Religion and Revolution

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In attempting to tackle this issue that is as complex as it has raised secular controversies, namely, the issue of the "Revolution and Religion" relationships, we do not intend either to give it a solution acceptable to all, or to put an end to the debates that a simple reference, or a simple rapprochement between the two concepts might provoke. We rather intend to translate what the struggle of the P.D.G. amidst the Guinean People for over 30 years has enabled us to learn as lessons in the process of our Revolution which remained consistent with the realities of our People, in order to understand them, analyze them and use them as bases of operations for a truly progressive transformation of our society.

We shall therefore attempt, first to "venture" into definitions, and then to enumerate some characteristic features of the two concepts.

To us, Revolution means the collective movement initiated by a group of men or by a whole people, and supported by their conscious determination to change an old degrading order into a new, progressive order in view of ensuring the safeguard and development of collective and individual interests, without any discrimination whatsoever. The People’s Revolution, to us, remains thus a collective consciousness in motion, and a collective movement guided by conscience and whose ultimate aim is the continued progress of man and the People.

The fact of religion emerged with and from human consciousness. It suggests solutions to anguish. It influences and even at times, motivates social behaviors. But today, Religion to us means any coherent system of creed which carries noble ideals and cardinal values conducive to collective progress, respect for human dignity and human virtue.

Revolution sets as an objective for the action of men, their happiness in this world of ours, while Religion projects men’s existence onto the next world and reserves for a future world the positive or negative sanction crowning their life in this world. The Revolution does not intend to deny this future world; it only wishes that the struggle against evil be not "deferred", "postponed", and this is actually what all the sincere believers and all the dispossessed, regardless of race, sex or nationality are pressing for.

 Revolution and Religion remain therefore characterized by their impersonality, their universality, and the ideology thatlocates them in the socio-human thinking, as well as the movement they impose on human conduct.

Revolution and Religion have common properties: they are means of educating the individual so that he may consciously acquire the conduct of a man that is free and responsible for his options and action. In other words, nobody becomes a revolutionary against his will, just as nobody could be the interpreter of a Religion against his will, or subjected to the exigencies of a Religion against his will. Revolution and Religion also have common postulates and they carry values, which they want the men to reflect, and more, of which they want men to, become the uncompromising and faithful advocates. To attain such an objective confers on these values a profound socio-historical significance. The one and the other set an ultimate objective to the human life of every individual, an objective on the basis of which a positive or negative sanction determines the value to be accorded to this individual existence.
A close examination indicates that Revolution and Religion both proclaim the pre-eminence of the society, the necessity for every individual to respect this pre-eminence in the assessment of contradictions between collective interest and individual interest, as well as the principles, rules and daily exigencies. The one and the other implicitly, if not openly, and profoundly consider society as the Supreme Reference from which the degree of usefulness of the individual is assessed and sanctioned as such.

The one and the other are expressed in a man through the faith which, as energy with a boundless strength, subtends and stimulates the manifestation of human life.

The one and the other underline the absolute necessity for every society to realize, defend and develop its independence, its sovereignty, its unity and its ethics, which must determine the behavior of individuals.

The one and other defend the common values, which are and remain universal aspirations for men and People: peace, freedom, justice, equality, progress, happiness, social harmony, truth and beauty.

Both consider certain goods as impersonal, well welded to the heritage of humanity, which every individual belonging to these goods must necessarily respect. These assets are both material and non-material: life, dignity, the unity, if not the cohesion of the family, of social groups, of the nation, of mankind; the soil, the subsoil, the fauna, the flora, the waters, air, light, etc.

Revolution and Religion proclaim, organize and conduct a permanent struggle, a universal struggle which, for the former (Revolution), is class struggle, the clash between antagonistic interests represented by classes that are opposed in the process of production, distribution and utilisation of the goods created by men, while for the latter (Religion), it is a struggle between good and evil, good embodying truth, justice and beauty, and evil embodying exploitation, alienation, foreign domination, lies, in brief, all that is contrary to good.

That the expression: class struggle and struggle between good and evil had not been formulated in the same terms, with the same concepts, does not change in any way their basic significance, the truths they involve and which men will have to defend in the search for collective and individual happiness.

When the Revolution raps capitalism, it is thereby identifying and materialising what Religion embodies under the abstract concept of social evil.

Revolution and Religion require, each from its faithful militants an attitude of struggle throughout their lives; a struggle against self, against selfishness, against defects and shortcomings, a struggle all around oneself for the triumph and the reign of social justice, historical and social truth, social solidarity and for the materialisation of the equality in duties and rights between individuals, within a free and harmonious society.

Indeed, the duties of the Revolution are, for all conscious militants of the Revolution, just like the religious duties, dictated to all men having faith in the same Religion, and this, regardless of race, colour, sex, or wealth. Revolution and Religion also act on the nature of thinking and on the action of the social being and dictate both an attitude of rigorous honesty, absolute faithfulness, modesty and social usefulness.

