A Dialectical Approach to Culture

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THE PATH OF TRIBULATIONS undergone by the concept of culture is, today, long indeed! The opinions of "committees of intellectuals" cancel each other out in a sterile dialectic; various "symposia" bring incomprehension and a hollow humanism into a timid encounter with historical truth and the progressive determination of man against the greatest calamity known to history: imperialism.

In countries where a capitalist regime isolates the general populace from scientific and technical attainments, the intellectual fights to retain his false "freedom" and questions himself in vain about the future of a decadent economic and social structure. He is helpless. He somehow constructs a cultural policy in an attempt to strengthen a society whose upheavals are the undeniable symptoms of degeneration, and instead of using the faded light of his poor autocratic reason to seek a new cultural conscience, he sinks into skepticism or, rather, into the terror of a future overshadowed by capitalism.

European trends have dominated the study of cultural problems in Africa. For a long time latter-day Anglo-Saxon anthropology, concerned with justifying the reactionary ideas of colonialism, cited Africa as the home of backward peoples who should be forced to accept colonialist humanitarian civilization.

History has shown that revolutionary maturity cannot be the object of an edict which imperialism would, in any case, never sign! The Anglo-Saxon school of thought allowed for a pseudo-realism worthy of Hume's successors a pseudo-realism the reactionary ideological content of which was soon to be exposed. Vierkandt's disciples, "culturalists" such as Grabner and Ankermann, and functionalists like Malinowski, believed they had discovered the basis of our culture. Their empiricism and its hatred of historical materialism produced a flood of disjointed monographs in which the class war and the imperialist's exploitation of our peoples were denied and reduced to an anti-scientific cultural pluralism.

Archaeologists' pickaxes had evidently not reached the African culture which lay too deeply buried under the irremovable heap of dirt, left behind by the colonialists, which our peoples have now succeeded in uncovering. The anxiety to extricate an authenticity which is, for obvious reasons, indiscoverable, gave rise to a fairly accurate representation of prelogism of Levy-Bruhl, who was already blind. In any case there is no difference of concept between the Blackman unaware of the logical categories of the classical world on the one hand, and the idea of the essentially sensitive black man as a sort of passive, wax creature, only fit to remain at a primary intuitive level in his perception of the outside world, on the other.

Thus it is no accident that African states still have to dedicate a symposium to a topic such as that which unites us today: "African culture and its realities." We recall that twenty years ago many pages were devoted to another topic which at that time seemed provocative and that was, "A black man is a human being." It has become today our historical duty to re-establish ourselves in afield such as culture, because we are emerging from a long period of eclipse during which the most elementary attributes of man notably that of his creativity, were contested and denied to us.

According to a well-nurtured prejudice, Africans took no part in the general task of shaping civilization. Africa is accused of being without history and without culture because it was necessary that this be so. Europeans slaughtered American Indians while at the same time admiring their temples and palaces. They admitted that they massacred the men to take over their land. With their conquests and domination, Europeans destroyed millennial civilizations in Asia, but they never
denied the existence of these civilizations as such, and never contested the quality of their craftsmanship and their human attributes.

Concerning Africa, Europe's first notion was not to exterminate the men with the sole idea of seizing their treasures, but to treat them as beasts to be sold into slavery and as they pleased, sold on the spot or exported to America, or even killed when their capabilities and selling price no longer assured an adequate profit.

To guarantee the success of such a venture a preliminary step was necessary, that of easing one's conscience and reassuring oneself by thinking that it was a question of dealing with beasts and not human beings. Hence the alleged barbarity of Africans and the denial of their culture and civilization gave birth to their estrangement from the human race.

But time did not stop, and progress continued to strengthen in the face of opposition and exploitation. More attention was paid to the legends, the epic poems and the tales passed by word of mouth from generation to generation of the Griots. Archaeology finally penetrated the various continents, thrusting deep into the depths of history and the soil so as to revive and bring to the surface the remains of entombed cultures.

In fact even without archaeological research and the tales of the Griots, ordinary common sense was adequate to realize the absurdity or rather the class-consciousness of those who managed to imagine a cultureless people.

By culture we understand all the material and immaterial works of art and science, plus knowledge, manners, education, a mode of thought, behavior and attitudes accumulated by the people both through and by virtue of their struggle for freedom from the hold and dominion of nature; we also include the result of their efforts to destroy the deviationist politics, social systems of domination and exploitation through the productive process of social life.

Thus culture stands revealed as both an exclusive creation of the people and a source of creation, as an instrument of socio-economic liberation and as one of domination.

Culture implies our struggle, it is our struggle.

Culture—as both the expression and the result of the relationships between man and society, and between man and society on the one hand and nature on the other—is found among all peoples and is inherent in the very process of life. A culture is to be found wherever conscious life exists.

Culture is the sum total of the material and spiritual values created by humanity throughout its history. This creation is both continuous and necessary. It is the corollary, the yardstick and the result of man's action to adapt to his environment so that he can both survive and flourish. It is inspired by the instinct for survival at the first stage and by an awareness of the laws of existence at a higher stage. Therefore it first obeys a simple biological law regulating the survival of the individual and the species before obeying a more complex psychological and socio-economic law. Now the instinct for self-preservation and the need for self-fulfillment are common to all societies and peoples. Every people must struggle to exist by creating the material means of its existence.

