Critical Reflection on Amilcar Cabral’s Criteria for Citizenship

by

Victor S. Alumona, Ph.D.
Department of Philosophy
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

Victor S. Alumona (onuegbe2002@yahoo.com) is a faculty member of the Department of Philosophy at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife in Osun State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

A focus on Amilcar Cabral's theory of citizenship, highlighting his definition of citizenship and the interest of Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands, as a nation. The paper argues that some may accept the letters of citizenship criteria while their real convictions are elsewhere, and still others may accept the criteria in both the letter and spirit with deep seated convictions, thus, there is no objective standard for determining who is a genuine citizen.

INTRODUCTION

In the course of leading the Guinea-Bissau armed struggle for independence from colonialism, Amilcar L. Cabral (1924-1973) obviously anticipated many practical and theoretical problems relevant to the current question of “who belongs to civil society or the nation?” and in the epoch of globalization, how to galvanize the peasantry, proletariat and petty bourgeois in the colony into a cohesive body of citizens known otherwise as the people of the nation during the liberation struggle and after independence. This question arose for Cabral because of the definitive character of the three classes, which were to be forged into a civil society in the nascent nation (Barbieri 2004))
For Cabral and Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) the peasantry was not a revolutionary class. Rather it was an illiterate and timid class having been touched least by colonialism. However, in Guinea this timid and illiterate peasantry, if comprehensively and adequately mobilized, was the *Sine qua non* for a successful revolution. Unlike Fanon who considered the colonial proletariat or working class as weak and consequently not revolutionary, Cabral viewed them as the revolutionary vanguard of *the people*, and only that their awareness must be enhanced for them to realize their historical mission. This duty of revolutionizing both the peasantry and proletariat fell squarely, in Cabral’s analysis, on the petty – bourgeoisie. The problem with this class, though, was its “conciliatory and vacillating” character, and that it had a “proneness to turn bourgeois”. In spite of this, the petty-bourgeois could play a leadership role in Guinea and thus “fuse its interest with that of the workers and peasants” (ibid 58) and became the arrow-head of the armed struggle and the impending revolution with the prerequisite being the petty-bourgeoisie’s readiness to commit class suicide. (Ulyanovsky 1984:57-58)

How to create from these disparate but objective classes into a robust citizenry and rightful inheritor of the revolution and sustainable socio-political and economic independence of Guinea-Bissau, was Cabral’s urgent problem. Usually, the criteria for the citizenship of a country are couched in terms of birth right, contribution of productive labor for the development of a country (Bhagwan and Bhushan 1998: 304). These ordinary criteria for citizenship are quite extrinsic and thus apparently belie Cabral’s intrinsic requirements for citizenship (cf. Plato, *Republic*. 8b-10e). Yet, it was quite imperative that these intrinsic criteria for citizenship be thrashed out even before the war was won to not jeopardize the young country’s future by handing it over to people of doubtful loyalty and integrity.

Thrashing out these intended criteria of citizenship had to be in a historical context, thus Cabral adopted a brand of materialist theory of history. He maintained for example, that “the motive force of history is the mode of production….” (Cabral 1980: 124-125)\(^1\). In view of this, he believed that there was a need to distinguish between two concepts of history relative to colonial societies with two basic dimensions, the colonial history of such societies, and their types of history given that they were originally free human societies having different motive forces of history. In the colonial situation the struggle between it and what Cabral called the “nation class” (Cabral 1980: 124-125), determined colonial history. But in free human societies, the mode of production determines history. Hence, many of the concepts Cabral adopted in his studies and essays were essentially elucidated against the background of the conviction that the mode of production is the motive force of history in human societies.
Therefore, one reasonably expects that Cabral would maintain a more objective definition of citizenship or people, and their rights in a nation, than the one that ultimately appeared involving a set of criteria for distinguishing who were of the nation and who were not, thus not subjective nor depended on a person’s capacity for moral sensibility, although this appeared not to be so. Thus, his definition of the people seemed to be founded on introspective moral sensibility akin to psychologism (i.e., a generic position in philosophy wherein psychology plays a central role in grounding or explaining a non-psychological fact or law) in some essential respects.

**Historical Context of Cabral’s Criteria for Citizenship**

Cabral’s criteria for citizenship of his new nation emerged in the context of the people’s war of liberation from colonialism. There was for him, a link between colonialism, the process of decolonization by armed struggle, and the need to identify a set of criteria which made it possible to set apart people who were genuinely in favor of actual decolonization.

Cabral saw colonization as “the violent usurpation of the process of development of the national productive forces” (Cabral 1980: 119-137) by an imperialist power. In the event of this, the colonized people were forced to leave their own line of historical development to enter colonial history. By the same token, national liberation comes about “when the national productive forces have been completely freed from all and any kind of foreign domination” (Cabral 1980:129-30); thus a society rejects the denial of its own historical process by colonialism through the destruction of colonial apparatus and hegemony.

