

The Grassroots Program of the Nationalist Movement

... patriotism means the safeguard of the existence of the nation and also of their own existence and welfare.

Le Duan

Amilcar Cabral once said that oppressed people don't fight for ideas, but to see their lives and the lives of their children go forward. Did he mean by this that ideas aren't important? No! He meant that the struggle for the independence of the nation must be grounded by the daily struggles to satisfy the immediate needs of the masses.

As Cabral and the PAIGC fought against Portuguese colonialism, and for their national liberation, they focused upon the real lives and the concrete needs of their people for, say, better roads, for education, for health care, for better working conditions and better pay -- they had to pay attention to what We sometimes refer to as the "democratic" content -- as well as to the nationalist content -- of the struggle for national independence and socialist development.

We're calling for the development of a comprehensive, nationalist, revolutionary-democratic program. You can call it a "grassroots" program, or a "reformist" program, or a "struggle for democratic/human rights" -- the terms are essentially interchangeable, so long as there is a mass stand, and a revolutionary orientation.

We believe that in order to further the development of a nationalist movement, and to eventually gain the support of the masses of Afrikans in the U.S. and win national independence, We must carry out a nationalist revolutionary-democratic program -- a program arising from the needs and aspirations of the masses for improvement of their immediate livelihood, and for eventual control of our society's social and productive relations.

A nationalist revolutionary-democratic program is the means by which We raise the fundamental contradictions between our people and the U.S. Such a program attacks all pillars of the oppressive state (i.e., its economy, its judicial, political and socio-cultural systems), and thus undermines the influence of the U.S. and that of its neo-colonial puppets inside our nation. As We apply the pressure, the covers are pulled off of the puppets and off of the puppeteer, as they fail to fulfill the expectations of those who continue to believe in "the American Way," and who straddle the fence rather than choose independence and socialism.

"... 'Going among the people, learning from the people, and serving the people' is really stating that We must find out exactly what the people need and organize them around these needs." **(George Jackson)**

The key words there are "We must find out exactly what the people need" -- because We have a tendency to substitute our needs for those of the people, i.e., We try to impose upon the people programs that arise out of our heads rather than from the conditions of their lives -- and then We usually become frustrated when the programs don't realize their anticipated results. And then, usually, We curse the people and claim that they are backward, rather than our trying to understand that "the people aren't fighting for ideas, but to make their lives and the lives of their children go forward." The task then, for us, is to develop the means by which

We join the people, wherever they are, in their efforts to improve and to safeguard their lives and the lives of their children!

...For a very long time the native devotes [his/her] energies to ending certain definite abuses: forced labor, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights, etc. This fight for democracy against the oppression... will slowly leave the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nationhood....

(Frantz Fanon)

All confrontations with those who rule are battles in the war against neo-colonialism, settler-imperialism, and for national independence. Struggles for democratic rights aren't ends in themselves, but they are necessary battles in the protracted struggle for national liberation and socialist development -- **if** they are waged by the masses, and from a revolutionary nationalist standpoint.

Long before the masses take up the slogan "Free The Land!" the war for the land has begun -- waged through struggles for "Afrocentric curriculums" in the schools. As the masses fight for adequate health care...as AIDS continues to eat its way into our lives and as We struggle against it, the war is on to "Free the Land!" As We engage the battles to stop the physical and mental abuse of the women and children, and of the gay and lesbian men and women of the nation -- all this and more is part of the war to "Free the Land!" However, it won't be a successful war unless and until the nationalist movement begins to assume responsibility for these issues--responsibility for all of the problems confronting all of the people of the nation, on a daily basis.

The road to an independent and socialist National Territory goes by way of the control of apartment buildings, housing complexes, schools, hospitals, city blocks, and southern counties. It's in the course of such struggles that nationalist and revolutionary consciousness develops: The masses begin to see that they have a set of interests that are separate and opposed to those of the U.S. and to those neo-colonial puppets who now claim positions of leadership within the nation. In the course of grassroots struggles to satisfy basic needs, the masses no longer stand in awe of the oppressive regime and its puppets, and come to see the need and the possibility for self-rule.

In the course of struggles for democratic rights, the masses acquire experience in combat against the enemy and in their own leadership abilities. As the masses unite, organize, struggle and develop their strengths, there arise contending ideological and material bases of power, i.e., new ideas, institutions, and other mechanisms for harnessing and directing the people's resources -- for self-development, and self-government. That is, as the people engage, say, the economic institutions of the oppressive state, the dialectic between theory and practice will call for the creation of new theories for economic development, for new methods for producing and distributing the wealth produced by the nation-becoming.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

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