AFRICAN peoples, like all peoples, have come along the long road of history through recurrent conflicts whose overall result has been increasing success. The creation of material values, the, creation of spiritual values, the creation and development of this global culture progresses continuously in spite of momentary slowing down, stagnation and setbacks. Material cultural production and spiritual cultural production are dialectically linked and exercise a reciprocal influence on each other. But the absolute priority must rest with material production, which itself participates directly in man's concrete action. For human history has more than once recorded a slackening of spiritual tension, a stagnation of intellectual and political life or even a total annihilation of all intellectual and political activity, but it has never recorded a long-term total interruption of the
development of material civilization. This evolution can, of course, slow down but it can never stop, as its stopping would signify the end of man's creative activity, the disappearance of his powers of adaptation, and mean his extinction.

This material production is a matter of vital necessity, a condition and sign of life. Man's material action is the "prime mover," the source of all else. It aims at the satisfaction of needs, first vital, physical needs and then less immediate ones relating to the assertion and enrichment of the personality, the intellectual and moral needs. This action of both men and society is directed against the environment, against man himself and against nature. It is designed to meet the needs of all and this raises the problem of its efficiency and profitability. To meet the needs of all, material action must have a tactics, a strategy, an intellectual effort to action, a certain degree of planning, both criticism and self-criticism in the light of the results, and a methodology bringing into play a whole series of intellectual operations. Culture is a material and spiritual acquisition, both the product and the price of action.

Creative action springing from a universal imperative and culture, which is its reflection, subject and effect, both constitute universal realities. Wherever there is the necessity of creation, we find culture. As the expression of the relationships between man and society, between man, society and nature, culture poses in the most pressing terms the problem of the dialectic of the general and the particular. Culture is an expression, in particular, specific forms, of a general problem - that of the relationships linking man to his environment. But these relations in turn take on a specific character determined by geographical conditions, the level of development of productive forces and the nature of the means of production as determined by the historical and social context. The cultural level of a people (including the peoples of Africa), its means of conquering knowledge, its manner of explaining phenomena, will depend on the power that it has gained over natural forces, and the degree of objectivity and abstraction attained in the heat of action to gain mastery over ever more perfected techniques. The specific, particular nature of a culture is a reality; it is one of the attributes of national reality in general and of class reality in particular. It expresses conditions of life shared in common, a similarity of attitudes and of reactions to natural and social phenomena.

But there is a general aspect even to this specific particularity. Even if these attitudes and reactions are marked by the irrational at certain stages of historical development, even if they derive from simple emotion at certain points in the action or even if they occur at the level of reflexes, they are fundamentally set in motion and guided by reason with a view to reaching well defined objectives and finding solutions to well defined problems. Specific particularity is not specific to African culture, but to every culture.

This specificity is a general reality. But, apart from this general aspect of specificity, culture, by virtue of its content, the expression of man's eternal aspiration to happiness and to the final unfolding of his nature, with ever increasing power over the environment, culture is in perpetual movement towards the universal. The speed at which culture tends towards the universal is in function of the dialectic of cultural forms and content at a given stage of history.

The universalization of the content of culture in interpreting the aspiration of all peoples will go hand in hand with a greater perfection of its forms of expression, due to the general development of forms and the revolutionization of industrial relations. African culture, like any culture, originated with the African himself and embodies his first preoccupations, his first struggles, his first successes and setbacks.

The course of history and the succession of African culture's development have closely reflected the course of the development of productive forces. Its initial simplicity, low intellectual level and slow rate of progression all reflected the weakness of man's position and the precariousness of his existence. Then over the centuries and down the ages, following the development of productive techniques, culture developed, became diversified, took on shades of meaning and incorporated science, technology, literature, music, dancing and sculpture.
This whole evolution, this progressive qualification is subordinated to reason, to the law of
gnoseology, to the transition from ignorance to an increasingly deeper and more exact degree of
knowledge. Any anthology of African culture tending to situate it outside the realm of reason, of
rational thought, of the law and of gnoseology tends to down-grade it and deviate it from its true end,
which is to qualify mankind, and sacrifices it to the myth of singularity and specificity.

African culture neither has nor needs any foundation other than the concrete life of the
African. With its roots deep in the inner most life of the people it expresses the life, work, ideals and
aspirations of the African people. It has contributed along with other peoples to the development of
science and technology. Prior to the contact with other continents, Africa had begun to smelt metal
and to forge tools and weapons. She had learned to weave fabrics. The notion of chemistry had
developed through various recipes needed to make soap, indigo, ink, to tan hides, etc.

But, to a far greater extent than science, which was handicapped by the persistence
throughout the ages of a low level of technology, African art, African literature, African sculpture,
music and dancing, will occupy or already occupy an important place in humanity's cultural heritage.
The reality of African culture needs no further demonstration, but its infinite realities are still to be
discovered, recorded and described.

On the other hand, in Africa as elsewhere, culture reacts upon those producing it (man and
society) at the same time as it is produced and developed.

Culture is an accumulated experience which modifies man in a linear, progressive and
quantitative manner but with additional qualitative phases of mutation. The result is a new man, a
new society, more skillful and more apt, integrating to an ever-increasing extent the means and the
end of action, and perfecting to an ever greater extent technology and means of action.

Experience, acquired by and for action, becomes an inexhaustible source of energy; both the
instrument and the guide of present and future action. Culture appears then, at one and the same
time, as a creation and a means of creation of man and society, as an expression of the dialectical
relationships between the creator and his creation. It is clearly apparent in its real light, that of a
factor determining and conditioning all else. The conquest of culture has obliged man to mobilize all
his physical and intellectual resources. Once it was conquered, culture became a flame animating
and intoxicating the conqueror, man. So it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that man equals the
culture that formed him and which inspires his behavior and action.

