

NEO-COLONIALISM vs. LIBERATION STRUGGLE: SOME LESSONS FROM PORTUGAL'S AFRICAN COLONIES

By John Saul

THE further development of the liberation struggles which are underway in Angola, Guiné, and Mozambique is creating a revolutionary nationalism very different from that earlier brand of nationalism which brought formal independence to African territories north of the Zambezi. This is a reality which supporters of these struggles and of the movements (MPLA, PAIGC, FRELIMO) which lead them must face unflinchingly, for it is at once these movements' greatest strength—and a harbinger of future difficulties in their finally winning their freedom. In this paper we shall both specify, briefly, the character of this "revolutionary nationalism" as it finds expression in Angola, Guiné and Mozambique, and examine a few of the broader implications of this pattern—its possible effect upon the rest of Africa, its likely impact upon the calculations of Portugal and her allies, its lessons for all those who would support the African cause.

1. *Nationalism* and Revolution¹

First, a comparative perspective. The denouement of the African nationalism which came to power in the late 1950s and early 1960s has almost invariably been a mere Africanization of the existing colonial structures; a distinctive pattern of external dependence and domestic hierarchy has emerged in post-colonial Africa which serves to choke off development rather than to liberate productive forces and release human energies. The domestic attributes of this syndrome are by now familiar:

(1) an educated *élite*, or petty-bourgeoisie, controls the state, using it both to guarantee the neo-colonial presence of international corporations and to gain privileged access to surpluses for themselves. Moreover this group overlaps with a class of commercial Africans who are rising within the middle levels of the private sector (the "commanding heights" being the preserve of the international giants);

(2) the mass of the population is, at worst, terrorized and repressed, at best demobilized and manipulated with the side-show of tribal, communal and religious competition;

(3) political structures, whether they be those of one-party dominant

systems or of outright military-cum-bureaucratic regimes are primarily designed as instruments to facilitate such repression and/or manipulation in the interests of the newly dominant classes;

(4) official ideologies—the vaguest of "nationalisms", the most meaningless of "African Socialisms"—serve primarily to rationalize and legitimate just such exploitative relations within the system.

These results were already prefigured in the nationalist movements themselves, as Fanon and Nyerere, among others, have emphasized. Fanon's analysis of "the pitfalls of national consciousness" and of "false decolonization" are, of course, well known. But Nyerere's less familiar approach to this reality is almost equally instructive, for he summarizes precisely those aspects of the inheritance from the nationalist phase which have had negative implications for post-colonial Africa: leaders who desired, first and foremost, to occupy the privileged positions of the former exploiters; masses sufficiently confused by the more simplistic nostrums of nationalism to see such Africanization as a significant accomplishment, and yet very soon to become disillusioned and apathetic; political organizations, too exclusively geared to the straightforward demands of nationalism and therefore destined to "lose support and . . . atrophy"—ideologies which easily degenerated into "racialism" (in Nyerere's term) and mere black nationalism, providing no real defence against the underlying structures of capitalist exploitation. Being thus as aware of the ambiguities of nationalist assertion as of its very real achievements Nyerere can only conclude:

"It is comparatively easy to get independence from a colonial power—especially one which claims to base its national morality on the principles of freedom and democracy. Everyone wants to be free, and the task of the nationalist is simply to rouse the people to a confidence in their own power of protest. But to build the real freedom which socialism represents is a very different thing. It demands a positive understanding and positive actions, not simply a rejection of colonialism and a willingness to co-operate in non-co-operation. *And the anti-colonial struggle will almost certainly have intensified the difficulties* (emphasis added)."²

It is equally important to note that some foretaste of this denouement was one factor which led Britain and France to retire relatively gracefully from the field of formal colonialism without waging a pitched battle against African assertions. Under the circumstances itemized by Nyerere, they—and other international capitalist actors, particularly the Americans—could be quite sanguine about the prospects for continued exploitation within a "neo-colonial" framework.

Here and there in independent Africa steps have been taken to challenge this pattern. In Tanzania, for example, Nyerere and his colleagues have made some real effort to break out of the impasse of conventional nationalism and increasingly to expose and remedy the contradictions which are masked by this inheritance; it is a difficult

task as Nyerere is well aware and as I have had occasion to document elsewhere,³ though it is not perhaps an impossible one. But "false decolonization" has been the dominant pattern, with implications for the struggle in Southern Africa to which we will return. Our immediate focus, however, is upon the nature of insurgent nationalism as it finds expression in the struggle to liberate Portugal's African colonies. And here we enter a world very different from that described by Nyerere. Of course, the struggle in Portuguese colonies (as elsewhere in Southern Africa) is immediately distinguished by the nature of the colonial resistance to nationalist aspirations there, and the strategies of sustained military confrontation which must, of necessity, be adopted. But, as hinted at the outset, this kind of struggle also detonates other processes which reshape the pattern of nationalism into a new mould and dictate, *in the nationalist phase itself*, an attempt to restructure social, economic and political relationships in a fundamental way. This is what is happening in Angola, Mozambique and in Guiné-Bissau; the conventional denouement of African nationalism becomes increasingly unthinkable as more and more fundamental choices are forced upon the people in the very course of waging their struggle. The result, in all likelihood, will be not merely national liberation, but a social revolution.

