



cfm news & notes

Information is ammunition for your struggle. A fighter without ammunition is not a fighter. And for you, a fighter without information cannot speak.

Samora M. Machel, President of FRELIMO
to CFM delegation, Dar es Salaam, 8/71.

U.N. DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE HEARS TESTIMONY ON TETE

Lord Anthony Gifford, Chairman of the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola, and Guine, an English group, spoke before the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization on Thursday, March 8, 1973. Tanzanian Ambassador Salim, Chairman of the Special Committee, stated that the Special Committee "attaches great importance to the role being played by non-governmental organizations in arousing world public opinion against the evils of colonialism ...and against the policies and activities of certain governments which continue to assist the racialist regimes." He added that it is the intention of the Special Committee to seek the collaboration and cooperation of such support groups.

Gifford was one of five visitors who spent 16 days in August, 1972 inside of Tete province last August as guests of FRELIMO. We reprint Gifford's speech for the up-to-date description it provides of life inside liberated Tete province, for its information on Anglo-Portuguese relations, and for its discussion of the work of the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola, and Guine. A slightly edited version of Gifford's speech follows:

Mr. Chairman, I am most honoured and privileged to have this opportunity of addressing your Committee. In April of 1972 your Committee showed in the most remarkable manner its determination to discover the truth about the liberation struggle against Portuguese colonialism through the courageous visit of the Special Mission to the liberated areas of Guinea (Bissau). I hope that the Committee will also find it possible to visit the liberated areas of Mozambique. But meanwhile the account I shall give about my own visit can perhaps serve to complement the experience which you already have of the remarkable achievements of those who are fighting against this brutal colonialist Power.

...I spent 16 days in August 1972 inside Tete province in Mozambique at the invitation of FRELIMO. I need hardly remind you of the importance of Tete province in relation to the liberation struggle in southern Africa as a whole. It is located between Zambia and Rhodesia; it is the site of the Cabora Bassa project; it is the key to the advance of FRELIMO towards the south.

...We covered in all a distance of 200 kilometres. We were accompanied by a large detachment of soldiers, cadres and carriers of supplies about 150 people in all. We marched freely, often over exposed ground, and except for once on our return journey when we heard the distant sound of gunfire, we were not involved in any incidents of war.

We marched south from the Zambian frontier to the district of Fingoe... which extends as far as the Zambezi river. About 7,000 people live there, entirely under FRELIMO administration. It was only in 1970 that after fierce fighting the district had been cleared of any active Portuguese military presence. Now the Portuguese, garrisoned mainly in Fingoe town, are limited to sporadic raids and bombardments against the people.



Polly Gaster and Lord Gifford in Fingoe District

We stayed inside the district for over a week. We were able to study in some depth and in a small way to share in life of the liberated Mozambican people. We met with members of the district committee elected by the people to bear responsibility for the administration of the district. We attended a class at the school established for 100 local children. We spent a full afternoon with the people of a village. We listened to and addressed two mass meetings of local people; we visited a first-aid post and, in another place, the central hospital of the district. We spent a day at a FRELIMO military base where about 200 soldiers were stationed. We spoke at length with the various cadres who were with us in particular, those responsible for the women's detachment, for health services and for production in the province.

At the end of our visit we made a short journey along the frontier to a FRELIMO frontier base. We saw a FRELIMO immigration post where a small detachment supervised movements in and out of the interior.

...We interviewed three men who had recently deserted from the Portuguese army south of the Zambezi. Their statements lent added confirmation to the information supplied to us by FRELIMO. In particular they confirmed the active participation of Rhodesian troops and advisers in the Portuguese war machine. We inspected a collection of captured war materials. We noted especially the presence of British and West German equipment.

Observations and Conclusions

I now turn to the observations and conclusions which can be drawn from our visit. In the first place, FRELIMO's control over the area which we covered is complete--and this is less than three years after the start of armed struggle in the area. The Portuguese say there are no liberated areas. I have been to a fully liberated area. The enemy tries his best to destroy the people by raids and bombardments, but he has little success. The settlements and plantations of the people are well concealed and widely dispersed. The local militias in each village are constantly on the alert for enemy movement. The FRELIMO forces are strong in number, in arms and, above all, in dedication to their cause....

We were astonished at the extent to which, after so short a time, new institutions, new forms of production, new social services had been established. In spite of the difficulties of communication, in spite of the lack of material resources, an effective structure of government, involving the local people in active participation, is in operation. We were able to understand this most profoundly as we listened to the members of the district committee explain how they discharged their responsibilities. In every field the cadres of FRELIMO and the representatives of the local people were working together with a unity of purpose that was truly remarkable.

