

# Portugal is not an Imperialist Country

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*Extract of a speech by Amilcar Cabral given at a solidarity rally in Helsinki (Finland) on 20 October 1971.*

You know that in our fight we do not try to explain to our militants, our people, our populations, how deep and complex is the fight against imperialism. Our people's situation was such, prior to the beginning of the fight, our political experience so slight, that it would have been difficult for us to pose the question of this fight on the basis of one directly aimed against colonialism and imperialism. We were forced to conduct our people's mobilization and organization for the struggle, at first, on the basis of concrete everyday problems of their life, moving later to larger concepts, to generalized views of colonialism and imperialism. Today people understand very well what is meant by colonialism, and Portuguese colonialism in particular, and are beginning to develop in their minds a clear notion of the phenomenon of imperialism. But last year, during a meeting with the members of our party's local units, I was discussing with them problems concerning Portuguese colonialism, and I said that Portugal is not an imperialist country; it is a colonialist country in the imperialist chain, but that its own nature is not that of an imperialist country.

Anyone familiar with Portugal's economy throughout its history quickly realizes that the Portuguese economic substructure has never attained a level which we may term imperialist. After the Treaty of Methuen of 1701, Portugal became a semi-colony of England, and at the level of Africa's exploitation it has been and still is nothing but an intermediate agent of our people's imperialist exploitation. It is the policeman of this exploitation, but it is not the real imperialist power which exploits our people. We have but to be reminded that most Portuguese industries, including that of the famous Porto wine, railways, telephones, etc. belong, just as do Portuguese mines, to

foreign enterprises. We have but to be reminded that more than 60% of its exports from Angola and Mozambique go to the U.S., England, Belgium, France, West Germany, but not to Portugal.

But my peasant comrade, from a village party unit, who knew nothing of such things, when he heard me say that Portugal is not imperialist, told me: 'Cabral, everyone tells us that we fight against imperialism, that we fight against the Portuguese, but now you're telling us that they are not imperialists; so, tell me: who is Mr. Imperialism that everyone speaks about but no one sees?.' We see thus posed, in the language of a peasant, the main question of the fight against imperialism, that is, the distinction between imperialism and imperialist domination. Sometimes we hear people cry out 'Down with imperialism' in their own country, but in reality they are fighting against imperialist domination. It appears to be of vital importance to distinguish imperialism from imperialist domination, to situate both in their historical perspective and to define their geographical locations.

As you well know, a new system of production and its distribution, called capitalism, emerged historically out of the Middle Ages. In certain countries capitalism developed with all the contradictions inherent in the development known as imperialism. Imperialism – as you know better than myself – is the result of the gigantic concentration of financial capital in capitalist countries through the creation of monopolies, and firstly of the monopolies of capitalist enterprises. This monopoly domination is essentially and characteristically an economic phenomenon. Then there follow implications of a political, social, cultural, moral character. We must thus distinguish the economic fact of these implications on the one hand, and characterize the relationship of capitalism with the rest of the world, on the other. It is not an overstatement to assert that, from the moment that the economic and financial (thus monopolistic) domination attained a certain level and thus was consolidated, a relentless struggle began between free enterprise capital and financial capital, the latter represented by monopolies and banks. Even a superficial analysis of contemporary and present-day economic history, shows that, in general, financial capital, i.e. imperialism, is the victorious element in this fight. This is to say that capitalism has given birth to imperialism, and has created the conditions necessary for the destruction of the former. You know that this new situation is characterized by complex contradictions that lead to a permanent confrontation, be it an open and peaceful one or not, between the imperialist countries themselves, in search of a new equilibrium in the relationship of forces, and in function of the need to obtain raw materials and markets. Imperialism appears, when analysed in this fashion, with its real face, situated where it really belongs, that is, in the capitalist countries which have become imperialist ones. Thus, imperialism exists in capitalist countries and not in our countries.

It was the steadily increasing need for new markets and raw materials, the insatiable thirst for surplus value, which determined the imperialist domination of the world. By the time imperialism had attained a very high level, it had already made a first division of the world; it is at the beginning of this

century that it proceeded, as you know, to make a new partition, particularly of Africa, by means of the Berlin Conference. That is to say that the internal concentration of financial capital in capitalist countries goes hand in hand with the monopolization of colonies, their conquest by imperialist countries.

It is in the framework of this colonial monopoly that the sharpest contradictions among capitalist countries themselves have been revealed, leading to two world wars. It is also in this framework that it is interesting to consider how Portugal, a non-imperialist country, an underdeveloped country, succeeded in preserving its colonies, despite the fierce jealousy of the imperialist countries. We can say clearly that England is responsible for this success. At the time of the Berlin Conference, Portugal was really a semi-colony of England. England pursued the tactic of defending Portuguese interests vigorously because it knew that, if Portugal could preserve its colonies, England would be able to exploit them as if they were its own. England prevented Angola and Mozambique in particular, but also Guinea, the Cape Verde Islands, etc., from becoming prey for the other imperialist countries. In the course of the partition, they were preserved by Portugal but exploited by England as well.

Thus, imperialist domination is the economic and political domination of non-capitalist countries or peoples by imperialism or imperialist powers. This is to say that we consider imperialist countries as a core in the general framework of the world economy. They have created on their periphery countries dominated by imperialism. If a country was still at a non-capitalist stage of development, the domination was purely colonialist. If such a country had already certain beginnings of capitalism, the domination was neo-colonialist, or semi-colonial. Thus imperialism, or rather the domination of people by financial capital, operates in colonialist, neo-colonialist, or semi-colonialist forms. It is this domination which is found in our countries, from Vietnam or China, to Cuba, or Tierra del Fuego, or Chile, as well as for a time in certain European countries, such as Portugal and others. It is this imperialist-dominated area which is generally called today the poor South in contrast with the rich North.

But it is important to distinguish the various situations found in both the poor South and the rich North. It is not all homogeneous. We lack the time necessary to analyse this distinction. We would simply like to emphasize its existence. Countries such as Sweden, Finland and others, even though they belong to the rich North, have never been imperialist countries.

What is important is to conclude by saying that the fight against imperialism must be fought within the imperialist countries, and the struggle against imperialist domination must be fought in our own countries. In this fight against imperialist domination in our countries, we consider that the most important struggle today is the one directed against neo-colonialism. In its classical form colonialism exists no longer, even if we are fighting an archaic Portuguese colonialism, whereas neo-colonialism continues to establish its roots everywhere in the world by means of puppets in order to deceive the people in their struggle for real liberation. Cuba fought against

a neo-colonialism practically as old as its fictitious independence, and was able to win. Vietnam presently fights courageously against an also quite neo-neo-colonialism, and will undoubtedly win in South Vietnam just as it has won in North Vietnam.

What is important is to recognize the obvious character of the intimate link between the fight against imperialism in imperialist countries, and that against the imperialist domination in our countries. The eventual destruction of financial capital within the capitalist world necessarily implies the destruction of imperialist domination. If, by some miracle, monopoly financial capital in the United States were to be destroyed, and if this country were to become a progressive one the Vietnamese people's fight would cease to make sense. What is important is to realize that the progressive destruction of imperialist domination of our countries is a decisive factor in the destruction of financial capital in imperialist countries. In this intimate and dynamic connection between these struggles, is located the decisive importance of the unity and solidarity of all anti-imperialist forces in the world. Unity and solidarity are decisive factors for the overall success of the fight against imperialism.