

Caetano: More Attuned to History?

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From a declaration made in Dakar (Senegal) by the Secretary-General of the PAIGC, on the occasion of turning over to the International Red Cross three Portuguese prisoners on 19 December 1968. Translated from French.

Although the political death of the Portuguese dictator has not created illusions in us, because our people and our militants are aware of the fact that we fight against Portuguese colonialism, which we have never confounded with the politics of a man, it is nevertheless true that certain political changes

may become possible in internal Portuguese politics, particularly in regard to the style of government and repression. In the long run, these changes might become more significant, as a consequence both of the increasing pressure of new phenomena which have taken place and will continue to do so in the life of Portuguese politics, conditioned and traumatized as it is by a colonial war, and of the need for the progressive affirmation of the personality of the new Prime Minister. From this perspective, some claim that Mr. Marcello Caetano, younger than his predecessor, and more sensitive to the historical realities of our times, will be able to understand the irreversible character of our national liberation struggle and the inevitability of our African peoples' access to national independence, the only possible conclusion of the war which Portuguese colonialism has forced upon us.

Last November 27, in the speech read to the Portuguese National Assembly, the new Prime Minister was able to give a peculiar emphasis to the desperate situation of the war in our country. In so doing, he not only gave indirect homage to our people and our party, whose prestige is a reality on an international scale, but he also showed that he had an acute knowledge of reality. The fact that he resorted to Salazar's jargon, to a certain patriotic demagogy as well as to the dramatized evocation of the scarecrow of 'Communist subversion', does not significantly limit the scope of the speech, and could be explained by the imperious necessity of appeasing the *ultras* and of moderating the action of those Portuguese who, from all strata of society, notably from the students and the youth, have dared to manifest their hostility towards the colonial war. Although proclaiming his decision of maintaining our people under the colonial yoke 'at whatever price', the leader of the Portuguese Government is well aware of the fact that, besides the enormous and irremediable losses in Portuguese lives and supplies, at the worst our people may sweep from the soil of our country any kind of Portuguese presence, too stained by the crimes of the colonial war and the attempts at genocide of our populations. It would be better to be realistic, to face up to the *vultures* of the colonial war courageously, and to obey the demands of history: to negotiate with our party for the accession to independence of our people, who are already in control of over two-thirds of the national territory, and thus preserve the possibility of useful cooperation between our countries.