

# Revisiting *The Green Book*

## From A Paulo Freire Perspective

Michael N. Quiros <sup>\*</sup>

### Abstract

The first part of this paper explores the core principle and mechanism of the Green Book's ideal version of democracy which is the direct rule and participation of the people without representation. It then proceeds to a pathology of the capitalist and communist systems as structures of domination before it moves on to a discussion of the role of the revolution in realizing the regime of the masses. This section closes with a discussion of the Green Book's take on the debate about and the self-contradictory aspects of its solution to the problem of the political instrument of governing in democratic polities.

In the second part, the Green Book is made to converse with Freire to show how their ideas converge and build on one another. The result is a rich dialectical synthesis concerning the conditions for people power, the revolution, and the revolutionary leadership to succeed. They provide both an alternate vision of and a framework to transform society. This paper ends with a brief analysis of the reason behind the downfall of the author of the Green Book in retrospect from the point of view of Freire.

**Key words:** Green Book, Freire, democracy, revolution, praxis, dialogue

### I. Introduction

As we witness a historic new wave of protest movements around the globe today in search for political change, we are made to reflect once again on the meaning of power, oppression, democracy, and revolution. This is especially true in the Middle East where the unleashing of the power of the people has not always been as peaceful and bloodless as their precedents in Asia and in Europe and whose future outcome remains unclear. What is power and how does it lead to oppression or the empowerment of the people? When does democracy become oppressive? What makes a revolution possible – that special moment when the people collectively assert and reclaim the power that is rightfully theirs – and what happens in its aftermath? Where do they go from there and how? These are just some of the questions which come into mind in the light of recent world events.

Fortunately, for the Arab world, they do not have to look far in their search for answers. If only they would look back into their own political history and tradition, they would find some answers, ironically enough, in the *Green Book*.<sup>1</sup> In it could be found a wellspring of ideas which Arab nations would do well to rediscover with an open mind as they experiment with democratic governance the Islamic way hereon. The Green Book's political theory fits the bill since it was conceived by an Arab for the Arabs, arising from the Muslim way of life, and borne of Arab society, history, and culture.

Another reason for the choice of the Green Book as the main subject of this paper, regardless of the actual turn out of events in history, is that surely the distinction can be made between the theory and its proponent. The former is never invalidated by the actions of the latter and that good ideas do outlive their masters. In other words, the merit of any theory depends not on whether its originator lived up to or carried out its tenets, but

---

<sup>\*</sup> Komazawa University  
mquiros@komazawa-u.ac.jp

rather on its internal consistency and power to explain social phenomena. It is therefore the task of impartial scholarship, of which this paper is one attempt, to discern the value of any idea in terms of what it contributes to the advancement of knowledge even if it comes from the worst of men. After all, not all dictators were bad from the start. In fact, some of them started out on reformist platforms with the view of mobilizing and changing society. It behooves then to separate the good from the bad and to learn from whatever one has to say on the failings of modern-day political systems, the way to build a truly participatory democratic society, and the reasons behind their political demise. Such an approach is made timely and feasible considering the long time past since the Green Book's publication which allows us to view it with objective distance from a comparative standpoint and see how it is also a product of its times. Lastly, should it turn out that the political theory of the Green Book is in itself ideological and self-contradictory, there is no surer way to find out than through a close examination of its theoretical assumptions in juxtaposition with another analytical framework such as Freire's in order to bring out its fundamental nature, including its relative strengths and weaknesses.

With regard to Paulo Freire, he is a contemporary social philosopher who is well known for his pioneering analysis on the nature of oppression and the dynamics of social change. In his famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,<sup>2</sup> he describes in detail not only the relation between the oppressor and the oppressed, but also the possibilities of overturning any unjust oppressive structure. He speaks from a humanistic perspective inasmuch as he is concerned with the humanization of the individual as with the liberation of society. For this reason, Freire's framework of social analysis and action not only bridges the gap between theory and practice, but likewise can be used to engage other philosophical systems both as touchstone for and counterpoint to the Green Book.