2. *Towards National Liberation*

To be sure, all the features characteristic of the brand of nationalism which has facilitated false decolonization elsewhere on the continent have been present "in the Portuguese context": the pursuit of *élitist* and entrepreneurial aggrandizement within the nationalist institutions (and even within the liberated areas), the instrumentalization of the masses with regional and tribal appeals, the elaboration of vaguely nationalist ideologies asking no basic structural questions about the nature of the society which is to be brought into being.⁴ From the point of view of the *conservative* members of the petty-bourgeois leadership of the independence struggle in Portugal's African colonies who favour such a conventional approach there has been just one flaw in this; in the context of a genuine liberation struggle this kind of nationalism, quite literally, *does not work* as it did for African leadership groups elsewhere on the continent. On the contrary, for such a struggle to be waged successfully the energies of the masses *must* be released in a new way, the leadership *must* link its fortunes to the masses more effectively, the imperialist enemy *must* be defined and confronted more meaningfully. In fact, once set in motion, the reality of protracted struggle has increasingly imposed its own logic upon FRELIMO, MPLA and PAIGC.

The crucial dimensions of this "logic" of protracted struggle will be familiar ones to students of the dynamics of guerilla warfare.⁵ Thus,

under Portuguese harrassment, entirely new programmes and institutions have had to be begun in the spheres of health, education, trade and the like; entire villages have often had to be moved and reorganized. Moreover, the guerillas must rely on the peasants as active partners in the struggle: to protect them, to help in carriage and supply of produce, to serve as a popular militia. Here is something more than "a rejection of colonialism, and a willingness to co-operate in non-co-operation". On the contrary, such developments demand from the people "a positive understanding and positive actions". It becomes imperative, therefore, that the gap between leadership and the masses be more effectively closed; genuine democratic methods of political work are necessary, with these in turn being premised upon new modes of education designed to attack *elitism* and upon new and more collective practices in the economic sphere. In addition, the necessity to link military activity in various parts of the country and to move cadres from place to place forces a greater transcending of parochialism and a deepening of national consciousness, (this being a development which simultaneously deprives reactionary elements of one of their most effective manipulative devices as well!) Finally, waging such a protracted struggle has an important educative impact as regards the international posture of the new countries and citizens which are being formed. For as the confrontation continues, the leadership as well as the mass of the population have had that much greater opportunity to become aware of the complicated network of imperialist forces which lock Portuguese hegemony into place; the crystallization of a much more meaningfully anti-imperialist ideology is a result. Thus in all these ways, and others, the knot of neo-colonialism is being untied in Angola, Mozambique and Guiné even at this very early stage.

It was Cabral himself who theorized the underlying meaning of this pattern of development most effectively, arguing that a genuine liberation struggle *must* become a revolution and drawing strength from that fact.⁶ His very conception of the problem is profoundly radical: "We therefore see that both in colonialism and in neo-colonialism the essential characteristic of imperialist domination remains the same: the negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violent usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive forces. This is the principle and permanent characteristic of imperialist domination whatever its form". Since "we have also seen that this freedom (of the process of development of the productive forces) alone can guarantee the normal development of the historical process of a people", "we can therefore conclude that national liberation exists only when the national productive forces have been completely freed from every kind of foreign domination". Just one further step is necessary to complete this argument:

“... if we accept that national liberation demands a profound mutation in the process of development of the productive forces, we see that this phenomenon of *national liberation* necessarily corresponds to a *revolution* (emphasis in the original).”

Ultimately, of course, “the neo-colonial situation (in which the working classes and their allies struggle simultaneously against the imperialist bourgeoisie and the native ruling class) is not resolved by a nationalist solution; it demands the destruction of the capitalist structure implanted in the national territory by imperialism and correctly postulates a socialist solution”. But in Guiné and in the other African colonies of Portugal the more classical colonial situation which exists, combined with the necessity of waging a people's war, are telescoping this process in ways that we have already outlined.

