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AGOSTINHO NETO ANSWERS 13 QUESTIONS

During a recent trip to Europe, Comrade Agostinho Neto, President of the MPLA, gave two interviews: one to Radio Cologne, in Federal Germany, and the other to the Italian socialist paper "Avanti". The questions asked by the journalists from these two countries have here been grouped according to theme.

THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA

Q. What is the situation in Angola today? (Radio Cologne)

A. After ten years of struggle, we have arrived at a situation which makes us hopeful of consolidating the independence struggle in our country. More than one-third of the territory is under the control of the MPLA's armed forces, that is, in the north, in Cabinda, in Moxico and Cuando Cubango regions, and also in a part of Lunda and Bié. There has been a ~~quantitatively~~ qualitative change in the struggle, both internally and abroad. Internally, our tactics have improved and our action is more vigorous. Our action is such that the Portuguese colonialists have completely evacuated the areas under our Movement's control. They are no longer safe in their barracks, which are often attacked. Their air force is no longer safe either, because we are attacking it too. In the liberated regions we are building an independent life, organising an administration with all the administrative bodies needed for the life of the people. Still internally, we have set up mass organisations: the women's organisation, the trade union organisation, the youth organisation, the pioneers etc. They help us to consolidate the unity of our people around our Movement, so as to carry on the struggle. Externally, over the past few years world opinion has developed positively, which is of course a result of our struggle. It is coming out increasingly in favour of independence for the colonies and a number of countries today recognise us as the true representatives of our people.

Q. The programme put forward by your Movement and the structures you have set up in the liberated areas show your concern to create true democracy and to avoid the compromises which other African countries have fallen into. Can you outline the basic principles guiding the creation of this new society? ("Avanti")

A. In drawing up our programme our major concern was how to prepare

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our militants to defend an independence which is costing us so dearly.

If we are waging an armed struggle in which the finest sons of Angola often lose their lives, it is because we really want our independence; and if we affirm our will to maintain our Movement's autonomy, it is in order to preserve, with an ethic deeply rooted in the Movement, the autonomy of our country and of our people. This independence also requires that we have truly democratic organisation in which the people take an effective part in the solution of major problems. Definitive structures will be established taking into account both ^{as from} traditions and the new social development of our country. But ~~right~~ now, this is the orientation of our Movement. In the areas under our control, administration and control of the population and its activities are carried out by Committees elected by the people. No outside interference could change this participation, which has now become a habit with our people. These Committees constitute the basis for future Popular Assemblies, in which representatives of all strata and sectors of the population will take part.

What will be the system we shall practise? That will be laid down by the Constituent Assembly.

- Q. The Portuguese Government has recently announced a draft constitutional reform providing for autonomy for the colonies. What do you think of it? (Radio Cologne)
- A. There has been no change of position as regards Portugal's colonialist concepts. When the Portuguese government talks about a multi-racial society, all it means is that power must remain in the hands of the settlers and that the African population must submit to their power, which we obviously do not accept. Recently Marcelo Caetano did indeed put forward a proposal on so-called autonomy for the colonies. This new formula arises out of the need to adapt to the present situation and is a result of the pressure both of the war and of world opinion. There has been no substantial change, and this is why we do not accept this decentralisation which can only strengthen the power of the settlers in our country.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

- Q. What role is ~~xxxxix~~ the South African racist government playing among the forces working to maintain the status quo in Africa? ("Avanti")

- A. South Africa constitutes a real danger to Africa. It is an expansionist country which is seeking bases in several African countries, especially economic bases, which are the most important in that they make exploitation and political control possible. It is helping to militarise Portugal, it is actively intervening in Angola and Mozambique and it has signed a pact with Rhodesia and Portugal for the defence of their common interests in Southern Africa. These three countries ^{are} ~~want~~ ^{advocates of} ~~want~~ the establishment of white power throughout the Southern part of Africa. Finally, with a view to strengthening its own position, South Africa is trying to disrupt African unity within the OAU, making contacts and trying to restore relations with some African countries.
- Q. What do you think of the Cahora Bassa scheme (Mozambique) and of the Portuguese-South African scheme for Mozambique to achieve independence within the framework of white Africa? (Radio Cologne)
- A. You have mentioned Cahora Bassa. Of course, this is a project which has interested ~~xxx~~ several countries in Europe, and also in America, in building a dam which would benefit South Africa, Rhodesia and Mozambique. It should be said that in Angola there is a similar scheme, perhaps of the same value, on the Cunene River, for irrigating ~~xxxxxx~~ an area of about 505,000 square kilometres. It is intended to supply electricity to the uranium mines in Namibia. This scheme is not yet very well known, because it has not been presented to world opinion, but it has the same purpose, which is to bring in settlers and strengthen white power in our continent. The two bodies of opinion which have emerged in Portugal on changing the colonies into neo-colonial, so-called independent countries, are, in my opinion, merely formulating solutions intended to achieve the same aim. The partition of Mozambique is being envisaged by those who believe that the northern part, where FRELIMO already controls part of the territory, is lost. They are therefore admitting their defeat by proposing ~~xxx~~ dividing the country and creating and strengthening white power in the southern part, which would naturally be linked to South Africa. This I believe to be the present Lisbon government's solution, but one which has not yet been ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ finally agreed to. It is also putting forward another formula, which is to federate all the colonies with Portugal. This means that instead of maintaining white power in only one part of the territory, ~~xxxxxxx~~ they would have to maintain white power throughout the territory, and this with the help of South Africa. It is South Africa

