

CHAPTER VIII

Fanon and Cabral: The African Legacy

Cabral's Life and Work

Amilcar Cabral was born on September 12, 1924, in Bafatá, Guinea-Bissau. His father was a teacher and his mother had a small business. He excelled at school and in 1945 went to Portugal to study at the *Instituto Superior de Agronomia* in Lisbon. In 1948 he organised a study group with the dual aim of bring modern civilisation to Africa and as a corollary of this overthrowing Portuguese colonialism (Davis 1978: 22).

He returned to his Guinea Bissau in 1952 and over the next two years conducted an agricultural survey of the whole country. He gained invaluable knowledge of the social structure and experience of the peasants. There are four major ethnic groups (roughly 30% Balante, 14% Mandjuk, 11% Fula, 10% Mandinga). The latter two are Islamicised (about 30% of the total population are influenced by Islam) the rest follow traditional African religions loosely termed 'animistic' (Urdang 1979: 66). In 1956 he helped found the *Partido Africano de Independencia da Guiné e Cabo-Verde* (PAIGC: The African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde)¹ clandestinely with five others. There followed six years of trial and error, experience and effort that can be divided into three stages. From its formation in 1956 until September 1959 it did little but win some adherents in Bissau and the major towns. At this time some hope was held of forcing concessions through peaceful demonstrations. The traditional revolutionary subject of Marxist theory, the working class, were few in number. Initially the PAIGC did, nonetheless, focus on the dock workers and crews of boats that were carrying merchandise inland on the rivers. They were highly conscious even without trade unions, Cabral (1969: 54) explained that:

We therefore decided to concentrate all our work on this group. This gave excellent results and this group soon came to form a kind of nucleus which influenced the attitudes of other wage earning groups in the towns - workers proper and drivers, who form two other important groups. Moreover, if I may put it this way, we thus found our little proletariat.

In August 1959 this group went on strike. The police repressed the strike killing fifty people and shattering the illusion that peaceful means would win concessions (Davis 1978: 222). After the crackdown the PAIGC leadership regrouped and made several key decisions. These included shifting the focus of the struggle to the countryside, to shift the secretariat outside the country and to prepare for armed struggle. By 1958 Cabral had discussed such moves with Sekou Touré, who was soon to be president of the newly independent Guinea. He attended the Accra All African People's Conference in Ghana to get support for the PAIGC struggle (Chabal 1983: 57). A cadre training school was set up in neighbouring Conakry to train militants in the necessary political work before the insurrection. Those who completed the school then returned to win peasant support in the country; others went to Algeria or Cuba for further training.

Both the Accra conference, which Fanon attended, and the cadre school in Guinea provided the PAIGC with close links to other African struggles, to the Algerian FLN and Fanon in particular. In

¹ The Cape Verde islands lie 600 miles off the coast of Guinea-Bissau and would become an separate nation eleven years after Guinea-Bissau gained its independence in 1974.

January 1963 the armed struggle was initiated. The early political work paid dividends as peasants moved from support to mobilisation especially as it became clear that military strikes against the colonists were possible. Late in 1963 the PAIGC met its first crisis with an outbreak of superstition and witch hunting. Some PAIGC commanders wanted to go their own way and peasants began to rely on traditional methods like fetishes to protect them from bullets. A congress in February 1964 reasserted central control and politics put back in charge. Moving from guerilla bands to a mobile army and re-organisation of life in the liberated zones was central to the PAIGC victory. The war was effectively won by 1968 although the Portuguese refused to resign as this would give impetus to struggles in Angola and Mozambique. With the assassination of Cabral in January 1973 the PAIGC went on the offensive driving the Portuguese back into the 'fortress' of Bissau. They held elections in the liberated zones (two-thirds of the country) during 1972 but it was the April 1974 officer's coup in Lisbon that saw the end of the fighting in May. With the withdrawal of troops, independence was declared in September. Earlier in July the PAIGC came into the open on the Cape Verde Islands as well and with elections in 1975 showed that the PAIGC was supported there as well the Islands declared their independence.

Cabral's use of Marxism, not as a dogma but as a method of concretely analysing reality as a process in which one participates to order to change it, is exemplary. Cabral had gift for concrete analysis. As Basil Davidson puts it: 'it was taught by brute facts, but the gift, of course, was to be able to learn':

Here was an intellectual - one, indeed, of rare and shining talent - who believed that the reaching of conclusions *without* the taking of appropriate action was self-frustration or betrayal. At the same time, Cabral believed that theorising without action must be vain or irresponsible, action unshaped by theory was bound to fail, or, more exactly, that action leading to no embodiment in effective theory - in *appropriate* theory - was only the road to delusion and therefore to defeat (1994: 218-23).

