

Book Review

Cabral, Amilcar. *Resistance and Decolonization*, translated and edited by Dan Wood, with an introduction by Reiland Rabaka, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

A friend who was a comrade of the Guinean national liberation struggle under Amilcar Cabral once described to me how Cabral would lecture the cadres around the campfire after maneuvers in the bush. “This,” he maintained, “is when the real education began.” In *Resistance and Decolonization*, a new translation of Amilcar Cabral’s theories of revolution, culture, identity, politics, and organization, the reader is ushered through familiar but refreshingly new doors of insight into Cabral and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC). The introduction, written by Africana critical theorist Reiland Rabaka, is an important piece that identifies and articulates the dimensions of Africana critical theory through the philosophy and praxis of its major theoretical voices, with Cabral rightfully recognized as one of them. Dan Wood’s essay, “Imbrications of Coloniality: An Introduction to Cabralist Critical Theory in Relation to Contemporary Struggles,” contributes an elegant and eloquent contextualization of Cabral’s thought. Students of Cabral who have an appreciation for those works that examine Cabral as more than a philosopher or theorist will appreciate Wood’s attention to the context of these lectures to the PAIGC. Wood’s attention to Cabral’s analysis of religion in the context of the “coloniality of religious power” (61) is, as Woods states, quite timely.

The heart of this book are the aspects of Cabral’s thought and work revealed in Wood’s translations. The leading voices of the tradition of Africana critical theory often wrote themselves out of their professional/disciplinary perspectives. This holds true for Cabral. In these pages, there are a series of lectures delivered by Cabral to the PAIGC cadres. As an agronomist for the Portuguese government, Cabral’s analysis of the possibilities of Guinean agrarian development was a factor in his commitment to a national liberation struggle. In this, we see the unique quality of Cabral’s thought, the dynamics of his role as commander, and glimpses into his character and humanity.

Within the section titled, “Analysis of a Few Types of Resistance,” one finds a series of directives presented over a course of days to the PAIGC in November 1969 along with “The Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence,” which was delivered before the UNESCO Meeting of Experts on Questions of Race, Identity and Dignity in Paris, July 2-3, 1972. In these documents, one sees Cabral’s consistent engagement with the fundamental themes and ideas of his canonical works, *Revolution in Guinea* (1970), *Return to the Source* (1975) and *Unity and Struggle* (1979). The role of culture and identity in the national liberation struggle, the transformative effects of struggle on culture, the relation between theory and praxis, and the centrality of continuous critical assessment of the conditions of the struggle are presented in their most dense and intricate forms. As lectures presented during an aggressive Portuguese counter-offensive, the lectures capture a sense of the organic urgency of the struggle that later essays have had published out of them. What one finds in these directives is a leader grappling with the foundational theoretical, philosophical, and ethical concerns of his struggle along with the practical concerns of his army’s operations.

Cabral’s agronomist training often reads as cool clinical analysis, the meticulous tone and metaphoric language of which reveal a mind invested in scientific analysis and pragmatic discernment. These essays display the interaction between these at times competing concerns and reveal a captivating portrait of the man behind them. In the lecture, “Political Resistance,” Cabral’s exhortations that “Portuguese colonialism” must be separated from the Portuguese people are reinforced by his notations on the decisive shift of Portuguese public opinion regarding the war in Guinea. A consistent stream in Cabral’s writings is his “pragmatism over ideology” approach. In an age when racial-nationalist calls for cultural unity continued to hold sway, Cabral’s assertion that “an objective analysis of cultural reality will show that no such racial or continental culture exists on any important scale” (178), stands apart from many Pan-African and Diasporic grounds for organizing against colonial domination. Along with the warrior-philosopher, we are given glimpses of the politician and moral leader. Cabral’s presentation of the political maneuvering behind the Afro-Lusophone coordination against Portuguese colonialism exemplifies the practical on-the-ground choices made in the eye of the national liberation struggle and that inform the possibilities of struggle. These moments are also balanced by Cabral’s demand, in “Cultural Resistance,” that the

members of the PAIGC must be the model of perfection for the people, even in their dress: “A people that is fighting for its independence, for its *dignity*, from today on must proceed with clean feet” (127). And we see a commander inspiring his soldiers with a grand vision of the forces in which they are a part and who also must stay attuned to the prosaic issues of equipment upkeep. The directive, “Armed Resistance,” has a stirring passage in which Cabral delivers a powerful analysis of the rise of European capitalism, the creation of the Atlantic slave system, the rise of African colonialism, the history of Guinea, and the role of the Guinean national struggle in all of this. This theorizing is matched in its intensity by Cabral’s frustrated critique of the improper management of canoes by the cadres in the directive, “Economic Resistance.”

Wood’s translation of Cabral’s work in *Resistance and Decolonization* is notable for its introduction to English speakers of a fuller, more organic image of Cabral. In these essays, one sees the finer details of how this warrior worked. In these lectures, one finds a figure who is vibrant and alive, and who speaks and acts from within the cauldron of need and possibility that made up the Guinea-Cape Verdean national struggle.

Charles Peterson
Oberlin College