

AN ESSAY ON PATRIOTISM LOYALTY DEVOTION AND DISCIPLINE

-Edwin Mabitse

It is my sincere belief that the discussion which I intend to initiate will serve us good when approached in the proper constructive spirit. We often speak of such qualities as discipline, devotion, loyalty and patriotism. I deliberately choose these four because personal experience has led me to conclude that amongst the fundamental qualities of a freedom struggler, they are the most profound and yet in most instances they suffer the misfortune of imprecise definition. Not so much because we are unable to conceive them but rather because of their close relationship. This is perhaps the reason behind the common confusion of either one or all of them with an individual's temperament.

PATRIOTISM

What then is discipline, devotion, loyalty and patriotism, how are they connected and how do they mould a revolutionary character? In discussing them I select to start with patriotism. In simple terms patriotism means love for one's country, the motherland if you choose. But love for one's motherland is not identical with blind love that does not discriminate between the good and the bad existing in the country, that does not reject fanatical identification with even those aspects that do not conform to the well-being of the people - let alone promote the interests of the working people who are indeed the creators of material wealth, setting the stage for cultural prosperity and other social heritage.

Therefore, patriotism is an honest quality of a selfless member of a community. It is the love for one's own people, relatives and friends, love for the struggling poor, identification with the efforts for the promotion of material and spiritual well-being of everybody, and recognition of the equality of all fellow countrymen. This extends to pride in the social and cultural traditions of the people. Above all patriotism encompasses realisation of the need for collective existence, for unity.

LOYALTY

It dawns therefore that a person imbued with such characteristics qualifying his attitude towards the life of his people will be true to the noble cause of fashioning the best social life for his country. He will faithfully align himself with those forces in the country working towards the realisation of this objective. He will enlist with the most patriotic of organisations to which he will consistently be true. In short he will be loyal to the progressive movement. This sums up the relationship between patriotism and loyalty.

DEVOTION

It is only when one is loyal (as explained above) that one becomes capable of having a clear and zealous attachment to the noble principles of his organisation. The ability to serve his organisation, his comrades and people with loving steadfastness is then cultivated and as it flourishes, it blossoms the quality of devotion. Of all the qualities under discussion the relationship between loyalty and devotion is perhaps the most intricate. One cannot be devoted to the popular cause whilst at the same time being disloyal to the organisation that is the custodian of the principles of the people's struggle; this would be a contradiction that will further suggest complete absence of patriotism in this example.

DISCIPLINE

The above qualities can be developed and sustained only under conditions of disciplined organisation, both of the individual and the collective. By disciplined organisation here I am referring to a collective of disciplined persons characterised by mutual respect, comradeship and understanding. An organisation whose structures mirror this spirit of mutuality and adherence to morally sound principles of conduct. It is evident enough that such perfection is inconceivable without the discipline of individual members. By discipline of individuals I am far from flirting with the discipline of the stick, mechanical discipline characteristic of bourgeois organisation in state, government, army and other institutions. Such 'discipline' is essentially not discipline since it necessarily manifests itself in deceptive conduct behind which hovers fear; fear of authority, and fear of failure since this would warrant humiliation and punishment. Here comradeship is unknown and mutual respect is a luxury that cannot be afforded. Personal consideration reigns supreme and all life goes under

the slogan of "everybody for himself and god for us all". All these balance on a platform of very low morality. This kind of 'discipline' is counterrevolutionary and we reject it.

The discipline I speak of is that which is based on understanding and acceptance of the noble objectives of one's movement (or country). In this connection, I am referring to the politics which serve as basis for commitment, the understanding of the need to obey comradesly authority, to be dutiful and to carry out the tasks of the movement energetically and unreservedly, to be respectful towards one's comrades and leadership, to strive for the protection of the movement from both internal and external enemies. Discipline is indeed a noble quality which is fraternal to honour. The key element of revolutionary discipline is that it is conscious. This guarantees the high morals of all revolutionaries.

I hope that this humble contribution will manage to spark off a discussion of these questions in our army so as to assist us in our noble task of waging this revolution to its logical conclusion. In conclusion, I can do no better than reiterate the symbolic slogan of our journal, "DISCIPLINE IS THE MOTHER OF VICTORY"!

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Africa is carried out. The African National Congress does not want bloodshed".

"The Star" has also acknowledged our maturity: "for the apparent policy of generally restricting attacks to 'strategic' rather than civilian targets enables the ANC to retain a broad international acceptability".

When we look at the Great October Socialist Revolution which we marked earlier this month, we note that the importance of Lenin is not a thing of the past because he is dead. We are looking to the future. The Revolution has not failed or dropped like the civilisation of the Roman Empire. It has not made a 'shameful conquest of itself' like the British Empire. The October Revolution is still developing with younger nations like Ethiopia and the People's Republic of Angola. It is real.

Look at what is happening in our country, and you see the decaying civilisation of capitalism, like civilisations of its past when they reach a certain stage. We might just as well state that imperialism is moribund, but very dangerous - if we look around the present conference tables. The degeneration is normally followed by a collapse of the entire system.

The future is the future which Lenin foresaw and we have every right to smile - all of us. We do not fear the future.