The movements facilitate these “revolutions”—and are in turn affected by them. For it is necessary to remind ourselves that movements like PAIGC, FRELIMO and MPLA are, in reality, two entities for much of the early period of their existence: a conventional nationalist movement frustrated of any easy transition to power, and a revolutionary movement, struggling to be born. Concretely, in the short run, this dichotomy between the two finds expression in the struggle within the petty-bourgeoisie, those who are and those who are not prepared to make the transition to revolutionary practice increasingly pitted against one another. Of course, as the struggle develops, and in the longer run, the masses themselves come, to an ever greater degree, to be the arbiters of this conflict; this, too, is one of the “benefits” of the horrors of guerilla warfare. Cabral would seem to have emphasized the prime importance, at least in the short-run, of the former aspect, his strictures about the ambiguity, for revolutionary purposes, of Africa's workers and peasants, their lack of spontaneous *élan* and their difficulties in distinguishing “true national independence from fictitious independence”, being well known. It was for this reason that he underlined “the fundamentally political nature of the national liberation struggle” and the important role of “a revolutionary vanguard” which “can be aware of this distinction from the start and make it known, through the struggle, to the popular masses”. Hence, too, his own stress upon the above-mentioned contestation within the petty-bourgeoisie, a contestation which can, however, be won by those members of the “revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie”, who are prepared to “commit suicide” (in his phrase) and “by sacrificing itself. . . reincarnate itself, but in the condition of workers and peasants”. But both aspects—this kind of struggle within the petty-bourgeoisie *and* the democratizing imperatives of a war waged with and among the people—and the dialectic established between the two are seen to be important, and to make the process of radicalization a cumulative and self-reinforcing one.

The result of this process in Guiné has been the success of the PAIGC and precisely the crystallization of a revolutionary line of development. Although Cabral's own assassination does demonstrate some of the dangers which can continue to plague such a movement during the transition period and under pressure from its imperialist enemy, it is nonetheless its continuing strength, and the ineluctable nature of its drive towards the actual claiming of independence for Guiné in the near future, which seems the most noteworthy feature of the post-Cabral PAIGC. Davidson has pinpointed the existence of other contradictions and divisions, but also stresses their marginal nature: "In Guiné-Bissau the general rise of nationalism similarly hived off splinter handfuls which established themselves in Dakar, the capital of neighbouring Senegal. Their programme and assumptions were correspondingly *élistist* and reformist, opting in the end for co-operation with the Portuguese against the main-stream movement, the PAIGC led by Amílcar Cabral. But the Senegalese divisions never acquired the baleful destructiveness of their parallel in the Congo." Furthermore, it seems clear that an independent Guiné under the PAIGC and grounded theoretically and practically in the manner which we have discussed, will not be a ready candidate for a "neo-colonial solution". Quite the contrary.

Davidson's mention of the Congo actually refers to an aspect of the development of the liberation struggle in Angola; to this matter we shall return. But the situation in Mozambique has also proven to be less straightforward than it has in Guiné, even if, fortunately, the result has been a similar one. I have given a detailed account of the development of FRELIMO elsewhere;⁸ the crucial points can be made more succinctly, however. Thus some unsympathetic observers saw in the fierce infighting within FRELIMO in the period both before and after Eduardo Mondlane's assassination (in 1969) signs of weakness. In fact this was the period when the most progressive of the FRELIMO leadership consolidated their position, finding their base in the new reality of the liberated areas and in their ability to move with the radicalizing logic of a genuine popular struggle. Opportunist elements — prone both to pander to the *élistist* and entrepreneurial aspirations of some segments of the African petty-bourgeoisie in predictable ways and to manipulate regional, tribal and racial slogans in the interests of their own aggrandizement — found themselves isolated, soon to drop away from active struggle or even to pass over to the side of the Portuguese.

It is no accident that, in the wake of such developments, the proceedings of subsequent meetings of FRELIMO's Central Committee have evidenced an exemplary unity and militancy. Indeed the most recent of such meetings, in December, 1972, was devoted to laying down

plans for future progress in the economic, social and political spheres of great promise and significance—plans which further work to preempt the possibility of any false decolonization. It is true that Mozambican leaders have been more reticent about drawing overtly the socialist conclusion than has Cabral. But certainly the development of a revolutionary nationalism has been the clear pattern of FRELIMO's practice. In addition, the movement's ideological formulations have also become not merely anti-imperialist but, at least implicitly, increasingly socialist; unlike their more conservative counterparts, these leaders have begun to cut through to the realities of exploitation *per se* in their formulations, and this awareness is also communicated to the people. Here, at the level of consciousness, is emerging a final guarantee that in Mozambique the nationalist struggle will be carried through to its "logical" conclusion. No doubt the reality of this kind of overall evolution of the struggle is also one of the most salient features of the Mozambican situation in the eyes of imperialist strategists!