Guinea-Bissau in the early 1950s when Cabral returned there was a small country under Portuguese domination. Even on the Left the situation was not well known or understood, Portuguese colonialism was seen as somewhat benign. In the Communist left the then dominant idea was that the line of march in the colonies should be determined by the situation in Europe. Since nothing could be done without working class leadership and there being none in Africa, they would have to wait until events unfolded elsewhere. Thus the PAIGC was expected to look to Portugal where the communist party would lead the struggle against the dictatorship and then in the course of events liberate Guinea Bissau through its colonial branch. In 1957 the Portuguese Communist Party agreed to support the PAIGC as a movement of national liberation, thus becoming the only Communist Party in Europe to do so. Many communists met their deaths at the hands of the dictatorship as a result.

Cabral's life and work are an implicit critique of the Eurocentric view of the Communist Parties. Many of his key ideas were delivered to the first Tricontinental conference in Havana in January 1966, which was later published as 'The Weapon of Theory'. Here he argues that there is a problem with the Marxist view of history if the idea of 'class' in the European sense was taken for granted:

It would also be to consider - and this we refuse to accept - that various human groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America were without history, or outside history, at the time when they were subjected to the yoke of imperialism. It would be to consider the peoples of our countries, such as the Balantes of Guinea, the Coaniamas of Angola and the Macondes of Mozambique, are still living today, if we abstract the slight influence of colonialism to which they have been subjected - outside history or that they have no history (1969: 77).

Cabral sought to develop a theory appropriate to the conditions that they faced. His solution to the problem was to broaden the use of Marxism by focusing not on 'class' but on 'productive forces'. Firstly, Cabral located his situation in the international context. In an imperialist global economy the 'native' bourgeoisie must forge an alliance with the international bourgeoisie, and so it can not establish a truly independent nation, instead the bourgeoisie becomes comprador. Cabral showed that in the era of imperialist capitalism the only road to independence leads through a social revolution that abolishes all modes of appropriation.

Cabral refined Nkrumah's view that there is a uniformity between colonial powers. He agreed that independence was granted as a means of securing indirect domination and that is why Portugal fought so hard because it could only be an imperialist agent not an imperialist power. Cabral argued that Portugal 'cannot decolonise because she cannot neo-colonise'. This leaves him able to explain why armed struggle is necessary. In recognising Portugal's weakness the structural logic was clearer (Cohen 1986: 49).

Cabral continues:

The objective of the imperialist countries was to prevent the enlargement of the socialist camp, to liberate the reactionary forces in our countries which were being stifled by colonialism, and to enable these forces to ally themselves with the international bourgeoisie. The fundamental objective was to create a bourgeoisie where one did not exist, in order to strengthen the imperialism and capitalist camp (1969: 58).

When attempts to base their organising on workers failed, the PAIGC were driven to rural areas where the majority of the population lived. The peasantry constitute the majority and live in non-capitalist social relations developed from the pre-colonial period; they were not the wage-labourers that European Marxism required for a revolution. Cabral distinguished two main groups of peasants with gradations from a horizontally to a vertically organised form. The Balante, an example of the former, held land in common, each family was allocated enough for subsistence; there was no state or class divisions. Women controlled what they produced, with cash crops used to pay colonial taxes. The latter groups like the Fula were semi-feudal who before colonisation had a hierarchy of chiefs and holy men who lived off the surplus. There was a middle layer of artisans and merchants who were employed by the chiefs. The peasants were bound to the chief and the male head of household maintained a family dependent upon him. It was this latter group particularly that was difficult to mobilise especially as the Portuguese developed good relations with the chiefs.

The mode of life of the peasants tends to be one of subsistence and independence that does not require broad social networks. This combined with cultural differences isolates groups. This isolation made it more difficult to develop a national bond to defend their interests against the Portuguese who extracted taxes but were otherwise distant. For the European wage labourer, who produces commodities and is bought and sold like one, the capitalist relations of exploitation are discernible. The experience of the peasants differs. The Portuguese operate either through the traditional chief or as a distant power with huge technological superiority that extracted the surplus directly without entering directly into its production. Nevertheless, this surplus was eventually turned into capital outside the village and in this way the peasant is a producer of surplus value for imperialist capital. This is experienced only indirectly in the form of commodities which peasants (unlike wage labourers) do not produce directly. In the colonial context the wage-earning group is only small and its experience is limited to small scale industries (like peanut shelling). This makes

it difficult to see the centrality of their role in capitalism. Following orthodox Marxism would have condemned Cabral to await the development of the revolutionary class. No revolutionary like Cabral would adopt such an approach. According to him:

if the class struggle is the motive force of history, it is only so in specific historical periods...it therefore seems correct to conclude that the level of productive forces is the essential determining element in the content and form of class struggle, is the true and permanent motive force of history (1969: 77).

