

Walter Rodney 1973

How Europe Underdeveloped Africa

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To
Pat, Muthoni, Mashaka and
the extended family

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How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. Walter Rodney 1973

Preface

This book derives from a concern with the contemporary African situation. It delves into the past only because otherwise it would be impossible to understand how the present came into being and what the trends are for the near future. In the search for an understanding of what is now called “underdevelopment” in Africa, the limits of enquiry have had to be fixed as far apart as the fifteenth century, on the one hand and the end of the colonial period, on the other hand.

Ideally, an analysis of underdevelopment should come even closer to the present than the end of the colonial period in the 1960s. The phenomenon of neo-colonialism cries out for extensive investigation in order to formulate the strategy and tactics of African emancipation and development. This study does not go that far, but at least certain solutions are implicit in a correct historical evaluation, just as given medical remedies are indicated or contra-indicated by a correct diagnosis of a patient’s condition and an accurate case-history. Hopefully, the facts and interpretation that follow will make a small contribution towards reinforcing the conclusion that African development is possible only on the basis of a radical break with the international capitalist system, which has been the principal agency of underdevelopment of Africa over the last five centuries.

As the reader will observe, the question of development strategy is tackled briefly in the final section by A.M. Babu, former Minister of

Economic Affairs and Development Planning, who has been actively involved in fashioning policy along those lines in the Tanzanian context [n.b.: not included in this reprint]. It is no accident that the text as a whole has been written within Tanzania, where expressions of concern for development have been accompanied by considerably more positive action than in several other parts of the continent.

Many colleagues and comrades shared in the preparation of this work. Special thanks must go to comrades Karim Hirji and Henry Mapolu of the University of Dar es Salaam, who read the manuscript in a spirit of constructive criticism. But, contrary to the fashion in most prefaces, I will not add that “all mistakes and shortcomings are entirely my responsibility.” That is sheer bourgeois subjectivism. Responsibility in matters of these sorts is always collective, especially with regard to the remedying of shortcomings. My thanks also go to the Tanzania Publishing House and Bogle L'Ouverture Publications for co-operating in producing this volume as simply and cheaply as possible. The purpose has been to try and reach Africans who wish to explore further the nature of their exploitation, rather than to satisfy the ‘standard, set by our oppressors and their spokesmen in the academic world.

Walter Rodney.
Dar es Salaam.

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Chapter One

Some Questions on Development

‘In contrast with the surging growth of the countries in our socialist camp and the development taking place, albeit much more slowly, in the majority of the capitalist countries, is the unquestionable fact that a large proportion of the so-called underdeveloped countries are in total stagnation, and that in some of them the rate of economic growth is lower than that of population increase.

‘These characteristics are not fortuitous; they correspond strictly to the nature of the capitalist system in full expansion, which transfers to the dependent countries the most abusive and barefaced forms of exploitation. It must be clearly understood that the only way to solve the questions now besetting mankind is to eliminate completely the exploitation of dependent countries by developed capitalist countries, with all the consequences that this implies.’

Che Guevara, 1964.

1. 1 What is Development?

Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. Some of these are virtually moral categories and are difficult to evaluate – depending as they do on the age in which one lives, one’s class origins, and one’s personal code of what is right and what is wrong. However, what is indisputable is that the achievement of any of those aspects of

personal development is very much tied in with the state of the society as a whole. From earliest times, man found it convenient and necessary to come together in groups to hunt and for the sake of survival. The relations which develop within any given social group are crucial to an understanding of the society as a whole: Freedom, responsibility, skill, etc. have real meaning only in terms of the relations of men in society.

Of course, each social group comes into contact with others. The relations between individuals in any two societies are regulated by the form of the two societies. Their respective political structures are important because the ruling elements within each group are the ones that begin to dialogue, trade or fight, as the case may be. At the level of social groups, therefore, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. Much of human history has been a fight for survival against natural hazards and against real and imagined human enemies. Development in the past has always meant the increase in the ability to guard the independence of the social group and indeed to infringe upon the freedom of others - something that often came about irrespective of the will of the persons within the societies involved.

Men are not the only beings which operate in groups, but the human species embarked upon a unique line of development because man had the capacity to make and use tools. The very act of making tools was a stimulus to increasing rationality rather than the consequence of a fully matured intellect. In historical terms, man the worker was every bit as important as man the thinker, because the work with tools liberated men

from sheer physical necessity, so that he could impose himself upon other more powerful species and upon nature itself. The tools with which men work and the manner in which they organise their labour are both important indices of social development.

More often than not, the term 'development' is used in an exclusive economic sense – the justification being that the type of economy is itself an index of other social features. What then is economic development? A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organised. Taking a long-term view, it can be said that there has been constant economic development within human society since the origins of man, because man has multiplied enormously his capacity to win a living from nature. The magnitude of man's achievement is best understood by reflecting on the early history of human society and noting firstly, the progress from crude stone tools to the use of metals; secondly, the changeover from hunting and gathering wild fruit to the domestication of animals and the growing of food crops; and thirdly, the improvement in the character of work from being an individualistic activity towards an activity which assumes a social character through the participation of many.

Every people have shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources

of nature. Every continent independently participated in the early epochs of the extension of man's control over his environment – which means in effect that every continent can point to a period of economic development. Africa, being the original home of man, was a major participant in the processes in which human groups displayed an ever increasing capacity to extract a living from the natural environment. Indeed, in the early period, Africa was the focus of the physical development of man as such, as distinct from other living beings.

Development was universal because the conditions leading each economic expansion were universal. Everywhere, man was faced with the task of survival by meeting fundamental material needs; and better tools were a consequence of the interplay between human beings and nature as part of the struggle for survival. Of course, human history is not a record of advances and nothing else. There were periods in every part of the world when there were temporary setbacks and actual reduction of the capacity to produce basic necessities and other services for the population. But the overall tendency was towards increased production, and at given points of time the increase in the *quantity* of goods was associated with a change in the *quality* or character of society. This will be shown later with reference to Africa, but to indicate the universal application of the principle of quantitative/qualitative change an example will be drawn from China.

Early man in China lived at the mercy of nature, and slowly discovered such basic things as the fact that fire can be man-made and that seeds of some grasses could be planted in the soil to meet food requirements.

Those discoveries helped inhabitants of China to have simple farming communities using stone tools and producing enough for bare subsistence. That was achieved several thousand years before the birth of Christ or the flight of the Prophet Muhammad. The goods produced at that stage were divided more equally among the members of society, who lived and worked in families. By the time of the T'ang dynasty of the 7th century A.D., China had expanded its economic capacity not only to grow more food but also to manufacture a wide variety of items such as silks, porcelain, ships and scientific devices. This of course represented a quantitative increase in the goods produced, and it was inter-related with qualitative changes in Chinese society. By the later date, there was a political state, where before there were only self-government units. Instead of every family and every individual performing the tasks of agriculturalists, house-builders, tailors, etc., there had arisen specialization of function. Most of the population still tilled the land, but there were skilled artisans who made silk and porcelain, bureaucrats who administered the state and Buddhist and Confucian religious philosophers who specialized in trying to explain those things that lay outside of immediate understanding.

Specialization and division of labour led to more production as well as inequality in distribution. A small section of Chinese society came to take a large disproportionate share of the proceeds of human labour, and that was the section which did least to actually generate wealth by working in agriculture or industry. They could afford to do so because grave inequalities had emerged in the ownership of the basic means of production, which was the land. Family land became smaller as far as

most peasants were concerned, and a minority took over the greater portion of the land. Those changes in land tenure were part and parcel of development in its broadest sense. That is why development cannot be seen purely as an economic affair, but rather as an overall social process which is dependent upon the outcome of man's efforts to deal with his natural environment.

Through careful study, it is possible to comprehend some of the very complicated links between the changes in the economic base and changes in the rest of the superstructure of the society – including the sphere of ideology and social beliefs. The changeover from communalism in Asia and Europe led for instance to codes of behaviour peculiar to feudalism. The conduct of the European knights in armour had much in common with that of the Japanese Samurai or warriors. They developed notions of so-called 'chivalry' – conduct becoming a gentleman knight on horseback; while in contrast had to learn extreme humility, deference and obsequiousness – symbolised by doffing his cap and standing bare-headed before his superiors. In Africa, too, it was to be found that the rise of the state and superior classes led to the practice whereby common subjects prostrated themselves in the presence of the monarchs and aristocrats. When the point had been reached, it became clear that the rough equality of the family had given way to a new state of society.

