

# Facets of Walter Rodney's Pan-African Intellectual Activism during his Dar es Salaam Years, 1966-1974

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## Abstract

This contribution sets out to deeply “ground” Walter Rodney’s Pan-African intellectual activism from 1966 to 1974 within the intellectual climate of the University of Dar es Salaam and the wider political context of Tanzania’s socialist project *ujamaa* and beyond. In my analysis of Rodney’s groundbreaking book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, I delineate four central pillars which solidly rest on Pan-African thought: Africans’ achievements and historic agency; nationalism as a liberating ideology for Africans and people of African descent; the Pan-African bridge across the Atlantic Ocean; and the exploitation of the *African* masses by the ruling classes. However, Rodney’s intellectual and political impact was not limited to *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. As a university lecturer, Rodney figured prominently in the restructuring of the curriculum of the future Institute of Development Studies; students were encouraged to perceive Africa in a holistic perspective, and to understand its active underdevelopment within the global capitalist system. At campus, Rodney also engaged with radical socialist students and

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university staff which fervently criticized imperialism, neo-colonialism and capitalist exploitation. Rodney's engagement during his Dar es Salaam years signify a globally informed Pan-African mindset that aimed to link the African diaspora and Africa more closely together; eager to convince oppressed people around the world to de-link from the global capitalist system and embark on a socialist path of heavy industrialization and development for the masses. The real obstacles of his difference in nationality, language and cultural background experienced by Rodney while living in Tanzania, also exemplify practical limitations which inform the complex nature of transnational and trans-Atlantic solidarities.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2019 the *16th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium* took place at Atlanta University to commemorate the late Guyanese historian Walter Anthony Rodney (1942-1980). The symposium engaged with "Pan-African Groundings: History, Movements, Resistance & Struggle" through a variety of formats. What becomes clear from the program of the symposium is that the hosting *Walter Rodney Foundation* and the presenters linked Rodney's Pan-Africanist groundings with the struggle of the people in the whole Global South (see Walter Rodney Foundation 2019). The keynote was delivered by lawyer Mireille Fanon-Mendés who chaired the United Nations Working Group on People of African Descent from 2014 to 2016. Mireille Fanon-Mendés is the daughter of Frantz Fanon, the Martinique-born psychiatrist and revolutionary intellectual who had a considerable impact on Rodney's thought. Remarkably, the 2019 symposium on "Pan-African Groundings" offered the public audience no less than three book launches connected to Rodney: the first publication of Rodney's posthumous book *The Russian Revolution: A View from the Third World* (2018a), which was compiled from lectures Rodney held at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in 1970/71; a reprint of his *The Groundings With My Brothers* (1969a) and a brand new 2019 edition of his well-known piece *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (2015 [1972]) with a foreword by one iconic leader of the *Black Power* movement, Angela Davis. As Davis highlights, when *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (HEUA) was published in 1972 it influenced both academia and activist circles,

“The field of African history would never be the same after the publication of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. At the same time, this meticulously researched analysis of the abiding repercussions of European colonialism on the continent of Africa has radicalized approaches to anti-racist activism throughout the world.” (Davis 2019: n.p.)

This article traces the political and scholarly influences as well as the heated debates that were molded into HEUA through an examination of Rodney's period in Dar es Salaam which spans from 1966/67 and 1969-1974, separated by a short teaching stint in Jamaica in 1968.

Walter Anthony Rodney was born into a working-class background in then British Guiana in 1942. This country is located on the South American mainland but due to its cultural and historic links its coastal strip with the capital Georgetown is often considered as part of the Caribbean, in particular in Pan-African contexts. On scholarships, Rodney studied first at the University of West Indies in Jamaica (1960-63) and later obtained his doctorate in African History with honors at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London (1963-66) (Lewis 1998: 18-20, 31).

Academically speaking, the six years at UDSM in Tanzania were probably his most productive years. Apart from his monograph HEUA, Rodney contributed chapters to volumes edited by fellow scholars at UDSM such as the historian Terence Ranger (Rodney 1968a) and the economist Idrian Resnick (Rodney 1968b) as well as to the *Cambridge History of Africa* (Rodney 1975b; 1975c). He published widely in renowned academic journals such as the *Journal of African History* (e. g. Rodney 1967a) and in locally produced outlets such as the Papers of the *Historical Association of Tanzania* (HAT) (Rodney 1967b; for the HAT and its innovative pamphlet series see Lonsdale 1969 and Harisch 2017). He also contributed written pieces to the radical student journal *Cheche* (later renamed *Maji Maji*), the journal *Mbioni* and to the local newspaper aligned to the TANU government, *The Nationalist*. His contribution to the *UNESCO General History of Africa*, Volume VIII (Rodney 1985), published posthumously, was probably written during his Dar es Salaam years as well. Returned to his homeland Guyana and committed to oppositional political activism there, Rodney was assassinated by the Forbes

Burnham regime in 1980, only 38 years of age (Institute of the Black World 1990: iii-iv; Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry 2016: 67, 74).

Walter Rodney had arrived in Tanzania's major port city and capital, Dar es Salaam in 1966. After he completed his doctoral degree in History at SOAS, the then only 24 year old historian was inclined to teach on the African continent. Given Rodney's Pan-African, socialist and anti-imperialist sympathies, however, at the time of his application in 1966 from London for Rodney only two viable options remained: Tanzania under Julius Nyerere and Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah (Institute of the Black World 1990: 32). Since Nkrumah was ousted the very same year, Rodney successfully applied for a lectureship at Tanzania's brand new University College of Dar es Salaam, which would become the University of Dar es Salaam in 1970. Actually, the University College Dar es Salaam had been founded in October 1961, consisting only of a law faculty with fourteen students (Kimambo 2010: 83). From 1961 to 1964 the small college took refuge in a newly constructed TANU building complex in the city center (Mapunda 2010: 62f.). On September 30, 1963, the University College Dar es Salaam became a constituent college of the University of East Africa (UEA) entity, the two other colleges being Makerere University College (Uganda) and University College Nairobi, (Kenya). Each of the colleges was initially specialized only in a number of fields but soon expanded to cover a wider range of disciplines. In 1964 the University College Dar es Salaam moved to its present location at the "University Hill", located 12 kilometres from the city center on lush and hilly ground (Kimambo 2010: 83, 85f.). In 1970, the UEA administrative structure was disbanded and the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) nationalized under its current naming.