## II. Themes in the Green Book

### De-Colonization and Islamic Tradition

The Green Book's political philosophy is the product not only of the colonial past of many Arab nations in which they experienced a great deal of suffering, oppression, intimidation, and humiliation at the hands of foreign masters; but also of "the colonial struggle of all peoples for freedom" (Ramirez 1989). As such, it springs "from the heart of the tormented, the oppressed, the despised, and the grief stricken . . . who were chained by exploitation, slavery, and the need which seeks their emancipation" (Green Book 1975 / Ibid.). In response, the Green Book espouses the return to the principle of natural communal living in accordance with the teachings of Islam and the natural Islamic Bedouin tradition<sup>3</sup> which it says has been completely forgotten or rejected as a result of the suppression by foreign colonizers and the new standards of living that they imposed. Its vision of society is founded on Muslim values where everyone is free, equal, and united "in a new society that will have no aggrieved, no oppressed, no destitute, no master, no slave, but only free brothers" (Ramirez 1989).

In this context, the belief in "Freedom, Arabic Unity, Socialism, and Islamic Spiritual Values" (Ibid.) is the pillar of the new revolutionary society. Both tradition and religion constitute as the organizing principles of society since they do not change easily over time and become hostage to narrow interests which jeopardize social freedom.

### Representation

For the Green Book, the parliament is the modern dictatorship. The very notion, let alone the act of rep-

resentation itself, is at once a denial of the direct and full participation of the people which is the essence of real popular democracy. Representation is only an obstacle to the people's unhampered use of their power in the realm of politics, economics, and society. Its very existence can only mean the impotence or the absence of a people who remain as mere spectators without the ability to govern themselves.

The repressive character of representation can be more readily seen if one looks into the workings of parliament. The body called the "Assembly of the People's Representatives" is in fact comprised of parties whose members belong to one particular class in society – that of the ruling party and upper class whose members share the same view and purpose: to acquire more power to rule the people. It goes without saying that the parliament whose members come from a certain party and class is a parliament of that party and class. That being the case, what this elite group does not have is the right to stand for the people's will when it comprises just a small portion of the general populace. There is no guarantee that its interests are indeed the same as the national interest, and vice-versa. In the same measure that the whole is always bigger than any of its parts and the part can never be equal to the whole, so do the people alone can best speak for themselves and not through a few representatives acting on their behalf. There must never be any kind of representation that takes the place of the people in decision-making in a people-centered democracy.

The ensuing conflict between parties and classes for power in order to attain their respective ends is such that they are ready to mobilize all resources at their command and every means necessary in every possible way to ensure their success at all costs. As always, they do it at the expense of the welfare of society at large with the people ending up as the loser. As the Green Book (1975) says:

*The parties in their struggle resort, . . . to denouncing and stultifying the actions of each other. This is a battle which is inevitably waged at the expense of the higher and vital interests of society. . . . Consequently, the interests and programmes of society become victims of the parties' struggle for power. Such struggle is, therefore, politically, socially, and economically destructive to society, . . . it is a defeat for the people, a defeat for democracy.*

The outcome of this system is always merely the triumph of one instrument of governing over others and the defeat of the masses as well as of real democracy. The struggle for power will never end until there are individuals or groups who would like to usurp the political, economic, and military instruments of society for their own purposes and unless all power rests on the hands of the people. Representative democracy is false and pathological. Because of the clashes among the ruling parties and classes in parliament, it becomes a form of social pathology – an exploitative social structure that employs the triple chord of power-wealth-arms in order to acquire more of the same in an endless cycle – while the people are forever marginalized and the rule of reason, freedom, and justice aborted.

### **Capitalism and Marxism**

Viewed from this perspective, it is likewise not difficult to discern the pattern of domination behind the two other political-economic systems of capitalism and Marxism. The two are actually no different from each other in their aim, form, substance, and method. The common objective of both is to govern the people through the division of society into classes: the master and the slave, the leader and the ruled, the government and the citizens, the state and the masses, the majority and the minority wherein the former tries to dominate the latter by controlling its needs. This it does either by manipulating the law or using armed force to protect the interests of the capitalists and the Communist Party alike.

