

The Political Situation in Portugal and the Liberation Struggle in the Portuguese Colonies

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Neo-colonialism is undoubtedly the main obstacle to be overcome by the African masses, if they are to fulfil their aspirations of complete independence.

Although Portugal is a colonial country, its economy exhibits those characteristics peculiar to underdevelopment: an agriculture essentially directed at the satisfaction of internal needs, an unimportant industrial

sector, an extremely limited consumption sector and an export sector based on a fairly large number of processed primary products.* The imperialist powers (Great Britain, France, Germany and the USA) share among each other the continued economic control over this country.

Because of this, Portugal could not shield itself from the impact of the offensive of the financial circles of the neo-capitalist states, West Germany and France in particular, nor was it able to ignore the changes occurring in Europe and Africa.

It is the existence of the vast 'Portuguese' socio-economic domain represented essentially by the colonies, which has permitted the Portuguese bourgeoisie to close the breaches in the structure of the 'New State' by resorting to the type of solutions that might be termed 'flight forward'. The massive emigration of the working masses, together with the systematic pillage which took place in the colonies, have contributed — by leading to the stagnation of the economy and the survival of a parasitic bourgeoisie — to hampering the advent of the industrial revolution in Portugal.

The internal contradictions of the regime, the retrograde position of Portugal and its increasing isolation internationally, the threat which the liberation movements of the peoples of the Third World constitute, and the pressure stemming from international finance nevertheless alarmed certain sectors of the Portuguese bourgeoisie, even before the outbreak of the wars of liberation.

It is the national liberation struggles in Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique that account for the alterations which one may presently observe in the political and economic structures of Portugal, changes that have occasioned internal disputes within the regime.

European imperialism, in compliance with the new neo-colonialist strategy, had decided to launch an economic offensive with the aim of acquiring new markets in the underdeveloped areas of the old continent. Portugal is thus invited to participate in the economic and political construction of Europe.

In the last decade, Portugal has been increasingly penetrated by capital from external sources, bringing in its wake the development of more modern economic methods as contrasted to the traditional sector. Even in the colonies, there is occurring a transformation, albeit to a lesser degree, of the classical exploitative schema by the establishment of associated capitalist interests that take the form of large commercial and mining firms.

Within the Portuguese bourgeoisie, there exists an increasing split of economic and political interests. Without question, the interests of the conservative element, the owners of the latifundia, the textile and cork manufacturers, those of the poor and moderate income settlers diverge more and more from the interests of that fraction of the Portuguese bourgeoisie allied

* This backwardness in the economy is aggravated by the feudal and para-feudal systems of land tenure.

to European high finance. These differences appear concretely as a political struggle within the structure which until now has served as the guarantee of the compromise between the various elements of the Fascist Portuguese bourgeoisie: the '*Uniao Nacional*'

The commencement of the wars of liberation gave new ammunition to the reformist wing of the bourgeoisie, whose political representatives are former collaborators of the Fascist regime. This group, while expressing scepticism about the possibility of Portugal being able to remain in the colonies by means of the army, need a transition period in order to attain political power, to readjust the country's fragile economic and financial structures in a European direction, and eventually to create neo-colonialist apparatuses in our countries.

The penetration of capital into Portugal and the colonies since 1961, the issuing of new basic laws, the effort to promote new African elites, constitute various attempts to mystify the peoples of our countries, as well as African and international public opinion. It is important to notice that these attempts were made at a time when certain political figures, belonging to the reformist section of the bourgeoisie, held portfolios in the government. They are part of the efforts towards the gradual creation of such neo-colonialist apparatuses. If the reformist bourgeoisie were to start a process of 'decolonization' the exact forms it would take after they took power would depend, in each of our countries, on the comparative strength of popular forces as mobilized in the liberation movement versus that of the repressive armies.

The African social instruments of this neo-colonialist policy might be located principally in the strata of the petty bourgeoisie and the traditional chiefs.

However, Salazarism, the viewpoint of the ultra-colonialist elements of the bourgeoisie, has succeeded in the short run in postponing the disaster that the loss of the colonies would represent to the Portuguese bourgeoisie by preventing the increasing conflicts between the opposing elements within the Portuguese ruling classes from exploding.

The unstable equilibrium of the Portuguese bourgeoisie rests at one and the same time on the intensification of repression in the colonies and on the appeal to foreign capital. But the financial burdens of maintaining repressive armies in three zones of combat, as well as a police apparatus, surpasses the economic possibilities of an underdeveloped country such as Portugal.

Discontent increases among the popular strata, the youth, the middle bourgeoisie and even in certain Catholic circles. Once the fragile economic structures of Portugal and the sacrifices imposed upon the working classes were no longer sufficient to sustain the costs of the colonial war, it became necessary to appeal for international military and financial assistance. The first countries which lent their aid to Portuguese colonialism were Spain and South Africa, but later there came the various NATO countries, in particular West Germany, Great Britain and the USA. The present regime is thus able to continue to wage its colonial wars by a combination of past accumulation of financial reserves, extraordinary taxes and foreign loans.

