

AN INTRODUCTION TO

AMILCAR CABRAL



“Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories...”



Church Land Programme



*An Introduction to Amílcar Cabral
in English and isiZulu*

Mark Butler

with Lindo Dhlamini, Zodwa Nsibande and David Ntseng

Church Land Programme, 2014

Web: www.churchland.org.za

Address: 340 Burger Street. Pietermaritzburg

Postal: Postnet Suite 23

Private Bag x 9005

Pietermaritzburg, 3200, South Africa

Ph: (+27) 33 2644 380

AMÍLCAR CABRAL

African Freedom Fighter

12 September 1924 – 20 January 1973

Cabral is remembered as a great thinker and fighter in the African national liberation struggles against colonialism. Although many things have changed since his death, some things really haven't, and many of his ideas are still relevant and interesting.

Life & Death

Amílcar Lopes da Costa Cabral was born in Guinea-Bissau in 1924. His parents were from Cape Verde, which is where he went to a mission-run school. He later studied agronomy at university-level in Lisbon, the capital of Portugal which was the European colonial power over Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.

At university he met students from other Portuguese colonies in Africa, like Mozambique and Angola, and also got involved in political discussions and organisations focused on resisting fascism in Portugal and advancing liberation in the colonies. He and his comrades became convinced it was necessary to break with Eurocentric ways of thinking about leftist or radical politics.

Cabral returned to Africa in 1950. Geographically this literally meant a return to Guinea-Bissau but politically too, it was a “return to the roots” which he believed was essential to connect petite-bourgeois intellectuals with the actual life of the masses of ordinary people. He used his first job as an agronomist doing agricultural census studies for the Portuguese colonial administration to learn in detail about the conditions and cultures of the people of Guinea-Bissau.

In 1956 he founded the Partido Africano da Independencia da Guinea e Cabo Verde or PAIGC, which led the independence struggle in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. In the same year, together with Mario de Andrade and Antonio Agostinho Neto, they also formed the Movimento Popular Libertacao de Angola or MPLA. From 1963, the PAIGC was compelled to fight an armed guerrilla war for independence.

During the independence struggle, Amílcar Cabral used his agronomy expertise to train his soldiers in food production methods so that they could sustain themselves alongside the people of the countryside – and also share labour and skills with the people for improved farming techniques. Cabral's PAIGC also ran a trading and barter system to bring basic goods to the people at lower prices than the colonial shops.

Guinea-Bissau finally achieved independence in 1973. Tragically, Amílcar was assassinated on 20 January of that year - about eight months before Guinea-Bissau's unilateral declaration of independence. Agents of the Portuguese government had worked together with rivals within Cabral's own PAIGC to kill him.

Culture

History teaches us that, in certain circumstances, it is very easy for the foreigner to impose his domination on a people. But it also teaches us that, whatever may be the material aspects of this domination, it can be maintained only by the permanent, organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned.

Amílcar Cabral, National Liberation and Culture speech at Syracuse University, 1970.

Cabral thought deeply about the relation between people's culture and their struggle for liberation. He criticised those theories of revolution that, in practice, were dismissive of people's culture – either because these theories were Eurocentric and basically racist towards non-western culture, or because they dogmatically insisted that economic questions of structure and class determined everything else.

But Cabral also avoided the trap of romanticising popular culture and insisted it was necessary to look critically at the good and the bad, and to relate these living cultural elements dialectically with the actual process of struggle. Connecting the positives of local cultures in the liberation struggle was, for Cabral, part of the process of creating a national culture. As Kali Akuno puts it: “Cabral repudiated radicals who denigrated cultural work (or created cultural caricatures) as well as those who privileged it above all else” (Akuno, in Manji and Fletcher (ed.s), 2013, 411).

He was clear that there was no longer any material basis for 'tribalism' and that it continued to exist only because the forces of colonialism supported it. He was therefore highly critical of “detrribalized individuals or groups within the national liberation movement” (Cabral, 1979) who, he argued, manipulate “tribal” identities “opportunistically” for their own interests (Nigel Gibson, in Manji & Fletcher (ed.s), 2013, 21).