Instead he and a few others formed a 'party of struggle' and set to work. They looked for the working class, which most of the Left assumed to be the only force capable of leading the struggle but did not find it. Cabral (1973: 63-4) identifies three layers of the petty bourgeoisie: the assimilated, the wavering and the revolutionary. It is this latter group who has the task of leading a revolutionary struggle. It is a great weakness of the national liberation movement but since the petty bourgeoisie has no independent class interests the outcome is not foregone. It is must be determined in struggle.

Here is Cabral's formulation:

To strengthen its revolutionary consciousness; to reject the temptation of becoming more bourgeois and the natural concerns of its class mentality; and to identify itself with the working class. This means that in order to truly fulfil its role in the national liberation struggle, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must be capable of committing suicide as a class, in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which they belong.

This alternative - to betray the revolution or to commit suicide as a class - constitutes the dilemma of the petty bourgeoisie in the general framework of the national liberation struggle. The positive solution, in favour of the revolution, depends on what Fidel Castro recently correctly called the development of revolutionary consciousness (1969: 89).

In the European context the service role of the petty bourgeoisie makes them less crucial than in the colonial context. One response to colonial repression is assimilation of the coloniser's mentality the other, Cabral labels a 'return to the source' (1973: 45). This parallels Fanon's 'retreatist stage'. Cabral argues that for the liberation movement to begin, the petty bourgeoisie has to transcend the assimilation phase:

A reconversion of minds - of mental sets - is thus indispensable to the true integration of the people into the liberation movement. Such reconversion - re-Africanisation, in our case - may take place before the struggle, but it is completed only during the course of the struggle, through daily contact with the popular masses in the communion of sacrifice required by the struggle (1973: 45).

The cultural retreat is a product of their alienation. Social advancement in the colonial setting requires that they give up African ways. As it becomes clear that the racist wall is impenetrable they are 'marginalised' (1973: 62). This kind of alienation is a familiar theme in Fanon's descriptions in Black Skin White Masks. The alienated petty bourgeoisie seeks a new identity. In doing so they develop a global perspective seeing the relations that exist between imperialism and the people of Guinea-Bissau more clearly than other classes. At first this cultural turn forces them, not to class analysis, but back to the masses. In Fanon's terms, in the 'retreat stage' they are no longer looking up to the master for approval but around at the other slaves. They reject the pretended superiority of the colonial power and seek refuge in the culture of the African in which all blacks share a common heritage.

However, Cabral (1973: 63) points out that this 'return to the source' is not an act of struggle against imperialism as such:

The 'return to the source' is not therefore a voluntary step, but the only possible reply to the demand of the concrete need, historically determined, and enforced by the inescapable contradiction between colonised society and the colonial power, the mass of people exploited and the foreign exploitative class, a contradiction in the light of which each social stratum or indigenous class must define its position.

It is in the move from individual identity to collective action, which the contradiction leads to struggle. Cabral (1973: 63) goes on:

So the 'return to the source' is of no historical importance unless it brings not only real involvement in the struggle for independence, but also complete and absolute identification with the hopes of the mass of people, who contest not only the foreign culture but also the foreign domination as a whole. Otherwise 'return to the source' is nothing more than an attempt to find short-term benefits - knowingly or unknowingly a kind of political opportunism.

The petty bourgeoisie must move from a cultural re-Africanisation of itself to an identification with the struggle of the mass of African people if it is to end its alienation. In this sense the strength of the masses is the key, not the petty bourgeoisie themselves. Cabral (1973: 41) states that:

The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated. Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment, among men or groups of men within a society, as well as among different societies. Ignorance of this fact may explain the failure of several attempts at foreign domination - as well as the failure of some national liberation movements.

It is crucial that the masses preserve their identity in the face of the colonial power and it often the rural masses who do this. Cabral (1973: 61) asserts:

Repressed, persecuted, humiliated, betrayed by certain social groups who have compromised with the foreign power, culture took refuge in the villages, in the forests, and on the spirit of the victims of domination. Culture survives all these challenges and through the struggle for liberation blossoms forth again

It is the colonial imposition that draws the people and their separate cultures together into one nation. Their histories meet with the struggle against the Portuguese and increasingly the coloniser provides the focus to forge a common history. This new cultural identity has its objective basis in anti-imperialism though it is not the peasant masses who articulate it. It is the petty bourgeoisie who articulates the national project and forges international links.