Both Revolution and Religion give prominence to labour: they present labour as a pressing duty, without the accomplishment of which, once the conditions of its accomplishment are available, man could not normally claim to belong to either. Sweat is indeed considered by both Revolution and Religion as the only objectively worthwhile criterion of deserving the sanction crowning the actions of every man. They strongly condemn human exploitation, arbitrary practices in social relations, racism, selfishness, laziness, ignorance, mystification, charlatanism, fetish, theft, alcoholism and moral depravity with the sole aim of safeguarding at the same time the physical health, the political,
intellectual and moral health of the People, thanks to a normalisation of relations of all kinds governing individuals within a whole community.

Thus, Revolution and Religion presents man, the individual only as a social being, an element that derived from the society, and who, while enjoying his personality, his freedom of thought and action, his faculties, is guided by a social consciousness, and who must live in perfect harmony in his relations with individuals and with the society, in the most absolute respect for the common values, the common interests, and the common future. Both, in their philosophy, assert the superiority of the human being over physical nature, over the animal and vegetable kingdom, in other words, over all that lives and which he considers an element of society’s progress.

From these definitions and general characteristics, Revolution and Religion constitute, in their principles, not two separate and much less, contradictory forces, but a single force acting on the individual in the diversity of objectives pre-occupying him; for the above-mentioned definitions and characteristics are indeed related to the foundation of the progress of man within the society, and of the society within the universe.

The Guinean Revolution is aware of the role it has to assume and which is an honorable role, to the extent that she has to translate the true legitimate aspirations of the Guinean People, of the Peoples of the world, and to the extent that she has to defend the interests of the Guinean People and to the other Peoples of the world, to enable them attain their objective of material and non-material happiness; her faithfulness to the People constantly leads her to observe an objective and courageous attitude to assert the People’s personality, the People’s interest and the People’s choices.

That is why, the Guinean Revolution, as an expression of scientific truth, adheres without reservations to historical and dialectical materialism, which is the social science the content of which has benefited from the contribution of all Peoples struggling for freedom, dignity and historical progress. This social science will continue to be enriched by the fruits of the People’s struggles and to constantly develop the impersonal values founding it in the reality of the struggle as well between the antagonistic classes, as between good and evil in the religious field.

As for philosophical materialism, the Guinean Revolution has not adopted it, and it is not bound to do so, for the philosophy of Islam to which the Guinean People have profoundly adhered asserts the existence of God; therefore, the People believe in all the prescriptions of the Holy Koran which the Guinean Revolution has the duty to translate through the successive phases of the evolution of the Guinean society into socio-human behaviours. Any Revolution that does not respect faith would violate democracy and human dignity.

1. Dialectical materialism invites man to have a global and unitary perception of the universe and all that lives therein, to understand the relations between all things; it holds that nothing is isolated, all things are interrelated. It explains the laws of reciprocal action and of universal connexion.

2. Materialist dialectics asserts that in the universe, everything changes as a result of universal change and incessant development, that all that is real is in motion, and that nothing in itself and for itself, has come to stay once and for all.

3. It explains the relation existing between the quantitative and qualitative changes enabling man to understand how the quality and properties of things change.

4. It asserts that in every organic unit, there is contradiction and that within every being, a thing and its opposite co-exist.
As for religious doctrine, it asserts first of all that the universe is not born out of nothingness on its own, that it is the work of an omniscient, omnipresent, invisible and informal God.

That God is lonely and absolute.

That the universe is complex, harmonious and perfectly governed by an infinity of movements characterising it. That everything is born and dies in the framework of that universe.

That man is the privileged creation of the Almighty who has endowed him with a mind and intellectual faculties enabling him to think, decide and realise, while controlling a portion of space and time covering his existence.

That without his mind, without conscience and will, man could not be superior to other beings possessing a mass that is heavier and larger than the one giving man his objective shape.

The soul, the mind and conscience which are not material, constitute the superior element, the dynamic function of the being.

The religious doctrine makes of the mind and the body the elements materialising human life, for a dead body does not act, just as there could be no mind without a body.

Dialectics applied to the features of this religious philosophy points out the duality, that is, the contradiction within everything, and it is in fact in order to indicate this reality of the universal and permanent contradiction that the Holy Koran presents the two orientations, the two paths followed by men, on account of the nature influencing their positive or negative conduct as regards the high values which constitute the basis of justice, truth and good, as against injustice, untruthfulness and evil.

The Guinean Revolution considers as a base of operations of its action that which brings the people together and unites them in the concrete struggle for their democratic progress, and not that which divides them and weakens them.

It condemns and combats all that which, objectively, at one stage of the development of society, hinders and jeopardises the process of socio-human qualification and the constant improvement of the mode of production and of the relations of production which exert a direct influence on the People’s conditions of life.

History is not made of intentions, just as theory does not regulate social life; it is action, the struggle against nature in view of controlling it, and against all practices of alienation, exploitation and suppression which constitute the woof of social life and regulate the course of the history of the human society.