The fact of a culture conditions both the existence of the people and their exercise of
sovereignty and power. For us, to speak of culture is to fight, and, although history has very edifying
examples to offer, such as those which dominate the formation of feudalism, we have chosen to
carry the data of this combat forward into the present era.

Everyone knows what a foul use was made of culture by the predatory powers in the course
of modern history, in their appropriation, among other things, of the African peoples.

After having laid their hands on the essential elements of the culture of their own people, the
upper classes of the colonialist powers used this weapon in their endeavor to dominate and exploit
our continent.

It was first of all necessary to legitimize the various kinds of pillage and colonial domination
in the eyes of established morality. To this end the natural difference between our culture and that of
the peoples of these powers was used to justify and accredit the ignominious assertion that we did
not have any culture and that a culture should be bestowed and imposed upon us.

Here started the crusade for humanization through the culturalization of the "marginal"
peoples, of the peoples which have remained at the stage of "raw material peoples," of peoples
waiting to be manufactured in the Big Factory of civilized men. And presently, so as to ensure that
colonization was everlasting, the colonizers introduced the systematic indoctrination of native workers, which contributed to the smooth functioning of the Big Factory.

The corps of "colonial elites," "men of culture," natives of any level, of any experience and political hue, was created.

On the eve of the disintegration of the colonial empires an "intellectual elite" emerged. It was opposed to the old "colonial elite," but subjectivist in the nature of its opposition.

This new elite tried to make use of all available means. It had suffered from the racist blows that imperialism has dealt to Africa, but it had not understood that although ideology and racist practices may be an effective weapon when wielded by imperialism which is an active racism and a non-culture in history, that racist ideology used by those who are in revolt cannot be but a double-edged weapon which, in the last resort, is profitable only to the imperialist enemy. Therefore, Holy Negritude, be it Arab-Berber or Ethiopian-Bantu, this Negritude is objectively an ideology auxiliary to the general imperialist ideology.

The Master transforms his slave into a Negro whom he defines as a being without reason, subhuman and the embittered slave then protests: as you are Reason, I am Emotion and I take this upon myself. This is how we loop the loops. The Master assumes his pre-eminence, and the Slave his servitude, but the latter claims his right to weep, a right which the Master grants him.

Are conciliation has come about and one understands easily why the imperialist propaganda system, press, radio, cinema, etc., goes to such trouble to spread the comforting concept of Negritude. Negritude is actually a good mystifying anesthetic for Negroes who have been whipped too long and too severely, whipped to a point where they have lost all reason and become purely emotional.

Serious analysis shows the colonial situation is by no means contested by this elite, and that, objectively speaking, far from mobilizing and arming the subjugated peoples, it gives the colonizers an easy conscience by accrediting the existence of certain liberty of thought and action within the colonial system.

From this point of view, the intellectual elite, while being subjectively in opposition, objectively completes the arsenal of colonial domination. While the latter appropriates popular culture for its own profit, it deprives the colonized people of its best defensive and offensive weapons, an autonomously created culture nurtured by themselves.

The combination of two circumstances: a people deprived of its own culture on the one hand, and the tremendous development of science and technology (elements of culture) by the imperialist, made a certain kind of culture into a deadly weapon in the hands of the neocolonialist, at the time the former colonies were attaining national independence.

It must be admitted that the frightened attitude of many African governments towards cynical imperialist arrogance, the helplessness of the peoples who were victims of neo-colonialist coup d’états, were a result of the fact that these peoples had been deprived of their culture. The most powerful weapon for the rape and renewed subjugation of our peoples now available to imperialism and neo-colonialism is a certain kind of culture.

The invincible weapon, defensive against imperialism and colonialism and offensive for the complete emancipation of our peoples, is culture which has once again become the creation of an entire society and the source of all progressive creation.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that culture, a super structure born from an infrastructure, which it modifies and qualitatively transforms in its turn, is the reality of a class of ideological classes.
One should not mistake this expression for a form of neo-idealism: by ideological classes, we are referring to classes which are by no means born from a simple economic and social stratification; we are faced here with a fundamental choice between two and no more possibilities which are mutually exclusive, viz. between:

1. The ideology of domination, and prostration under domination.
2. The ideology of struggle against any kind of domination and of the complete sovereignty of the people, power being exercised by and for the people.

All the activities of the Guinean Democratic Party are based on this second ideology which is manifest in all the aspects of life without a single exception.

Thus it is understood that culture is a field of action where man, society, nature, men and peoples confront one another. In this merciless combat, the reconnoitering and conquering of ground are essential for victory. The superiority of arms is a superiority of culture, at least in its material and technical aspects. And it is this superiority in the production of culture which enables a people to dominate other peoples and impose its spiritual culture on them.

Culture is a more effective weapon than guns for the purpose of domination. For it was scientific, technical and technological culture which produced the guns. The prerequisite for any domination, exploitation and oppression is the denial to the oppressed man or people of his or their human attributes and therefore, in the first instance, cultural activities.

Before conquering, dominating and subjugating a people, the ruler asserts the superiority of his culture and civilization and proclaims its civilizing mission to those he has declared arbitrarily and unilaterally to be barbarian, savage, uncultured, and without civilization. The rulers take it for granted that the understanding of nature with a view to exploiting it in order to promote technical advancement is their exclusive privilege, their property. But opinions more authoritative and more justified than those of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism stated that nature was understandable to any individual and that man, provided he was aware of the historical significance of his existence, was capable of penetrating further every day into the secrets of nature, and increasing his power over it in order to increase his control of it.