In addition, national liberation implied the existence of a leadership in society being decolonized that can articulate its problems and consequently fashioned the goals and course of liberation. In Guinean society of Cabral’s time, leadership was provided by the petite bourgeoisie. In the colonial reality and scheme of things, they were a marginalized class, and held a marginal position and adopted an ambivalent position vis-à-vis the cause of national liberation. Naturally, as Cabral pointed out, this class was not inclined towards leading a revolution. Rather its disposition was to acquire capital and turn itself into an indigenous capitalist class. Nevertheless, the colonial situation demanded that in spite of itself, it must lead a revolution. This was especially imperative considering the peasants’ low level political awareness, and in order to assume its leadership role in the emerging scenario, the petite bourgeoisie must commit class suicide to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which it belonged (Cabral 1969: 89).
This meant that with regard to the revolution, the *petite bourgeoisie* had two basic alternatives, either to betray the revolution or commit suicide as a class by abandoning its natural course of development into a class of capitalists. Cabral urged the *petite bourgeoisie* along the second line of action. It was this perceived connection between the development of revolutionary consciousness, and committing class suicide that made it necessary for Cabral to emphasize the need for the leaders of the revolution, and by extension, the rest of the *people* involved in the process of national liberation, to acquire a high moral caliber. For it seemed that the ability to commit the type of class suicide recommended here had much to do with members’ moral depth.

In fact, it depended essentially on it, as Cabral testifies: *... this dependence necessarily calls attention to the capacity of the leaders in the national liberation struggle to remain faithful to the principles and to the fundamental cause of this struggle. This shows us to certain extent, that if national liberation is essentially a political problem, the conditions for its development give it certain characteristics which belong to the sphere of morals* (Cabral 1969: 89-90)

This evident stress on the moral caliber of leaders of the revolution, and emphasis on morals should be noted, and the necessity for the *petite bourgeoisie* to develop revolutionary consciousness through a wide ranging of political mobilization. This, like other kinds of propaganda is directed to the mind. The intended effect is to elicit consent to a particular line of action. Although sometimes political mobilization may have a tinge of ‘disinterested’ concern with facts – in the sense of objective analysis of issues and situation – as found for example, in a colonial setting, and at other times, it involved or had an uncanny resemblance with telling people what they wanted or already programmed to hear and accept. The latter invariably creates, usually a band wagon effect on individual minds, especially in the cases where persons give immediate assent to speeches or discussions on topical issues without having a good grasp of the essential considerations involved in it. This state of mind in people can easily be created by the rhetorical artistry of a demagogue.

In an emergency situation like what prevailed during the armed struggle led by Cabral, the scenario described above can put the onus on the individual to show that she or he belonged to the mainstream of a mobilized people by certain outward gestures and behavior which in some persons may have bordered on hypocrisy, hence these overtures for belonging could manifest in both the elite and peasantry. And further examination of the peculiar characteristics of Guinean peasantry should yield more conclusions, based on vigorous political mobilization.
The Guinean Peasantry

The Guinean peasantry were led by the *petite bourgeoisie* in the liberation war, and constituted the major bulk of the population before the inception of the war who lived in the villages far away from the cities, and consequently marginally affected, if at all, by the colonial culture, and for Cabral, the main potential force for national liberation.

According to Cabral, the cultural homogeneity among the peasants formed the only possible basis for the development of a nationalist consciousness (Chabal 1981: 31-56), and the remoteness of the peasants from the real effect of colonial culture gave them definite characteristics which Cabral did not fail to emphasize. The peasantry in Guinea was not originally a revolutionary force, unlike their counterparts elsewhere, for example in China, hence Cabral realized that “It was not possible for our party militants and propaganda workers to find the same kind of welcome among the peasantry in Guinea as other revolutionaries in China found among their own peasants” (Cabral 1969: 50).

Furthermore, Cabral noted that it was correct to say that in Guinea, the peasantry carried the greatest burden of colonial exploitation; yet it was not for that reason a revolutionary force. On this point, Cabral distinguished between physical force and revolutionary force (Ulyanovsky 1984: 56). For the peasantry to transform into a revolutionary force, it was not the degree of suffering involved that mattered as “even extreme suffering in itself does not necessarily produce the *prise de conscience* required for the national liberation struggle” (Cabral 1969: 52-53). This much cherished transformation of the peasantry required the development of revolutionary consciousness through practice and theory for which the armed struggle was just the opportunity. In spite of this weakness of the peasantry at that historical moment, Cabral conceded that it was nonetheless very important in the scheme of things, given that the peasantry controlled the bulk of the nation’s wealth.

While the peasantry carried the greatest burden of colonial exploitation, it was yet easier to convince the workers and *the people* employed in towns that they were being massively exploited, because they could see it. Hence the workers and urban elite possessed a relatively higher revolutionary spirit than the peasants, and eventually the peasantry like the *petite bourgeoisie* “became nationalistic because they were made conscious of the limit of their existing privileges’ (Cabral 1969: 52-53).
Political Mobilization and Revolutionary Consciousness

Obviously, the process through which they were made to see the limits of their privileges, and subsequently became nationalistic was through political mobilization. Similarly, the petite bourgeoisie was made to see the utmost need of committing class suicide through political mobilization. Hence we see that at the threshold of the war for national liberation, the two major classes that were to prosecute it, were not revolutionary forces, but became revolutionary forces in the process of the war. Yet at the inception of the war, one of the classes, the petite bourgeoisie, was better than the others in the sense that it was literate and had more access to a wider range of ideas pertinent to the success of the war, whereas the peasantry was illiterate as Cabral remarks: “In Guinea the peasants cannot read or write, they had no relations with colonial forces during the colonial period except for paying taxes, which was done indirectly” (Cabral 1969:56-57).

Given the above scenario, the responsibility fell on the petite bourgeoisie to articulate the problems of the society, determine the possible solutions to them, and disseminate information regarding it to the population, thus in charge of guiding the course of the national cause in its entirety. Yet, given the characteristics of this class, as Cabral described it, the only claim it had to this national enterprise was its advantage of literacy, which like any other asset can be used for good or ill. The petite bourgeoisie could not because of this asset claim that it had a greater revolutionary force or spirit than the peasantry, unless it had fulfilled the condition of committing class suicide. In other words, it has to revolutionize itself and in consequence abandon its natural inclination of turning into a national bourgeoisie. Only when this was clearly done could the petite bourgeoisie claim to be a better revolutionary force than the peasantry, and thus acquire both the ideological and moral mandate to lead the revolution.