Finally, similar trends can be identified in Angola, where MPLA has slowly but surely expanded its military control over the Eastern regions and begun to push beyond them towards the sea and into areas where preparatory political work is already underway. The consolidation and radicalization of the movement itself and of the new Angola which begins to live within the liberated areas is also advanced. It is true that MPLA went through a particularly harrowing period before consolidating its revolutionary direction. Davidson's account of this whole process is exemplary, and indeed stands as *required* reading for anyone concerned with the struggle in Portugal's colonies.⁹ There seems little point in paraphrasing his narrative here, except to note that he traces these early difficulties in detail, commenting that "there is a general rule by which all movements of resistance produce and deepen conflicts within themselves as the reformists draw back from the revolutionaries, and, in drawing back, fall victim to the game of the enemy regime", and finding in the *Conferencia dos Quadros* (January, 1964) the point at which Neto and others began to point the way forward in the most promising manner. Then, with the opening of the Eastern front after Zambia's independence and the "systematic mobilization of active support among the peoples of the eastern districts", this pattern of development became a cumulative one.

The full flowering of the Angolan Revolution has been forestalled by logistical and political factors, however. The guerillas point of entry via Zambia is several thousand miles from East African ports, and the Eastern regions themselves are vast and sparsely populated. Yet President Mobutu of Zaire has made access via his country to the more economically strategic and populous north and central regions impossible for MPLA, preferring to deal with Holden Roberto's Angolan

National Liberation Front (FLNA). The latter movement has come in turn to represent the most opportunist and inactive of petty-bourgeois leaderships, characteristically rooting itself in ethnic exclusivism (principally the Bakongo people, which is also a prominent group within Zaire itself) and widely suspected of dubious connections with imperialist intriguers. This kind of division, which assists only the Portuguese, exemplifies in the most extreme manner the difficulties of working towards a territory-wide revolutionary challenge.

The situation has begun to change, however, in ways that could further fuel this successful liberation struggle. Apparently Mobutu has had to come part way to meet the realities of revolutionary nationalism as it emerges from such a struggle. Equally important have been demands from lower-level militants within FNLA itself for a more positive challenge to the Portuguese on the part of their leaders, demands which have recently culminated in a number of mutinies in Holden's military camps. Consequently the door has been opened for MPLA to shift its sights to the north by means of an alliance with Holden and with the FNLA. To be sure, the terms of such an alliance have only just begun to take shape, and the dangers are self-evident. Yet MPLA is solid enough to safeguard its revolutionary direction even within a more united framework and if the military opening is forthcoming, this initiative should prove, like Mao's dealings with the Kuomintang, to have been worth the risk. It seems possible that new energies will be released, and, in addition, the danger of a disunited, self-defeating post-colonial situation further preempted by such developments.

In the case of each of Portugal's African colonies, then, we see not merely a struggle for independence—but a revolution in the making. The significance of this is two-fold. Firstly, such a political reality is as important as the military one in defining the movement's success, the two dimensions being in fact closely related. For the deep roots struck in the soil of popular awakening and self-assertion are vital not merely in ensuring logistical support of various sorts. but, even more importantly, in supplying the guerilla forces with much of their essential *clan*. But there is a further significance to the political reality of radicalization, it also enhances the danger which these movements represent in the eyes of their enemies. As noted, the fact that they increasingly challenge not merely an anachronistic Portuguese colonial structure but also imperialist hegemony and neo-colonialism is not lost on vitally important factors beyond Portugal itself. To a more detailed examination of this and other implications of the exemplary evolution of revolutionary nationalism in Portugal's African colonies, we can now turn.

3. *The Continental Contest*

That independent Africa should approach the liberation struggle in Southern Africa with something less than full commitment is not surprising in light of our earlier formulations: Cabral had identified, among the factors "unfavourable to national liberation movements", "the neo-colonial situation of a great number of states which, having won political independence, are now tending to join up with others already in that situation".¹⁰ Malawi's parodic commitment to the white South and Zaire's harrassment of MPLA are merely the most dramatic manifestations of this reality, the reluctance of most African states to pay their subscriptions to the Liberation Committee of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) the more typical failing. The growing military success and the further radicalization of the liberation movements in Portugal's African colonies has had certain paradoxical results, however. At one level, the promise of an eventual way out from the morass of underdevelopment which these movements represent is, implicitly, a threatening example for the leaders of other African states. Yet their progress has also drawn these movements closer to the centre of the African stage and made them that much more difficult to ignore.