What is important, at a given historical moment in the process of the knowledge and control of natural forces, is not so much the quality of knowledge and its conformity to the absolute truth as the way men and people are aware of their abilities and possibilities for understanding, and of their unfailing will to progress. In this process, the characteristic factor is an attitude, a turn of mind leading to self-reliance and confidence in the people. Acquired knowledge and the degree of truth which characterized it, belong to a quantitative factor linked with facilities used in research, experiment, and application.

This is a historical stage in development which each people will achieve more or less quickly according to their means, the pre-requisite being once again the belief that what is unknown can be known. No people are more gifted, more intelligent than others, but there are differences in historical contexts. Imperialists and exploiters blinded by the will to exploit are incapable of understanding this primary truth. Their culture is made up of guns, whips, hard labor and training which deny, humiliate and depersonalize those under the colonial yoke.

For the bourgeoisie and its colonialist allies, masses must be kept in ignorance, for ignorant individuals can distort culture if they attain it. Peasants and workers are incapable of preserving cultural values, let alone creating new ones. This propaganda has been proved to be absurd in those countries where socialism is being introduced. Revolution is the only way to insure that science and culture will thrive and not decline.

Culture, through art, literature, techniques, etc., is the image of men's activity. Thus, hunt dances imitate the movement and pace of the game hunted. The stylized choreography of the African savannah hunter imitating the lion or the elephant even so far as to include its appearance,
aesthetically poor only in the minds of the exploiters who hate all that is connected with the people. War is a hunt where man is the game, and culture is an imitation of war episodes. The dances of the Sofas of Samori or the "tudos" of the Damel Tagne latDior, the Boko (challenge dances) of a N'Beur-Kat (Senegalese wrestler) like the famous wrestler Modum Khule (who actually existed) are real masterpieces, especially when accompanied by songs and gestures of attack like those of the phalanges mentioned by Stanley. Culture is the image, the record of both experience and the techniques of production.

Sayings, proverbs, tales and folk songs express the wish for a bountiful production and the experience of mastery over nature; hence the naive materialism of peasant cultures co-existing with the idealism arising from their ignorance.

Authors as perspicacious as Frazer, in their rejection of historical materialism, were not able to account scientifically for magic. The experience of the fight against nature enables man to acquire knowledge. But given his limited means and sometimes even the implacable hostility of physio-chemical determinism, the major secrets of nature are all the more difficult to penetrate in that their world is unknown. Magic then becomes a conjuration, and rites reproduce gestures acquired from experience, which are regarded as valuable if occult creatures are favorable. Hence man invokes the experiences aiming at limiting damages, natural disasters, and at killing beasts which destroy the crops, etc.

Should development stop at that stage, it would lead to ignorance. Imperialism soon found out that its power lay in this. It had to transform us into sacred, helpless beings facing natural and historical necessities. Kept in such an ignorant state, oppressed peoples are prey to prejudice and terror before invisible powers which are all the more alienating in that they are closely linked with their culture. Misery and physical decline are given an explanation except when this latter unveils the monstrous responsibilities of the imperialist exploiters.

Culture is the synthesis of people's activities. To fight together against diseases and hunger, to control nature and to widen the scope of knowledge are the tasks of the whole of mankind. Scientific and technical culture is the highest manifestation of collective creativeness. It has led to the eradication of several natural scourges.

From the historical point of view, no culture can be free of a class content. Unless it is a fake to camouflage some stupidity of the ideologists of exploiting regimes, every culture follows a well-defined political line. African feudalism for example did not experience private land control while, on the contrary, it was the case in Europe, where the lords came to consider themselves as the owners of the land they were entrusted with simply defending against possible invaders. That is the origin of the collective nature of peasant dances, where the gestures cover the whole range of free agricultural activity.

Culture, like all social phenomena, is characterized by class struggle. Cultural power, the container and contents of economic and political power, is thus a powerful oppressive weapon in the hands of the exploiters. Culture for the people has rightly been considered as the bete noire of the ideologists of capitalism.

It is logical for capitalistic exploitation to deny workers access to the culture they have created. Thus it is that sociologists, reactionary historians, with a view to justifying such a monopolization and to praising it, put forward the theory of the development of culture by an elite. The idea is that mankind is indebted to a handful of such genial individuals as Darwin, Einstein, Shakespeare, and Beethoven for its achievements in art, science, technology, and literature. Of course, tribute should be paid to these men. But if it is true that their active existence is a proof that culture is created by an elite, how can one explain that individuals endowed with equal genius did not exist in the days of the Leakeyman or Sinanthropus?
Science has never been a one-man concern. It is usually retorted that, in the past, a scholar used to work by himself. In fact a scientist can make discoveries or inventions and enrich the heritage of mankind only in a favorable social and cultural context. Nowadays, the method of scientific research has altered. The scientist forms part of a team. The "demonstration" of this method has not yet led to the realization that collective work was a necessity due to the complexity of problems and the scope of modern science. It is also due to the fact that capitalism aims at monopolizing and exploiting brigades of brains. But as far as we are concerned we are fully aware that this method, of which capitalism considers only the effects, is the very basis of scientific inventiveness. Besides, scientific workers are the perpetuators of the efforts of past generations.