The Evolution of Citizenship Criteria

In Cabral’s Guinea, the first step toward committing class suicide was taken in 1956 when the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) was formed by a group of six whose members were drawn from the middle class or the petite bourgeoisie. By this singular act, the petite bourgeoisie took the most decisive step towards committing the recommended class suicide and consequently set the moral tone of the war for prospective cadres and combatants, and the high pitch of this moral tone is evident in Cabral.

When the petite bourgeoisie chose one of the alternatives open to it – not to give free rein to its natural tendency to become the national bourgeoisie – and not leave itself void of a driving spirit it had to develop a revolutionary consciousness.
Indeed, much physical and mental energy went into achieving this necessary condition for keeping the revolution on course, and what is quite important is the noted requirement that the leader of the national liberation struggle should be able to remain faithful to the principles and fundamental course of the struggle. This at least meant that the petite bourgeoisie identified itself with the popular masses through the struggle. Cabral maintained that “the degree of (this) identification depends on the movement and on the level of moral and political consciousness of each individual” (Chabal 1981: 31-56). The extensive import of each individual in the above statement should be emphasized especially as the leaders of the revolution did not alone constitute the people.

From this, we can surmise that it was also Cabral’s conviction that the moral condition expressed was also required of any single individual – party cadres, responsible worker, Zonal and Inter-Regional committee leaders et cetera – who had chosen to participate in the war of national liberation. It is mainly on this basis that he took a further step to emphasize the point that “to a certain extent …. National liberation is essentially a political problem, the conditions for its development give it certain characteristic which belong to the sphere of morals” (Cabral 1969: 89-90). The stress on moral probity of leaders and followers as a condition for the development and prosecution of the war is quite clear from this quote. One can therefore appreciate the import of such moral reasoning from Cabral and how it influenced his rigorous conception of “the people” or the citizenry of his nation, especially a free, democratic and self reliant nation, and only when an individual was a member of “the people”, did Cabral believes she or he was entitled to certain rights in the polity of his conception.

Patrick Chabal traces the trend of this moral reasoning in Cabral, and deduces some noteworthy conclusions. For example, he believes that for Cabral, men rather than ideology determine the meaning of revolution and orientation towards socialism. More so Cabral (in Chabal’s opinion), regarded revolution and socialism as moral rather than merely ‘instruments’ for solving political questions, and that the success of any revolution attendant to the use of these instruments’ is measured by the human caliber of the party leaders as well as the improvement in the living conditions of ordinary men and women. Chabal concludes that the human and moral attributes of the party cadres were, in Cabral’s view, more important assets in a socialist transformation than adherence to ideology (Chabal 1981: 46).

Also important is that this view shows the fundamental position which Cabral assigned to the moral probity of combatants and all involved in the war for national liberation. Hence Cabral laid this down as a condition for its development after inception, and it then becomes clearer why in his “political work as a party leader and teacher emphasized the need for personal morals and decency by all, and not merely political vigor and dedication on the part of party cadres” (Chabal 1981: 31-56).
As mentioned above, members of the petite bourgeoisie in Cabral’s Guinea at a point decided to commit class suicide, the first condition necessary for leading the war of national liberation. Having complied with this condition, they – the leaders – also felt justified to set the moral tone for the war. With this moral tone, everyone who wanted to be or even just finds themselves in the mission for national liberation must comply. Given this high pitch of the said moral tone, the leaders apparently suspected that only very few of the ideologically dormant peasantry would willingly join the struggle, especially in the light of the huge personal sacrifice it demanded. This situation, in addition to the fact that the Guinean peasantry was not a revolutionary force ab initio, made political mobilization necessary, and the petite bourgeoisie leading the revolution was not naturally inclined towards revolutionary activities.

In all, it was not out of place for someone to suspect that the few leaders would recant their positions in the process, or that prospective cadres would find it necessary to hedge, drag their feet, and watch the fortunes of the war before deciding on what to do, a type of delay that could be disastrous for the fortunes of the war, hence, the earlier the majority of the people joined the struggle actively, the better, which made intense political mobilization necessary.

Essentially, political mobilization is a thing of the mind, whereas political propaganda is directed to peoples’ minds via a message of political mobilization, like that of a new gospel is subject to acceptance, rejection, or people may just be indifferent. Also, even when there is a semblance of acceptance of the main tenets of political propaganda, its manifestation in peoples’ behavior is in the form of vigorous political actions. But this does not necessarily imply conviction on the part of the people exhibiting such a behavior. For all we know, many of them may just be ‘acting’ in order to show that they belonged to the popular movement or Party. In other words, they may just have followed the crowd. Given that “there is no art to read the mind’s construction on the face” (Shakespeare’s Macbeth) we cannot neglect this band-wagon-effect-view of political mobilization on people’s minds. Thus they were just propelled along the mainstream of mobilized persons, though not necessarily agreeing with their convictions.