The State

The problem of the nature of the state created after independence is perhaps the secret of the failure of African independence.

Amílcar Cabral, “Connecting the Struggles”

In Cabral's thinking, the colonial state could not be taken over and made to serve any liberatory purpose. A new form of state would only emerge in and through the complete transformation process of national liberation struggle itself. During the struggle, Cabral clearly saw the new state emerging in the liberated zones as the war progressed. As Gibson puts it: “Cabral considered the future in the present as a practical issue of institution building in the liberated zones. In contrast to the parasitic and authoritarian colonial state, he claimed, 'we are creating the state through the struggle’” (Nigel Gibson, in Manji & Fletcher (ed.s), 2013, 25).

The Power of the People

“Revolutionary democracy demands that...at all costs the people feel that it is they who have the power in our lands in their hands. Up until now they have not felt this very much. In the liberated areas some comrades have usurped this power of our people”

Amílcar Cabral, “Revolutionary Democracy” 1969.

Like Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral thought it very important for African liberation struggles to properly understand the relation between the masses of the people and the petite-bourgeois class which often generates revolutionaries who think of themselves as radical and professional 'intellectuals', 'thinkers' and 'theorists'.

To avoid undermining people's power, Cabral said it was necessary for petite-bourgeois activists to commit “class suicide” - not as a once-off declaration but an ongoing praxis of submerging their thinking and work in the life of the grassroots struggle.

To play its role in the struggle, the revolutionary petit bourgeoisie has to be capable of ‘class suicide’ and be reborn as part of the revolutionary working class, identifying entirely with the aspirations of the people to whom they belong.

Amílcar Cabral, Cuba, 1966.

Sadly, in the post-independence processes of Guinea-Bissau and other African countries that followed Cabral's assassination, Samir Amin is probably right that:

The petit bourgeoisie in none of these countries has committed suicide, but has instead become the backbone of a pathetic comprador government, devoid of a political programme and functioning under imperialist - especially European - domination.

Cabral tried mightily to avoid such an outcome and for this he amply deserves to be called one of the most audacious leaders of the first generation of African freedom fighters Amin, in Manji & Fletcher (ed.s), 2013, 57-8.

While the native ruling class becomes progressively more bourgeois, the ... urban workers and agricultural proletarians, all exploited by the indirect domination of imperialism, opens up new perspectives for the evolution of national liberation.

Amílcar Cabral, The Weapon of Theory, 1966

AMÍLCAR CABRAL

Isishosho e-Afrika

12 kuMandulo (September) 1924 – 20 kuNhlolanja (January) 1973

UCabral ukhunjulwa njengomuntu owayenemibono noma enemibono enzulu futhi elwela nenkululeko kwi-African national liberation struggles (umzabalazo owawumelene nengcindezi yamakoloni). Nakuba izinto eziningi sezashintsha kusukela adlula emhlabeni, kepha ezinye azikaka shintshi, eminye yemibono yakhe eminingi isafanele futhi isathakazelisa.

Ukuphila nokufa kuka Cabral

U-Amilcar Lopes da Costa Cabral wazalelwa e-Guinea-Bissau ngonyaka ka-1924. Abazali bakhe babe qhamuka e-Cape Verde, kuyilapho angena khona isikole esasakhiwe ngamamishinari. Waqhubeka nemfundo ephakeme efunda izifundo zolimo namahlathi (agronomy) eNyuvesi yase Lisbon enhloko dolobha yama Putukezi (Portugal) eyayibuswa ngaphansi kwe ngcindezi yama-Koloni ase-Yurophu phezu kwe Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.