Ultimately, capitalism and Marxism are still ineffectual and dictatorial. The Politburo merely replaces the bourgeoisie and assumes for itself the latter's interests and activities. In so doing, the Party also inherits the

same contradictions that characterize the class that it supersedes – contradictions which, if not soon, will eventually appear. Marxism has not really succeeded in dismantling capitalism. The only thing that it has been able to do is to pit the proletariat against the bourgeoisie such that with the latter's downfall, the former can seize the reigns of power and remain there until the final (and elusive) stage of communism is consummated. It is also questionable how the Party can represent the proletariat, for in the end, it may be just another form of one-party dictatorship in the making. Both systems short-circuit the way to democracy through the media of power and money which lead to violence. According to the *Commentary on the Green Book* (World Center 1984):

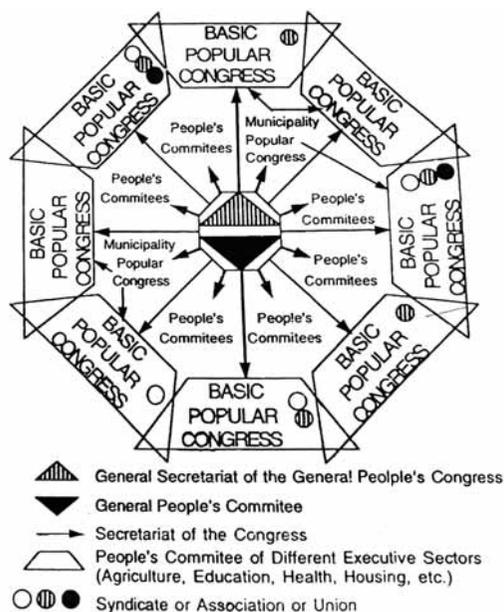
*The crisis that appears in the dialectical relation between capitalism and Marxism cannot be denied. Capitalism has failed to look for solutions to the problems of mankind and its deadly disease. Instead, it has perpetuated the covert existence of a rotten exploitative structure. On the other hand, Marxism, which came as a reaction to the capitalist system, has failed to come up with anything new other than an impotent system which stifled popular democracy in order to establish a perennial dictatorship of the Communist Party.*

It is therefore the aim of the *Green Book* to give “final and simple scientific solutions” (Ibid.) even to the most intricate political, economic, and social problems of mankind. The book is the product of a careful study of the failures of other experiments in democracy and proposes a third way that does away with the shortcomings of capitalism and communism. It does not possess any unusual solution but merely contains what the people need to govern themselves well and whose sole challenge is to adopt it.

## **Democracy**

In the *Green Book*, genuine democracy is no other than the direct authority and participation of the people and not on power exercised under their name. There is no place for traditional leaders and representatives of the people. Democracy is a systematic and dynamic structure with only one theory and method in the form of popular grassroot organizations at its base in lieu of class and party representatives. Unlike the traditional top-down model whereby the government is at the top or center and has the monopoly of all power, it looks at people as the source and locus of all authority: the people who are not the by-product but rather the cause and vehicle of its expression. This feature is what spells the difference between the *Green Book's* and other failed attempts at direct popular democracy: At all times, places, and circumstances, the authority and sovereignty of the people remains indivisible and irreplaceable.

Under this system, the whole citizenry is divided into Basic Popular Congresses (BPC) in each locality. Then the people of each BPC choose from among themselves a rapporteur who in turn collectively comprises a body called the Congress of Secretaries (CS) consisting of rapporteurs from all BPCs in a given locality. In addition, the people select Peoples Committees (PC) that take the place and work of government at the local level and are responsible to them always in all aspects of the implementation of their will. The people are also encouraged to form Professional Organizations, Unions, and Workers Associations (POUWA) within each BPC. Finally, all these – the CS's, PC's, and POUWA's – meet together in a national General Peoples Congress (GPC) where they discuss the solutions to the various issues confronting them. Whatever they ratify at this level is referred back to the BPC's for further deliberation whose outcome is then carried out by the citizens committees. In illustrated form, the *Green Book's* model looks like this:



Source: Mansour O. El-Kikhia, *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1997), 49.