In the natural sciences, it is well known that in many instances quantitative change becomes qualitative after a certain period. The common example is the way that water can absorb heat (a quantitative

process) until at 100° C it changes to steam (a qualitative change of form). Similarly, in human society it has always been the case that the expansion of the economy leads eventually to a change in the form of social relations. Karl Marx, writing in the 19th century, was the first writer to appreciate this, and he distinguished within European history several stages of development. The first major stage following after simple bands of hunters was *Communalism* where property was collectively owned, work was done in common, and goods were shared out equally. The second was *Slavery*, caused by the extension of domineering elements within the family and by some groups being overwhelmed by others. Slaves did a variety of tasks, but their main job was to produce food. The next was *Feudalism* where agriculture remained the principal means of making a livelihood, but the land which was necessary for that purpose was in the hands of the few, and they took the lion's share of the wealth. The workers on the land (now called Serfs) were no longer the personal property of the masters, but they were tied to the land of a particular manor or estate. When the manor changed hands, the serfs had to remain there and provide goods for the landlord – just keeping enough to feed themselves. Just as the child of a slave was a slave, so the children of serfs were also serfs. Then came *Capitalism*, under which the greatest wealth in the society was produced not in agriculture but by machines – in factories and in mines. Like the preceding phase of feudalism, capitalism was characterised by the concentration in a few hands of ownership of the means of producing wealth and by unequal distribution of the products of human labour. The few who dominated were the bourgeoisie who had originated in the merchants and craftsmen of the feudal epoch, and

who rose to be industrialists and financiers. Meanwhile, the serfs were declared legally free to leave the land and to go in search of employment in capitalist enterprises. Their labour thereby became a commodity – something to be bought and sold.

It was predicted that there would be a further stage – that of *Socialism* – in which the principle of economic would be restored, as in communalism. In the present century, the phase of Socialism has indeed emerged in some countries. Economically, each succeeding stage represented development in the strict sense that there was increased capacity to control the material environment and thereby to create more goods and services for the community. The greater quantity of goods and services were based on greatest skills and human inventiveness. Man was liberated in the sense of having more opportunities to display and develop his talents. Whether man uplifted himself in a moral sense is open to dispute. The advance in production increased the range of powers which sections of society had over other sections, and it multiplied the violence which was part of the competition for survival and growth among social groups. It is not at all clear that a soldier serving capitalism in the last World War was less ‘primitive’ in the elemental sense of the word than a soldier serving in one of Japan’s feudal armies in the 16th century, or for that matter a hunter living in the first phase of human organisation in the forests of Brazil. Nevertheless, we do know that in those three respective epochs hunting band, feudalism, capitalism-the quality of life improved. It became less hazardous and less uncertain, and members of society potentially had greater choice over their destinies. All of that is involved when the

word 'development' is used.

In the history of those societies which have passed through several modes of production, the opportunity is presented of seeing how quantitative changes give rise ultimately to an entirely different society. The key feature is that at given junctures the social relations in the society were no longer effective in promoting advance. Indeed, they began to act as brakes on the productive forces and therefore had to be discarded. Take for instance the epoch of slavery in Europe. However morally indefensible slavery may have been, it did serve for a while to open up the mines and agricultural plantations in large parts of Europe and notably within the Roman Empire. But then those peasants who remained free had their labour depressed and under-utilised because of the presence of slaves. The slaves were not disposed to work at any tasks requiring skills, so the technological evolution of society threatened to come to a halt. Furthermore, the slaves were restless, and slave revolts were expensive to put down. The landowners, seeing their estates going to ruin, decided that it would be best to grant the legal freedom for which slaves were clamouring. and to keep exploiting the labour of these free serfs by ensuring that they had no lands to plough other than those of the landlords. Thereby, a new set of social relations – that of landlord and serf – replaced the old relations of slave master and slave.

In some instances. the changeover to a new mode was accompanied by violence at a critical point. This occurred when the ruling classes involved were being threatened with removal by the process of change.

The feudal landlords remained in power for centuries during which the merchant and manufacturing interest grew wealthy and sought to achieve power and social pre-eminence. When classes are so well-defined, their consciousness is at a high level. Both the landlord class and the capitalists recognised what was at stake. The former fought to hold on to the social relations which no longer corresponded to the new technology of machine production and the organisation of work by means of purchasing labour power. The capitalists flung themselves into Revolutions in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries to break the old relations of production.

The notions of revolution and class consciousness must be borne in mind when it comes to examining the situation of the modern worker and peasant classes in Africa. However, for the greater part of Africa's history, the existing classes have been incompletely crystallized and the changes have been gradual rather than revolutionary. What is probably of more relevance for early African development is the principle that development over the world's territories has always been uneven.

While all societies have experienced development, it is equally true that the rate of development differed from continent to continent, and within each continent different parts increased their command over nature at different rates. Inside Africa, Egypt was capable of producing wealth in abundance twenty-five centuries ago, because of mastery of many scientific natural laws and their invention of technology to irrigate, grow food, and extract minerals from the subsoil. At that time, hunting with bows and even wooden clubs was what people depended on for

survival in most parts of the African continent-and in various other places such as the British Isles.

One of the most difficult questions to answer is exactly why different peoples developed at different rates when left on their own. Part of the answer lies in the environment in which human groups evolved and part of it lies in the 'superstructure' of human society. That is to say, as human beings battled with the material environment, they created forms of social relations, forms of government, patterns of behaviour and systems of belief which together constituted the superstructure-which was never exactly the same in any two societies. Each element in the superstructure interacted with other elements in the superstructure as well as with the material base. For instance, the political and religious patterns affected each other and were often intertwined. The religious belief that a certain forest was sacred was the kind of element in the superstructure that affected economic activity, since that forest would not be cleared for cultivation. While in the final analysis the breakthrough to a new stage of human development is dependent upon man's technical capacity to deal with the environment, it is also to be borne in mind that peculiarities in the superstructure of any given society have a marked impact on the rate of development.

Many observers have been puzzled by the fact that China never became capitalist. It entered the feudal phase of development virtually 1,000 years before the birth of Christ; it had developed many aspects of technology; and it had many craftsmen and artisans. Yet the mode of production was never transformed to one where machines were the

main means of producing wealth and where the owners of capital would be the dominant class. The explanation is very complex, but in general terms the main differences between feudal Europe and feudal China lay in the superstructure – i.e. in the body of beliefs, motivations and socio-political institutions which derived from the material base but in turn affected it. In China, religious, educational and bureaucratic qualifications were of utmost importance, and government was in the hands of state officials rather than being run by the landlords on their own feudal estates. Besides, there were greater egalitarian tendencies in Chinese land distribution than in European land distribution, and the Chinese state owned a great deal of land. The consequence was that the landowners had greater powers as bureaucrats than as men of property, and they used that to keep social relations in the same mould. It would have been impossible for them to have done that indefinitely, but they slowed down the movement of history. In Europe, the elements of change were not stifled by the weight of a state bureaucracy.

As soon as the first capitalists appeared in European society, an incentive was created for further development through the attitude of this class. Never before in any human society had a group of people seen themselves consciously functioning in order to make the maximum profit out of production. To fulfill their objective of acquiring more and more capital, capitalists took a greater interest in the laws of science which could be harnessed in the form of machinery to work and make profit on their behalf. At the political level, capitalism was also responsible for most of the features which today are referred to as ‘Western Democracy’. In abolishing feudalism, the capitalists insisted

on parliaments, constitutions, freedom of the press, etc. These too can be considered as development. However the peasants and workers of Europe (and eventually the inhabitants of the whole world) paid a huge price so that the capitalists could make their profits from the human labour that always lies behind the machines. That contradicts other facets of development, especially viewed from the standpoint of those who suffered and still suffer to make capitalist achievements possible. This latter group are the majority of mankind. To advance, they must overthrow capitalism; and that is why at the moment capitalism stands in the path of further human social development. To put it another way, the social (class) relations of capitalism are now outmoded, just as slave and feudal relations became outmoded in their time.

There was a period when the capitalist system increased the well-being of significant numbers of people as a by-product of seeking out profits for a few, but today the quest for profits comes into sharp conflict with people's demands that their material and social needs should be fulfilled. The capitalist or bourgeois class is no longer capable of guiding the uninhibited development of science and technology again because these objectives now clash with the profit motive. Capitalism has proved incapable of transcending fundamental weaknesses such as underutilization of productive capacity, the persistence of a permanent sector of unemployed, and periodic economic crises related to the concept of 'market' – which is concerned with people's ability to pay rather than their need for commodities. Capitalism has created its own irrationalities such as a vicious white racism, the tremendous waste associated with advertising, and the irrationality of incredible poverty in

the midst of wealth and wastage even inside the biggest capitalist economies, such as that of the U.S.A. Above all, capitalism has intensified its own political contradictions in trying to subjugate nations and continents outside of Europe, so that workers and peasants in every part of the globe have become self-conscious and are determined to take their destiny into their own hands. Such a determination is also an integral part of the process of development.

It can be offered as a generalization that all phases of development are temporary or transient and are destined sooner or later to give way to something else. It is particularly important to stress this with reference to capitalism because the capitalist epoch is not quite over and those who live at a particular point in time often fail to see that their way of life is in the process of transformation and elimination. Indeed, it is one of the functions of those who justify capitalism (bourgeois writers) to try and pretend that capitalism is here to stay. A glance at the remarkable advance of Socialism over the last fifty-odd years will show that the apologists for capitalism are spokesmen of a social system that is rapidly expiring.