Somewhat surprisingly, the latter aspect has recently seemed to be quite prominent. One result can be seen within the OAU itself where, at the Rabat Summit of 1972 and at this year's Accra conference of the Liberation Committee, a mood of rather deeper commitment to the struggle appeared to prevail than on many earlier occasions. Of course a great deal of this was merely rhetorical, but at least the reality of escalation and polarization had begun to challenge the dull conservatism which has come, so soon after independence, to be a characteristic feature of most Pan-African undertakings. The popular distaste for "dialogue" which surfaced as *one* aspect of the overthrow of ultra-right governments in Ghana and Madagascar in the past few years is another feature of the (admittedly tortoise-paced) radicalization of continental aspirations and activities which the liberation struggle—through its more explicit confrontation with imperialism, racialism and the most compromised of Africa's petty-bourgeoisie—is unleashing. Thus it now appears possible that even Malawi may eventually be moved to recalculate its strategic options in the context of escalation at its doorstep! For the moment it is Zaire which warrants the closest scrutiny in this respect however, Mobutu's aforementioned role (taken up with the active encouragement of Kaunda and Nyerere) in smoothing the way for an MPLA-FNLA alliance perhaps representing this very kind of advance.

In the other crucial "border-states"^w—Tanzania and Zambia (not to mention Guinee-Conakry)—this pattern is equally important. Obviously "radicalization" in these cases has its own internal dynamic,

but confrontation with the South is also a factor in their progress. One key reason for Tanzania adopting Mwongozo, the TANU Guidelines of 1971, for example, was the invasion of Guinee by the increasingly desperate Portuguese and the obvious need for Tanzania itself to strengthen its political and military sinews against the day of some similar challenge. There are many more contradictions in Kaunda's Zambia than in Tanzania, but once again Kaunda's regime is certainly more progressive than any immediately likely alternative. And here too it is confrontation (such as that with the Smith regime over the recent closing of border) which has strengthened Kaunda's hand and thereby provided his regime with such breathing-space as it has had both for realizing a less dependent development strategy of its own and for aiding the liberation struggle.

The more negative side of the coin cannot be ignored, of course—either with reference to the border-states or to independent Africa as a whole. For, as noted, the fact of confrontation is at once a stimulant *and* a threat to progress there. Military success and radicalization in Southern Africa certainly represent a challenge to imperial interests (a point to which we shall return). We have also stated that they present some kind of implicit challenge to the classes which predominate in independent Africa. Given such potential enemies it is most unlikely that the generalization of the logic of protracted struggle to a continental scale will be a smooth one. The invasion of Guinee by the Portuguese, the occasional bombings of Tanzania and Zambia and threats of even more aggressive intervention from outside,¹¹ are graphic foreshadowings of possible developments. But a right-wing backlash within countries like Zambia and Tanzania is a much more subtle danger and would equally (and even more effectively perhaps) reverse the trend towards increased support and help to isolate the liberation movements.¹² In sum, the liberation struggle is part of a continental struggle against the structures of domination inherited from colonialism and the question of the lines of development which are most likely to follow from confrontation must remain posed. One thing is clear, however: supporters cannot confine their interests to Portuguese Africa or even to Southern Africa, but must take an active interest in supporting progressive tendencies throughout the continent. For the two fronts are vitally interrelated.

4. The Imperialist Response

The acceptance of a "neo-colonial solution" similar to that obtained by the British and French in their African colonies was one possible Portuguese response to the fruition of African nationalism in the late fifties and early sixties. But with the benefit of hindsight we can see that any such result was extremely unlikely. Portugal's own economic

weakness and dependence meant that she could not hope to compete with other imperialist economic interests and maintain economic primacy in the African territories unless that primacy were guaranteed by political means, by the mechanism of *the colonial state*. Secondly, Portugal is itself an overtly authoritarian society; under such circumstances it has proven difficult to theorize a logic of freedom for the colonies and dangerous to establish a democratic precedent in Black Africa which might well unleash parallel demands from white Portuguese closer to home. Thirdly, Portugal's whole authoritarian structure is legitimized by myths of empire, "lusotropicality", and mission which provide a certain glue for the system—and which some of the rulers of Portugal may even have come to believe!