Enyuvesi wahlangana nabanye abafundi ababephuma kwamanye amazwe ayecindezelwe ama-Putukezi e-Afrika, njenge Mozambique ne Angola. Wahlanganyela nasezingxoxweni zepolitiki nezinhlangano ezazibhekene nokulwisana nontamolukhuni bamaPutukezi nokuyisa phambili elenkululeko kumakoloni. Ekanye namanye amakhomanisi babeqinisekile ukuthi kufanele kunqanyulwe noma kunqamuke izindlela zokucabanga zamazwe aseNtshonalanga zepolitiki. U-Cabral wabuyela e-Afrika ngonyaka ka-1950. Wabuya esebuyela lapho ayezalelwa khona e-Guinea-Bissau futhi ebuyiswa naye zepolitiki, wayekhohlelwa ukuthi kwakubalulekile ukuthi axhumane nezihlakani zibazimele kahle, ngezimpilo zeningi labantu abajwayelekile (ordinary people). Wasebenzisa imfundo yakhe yezolimo namahlathi esebenza ngokubalwa kwabantu kwezolimo (agricultural census) esebenzela I-koloni yamaPutukezi ukuba afunde kabanzi ngezimo namasiko abantu base Guinea-Bissau.

Ngonyaka ka 1956 wasungula inhlangano eyayibizwa ngokuthi yi-Partido Africano da Independencia da Guinea eCabo Verde or PAIGC, eyayihola umzabalazo wombuso ozimele (independence struggle e-Guinea-Bissau nase Cape Verde). Kuwo lowo nyaka ekanye no Mario de Andrade beno Antonio Agostinho Neto basungula i-Movimento popular libertacao de Angola or MPLA. Ngonyaka ka 1963 inhlangano i-PAIGC yaphoqeleka ukuba ilwe impi ehlo mile ilwelwa umbuso ozimele (independence).

Ngesikhathi somzabalazo U-Amilcar Cabral wasebenzisa ubuchwepheshe bezifundo zakhe zolimo namahlathi ukuqeqesha amasosha ukukhiqiza ukudla ukuze bakwazi ukuziphilisa kanye nabantu basemaphandleni, futhi bakwazi nokwabelana ngamakhono nemisebenzi kanye nabantu ukuze bakwazi ukuthuthukisa amasu ezolimo. Inhlangano ka-Cabral i-PAIGC yayisebenza nangezokuhwebelana nokunanelana ukuletha impahla kubantu ngamanani aphansi kunezitolo zamakoloni.

IGuinea-Bissau yagcina izuza inkululeko ngonyaka ka-1973. Ngeshwa uCabral wadlula emhlabeni mhla ka 20 kuNhlolanja ngawo lowo nyaka ngokubulawa, ezinyangeni nje eziyisishagalombili (8) ngaphambi kokuba isimemezelo sombuso ozimele sikhishwe. Kwaba nabantu kuhulumeni wama Putukezi abasebenzisana nezimbangi noma uhulumeni omdala phakathi kweqembu lika Cabral ukuba bambophele uzungu bambulale.

Isiko- Culture

Umlando usifundisa ukuthi kwezinye izimo kubalula ukuba umuntu wangaphandle akwazi ukulawula abantu. Kodwa kuphinde kusifundise ukuthi noma ngabe yini ephathekayo kulolo lawulo ingakwazi ukugcinwa unomphelo ngobumbano nosiko labantu abathintekayo kulolodaba.

Inkulumo ka Amilcar Cabral, National Liberation and culture eyayise Nyuvesi yase Syracuse ngo 1970

uCabral wacabangisisa kanzulu ngobudlelwane phakathi kwamasiko abantu nomzabalazo wenkululeko. Wayegxeka izinkolelo noma imibono yezinguquko eyayenziwa ngoba yayiphikisana namasiko abantu ngenxa yokuthi imibono yayine ngindezi (Eurocentic) nobandlululo.

UCabral wayekugwema ukuqhakambisa noma ukuncoma kakhulu usiko oluthandwayo egcizelela ukuba kubukiswe nhlangothi zonke okuhle nokubi, kulandiswe izimo zokuphila ngokuxoxisana ngomzabalabo.

Ukuxhumanisa okuhle ngamasiko endawo nomzabalazo wenkululeko kwakuyingxenye noma indlela ka Cabral yokwakha isiko-zwe (national culture). Njengokusho kuka Kali Akuno:

“uCabral wayengahambisani nabantu abeya umsebenzi wezamasiko noma ababeyibeka ibe ngcono ngaphezu kwakho konke” (Akuno, in Manji and Fletcher(ed.s) 2013.411).