By means of this model, the primary logistical problem of attaining direct popular democracy – i.e., the impossibility of convening all the people together at one place and time and still have a meaningful discussion and outcome – is purportedly overcome:

*The “Peoples Assembly” . . . will become dozens of small assemblies according to the number of people. The whole population need not gather all together in one assembly. They will meet in different local congresses in order to discuss the same issues and arrive at decisions at the same time. This is the start of a practical way towards real direct popular democracy (World Center 1984).*

In this manner too, the problem with respect to the instrument of governing which results from the struggle for power disappears. Under this paradigm, the people reign supreme: They are the administrators and supervisors of themselves and unto their hands lie all the power, wealth, and arms of society. It is also said to be the beginning and foundation of “the regime of the masses” or the ideal state which has been the dream of philosophers since ancient Greece (Ramirez 1989). Such a state, when finally realized, is only the fruition and culmination of the struggle of the masses for democracy.

### **The Regime of the Masses**

In this regime, the people are the masters of themselves. They possess all the power, wealth, and arms of the nation as well as the ability to plan, carry out, and supervise the implementation of whatever they decide to do with these resources. What is more, according to “the Green Book, if ever the people may so desire to replace the regime with a new one or to return to the old modality of living, they can do so freely anytime. The only thing which they can no longer do is to rebel further against the system. This is because if the people are already in command, who else should they go against (but only themselves which is a self-contradictory and self-debilitating act)? What more can they ask for? As one scholar puts it, “the Green Book has provided us with a new system which begins with the people at the grassroots level, operates with the people as the

participant-citizens and attains fulfillment with the people working not only for themselves but also for the whole society” (Ibid.).

Once the cornerstones of popular democracy are set in place, and the people are now the ones who govern, the competition for power by parties and classes and its ensuing violence disappear. For under genuine democracy,

*. . . there is no excuse for one class to crush other classes for its own benefit, no excuse for one party to crush other parties for its own interests, . . . To allow such actions means abandoning the logic of democracy and resorting to the logic of force. Such an action is dictatorial, because it is not in the interest of the whole society, . . . but in the interest of a certain class (Green Book 1975).*

There is no more state or government which has the monopoly of power to suppress the people. Who else will they try to restrain when the people themselves are sovereign? Likewise, initiatives for change need not employ violence any longer as they can be deliberated upon in the BPC’s. Everyone possesses power as an end in itself for the purpose of allowing the rule of reason to prevail.

## **Revolution**

The revolution is a process of radical change in every aspect of life be it political, economic, or social. It encompasses the people’s concept of themselves, their capabilities, and the presuppositions shaping their lives. It begins with their awakening to the evil of the structures and relations that not only inhibit their full-self-realization but also leave them with no other way to achieve change. The revolution is made possible only by dismantling the old order and building from its ashes a new healthy revolutionary society. This type of revolution, if carried out well according to its real essence, can never be a step backward, but rather always a leap forward to something better.

In this regard, the consciousness of the people in the outcome of the revolution is crucial. Its success and their emancipation proportionally depend on their revolutionary awareness – whether they choose to remain as passive spectators or to actively engage in the launching of the revolution. As the *Commentary on the Green Book* (World Center 1984) says:

*The most important aspect in the liberation of workers is the rise in their consciousness. They should be able to comprehend the bitter truth about the unjust and reactionary situation which is being imposed on them by the forces of reaction . . . in order to crush and to subjugate them.*

The need to be vigilant does not end with the triumph of the revolution, but rather and more importantly, in its aftermath – after seizing power and during the course of effecting its ideals. This is because the enemies of the masses are always ready to sabotage their accomplishments and to take every opportunity to enchain them once again. That is why, in a revolution, it is imperative that the people assume for themselves the responsibility of implementing, continuing, and defending the cause of the revolution. Otherwise:

*There is no doubt that the people will fall back into the snares of capitalism and of exploitative reactionary forces if they lose their revolutionary thinking. They will regret their failure to have overcome in a historic battle all their enemies, a battle which should have resulted in their being master of their own needs and free from exploitation and submission, free for all times (Ibid.).*