It is important to note that Cabral is not saying that the petty bourgeoisie as a whole is a revolutionary class even though its position on the colonial context gives it a different historical role. Left to themselves they will ally with the imperialists, however, their alienation makes it *possible* that a small revolutionary section will throw its lot in with the masses and lead the struggle. They have travelled to the imperial core and to other colonies. They can take a global perspective on anti-imperial struggles. Their alienation makes it possible for them to develop a

cultural critique and recognise its class content. This was the role that European Marxists had reserved for the proletariat. Nevertheless, this is a dangerous path and success requires more. Cabral's key insight was that the Portuguese could not 'neo-colonise' and were forced into a protracted armed struggle. For the PAIGC to be successful would require a social revolution. As areas were liberated the PAIGC replaced the colonial structures with popular ones, to guarantee success these new structures must improve the life of the peasants.

The PAIGC leadership worked patiently to build support necessary to make struggle possible - intelligence, safe passage, food - all essential to guerilla warfare. Repeatedly the leadership saw the need for the people to learn from their own experience and not to force the pace. Davidson (1969: 100-3) gives the example of the PAIGC persuading the Balante of the need to open a second front to liberate Fula territory. They met the response that it was up to the Fula to liberate their own territory. The PAIGC explained that the Portuguese would be able to concentrate their forces and re-group and so ultimately it was in everyone's interests. The Balante remained unconvinced until the Portuguese did as predicted and then redoubled their attacks at which point thousands volunteered to fight in Fula territory. Thus the Balante learned that their liberation required that of the Fula, and the Fula peasantry learned the importance of solidarity. The alternative, military coercion, would only have undermined popular support, even if objectively the leadership was right.

In the protracted struggle it also became clearer who benefited from colonialism, who betrayed the militants and who retreated with the Portuguese. National consciousness had a basis in these experiences as did a growing international awareness of what other nations supported their struggle and who aided the Portuguese. The alternative to a revolution also presents itself. Fanon warned about neo-colonialism, the Africanisation of colonial state and the need to go beyond national consciousness.

With the coming of independence a new struggle emerges. The armed struggle is over but the anti-imperialist struggle continues. The peasant's motive for rebellion and the petty bourgeoisie's need to identify with the masses is undermined. Neo-colonialism seeks an agent from the indigenous groups and how successfully they are resisted will depend a lot on the extent to which the leadership has come to identify with the masses. How strong the revolutionary structures in the liberated zones are and the extent to which groups have developed a class and internationalist perspective will be crucial in the post colonial stage.

While the struggle in Guinea-Bissau had its own peculiarities it is the struggle against imperialism that links both stages of the struggle. Colonial power is directly opposed in the anti-colonial stage with as broad a front as possible. In the postcolonial period it is the domestic allies of imperialism that must be confronted and this requires new forms of struggle. By 1964 the process was well in motion which emphasised the importance of the patient preparatory work from 1956-1964. By the end of 1963 the PAIGC had control of small but decisive areas of liberated territory and their political understanding became increasingly clear. In February 1964 the PAIGC's first congress outlined the program that would liberate the country ten years later, clarifying the leadership's revolutionary perspective and launching a regular guerilla fighting force.

At a seminar in May 1964 at the Frantz Fanon Centre in Milan, Italy, Cabral affirmed that:
 the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie is honest; that is to say, it remains identified, in spite of all the hostile conditions, with the fundamental interests of the popular masses. To do this it may have to commit suicide; but it will not lose. By sacrificing itself it can incarnate

itself, but in the conditions of workers or peasants (1969: 59).

Whatever the course of events, by 1966 as Davidson (1994: 225) points out ‘there was no doubt that the revolutionary segment’s “suicide” was not only far advanced but was proving fruitful in its reincarnation.’ Clerks and intellectuals had sunk their identities into working and fighting with the village masses. It is crucial to see that the process set in motion by the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau is what grounds Cabral’s argument here. It is not based on a theory of consciousness but on the practice of his small group that had grown and come to identify with the masses. They held the initiative against the Portuguese, as a vanguard party, with increasing mass participation. Most of the petty bourgeoisie remained in colonial service or in exile, even at the end of the war the bulk was still largely on the side of the Portuguese colonisers.

Cabral's analysis included the role of other classes. Fanon had raised the theoretical question in Africa of the peasants as a revolutionary force. Cabral's experience and observations in Africa showed that they were not:

Many people say that it is the peasants that carry the burden of exploitation: this may be true, but so far as the struggle is concerned it must be realised that it is not a matter of the degree of suffering or hardship involved in such matters: even extreme suffering in itself does not necessarily produce the *prise de conscience* required for the national liberation struggle. In Guinea the peasants are subjected to a kind of exploitation equivalent to slavery; but even if you try and explain to them that they are being exploited and robbed, it is difficult to convince them by means of a unexperienced explanation of a technico-economic kind that they are the most exploited people; whereas it is easier to convince the workers and people employed in the towns who earn, say, 10 escudos a day for a job in which a European earns between 30 and 50 that they are being subjected to massive exploitation and injustice because they can see (1969: 51-2).

