while people's devastated homes remained untouched. Crews worked day and night so that stores would open and people could have their pockets picked again as soon as possible. The day after the tornado, Gilmore's opened its men's department and invited people in to shop in the store that had been a tomb for 2 workers.

But what the capitalists couldn't clean up or paint over was the truth about how they had conducted their murdering "business as usual" as the life-threatening tornado was approaching. Again Gilmore's is a disgustingly sharp example.

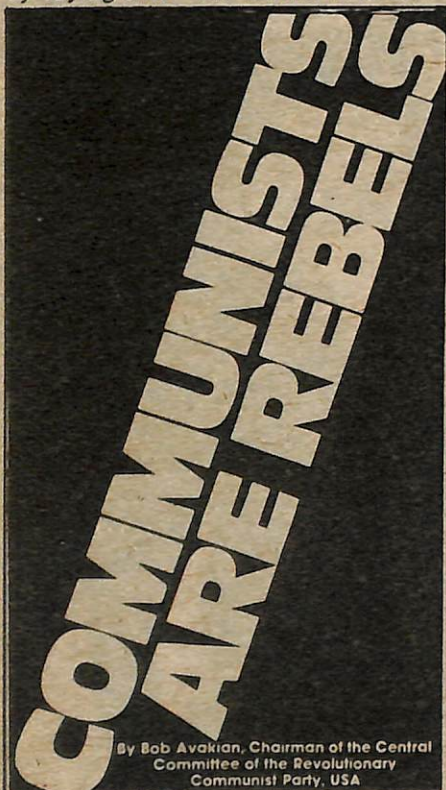
Management had heard the tornado warning, but decided to let their workers finish totaling up their cash receipts and taking them upstairs before these workers were warned. When a warning was finally sounded a few seconds before the tornado hit, instead of

putting people in the basement which they claimed would be unsafe, they pushed people out the back door towards a nearby parking structure. As some of the clerks, who had been counting money as the storm approached, were leaving the building the back wall collapsed. Two were killed and 3 seriously injured. Many had leveled accusations that Gilmore's management drove the workers outside to avoid lawsuits from injuries incurred inside this building. Gilmore's is now trying to get the workers to sign a statement defending management's actions during the tornado!

But Gilmore's was not alone in these crimes. At the Fisher Body Plant in Kalamazoo, no warning siren was even sounded. A motorcycle shop right nearby was flattened. If there had been a direct hit on Fisher Body 1,000 workers would have been caught in the middle of flying sheet metal and machinery.

At the Reynolds Metal Company near Kalamazoo, management openly refused to sound the siren because it would disrupt production. Some workers walked out in protest and 3/4 of the 200-men workforce have filed grievances over the company's wanton disregard for their lives.

None of this was brought up in the media. Instead, the authorities were praised for their handling of the situation and the destruction summarized as the result of powerful natural forces beyond the control of man. But when the dust had cleared, a force was revealed standing as a savage obstacle to the ability of the masses of people to deal with the disaster: the life-damning drive for profit of the capitalist system—and the dictatorship this class wields to protect their profits—was exposed as a force more responsible for the loss of life and potential loss of life than the tornado itself.



By Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

A Letter from RCP Chairman Bob Avakian to His Parents On Philosophy, Religion, Morals, and Continuous Revolution

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