Moreover, once the initial opportunities for "peaceful" compromise had been foregone, such a result became even less likely—with the escalation of the struggle and with the radicalization of the nationalist movements. To be sure the Portuguese have more recently introduced some window-dressing: increased "autonomy" for the "overseas provinces" and carefully controlled elections (though these gestures are in any case as much a sop to white settler influence and demands as to African and world opinion) as well as some judicious and strictly delimited "Africanization" of army and bureaucracy. Other related ploys, designed to confuse and disarm, can also be expected. But the military and political challenge is already so far advanced as to make even the last-ditch fall-back position of a "false decolonization", using those few compliant Africans who stand in the wings, a too risky one.

In addition, the allies of Portugal who may have been more inclined than Portugal towards a neo-colonial solution for the latter's colonies at an earlier stage of the game are now perforce more deeply committed to the full-scale defence of the *status quo* in Portuguese Africa. South Africa is one important example. Visibly nervous about recent developments in Mozambique and Angola, as any reading of the South African press will document, authorities there seem well prepared to step up the integration of sub-continental defence and probably to advance more deeply into the fray themselves. And the South Africans are also ready to invoke an even wider war, viz. Admiral Biermann, South Africa's military commander, writing in *Paratus*, the journal of the South African armed forces:

"... a regional treaty of alliance is an excellent goal, and should be pursued with vigour, but in the long term this can only serve as an intermediate objective to the final aim. . . . It is imperative that a super-power should be involved in the strategy for the southern hemisphere. . . . We must persuade the West that Communist penetration into the southern hemisphere is a direct threat to Western Europe and the rest of the free world."

Unfortunately, the United States seems more than ready to heed such a call. The moment when the Americans appeared to be most committed to facilitating a neo-colonial solution came in the very earliest days of the Kennedy Administration. But given Portuguese intransigence it became necessary for this and subsequent administrations to accommodate themselves to such a reality and to a partnership with Portugal. And this arrangement in turn became all the more attractive as the movements themselves were radicalized and developed into much less certain guarantors of a future false decolonization. Portugal's move in the early sixties to encourage foreign investment in the colonies, itself a reversal of long standing policy, was a closely related factor, of course. Firms like Gulf Oil (whose payments to Angolan authorities for their oil operations in Angola were equivalent last year to two-thirds of the military budget of that "province") have thus become quite firmly committed to safeguarding the continuance of established structures.

Finally, although the NATO connection has long been the major prop for poverty-stricken Portugal's war effort, it is also true that Nixon's increasingly forthright moves in Southern Africa—crucial loans to Portugal (ostensibly for use of the Azores base), sale of military-related equipment to South Africa and Portugal, sanctions lifted on Rhodesian chrome—signal an ever deepening commitment. As Richard Barnett has concluded a recent survey of American policy in Southern Africa for *The New York Review of Books*:¹⁴ “. . . the United States (under the rhetoric of containing violence and preventing war) now appears ready to step up its assistance to the minority racist and colonial governments in beating back challenges to their rule”. Escalation thus seems to be the name of the game in Portugal's African colonies; there is grave danger that the analogy with Vietnam which is now often invoked with reference to the Southern African situation holds good not merely for Portugal and South Africa but also for the United States and other Western countries.

5. *The Imperatives of Support*

Several aspects of the preceding analysis are immediately relevant to anyone seeking to advance the cause of the freedom fighters of Angola, Mozambique and Guinée in western countries. The most important points can be summarized under three rubrics:

(a) *A continental perspective.* It scarcely requires repeating that our concern cannot be confined to Portugal's African colonies themselves. In the first place what is increasingly at issue is a battle for all of Southern Africa. This is perfectly clear to the white regimes who are striving to integrate their counter-revolutionary activities. The liberation movements in Portuguese Africa equally understand that the pace of development of their own struggle is dependent upon the

emergence of effective challenges to white rule elsewhere in the sub-continent, challenges which will prevent the enemy from concentrating its fire-power and expertise on any one or two fronts. Hence the example of the effective interplay between Mozambican guerillas and their Zimbabwean counterparts earlier this year.¹⁵ And we, in turn, must be ready to keep pace in our own support and educational work with this inevitable escalation and generalization of the conflict. In addition, we have quite specifically noted the interaction between the liberation struggle on the one hand and developments in independent Africa on the other. The struggle is continental, not merely "Portuguese", in this respect as well,¹⁶ and the exposure of, and resistance to, counter-revolutionary trends and imperialist activities elsewhere in Africa thus becomes another important aspect of our concern.

