Lycée Départemental de Donsin School Year: 2014-2015

Teacher: Mr. RAMDE Level: Tle A

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**TEXT: WHAT IS UNDERDEVELOPMENT?**

Underdevelopment is not absence of development, because every people have developed in one way or another 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 viewpoint some human groups have advanced further by producing more and becoming wealthier. 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 has developed.

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 “underdeveloped” in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment with which the world is new preoccupied 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. This 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 “underdevelopment”. 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 USA, which practises external oppression on a massive scale, while internally there is a blend of exploitation, brutality and psychiatric disorder.

**From W. Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.**