On this account, they have to be extra-careful and diligent in governing so that they will be able to surpass the criticism and calumny of their foes. Furthermore, to bring about an effective victorious revolution, a mere revolutionary way of thinking will not suffice. If every revolution requires a theory of action to be free,<sup>4</sup> without which it is impossible to move forward, it also necessitates careful planning and implementation due to the complexity of the process of developing the awareness necessary for the transformation of society. For this reason, says the Green Book, there must be an instrument of the revolution that will serve as the political and practical framework to launch it. It is the duty of this body to analyze with the people and to conscience-ticize them about how depraved the structure of a reactionary society is, thereby making them realize the urgent need to change it. Their task is to unite and to support the masses in their struggle without usurping from them their historic role and deed. They are there to assist and not to rule. It would be the greatest mistake of the revolutionary committee “to brush the masses aside and to try to act for them” (Ibid.) and lose solidarity with the people as a result of their disguised will to power or a feeling of pity for them. For when this happens, what is considered a revolution is nothing but a mere coup d’etat, a political collusion in which just another dictatorship is in power. There is no real change and the revolution fails.

In the end, it is really up to the people to be on the constant lookout for such pitfalls through unceasing reflection and deliberation. It is the only way for them to be always receptive to the dictates of reason, long eclipsed by ideological distortions, as counterforce against all types of manipulation while being able to correct themselves accordingly. When it comes to governing themselves, the only one whom they can really rely on in the end is themselves, not their leaders and representatives. As the Green Book states, true popular democracy is not and no longer the “supervision of the government by the people” but rather the “*supervision of the people by the people*” (Green Book 1975, italics added). There are no more, intermediaries for there is no need for them. All political authority and activity emanates from and is done by the people themselves.

### **The Green Book: A Critique**

A critical analysis of contemporary democratic society, the Green Book’s political theory uncovers the narrow interests behind systems which pretend to be genuine democracies but in reality are oppressive structures of violence. That is, by returning to the basics of what democracy is, it is able to expose some of its ideological distortions by showing how they obvert, negate, and deviate from an original reference point of what real direct and popular democracy should be. In so doing, it divests people of their illusions about the political systems which they take-for-granted and consider progressive. It is one useful heuristic device that opens their eyes to the underpinnings and workings of liberal representative democracy while giving their all-out faith in it a fair shake.

The Green Book also goes beyond the level of mere criticism by offering us an alternative ideal of democracy: An ideal which at the same time is the source of, the way to, and the goal of rational deliberation and social change. Its strength lies in specifying the actors and dynamics of oppression in the Western political context as well as in conceptualizing the institutional framework with which to carry out the revolution. Compared to traditional versions of democracy wherein the relation between the people and their representatives is easily falsified and forgotten, it makes for a viable means that brings out, preserves, and materializes the will of the people. Thus by serving both as an ideal and method that can be used in analyzing the status quo, the Green Book points the way to the transformation of politics and the liberation of society as a whole.

Another contribution of the Green Book lies in its vision to achieve a society where everybody is rational, free, equal, and united. There is neither class nor hierarchy which divides, alienates, and marginalizes, but only the people at the center in solidarity. Through the communal ownership of power, wealth, and arms of the nation, the abuses that result from the unequal distribution and the monopolization of the resources of society are minimized. All power is solely of, by, for, and with the people. It presupposes a concept of power

which does not necessarily imply the use of violence in order to make the citizens obey. Instead, to be powerful is precisely *to avoid violence by instituting structures of freedom* (people's organizations in place of power-broking representatives) where reason and dialogue can prevail. In this way, power becomes an end in itself that cannot be instrumentalized further by anybody to strengthen oneself at the expense of others.