Umbuso- The State

Inkinga yesimo sezwe eyadaleka ngemva kombuso ozimele kwaba mhlawumbe izimfihlo zokuwa kombuso ozimele e-Afrika.

Amilcar Cabral, “Connecting the struggles”

Ngokucabanga kuka Cabral, umbuso wengcindezi wawungeke uketulwe wenziwe ukuba ube ngaphansi kwenkululeko yentando yeniningi. Uhulumeni omusha wawungafezeka uma kushitshwa indlela imizabalzo ehanjiswa ngayo. Ngesikhathi somzabalazo, uCabral wabona umbuso omusha uvuka ezindaweni zenkululeko ngenkathi impi isaqhubeka.

Njengokuba u-Gibson eyibeka uthi:

UCabral wayecabanga ngekusasa kwi namhlanje ezimweni eziwusizo kwisikhungo sokwakha (institution building in the liberated zone) phakathi kwendawo yenkululeko. Uma uqhathanisa isinanakazana (parasitic) sekoloni yomashiqeka (authoritarian) ubeka uthi, sakha umbuso ngomzabalazo “

Nigel Gibson, in Manji & Fletcher (ed.s) 2013.25

Amandla abantu

Izingunqoko ngokubusa ngentando yeningi (Revolutionary Democracy) zifuna abantu bazilwele ngakho konke ukuze bazizwele engathi amalungelo omhlaba asezandleni zabo. Kuze kube manje abakaze bazizwele kanjalo. Kwezinye izindawo lapho inkululeko isifinyelele khona amanye amakhomanisi aseqhwaqele amandla abantu.

Ailcar Cabral, "Revolutionary Democracy" 1969

Njengo Frantz Fanon, uAmilcar Cabral wabona ukuthi kubalulekile ukuthi umzabalazo wenkululeko e-Afrika uqondisise ubudlelwane phakathi kweningi kanye nedlanzana labantu abanothile elaligqugquzela izingunqoko ezazinomcabango wokuthi bacabange ukuthi bangongcweti bezihlakaniphi, abanemibono futhi abangabahlaziyi (theorists).

Ukugwema ukubukela phansi amandla abantu, uCabral wathi kubalulekile ukuthi laba abazimele kahle bazehlise, futhi ukuzehlisa kube yinto eqhubekayo ukuze bakwazi ukugxilisa imicabango yabo nomsebenzi ezimpilweni zalabo abanthintwa ngqo wumzabalazo.

Ukuze bakwazi ukudlala indima emzabalazweni laba abazimele kahle kumele bakwazi ukuzehlisa ukuze bakwazi ukuba ingxenye yomzabalazo wenguqoko, futhi bakwazi ukuhlonza noma babeyingxenye yalabo abafisa ukubaxhasa noma abazwelana nabo.

Amilcar Cabral, Cuba, 1966

Ngeshwa ngaphambi kwezinqubo zokuzibusa kwezwe lase Guinea-Bissau namanye amazwe ase Afrika alandela ngemva kokubulawa kuka Cabral, uSamir Amin kungenzeka uneqiniso uma ethi:

Labo abazimele kahle kuwo wonke amazwe ase Afrika abazange bazehlise, kodwa baba abasekeli bakahulumeni wengcindezelo, basekela izinhlelo zepolitiki yabo nokusebenza kwayo.

UCabral uzamile ngakho konke anakho ukuvimbela imiphumela efana nale, ngalokho ufanele ukubizwa njengomholi owayenesibingi futhi engasabi nokuthatha izinqumo ezazimfaka ebungozini. Ungomunye wesizukulwane sokuqala e-Afrika esasilwela inkululeko.

S. Amin, in Manji & Fletcher (ed.s) 2013, 57-8.

Ngenkathi ubuholi bomdabu buloku buqhubeka buguquka buba sohlangothini lwabazimele kahle.... abasebenzi basemadolobheni nabasebenzi bezolimo ababexhashazwa umbuso wangaphandle, kuvuleleleka ukuba izinto zibukeke ngelinye iso ngenxa yoguquko lwezinto ngenkululeko yesizwe (Evolution of national liberation).

Amilcar Cabral, The Weapons of Theory, 1966