The fact that capitalism today is still around alongside of socialism should warn us that the modes of production cannot simply be viewed as a question of successive stages. Uneven development has always ensured that societies have come into contact when they were at different levels – for example, one that was communal and one that was capitalist.

When two societies of different sorts come into prolonged and effective

contact, the rate and character of change taking place in both is seriously affected to the extent that entirely new patterns are created. Two general rules can be observed to apply in such cases. Firstly, the weaker of the two societies (i.e., the one with less economic capacity) is bound to be adversely affected-and the bigger the gap between the two societies concerned the more detrimental are the consequences. For example, when European capitalism came into contact with the indigenous hunting societies of America and the Caribbean, the latter were virtually exterminated. Secondly, assuming that the weaker society does survive, then ultimately it can resume its own independent development only if it proceeds to a level higher than that of the economy which had previously dominated it. The concrete instances of the operation of this second rule are found in the experience of the Soviet Union, China and Korea.

China and Korea were both at a stage approximating to feudalism when they were colonised by the capitalist powers of Europe and Japan. Russia was never legally colonised, but while in the feudal stage and before its own indigenous capitalism could get very far, the Russian economy was subjugated by the more mature capitalism of Western Europe. In all three cases, it took a socialist revolution to break the domination of capitalism, and only the rapid tempo of socialist development could make amends for the period of subjugation when growth was misdirected and retarded. Indeed, as far as the two biggest socialist states are concerned (the Soviet Union and China), socialist development has already catapulted them beyond states such as Britain and France, which have been following the capitalist path for centuries.

Up to the end of the 1950s (the point at which this study terminates), Russia, China, Korea and certain nations in Eastern Europe were the only countries which had decisively broken with capitalism and imperialism. Imperialism is itself a phase of capitalist development in which Western European capitalist countries, the U.S.A., and Japan established political, economic, military and cultural hegemony over other parts of the world which were initially at a lower level and therefore could not resist domination. Imperialism was in effect the extended capitalist system, which for many years embraced the whole world – one part being the exploiters and the other the exploited, one part being dominated and the other acting as overlords, one part making policy and the other being dependent.

Socialism has advanced on imperialism's weakest flanks – in the sector that is exploited, oppressed and reduced to dependency. In Asia and eastern Europe, socialism released the nationalist energies of colonised peoples; it turned the goal of production away from the money market and towards the satisfaction of human needs; it has eradicated bottlenecks such as permanent unemployment and periodic crises; and it has realised some of the promise implicit in Western or bourgeois democracy by providing the equality of economic condition which is necessary before one can make use of political equality and equality before the law.

Socialism has re-instated the economic equality of communalism, but communalism fell apart because of low economic productivity and scarcity. Socialism aims at and has significantly achieved the creation

of plenty, so that the principle of egalitarian distribution becomes consistent with the satisfaction of the wants of all members of society.

One of the most crucial factors leading to more rapid and consistent expansion of economic capacity under Socialism has been the implementation of *planned development*. Most of the historical processes so far described relate to involuntary and unplanned development. No one planned that at a given stage human beings should cease using stone axes and use iron implements instead; and (to come to more recent times) while individual capitalist firms plan their own expansion, their system is not geared to over-all planning of the economy and the society. The capitalist state intervened only fitfully and partially to supervise capitalist development. The Socialist state has as its prime function the control of the economy on behalf of the working classes. The latter -i.e., workers and peasants – have now become the most dynamic force in world history and human development.

To conclude this brief introduction to the extremely complex problem of social development, it is useful to recognise how inadequate are the explanations of that phenomenon which are provided by bourgeois scholars. They very seldom try to grapple with the issue in its totality, but rather concentrate attention narrowly on ‘economic development’. As defined by the average bourgeois economist, development becomes simply a matter of the combination of given ‘factors of production’ : namely land, population, capital, technology, specialisation and large-scale production. Those factors are indeed relevant, as is implied in the

analysis so far; but omissions from the list of what bourgeois scholars think relevant are really overwhelming. No mention is made of the exploitation of the majority which underlay all development prior to Socialism. No mention is made of the social relations of production or of classes. No mention is made of the way that the factors and relations of production combine to form a distinctive system or mode of production, varying from one historical epoch to another. No mention is made of imperialism as a logical phase of capitalism.

In contrast, any approach which tries to base itself on Socialist and revolutionary principles must certainly introduce into the discussion at the earliest possible point the concepts of class, imperialism, and Socialism, as well as the concepts of the workers and oppressed peoples. Each new concept bristles with its own complications, and it is not to be imagined that the mere resort to certain terminology is the answer to anything. However, one has at least to recognise the full human, historical and social dimensions of development, before it is feasible to consider ‘underdevelopment’ or the strategies for escaping from underdevelopment.

1.2 What is Underdevelopment?

Having discussed ‘development’, it makes it easier to comprehend the concept of underdevelopment. Obviously, underdevelopment is not absence of development, because every people have developed in one way or another and to a greater or lesser extent. Underdevelopment makes sense only as a means of comparing levels of development. It is very much tied to the fact that human social development has been

uneven and from a strictly economic view-point some human groups have advanced further by producing more and becoming more wealthy.

The moment that one group appears to be wealthier than others, some enquiry is bound to take place as to the reason for the difference. After Britain had begun to move ahead of the rest of Europe in the 18th century, the famous British economist Adam Smith felt it necessary to look into the causes behind the 'Wealth of Nations'. At the same time, many Russians were very concerned about the fact that their country was 'backward' in comparison with England, France and Germany in the 18th century and subsequently in the 19th century. Today, our main pre-occupation is with the differences in wealth between on the one hand Europe and North America and on the other hand Africa, Asia and Latin America. In comparison with the first, the second group can be said to be backward or underdeveloped. At all times, therefore, one of the ideas behind underdevelopment is a *comparative* one. It is possible to compare the economic conditions at two different periods for the same country and determine whether or not it had developed; and (more importantly) it is possible to compare the economies of any two countries or sets of countries at any given period in time.

A second and even more indispensable component of modern underdevelopment is that it expresses a particular relationship of *exploitation*: namely, the exploitation of one country by another. All of the countries named as 'underdeveloped' in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment with which the world is now pre-occupied is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist

exploitation. African and Asian societies were developing independently until they were taken over directly or indirectly by the capitalist powers. When that happened, exploitation increased and *the export of surplus ensued*, depriving the societies of the benefit of their natural resources and labour. That is an integral part of underdevelopment in the contemporary sense.

In some quarters, it has often been thought wise to substitute the term 'developing' for 'underdeveloped'. One of the reasons for so doing is to avoid any unpleasantness which may be attached to the second term, which might be interpreted as meaning underdeveloped mentally, physically, morally or in any other respect. Actually, if 'underdevelopment' were related to anything other than comparing economies, then the most underdeveloped country in the world would be the U.S.A, which practices external oppression on a massive scale, while internally there is a blend of exploitation, brutality, and psychiatric disorder. However, on the economic level, it is best to remain with the word 'underdeveloped' rather than 'developing', because the latter creates the impression that all the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America are escaping from a state of economic backwardness relative to the industrial nations of the world, and that they are emancipating themselves from the relationship of exploitation. That is certainly not true, and many underdeveloped countries in Africa and elsewhere are becoming more underdeveloped in comparison with the world's great powers, because their exploitation by the metropolises is being intensified in new ways.

Economic comparisons can be made by looking at statistical tables or indices of what goods and services are produced and used in the societies under discussion. Professional economists speak of the National Income of countries and the National Income per capita. These phrases have already become part of the layman's language, by way of the newspapers and no detailed explanation will be offered here. It is enough to note that the National Income is a measurement of the total wealth of the country, while the per capita income is a figure obtained by dividing the National Income by the number of inhabitants in order to get an idea of the 'average' wealth of each inhabitant. This 'average' can be misleading where there are great extremes of wealth. A young Ugandan put it in a very personal form when he said that the per capita income of his country camouflaged the fantastic difference between what was earned by his poor peasant father and what was earned by the biggest local capitalist, Madhvani. In considering the question of development away from the state of underdevelopment, it is of supreme importance to realise that such a process demands the removal of the gross inequalities of land distribution, property holding and income, which are camouflaged behind national income figures. At one stage in history, advance was made at the cost of entrenching privileged groups, In our times, development has to mean advance which liquidates present privileged groups with their corresponding unprivileged groups. Nevertheless, the per capita income is a useful statistic for comparing one country with another; and the developed countries all have per capita incomes several times higher than any one of the recently independent African nations.