The difficulties of overcoming the peasant's ignorance and isolation and winning them to the struggle are well known. As Cabral states:

Here I should like to broach one key problem, which is of enormous importance to us, as we are a country of peasants, and that is the problem of whether or not the peasantry represents the main revolutionary force. I shall confine myself to my own country, Guinea, where it must be said at once that the peasantry is not revolutionary force - which may seem strange, particularly as we have based our whole armed liberation struggle on the peasantry. A distinction must be drawn between a physical force and a revolutionary force; physically, the peasantry is a great force in Guinea: it is almost the whole of the population, it controls the nation's wealth it is the peasantry which produces; but we know from experience what trouble we had convincing the peasantry to fight (1969: 50).

Frantz Fanon, the FLN representative in Ghana in 1960 urged the PAIGC to 'begin' their armed struggle. This was based on the conception that once 'begun' the peasants would rally and the insurrection unfold by itself. This led to Fanon's (and FLN) support of Holden's *União das Populações de Angola* (UPA) that proved fruitless. When the PAIGC refused to 'begin' they were roundly criticised (Davidson 1994: 228). Fortunately Cabral continued with the painstaking work of preparing the ground. It required the training over a two year period of about one thousand cadres in Conakry, in neighbouring Guiné, drawn from various groups but into whom was inculcated a working class mentality:

When these cadres returned to the rural areas they inculcated a certain mentality into the peasants and it is among these cadres that we have chosen the people who are now leading the struggle; we are not a Communist party or a Marxist Leninist party but the people now leading the peasants in the struggle in Guinea are mostly from the urban milieu and connected with the urban wage-earning group. When I hear that only the peasantry can lead the struggle, am I supposed to think we have made a mistake? All I can say is that at the moment [1964] our struggle is going well (Cabral 1969: 55).

There was also an important group which Cabral had no term for who lived on the outskirts of towns, living with relatives as it was the custom for urban relatives to accommodate kin. This group was literate and receptive to new ideas and could relate to the peasants as well as see the advantages of urban life. They understood the obstacles that stood in the way of African advancement especially Portuguese racism.

Cabral was able to make a more careful distinction between *lumpenproletariat* and real *déclassé* elements:

There is another group of people whom we call the *déclassés*, in which there are two sub-groups to be distinguished: the first group is easy to identify - it is what would be called the lumpenproletariat if there was a real proletariat: it consists of really *déclassé* people, such as beggars, prostitutes and so on. The other group is not really made up of *déclassé* people but we have not found an exact term for it; it is a group to which we have paid a lot of attention and it has proved to be extremely important in the national liberation struggle. It is made up of young people who are connected to the petty bourgeois or workers families, who have recently come from the rural areas and generally do not work; thus they have close relations with the rural areas, as well as with the towns (and even with the Europeans). They sometimes live off some kind of work or other, but they generally live at the expense of their families (1969: 48).

In summary, Cabral analysed social groups in their relationship to colonial power: their attitude to the national struggle, their capacity to embrace nationalism and in the postcolonial situation their revolutionary capacity. Itinerant traders were useful for spreading the word but only if paid. In urban areas Europeans opposed national liberation especially white workers, though some petty-bourgeois whites were sympathetic. As for Africans the petty bourgeoisie can be divided into three groups: those officials and professionals ready to compromise with colonialism, those committed to nationalism and who are the focal point of the struggle. Finally the third group that vacillates between the first two. As to the wage earners 'there is a majority committed to struggle', but they are difficult to mobilise. Next the *déclassé* elements: one section largely serves the Portuguese police, the second group have a broad perspective and join the struggle early. From this group the PAIGC drew many cadres (1969: 49-51).

Cabral was less concerned with general debates about the need for a proletarian party or advocating particular measures as 'socialist'.

He resisted labels, preferring concrete analysis and letting the results speak for themselves:

Every theory of armed struggle has to arise as the consequence of an actual armed struggle. In every case, practice comes first and theory after...If you really want to advance the struggle, you must make a critical assessment of the experience of others before applying their theories, but the basic theory of armed struggle has to come from the reality of the fight.

If you decide it's Marxism, tell everybody that it is Marxism. If you decide that it's not Marxism, tell everyone that it's not Marxism. But the labels are your affair. People here [London] are very preoccupied with the question: are you Marxist or not Marxist? Are you Marxist-Leninist? Just ask me; please, what we are doing in the field. Are we really liberating our people, the human beings in our country, from all forms of oppression? Simply ask me this and draw your own conclusions (Davidson 1994: 230).