Influenced by the Marxist study groups under the mentorship of the well-known Caribbean intellectual C.L.R. James and his wife Selma James during his student years in London (Rodney 2015 [1972]: xiv), Rodney "arrived in Tanzania fully aware and appreciative of the historical tradition of black activism and Pan-African consciousness as well as efforts by Malcolm [X], [Stokely] Carmichael, and student activists in the United States." (Adeleke 2017: 130) Tanzania's Arusha Declaration of 1967 which set the country on its own path of African socialism, *ujamaa*, further inspired an array of mainly left-wing and liberal scholars to teach at the UDSM and made the university a global intellectual hub of competing Cold War arenas between East, West and South—influenced by *Black Power*, the African liberation

struggles and the revolutionary atmosphere of the "global 1960s" (Asheeke 2019; Burton 2017; Harisch 2018; Shivji 2012).

In this article I am going to highlight how Rodney's Pan-African intellectual activism was deeply "grounded" (Rodney 1969a) within the intellectual climate of an institution, that is the University of Dar es Salaam, and shaped by the political context of Tanzania's socialist project *ujamaa*. By scrutinizing Rodney's writings and his political activism along Pan-African lines during his Dar es Salaam years, I hint at the intricate evolution of Walter Rodney as a historian, engaged faculty member, and highly political individual – following the lead of Rupert Lewis' formidable account on Rodney (Lewis 1998). The thematic sections that will follow are made up of four parts. The first deals with *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, arguing that it is vital to understand Rodney's Pan-Africanism within a global anti-colonial and anti-imperial perspective of the 1960s. Focusing on the four themes of African achievements and agency, African nationalism, connections between Africa, the Caribbean and the US as well as on the African ruling classes, I emphasize the Pan-African dimension of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. The second part draws on material from the University Library Dar es Salaam, East Africana Collection, and examines the ways socialist faculty staff at UDSM—among them Rodney—pushed for the radical restructuring of an interdisciplinary, university wide course along socialist and Pan-African lines. This course, which later became the curriculum of the Institute of Development Studies, employed dependency theory and various other (neo-) Marxist methodologies to identify the causes and remedies for Africa's underdevelopment. Another crucial aspect of the intellectual life at UDSM was the spirit for fervent debates over *ujamaa*, "scientific socialism" and student radicalism—a milieu Rodney easily immersed himself into. This is the theme of part three. As a comrade, Rodney was involved into the activities of the *University Students African Revolutionary Front* (USARF), a radical student body that organized seminars on African liberation, printed a radical magazine and distributed leaflets on and off campus to instill a revolutionary spirit among university students and the broader public. USARF and Rodney's activities connected to it show that the group's ideology was radically internationalist in outlook, and its rhetoric encouraged the whole of Africa to disengage from imperialism. The final section shows how Rodney's efforts to reconcile Pan-African ideals and practices in the Tanzanian political context were not

always easy in everyday life, and thus points to obstacles for Pan-African solidarities.

### **The Pan-African Dimension of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa***

*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* was aimed at an African audience. Rodney defined *African* as both Africans on the continent and descendants of Africans scattered around the globe (see e.g. Adeleke 2017: 138, Rodney 2015 [1972]: 81f., 258, Young 2008: 488f.); and it was decidedly anti-establishment: "The purpose has been to try and reach Africans who wish to explore further the nature of their exploitation, rather than to satisfy the 'standards' set by our oppressors and their spokesmen in the academic world" (Rodney 2015 [1972]: viii). It is important to note that for Rodney Africa's exploitation and oppression which is highlighted above were a result of European (and, later, US-American) capitalist imperialism. Therefore, Rodney's Pan-Africanist call in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is not only anti-colonial but also decidedly anti-capitalist in nature; it was informed by Rodney's belief in socialism as the only viable option for Africa's development and the liberation of oppressed people around the globe (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 11f.).

With a broad public in mind, the book was deliberately written without footnotes— only complemented by a "Brief Guide to reading" containing a commented list of works Rodney deemed relevant for the respective chapter; and its first edition of 1972 was published cooperatively by the Dar es Salaam based Tanzania Publishing House and Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications in London. An edition printed by Howard University Press in 1974, eventually catered for the North American markets, while the 1970s and 1980s saw *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* translated into several European languages, among them Portuguese (1975), German (1980), Spanish (1982) and French (1986). A Chinese translation seems to be forthcoming (Hirji 2017: 1). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* has been a work with long-lasting international influence also because the text itself is written in a clear, sharp and witty style. Rodney drew from a wide range of historical examples on the African continent to advance the main argument that capitalist relations with Europe (and later the US) into which Africa had entered into from the 15th century onwards, led to a dialectical— interrelated, intertwined, entangled—process of European development through African under-development. This encompassed the fields of

politics, culture, religion, and technology (see Lewis 1998: 69-78, Harisch 2018: 90-110).

To better understand the political context in which HEUA was written, it is useful to bear in mind that the late 1960s were a period of revolutionary tensions fueled by student demonstrations around the world – the war in Vietnam raging, the civil rights and *Black Power* movement in the US radicalizing; and struggles of the Black majority populations in colonial and ex-colonial territories against white power and supremacy ongoing—from the Caribbean to Southern Africa (see Austin 2001, Wong 2016: 11f.).

