

The Nation-Class

Amilcar Cabral

Response to an interview question by Amilcar Cabral on 28 October 1971. The interview was conducted on behalf of two journals of the Portuguese underground opposition and is reproduced from Anticolonialismo, No. 2, February 1972. Translated from Portuguese.

Question: Amilcar Cabral, in 1964 you stated that it was not the class

struggle but rather the colonial situation which was of prime historical importance at that time. What exactly must we understand by this, and what are the political consequences of such a view?

Answer: This statement is the result of an appreciation of our own reality. We are not unaware that, in the course of the history of our people, there have emerged class phenomena, varying in definition and state of development. We have on the one hand the Balantas, for example, a horizontal society, and on the other we have a society such as the Fulas already built up in the form of a pyramid and thus with classes fairly well defined. Meanwhile, we know that colonial domination in our country, just as in others, but we are here referring to our own case, creates an identical situation for everyone. And when the fight against colonial domination begins, it is not the product of one class even though the idea may have sprung up from the class which has become aware more rapidly or earlier of colonial domination and of the necessity of combatting it. But this revolt is not the product of a class as such. Rather it is a whole society acting as a nation-class that carries it out. This nation-class, which may be more or less clearly structured, is dominated not by people from the colonized country but rather by the ruling class of the colonized country. This is our view, and hence our struggle is essentially based not on a class struggle but rather on the struggle led by our nation-class against the Portuguese ruling class. It is precisely here that we find the link between our struggle and that of the Portuguese people for the social, economic and cultural transformation of their lives; because the Portuguese people is also conducting a struggle, utilizing progressively more developed forms, against the same ruling class.

Naturally, the consequences are: firstly, through this fight we are shaping our African Nation which, as you know, was not yet very well defined, with all the problems of many ethnic groups, of the divisions created by the colonialist power itself (distinctions between natives and *assimilados*, between city dwellers and peasants, etc.). We are building our African Nation which is becoming more and more conscious of itself. But at the same time we must be alert to the development of classes within this new nation. In the meanwhile, the struggle gives us experience based exactly on this postulate. In this way, not only do we strengthen our political and moral unity as a nation, but we also strengthen our vigilance so as to keep the class struggle from taking on aspects which could be detrimental to the progress of our own people. This is all I can say in a brief form on this vast and very complex problem.