Besides concrete analysis of classes Cabral wrote about culture and liberation. He emphasised that consciousness was a key element in the national liberation struggle and that it would have to be preceded by a cultural revival. Like Fanon he saw that the colonialists had deprived the people of their history and so part of the process of liberation was restoring it to them. The liberated zones in Guinea-Bissau were the basis for new social practices that were to form a new society. Like most colonies the Portuguese maintained their rule not merely by force but by assimilating a section of the population. This group saw themselves as Portuguese, and saw the bulk of the population as a mass to be exploited. Subject to coercion and racism 'natives' internalised this inferiority so well described by Fanon. The challenge for any revolution was how to reverse the cultural despair. It was central to Cabral that the people must liberate themselves and this goal was for him the test of

any good leadership. It was not merely a change of masters, about which Fanon warned, but a cultural change forging a new independence:

Our cultural resistance consists in the following: while we scrap colonial culture and *the negative aspects of our own culture, whether in our character or in our environment*, we have to create a new culture, also based on our traditions but respecting everything that the world today has conquered for the service of mankind (Davidson 1994: 233 emphasis added).

This would only come to fruition with the end of colonialism but it served as the central aim of the liberated zones and their democratic self-organisation. In this way the short term goal of mobilising people meshed with the long term goal of liberation. It was never enough to defeat the Portuguese militarily, even this was a slow process. It was necessary to build a new culture in the rear so that the social change would result in more than a change of government. Cabral stressed repeatedly:

Consider these features inherent in an armed liberation struggle: the practice of democracy, of criticism and self-criticism, the growing responsibility of populations for the management of their life, literacy teaching, the creation of schools and health care. The training of cadres from peasant and labourer backgrounds - and other achievements. We should thus find that the armed liberation struggle is not only a product of culture but also a...*determinant* of culture. This is without doubt for the people the prime recompense for the efforts and sacrifices which are the price of war (Davidson 1994: 235).

Cabral insisted that since practice determined theory they had no blueprint for what would happen in the liberated zones. His 'theoretical' elaborations of a new culture were much more about achieved practice than abstractions (Davidson 1994: 235). The maturing of such a culture in a progressive direction was not an inevitable outcome but part of a process of liberation. In the liberated zones the leadership learned a new respect for the peasants, Cabral describes it thus:

while on their side, the mass of workers and, in particular, the peasants, who are generally illiterate and have never moved beyond the confines of the village or region, in contact with other categories shed the complexes which constrained them...understand their situation as determining elements of the struggle...break the fetters of the village universe to integrate gradually into the country and the world, become fitter to play the decisive role as the principal force of the liberation movement (Davidson 1994: 236).

It was on the struggle for woman's liberation that work of the PAIGC deserves particular mention. The PAIGC leadership, mostly male, was committed to woman's liberation. Beyond programmatic statements they recognised that the struggle needed to be carried on by the women themselves, raising their own demands and organising. With women especially political independence must translate into personal independence. Laws have their place but women must be willing and able to sanction men for their behaviour and this cannot be accomplished overnight. The leadership recognised that it was liberating women's productive powers that lay the basis for their liberation.

Traditionally women in Guinea-Bissau were forced to marry, had no right of divorce and polygyny was common. Women were the foundation of the agricultural economy performing the bulk of the work. Patriarchal traditions were grounded in economics. A viable economy existed based on polygyny as one means of obtaining many workers, and paying compensation in the form of the bride price. Women were not educated since it was not necessary for their social role. To sustain the economy divorce was made impossible. In this way production and reproduction were ensured. Women shared a sense of mutual responsibility looking after each other when ill or pooling their labour at harvest time. The PAIGC began educating people about the need for change. Many women were willing to challenge the existing structures; many were not. Men who could see little

gain were even more resistant. With the political mobilisation by the PAIGC more changes were instituted; PAIGC sought support from women, who in turn supported the PAIGC. Cabral, as concrete as always, said:

Keep always in mind that people are not fighting for ideas, for things in anyone's head. They are fighting...for material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward to guarantee the future of their children. National liberation, war on colonialism, building of peace and progress, independence - all that will remain meaningless for the people unless it brings a real improvement in the conditions of life (Urdang 1979: 25).

These priorities were set on agriculture at village level. The bulk of agriculture was carried out at subsistence level by the women. PAIGC set up state farms and co-ops to introduce new techniques and sought to educate the population politically. For example, collective dam projects were not just technical exercises but showed the value of collective work. Any attempt to enforce such projects would simply have reminded the population of the colonialist's tactics. During the war it was emphasised that all people, not just women, needed to be productive at village level. During and after the war - soldiers pitched in, education for woman was encouraged and sexist attitudes challenged.

With the village as the centre of economic life it was the sexual division of labour and the customs that support it that needed to be challenged. While women perform most of the subsistence, child care and domestic work then there are limits to liberation. Co-operative childcare and better agricultural technologies were needed since the 'need' for more than one wife could only be overcome with better technology. State farms show alternative ways of working. It is the division of labour that must be challenged and accompanied by political power and representation.