It was obvious also that FRELIMO's capacity to control and administer its own territory was not confined to regions close to a friendly frontier. We did not ourselves penetrate south of the Zambezi; but, as the area in which we were was one of the access

points for advances further south, we were able to see how the people organized themselves to bear the immense burden of transporting materials over the long distances which have to be crossed. Every village has taken on a responsibility to find volunteers to share this burden, and I have no doubt that through the determination of the people these problems of transport have been overcome. It is a matter of record that FRELIMO is able continuously to harass and mine the road that brings supplies from Rhodesia to the Cabora Bassa project. It is also a matter of record that FRELIMO has opened a new front in the province of Manica and Sofala, hundreds of kilometres south of Zambia. Given the factors that made success in Tete province possible--the intensive advance political work by FRELIMO militants, the readiness of the people to reject the life of oppression under the colonialists--I am confident that what was achieved in Tete between 1968 and 1972 will be achieved in Manica and Sofala between 1972 and 1976, and in other provinces as well. This means in turn that a free Mozambique will be a reality in the regions both to the north and to the east of Rhodesia, in the area over which the Cabora Bassa transmission lines will pass, in the area over which the Rhodesia-Beira railway runs, in areas not far distant from the frontier of South Africa itself. I need not emphasize the political importance of this situation in the broader context of the liberation of southern Africa....



Economic development in liberated Tete

The United Kingdom and Portugal

If I may, I should like to turn now to my own country, the United Kingdom, and to the work of the organization that I represent.

As you know, Portugal is a small, poor country. Its Government's colonial policies are condemned throughout the world. It is able to continue to rule over and to make war against the people of Mozambique, Angola and Guine only because of the military, economic and political support it receives from a small number of countries. If that support were withdrawn, the peoples of Mozambique, Angola and Guine would soon be independent. If that support continues, their struggle for liberation will be long and bitter. As Portugal woos those countries more desperately for support, the need for effective well-organized solidarity movements within those countries becomes more obviously important.

One of those countries is the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom and Portugal have had an alliance together for 600 years. For centuries Britain has dominated and exploited the Portuguese economy. In Angola and Mozambique Britain controlled, and still controls, huge interests in mining, trading, transport and production fields. Britain today remains Portugal's most important customer and, after West Germany, its second largest supplier. Britain's vast stake in South Africa spills over into subsidiary companies in Angola and Mozambique. Above all, Britain also is a country which proclaims strong democratic principles, which has decolonized from Africa itself, which seeks good relations with independent African States, which has a powerful labour movement and a powerful tradition of internationalist support.

What, then, are the possibilities for change? On the one hand, there are very powerful interests anxious to maintain and increase their support for the Portuguese Government: businessmen who wish to exploit the resources of the Portuguese colonies for easy profits; military men who are obsessed with cold-war attitudes to the NATO alliance; politicians of the right whose political philosophy is not much different from their Portuguese friends. Today the British Government, to its shame, speaks for those interests alone. This year, the 600th anniversary of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance, it is preparing to celebrate its friendship with Portugal's rulers in a series of festivities--festivities designed by both Governments to strengthen the bonds between British and Portuguese reactionary forces. On the other hand, there is growing inside Britain a strong movement of solidarity with the liberation struggle. This is not a movement limited to young people.... Our committee is working, and is working with increasing effectiveness, with opposition political parties, with trade unions, with religious and humanitarian organizations.

The Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola, and Guine

When we began our work five years ago, few people in Britain knew, and fewer cared, about the people of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea. We started to inform those who would listen, to publish pamphlets, to influence mass organizations, to talk to political leaders, to seek out sources of material aid.

Since that time five years ago almost 100,000 worth of aid has been sent from British sources to the liberation movements. The Labour Party, the Liberal Party and the Trades Union Congress have pledged their full support to the struggle. The Labour Party has even established a solidarity fund and has sent funds--although in small quantities--to the liberation movements. Above all, the British people are more and more becoming aware of the criminal acts of the Portuguese and the achievements of the liberation movements. When leaders of the movements visit Britain, as did Amilcar Cabral in 1971, they speak to large and enthusiastic audiences.

I firmly believe that to change British policy from support for Portugal to support for the liberation movements is a goal which can be achieved. When it is achieved it will be in every way--politically, materially, psychologically--a bitter blow to the Portuguese colonialists.

Cooperation

But to achieve this goal we need your help and your support--your help and your support as a Committee of the United Nations, your help and your support as representatives of important Governments of the world. I hope it is not presumptuous to suggest that our small organization and your important Committee should cooperate together. Our aims are in no way different.

There are, of course, many ways in which we can work together in unison. I shall mention some which seem to me to be important. All must be directed at intensifying the pressures which can be brought to bear upon the Government of the United Kingdom and upon other Governments upon which Portugal depends.

First, we can together insist that supplies of arms, spares and military aid to Portugal should cease and be embargoed.

Secondly, we can fight the ideas put forward by elements within NATO that the NATO area be extended into the Central and South Atlantic.

Thirdly, we can condemn the unusually favourable agreement concluded between Portugal and the European Economic Community, and be vigilant to prevent economic expansion through the EEC into Angola, Mozambique and Guine.

Fourthly, we can denounce every move made by national and multinational corporations to exploit through investment the resources and the people of Angola, Mozambique and Guine.