On the other hand, the Green Book has yet to overcome representation and the inherent unique differences of people even in the regime of the masses. It remains to be seen whether the rapporteurs or "messengers of the people" will in due course turn out to be their new representatives, forming a new privileged class among themselves. It also needs to be worked out how such a direct style of democratic governance can work in countries with huge populations and complex societies given the time and coordination it will take before decisions are made and implemented in such a system. In addition, there is the question of how long or until when the interest of the people can be sustained to participate in the system on a permanent basis without giving up their role or being usurped by others. Finally, regarding the role of the revolutionary committee, there is no doubt that it has the tendency to become ideological-dictatorial with no one else to be accountable to other than themselves and for the regime of the masses to degenerate into a state that is the same as or worse than before. This fact only goes to show that even well-articulated theories and progressive leaders-thinkers are subject to decay and distortion over time and that there is no one perfect scientific solution to all of the problems of modern society.

### III. The Green Book and Paulo Freire in Dialogue

There are many striking parallels and contrasts between the Green Book and Freire. Their viewpoints converge in many related aspects inasmuch as they richly highlight the unique perspective of each other in areas where their thoughts diverge. In the final analysis, they share the common concern for the emancipation and humanization of the oppressed in society. Both of them serve as insightful critique of pathological structures of oppression as the first step towards social transformation.

That said, Freire would most likely agree in principle with the Green Book on several fronts.

First, with respect to the Green Book's conception of power, Freire would have no qualms about the direct and popular rule by the people. He would not mind doing away with party-based and class-controlled mode of representation insofar as it would allow people to participate in the decision-making process of governing themselves. The Green Book has got it right in interpreting that genuine democracy is not so much the supervision of the government by the people as the supervision of the people by, for, with the people. Freire cannot over-emphasize the crucial role of the people in any undertaking for social change. Doing away with parliament or the Communist Party can only be justified as long as it merely serves to divide and rule, manipulate, and culturally invade the people – backed by brute force if need be – into beings for others, as mere objects of possession by the ruling party-class. Popular participation is the essential condition that enables the direct rule and authority of the people as well as the basic safeguard that the overall interest of society is not undermined by the struggle for nor by the monopoly of power that besets Western parliaments and the last Communist dictatorships in the world today.

Moreover, according to Freire, as beings of praxis, participate the people must because it is only they, the marginalized and the oppressed, who have the historic task and capacity to liberate themselves together with their oppressors. Blinded and imprisoned by their own oppression, the latter cannot do it on their own. Although both groups bear the mark of oppression and are manifestations of dehumanization, it is only the former who can restore the humanity of them both – not by mere switching of roles or by replacing one oppressive structure with another, but through the courageous act of love by the oppressed witnessing to the lovelessness and consuming the violence of their oppressors. One frees or saves himself only with others and

to the extent one is able to do so, he is reborn into a new humanity, new life, new self that is neither oppressed nor oppressor in identity any longer, but a new transfigured being.

But then again, the Green Book would add that the people's participation is not enough. On top of it, there is the need to put up structures of freedom to institutionalize the people's practice of liberty on solid footing. They are in the form of people's congresses and committees which supersede the violence engendered by the conflict of political parties for domination. These popular grassroots organizations are the drivers of real democracy; they provide the instruments for the direct expression and communal ownership of power by the people. They open up the space for reason in lieu of force, dialogue and not violence, to be the rule of the game in the regime governed by the masses.

Second, both sources have very complementary views on the revolution. For the Green Book, the revolution is the process of radical change that encompasses all aspects of political, economic, and social life. It involves the complete elimination of the old society to build a new one. The same is true for Freire. He believes that the revolution needs the total reconstruction of society, a deliberate and systematic action to transform the existing social structure with the participation of the people. But for Freire, it is at the same time a cultural action as no social change occurs in the abstract or in tabula rasa. It requires the mediation of the human culture of liberation in replacing the alienating human culture of oppression as much as in shaping it anew.