Another crucial impact on Rodney came through Tanzania's progressive stand against white colonialism and racism. The capital Dar es Salaam was home to the offices of liberation movements from all over Southern Africa, and Tanzania's countryside hosted military training camps (Burton 2019; Roberts 2016). All these influences combined, the University of Dar es Salaam was a meeting point of South-East-West-North and beyond, an arena where conflicting interests on the global, national, institutional and personal level had to be reconciled within a space offered by the Tanzanian developmental project *ujamaa* (Ashekee 2019; Bourbonniere 2007: 87; Burton 2017: 401-456; Harisch 2018; Lal 2015; Shivji 2012: 86f.).

In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Rodney upholds that albeit outright colonial rule on the African continent lasted only for around seventy to eighty years, the foundation for Africa's underdevelopment was laid with the continent's integration into the international capitalist trade networks that were controlled by European capital from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 73-92, 131). Moreover, the full scale colonial intervention at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century happened at a decisive moment of African development, thus aborting indigenous patterns of development in various fields, such as politics, economics, and culture (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 124, 214). The rapid technological progress in the capitalist metropolises, combined with measures of force, heavily increased the exploitation of raw materials and labour supplies in the colonies that were engrained into a global capitalist system. By providing surplus from raw materials and labour supplies from the African continent and from African labour on American slave plantations, Africa developed Europe (and the USA) and was in turn underdeveloped through the expatriation of its profits into the hands of European and later US-American capitalists (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 69, 77-79, 138, 161, 197). To ensure genuine development on the African

continent after this process of active underdevelopment, Africans must form bigger federations inspired by Pan-African ideas and radically de-link with the global capitalist system, following a socialist path of heavy industrialization and development for the masses (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 75, 100).

Rodney is seen by some people first and foremost as *the* scholar, who applied Latin American dependency theory to African history (Lewis 1998: 69), while others value his main contribution in emphasizing the connections between the Atlantic slave trade and African underdevelopment. Other assessments highlight Rodney as a Marxist and/or Pan-African historian (Kaba 1982; Lewis 1998; Young 2008). The historian Arno Sonderegger (2011b: 99) identified three topoi that are highly relevant for Pan-Africanist thought: racism and anti-racism (inequality), colonialism and anti-colonialism (dependency), and African Nationalism (authenticity). All three play a crucial role in Rodney's writing of African history in HEUA as well as in a number of his other works. In my reading of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, I found that the following four pillars — one can certainly identify more — rest on a strong Pan-African foundation:

- (1) The affirmation of Africans' (including people of African descent in the diaspora) achievements and historic agency (as well as weaknesses) in the pre-colonial and colonial era without blindly adhering to Eurocentric concepts of civilization and modernity.
- (2) Nationalism as a possible liberating ideology for Africans and people of African descent and as a starting point for a grander, more inclusive African political entity which would follow a socialist path of development.
- (3) Rodney's approach of entangled history (Sonderegger 2016: 12) in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* helped to solidify the Pan-African bridge across the Atlantic Ocean between African anti-imperialism and the *Black Power* movement in the US and Caribbean.
- (4) "Neo-colonialism": Rodney criticizes the exploitation of the *African* masses by the ruling class, irrespective of the latter's color and highlights the indigenous African "comprador" class as "sell-outs" to international capitalist enterprises.



Crucially, these four pillars should not be understood as static and clearly demarcated entities but rather entwined lines of thought which informed and recurred on each other. With regards to African achievements and historical agency as well as Black people's struggles around the world, especially in the Americas, Rodney was convinced that a fuller understanding of Africa's past was the key to solutions in the present (Rodney 2015 [1972]: vii). "*Africa*" for Rodney encompassed Africans, Blacks around the world as well as all people oppressed by imperialism (Adeleke 2017: 138, Rodney 2015 [1972]: 81f., 258, Young 2008: 488f.)—with the qualification that Rodney understood imperialism as Western capitalist imperialism (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 11, 126). The task *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* should fulfill in this regard was already mentioned by Rodney in his book *The Groundings with my Brothers* three years earlier,

“If we, the blacks in the West, accept ourselves as African, we can make a contribution to the development of African culture, helping to free it from European imperialism. [...] What we need is confidence in ourselves, so that as blacks, and as Africans we can be conscious, united, independent and creative. A knowledge of African achievements in art, education, religion, politics, agriculture and the mining of metals can help us gain the necessary confidence which has been removed by slavery and colonialism.” (Rodney 1969a: 37)

"African achievements in art, education, religion, politics, agriculture and the mining of metals" were seen as key to re-affirm African agency and indeed history. As concrete examples for African achievements in the pre-colonial period, Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* offers a walk through Egypt, Ethiopia, Nubia, the Western Sudan, the East African interlacustrine zone and Zimbabwe (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 45-66). The author emphasizes that whatever Africans achieved "was a perfectly logical outgrowth of human social development within Africa" (Rodney 1972: 61) and not a transplant from outside. Yet, compared to many parts of Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Africa's weaknesses lay in her distance to scientific knowledge, in weaker tools and a lower efficiency in agriculture and manufacture (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 38f.). Yet, Rodney was careful not to adhere to the Western "civilization" discourse shaped by colonialism (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 199).