The following table gives a clear picture of the gap between Africa and certain nations measured in per capita incomes. It is the gap that allows one group to be called ‘developed’ and another ‘underdeveloped’. (The information is obtained from United Nations statistical publications, and applies to the year 1968 unless otherwise stated.)

Countries Per Capita income in U.S.
dollars.

Canada	2,247
U.S.A.	3,578
France (1967)	1,738
United Kingdom (1967)	1,560
AFRICA as a whole (1965)	1,400
Congo	52
Ghana	198
Kenya	107
Malawi	52
Morocco	185
South Africa	543
Tanzania	62
U.A.R.	156
Zambia	225

The gap that can be seen from the above evidence is not only great, but it is also increasing. Many people have come to realise that the developed countries are growing richer quite rapidly, while underdeveloped countries for the most part show stagnancy or slow rates of growth. In each country, a figure can be calculated to represent

the rate at which the economy grows. The growth rate is highest in Socialist countries, followed by the big capitalist countries, and with the colonies and ex-colonies trailing far behind. The proportion of international trade which is in the hands of the underdeveloped countries is declining. That proportion was roughly 30% in 1938 and went down to less than 20% in the 1960's. This is an important indicator because trade is both a reflection of the quantity of goods produced and a way of obtaining goods not locally produced.

Developed economies have certain characteristics which contrast with underdeveloped ones. The developed countries are all industrialized. That is to say, the greater part of their working population is engaged in industry rather than agriculture, and most of their wealth comes out of mines, factories, etc. They have a high output of labour per man in industry because of their advanced technology and skills. This is well known, but it is also striking that the developed countries have a much more advanced agriculture than the rest of the world. Their agriculture has already become an industry, and the agricultural part of the economy produces more although it is small. *The countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America are called agricultural countries because they rely on agriculture and have little or no industry: but their agriculture is unscientific and the yields are far less than those of the developed countries.* In several of the largest underdeveloped nations, there was stagnation and fall in agricultural output in and after 1966. In Africa, the output of food per person has been falling in recent years. Because the developed countries have a stronger industrial and agricultural economy than the rest of the world, they produce far more goods than

the poor nations-in the category of necessities as well as luxuries. It is possible to draw up statistical tables showing the production of grain, milk, steel, electric power, paper, and a wide range of other goods; and showing at the same time how much of each commodity is made available to each citizen (on the average). Once again, the figures are highly favourable to a few privileged countries in the world.

The amount of steel used in a country is an excellent indicator of the level of industrialization. At one extreme, one finds that the U.S.A. consumes 685 kg. of steel per person, Sweden 623 kg. and East Germany 437 kg. At the other extreme, one finds that Zambia consumes 10 kg., East Africa 8 kg. and Ethiopia 2 kg. When the same kind of calculation is made for sugar, a sample of the results shows Australia with 57 kg, and North America and the Soviet Union with 45 to 50 kg. on the average. Africa, however, consumes only 10 kg. of sugar per person per year, and this is better than Asia with 7 kg..

An even more gloomy set of statistics relate to basic food requirements. Each individual needs a certain quantity of food per day, measured in calories. The desirable amount is 3,000 calories per day; but no African country comes anywhere near to that figure. Algerians consume on average only 1,370 calories per day, while Ivory Coast can consider itself very well off within an African context with 2,290 calories as the national average. Furthermore, one also has to judge the protein content of the food; and many parts of Africa suffer from 'protein famine' – which means that even when calories are available from starchy foods, little protein is to be found. Persons in developed capitalist and Socialist

countries consume twice as much protein food as those in underdeveloped countries. Such differences help to make it clear which countries are 'developed' and which are 'underdeveloped'.

The social services provided by a country are of importance equal to that of its material production in bringing about human well-being and happiness. It is universally accepted that the state has the responsibility to establish schools and hospitals, but whether these are provided by the government or by private agencies, their numbers can be established in relation to the size of the population. The extent to which basic goods and social services are available in a country can also be measured indirectly by looking at the life expectancy, the frequency of deaths among children, the amount of malnutrition, the occurrence of diseases which would be prevented by inoculation and public health services, and the proportion of illiterates. In all these respects, the comparison between the developed and underdeveloped countries shows huge and even frightening differences. For every 1,000 children who are born alive in Cameroon, 100 never live to see their first birthday, and out of every 1,000 African children born alive in rural Sierra Leone, 160 die before reaching one year. Yet the comparable figures for the U.K. and Holland are only 12 and 18, respectively. Besides many more African children die before they reach the age of five. Lack of doctors is a major drawback. In Italy, there is one doctor for every 580 Italians and in Czechoslovakia there is one doctor for every 510 citizens. In Niger, one doctor must do for 56,140 people; in Tunisia, one doctor for every 8,320 Tunisians; and in Chad one doctor for 73,460 persons.

It takes a large number of skilled people to make an industrial economy function; while the countries of Africa have a woefully insufficient number of highly qualified personnel. The figures on doctors just given confirm this, and the same problem exists with engineers, technicians, agriculturalists and even administrators and lawyers in some places. Middle level skills in fields such as welding are also lacking. To make matters worse, there is at present a 'brain drain' from Africa, Asia and Latin America towards North America and Western Europe. This is to say, professionals, technicians, high-level administrators and skilled workers emigrate from their homes, and the small number of skilled people available to the underdeveloped world are further depleted by the lure of better pay and opportunities in the developed world.

The lopsided nature of the present international economy is strikingly brought home by the fact that the underdeveloped countries have in turn to recruit foreign experts at fantastic cost.

Most of the data presented so far can be described as 'quantitative'. It gives us measurements of the quantity of goods and services produced in various economies. In addition, certain qualitative assessments have to be made concerning the way that a given economy is put together. For economic development it is not enough to produce more goods and services. The country has to produce more of those goods and services which in turn will give rise spontaneously to future growth in the economy. For example, the food-producing sector must be flourishing so that workers would be healthy, and agriculture on the whole must be efficient so that the profits (or savings) from agriculture would

stimulate industry. Heavy industry, such as the steel industry and the production of electrical power, must be present so that one is capable of making machinery for other types of industry and for agriculture. Lack of heavy industry, inadequate production of food, unscientific agriculture – those, are all characteristics of the underdeveloped economies.

It is typical of underdeveloped economies that they do not (or are not allowed to) concentrate on those sectors of the economy which in turn will generate growth and raise production to a new level altogether, and there are very few ties between one sector and another so that (say) agriculture and industry could react beneficially on each other.

Furthermore, whatever savings are made within the economy are mainly sent abroad or are frittered away in consumption rather than being redirected to productive purposes. Much of the national income which remains within the country goes to pay individuals who are not directly involved in producing wealth but only in rendering auxiliary services-civil servants, merchants, soldiers, entertainers, etc. What aggravates the situation is that more people are employed in those jobs than are really necessary to give efficient service; and to crown it all these people do not reinvest in agriculture or industry. They squander the wealth created by the peasants and workers by purchasing cars, whisky and perfume.

It has been noted with irony that the principal ‘industry’ of many underdeveloped countries is administration. Not long ago, 60%, of the internal revenue of Dahomey went into paying salaries of civil servants

and government leaders. The salaries given to the elected politicians is higher than that given to a British Member of Parliament, and the number of parliamentarians in the underdeveloped African countries is also relatively high. In Gabon, there is one parliamentary representative for every 6,000 inhabitants, compared to one French parliamentary representative for every 100,000 Frenchmen. Many more figures of that sort indicate that in describing a typical underdeveloped economy it is essential to point out the high disproportion of the locally distributed wealth that goes into the pockets of a privileged few.

Members of the privileged groups inside Africa always defend themselves by saying that they pay the taxes which keeps the Government going. At face value this statement sounds reasonable, but on close examination it is really the most absurd argument and shows total ignorance of how the economy functions. *Taxes do not produce national wealth and development. Wealth has to be produced out of nature – from tilling the land or mining metals or felling trees or turning raw materials into finished products for human consumption.* These things are done by the vast majority of the population who are peasants and workers.

There would be no incomes to tax if the labouring population did not work.

The incomes given to civil servants, professionals, merchants, etc. come from the store of wealth produced by the community. Quite apart from the injustices in the distribution of wealth, one has to dismiss the argument that ‘the tax payers’ money’ is what develops a country. In

pursuing the goal of development, one must start with the producers and move on from there to see whether the products of their labour are being rationally utilised to bring greater independence and well-being to the nation.

By paying attention to the wealth created by human labour out of nature, one can immediately appreciate that very few underdeveloped countries are lacking in the natural resources which could go in to making a better life; and in those cases it is usually possible for two or three territories to combine together for their mutual benefit. In fact, it can be shown that the underdeveloped countries are the ones with the greatest wealth of natural resources and yet the poorest in terms of goods and services presently provided by and for their citizens.