The first cadres trained in Conakry (Guiné) were male. This was necessary since only men were able to travel or obtain family support to look for work in the city. A woman could not have entered the village and won the trust of people. These cadres then returned to Guinea-Bissau and entered villages, patiently explained, then mobilised the people. Initially schools, hospitals and clinics were regarded with suspicion until they were adopted by the people. In the liberated zones five member village councils were set up and people's courts elected. It was compulsory that two women were elected to the councils. Urdang (1979: 123-4) notes:

"It was the women who were easiest to mobilise" said Francisca Pereira [a PAIGC organiser], in an interview. "They realised that this was a great opportunity for their liberation. They knew the attitudes of the party, and understood that for the first time in the history of our country, *they would be able to count on political institutions to safeguard their interests.*"

The development of these institutions was not accidental. The position that woman must be liberated in the process of overall revolution had been a clear and integral part of the ideology of the PAIGC from before mobilisation. In all guerilla wars women have been the supply line - be it Yugoslavia during the Second World War, Vietnam, Algeria, Angola, or Mozambique. It is the women, given their historical condition, who have provided the food.

However, there is a distinct difference between the involvement of women in the guerilla wars in countries such as Algeria on the one hand, and in countries such as Vietnam, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau on the other. This difference lies in the political ideology of the movements. In the case of the latter group the liberation of women is emphasised in order for socialism to become a reality. In Algeria, women played a very active role in the revolution, although it was generally restricted to tasks that men could not do, such as

smuggling bombs out of the Kasbah. But there was no ideology to back it up, no policy that saw the liberation of women as an end in itself. Once colonialism was defeated women were encouraged to don their veils again and return to their traditional roles in the family and to produce more children. The fight for the emancipation of women was stillborn

The involvement of women in the Guinean revolution was not an afterthought brought about by necessity (Urdang 1979: 123-4).

Women's liberation was central to the struggle to create an egalitarian society not just as a pragmatic matter but as a principle emphasised from the earliest days of cadre training in Guinée (Conakry). In the initial meeting called by the mobilisers, they insisted that women should attend. The five-member councils were required to have two women members, which was important to breaking down stereotypes and granting recognition to the work women do. Cooking for guerillas was a central task and increased the status of 'women's work', but this was not an end in itself. Women were forced to travel away from home; they became involved in political discussions not just with each other but with the men (Urdang 1979: 127). Their role on village council expanded.

While re-valuing the customs of the people, the PAIGC began discouraging customs that were oppressive to women like forced marriages, lack of divorce and polygyny. At one point there was a serious threat to the struggle when local commanders began setting up their own fiefdoms. There was an outbreak of reliance on traditional superstitions such as fetishes to protect one from Portuguese bullets. Such practices destroyed the anti-colonial struggle in the Congo but the PAIGC was able to recover, not by banning the practice but by showing that such practices were dangerous. Such political education was backed up by new structures (for example, law) but ultimately it was not imposed on the people.

Although veiling was not an issue as in Algeria, clitoridectomy was common among Islamised tribes like the Fula. The PAIGC recognised the embeddedness of the custom in the social structure of the tribes. The practice had a long tradition and was performed at puberty as a rite of initiation into womanhood. Thus older women supported the practice because "it had always been done" and younger ones looked forward to it as a sign of their maturity. As the practice was not opposed by the women themselves it was not banned in the liberated zones like forced marriage. Instead the focus was on educating young girls that the practice was unnecessary and unhealthy. The girls at boarding schools made contact with teachers and others who saw it as harmful and carried the message back to the village. The focus was on the eliminating the practice rather than saying women who were not circumcised were better or worse. The PAIGC recognised that centuries of tradition cannot be abandoned overnight and that changing even harmful customs can have negative social and psychological effects on the individual (Urdang 1979: 186-7).

Lack of women in leadership was viewed as a political problem. Women were still tied to traditional structures and the PAIGC was keen to avoid tokenism. There were few woman combatants in the standing army though they did serve in support roles and in the village militia. Traditionally most women were encouraged to marry early and have children as an economic necessity for the village. It was felt that to challenge the custom and fight the Portuguese at the same time when there was sufficient men made the task unnecessary (Urdang 1979: 227). It was because of the collective practice in the liberated zones that by 1972 PAIGC had control of half the country and two years later had driven out the Portuguese.

There are many interesting points that could be addressed. Given the general abandonment, even on the Left, of Leninism and the vanguard party here we have the PAIGC that was a self-appointed vanguard serving the people and seeking ways to institutionalise 'people's power'. Davidson (1994: 237-8) outlines how without addressing theoretical questions Cabral was thinking in institutional terms: how to organise the self-governing committees of the liberated zones, how to separate the state and the party, and how to develop political identities that were not party identities. Though all the committees saw themselves as part of the PAIGC they were not branches. They set in motion general elections to regional committees in the liberated zones, based on secret ballot and universal suffrage. The regional committees then elected a People's National Assembly (PNA) as legislative body that would declare Guinea's independence.