Hence, there arose the need for some benchmarks against which to measure or determine the steadfastness of the vast mobilized population, to the national cause, and also set the citizens apart from the populace. In more practical terms, this search for standard reference point(s) required something like an oath to be sworn by every person who claimed to belong to the revolutionary vanguard. The PAIGC actually made use of such a method (Cabral 1980: 103) at some point in the struggle.
The prospective Party cadres were made to eat a piece of kola-nut, probably as a symbolic gesture of loyalty by which a cadre pledge to remain faithful to Party principles which then assumed the status of vows, and that she or he would not betray or sabotage the national cause. The advantage of such an oath was that, it constantly reminded one of his/her loyalty to Party principles constantly demanded of him or her. Hence, the oath, like a marriage vow, in this way had a kind of psychological grip on the person’s mind and regularly challenged him/her to the moral questions involved, each time she or he tried to break his/her vow and abandon the national cause. In the same way, a person who recanted or one intending to do so, could always be held to his vows and pledged to always obey the Party principles.

However, PAIGC later abandoned this method of Party identification and faithfulness. The reason for abandoning it was not quite obvious, but it was replaced, and in any case, with something no less introspective in nature, i.e., though some other criteria for eliciting a type of psycho-moral response from persons by virtue of how they were regarded as part of the people – the citizens.

In order to appreciate this point, we have to appreciate the mental state of preparedness of the people at the threshold of national liberation. At this stage of their history, a greater part of the population and leadership of the liberation Party possessed between themselves a domineering commitment to the cause of liberation from colonial suzerainty, thus they shared a common belief in this cause and in their ability as a people to achieve its aims, and this firm belief determined what persons did either in groups or as individuals while the war lasted, thus a kind of re-engagement between the petite bourgeoisie and the peasantry.

Cabral anticipated the rapprochement of the national elite and the peasantry when he maintained that the former can only identify itself with the popular masses through the struggle. The net result of this rapprochement is what Basil Davidson calls the development of community consciousness (Davidson 1977: 39-46). In my view, this is the ultimate effect of political mobilization and propaganda, a community consciousness that served as the bedrock of inspiration for the people to commit themselves wholly to the armed struggle. Once this over-arching consciousness was created, it galvanized the people towards dislodging colonialism.

Consequently, the mental state of the nation had a cause to which a great majority of the people were committed in word as well as in deed; in word, when they accepted the main principles of the Party, and in deed, when they accepted their stage in history, knowing that the only viable means for destroying colonialism was armed struggle which they committed themselves to as combatants which influenced Cabral’s conception of “the people” as essential to the development of the nation.
Cabral’s Criteria for Citizenship

At this point of the struggle, identifying with the aims of the national cause defined and sustained by prevailing community consciousness, was for Cabral, one of the criteria for ascertaining who was or not of “the people”. The implication of this as a selective principle Cabral applied with the aim of identifying who was part of the people, it that he said “…in each phase of a nation’s history, of a land, of a population of a society, the people are defined in terms of the mainstream of the history of that society, in terms of the highest interests of the majority of that society” (Cabral 1980: 90). Stated this way, the mainstream history of the society at that period was engagement in a war of independence. While this was the case at this period, it would not remain permanently so. At the cessation of the war, for example, the society entered into another phase which meant that the mainstream history would have to be redefined. Similarly, we can understand “the highest interest of the majority of the society” during the period of the people’s war as liberation from colonialism and subsequent re-ordering of society such that no citizen of the emerging nation would be exploited again, either by the Portuguese or elite within African leadership.

The highest interest of the people at this period was also historically conditioned and dated, but not a permanent feature of society for when the highest interest of the majority of the people shifts as the mainstream history of that society changes. Hence the two main components of criterion are dynamic, yet relative to the period of armed struggle they jointly indicate mainstream history, and the highest interest of the majority of the people in Guinean society as a people engulfed in armed struggle aimed at dislodging colonialism and emancipating themselves from political and economic subjugation.

It follows therefore, that the people of Guinea and Cape Verde at the liberation struggle phase were those not only born in the land, but those who wanted to put an end to foreign domination. They were those who apart from being motivated by this aim were also ready to work hard for its realization. In short, the people of Guinea and Cape Verde were also members of PAIGC, the liberation Party, and all members of the Party shared the same view about colonialism and the need to eradicate it politically if possible or militarily, should diplomatic efforts fail.

At this stage, the above conception of the people was dominant, and hence, we have a merger of the membership of the people and the Party as the Party embraced all persons in the territory who accepted the identified aim and were ready to work for it. Cabral explicated this further when he asserted “…all those of the population of our land who at this moment want the Portuguese colonialists to leave our land, so that we should gain our freedom and independence, are our people”. But this is not all, there was a further equation of the people and the Party and its leadership, i.e., the principal element of the people (Cabral 1980:90).
PAIGC as a Party espoused a world view or an ideology which every true member avowed as a set of principles for guiding action. Acceptance of the Party’s world view and program of action against the Portuguese colonialists automatically made one a part of the people, thus a citizen, at this stage of the struggle. In view of this, it is clear that Cabral defined the people in terms of the readiness of any member of the population to accept the ideology of the Party.

This identification of Party membership and citizenship is what I call Cabral’s Ideological Consent Criterion (CICC) for ascertaining who was of the people and therefore a citizen in the nation. And whoever did not pass through the sieving process of CICC was not of the people. But whoever passed through the process and embraced the spirit of the CICC was of the people even if originally she or he was not an African but a Portuguese. Consequently, this criterion enabled Cabral and the Party to sell their liberation struggle as being motivated by the noblest of intentions, not by racial prejudice. Hence when the colonial wars waged by the Portuguese government led to its downfall, the oppressed people of the Portuguese colonies rejoiced with their counterparts in the metropolis, because they saw themselves as suffering from the high handedness of the same fascist government.