The United Nations *Survey of Economic Conditions in Africa* up to 1964 had this to say about the continent's natural resources:

Actually, African potential is shown to be greater every day with new discoveries of mineral wealth. On the agricultural side, African soil is not as rich as the picture of tropical forests might lead one to believe; but there are other climatic advantages so that with proper irrigation crops can be grown all the year round in most parts of the continent.

The situation is that Africa has not yet come anywhere close to making the most of its natural wealth, and most of the wealth now being produced is not being retained within Africa for the benefit of Africans. Zambia and Congo produce vast quantities of copper, but that is for the

benefit of Europe, North America and Japan. Even the goods and services which are produced inside of Africa and which remain in Africa nevertheless fall into the hands of non-Africans. Thus, South Africa boasts of having the highest per capita income in Africa; but as an indication of how this is shared out, one should note that while the Apartheid regime assures that only 24 white babies die out of every 1,000 live births, they are quite happy to allow 128 African babies to die out of every 1,000 live births. *In order to understand present economic conditions in Africa, one needs to know why it is that Africa has realised so little of its natural potential, and one also needs to know why so much of its present wealth goes to non-Africans who reside for the most part outside of the continent.*

In a way, underdevelopment is a paradox. Many parts of the world that are naturally rich are actually poor and parts that are not so well off in wealth of soil and sub-soil are enjoying the highest standards of living. When the capitalists from the developed parts of the world try to explain this paradox, they often make it sound as though there is something 'God-given' about the situation. One bourgeois economist, in a book on development, accepted that the comparative statistics of the world today show a gap that is much larger than it was before. By his own admission, the gap between the developed and the underdeveloped countries has increased by at least 15 to 20 times over the last 150 years. However, the bourgeois economist in question does not give a historical explanation, nor does he consider that there is a relationship of exploitation which allowed capitalist parasites to grow fat and impoverished the dependencies. Instead, he puts forward a

biblical explanation! He says that:

‘It is all told in the Bible:

*For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance;
but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.
(St Matthew, xxv, 29.)*

The story of the “hath nots” is the story of the modern underdeveloped countries.’

Presumably, the only comment which one can make on that is ‘Amen’.

The interpretation that underdevelopment is somehow ordained by God is emphasised because of the racist trend in European scholarship. It is in line with racist prejudice to say openly or to imply that their countries are more developed because their people are innately superior, and that the responsibility for the economic backwardness of Africa lies in the generic backwardness of the race of black Africans. An even bigger problem is that the people of Africa and other parts of the colonised world have gone through a cultural and psychological crisis and have accepted at least partially the European version of things. That means that the African himself has doubts about his capacity to transform and develop his natural environment. With such doubts, he even challenges those of his brothers who say that Africa can and will develop through the efforts of its own people. If we can determine when underdevelopment came about, it would dismiss the lingering suspicion that it is racially or otherwise predetermined and that we can do little about it.

When the 'experts' from capitalist countries do not give a racist explanation, they nevertheless confuse the issue by giving as causes of underdevelopment the things which really are consequences. For example, they would argue that Africa is in a state of backwardness as a result of lacking skilled personnel to develop. It is true that because of lack of engineers Africa cannot on its own build more roads, bridges and hydroelectric stations. But that is not a cause of underdevelopment, except in the sense that causes and effects come together and reinforce each other. The fact of the matter is that the most profound reasons for the economic backwardness of a given African nation are not to be found outside that nation. All that we can find inside are the symptoms of underdevelopment and the secondary factors that make for poverty.

Mistaken interpretations of the causes of underdevelopment usually stem either from prejudiced thinking or from the error of believing that one can learn the answers by looking inside the underdeveloped economy. The true explanation lies in seeking out the relationship between Africa and certain developed countries and in recognising that it is a relationship of exploitation.

Man has always exploited his natural environment in order to make a living. At a certain point in time, there also arose the exploitation of man by man, in that a few people grew rich and lived well through the labour of others. Then a stage was reached by which people in one community called a nation exploited the natural resources and the labour of another nation and its people. Since underdevelopment deals with the comparative economics of nations, it is the last kind of

exploitation that is of greatest interest here – i.e. the exploitation of nation by nation. One of the common means by which one nation exploits another and one that is relevant to Africa's external relations is exploitation through trade. When the terms of trade are set by one country in a manner entirely advantageous to itself, then the trade is usually detrimental to the trading partner. To be specific, one can take the export of agricultural produce from Africa and the import of manufactured goods into Africa from Europe, North America and Japan. The big nations establish the price of the agricultural products and subject these prices to frequent reductions. At the same time the price of manufactured goods is also set by them, along with the freight rates necessary for trade in the ships of those nations. The minerals of Africa also fall into the same category as agricultural produce as far as pricing is concerned. The whole import/export relationship between Africa and its trading partners is one of unequal exchange and of exploitation.

More far-reaching than just trade is the actual ownership of the means of production in one country by the citizens of another. When citizens of Europe own the land and the mines of Africa, this is the most direct way of sucking the African continent. Under colonialism the ownership was complete and backed by military domination. Today, in many African countries the foreign ownership is still present, although the armies and flags of foreign powers have been removed. So long as foreigners own land, mines, factories, banks, insurance companies, means of transportation, newspapers, power stations, etc. then for so long will the wealth of Africa flow outwards into the hands of those

elements. In other words, in the absence of direct political control; *foreign investment ensures that the natural resources and the labour of Africa produce economic value which is lost to the continent.*

Foreign investment often takes the form of loans to African governments. Naturally, these loans have to be re-paid; and in the 1960s the rate of repayment (amortization) on official loans in underdeveloped countries rose from \$400 million per year to about \$700 million per year, and it is constantly on the increase. Besides, there is interest to be paid on these loans as well as profits which come from the direct investment in the economy. These two sources accounted for the fact that over \$500 million flowed outward from the underdeveloped countries in 1965. The information on these matters is seldom complete, for the obvious reason that those making the profit are trying to keep things quiet, so the figures given above are likely to be underestimates. They are meant to give some idea of the extent to which the wealth of Africa is being drained off by those who invest in, and thereby own, a large part of the means of production of wealth in Africa. Furthermore, in more recent times the forms of investment have become more subtle and more dangerous. They include so-called 'absentee' management of local African companies by international capitalist experts.

Africa trades mainly with the countries of Western Europe, North America and Japan. Africa is also diversifying its trade by dealing with socialist countries, and if that trade proves disadvantageous to the African economy, then the developed socialist countries will also have joined the ranks of the exploiters of Africa. However, it is very essential

at this stage to draw a clear distinction between the capitalist countries and the socialist ones, because socialist countries have never at any time owned any part of the African continent nor do they invest in African economies in such a way as to expatriate profits from Africa. Therefore, socialist countries are not involved in the robbery of Africa.

Most of the people who write about underdevelopment and who are read in the continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America are spokesmen for the capitalist or bourgeois world. They seek to justify capitalist exploitation both inside and outside their own countries. One of the things which they do to confuse the issue is to place all 'underdeveloped' countries, in one camp and all 'developed' countries in another camp irrespective of different social systems; so that the terms 'capitalist' and 'socialist' never enter the discussion. Instead, one is faced with a simple division between the industrialised nations and those that are not industrialised. It is true that both the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union are industrialised and it is true that when one looks at the statistics, countries such as France, Norway, Czechoslovakia and Rumania are much closer together than any one of them is to an African country. But it is absolutely necessary to determine whether the standard of living in a given industrialised country is a product of its own internal resources or whether it stems from exploiting other countries. The United States has a small proportion of the World's population and exploitable natural wealth but it enjoys a huge percentage of the wealth which comes from exploiting the labour and natural resources of the whole world.

The erroneous views about underdevelopment and the oversimplified distinction between rich and poor nations are opposed by Socialist scholars both inside and outside the Socialist countries. Those erroneous views are also being exposed by economists in underdeveloped countries who are discovering that the explanations offered by bourgeois scholars are explanations which suit the interests of those countries which exploit the rest of the world through trade and investment. One French Socialist writer, Pierre Jalée, proposes that to obtain a proper perspective of relations between developed countries and underdeveloped ones, two categories should be set up namely, imperialist and Socialist. The Socialist camp include all countries big and small which have decided to break away from international capitalism. The imperialist camp contains not only the capitalist giants like the U.S.A., France, West Germany and Japan but also the weak nations in which those industrial nations have investments. Therefore the imperialist camp can be sub-divided into exploiting and exploited countries. For the most part, the nations of Africa fall into the group of exploited countries inside of the capitalist/imperialist system. Roughly one-third of the world's peoples are already living under some form of Socialism. The other two-thirds constitute the capitalist/imperialist camp, with the majority being in the exploited section.

It is interesting to notice that in spite of their efforts to confuse the situation, the bourgeois writers often touch on the truth. For example, the United Nations (which is dominated by western capitalist powers) would never stress the exploitation by capitalist nations, but their economic reviews refer on the one hand to 'the centrally planned

economies', which means the Socialist countries, and on the other hand they speak of 'the market economies' which means in effect the imperialist sector of the world. The latter is subdivided into 'the developed market economies' and 'the developing market economies', disguising the fact that the market means capitalist market. This study is concerned with analysing the relations between those countries which are together within the capitalist market system.