For the two of them, the first precondition of the revolution is the conscience-tization of the people. It entails, first of all, the critical analysis of reality or the power to look critically at one's personal-social condition and discern the dehumanizing contradictions that distort his/her human vocation to be a free subject. Such an awakening of the consciousness involves a three-fold process of: First, the awareness by the people of the "bitter truth" about their oppressed/oppressive situation as individuals and then as a class; second, the recognition of their previously distorted perception as to the real causes of their oppression in their totality; third, their realization of being the anti-thesis of their oppressor. Their ultimate liberation and humanization is directly tied up with their new knowledge of self that comes with a different way of looking at the world. Then a new personal-cultural attitude towards oppression, as only a temporary-limiting but not fated situation which can be overcome, is born. Real consciousness is replaced by potential consciousness such that the abstract untested feasibility or yet-unperceived viability of transformative action is tested in the concrete. In this way, not only is the oppressive nature of reality unveiled, the permanent hold of oppression negated, but also dehumanization becomes a cause for hope: Hope that moves one to struggle against the obstacles for human liberation as active subjects; hope which has the two necessary daughters of indignation for the way things are and of courage to change the status quo in the midst of oppression;<sup>5</sup> and hope that does not lead to cynicism or despair, but rather that enables one to face, challenge, and alter oppressive reality.

According to the Green Book and Freire, the second important feature of the revolution is that it is firmly grounded in praxis. It is based on the notion of the creative and transforming power of human labor which is the means toward the humanization – and not the commodification or exploitation – of the individual. As such, there is the direct link between the transformation of the world by human activity and the liberation and full realization of the human person as free subject. As Freire says, to exist humanly to the fullest, particularly on the part of the oppressed, is to name or change the world; praxis is the people's way of life and reason for living. It is what gives meaning and drives their being here and now. Praxis is what the oppressed do and live for. It is their way of making sense of the world, as well as their means of changing it for the better. What it does is to pose as problematic their situation in the world, make it an object of reflection, and in so doing be challenged to transform it. This is how the people's consciousness emerges from the world of doxa or apparent knowledge and comes to logos or true knowledge of the essence and causes of things that includes the phenomenon of oppression in its entirety. And as Freire remarks, the greater the people understand alienating reality, the better they are in the position to intervene in history as subjects and act upon it through culture. All is unified and united in praxis: critical reflection leading to action (reflective action/active reflection),

theory informing practice, the teacher-student learning from the student-teacher, the leaders working with the people, from object/beings for others to subjects/beings in themselves – such that in the end there is neither oppressor nor oppressed but only fellow human beings in dialogical communion. All forms of contradictions and dichotomies disappear as much as they are resolved in praxis that links thought and action, subject and object, the oppressor and the oppressed, the leaders and the people in dialogical solidarity.

Third, concerning the crucial role of the leaders in the revolution vis-à-vis the people, both sources are in agreement on this point. Their relationship should be characterized by dialogue and partnership, fostered by critical thought and underscored by mutual trust and respect, for the humanization of each other in a process of bilateral growth and responsibility. One cannot act for or without the other in the same way the leaders could only aspire to live with the people and not in or for them. In no instance, emphasizes the Green Book, should they become the people's new masters by merely taking over from the old oppressors of the capitalist and communist states. It is only in complete solidarity with the people – taking up their cause as one's own, or in the words of Freire, "to suffer with them and fight at their side"<sup>6</sup> – that the leaders can hope to find their *raison d'être*. It is exactly the opposite of how the oppressors justify their existence in the minds of the oppressed by resorting to all sorts of anti-dialogical manipulative and mystifying rhetoric and action.

As the Green Book clearly indicates above more than Freire, the revolutionary leadership is the theoretical and practical instrument both to launch and to see the revolution through to its logical end. For both, the taking of power comprises only one moment or the start of the revolution. The revolution merely inaugurates praxis in history but is certainly not the end of it. Equally important is the continuation, defense and implementation of its ideals that will determine its success or failure. For so great is the temptation to fall back to the old system, for the leaders to usurp power, for the people to lose their revolutionary consciousness, and for the forces of reaction to subvert the gains of the revolution that, argues the Green Book, it is the task of the leaders to organize the people into people's committees that will carry out and sustain the thrust of the revolution. They have to be united themselves as they strive to foster unity *among* and *with* the people in horizontal differentiation from their common oppressor. Organizing themselves in popular groups with the people's support behind the leadership and the leaders' full trust in the people's capacity to participate in their own emancipation is not only their greatest protection from the manipulation of the oppressor but also the most effective means to effect changes in society.

