WHO CONTROLS AFRICA?
INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet is part of a series, the Black Liberation Series, published by the Black Liberation Front. They have developed out a number of BLF discussion documents. These discussion documents were first intended to serve as starting points in the discussions which began to take place within the Black Liberation Front from around 1978. They came about because many members of the organisation, which was formed in 1971, became convinced that the old narrow nationalist political line, which the organisation had followed up till then, had done great harm to it and left it completely unprepared to play an active and leading role in the rising struggles of the Black community.

As a result the papers dealt with many questions which were seen as important to the development of a better understanding of the struggle of Black people for freedom. These ranged from general questions, such as understanding how societies work, to more specific ones such as the structure of the Black community in Britain. These discussions were a clear example of the development of the organisation’s political understanding since it had published the document “Revolutionary Black Nationalism”. This development continues today. During the discussions many changes were made in the original papers, some were rewritten altogether and some were scrapped completely. Nevertheless, this process was an important first step in helping the organisation to break away from its narrow nationalist past and to build a more revolutionary understanding of the nature of Black people’s struggle.

The Black Liberation Front has decided to publish these documents for a number of reasons. In the first place they are intended to provide people interested in joining the organisation with an understanding of the organisation’s general political position. Secondly, it is hoped that they will make a contribution to the ongoing discussion within the Black Liberation Movement.
WHO CONTROLS AFRICA?

Today in Africa, there are over 40 officially independent countries, all members of the Organisation of African Unity, and each one with a government made up of Africans.

It is only in occupied Azania (South Africa) and Namibia that there is any longer open foreign control of any part of Africa.

However, things are not always what they seem, and a close look at the living conditions of the African working people can only lead to one conclusion and that is that they do not control Africa. For despite living in a vast and beautiful continent rich in all types of natural resources, they continue to live a life of extreme poverty and hardship. It is clear that the wealth of the continent is neither under their control or used for their benefit. To get an understanding of who now controls Africa, we have to look back into the history of the continent.

Slavery, Colonialism and Independence

By the middle of the 15th century, Africa presented a varied picture of different societies. Throughout the continent there were large empires with kings, queens and state officials, as well as smaller societies where the ordinary people had more power. Each society had its own history and course of development. The rise of the European slave trade marked the first step in the destruction of Africa's independence and its falling under the control of the European capitalist. During the slave trade millions upon millions of Africans were uprooted from their societies and transported across the Atlantic to slave in the Caribbean and the Americas. This evil trade had a devastating effect on the African societies. In particular, the removal of such large numbers of people disrupted their economies. Production of food and other necessities fell into decline and in some societies the capturing and selling of slaves became the main way of making a living. Such was the havoc caused by this trade that the Igbo people of eastern Nigeria called this period "the time when the world fell apart".

Following the slave trade and beginning in the late 19th century came the second phase of the process which was eventually to lead to Africa coming under the total control of the European ruling class.

This was the period of the direct colonisation of Africa by the European powers. In 1884 at the Berlin Conference the capitalist states of Western Europe divided up Africa among themselves and the "Scramble for Africa" got into top gear. These powers launched widescale military invasions of every part of the continent, but it was not until around 1912 that they were eventually able to overcome the powerful resistance of the African people, and establish their total colonial domination over Africa.

As soon as the military conquest of the continent had been achieved the European capitalists set up their own colonial government and administration and took various measures to forcefully integrate Africa into the world capitalists system and to exploit its people and natural resources. In the first place they used laws, taxes and other means to prevent the African people from producing food, and instead forced them to produce raw materials for western Europe's industries. In this way cocoa became Ghana's main crop, palm oil Nigeria's, rubber Liberia's and so on. In other cases the colonialists stole the African peoples land and set up plantations to produce these crops, with the African people as labourers. In other instances, they concentrated their efforts on getting their hands on the natural resources of the particular colony, through the setting up of the mining industry, a good example of which was the copper mining industry in Zambia. However, generally the capitalists saw the colonies as a source of raw materials for western Europe, and this is how they were developed, without any regard to the interest of the African people. As a result the economies of the African colonies were very lopsided and the vast majority of the people depended on one crop or industry for a living. However, this was not all, and to make the colonies a secure market for the goods their industries in Europe produced, the colonialists took steps to destroy the local industries. Under this two prong attack the economic independence of Africa was shattered, and the continent fell under the economic domination of western imperialism. This provided the basis for the political social and cultural domination, which closely followed it. A very good picture of a colonial economy was painted by Miguel Trouvolda Prime Minister of Sao Tome and Principe, in a statement he made in April 1976; "We have inherited an economy of the colonial type based essentially on the monoculture of cocoa. The country's economy depended on the outside world not only in production, but also in consumption since we exported everything that we produced and imported everything the people needed. The economy was concentrated in the hands of Portuguese colonialists, 90% of the land and all of the commerce was in their hands. Our people only participated in this economy with their hands, to allow the enrichment of the Portuguese colonialist. This point is further reinforced by the fact that in 1974 Guinea Bissau an ex-colony of Portugal sent 98% of its exports to that country and received 66% of its imports from there, whereas 3% came from African countries and 1% of its exports went elsewhere in Africa.