At independence as anticipated by Cabral, another criterion for determining citizenship emerged, saying that ...when we have gained our independence, anyone who wants our land to be independent, for example but does not want our women to be liberated, but wants to go on exploiting women in our land, though he is of the people today, he will not be so tomorrow (Cabral 1980:90).

Clearly at independence, CICC though a prerequisite for citizenship, would not be enough. It is also clear that the scope of this new complementary criterion includes women and embraces other groups similarly exploited or disadvantaged under colonialism. It appears that here women was just representative of the other elements in anticipated independent society in need of emancipation through education, gainful employment and enhancement of self-respect and personal dignity. This new criterion was to cater for the “wretched of the earth” in dire need of social, economic and political emancipation. The examples can be multiplied via land tenants, commercial sex workers, the handicapped, casual workers and even the assimilado, i.e., people of African heritage considered by colonial authorities to have met certain formal standards indicating that they had successfully absorbed Portuguese language and culture.

At independence, full civil and political rights must be restored to all peoples in the territory, hence their rights must not only be restored, they must also be respected and protected from arbitrary withdrawals and violations, and anyone who claimed these rights at independence, but who denied others the same shall be excluded from “the people”.
Cabral insistently reminded everyone that “... if we want all children (or more appropriately, all citizens) in our land to be respected and someone among us does not want this, he will be part of the population, he will not be part of the people” (Cabral 1980: 90).

Evidently, conceding human and civil rights to all citizens became for Cabral the overriding criterion for counting someone as a part of the people. The reasoning behind this position appears to be that the liberation struggle was fought to liberate the society from the shackles of colonialism and dehumanization, and the fruits of winning would be harmony, consolidation and development at independence under the right leadership. Ideologically, one of these gains of independence was the building of an egalitarian society based on equal opportunities for self-improvement, and anyone who took exception to this subverted the whole essence of the liberation struggle and the fruits of independence. Hence she or he was a saboteur, an agent of neo-colonialism, one was of the population, but not of the people, and such a person should be jailed according to Cabral. In all, we know who is of the people at independence if she or he conceded to all the natural, civil and political rights which one enjoyed. Let us term this Cabral’s Rights Concession Criterion (CRCC) for citizenship.

It seems evident from the foregoing that during the liberation struggle phase or even during the anticipated period of consolidating the gains of independence, there was one overriding consideration that people who avowed the same views about the liberation struggle and contributed a considerable amount of labor, mental and physical, in each of the phases, ought to also enjoy equal civil and political rights.

From this, it can be concluded that each comrade, who by virtue of his or her compliance with the letters and spirit of CICC and CRCC, was further warranted to expect that she or he will be treated fairly and justly according to established rules without overt or covert discrimination. A comrade’s faith in this was further strengthened by the fact that she or he also knew that all comrades accepted it as a basic tenet. Indeed, that warrant was the basic bond uniting all engaged in the tedious enterprise of armed struggle. This was the attainable ideal situation when everybody in the polity internalized the CICC and CRCC in the letter and spirit.

Thus far in our analysis, we see that Cabral enunciated selective criteria for determining citizenship in the emerging nation of Guinea Bissau, second, those who compiled with the criteria were autonomous individuals who also differed in their dispositions to assent or dissent from the provisions of the criteria, and third, as the criteria – CICC and CRCC stand, three new positions could be taken by autonomous individuals:
A person may accept only the letters of the criteria as some people sometimes accept only the letters of a particular legal provision. In this case complying with the letters of the criteria becomes the only condition for qualifying to be part of the people. Such persons are likely to pay lip-service to the intentions of the criteria.

Another person may accept and emphasize the ‘spirit’ of the provisions of the criteria, and think it is really what is required whether or not one makes overt gestures to manifest its acceptance.

As far as a person is concerned, the criteria enjoin that one who says or avows that one is for the people should not at the same time engage in double-dealing or be a saboteur, and should always do what is expected for the success of the revolution and welfare of the people, whether or not she or he is being observed. Such a person as described in this category invariably will accept the letters of the criteria. But someone like the first person who accepts and emphasizes only the letters of the criteria is not bound to internalize the spirit of the criteria like the second person. Emphasis on the letters of the criteria at best demands, overt gestures for showing his/her watchers that she/he is part of the people, whereas his conviction is different. This overriding conviction does not, in his/her view, compel him/her to act in the interest of the people when she/he is not under the gaze of others (especially superior officers or people considered leaders of the revolution). When such a person acts contrary to the provision of the criteria she/he has no qualms of conscience.

There are those who may be indifferent to the enunciated criteria in letter and spirit, and given that this indifference would most likely show in the attitudes of persons concerned, hence it would not be a problem identifying them for their indifference, and thus foreclosing their citizenship.

The possibility that individuals may have adopted these likely different positions vis-à-vis the criteria is suggested by the fact that prior via their being politically mobilized which made them take up arms against the colonialists; they were first of all autonomous individuals. Hence while Cabral may have emphasized something like the position of the second person above, and persuading others to adopt it, some other persons might have just been concerned with overt actions indicating that they belonged, but not necessarily precluded by any moral force or consideration from acting otherwise when out of view.
Thus, Cabral made many lamentations about comrades who subverted programs designed to emancipate women (Cabral 1980: 111), women themselves who could not justify a confidence resposed in the Party (Chabal 1981: 98) and comrades in general being dragged into fighting for mere ideological purity (Chabal 1981: 75-99) which conjointly attest to this possibility of actual lack of moral force while the war was in progress. In various ways, these people may have been concerned with mere outward show to only satisfied their urge to exhibit actions indicating that they also belonged to the crowd of emancipated comrades. It may just be that their spirit and conviction were not there in actual fact; hence they only joined forces and the tide of revolution to save their skins in a period of mergency.