(b) Revolutionary nationalism. Supporters must also take seriously the logic of the movements' own development (outlined in Section 2), and the scope and depth of the challenge to colonial dependence which they increasingly pose. Only in this way can concerned groups in the metropolitan countries, whether they be black or white, make the relevant distinction between those individuals and movements which are truly dedicated to the independence of Portugal's African colonies and those which manipulate "black nationalist" (so-called), "Maoist" and other formulae in a demagogic and self-serving manner.¹⁷ Only in this way can any future tricks by the Portuguese which are premised upon various forms of nominal "Africanization" be adequately interpreted and exposed. Most important, only in this way can distorted images of the movements themselves, such as are bound to proliferate in the capitalist press as the military confrontation escalates, be defused. But this last comment carries us over to a third and final consideration which is of particular crucial significance.

(c) The anti-imperialist struggle. For these images will be only in part distorted. To be sure, they will present the movements as "tools of the East", as representing "a communist menace".¹⁸ Such emphases are already at play both in the propaganda of the Southern African regimes and in certain of the western press response, and here the distortion is obvious. Yet these formulations do touch upon something real as well, something which moves bourgeois commentators to demagogic excess in an attempt to more successfully package their fears for uncritical consumption by a broader public. For the fact remains that these movements are challenging imperialist hegemony—not, of course, because they are some off-shoot of "international communism", but because such a challenge springs from the logic of protracted struggle in Portugal's African colonies and from the growth and maturity of the movements themselves. As we have pointed out, they are creating the preconditions for a genuine decolonization, the kind of decolonization

which alone can begin to free Angola, Mozambique and Guiné from that neo-colonial vice which guarantees the continued underdevelopment of the rest of the continent. As a result, the ruling-classes of western countries do have legitimate reason for concern because, increasingly, more is at stake in Portuguese Africa than that "political independence," narrowly conceived, which was so readily negotiable only a decade ago in Africa.¹⁹

Of course, it can be hoped that the sheer anachronism of Portuguese colonialism, as well as the anomalous nature of the overtly racial oppression which it represents, will attract a very wide range of people and groups in western countries to the cause of freedom in Angola, Mozambique and Guiné. But in the long-run it will not be sufficient merely to draw "liberals" and social-democrats into supporting the liberation movements on the basis of a narrow understanding of the movements' role—and of their likely enemies.²⁰ If this is done, such support may merely melt away when the going gets tough; these liberals will seek, as so many did for so long in Vietnam, to find some "moderate", some non-existent, middle road compromise. In doing so they will be objectively lending their support to the worst barbarisms of imperialism. Those with a sharper analysis of imperialist reality must seek to preempt such confusion as far as possible. We must seek to educate ourselves and others about the real imperatives of development in the "Third World" and about the absolute necessity of such *revolutionary* solutions as are emerging in Portugal's African colonies.

There are some who would take this argument further, arguing that the very radicalization of the movements is already sufficiently a threat to western capitalism that our governments—the capitalist state under which we live—are bound to thwart their growth. Only by contributing first and foremost to a revolution in our own countries could we really hope to contribute significantly to the cause of Southern African liberation, they say. And there is some truth in this emphasis. But such revolutions are a long way off; we can scarcely afford, in the short-run to sit idly by and merely assume that no pressure for modification of western policy *vis-à-vis* Southern Africa can conceivably bear fruit. Besides, the revolutions which are necessary in western countries are unlikely to be once-for-all events. They will be fought on a number of fronts, and tactical advances are possible.²¹ The terrain of colonial freedom provides one such front, a more difficult terrain than it was a decade ago when imperialism's bets were more effectively covered, but not by definition a hopeless one. In any case, this paper is not specifically charged with the task of exploring the question of strategies of support, merely with identifying some of the implications of the "neo-colonialism/liberation struggle" dichotomy. We can conclude, therefore, by stressing the growing advantage in our support work of

rallying people to the cause of FRELIMO, MPLA and PAIGC on the basis of some kind of anti-imperialist perspective. There is an added advantage. By so structuring the problem we will also learn something of our own oppression in the imperialist centres: in the course of helping others in their powerful and effective efforts to liberate themselves, we can also move towards our own liberation.²²

NOTES

Most of the material in this section, and several paragraphs in Section 3, have been carried over from my earlier paper "FRELIMO and the Mozambique Revolution" in *Monthly Review*, March, 1973 (reprinted in G. Arrighi and J. S. Saul, *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*, Monthly Review Press, 1973). J. K. Nyerere, "Introduction", pp. 26-32 (section entitled "The Problems of Building Socialism in an Ex-Colonial Country"), in *Freedom and Socialism* (London, New York, Nairobi, 1968).