The African people, however, never accepted the colonial domination of the continent, and by the 1950's and 60's there had developed powerful mass movements against colonialism and for the independence of the African countries. In some countries such as Kenya this struggle even reached the stage of armed violence between the African people and the colonial occupiers. The western European colonialist were forced to abandon their old style control of Africa, and to find new means to dominate and exploit the continent and its people. Although it was the
African masses who provided the power and strength of the independence movement, the leaders of this movement usually came from the petty bourgeois class, in particular medium size farmers, teachers and minor officials in the colonial administration. As a result of the type of leadership of the independence movements, the hopes of the African masses for genuine freedom, social progress and African unity were not fulfilled. Apart from a few cases, where these movements for national liberation developed in a revolutionary way such as in Mozambique and Angola, independence brought few changes to the lives of the ordinary African people. In most cases the petty-bourgeois leadership simply took over the running of the system which the colonialists had implanted in Africa, made a few mild reforms and introduced a national flag and anthem. In the countries where this took place, such as Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia and most of the other countries on the continent it came to be known as neocolonialism since it was no more than a new colonialism. In fact it did little to break the stranglehold which the imperialists had established over Africa. Today this control is as apparent as ever.

**Neo-Colonialism in Action**

Despite the fact that over forty African states are today considered to be independent, the western imperialist countries still maintain their control over the continent. In the first place the economies of the African countries are very weak, suffering as they do from nearly a hundred years of colonialism. Many of these economies depend on one crop or mineral the vast majority of which is exported to western Europe, where the price is also fixed. As a result, the fall in the price of these commodities can force some African countries into bankruptcy. But there are many more features of western imperialism's economic strangulation of Africa. Direct investment by multi-national corporations in Africa is one of the main means for exploiting the people and resources of the continent. This can be seen very clearly by the fact that whereas between 1973-79 international capitalists invested U.S. $4.9 billion in Africa, in the same period they reap a profit U.S. $15.9 billion from the continent. Further to this the so-called “aid” which the imperialist countries and international organisations like the World Bank and IMF, make available to African countries as loans has had equally disastrous effects. Above all else this aid has led the African countries into massive debts. It was estimated that in 1972 the “independent” states of Africa owed the western imperialists some U.S. $16.3 billion, and that 55.7% of new loans were being used to pay back the old debts. The heavy burden which these debts are to the working people, who are the ones who have to produce the wealth to pay them off, can be seen from the fact that in 1980 25% of Sudan’s national budget was being used to pay the interest on the debts which it owed the international capitalists.

Another aspect of the economic domination of Africa is the fact that some multinational companies control a whole sector, such as oil production, mining or plantation agriculture, of the economy of certain countries. This puts these companies in a position to direct the development of the national economy into those areas, they consider suitable. Even trade between the imperialist countries and the African states show up the imperialist domination of Africa.

In order to maintain their economic hold over Africa the imperialist countries actively interfere in the political life of the African countries. In the first place, they bribe the corrupt African ruling class and put all types of pressures on them to follow the policies which the imperialists like. This is exactly what happened when the reactionary African leaders, under pressure from their U.S. masters sabotaged the 1982 O.A.U. conference which was due to be held in Libya. In those cases where bribes and other pressures don’t succeed they organise military coups, political assassinations and other types of subversion. In some cases they organise direct military intervention to defend pro-western African leaders. Such was the case with Britain’s intervention in Gambia and France’s in Zaire. Some imperialist countries already have military bases in Africa, for example the U.S. has one in Kenya, and some carry out military exercises with the troops of certain African countries. Alongside this economic and political control of Africa, the rotten imperialist culture of individualism, selfishness, greed depravity and senseless violence has also penetrated the continent.

**The African Ruling Class**

The African bourgeoisie, which is made up of big businessmen, top civil servants, politicians, and the chieftains of the armed forces and police, are the ruling class in most African countries. Without this class the imperialists could not maintain their hold over Africa.

They are in fact the enemy agents within the ranks of the African people. Many of them work as the representatives of various multi-national firms in Africa, and many others are on the payroll of the western espionage services such as the C.I.A. and M.I.6. Most of the military chiefs have been trained in the West in such places as Sandhurst in Britain and West Point in the U.S.A.

This class which is very corrupt is already notorious for the major theft of the wealth of the African countries, which they have carried out. Many of them live in extreme luxury, and are the main imitators and followers of western imperialist culture in Africa. Although some of them try to present themselves as real African nationalists, and some adopt long African names, as a whole they are strong allies of the western imperialists and oppressors of the African people. They are not mere puppets who do not know what they are doing, in fact they have sided with the imperialists against the African people. They are extremely ruthless, meting out all types of brutality to crush the resistance of the African people to their neocolonial rule.
A People’s Africa

The struggle to bring Africa under the control of the working people is a very difficult and complicated struggle. Those countries which have started on this path, the path of building scientific socialism, have already met many difficulties. Some of these problems are a result of the colonial plunder of these countries, while others are caused by the efforts of the imperialists and their supporters to sabotage the successful building of socialism in Africa. Nevertheless this is the only way the hopes of the African masses for genuine freedom, social progress and African unity can ever be achieved. To bring Africa under the control of the African people, it's necessary to fight against the imperialists and their allies and to fight for scientific socialism and African unity.
ALSO IN THIS SERIES
No. 1: Understanding Society
No. 2: Capitalism and Socialism
No. 3: Racism
No. 4: Pan-Africanism
No. 5: The Black Community in Britain

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