That is why the Guinean Revolution strongly believes that the container is one thing, and the content, quite another thing, two realities that deserve to be dialectically analysed. Thus, the container and the content may be understood both as separate entities and in their interdependency.

An old suit-case may contain valuable items, whereas a new, beautiful suit-case may contain items with no social and human value!

Religion, as well as Revolution may proclaim the absolute equality of beings, justice in social and human freedom, and have unfaithful interpreters who may flout the exigencies they are advocating through their behaviours. That is why, we must not judge the value of a Religion through the behaviour of those who are claiming it theoretically, while refusing to be its true containers. This shows the independence of the content from the container, and vice-versa. On the contrary, a Religion that would impose itself on man, against his will, by way of aggression, may be faced with resistance from the People, however noble the values it reveals. These values constitute the content, and Religion constitutes the ideological container. In the same way, whatever the
soundness of the objectives contained in the programme of a Revolution, that Revolution would fail if the People are not involved in the conception, discussion and materialisation of these objectives and in the control of actions.

This points to the link between the container and the content.

The basic exigency which the revolutionary and the believers must consider foremost in the appreciation of men's the obligation for them to participate effectively and efficiently in the People’s struggle for their progress, their freedom, their sovereignty, their dignity and the defence of the legitimate interests of every man without any other consideration that the legitimacy of property. No People are in favour of human exploitation, for the supremacy of one individual over others; no People acknowledge the right for one individual or a group of individuals to dispose of the life and property of others. The genuine exigencies of a Revolution or a Religion consist of the protection and development in harmony and justice of the human society whose character of solidarity must at all times be reinforced and asserted. The qualification of revolutionary and believer should not divide men, for good and evil are only defined by their nature, and the social classes, by their essence, facing the aspirations of the society. The best judgement we can make of man must be founded on his objective behaviour vis-à-vis the high values characterizing social and human existence.

In conclusion, social truth is revolutionary and this truth reflects in courage, the personality, usefulness and efficiency in the exclusive service of the People.

The Revolutionary People of Guinea have no complex towards anybody, for they consider themselves not only responsible for their existence and their destiny, but also sharing the same responsibilities with other Peoples of the world for the existence and the future of mankind.

As for us, there could be no inconsistency in the fact that men, determined to establish on their soil the bases and the material and non-material means of their progress, constitute a common front, such as the People’s Democratic Revolution.

The Muslim and the Christian both have room inside the Guinean Revolution, and they will be judged by that Revolution only on the basis of their faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the options of the People and the objectives democratically assigned by the revolutionary movement.

On the international scale, the Guinean Revolution doesn't intend to discredit any People, or any section of the People, but exclusively the negative values which she is fighting resolutely, permanently. These negatives values are: imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, human exploitation, racism, apartheid, superstition and all forms of licentiousness.

We are asserting once more that the container is one thing, and the content quite another. Efficiency in man’s struggle and the People’s struggle requires a perfect harmony between the container and the content, which is the expression of the unity of theory and practice, of this unity of philosophy and the behaviour it advocates, which, in turn is in the final analysis, the expression of dignity which requires man to do only what he says and say only what he is doing or will be doing.

We are appealing to all the Parties of world Revolution and to all conscious men of all nations to seal the unity of progressive forces, the unity of Peoples in the struggle which aims at completely and definitely putting an end to all that alienates the freedom, dignity and legitimate interests of the People and of man.

History is not a sprint, but rather, a long distance race, and for any race, we need a vehicle, that is, a means of transport from point "A" to point "B" or from point "A" to infinity.

But whatever the difference between the vehicles used, what is required of men is that the vehicle they are using should move in the same direction, towards the same objective: the sun of justice, dignity, unity and fraternity in peace.
In Africa, Islam has been a spiritual tool and a social force of resistance against imperialist domination. That is indeed why the colonisers have used all their means with the view to destroying it, but to no avail. It is also known that in Europe and America, it is the proletarians, those elements exploited by capitalism and feudal bourgeoisie who opposed all kinds of injustices under the banner of Christianity. No truly revolutionary conception could consider the aspirations to happiness, the belief in a true justice, incarnated by the masses of the People fighting their exploiters, as a reactionary trend to be destroyed.

That the Revolution exposes and destroys the basis of exploitation, oppression and injustice, nothing could be more progressive! That it denounces the war-mongers, the practices of mystification inherent in men of all races, all religions or those without any religion, nothing could be more righteous!

Beyond philosophical conceptions ideologies and men’s intentions, society must assess the nature of their behavior within it, their objective attitudes facing its present and future interests.

There are fake believers as well as fake revolutionaries.

Revolution and Religion are not ends in themselves, but means which men use for social objectives.

In the last analysis, it is the socio-historic significance of men’s concrete actions which will serve as a sound criterion for their classification into useful men and harmful men in relation to the society.