Rodney's cautious words on the discourse of African achievements and civilizations have to be set in historical context. The 1960s were the decade when scholars successfully refuted the colonial myths about Africa as a continent without history, civilizations and achievements. Research and writings done in Ibadan, Legon, London, Madison, Makerere, Dakar and Dar es Salaam, among other places, highlighted that Africa is the cradle of mankind and that Africans had created powerful empires which flourished long before the arrival of the Europeans; in short, they demonstrated that Africa had a long, rich and colorful pre-colonial history of its own (Falola 2004; Sonderegger 2011a). Researching for his PhD on the effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade on the Guinea coast at SOAS, Rodney himself was part of this academic agenda. The emphasis on Africans' achievements was inextricably linked to the anti-colonial nationalisms on the African continent during the 1950s and 1960s (Falola 2004; Sonderegger 2011a), the second pillar I delineated above. For Rodney, nationalism as a possible liberating ideology provided only a starting point for a grander, more inclusive African political entity. While Rodney grew fiercely critical of any socialist Pan-Africanism driven by a state-centered nationalism in the later 1970s (Rodney 2015 [1972]; Quest 2016), at the time of writing *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* he felt it was imperative for existing African nation-states to federate, given that "[t]he small size of African states and the numerous political divisions made it so much easier for Europe to make the decisions as to Africa's role in world production and trade." (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 75) Rodney was of the conviction that socialist states with their emphasis on development planning for the masses would represent the right model: "The socialist state has as its prime function the control of the economy on behalf of the working classes." (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 12) Nationalism could act as the impulse to set up a socialist order: "socialism released the nationalist energies of colonized peoples; it turned the goal of production away from the money market and towards the satisfaction of human needs." (Rodney 2015 [1972]: 11)

Much more than most of his colleagues, and very self-consciously, Rodney spread out his activities into non-academic territory. Closely aligned with the task of nation-building, writing African history was a powerful tool to give Africans back their pride and dignity. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* had a huge impact especially on a Black readership around the globe and fulfilled the task of "writing back" with a widely resonating fervor—the

third pillar I identified above. The wide resonance of HEUA, I would argue, signaled a powerful impulse for the Pan-African bridge across the Atlantic Ocean between African anti-imperialism and the *Black Power* movement in the US and Caribbean. For example, in volumes edited by *Black Power* scholar-activists at the Institute of the Black World, Rodney informed the mostly North American audience about Tanzania's socialist project of *ujamaa* and what this meant for the country's educational policies—placing the Tanzanian efforts within a wider setting of education in Africa and its colonial legacies (Rodney 1974). The personal encounters which informed these scholarly collaborations partly dated back to the 1968 Congress of Black Writers in Montreal, Canada, which Rodney attended (Rodney 2018b). Vincent Harding, Robert Hill, and William Strickland, who were leading members of the Institute of the Black World in Atlanta, remembered that *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* “immediately struck an exciting and responsive chord among many in this country [the USA]. Among politically-oriented black people it played something of the same formative role as Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* almost a decade before.” (Rodney 2015 [1972]: xvi)

The revolutionary writer Frantz Fanon had analyzed those Africans who acted as a transmission line between the colonial metropolises and territories in Africa, which brings us to the fourth pillar of Rodney's Pan-African thought. Rodney's own Marxist class analysis which criticizes the exploitation of the African masses by the ruling classes in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is very much informed by Fanon's views (Rodney 1972: 25, 261). According to Rodney, “[u]ltimately, it was possible for the colonizers to withdraw and to satisfy the aspirations of most of the African intelligentsia, without in any way relieving the peasant and worker majority, who were the most exploited and the most oppressed.” (Rodney 1972: 244) The importance of the African ruling classes is a recurring theme in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. In Rodney's view, this small minority “which serves as the transmission line between metropolitan capitalists and the dependencies in Africa” (Rodney 1972: 25) is described as “sell-outs”, as “gentlemen who dance in Abidjan, Accra, and Kinshasa when music is played in Paris, London, and New York.” (Rodney 1972: 25) Since this class of African “compradors” (Rodney 1972: 131), together with international capitalist companies, expatriate most of Africa's surplus, they stand in the way of meaningful development for the masses. Along these lines, Rodney

states in the preface of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* that he wanted to "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." (Rodney 1972: vii) On the foregoing pages, I have substantiated four Pan-African socialist foundations of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* in detail. To recollect the findings of this section, I want to emphasize Kurt B. Young's lines who contend that "Rodney was foremost a Pan-Africanist. Indeed, the essential thread throughout his lifework was his commitment to the eradication of political exploitation and economic underdevelopment in the African world." (Young 2008: 488) Young chose to map "Rodney's thinking on the political and economic advancement of Africa, African people in the Diaspora, and indeed on all exploited people." (Young 2008: 488, my emphasis) Rodney's legacy was celebrated in a similar way at a memorial symposium named *Walter Rodney's contribution to the Revolution* which was organized at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) within a few weeks after Rodney's assassination. The university's *Arts Lecture Theatre* was full to the brim with not only students but the general public attending as well,

"[T]he majority [of the audience] had never met him, except through the medium of the written word, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, which remains his legacy and inspiration to us, our link with this great son of the oppressed masses of Africa and the West Indies." (Muganda et al. 1980: 2)

Yet, Rodney also made clear how the drafting of his magnum opus, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* was deeply affected by the Tanzanian political context and the UDSM in particular,

"It was in Tanzania in 1967 that I believe I was afforded the opportunity to grow in conjunction with the total movement of a society, and to grow in conjunction with other comrades, younger and older, though mainly younger, who were also grappling for the same perspective on African history." (Institute of the Black World 1990: 35)

And indeed, while Rodney acknowledges the work and help of many colleagues in the preparation of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, he thanks two individuals, “who read the manuscript in a spirit of constructive criticism” (Rodney 1972: vii), explicitly: “comrades Karim Hirji and Henry Mapolu”, who were undergraduate students at UDSM and members of USARF, the radical student body to which Rodney, the university teacher, aligned himself. Apart from the students engaged in USARF, at the University of Dar es Salaam, Rodney had found a handful of committed socialist scholars who aimed at fundamental changes in the country's recently established university. How this group of radical scholars sought to achieve this is the focus of the next section.