Accordingly, a successful prosecution of the war of national liberation required Cabral not to have certain people of doubtful loyalty in his Party, and among the combatants. For example, Cabral could not accept people in the first category discussed because to do so would have meant that it did not really matter what ones convictions were once she/her agreed to bear arms against the colonialists. Similarly, Cabral could not have admitted into his Party and overall organization those who hedged about the viability and eventual success of the war of national liberation, in the hope that they might, in the long run, be swayed in its favor. Consequently, the people in the above second category appeared to be Cabral’s chosen ones: people who accepted and emphasized not only the letters of the selective criteria, but also its spirit and intentions; people whose consciences would prick even at the mere thought or temptation to betray the Party, its leadership or the cause of national liberation. For this was the type of people that he could have assigned sensitive duties or sent to the war fronts without fearing they could be unfaithful to the national cause, the moment they were out of the leaders’ gaze.

This tendency in Cabal to emphasize a strong moral base, as to make it a condition for genuine actions and thoughts of comrades during the war of national Liberation is noted and highlighted by Chabal as he points out that for Cabral…the human and moral attributes of Party cadres were more important assets in the socialist transformation of society than the adherence to so-called proletarian ideology, and that as a Party leader and teacher emphasized the need for personal morals and decency by all, and not merely political vigor and dedication on the part of Party cadres (Chabal 1981: 31-56).
Further, he notes that “Cabral had an almost puritanical notion of what these responsibilities implied – to be the revolutionary elite implied much more than applying the Party rules and policies” (Chabal 1981: 31-56). In Cabral’s own words, it implies that: *we must not hide anything from our people; we must not deceive our people. Deceiving our people is to build a foundation for calamity for our Party…. This is better than lying, cheating and looking small in peoples’ eyes, for they, however wretched and suffering, are like any people, and they know the difference between the truth and a lie, justice and injustice, good and evil, and they are wise enough to lose respect for anyone who lied to them* (Cabral 1980: 94).

Eschewing the moral categories of ‘deception’, ‘lying’, ‘cheating’ and complying with the injunction not to ‘hide anything’ from the people, are virtues which mere adherence to Party rules or compliance with the stated selective criteria do not necessarily require. But a conscientious fellow cannot neglect them especially if he/she still desires the serenity of his/her personal conscience. It is possible that in the bid to comply with rules, just like complying with the provisions of a statute, one can do so in a way that abets deception, lying, cheating, or in a way that breeds and encourages injustice. In this case, one who is concerned with complying with the letters of these provisions may not feel any pangs of conscience about the moral implications of his compliance when such compliance with the letters of the rules of legal provisions affect persons adversely.

In this context, the difference is that one who is conscientious, and cognizance of the letters and spirit of the provisions of the selective criteria, and adheres to them humanely, cannot at the same time neglect the moral implications of actions deriving from the provisions. I think that it was the nurture of this personal conscience, while adhering to the selective criteria and other Party rules that Cabral sought from any one who wished to be part of the people. And anything short of this should disqualify a person from mixing with the people if he/she could be detected.

**Cabral’s Psychologism**

Conversely, the possibility of detecting persons who claim they have consciences even when they did not is quite remote. Furthermore, the remoteness is heightened when they may pretend and posture as if they adhere to the demands of the selective criteria even when their minds were far away from the intention of the criteria.
Such personal and moral conscience should ally with adherence to the letters of the criteria and qualify a person to be a citizen, or part of the people, introspectively, a process one can decide for him of herself through self observation. Thus if it is true that this type of personal conscience makes it possible for one to have pangs of conscience when violating avowed Party principles unobserved, or when she/he avows the selective criteria unconscientiously, and is the ultimate basis one can claim to be a citizen, then Cabral’s definition of citizenship or the people of his nation is based on a specific kind of psychologism.

Theorists who adopt this as a philosophical position maintain that the only instrument of philosophical investigations from this point of view is self – observation or introspection. In their conviction, there is no way to establish truth other than by reducing it to the subjective elements of self observation. In the case of Cabral, the argument is not that he adopted this view as an overriding and fundamental theoretical position, but rather his bid to define the people of his nation or citizenship therein, which reduce it to what one can call moral psychologism wherein personal moral conscience becomes the basis or arbiter of an approved attitude one should adopt towards his or her compatriots, and the nation in general.

This position is what I believe is at the root of his statement that people of a society or nation are defined in terms of the mainstream history of society, hence representing the highest interest of the majority. Thus statements or definitions are designed to elicit a certain psychological disposition from people during the time of revolution and after. Hence this psychologism I have endeavored to trace and explain. It shows that one should always be guided by personal consciousness in whatever significant thing one does, says or even thinks about the overall fortunes of the revolution, and as a result becomes the seat of a person’s actions and intentions as she/her relate with society and its people.

Objection and Problems

Having interpreted Cabral’s definition of the people or citizens of the nation, it appears to have a problem in the form of an objection, and when more specifically asked, if subjective or introspective capacity to feel the qualms of conscience is the essential respect a person can use become a citizen, then it is difficult or even impossible to detect and separate those who had it from those who did not. In the long run, the implication of this for Cabral is the inseparability of the citizens from the crowd due to the inaccessibility of a person’s thought or state of mind.
The contrary would have made it possible to peer into the minds of comrades and ascertain if they possessed the required subjective moral condition that would enable them to qualify as citizens or as part of the people. As this is impossible, Cabral risked accepting a person, no matter his or her innermost persuasions, but who avowed the letters of the selective criteria, as a citizen. And thus this is a set formal condition that almost all members of the population could meet as they were likely to comply to given the state of emergency that requires that a reasonable person should not work against his interest by giving others cause to doubt his/her loyalty to allow all members of the population to in principle, be a citizen.