It is here that I and the poet Victor Hugo are in agreement. I wrote: "... one discovery may fundamentally or partially question a scientific principle previously considered sacrosanct and which had therefore prevailed till then... undoubtedly it is the law of continuous advance which prevails." Hugo wrote: "Science is continuous scratching with fruitful results; science is a ladder. ..." The foundations of culture have been created and the conditions for its progress are created by the working masses which are the makers of history.

Literature and art have thrived for a long time in the form of folklore: epic poems, legends, tales, proverbs, songs served as a basis for writers. Painters and artists drew inspiration from the applied arts created by the people; popular art is an inexhaustible treasury of patterns and methods, a source of exaltation for writers and artists. It generates and feeds the national form of the art and literature of every country; science stems from the people's genius.

Consequently, culture is not the privilege of those exploiters who have, by depriving the masses of the benefits of science and culture and by keeping them in ignorance, found a justification for their class supremacy. For intelligence and talent are not the privilege of a class; the force of the spirit, talent and will of thousands of workers is reflected in all cultural creations.

Culture, a weapon of domination, will be one of liberation. In this instance, one must fight on ground of the enemy's choosing but one where the issue of the fight will be governed by an adequate weapon: popular culture. The imperialists use cultural, scientific, technical, economic, literary and moral values in order to justify and perpetuate their regime of exploitation and oppression. The oppressed peoples also use cultural values, but of a nature contrary to the former, in order to fight more successfully against imperialism and in order to free themselves from the colonial regime.

Resistance and then the offensive, will be organized, first of all, in the cultural field. Colonized man must first recollect himself, critically analyze the results of the influences to which he was subjected by the invader, which are reflected in his behavior, way of thinking and acting, his conception of the world and society and in his way of assessing the values created by his own people.

In the first place, he must undertake to re-conquer his own personality by denying the cultural values which have depersonalized him, by de-colonizing his own mind, his customs, and his attitudes, by dismantling the philosophical systems justifying dominations, particularly Levy-Bruhl's notorious myth of primitive and prelogic mind as opposed to the intellectual and moral superiority complex of the colonizer. The colonized man must free himself from his inferiority complexes and embody man in what he represents of absolute values, aspirations to the universal.

This first stage of liberation, of struggle for the liquidation of the various complexes of the colonized man is not to be dissociated from the following stage - that of the reconquest of lost values, of possessions denied and lost, attributes of a sensible man who thinks and acts in a dignified way and is aware of his potentialities. Nature abhors a vacuum, even on the cultural level. One cannot extirpate from the mind of colonized man the culture which has been imposed upon him and which has poisoned him, except by offering him a substitute culture, namely his own culture, which implies an action to restore to life, revalorize and popularize that culture.
However, this action is possible only in the larger framework of the struggle for national liberation and social promotion. Culture cannot flower properly without putting an end to the causes which have been stifling it; but conversely the cult of cultural authenticity, the struggle for the reconquest of this authenticity by activating the awareness of popular masses and their mobilization, activate the process of political and social liberation, as well as forging the nation through the creation of a melting pot in which the simple citizen is formed without any consideration of tribe or race.

This free man within a free people who has rediscovered his physical and mental balance can thence forward assume the entire responsibility for his own destiny. He can and must widen boundlessly the bases of his cultural heritage, diversify them, direct them in order to clarify any action likely to be undertaken with a view to improving the conditions of existence and prosperity. The imperialists have dominated and oppressed peoples because of a technical superiority they had previously acquired. The peoples in turn, animated by the conviction that the faculty of research, discovery and invention is the thing most fairly shared among men, will throw themselves into the battle for sciences and technics. Scientific culture, the ideal means of domination and production of goods, is a factor for progress in the creation of material culture and spiritual culture.

Yes, culture is an instrument of freedom, an anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, anti-neo-colonialist weapon, a means of dominating nature, always providing it is a progressive, revolutionary culture created and consumed by the people on the basis of popularization. Only such a culture frees man of himself, of his egoistical tendency, of the vanity and pride and the fear which inhibit him, only such a culture frees and promotes a people by reconciling them with their authentic nature and opening for them the way to the future and the universal.

Today, national liberation and the edification of socialism are scheduled in the program of revolutionary Africa. All kinds of imperialists, colonialists, neo-colonialists, armies of ideological puppets, traders of peoples have taken fright when confronted with the determination of our masses, and vilify socialism and present it as an ideology of terror. The only reason for such a display of anti-revolutionary force is our determination to free Africa from the lust of imperialism, our determination to build an Africa having nothing to do with the exploitation of man by man.

However, we would be supporting a determinism similar to a wait-and-see policy and to fatalism, if we limited our victory to the eradication of imperialism and its self-destruction. For, while such a system bears in itself the germs of its own destruction, history teaches us that the duration of the regimes of exploitation of man by man depends on the intensity of intervention and the cultural level of the oppressed peoples. It is therefore important to create revolutionary conditions in order to enable citizens to give the best of themselves. Culture, being a synthesis of people’s activities, is a power whose democratic mastery provides the masses with unexpected capacities of ideological and material creation and improvement.

It was through cultural power that the Master managed to justify and maintain his political power and economic domination over the Slave. It is through usurpation of cultural power - in the form of science, technology, methodology, art and a certain conception of the world - that neo-colonialist imperialism is still controlling many governments and exploiting the peoples it is supposed to help.