### **The Curriculum at the Institute of Development Studies**

When Rodney set foot in Dar es Salaam sometime in October 1966, the city was shaken by student demonstrations. It is not clear if Rodney witnessed the demonstrations themselves or only their aftermath (Shivji 2012: 84). On October 22, 1966, more than four hundred Tanzanian university students protested in a long march towards the city center against a mandatory *National Service* program for university graduates. Originally founded in 1963 with Israeli assistance, the *National Service* started as a voluntary program for young men and women. In November 1965, however, the TANU government announced a compulsory scheme for all graduates of universities and professional schools. Five months were intended for basic training in a camp, rural nation-building projects such as roads or farmwork and the remaining 18 months for a job the students were well-suited, e. g. teaching or civil service with reduced salary (Ivaska 2011: 136). Certain of their highly desired skills in an only recently independent country, the demonstrating student body perceived the compulsory program as a threat to their high standing aspirations vis-à-vis the political ruling class. The debate around *National Service* also highlighted the inter-generational conflict lines between the young, aspiring, educated few and their counterparts in their thirties or forties, who had already secured their posts in the party machinery and started accumulating wealth and status. The protesters carried with them banners such as “Kawawa Must Quit” and “Terms Harsh—Colonialism Was Better” (Ivaska 2011: 127.).

President Nyerere received the protesting students in front of the State House with a spontaneous speech. He admitted that politicians' salaries

were too high, and immediately offered to cut his own salary by twenty percent. The students were sent home and then later expelled indefinitely from attending the university. (However, after some months the students were allowed to continue their studies. Although many of the faculty staff condemned the demonstrations, at the *Conference on the Role of the University College* speakers asked the government to pardon the students.) Given that roughly two thirds of the Tanzanian student body at UDSM had been expelled after what were perceived elitist demonstrations, it is no exaggeration to assert that the university administration and ruling party were in a severe state of shock during the term 1966/67. A few weeks after the *Arusha Declaration* had been proclaimed on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1967, the policy paper *Education for Self-Reliance* was launched by the President's office. To discuss lessons of the *National Service* crisis, in March 1967 a major conference was held at "the hill", entitled *Conference on the Role of the University College Dar es Salaam in a Socialist Tanzania* (University College of Dar es Salaam 1967).

The National Service crisis thus marked a unique opportunity for socialist staff members at UDSM like Rodney to radically restructure the university along anti-elitist lines and turn it into a "people's institution". Rodney was part of the so-called "Group of Nine", a collective of mainly expatriate scholars at UDSM who would later become "household names in international leftist circles" (Ivaska 2011: 148): Giovanni Arrighi, Catherine Hoskyns, Grant Kamenju, Frances Livingstone, James Mellen, Sol Picciotto, Walter Rodney, John Saul, and Herbert Shore (Bourbonniere 2007: 88; Ivaska 2011: 147f.). For the *Conference on the Role of the University College Dar es Salaam in a Socialist Tanzania*, the "Group of Nine" handed in a proposal to drastically alter the "Common Course", an introductory course which was compulsory for all students at UDSM, and played a crucial role in the future syllabi of the *Department of Development Studies* that became the *Institute of Development Studies* (IDS) on 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1973 (University of Dar es Salaam 1975: n.p.). As Michelle Bourbonniere (2007: 104) has shown, the curriculum of the IDS clearly shows how the lessons were rendered along an innovative blend of international socialist thought, dependency theory and Tanzania's *ujamaa* experience. The focus was on Africa's emancipation from underdevelopment under the banner of socialism. A number of lessons were dedicated to the theme of "The Pan-African Movement and TANU and Tanzania's struggle for national emancipation" or "The OAU [Organisation

of African Unity] and the struggle of the African people still under classical colonial domination and racist regimes" as they emphasized the struggle against neo-colonialism (University of Dar es Salaam 1975: n.p.).

Large parts of the curriculum were oriented alongside dependency paradigms and engage with questions of African development and underdevelopment—with Africa being always conceptualized as a whole. The lessons on "System of Underdevelopment" aim to make the first year students familiar with theories of underdevelopment, the external as well as internal causes of underdevelopment as well as with what was simply called "the way out". That "way out" is stated clearly in Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* which was discussed above. The preface of the book postulates 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." (Rodney 2015 [1972]: vii) As is visible in Rodney's references in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, this Pan-African solution, which Rodney has termed in another paper "Disengagement from Imperialism", was based on Samir Amin's works on neo-colonialism and Amin's call to "de-link" from the capitalist world system (Rodney 2015 [1972]: e. g. 11, 24; Amin 1976 [1973]). Amin had been a frequent visitor at the campus of UDSM in the early 1970s (see Amin 2011: 15).

The entanglements as well as oppositions between "scientific socialism", African socialisms, *Black Power* and their applicability for Pan-African struggle remained a hotbed in the curriculum. Section 8 of the curriculum engages with "Utopian socialism, Marx and scientific socialism." It traces the development of socialist thought from 1917 to the present day with an emphasis on the anti-imperialist struggle. It looks at "Socialism distinguished from social democracy and reformism." The following section 9 interrogates the concepts and roots of "African Socialism" as well as current trends and developments. Ghana and Mali as well as Tanzania, Guinea and Congo-Brazzaville figure as case studies. Theoretical works from a number of African and Afro-Caribbean writers are studied: Frantz Fanon, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Amílcar Cabral, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Tom Mboya.

To be sure, the last two Africans—Senegal's first President (1960-1980) Léopold Sédar Senghor and Kenyan trade union leader and, later, Minister of Labour, Tom Mboya—did receive their fair share of criticism from a self-

declared international socialist like Rodney. According to his 1972 article, *Tanzanian Ujamaa and Scientific Socialism*, Mboya and Senghor were ideologically not ideal companions of Fanon, Nyerere, Cabral and Nkrumah. Conversely, Mboya and Senghor were perceived by Rodney as African leaders who abused the term socialism for nothing more than collaborating and selling out to the imperialist West,

“When 'African Socialism' was in vogue early in the 1960s, it comprised a variety of interpretations ranging from a wish to see a socialist society in Africa to a desire to maintain the status quo of neo-colonialism. Since then the term has come to be identified with its most consistent and least revolutionary ideologue, Leopold Senghor, and with the late Tom Mboya.” (Rodney 1972: 61f.)