But neither the doctrine of the *Estado Novo* nor the moral support of the

Church provides ideological or moral justification for this genocidal enterprise.

As the struggle of our peoples becomes deeper and more extensive, military costs go up, and the Fascist bourgeoisie ties Portuguese monopoly capital ever more closely to imperialism. The contradictions within the bourgeoisie itself become sharper, which will speed up the pauperization of the petty and middle bourgeoisie, and the intensification of the anti-Fascist struggle.

The ultra-colonialist segment of the bourgeoisie must face up to the historical impossibility in political, economic and even intellectual terms of its perceiving the national liberation movement intelligently in the new spirit of our times. The bourgeoisie pursues the logic of its options: it will die as its world disappears. The independence of our countries will bring about its destruction. It has no choice but to continue the war *at any cost*.

The armed insurrection of the Angolan people, in February 1961, aroused at first a homogeneous reaction in Portugal: the propaganda apparatus of the regime, counting on patriotic sentiments with racist overtones, and taking advantage of the absence of an anti-colonialist political consciousness, was able to bring the Portuguese people to approve of 'killing Blacks'.

The violent reaction of the ruling groups in Lisbon to the position taken at the UN by the United States demonstrates the extent to which a climate of national exaltation reigned in Portugal at that time. Chauvinistic mobilization created a base for the 'depolarization' of the anti-Fascist resistance.

Then, in what constituted a second stage, the contradictions became sharpened between, on the one hand, an intermediate bourgeoisie allied to international capitalism, which supported a certain political liberalization, and on the other hand, a national monopolist bourgeoisie. This phase, having begun in early 1963, saw the development of two parallel movements: the first, an evolution in the economic policy of the Portuguese state; and the second, a psychological change in the Portuguese people itself.

We can state that the first round of the struggle within the Portuguese bourgeoisie was won by the lobby of the monopolist bourgeoisie. They were able to ensure that the regime continued along the same lines of ultra-colonialist exploitation based on traditional administrative and political patterns.

But the wind of change that now blows in Portugal is in part the consequence of political pressure exerted by the imperialist powers. Granted access by the new administrative regulations to investment in the colonies and drawing on their experience elsewhere in Africa, those powers backed the regime in Lisbon financially, economically and militarily.

As for the level of the popular masses, here we witness a tangible movement of political reaction against the pursuit of colonial wars.

In the beginning of 1961, the fact of a colonial war constituted a source

of economic profit for all those involved in the Portuguese army: the General Staff and the various military commands, the majority of the junior officers and the draftees. There has been little change in this position since.

The movements of protest and the ever increasing number of deserters still result from individual attitudes. They tend to be found primarily among the junior officers who have come from the universities where they had taken part in campaigns of political clarification on the question of colonialism.

The three categories of factors which exert an influence on the anti-colonialist attitudes of the Portuguese people are as follows:

- a) the action taken by progressive political movements which feel the need to attack Fascism on its home ground;
- b) the increase in the cost of living, aggravated by wartime sales taxes;
- c) the increasingly important action taken by the advanced sectors of the Portuguese students.

It is obvious that a complete evaluation of the impact of the colonial war must consider the qualitative differences that have emerged within Portuguese society, as a result of the fighting on three fronts which are taking their toll in increasing casualty rates and exhaustion. In the last analysis, it will only be in the reaction of the population to these realities that we can expect a mobilization against the colonial war in Portugal.

Conclusions

1) The impact of the European neo-capitalist offensive upon the fragile socio-economic structures of Portugal has brought about a split in the economic interests of the Portuguese bourgeoisie. This split has repercussions on the regime. The contradictions within the Portuguese social strata have become sharper due to the national liberation struggles.

2) Economic, political and psychological motives explain why the most retrograde sector of the ruling bourgeoisie fights to keep the political and economic status quo and pursue the colonial wars.

3) Taking into account the present state of relations of internal and international forces, some changes in the Portuguese political scene may well occur shortly. In this case, the reformist bourgeoisie would play a decisive role on the basis of a compromise with international finance.

4) This sector of the bourgeoisie would attempt to apply neo-colonialist solutions which might nonetheless differ from country to country, depending on the strength of the local forces and also on the political position of the neighbouring states.

5) Despite the serious differences of orientation among the various trends of the Portuguese opposition, we must take their struggle against the Salazar regime and colonialism to be a political fact favourable to our cause of national liberation.

6) While recommending increasing cooperation between the Portuguese democratic opposition and the liberation movements within the CONCP on the basis of mutual advantage, we must bear in mind that the objective of our struggle is a form of national independence that excludes any neo-

colonialist solution.