Fifthly, in this year 1973--and I ask this most particularly--we can take every opportunity of attacking the Anglo-Portuguese alliance, the celebrations of which are a complete negation of United Nations policy as expressed in the General Assembly.

Sixthly--and I say this especially to friends within the Commonwealth--we can agitate at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference and elsewhere for support and solidarity from the Commonwealth towards the liberation movements.

Finally, in our work on the question of the Rhodesian rebellion and South African apartheid, we can in particular expose the roles played by Portugal in breaking sanctions, and by South Africa and Rhodesia in assisting Portugal.

THOUSANDS IN PORTUGAL CALL FOR AN END TO COLONIAL WARS

Opposition to Portugal's colonial wars and support for the liberation struggle of the African people has rapidly grown in the past few years, both internationally and inside Portugal. At the United Nations, the liberation movements were granted observer status, first in the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly and then in the Decolonization Committee. The United Nations has strongly condemned the support given to Portugal by the NATO countries, and has called for direct moral and material assistance to the liberation movements. The international support movement has also grown in size and effectiveness, as demonstrated by successful actions and boycotts against economic and military assistance to Portugal organized in many countries, and by the numerous international conferences convened to co-ordinate strategies and tactics.

As the war drags on and Portugal is faced with increasing economic difficulties and dependence on external help, opposition inside Portugal has also grown stronger and less easily silenced. Mass emigration in order to avoid the draft, desertions, sabotage and student unrest show that many Portuguese are becoming mobilized against the colonial wars. Portugal is now faced with the dilemma of having to silence the opposition while presenting an acceptable image to the international community, particularly to its new partners in the European Economic Community. The need to "democratize" its image has forced Portugal to grant some limited freedom to the moderate opposition, as described in the following excerpts from a recent New York Times article. As the regime is forced to deal with the opposition, it may set in motion a dialectic which in the end may prove impossible to stop. Hence moves to "Africanize" the war (reminiscent of the Nixon policy of Vietnamization, adopted at the height of the anti-war movement in the U.S.). We hope to deal with the issues of Africanization and neo-colonialism in a future issue of News and Notes.

From the New York Times, April 10, 1973:

OPPOSITION BIDS PORTUGAL CEASE WARFARE IN AFRICA

Lisbon, April 9 - The first gathering of opponents of the Portuguese regime to be allowed in four years issued an appeal for the end of the "colonial war" in Africa and the establishment of political freedom in Portugal.

Republicans, monarchists, Communists, Socialists and liberals, united by a common dislike of more than 40 years of authoritarian rule, met for a week in the small northern town of Aveiro...

Heavy censorship, a characteristic of Portuguese life, prevented news media from disseminating essential aspects of the positions taken by delegates from all parts of the country. The long and expensive effort by Portugal to hold on to her African provinces...has been a taboo subject in Portugal until now.

...The final declaration said: "Twelve years of colonial war represent a crime against humanity by the destruction of African populations and cultures and by the absurd sacrifice that has bled the country in lives and in resources and which constitutes a profound sapping of moral energies of a people that needs to mobilize them to build the future."

The Government of President Marcello Caetano has proclaimed a multiracial commonwealth of self-governing provinces as its eventual aim, and recently staged elections for local assemblies in Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea. Although large numbers of blacks were elected to the assemblies only a small part of the territorial populations voted and candidates were presented on a single approved list.

In Portugal, elections for a new National Assembly are to be held next fall and, as in 1969, the various elements opposing the official Popular National Action party were allowed to assemble to prepare a kind of platform for candidates willing to defy the official line publicly. But the restrictions evident before, during and after the Aveiro meetings did not bode well for the opposition's chances of making political headway.

... Heavy police forces were brought into Aveiro... and set up roadblocks to halt cars and buses several miles from town. Hundreds of delegates had to walk the rest of the way. A train from Oporto... was detained halfway to Aveiro and the identity of passengers was checked before the train was allowed to proceed.

Public gatherings outside the theater in Aveiro were forbidden. When 1,500 delegates tried to march to a square where there is a monument to José Estavao, a 19th-century liberal politician,...the marchers were attacked from behind by club-swinging policemen and by dogs, and some 25 persons were injured. ...

One delegate, asked why the meetings were permitted, said that the Government wished to bring about Portugal's integration with the European Common Market and felt that it had to improve its international reputation by building a "democratic facade."

A professor at a Government-controlled university reflected the political atmosphere by saying: "I can be dismissed for being here. Civil servants are not supposed to engage in political activity without authorization. I did not ask for it."

He and other delegates professed to be encouraged by the large turnout, which, at the end, consisted of several thousand people. One said that he did not feel so isolated as in the past. Gatherings of more than 21 persons are illegal unless specifically authorized. Consequently the opposition does not get much opportunity to meet.

...In addition to demanding the end of the wars in Africa and the establishment of freedoms in Portugal, the delegates called for a "struggle against the absolute power of monopolistic capital" and the introduction of socialism to end Portugal's economic and social backwardness.