The vanguard made possible a space for its own democratisation that expanded as the liberated zones grew stronger. This demonstration of the relationship between the vanguard and the masses would increase. In turn this would produce a reaction from the native petty bourgeoisie, especially in the capital, that would resist the changes and the result of this would be the outcome of future struggles. It was this dialectical understanding of processes that Cabral had mastered. Davidson sums up that:

By the end of 1972, Cabral knew that the concept of an ever extending democratic control, as well as the means of realising it, were deeply rooted in the liberated zones. He had worked for that, ever since the congress of February 1964, with unbending purpose. Behind the scenes of military success it was perhaps his greatest achievement (1994: 238).

Cabral's achievement in the liberation of Guinea-Bissau and the building of a genuine popular culture was cut short at the hands of Portuguese agents. In many ways this was a tragic fulfilment of Fanon's warning about the petty bourgeoisie, who seized power in a coup sponsored by the Portuguese.

Cabral's work and the manner of his death reinforce Fanon's warnings about the limits of national consciousness. Even if there is no other weapon to use but nationalism and no one but the petty bourgeoisie to lead the struggle, the PAIGC showed what could be achieved. As a revolutionary nationalist Cabral doubtless foresaw that there would be more struggle after independence. These challenges could only be addressed in their turn and the result would be the outcome of struggle not of theory.

Summary

Cabral develops and expands Fanon's work on class, culture and national liberation. Like Fanon he deals with the issue of consciousness, the need to unshackle the minds of colonised from the ideas of the colonisers. In Cabral's case it is not just the coloniser's ideas but the negative, especially patriarchal, ideas in one's own culture that must be removed. There is a break with the West and with the Eurocentric ideas of the Western Left. Cabral deepens and clarifies Fanon's class analysis, though agreeing with it in many respects. He also shares Fanon's interest in the role of native intellectuals and the importance of culture and self-liberation. Cabral differs from Fanon most notably on the role of subordinate classes. Cabral analysed social groups in their relationship to colonial power: their attitude to the national struggle, their capacity to embrace nationalism and in the postcolonial situation their revolutionary capacity.

Fanon sees the peasants as ‘spontaneously revolutionary’, particularly in their willingness to use violent methods. In the cities it is the landless peasants in the form of the *lumpenproletariat* that having nothing to lose will resort to arms. Cabral disagrees, they are not ‘spontaneously revolutionary’. They need to be educated and trained. To do this requires the training and preparation of a cadre force who has developed a revolutionary consciousness and a program to develop the nation. Peasants are difficult to mobilise, but their majority status means their support is necessary. In liberated zones, people are educated in the struggle. Structures must be set up to enact the program so that people can experience the new set of social relations. This is particularly evident in the PAIGC’s work with women. The role of armed struggle is not seen as liberating per se but as a structural necessity imposed on a colonising power whose capacity for neo-imperialism was limited.

Marx contended that it was the wage labourer that had a ‘privileged’ position as a commodity in the process of production and thus was more likely to ‘see through’ the relations of exploitation. In the colonies though, this was not the case. The direct relations of exploitation are experienced by the petty bourgeoisie who staffed the colonial apparatus and were educated. As to the wage earners ‘there is a majority committed to struggle’ but they are difficult to mobilise. Next the *déclassé* (that is, Fanon’s *lumpenproletariat*) elements divided into one section who serve the Portuguese police and a second group from which the PAIGC drew many of its first cadres. Cabral found that itinerant traders were useful for spreading the word but only if paid. In urban areas Europeans opposed national liberation especially white workers, though some petty-bourgeois whites were sympathetic. As for Africans, the petty bourgeoisie can be divided into three groups: those officials and professionals ready to compromise with colonialism. Those committed to nationalism who have the task of leading the revolutionary struggle and the third group that vacillates between the first two.

In relation to culture Cabral sees the peasants as custodians of culture as does Fanon. Both men were aware of the importance of the struggle over culture. Fanon outlines three responses to colonialism as three stages in a process: first, assimilation, then a ‘retreat’ into tradition which was probably a necessary (but ultimately limited) step and finally a fighting stage. Cabral does not articulate his theory of culture in this way but he does locate cultural reactions more clearly as class responses. Cabral is clear that assimilation is carried out by the petty bourgeoisie who works closely with the colonialist. He notes too that the ‘retreat’ into tradition is only important if it leads to the petty bourgeoisie identifying with the struggle of the masses so like Fanon he sees this response as a stage to be transcended.

The next chapter moves through the African diaspora to look at radical black politics in the United States in the late 1960s.