To counter this alleged identification of African socialism with Senghor and Mboya, the curriculum of the Institute of Development Studies at the UDSM included a strong dose of international socialism which proposed a radical break with the international capitalist system. Its socialist Pan-African content is to be seen in the belief that Africa has to emancipate itself from underdevelopment through a state-directed industrialization program. A second Pan-African dimension in the curriculum I want to highlight was rooted in the still ongoing struggle to liberate the remaining colonial territories and the white minority dominated areas from their white oppressors. Accordingly, TANU's outstanding support for the liberation movements of South Rhodesia, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa and Namibia was elaborated in the curriculum. Since many liberation movements had their offices in Dar es Salaam, it happened that leaders of the Mozambican FRELIMO were speaking in the university's main lecture hall about African liberation. Events such as these were usually organized by UDSM's radical student organization USARF whose members were all comrades of Rodney and vigorously campaigned for international socialism on campus (Hirji 2010).



### **International Socialism and Pan-Africanism on Campus**

In the vacation month of December 1969 the TANU Youth League branch of the UDSM together with the TANU headquarters organized the *Second Seminar of the East and Central African Youth*. The seminar should discuss prospects as well as obstacles of the African revolutions that were emerging, especially in Southern Africa at that time. The event lasted four days, apart from presentations and discussions participants were invited to visit an *ujamaa* cooperative village and the Ruvu national service camp. Among the speakers was Walter Rodney, who lectured in front of participants not only from Tanzania but also neighboring countries as well as members of liberation movements. Rodney's speech, in which he ridiculed most African leaders, sparked a heated debate. It was published in the government newspaper *The Nationalist* on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1969 under the heading "*African Revolution 'Must Be Accepted'*" (Rodney 1969b). Four days later, *The Nationalist* newspaper published an editorial letter that strongly rejected Rodney's radicalism calling it "Revolutionary Hot Air". The Guyanese non-national Rodney and other "campus radicals" were denounced as "irresponsible" and erratic. Rodney in turn wrote a letter to the newspaper to explain his actions, but in a very conciliatory tone thanked the government to be allowed to teach in the country (Hirji 2010: 39). The episode of late 1969 demonstrates that the radical students and staff involved in these events tested the limits of what was considered by one of Tanzania's most renowned scholars and radical students at that time, Issa Shivji, as a period of considerable free debate on campus (Shivji 1980).

Already during his London years at SOAS (1963-66), Rodney had taken part in a study group organized by Richard Small and Norman Girvan which included a number of West Indian students. Under the mentorship of C. L. R. James and his wife Selma, this group did not follow a specific party line but rather stimulated independent thought and creative thinking (Lewis 1998: 38). When Rodney arrived at the Dar es Salaam campus in late 1966, he came upon a vibrant climate to discuss socialism, elitism and the role of the university in an African independent state. The debates became increasingly heated when Tanzania's TANU proclaimed a socialist path of development with the 1967 *Arusha Declaration*. The Tanzanian context, in which Rodney was working, was shaped by president Nyerere's African socialism, *ujamaa*. His ideas of *ujamaa* (literally, *familyhood*) were first communicated in 1962. At first, Nyerere understood *ujamaa* rather as a

philosophical guide than a concrete socio-economic formation; cornerstones of Nyerere's writings were respect and dignity, communal ownership of land and key goods, an obligation to work, and the vision to terminate the exploitation of man by man (Burton 2017: 57). *Ujamaa* appealed to the ideal values of African pre-colonial society such as respect, sharing and hospitality, but also the dedication to hard work (Burton 2017; Lal 2015). Inspired by the spirit of what they perceived *ujamaa* to be, a small but very vocal group of students aimed to propagate socialism at the campus. Among these students was Yoweri Museveni, later president of Uganda, who came to Tanzania in July 1967. Museveni was impressed by "Tanzania's militant anti-imperialist stand" when Nyerere rejected the West German pressures towards Zanzibar's alignment with East Germany and cut diplomatic ties with Britain after London decided to remain idle via the white settler regime in Southern Rhodesia (Museveni 2010: 13).

Immediately upon his arrival, Museveni felt that the student body lacked militancy and "was taken up by frivolous activities: drinking, dancing, and watching decadent Western films." (Museveni 2010: 13) To counter the students' apathy, a small group formed a revolutionary student organization called the *Socialist Club*. Members included students from Malawi, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and other countries, exemplifying a Pan-African orientation (Shivji 2012: 84). The TANU youth wing, the *TANU Youth League*, was reckoned as an ineffective, unpopular organization whose leaders lacked commitment (Museveni 2010: 13). Around November 1967, the small group of socialist students founded the *University Students African Revolutionary Front* (USARF) to transform the college "to a hotbed of revolutionary cadres, cadres that would dedicate themselves, unto death, to the cause of the African revolution" (Museveni 2010: 14). Walter Rodney was one of the faculty members that took part in the meetings of the *Socialist Club* and later the USARF. A number of USARF members entered into close relationship with Rodney who was at that time in his mid-twenties, and therefore hardly older than most of the students (Hirji 2010: 30). The goals USARF set for itself were very ambitious,

"a) To work unceasingly for the promotion of a revolutionary spirit *within the University, Tanzania, Africa and the world in general*

- b) To contribute to the success of the various liberation movements and to work hand in hand with other progressive forces *here and elsewhere*
- c) To drive home the urgent need for *African solidarity* as the only means of getting *real independence for Africa* and of safeguarding that independence
- d) To keep a constant vigil against imperialist ideology and propaganda by every possible means
- e) To stand firmly within the ranks of the workers and peasants of *Tanzania, Africa and the world* in their fight against imperialism and for socialism." (Shivji 1980: 31)

The highlighted phrases clearly show how the USARF understood the revolution as not limited to the African continent (or, African nation-states) but as a socialist world revolution guided by the inevitable class struggle of Marxist-Leninist thought. Another driving force was the proclamation of African solidarity for the liberation struggle in Southern Africa that symbolized the entrenched evils of imperialism, racism, and capitalist exploitation.

