

The Relevance of Marxism-Leninism

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Question: Besides nationalism, is your struggle founded on any ideological basis? To what extent has the ideology of Marxism and Leninism been relevant to the prosecution of the war in Guine-Bissau? What practical peculiarities, if any, have necessitated the modification of Marxism-Leninism?

Cabral: We believe that a struggle like ours is impossible without ideology. But what kind of ideology? I will perhaps disappoint many people here when I say that we do not think ideology is a religion. A religion tells one, for example, that Christ was born in Nazareth and performed this miracle and

that and so on and so on, and one believes it or one doesn't believe it, and one practises the religion or one doesn't. Moving from the realities of one's own country towards the creation of an ideology for one's struggle doesn't imply that one has pretensions to be a Marx or a Lenin or any other great ideologist, but is simply a necessary part of the struggle. I confess that we didn't know these great theorists terribly well when we began. We didn't know them half as well as we do now! We needed to know them, as I've said, in order to judge in what measure we could borrow from their experience to help our situation — but not necessarily to apply the ideology blindly just because it's a very good ideology. That is where we stand on this.

But ideology is important in Guinea. As I've said, never again do we want our people to be exploited. Our desire to develop our country with social justice and power in the hands of the people is our ideological basis. Never again do we want to see a group or a class of people exploiting or dominating the work of our people. That's our basis. If you want to call it Marxism, you may call it Marxism. That's your responsibility. A journalist once asked me: 'Mr. Cabral, are you a Marxist?' Is Marxism a religion? I am a freedom fighter in my country. You must judge from what I do in practice. If you decide that it's Marxism, tell everyone that it is Marxism. If you decide it's not Marxism, tell them it's not Marxism. But the labels are your affair; we don't like those kind of labels. People here are very preoccupied with the questions: are you Marxist or not Marxist? Are you Marxist-Leninist? Just ask me, please, whether we are doing well in the field. Are we really liberating our people, the human beings in our country from all forms of oppression? Ask me simply this, and draw your own conclusions.

We cannot, from our experience, claim that Marxism-Leninism must be modified — that would be presumptuous. What we must do is to modify, to radically transform, the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of our people. This doesn't mean that we have no respect for all that Marxism and Leninism have contributed to the transformation of struggles throughout the world and over the years. But we are absolutely sure that we have to create and develop in our particular situation the solution for our country. We believe that the laws governing the evolution of all human societies are the same. Our society is developing in the same way as other societies in the world, according to the historical process; but we must understand clearly what stage our society has reached. Marx, when he created Marxism, was not a member of a tribal society; I think there's no necessity for us to be more Marxist than Marx or more Leninist than Lenin in the application of their theories.