The existence of this problem however does not invalidate my interpretation of Cabral on citizenship. The problem exists not for the interpreter but for Cabral himself – the theorist – who adopted such an introspective condition as the fulcrum of his definition of citizenship. From the vantage point of this basic problem, other problems associated with this manner of defining citizenship can be highlighted that arise mainly from the inherent lack of objective ways of determining who has this particular moral precondition, and who lacks it. Yet, as things stand, both insincere and sincere comrades have one way of exhibiting their convictions, i.e. through overt actions leading the audience to measure the depth of their convictions, with the difference being that while the overt actions of the former lack the type of moral depth explained previously while those of the latter presuppose moral depth – the capacity to feel the qualms of conscience if they violated or even tried to violate their own avowals of the criteria, when out of the gaze of a higher authority, or a scrutinizing audience.

The tragedy of the situation is that we cannot identify who possesses or lacks the moral force which makes one a citizen, especially in a situation where fake or insincere, and genuine or sincere revolutionaries, endeavor strenuously, to make their actions consistent in order not to fall out of favor. Eventually, there arises an intense rivalry or competition between fake and genuine revolutionaries on the level of overt actions designed to be conducive to the fortunes of the revolution. Hence each side tries to outsmart the other, and gain, unwavering attention of the people or leaders. This rivalry can exist on the covert or subterranean level initially. And because the fake revolutionaries who accept only the letters of the selective criteria have only the consistency of their overt, though insincere actions as ways of validating their positions, and are likely to be more vigorous than their sincere counterparts in this subtle contest.

Yet, as time goes on, this under current contest becomes more obvious. There now emerges sinister charges which the groups haul at each other. As a result, people may now be branded ‘moderates’ while others are called ‘extremists’ or ‘hard-liners’ vis-à-vis the dominant ideology, and the cause of the revolution.

---

This new development only succeeds in creating dissension within the ranks of the people because given the way citizenship or “the people of a nation” is defined, there is no objective way of determining the “essential factor” that makes one a citizen of the new nation. A judge, who wants to separate the sheep from the wolves so to say, has only his own subjective assessment of each of the group’s overt actions to rely on. This may deepen the problem since his assessment may not always measure the real situation. In fact, the genuine revolutionaries may come off worse in the judge’s assessment, because they are likely to be less hypocritical in their actions.

In case the judge is the leader of the revolution, and because of the subjective nature of his assessment of the actions of his colleagues and followers, there is likely to be a disparity between what he expects and the actual actions of people as they relate to the cause of the revolution or armed struggle. Furthermore, from this disparity, there arises mutual suspicion on two basic levels: (1) suspected Luke-warm attitude that will be interpreted as abandoning the cause and course of the revolution, and (2) excessive adherence to the tenets of the Party ideology and the cause of the revolution would also be interpreted as dogmatism if the suspect is on the leadership, part of the zealotry, or a mere revolutionary worker.

The labels of ‘moderates’ and ‘extremists’ that could be in vogue are likely to also have another side-effect: the ‘extremists’ are most likely to feel self-righteous and hence arrogate to give themselves the title of ‘guardians of the revolution’. From then on, they may want to do things according to their own level of moral sensibility whether or not such actions conform to the established rules. This attitude further breeds arbitrariness and sometimes encourages the tendency to adopt double standards regarding similar cases, or in interpreting and applying Party principles and agreed upon revolutionary guidelines.

If this tendency triumphs and persists, and people decline to challenge it out of fear of persecution, it eventually succeeds in alienating them from the leadership, and the cause of the revolution. However, in case the people decide to challenge this trend, and the leaders resist, it is then more likely that the revolutionary democracy of the people may be turned into oligarchic totalitarianism in which the Party elite acting as the ‘guardian of the revolution’, that can unleash a reign of terror on the whole Party and the people. And should this happen the situation becomes dicey because in the realm of the subjective, the winner is the self with his/her limited horizon, and to the extent that the self wins, and others who do not meet his/her own standard and estimation apparently fails.
When this happens in a revolutionary situation, and because the only essential criteria for citizenship are basically subjective, those who eventually qualify as citizens do so because of the estimation of an individual. Given that they are now citizens by virtue of their subjective moral sensibility, and given that there are no objective ways to break into the inner thoughts of citizens and ascertain their purity or otherwise, the judge ultimately depends on his/her own introspective assessment and uses it as standard to judge others and their level of dedication.

Conclusions

In this exercise, we have seen that colonialism, as a historical phenomenon thwarted the Guinean peoples’ direction of natural and indigenous development, and made national liberation imperative. In order to prosecute this, people enlisted in its favor. The various strata in various ways were not revolutionary enough to embark on this venture. Naturally, the Guinean peasantry was not a revolutionary vanguard. In similar ways of the peasantry not being a revolutionary force, the natural inclination of the petite bourgeoisie was not to lead a revolution aimed at the total emancipation of the people from oppression and exploitation. All the same, historical antecedents and conditions bequeathed this very duty on the petite bourgeoisie who given their peculiar characteristics and natural inclination that don’t encourage revolutionary fervor for the peasantry, they (the petite bourgeoisie) had to be politically mobilized, and the peasantry had to be converted into a revolutionary force as the petite bourgeoisie had to commit class suicide. And last, any member of each of these social classes could be regarded as fully mobilized according to Cabral, depending or whether or not they adopted a positive disposition towards what he regarded as the mainstream history of the society, and the highest interest of the greatest majority of the people.