The other aspect of the elite’s monopoly is that it cripples culture; capitalism, which is only concerned with the creation of a wealthy upper class, cannot stimulate culture. There is neither a unilateral economic determinism nor idealism to assert that the weakness or the death of several civilizations is due not to irascibility or to a so called original moral insufficiency of man, according to ill-omened bourgeois philosophers, but to the fact that culture was the monopoly of a small minority; the scientific and technical power of this minority was the perfect expression of the frailty of such economic and cultural systems. Only a creative people can make culture advance, provided that the social system enables the democratic assimilation of the techniques and that the enrichment of a
universal cultural patrimony becomes the peoples' monopoly. Democratization of science and culture is thus the fertilization of progressive civilizations.

Only the revolutionary movement can restore to culture its humanistic essence.

Culture is then understood in its two basic aspects:

- It means domination of physico-chemical determinism for progressive purposes.
- It means revolutionary orientation of society.

The Cultural Revolution implies the total emancipation of the people; consequently the Cultural Revolution is the radicalized revolution.

One cannot talk of revolutionary socialization of the means of production when the people, who are the rightful owners, are uneducated and incapable of improving upon that of which they have been deprived. The revolutionarization of culture supposes two basic aspects:

- Culture is available to masses, and is a democratic process which is the means of qualifying the masses.
- By widening the intellectual qualification, revolution creates new conditions for the fecundation of culture and science. Once the people are aware of what they create, and know they are responsible for the improvement of social relationship, they are ideologically capable of undertaking the construction of a society free of the exploitation of man by man.

Revolution democratizes culture to its very core, making it serve all of society and not just the elite. The democratization of culture enables many people to reveal their talents in all fields of scientific and artistic endeavor, and it creates the conditions that enable these talents to flourish.

Artistic creation cannot remain outside the struggle, aloof from politics, because each writer, each artist, whether he likes it or not, expresses the interests of his class in his work. The socialist revolution throws off the monetary yoke from culture and permits the creation of works for the vast popular masses and not just for the flattering of the personal tastes of a handful of stupid gluttons.

The cultural and technical aspects of a society are a part of the whole of the revolutionary cause. Lenin wrote that they are "a little review and a little screw" in the general mechanism of the revolution. Revolutionary culture is a powerful fighting weapon and a material force for the people. Before the revolution, it constitutes an indispensable part of the battle-front of total revolution. Science and culture fit perfectly into the general mechanism of the struggle, as weapons of unity and education for the destruction of the enemy, with one heart and one will.

"An army without a culture is an ignorant army and an ignorant army can never defeat its enemy," wrote a contemporary philosopher. Africa must join the Cultural Revolution. But what are the principal tasks of the Cultural Revolution? Cultural Revolution does not mean the denial of all culture of the past; rather it is the continuation of everything that was beautiful because it was of the people in spite of the will of the exploiters. It is therefore a question of:

- Choosing permanent and sound values from the cultural heritage and rejecting everything that is useless and reactionary, the outmoded mores, the bad traditions, the superstitions, and alienating and inhibiting attitudes such as Negritude.
- Transforming culture from the privilege of an elite into a culture that belongs to the people.
- Elevating the cultural and scientific level of the working class to insure the continued progress of the production forces.
- Reeducating and completing the training of the older intellectuals who can still be salvaged, because once man has freed himself from the narrowness of the petit bourgeois, he can always be perfected.
- Creating a new type of intellectual.
- Committing the whole people irrevocably to the building of socialism.
The revolution restores to the people what they created during the secular class struggle, returns to the masses the scientific and technological acquisitions achieved by their labor, and defines constantly the means of struggle against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Given adequate material and dimensions, our people become invincible, raise higher the flag of freedom and better exercise their historical role of eradicating imperialism permanently.

Here, presented as briefly as possible, is an African sample of Cultural Revolution.

During the 22 years of the heroic struggle of the Democratic Party of Guinea against colonialism, feudalism and imperialism, pride of place is due to the fight for the restoration and assertion of the cultural assets of the works of civilization created by the millenary genius of our peoples, shamelessly scouted by the most criminal aggression of imperialism, cultural aggression.

Indeed, more than the military invasion and armed occupation of the mother country, more than the looting of our riches and the destruction of our country's social institutions, the lowering and denaturing of our civilizations seemed to our people to be the most unbearable expression of the colonialist imperial regime.

During the most intense period of separate citizenship and hard labor, in the prisons and the death camps, the proud people of Guinea, chained and gagged, have been continuously rejecting the cultural assets of the colonizers. In their moral and physical poverty, they remained haughty and aloof to assimilation, proclaiming forcefully and with determination the undying authenticity of their culture and rejecting at the same time the caricature of civilization in the name of which the authorities in occupation enjoined them to renounce their personality.

Our people have never accepted the inevitability of colonization. They were aware of the fact that our continent had been in ignorance of Europe, Asia and America for millions of years and that, during the long centuries of furious struggle against nature, our ancestors, facing the multitudinous difficulties connected with survival and improvement, produced cultures and civilizations which stand today, in many fields, as the finest achievements of human creation.

They were aware that, during these remote ages, our ancestors discovered the secret of the techniques and laws of agriculture and pastoral life; that they discovered and mastered numerous secrets of nature; that they devised methods of education and information in relation with the requirements of their development; that they codified the rules of social organization and ethics; that they organized trade, erected cities, created armies, founded empires and states.