But Freire stands out better than the Green Book in stressing that not only is the revolution built on dialogue, but also it is essentially a method of dialogical action. The ultimate rationale for and dynamic of social change is human subjectivity and the human vocation to be free. He defines it as the encounter between subjects – the leaders and the people – to name the world and whose constant communication fosters communion between them. As a result, there develops a covenant or a deep bond of trust in and support for one another which leads them to cooperate in humanizing the de-humanizing culture of violence and oppression that engulfs them. Dialogue and deliberation are the best guarantee that both the leaders and the people will not lose their critical consciousness or dominate one another, but will always be guided by the light of reason in their action. The former cannot command the latter's conviction to engage in the struggle for liberation, but can only seek the people's adherence to it in a "free coincidence of choices" (Ibid.) both in the practice and in pursuit of freedom.

### **The Author of the Green Book: A Final Look**

Freire offers some perspective that helps one understand what happened to the author of the Green Book from hindsight. It also offers leaders, both present and future, lessons on how not to commit the same mistake of falling into the trap of demagoguery and of power corrupting them precisely by losing their touch with the people and their critical consciousness. For despite the eloquence of the Green Book's political theory,

what its author did was merely to talk *about* the people, but was really never one with them. Not only did he lose the trust of his people, but even more so, he did not trust in them. He thought *for* them, not *with* them, nor did he care to listen to what they had to say in a true spirit of dialogue. He regarded them not as fellow subjects to be respected, but rather as objects to be used and oppressed for his own convenience. He lived *within* them as oppressor or somebody to be feared. For that reason, he ceased *being* a revolutionary leader but only somebody *having* power. No wonder then when confronted by the power and voice of the people clamoring for freedom and change, he responded with such violence and vengeance that only went to show how he loved himself above everyone else. History eventually caught up with and repeated itself in him. He had all the workings of fallen dictators of the past. Such is the fate that awaits those who live by the sword and not by the way of the praxis.

*“Leaders who do not act dialogically . . . do not organize the people – they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.”*

*“Transformation [the revolution] is only valid if it is carried out with the people, not for them. Liberation is like childbirth, and a painful one. The person who emerges is a new person: no longer either oppressor or oppressed, but a person in the process of achieving freedom.”*

*-- Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

## Endnotes

1. Muammar Al Qathafi, *The Green Book: Part One: The Solution of the Problem of Democracy: The Authority of the People* (Cebu City, Philippines: Our Press [1975]). All indirect references to Qathafi's ideas, except direct quotes, are taken from this source, passim.
2. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005). All indirect references to Freire's ideas, except direct quotes, are taken from this source, passim.
3. The author of the Green Book seems to have in mind as model of society the nomadic Muslim tribes of the desert which were small tightly knit and self-governing groups. Hence, governance and communication in these communities was fairly easy, direct, and popular having no need for intermediaries and characterized by mutual trust, care, and partnership between the leaders and the people. Dialogue between them on a daily basis was fairly constant with the role to participate in decision-making by each member ensured. Authority and possessions were distributed and practiced in collegiality for the welfare of the community and of every individual. As such, there was frequent discussion among them not only on how to live the Koran, but also on ways of living that were incompatible with its teachings, personally and collectively, in the form of passions to subjugate others and unjust practices that treated people as mere objects for others.
4. Freire, op. cit.
5. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961, passim.
6. Freire, op. cit.

**REFERENCES CONSULTED**

- Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt. Brace & World, 1970.
- Augustine St. *Confessions*. R.S. Pine-Coffin, transl. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1961.
- Foucault, Michel. "Second Lecture." *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Birth of the Asylum." *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. London: Tavistock, 1971.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1970.
- Habermas, Juergen. *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.
- Qathafi, Muammar Al. *The Green Book*. Cebu City, Philippines: Our Press, [1975].
- Ramirez, Jaime B. *Muammar Al Qathafi: The Great Leader*. Cebu City: The Vanguard Resources Management Group, 1989.
- Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- World Center for Research and Studies of the Green Book. *Commentary on the Green Book*. Tripoli: World Center for Research and Studies of the Green Book, [1984].