This basic conviction of Cabral eventually yields, in my view, criteria for selecting citizens of the country. Given these criteria dubbed CICC and CRCC, persons can assume three basic positions as indicated above. Hence the particular position of Cabral appeared to prefer persons who adopted his criteria, which in its essential aspect demanded something more than mere verbal avowals of the letters of the criteria. It further demanded that people be personally convinced about the basic intentions of the criteria, and that they have the capacity to feel the pangs of conscience anytime they were violated or in some way attempted to be violated wherein their own avowals of Party provisions would object, especially when not under the strict observance or influence of a superior authority. Thus it is in this possessing of moral capacity or sensibility that the highest interest of the people and the revolution is given historical epoch, and most important, a person can genuinely claim to be part of the people, a citizen.
Moreover, I conclude that the essential way people can become citizens is mainly introspective and psychological which forms a fundamental basis of Cabral’s definition of “the people” of the nation, incorporating a disposition towards others in society that confers rights of citizenship in the polity of his construct. Second, we can see that essential disposition makes persons part of the people or citizens and as products of certain interrelated historical conditions that determine and condition placing Cabral’s introspective method of defining the people within a ‘historicized psychologism’ that contributes to his stature as one of Africa’s most foremost revolutionary leaders who’s political movement and social-political theoretical influence led to political and military success over a modern colonial power.

NOTES

1 He maintained this view against some Marxists who insist that class struggle is the motive force of history. For him, it was even the level of development of productive forces that is the essential determinant of the content and form of class struggle. In his view, adopting the class-struggle-view of motive force of history implied two things: prior to the development of classes in some societies, they had no history; history will cease at the extinction of social classes and class struggle, hence both implications are unacceptable to Cabral (124-125).

2 It is noteworthy that for Cabral, a member of the population was not necessarily part of “the people”. There is a transformation the one had to undergo before he or she became part of the latter, his citizenship criteria revolved around this idea.

3 In Stoic Parlance it falls under the category of “the indifferent” and items under this category like wealth, honor, can aid or impede the attainment of virtue by a stoic depending on how he/she uses them.

4 The six people were Amilcar Cabral, Luix Cabral, Aristides Pereira, Fernando Fortes, Eliseu Turpin and Julio de Almeida.

5 Cabral underscored this point when he reminded Party cadres “that people are not fighting for ideas or what is in men’s [human] mind The people fight and accept the sacrifices demanded by the struggle in order to gain material advantages, to live better future of their children. National liberation, the struggle against colonialism, the construction of peace, progress and independence are nothing but hollow words devoid of any significance unless they can be translated to real improvement of living conditions” quoted in Chabal, P. “National Liberation in Portuguese Guinea, 1956-1974” African affairs 80 (2/5), Jan. 1981. 31-56.

6 As a terminology, Cabral preferred ‘Party’ to ‘movement’ or ‘Front’ when describing Liberation organizations. In his view the latter labels connote a conglomeration of different organizations which though have a common enemy differ in their views about the enemy and how best to fight and defeat it. But they nevertheless come together, reach a compromise and present an apparent united front against the enemy. It does not mean that they share the same ideology or are one on goals and means of achieving them. He was probably convinced very early in the struggle that on cannot meaningfully wage an armed struggle based on compromises between different organizations.

39

Actually, in the light of the eventual fate of the Patriotic Front, and the Zimbabwean post-independence experience characterized by violence and armed skirmishes especially in Matebeteloland, Cabral was right in his conviction that ‘Fronts’ do not have the capacity to absorb and diffuse centrifugal forces. On the other hand, a Party like the PAIGC had as “its vital principle a single organization, a single banner and no confusion” (Cabral, 93).

7 Talks about rights also connote talks about opportunities to enjoy these rights. When I talk about ‘equal opportunity’ to enjoy certain rights, I mean it in the sense it is analyzed by Peter Western in “The Concept of Equal Opportunity”, *Ethics* 95, (4), July 1985.

8 The concern expressed here over the lack of real or avid conviction and an inspiring moral base in some actors in Cabral’s Party is not a misplaced one, is evident in the fact that “Cabral (himself) was assassinated by disgruntled elements of the PAIGN operating as agents of the Portuguese Secret Police and who had been promised a vague form of ‘autonomy’ within the Portuguese empire if they succeeded in eliminating the PAIGC leadership” (emphasis added). See, Chabal, P. “National Liberation in Portuguese Guinea 1956 – 1974” fn. – 44, p. 84. In this case, further investigations might have revealed that given the individual case history of the perpetrators of this act, they should not have been accepted as emancipated and convinced comrades. This is notwithstanding the fact that the person in question may be benefiting optimally from the system he actually owes no real allegiance. See Aino Kuusinen, *The Rings of Destiny: Inside Soviet Russia from Lenin to Brezhnev* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1974).

9 The actions of genuine revolutionaries, because they are more conscientious, are likely to be interpreted in certain situations as luke-warm. They are more likely to eschew over-zealousness in whatever thing they do. Possibly, this is the stock-in-trade of fake revolutionaries.

**Bibliography**


Western, Peter “The Concept of Equal Opportunity” *Ethics* 95, 1985 (4).