Thus our people know that they were the worthy repositories of human culture, assets in the defense and perpetuity of which so large a number of our ancestors - forever immortal - gave their lives; our people did not kneel to the cultural mystification of the authorities in occupation.

For a people animated by such an awareness of history, there could not be any compromise: it was a question of totally rejecting the colonial system of imperialism and its criminal ideology as well as all the values it defends.

We must, in and by a struggle, recreate a new society based on the values which glorify the memory of its heroes.

We must restore to the concept of culture all its meaning and all the importance that it should have never lost: that of being at the same time the specific creation and collective property of each people concerned, the factor of identification, cohesion and improvement of societies, the means for the mastery of nature, the source and the surest defender of people's power, and the pre-eminent weapon against any foreign intrusion.

This is how, throughout the centuries, were maintained the concept and reality of African Culture, for the perpetuation of which millions of Africans gave their lives, among whom history
mentions the prestigious names of Samory, Alpaa Yaya Lat-Dior, Soundiata, Biton Koulibaly, Behanzin Abdelicader.

On August 2nd, 1968, I started, in the name of our people, the socialist Cultural Revolution, an event with far-reaching consequences.

Although, in the course of the construction of an essentially democratic society, the exercise of political power by the people must be accompanied by a mastery of the economic power, this alone is not enough. Experience taught us that when the people do not control what they create, if they are not aware of the finality of their daily activities, the acquisitions of the revolution and all the prospects for the improvement of society are still watched by the internal and external counter-revolution. Science, technology and culture in the widest sense are now the property of the people and enable the masses to assume irreversibility of the permanent and ever-improving revolution.

So it is that some intellectuals without any revolutionary political philosophy and some theorists, who are prisoners of a unilateral dogmatic materialism, think that the idea of the revolution, conscience-in-movement, used by our Secretary-General in his analysis, is a form of neo-Hegelianism, because for Hegel the conscience was just an absolute idea wandering in quest of undiscoverable contents. For us this conscience is not an evanescent form; for our party, idealism is rather in the conception of a socialist society which gave birth mechanically to popular science and culture without which, however, the edification of socialism is a compromise.

We reject this theory for two fundamental reasons. First, at a time when imperialism brandishes science and technology like a scarecrow, at a time when imperialism in Vietnam, in Africa, in the Middle East shamelessly scorns universal reprobation by its aggression and maintenance of neo-colonialism, the people must be more than ever the masters of nature and society. Second, culture and technology, together forming cultural power in the hands of a "comprador bourgeoisie," are the most deadly weapons of the counterrevolution.

Therefore, although adequate political and economic conditions produce the possibilities of changing society, the economic and political power remains fragile as long as the methodical, scientific development of the future by the people has not been achieved. The growth of revolutionary movement depends on the scientific and ideological level of the people.

One might be tempted to put this conception of the cultural reality prior to the material edification of socialism to the account of objective neo-idealism. This is wrong - we have clearly adopted the analysis of Marx and Engels: the super-structures result from the material basis and influence it dialectically. This analysis, chiefly put forward by Engels, was an immediate answer to the class spies of historical materialism.

It is through a serious study by the light of the new data on the African revolutionary movement that we discovered a characteristic of the superstructures which seemed to have passed unnoticed so far: culture is at a given time a social process, an infrastructure. Therefore it can be easily understood that once cleared out of its idealistic contents and impalpable synthetic data, culture, now including science and technology, is the stake for a ruthless class struggle.

This is why, forged by twenty years of fight, the people of Guinea, as early as the 8th Congress of its national party, the DPG, after several sessions of the National Revolutionary Council, and the decisive one of the Central Committee on August 2nd, 1968, started the socialist revolution with its cultural phase.

Our Cultural Revolution operates in all fields of national activities.

At the level of the masses, all the inhabitants of our country must become literate before October 2nd, 1971, the end of the literary campaign. In a second stage, literate persons will receive supplementary courses of two kinds: the knowledge and the know-how acquired at the end of this
vocational and intellectual qualification corresponds to the 9th school year in our system (lower certificate in the Colonial system).

At the level of public services, institutes, specially organized schools, and production unit committees are the promoters of the courses; a ministry created for this purpose is entrusted with the standardization and distribution of courses. Each rural political and economic unit has its own PRL (Pouvoir Revolutionnaire Local - Local Revolutionary Administration).

We have established that state centralization is the worst manifestation of bureaucracy; in the long run it impedes localization of the functions of the state; the revolution becomes a collection of principles in a vacuum. Directives, mobilizations and manifestations are characterized by a discontinuous periodicity in contrast with the need for continuity in the development of the Revolution.

The PRL (Local Revolutionary Administration) represents the revolutionary state in the hands of the people who thus have a real control of bodies which are notably concerned with practical achievement. Not only does the state no longer maintain a plethora of civil servants who might well take over the revolution at their level, but the activities of those who are in service necessarily come partly within the sphere of the PRL.

The PRL's are responsible for:
- the economy
- Public Works
- education and culture
- health
- civil status and justice
- communications
- defense of the revolution

The objectives laid down in each sector are attained by the masses by means of specialized brigades.

We may well expand a little on education and culture. Each political and economic cell, and we have over eight thousand such basic cells, has its various cultural unit; each has an artistic group and sporting groups. Artistic competitions between local committees or between sections of the Party provide opportunities for cultural activities rich in stimuli for mass mobilization and particularly for the rehabilitation of African Art. After making a selection at basic committee level, the Sections of the Party become shock troops meeting each other in friendly strife each year during the National Artistic fortnight. Prizewinning plays and other forms of artistic creation, after being checked for ideological soundness, become part of the teaching material available for training and education. As far as we are concerned, the play *Et la nuit s'illumine*, the theatrical expression of the recent epic of our people, which is our country’s entry at the present competitions in Algiers, together with another tragedy *The Siege of Sikasso*, are quite the equal of *Le Cid, Iphigenia or Othello*.