To achieve the pursued goals, the USARF organized public lectures and seminars, where Rodney often delivered a speech, distributed leaflets, and issued statements on a variety of political events to "disseminate anti-imperialist propaganda." (Shivji 1980: 33) USARF reached a global audience due to worldwide subscriptions of their self-edited journal *Cheche* (later *Maji Maji*) and could boast to have hosted renowned radicals such as Stokely Carmichael, Cheddi Jagan, Gora Ebrahim, C. L. R. James, and A. M. Babu who spoke at USARF events at the university's Arts Lecture Theatre (Shivji 1980: 33). Given this illustrious round of *Black Power* activists, Caribbean intellectuals and politicians, South African and Zanzibari Marxists, these events of USARF in cooperation with the university's socialist staff such as Walter Rodney and the Canadian John Saul made the university campus in Dar es Salaam in the late 1960s a crucial intellectual hub and hotbed of socialist and liberationist thought along revolutionary lines.

During his time in Tanzania, Rodney committed himself towards the full liberation of Africa from foreign and white minority rule and propagated a socialist revolution for Africa's workers and peasants to achieve welfare and development for the masses. Yet, Rodney's theoretical commitment to Pan-

Africanism and the perceived common struggle against neo-colonialism notwithstanding, to live as a non-national on another continent posed a number of limitations to Rodney's room for manoeuvre, as we will see in the next section.

### **Obstacles for Pan-Africanist Solidarity**

Rodney's stay at UDSM also highlights the limits of a non-Tanzanian revolutionary intellectual who was lacking a Swahili cultural background and was thus primarily confined to the university as the principal stage (Adeleke 2017: 131). In my reading, these obstacles, centered around nationality, language and cultural background on the broader canvas also exemplify practical limitations for transnational or even trans-Atlantic solidarities. In an interview from 1975, Rodney explained these difficulties at length,

“My political role in that situation was fairly well-defined: to stay within the university walls; first and foremost, to develop and struggle at the level of ideas, to relate to the student population. For me, being a non-Tanzanian, it meant that I had to relate to the indigenous Tanzanians, indigenous intellectuals and students, within the university, and only secondarily to relate to Tanzanians outside the walls of the university. I draw that distinction.” (Institute of the Black World 1990: 39)

And again,

“Many people may say, well, it's a spurious distinction and it's part of the elitism of the university, or something of that sort. I don't think so. One must recognize certain limits in any given political situation: limits of culture, limits of one's legal status, limits that come from the fact that we were speaking in the university one language, which is English, and the people of Tanzania were speaking Swahili. And one must take all of those things into account, along with the historical record—the Tanzanian people, like other African people, had constantly been subjected to harangues from outside as part of cultural imperialism.” (Institute of the Black World 1990: 39)

The above lines highlight the limits of Rodney's field of action at UDSM. The legal status of an outsider – as against a national citizen of Tanzania – potentially yields the danger of being accused for meddling with “internal” affairs—as was made clear in the incident of Rodney's above mentioned speech from 1969 when he first criticized African postcolonial leaders for their compliance with neo-colonists (“briefcase revolution”) but then, reacting to a fierce article which criticized the “campus radicals”, Rodney apologized to the Tanzanian government (Rodney 1969b; Shivji 2012: 86f.). Throughout the 1970s, individual students and staff from UDSM were “rusticated” to rural areas or, as in the case of the Kenyan student leader Simon Akivaga, deported to their country of origin (Bourbonniere 2007: 119–132). Therefore, “nationality on paper” was a sensitive issue for a socialist radical like Rodney who was very outspoken on political matters. In that case, Rodney even seriously considered applying for Tanzanian citizenship but ultimately feared that this would not change much,

“You change your legal status, you become a national and, therefore, hopefully you are open both to the advantages and disadvantages of being a national of that country. I say hopefully because there are times when people have changed their nationality and the government in existence or perhaps the succeeding government still treats them as being apart. Because their citizenship was granted rather than being a matter of birth, it could be revoked.” (Institute of the Black World 1990: 42)

The problem of a narrow African nationalism in matters of citizenship, colonial borders and national labour markets, which was exclusive by nature rather than inclusive as any “pan-concept” ought to be, was a key component of Rodney's criticism of Pan-Africanism as it was exercised by African leaders (who referred to themselves as Pan-Africanists) in the mid-1970s. One example is the speech he prepared for the *6th Pan-African Congress* in Dar es Salaam in 1974 but was unable to deliver due to ill-health,

“Pan-Africanism has been so flouted by the present African regimes that the concept of 'Africa' is dead for all practical purposes such as travel and employment. The 'Africanisation' that was aimed against the European colonial administrator soon

gave way to restrictive employment and immigration practices by Ivory Coast, Ghana (under Busia), Zaire, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and others - aimed against Dahomeans, Nigerians, Burundi nationals, Malawians, Kenyans and all Africans who were guilty of believing that Africa was for the Africans." (Rodney 1975a: 22f.)

Interestingly, Rodney's critique does not exclude Nyerere's Tanzania which finds itself here listed together with the usual neo-colonial suspects such as Mobuto's Zaire and Houphouët-Boigny's Ivory Coast. Thus, according to Rodney the issue of excluding poor nationals of neighboring states from the national labour market was practiced by a number of African governments blatantly violating the idea of Pan-African unity, solidarity, and cooperation.