The things which bring Africa into the capitalist market system are trade, colonial domination and capitalist investment. Trade has existed for several centuries; colonial rule began in the late 19th century and has almost disappeared; and the investment in the African economy has been increasing steadily in the present century. Throughout the period that Africa has participated in the capitalist economy, two factors have brought about underdevelopment. In the first place, the wealth created by African labour and from African resources was grabbed by the capitalist countries of Europe; and in the second place restrictions were placed upon African capacity to make the maximum use of its economic potential – which is what development is all about. Those two processes represent the answer to the two questions raised above as to why Africa has realized so little of its potential and why so much of its present wealth goes outside of the continent.

African economies are integrated into the very structure of the developed capitalist economies; and they are integrated in a manner that is unfavourable to Africa and ensures that Africa is dependent on the big capitalist countries. Indeed, *structural dependence is one of the*

characteristics of underdevelopment. Most progressive writers divide the capitalist/imperialist system into two parts. The first is the dominant or metropolitan section and the countries in the second group are often called satellites because they are in the orbit of the metropolitan economies. The same idea is conveyed by simply saying that the underdeveloped countries are dependencies of the metropolitan capitalist economies.

When a child or the young of any animal species ceases to be dependent upon its mother for food and protection, it can be said to have developed in the direction of maturity. Dependent nations can never be considered developed. It is true that modern conditions force all countries to be mutually interdependent in order to satisfy the needs of their citizens; but that is not incompatible with economic independence because economic independence does not mean isolation. It does, however, require a capacity to exercise choice in external relations, and above all it requires that a nation's growth at some point must become self-reliant and self-sustaining. Such things are obviously in direct contradiction to the economic dependence of numerous countries on the metropolises of Western Europe, North America and Japan.

It is also true that metropolises are dependent on the wealth of the exploited portions of the world. This is a source of their strength and a potential weakness within the capitalist/imperialist system, since the peasants and workers of the dependencies are awakening to a realisation that it is possible to cut the tentacles which imperialism has extended into their countries. However, there is a substantial difference between

the dependence of the metropolises on the colonies and the subjugation of the colonies under a foreign capitalist yoke. The capitalist countries are technologically more advanced and are therefore the sector of the imperialist system which determined the direction of change. A striking example to this effect is the fact that synthetic fabrics manufactured in the capitalist metropolises have begun to replace fabrics made from raw material grown in the colonies. In other words, (within certain limits) it is the technologically advanced metropolises who can decide when to end their dependence on the colonies in a particular sphere. When that happens, it is the colony or neo-colony which goes begging cap in hand for a reprieve and a new quota. It is for this reason that a formerly colonised nation has no hope of developing until it breaks effectively with the vicious circle of dependence and exploitation which characterises imperialism.

At the social and cultural level, there are many features which aid in keeping underdeveloped countries integrated into the capitalist system and at the same time hanging on to the apron strings of the metropolises. The Christian Church has always been a major instrument for cultural penetration and cultural dominance, in spite of the fact. that in many instances Africans sought to set up independent churches. Equally important has been the role of education in producing Africans to service the capitalist system and to subscribe to its values. Recently, the imperialists have been using new universities in Africa to keep themselves entrenched at the highest academic level.

Something as basic as language has come to serve as one of the

mechanisms of integration and dependence. The French and English that is so widely used in Africa is more for the purpose of African communicating with the exploiters rather than African with African. Actually, it would be difficult to find a sphere which did not reflect the economic dependence and structural integration. At a glance, nothing could be less harmful and more entertaining than music, and yet this too is used as a weapon of cultural domination. The American imperialists go so far as to take the folk music, jazz and soul music of oppressed black people and transform this into American propaganda over the Voice of America beamed at Africa.

During the colonial period, the forms of political subordination in Africa were obvious. There were governors, colonial officials and police. In politically independent African states, the metropolitan capitalists have to ensure favourable political decisions by remote control. So they set up their political puppets in many parts of Africa, who shamelessly agree to compromise with the vicious Apartheid regime of South Africa when their masters tell them to do so. The African revolutionary Franz Fanon dealt scorchingly and at length with the question of the minority in Africa which serves as the transmission line between the metropolitan capitalists and the dependencies in Africa. The importance of this group cannot be underestimated. The presence of a group of African sell-outs is part of the definition of underdevelopment. Any diagnosis of underdevelopment in Africa will reveal not just low per capita income and protein deficiencies, but also the gentlemen who dance in Abidjan, Accra and Kinshasa when music is played in Paris, London and New York.

Political instability is manifesting itself in Africa as a chronic symptom of the underdevelopment of political life within the imperialist context. Military coups have followed one after the other, usually meaning nothing to the mass of the people, and sometimes representing a reactionary reversal of the efforts at national liberation. This trend was well exemplified in Latin American history, so that its appearance in neo-colonial South Vietnam or in neo-colonial Africa is not at all surprising. If economic power is centred outside of national African boundaries, then political and military power in any real sense is also centred outside until and unless the masses of peasants and workers are mobilised to offer an alternative to the system of sham political independence. All of those features are ramifications of underdevelopment and of the exploitation of the imperialist system. In most analyses of this question, they are either left out entirely or the whole concept of imperialism and neocolonialism is dismissed as mere rhetoric-especially by 'academics' who claim to be removed from 'politics'. During the remainder of this study, a great deal of detail will be presented to indicate the grim reality behind the so-called slogans of capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and the like. For the present moment, the position to be adopted can be stated briefly in the following terms:

The question as to who and what is responsible for African underdevelopment can be answered at two levels. Firstly, the answer is that the operation of the imperialist system bears major responsibility for African economic retardation by draining African wealth and by making it impossible to develop more rapidly the resources of the

continent. Secondly, one has to deal with those who manipulate the system and those who are either agents or unwitting accomplices of the said system. The capitalists of Western Europe were the ones who actively extended their exploitation from inside Europe to cover the whole of Africa.

In recent times, they were joined and to some extent replaced by capitalists from the United States; and for many years now even the workers of those metropolitan countries have benefited from the exploitation and underdevelopment of Africa. None of these remarks are intended to remove the ultimate responsibility for development from the shoulders of Africans. Not only are there African accomplices inside the imperialist system, but every African has a responsibility to understand the system and work for its overthrow.

Brief guide to reading

There is a great deal of literature on ‘development’ and ‘underdevelopment’, although less than one would expect in view of the importance of the subjects. Most of that which is available seeks to justify capitalism. Hence, there is a narrow concentration on ‘economic development’ and particularly on capitalist economies, rather than any analysis of human social development. That approach is challenged by Marxist writers in the metropolises and increasingly by scholars from the underdeveloped world.

Frederick Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Karl Marx, *Preface to a Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*.

Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* edited by E. J. Hobsbawm.

These three works are samples of writing by the founders of what is now called Marxism. Most of the publications of Marx and Engels have a relevance to the theme of development, with particular emphasis on feudal and capitalist times.

Richard T. Gill, *Economic Development: Past and Present*.

Ragnar Nurkse, *Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries*.

These are typical examples of bourgeois metropolitan views on development and underdevelopment – the first being a text for North American college students by a Canadian economist and the second being a frequently reprinted work of one of the most prominent bourgeois advocates of the ‘vicious circle of poverty’ theory.

Unfortunately, these are also the kind of books which dominates the shelves of any university or public library *in Africa*. The reader is invited to test this generalisation.

J. D. Bernal, *Science in History*.

Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*.

Both of these are lengthy, but they should be tackled. Science and technology derive from the effort to understand and control the natural environment. Familiarity with the history of science is essential to an awareness of the development of society. Needham's book is cited here as a corrective to the fairly common view that science is something peculiarly European.

Celso Furtado, *Development and Underdevelopment*.

A. Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*.

T. Szentes, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*. (Budapest, 1971.)

The first writer is from Brazil, a country with a long history of dependence on and exploitation by the metropolises of Europe and North America. Frank's book reflects the thinking of many progressive Latin American intellectuals and it has now become well entrenched as a view of Marxists inside the metropolises. Szentes is a Hungarian economist systematically applying Marxist insights to the actual data and processes of the underdeveloped world and imperialism as a whole.

Samir Amin, *The Class Struggle in Africa*. (Africa Research Group, Box 213, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

Samir Amin is a North African. He stands out with regard both to the volume of his productions and the quality of his insights. The text cited above is very general – covering in outline the period of the coots of development in ancient Africa right up to the present and the projected

Socialist future. It is likely that more of his work will be translated into English (French being his working language).

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How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. Walter Rodney 1973

Chapter Four. Europe and the Roots of African Underdevelopment — to 1885

‘The relation between the degree of destitution of peoples of Africa and the length and nature of the exploitation they had to endure is evident.