As for its functioning, the PRL has been adapted to the structure of the Party and the State, as regards both its organization and its various offices.

As we have said, the PRL represents the Revolutionary State in country districts. This has proved beneficial in abolishing urban bureaucracy and planting the roots of the revolution in the countryside.

On the economic front, no hierarchy in government service is exempt from participating in the annual agricultural campaign, the final aim of which is to abolish economic blackmail by turning the slogan, "Produce to be self-sufficient," into a reality. It is also the best method of reeducating the old-style intellectuals towards a real instead of a lip-service identification with the ideals of the Popular Revolution.
As regards education, the schools are closely coordinated in the process of transforming individuals and society and are known as CER (Centre d'Enseignement Révolutionnaire - Centre for Revolutionary Education), covering all four stages of schooling, from the primary school to university level.

Education, now in revolutionary mould, follows a dialectical line.

It starts with social, geographic and political realities; on the basis of these initial data, it draws up plans for transformation; these plans are carried out on the land made available to the CER. IN THE REPUBLIC of Guinea today each scholastic establishment, right up to university level, is a production unit working one or more forms and at the same time an administrative unit, self-governing through its Council, all the members of which, save one, are pupils. Today we already have a number of self-sufficient units and State financial support for the others is ever more strictly reduced. Thus the CER is a fertile cell in the forefront of socialism. It is not a simple school, but a centre of economic and ideological radiation, the crucible in which the New Man is formed. Not only does it represent in the countryside, for example, the most successful creation of the revolution, but every one of the 8,000 Basic Committees of the Party has a CER attached to it, which thus becomes a centre of research and of scientific and technical extension. Pedagogically speaking, the curricula have been shorn of all that was useless and ideologically false. This makes it possible to devote far more time to productive activities which, in some cases, account for 75% of the programme. In each district and in the Federation there exists a Council for Revolutionary Socialist Culture, directly concerned with the close integration of the schools with the life of the people. As part of the revolutionizing of our educational system, we considered that the moment had come to end our linguistic inferiority complex - a tenacious heritage of colonialism. The re-establishment of our native tongues is held to be a potent factor in shaking off alien influence, and in bringing ideological freedom and therewith the self-confidence of which colonialism had robbed us. Accordingly, from the earliest classes onwards, these national languages are not "lessons" or "subjects" but tools - the vehicles for transmitting scientific and technical knowledge. In the higher classes, including the 4th stage - High Education - the national languages are compulsory subjects not merely for the Faculty of Social Sciences, but for the Technical Faculties also. The national languages are, at this level, provisionally compulsory subjects because they are intended, in our plans for a Cultural Revolution, to be the tools of education in uprooting mental structures foreign to the genius of our people.

All this is not easy; we have our difficulties, but they are far from insurmountable. The class struggle following the path of anti-imperialism cannot be a simple affair. But our difficulties are the less formidable because in education, as in all other fields, no decision is taken until it has been discussed in a thoroughly democratic manner in the Party framework. From the 1st to the 4th scholastic cycle, the people have a voice in all matters; the people cannot be wrong and may oppose a perfectly justified decision if they have not been consulted or if they are not convinced that the decision is right. This principle is dear to us.

At all levels, the CER is directly administered by the pupils and students themselves, through a Governing Council which is not only an administrative body but also a technical component of the Party, functioning with well-defined attributes. In all cycles of education the headmaster is not the potentate of yesterday but an adviser, a member of the Council who takes part, on the same footing as the pupils, in the collective management of the funds voted by the State or earned directly by the production of the CER. The Council maintains discipline and has the whole responsibility for the correctness of financial dealings. The teacher is no longer a figure declaiming dogmatically from behind his desk, but a militant spirit carrying out his tasks in revolutionary education.

It is no internal contradiction but the logic of our socialist leanings which has prompted us to democratize the administration of our educational establishments and the relations between masters and pupils, professors and students. In an hour when youth is causing age-old and "proven" systems
to totter, our young people, satisfied and with no further claims, no longer ask the dramatic question, "What shall I be tomorrow?"

Our youth are not merely implicated in the exercise of power, which is denied, incidentally, to their comrades in bourgeois countries, but they exercise power effectively and exclusively. Today the struggle "often bloody" of youth in support of its claims, which is, by the way, a heightened aspect of the class struggle in many economic systems, does not exist in Guinea. Our youth, entirely devoted to the struggle against imperialism and against the clique of counter-revolutionaries, demands, instead, supremacy over nature. Armed with the Party ideology, these young people strive rather to rid historical necessity of its fatal character by becoming the effective masters of the future.

We have been well aware that a revolutionary movement without a coherent and scientific ideology is a dangerous compromise doomed to fail. Therefore the Party ideology is at the heart of all our activities, whether productive, scientific, technical, literary or other. For us ideological training is absolutely imperative. It is above all for us the essential implement enabling us to create, in Guinea, the African Society, the New African Man, an artisan conscious of possessing a culture, the crucible of United Africa and an original contribution to universal culture.

That, Comrades, is what we are doing in Guinea, in the name of Africa.