While teaching in Tanzania, the country's language of instruction in higher education, English, enabled Rodney to exchange his ideas with students at the university, but was of little use off campus. While in Jamaica, language and cultural familiarity did not pose a barrier for Rodney to "ground" with the Rastafarians in the "gullies" of Kingston (Rodney 1969a). In Tanzania, however, it was much more difficult to immerse oneself into the fabric of society, regardless of Rodney's black skin color, his Pan-African stance or his preference for African cloth. A number of cultural factors posed limitations to truly participate in the host society,

"[O]ne must know that society, that environment. One must have a series of responses and reflexes that come from having lived a given experience. One must be able to share a joke because of a nuance in language and pronunciation. One must be able to go to the marketplace in the case of Tanzania, and bargain in the Swahili manner without being perceived as an outsider. Now, when one thinks of all of these factors it's virtually a lifetime task to master a language and then to master the higher level of perception which normally goes into a culture. And I didn't believe that I could afford that. I believed that there is another culture from which I derived into which I could project myself with greater ease." (Institute of the Black World 1990: 42)

Rodney's understanding of a progressive "guerilla intellectual" was based on the act of "grounding" with the experiences of the masses. The "guerilla intellectual" must establish a reciprocal linkage with the people, immerse himself and accept a two-sided learning process as well as appreciate their needs and interests. (Adeleke 2017: 132f.) Realizing the severe limitations the Tanzanian context posed for the practice of a "guerilla intellectual", Rodney ultimately decided to leave Tanzania after having spent six years in the country. He returned to the Caribbean world – back to the culture from which Rodney stemmed, and where grounding as "a two-way counter-hegemonic, knowledge-creation process" (Adeleke 2017: 133) was certainly easier to accomplish.

When Rodney arrived in Guyana, following an intervention from the government, he was declined the promised position of professor at the last minute. From then on Rodney sought to engage himself fully in politics and associated with the *Working People Alliance* (WPA), a multi-racial party promoting a Marxist ideology (see Lewis 1998). Apart from politics, Rodney did not give up lecturing abroad, researching and writing history – until a car bomb placed by a government agent killed him, only 38 years old, leaving behind his wife Patricia Rodney, and the three children Shaka, Asha, and Natasha.

## **Conclusion**

In this contribution on Walter Rodney's Pan-Africanism I aimed to demonstrate that Rodney's work focused on mobilizing Black and oppressed people in Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas and beyond in their struggles against colonialism, neo-colonialism and racism as well as to re-asserting their pride and dignity as Africans.

In my analysis of Rodney's classic *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, I highlighted four Pan-African foundations: (1) the affirmation of Africans' achievements and historic agency; (2) nationalism as a possible liberating ideology and as a forerunner for an African political entity following a socialist path of development; (3) the efforts of Rodney to solidify the Pan-African bridge across the Atlantic Ocean between African anti-imperialism and the *Black Power* movement in the US and Caribbean by writing an entangled history of the respective regions; (4) Rodney's objection towards the exploitation of the *African* masses by the ruling classes, irrespective of the latter's color.

Importantly, Rodney's Pan-African impact is not limited to his publication of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. During his years in Tanzania, Rodney left his mark on several levels. He had a direct impact through teaching at UDSM and figured prominently in the restructuring of the "Common Course" curriculum, which later was integrated into the Institute of Development Studies. The students of the course were encouraged to perceive Africa in a holistic perspective, understand its active underdevelopment within the global capitalist system, and reflect on socialist solutions to achieve well-being and development for a united Africa and oppressed people worldwide.

Stamped in the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s, personally involved in the heated debates sparked around Tanzania's African socialism, *ujamaa*, and ideologically engaged in the task of African liberation movements to free the continent from white supremacy, Rodney was also involved with the *Socialist Club* and USARF, a self-organized collective of radical socialist students and staff at the university which fervently criticized imperialism, neo-colonialism and capitalist exploitation. Both Rodney's engagement within USARF for the African revolution, as well as his writings in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* signify a globally informed Pan-African mindset that aimed to link the Caribbean and Africa more closely together. Rodney's Pan-Africanism was intended to support the struggles of black and oppressed people around the world, reminding them that in a postcolonial order they should not surrender to "black lackeys" in power.

With some justification, Tunde Adeleke (2017: 131) suggested that the inability to fully engage with the majority of the population in Tanzania, had made Rodney aware that his role as a revolutionary scholar-activist was lacking fundamental cultural and linguistic affinities and that the struggle outside the university should be led by Tanzanian intellectuals. Yet, Rodney's decision to end his stay in Tanzania and return to Guyana might be explained just as well by his disillusionment with recent developments on the Tanzanian political scene. Rodney's speech for the *6th Pan-African Congress* (prepared but not delivered by himself due to ill-health), which was convened in Dar es Salaam in June 1974 towards the end of his stay in Tanzania, already showed an embitterment for the narrow nationalism of African governments whom he accused to have murdered "the concept of Africa" (Rodney 1975a: 22f.) – a concept he took pains to disseminate with his widely known book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* among blacks



around the world. At the end of his period in Dar es Salaam Rodney had grown very critical of state-directed attempts to implement Pan-Africanism, a position which was based on what he perceived a narrow nationalism of African leaders.

His experiences as a "non-national" in Tanzania and the differences of language, socialization and culture separating him from easy communication with "locals", led him to develop crucial insights for transcontinental solidarities and Pan-African sentiments on the spot. In the mid-1970s Rodney had made it clear that the Pan-Africanism he would adhere to was not fueled by governments but rather a grassroots movement from below. He contended,

Without falling into the trap of imagining that the present states of Africa and the Caribbean will liberate the African masses from the tyranny of man and nature, it still remains an open political question as to how far they can be pressured to take steps which lessen the immediate impact of imperialist exploitation and which perhaps grant respite to the producers and progressive forces. (Rodney 1975a: 11)

And, as was his position in 1975, Rodney expected these pressures not to come from supranational organizations such as the OAU (which he criticized) but rather from below, in the form of "the most progressive elements in the black world" (Rodney 1975a: 10). This line of thought is carried into the 21st century by organizations such as the *Walter Rodney Foundation*, based in Atlanta, USA. In this vein, Rodney's legacy and crucial entanglement with the University of Dar es Salaam, African socialism and quests for a liberated Africa may continue to resonate within progressive movements in the region and help to re-establish the University of Dar es Salaam as a strong Pan-African foothold on the African continent.

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