Africa remains marked by the crimes of the slave-traders: up to now, her potentialities are restricted by under-population.’

Ahmed Sekou Toure,

Republic of Guinea, 1962

4.1 The European Slave Trade as a Basic Factor in African Underdevelopment

To discuss trade between Africans and Europeans in the four centuries before colonial rule is virtually to discuss slave trade. Strictly speaking, the African only became a slave when he reached a society where he worked as a slave. Before that, he was first a free man and then a captive. Nevertheless, it is acceptable to talk about the trade in slaves to refer to the shipment of captives from Africa to various other parts of the world where they were to live and work as the property of Europeans. The title of this section is deliberately chosen to call attention to the fact that the shipments were all by Europeans to markets controlled by Europeans, and this was in the interest of European capitalism and nothing else. In East Africa and the Sudan, many

Africans were taken by Arabs and were sold to Arab buyers. This is known (in European books) as the 'Arab Slave Trade'. Therefore, let it be clear that when Europeans shipped Africans to European buyers it was the 'European Slave trade' from Africa.

Undoubtedly, with few exceptions such as Hawkins, European buyers purchased African captives on the coasts of Africa and the transaction between themselves and Africans was a form of trade. It is also true that very often a captive was sold and resold as he made his way from the interior to the port of embarkation — and that too was form of trade. However, on the whole, the process by which captives were obtained on African soil was not trade at all. It was through warfare, trickery, banditry and kidnapping. When one tries to measure the effect of European slave trading on the African continent, it is very essential to realise that one is measuring the effect of social violence rather than trade in any normal sense of the word.

Many things remain uncertain about the slave trade and its consequences for Africa, but the general picture of destructiveness is clear, and that destructiveness can be shown to be the logical consequence of the manner of recruitment of captives in Africa. One of the uncertainties concerns the basic question of how many Africans were imported. This has long been an object of speculation, with estimates ranging from a few millions to over one hundred million. A recent study has suggested a figure of about ten million Africans landed alive in the Americas, the Atlantic islands and Europe. Because it is a low figure, it is already being used by European scholars who are

apologists for the capitalist system and its long record of brutality in Europe and abroad. In order to white-wash the European slave trade, they find it convenient to start by minimising the numbers concerned. The truth is that any figure of Africans imported into the Americas which is narrowly based on the surviving records is bound to be low, because there were so many people at the time who had a vested interest in smuggling slaves (and withholding data). Nevertheless, if the low figure of ten million was accepted as a basis for evaluating the impact of slaving on Africa as a whole, the conclusions that could legitimately be drawn would confound those who attempt to make light of the experience of the rape of Africans from 1445 to 1870.

On any basic figure of Africans landed alive in the Americas, one would have to make several extensions — starting with a calculation to cover mortality in transshipment. The Atlantic crossing or ‘Middle Passage’, as it was called by European slavers, was notorious for the number of deaths incurred, averaging in the vicinity of 15% to 20%. There were also numerous deaths in Africa between time of capture and time of embarkation, especially in cases where captives had to travel hundreds of miles to the coast. Most important of all (given that warfare was the principal means of obtaining captives) it is necessary to make some estimate as to the number of people killed and injured so as to extract the millions who were taken alive and sound. The resultant figure would be many times the millions landed alive outside of Africa, and it is that figure which represents the number of Africans directly removed from the population and labour force of Africa because of the establishment of slave production by Europeans.

The massive loss to the African labour force was made more critical because it was composed of able-bodied young men and young women. Slave buyers preferred their victims between the ages of 15 and 35, and preferably in the early twenties; the sex ratio being about two men to one woman. Europeans often accepted younger African children, but rarely any older person. They shipped the most healthy wherever possible, taking the trouble to get those who had already survived an attack of smallpox, and who were therefore immune from further attacks of that disease, which was then one of the world's great killer diseases.

Absence of data about the size of Africa's population in the 15th century makes it difficult to carry out any scientific assessment of the results of the population outflow. But, nothing suggests that there was any increase in the continent's population over the centuries of slaving, although that was the trend in other parts of the world. Obviously, fewer babies were born than would otherwise have been the case if millions of child-bearing ages were not eliminated. Besides, it is essential to recognise that the slave trade across the Atlantic Ocean was not the only connection which Europeans had with slaving in Africa. The slave trade on the Indian Ocean has been called the 'East African slave trade' and the 'Arab slave trade' for so long that it hides the extent to which it was also a European slave trade. When the slave trade from East Africa was at its height in the 18th century and in the early 19th century, the destination of most captives was the European-owned plantation economies of Mauritius, Réunion and Seychelles-as well as the Americas, via the Cape of Good Hope. Besides, Africans labouring as

slaves in certain Arab countries in the 18th and 19th centuries were all ultimately serving the European capitalist system which set up a demand for slave-grown products, such as the cloves grown — Zanzibar under the supervision of Arab masters.

No one has been able to come up with a figure representing total losses to the African population sustained through the extraction of slave labour from all areas to all destinations over the many centuries that slave trade existed. However, on every other continent from the 15th century onwards, the population showed constant and sometimes spectacular natural increase; while it is striking that the same did not apply to Africa. One European scholar gave the following estimates of world population (in millions) according to continents:

	1650	1750	1850	1900
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Africa	100	100	100	120
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Europe	103	144	274	423
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Asia	257	437	656	857
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None of the above figures are really precise, but they do indicate a consensus among researchers on population that the huge African continent has an abnormal record of stagnation in this respect, and there is no causative factor other than the trade in slaves to which attention can be drawn.

An emphasis on population loss as such is highly relevant to the

question of socio-economic development. Population growth played a major role in European development in providing labour, markets, and the pressures which led to further advance. Japanese population growth had similar positive effects; and in other parts of Asia which remained pre-capitalist, the size of the population led to a much more intensive exploitation of the land than has ever been the case in what is still a sparsely-peopled African continent.

So long as the population density was low, then human beings viewed as units of labour were far more important than other factors of production such as land. From one end of the continent to the other, it is easy to find examples that African people were conscious that population was in their circumstances the most important factor of production. Among the Bemba, for instance, numbers of subjects were held to be more important than land. Among the Shambala of Tanzania, the same feeling was expressed in the saying 'a king is people'. Among the Balanta of Guinea-Bissau, the family's strength is represented by the number of hands there are to cultivate the land. Certainly, many African rulers acquiesced in the European slave trade for what they considered to be reasons of self-interest, but on no scale of rationality could the outflow of population be measured as being anything but disastrous for African societies.

African economic activity was affected both directly and indirectly by population loss. For instance, when the inhabitants of a given area were reduced below a certain number in an environment where tsetse fly was present, the remaining few had to abandon the area. In effect,

enslavement was causing these people to lose their battle to tame and harness nature — a battle which is at the basis of development.

Violence also meant insecurity. The opportunity presented by European slave dealers became the major (though not the only) stimulus for a great deal of social violence between different African communities and within any given community. It took the form more of raiding and kidnapping than of regular warfare, and that fact increased the element of fear and uncertainty.

Both openly and by implication, all the European powers in the 19th century indicated their awareness of the fact that the activities connected with producing captives were inconsistent with other economic pursuits. That was the time when Britain in particular wanted Africans to collect palm produce and rubber and to grow agricultural crops for export in place of slaves; and it was clear that slave-raiding was violently conflicting with that objective in Western, Eastern and Central Africa. Long before that date, Europeans accepted that fact when their self-interest was involved. For example, in the 17th century, the Portuguese and Dutch actually discouraged slave trade on the 'Gold Coast' for they recognised that it could be incompatible with gold trade. However, by the end of that century, gold had been discovered in Brazil, and the importance of gold supplies from Africa was lessened. Within the total Atlantic pattern, African slaves became more important than gold, and Brazilian gold was offered for African captives at Whydah (Dahomey) and Accra. At that point, slaving began undermining the 'Gold Coast' economy and destroying the gold trade. Slave-raiding and kidnapping made it unsafe to mine and to travel with

gold; and raiding for captives proved more profitable than gold-mining. One European on the scene noted that ‘as one fortunate marauding makes a native rich in a day, they therefore exert themselves rather in war, robbery and plunder than in their old business of digging and collecting gold’.

The above changeover from gold-mining to slave-raiding took place within a period of a few years between 1700 and 1710, when the ‘Gold Coast’ came to supply about 5,000 to 6,000 captives per year. By the end of the 18th century, a much smaller number of captives were exported from the ‘Gold Coast’, but the damage had already been done. It is worth noting that Europeans sought out different parts of West and Central Africa at different times to play the role of major suppliers of slaves to the Americas. This meant that virtually every section of the long western coastline between the Senegal and Cunene rivers had at least a few years experience of intensive trade in slaves — with all its consequences. Besides, in the history of Eastern Nigeria, the Congo, Northern Angola and Dahomey, there were periods extending over decades when exports remained at an average of many thousands per year. Most of those areas were also relatively highly developed within the African context. They were lead rig forces inside Africa, whose energies would otherwise have gone towards their own self-improvement and the betterment of the continent as a whole.