3. Cf. my essay "African Socialism in One Country: 'Tanzania'" in Arrighi and Saul, *op. cit.*
4. The military line which follows from such a tendency is also familiar: distrust of the masses and a putschist approach.
5. For a comparative perspective see the information analysis in Mark Selden, "People's War and the Transformation of Peasant Society: China and Vietnam" (reprinted in L. Kaplan (ed.) *Revolutions: A Comparative Study*, Vintage, 1973); for a fuller representation of this "logic of protracted struggle" with reference to Mozambique, see "FRELIMO and the Mozambique Revolution", *op. cit.* The following quotations from Cabral are drawn from his speech to the first Tricontinental Conference of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America held in Havana in January, 1966; under the title "The Weapon of Theory" it is reprinted in A. Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea* (Stage 1, 1969).
7. Basil Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm: Angola's People* (Doubleday, 1972), p. 222-3.
8. See my "FRELIMO and the Mozambique Revolution", *op. cit.* My argument in this paper was subsequently confirmed by my own observations during a trip into the liberated areas of Tete Province, Mozambique, with FRELIMO in August, 1972. Among other things, I was profoundly impressed by the quality of the cadres—"the revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie" in fact—who comprised the "responsibles" of FRELIMO at various levels of the organization, and also "I discovered at public meetings and through visits to villages inside Mozambique a level of popular enthusiasm and involvement in the struggle far higher than I had dared to expect and of a kind that has underwritten the cumulative success of guerilla struggle elsewhere" (*The Canadian Forum*, March, 1973).
9. Davidson, *op. cit.*
10. Cabral, *op. cit.*
11. See the article in *The Observer*, November 12, 1972, under the headline "Plan to attack Tanzania".
The extreme example of the possible danger here is the suppression of Palestinian guerillas by several of the independent Arab states in recent years.
13. Quoted by Colin Legum in *The Observer*, 17 December, 1972.
14. Richard Barnett, "Nixon's Plan to Save the World", *New York Review of Books*, November 16, 1972.

15. The further escalation of the workers' challenge in South Africa (fore-shadowed by the recent Durban strikes and other actions), and the dialectic established between peasant-based guerilla warfare and proletarian action throughout the area, obviously will be an even more vitally important gearing up of the struggle, one also pregnant with implications for the character of the independence eventually achieved.
16. It can also be noted, parenthetically, that our concern does expand in another direction as well—to Portugal itself, and the struggle against dictatorship "at home" which is beginning to complement the African Struggle.
17. At the other extreme from these pseudo-radical deviations are movements, groups or individuals which now, or in the future, may represent themselves as "the responsible alternative" to the established and effective movements.
18. The presentation of such a false picture will be made easier by the fact that the movements must, of necessity, rely primarily upon Eastern countries for their arms. But no-one can doubt the extent to which the liberation movements, despite their gratitude for such fraternal assistance, safeguard their ideological and political independence. The fact that both Russia and China have come to support their efforts is one proof of this fact.
19. Moreover, since the escalation of the struggle does tend to carry the battle front right into South Africa itself—this being at once imperialism's most lush preserve on the continent and the place where a "false decolonization" option is most inconceivable—incalculably more is at risk than ever before.
20. Of course we do not refer here to those "liberals" (and social democrats?) who are merely the conscious apologists for the corporate structure; cf. Waldemar Nielsen's influential book *The Great Powers and Africa* which argues, in effect, for American support for liberation before "extremists" profit from a "deteriorating" situation!
21. On this subject, see the helpful formulations of Andre Gorz in his essay "Reform and Revolution" in his *Socialism and Revolution* (Anchor, 1973).
22. Unfortunately I was myself unable to attend the Manchester Conference for which this paper was prepared. I learn, from a distance, that this final paragraph was, rather surprisingly, misinterpreted by a few delegates, notably by the discussant, Bob Sutcliffe. Certainly the intention was not to suggest that support work should take priority over domestic struggle for the Movement in advanced capitalist societies. Rather it was directed towards countering the argument, often heard in Canada, that such support work is entirely diversionary from the priority of domestic struggle! I sought to present, albeit too briefly, a more dialectical approach designed to resolve any such false dichotomy. Not only is there an imperative, given our responsibilities towards other struggles elsewhere, to avoid postponing assistance to them, but, equally important, the carrying out of support work, if properly conceived, can also be part of a strategy directed towards domestic transformation—raising consciousness and confronting significant enemies. There is, of course, an alternative approach—best exemplified by the work of the Liberation Support Movement in North America and theorized by Don Barnett, "Towards an International Strategy", *Monthly Review*, April, 1968—which does give unquestioned priority to Third World struggles; moreover, for all of us there is the temptation to "get off" on other people's revolutions. *Pace* Sutcliffe, this is not my position. I do think the text is clear enough on this point, but nonetheless I hope to return to the issue at greater length elsewhere.