The changeover to warlike activities and kidnapping must have affected all branches of economic activity, and agriculture in particular. Occasionally, in certain localities food production was increased to

provide supplies for slave ships, but the overall consequence of slaving on agricultural activities in Western, Eastern and Central Africa were negative. Labour was drawn off from agriculture and conditions became unsettled. Dahomey, which in the 16th century was known for exporting food to parts of what is now Togo, was suffering from famines in the 19th century. The present generation of Africans will readily recall that in the colonial period when able-bodied men left their homes as migrant labourers that upset the farming routine in the home districts and often caused famines. Slave trading after all, meant migration of labour in a manner one hundred times more brutal and disruptive.

To achieve economic development, one essential condition is to make the maximum use of the country's labour and natural resources. Usually, that demands peaceful conditions, but there have been times in history when social groups have grown stronger by raiding their neighbours for women, cattle and goods, because they then used the 'booty' from the raids for the benefit of their own community. Slaving in Africa did not even have that redeeming value. Captives were shipped outside instead of being utilised within any given African community for creating wealth from nature. It was only as an accidental by-product that in some areas Africans who recruited captives for Europeans realised that they were better off keeping some captives for themselves. In any case, slaving prevented the remaining population from effectively engaging in agriculture and industry, and it employed professional slave hunters and warriors to destroy rather than build. Mite apart from the moral aspect and the immense suffering that it

caused, the European slave trade was economically totally irrational from the viewpoint of African development.

For certain purposes, it is necessary to be more specific and to speak of the trade in slaves not in general continent-wide terms but rather with reference to the varying impact on several regions. The relative intensity of slave-raiding in different areas is fairly well known. Some South African peoples were enslaved by the Boers and some North African Muslims by Christian Europeans, but those were minor episodes. The zones most notorious for human exports were, firstly, West Africa from Senegal to Angola along a belt extending about 200 miles inland and, secondly, that part of East Central Africa which today covers, Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Northern Zambia and Eastern Congo. Furthermore, within each of those broad areas, finer distinctions can be drawn.

It might therefore appear that slave trade did not adversely affect the development of some parts of Africa, simply because exports were non-existent or at a low level. However, the contention that European slave trade was an underdeveloping factor for the continent as a whole must be upheld, because it does not follow that an African district which did not trade with Europe was entirely free from whatever influences were exerted by Europe. European trade goods percolated into the deepest interior, and (more significantly) the orientation of large areas of the continent towards human exports that other positive inter-actions were thereby ruled out.

The above proposition may be more fully grasped by making some

comparisons. In any given economy, the various components reflect the well-being of others. Therefore, when there is depression in one sector, that depression invariably transfers itself to others to some extent. Similarly, when there is buoyancy in one sector then others benefit. Turning to biological sciences, it will be found that students of ecology recognise that a single change, such as the disappearance of a small species could trigger off negative or positive reactions in spheres that superficially appear unconnected. Parts of Africa left 'free' by export trends in captives must have been affected by the tremendous dislocation — in ways that are not easy to comprehend, because it is so much a question of what might have happened.

Hypothetical questions such as 'what might have happened if . . . ?' sometimes lead to absurd speculations. But it is entirely legitimate and very necessary to ask 'what might have happened in Barotseland (southern Zambia) if there were not generalised slave-trading across the whole belt of central Africa which lay immediately north of Barotseland?'. 'What would have happened in Buganda if the Katangese were concentrating on selling copper to the Baganda instead of captives to Europeans?'

During the colonial epoch, the British forced Africans to sing

Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves
Britons never never never shall be slaves

The British themselves started singing the tune in the early 18th century, at the height of using Africans as slaves. 'What would have

been Britain's level of development had millions of them been put to work as slaves outside of their homeland over a period of four centuries?' Furthermore, assuming that those wonderful fellows could never never never have been slaves, one could speculate further on the probable effects on their development had continental Europe been enslaved. Had that been the case, its nearest neighbours would have been removed from the ambit of fruitful trade with Britain. After all, trade between the British Isles and places like the Baltic and the Mediterranean is unanimously considered by scholars to have been the earliest stimulus to the English economy in the late feudal and early capitalist period, even before the era of overseas expansion.

One tactic that is now being employed by certain European (including American) scholars is to say that the European slave trade was undoubtedly *a moral evil*, but it was *economically good* for Africa. Here attention will be drawn only very briefly to a few of those arguments to indicate how ridiculous they can be. One that receives much emphasis that African rulers and other persons obtained Europe commodities in exchange for their captives, and this was how Africans gained 'wealth'. This suggestion fails to take into account the fact that several European imports were competing with and strangling African products; it fails to take into account the fact that none of the long list of European articles were of the type which entered into the productive process, but were rather items to be rapidly consumed or stowed away uselessly; and it incredibly overlooks the fact that the majority of the imports were of the worst quality even as consumer goods — cheap gin, cheap gunpowder, pots and kettles full of holes, beads, and other

assorted rubbish.

Following from the above, it is suggested that certain African kingdoms grew strong economically and politically a consequence of the trade with Europeans. The greatest of the West African kingdoms, such as Oyo, Benin, Dahomey and Asante are cited as examples. Oyo and Benin were great, before making contact with Europeans, and while both Dahomey and Asante grew stronger during the period of the European slave trade, the roots of their achievements went back to much earlier years. Furthermore — and this is a major fallacy in the argument of the slave trade apologists — the fact that a given African state grew politically more powerful at the same time as it engaged in selling captives to Europeans is not automatically to be attributed to the credit of the trade in slaves. A cholera epidemic may kill thousands in a country and yet the population increases. The increase obviously came about *in spite of* and not because of the cholera. This simple logic escapes those who speak about the European slave trade benefitting Africa. The destructive tendency of slave trading can be clearly established; and, wherever a state seemingly progressed in the epoch of slave trading, the conclusion is simply that it did so in spite of the adverse effects of a process that was more damaging than cholera. This is the picture that emerges from a detailed study of Dahomey, for instance, and in the final analysis although Dahomey did its best to expand politically and militarily while still tied to slave trade, that form of economic activity seriously undermined its economic base and left it much worse off.

A few of the arguments about the economic benefits of the European slave trade for Africa amount to nothing more than saying that exporting millions of captives was a way of avoiding starvation in Africa! To attempt to reply to that would be painful and time-wasting. But, perhaps a slightly more subtle version of the same argument requires a reply: namely, the argument that Africa gained because in the process of slave trading new food crops were acquired from the American continent and these became staples in Africa. The crops in question are maize and cassava, which became staples in Africa late in the 19th century and in the present century. But the spread of food crops is one of the most common phenomena in human history. Most crops originated in only one of the continents, and then social contact caused their transfer to other parts of the world. Trading in slaves has no special bearing on whether crops spread-the simplest forms of trade would have achieved the same result. Today, the Italians have (hard) wheat foods like spaghetti and macaroni as their staple, while most Europeans use the potato. The Italians took the idea of the spaghetti type foods from the Chinese noodle after Marco Polo returned from travels there, while Europe adopted the potato from American Indians. In neither case were Europeans enslaved before they could receive a benefit that was the logical heritage of all mankind, but Africans are to be told that the European slave trade developed us by bringing us maize and cassava.

All of the above points are taken from books and articles published recently, as the fruit of research in major British and American Universities. They are probably not the commonest views even among

European bourgeois scholars, but they are representative of a growing trend that seems likely to become the new accepted orthodoxy in metropolitan capitalist countries; and this significantly coincides with Europe's struggle against the further decolonization of Africa economically and mentally. In one sense, it is preferable to ignore such rubbish and isolate our youth from its insults; but unfortunately one of the aspects of current African underdevelopment is that the capitalist publishers and bourgeois scholars dominate the scene and help mould opinions the world over. It is for that reason that writing of the type which justifies the trade in slaves has to be exposed as racist bourgeois propaganda, having no connection with reality or logic. It is a question not merely of history but of present day liberation struggle in Africa.

4.2 Technological Stagnation and Distortion of the African Economy in the Pre-Colonial Epoch.

It has already been indicated that in the 15th century European technology was not totally superior to that of other parts of the world. There were certain specific features which were highly advantageous to Europe—such as shipping and (to a lesser extent) guns. Europeans trading to Africa had to make use of Asian and African consumer goods, showing that their system of production was not absolutely superior. It is particularly striking that in the early centuries of trade, Europeans relied heavily on Indian cloths for resale in Africa, and they also purchased cloths on several parts of the West African coast for resale elsewhere. Morocco, Mauretania, Senegambia, Ivory Coast, Benin, Yorubaland and Loango were all exporters to other parts of