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which is supporting Portugal with a view to achieving this situation; it is South Africa's wish to establish white power in Angola and Mozambique and to consolidate the political and economic position of the settlers, so as to prevent any change in the apartheid system which the South Africans are fighting.

- Q. Are there already any of the African states "which dream of the creation of a white state" in Southern Africa? (Radio Cologne)
- A. Everyone knows Malawi and other countries like Madagascar. Recently it was the Ivory Coast that declared itself prepared to establish relations with South Africa. There are others which would like to take the easy way and come to terms with South Africa. I do not think they are the true African patriots. They are not among the countries which are fighting for the complete liberation of Africa, the ideal which prompted all the countries to form the OAU. These countries are not the ones which really represent revolutionary Africa. They are, it can be said, the ones which are betraying the interests of our continent.
- Q. Houphouet Boigny is involved in dialogue with South Africa and Portugal... (Radio Cologne)
- A. We believe that dialogues can only take place when there is a material basis for dialogue. In the present situation there is no material pressure on South Africa. We do not understand how dialogue could solve the situation. A serious struggle must first take place and there must also be pressure from all the African states, or from the liberation movements in South Africa, very clearly showing the whites in South Africa that they are not the masters of these territories which they have colonised, since we consider that in South Africa there has also been colonisation. A white minority is ruling millions of Africans. We think that this kind of proposal means capitulation to the enemy and, as fighters, we cannot give ourselves up to the enemy without exhausting our forces, without trying to achieve an aim acceptable to our people. Therefore, I think that if we compare the struggle against South Africa with the struggle we are waging against the Portuguese colonialists, we can say that to be involved in dialogue is to have dialogue with the Portuguese. To propose a dialogue with Portugal would mean laying down our arms and giving ourselves up to the enemy, to say nothing of perhaps accepting something even worse than slavery.
- Q. Do you think that armed struggle is the only way to solve the conflict

between the African peoples in Southern Africa and the racist and colonialist forces in that region? (Radio Cologge)

- A. Yes! It is only through armed struggle that one can oppose the consolidation of the forces that want to dominate South Africa. I think that the struggle will become more radical, because the intentions of the colonialists and South African racists are increasingly opposed to the wishes of our peoples. In Rhodesia there is a situation similar to the one in South Africa. There are the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique which are fighting arms in hand to prevent a tougher confrontation between the liberation forces and the dominator. There are different proposals with different intentions. There are those who are for real independence, the end of the war and the transfer of power into the hands of those who represent the people, that is to say, those who understand the rights of the different peoples in the world. There are those who want to adopt moderating formulas just to weaken the vitality and commitment of the liberating forces in our continent. There are also those who want to see the war end for the sole purpose of preserving their interests, particularly their economic interests. Finally, I believe that one way or another, war is already being waged ~~and~~ and a change like the one in Rhodesia, with the unilateral declaration of independence, is impossible in Angola and Mozambique, where we are already fighting, where there is no hope for the racists and colonialists. We are going to achieve victory and ~~we~~ win our independence.

THE OAU

- Q. Do you believe that the OAU has always maintained a firm enough attitude towards neo-colonial and South African pressure? In particular, how does the OAU live up to what the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies expect of it? ("Avanti")
- A. I will answer that question in all sincerity, despite the fact that our African brothers do not very much like us to talk about them outside our continent. But I think that we are all living in the same world, even if we inhabit different continents and belong to different ethnic groups. The OAU's programme, which was to unite all the African peoples against colonialism and neo-colonialism, so as to promote the development of Africa, to intensify relations and communications, in short a whole series of technical programmes, has been only very partially achieved. I would even say that, as concerns decolonisation - which is the most urgent political problem - and

the struggle against the racist regimes in Southern Africa, the OAU's action has not yet been as truly uniform, serious and determined as it should have been. We even lack material aid. It is incomprehensible that this should not accompany the advance of our struggle. When we expand the combat front, we then lack the means to maintain the positions won. If all of Africa were to cooperate, the struggle would be easy. In 1961 we started our war with eight guns. Now we have thousands of them. Our people's ability and will to fight the Portuguese are tremendous. At present, however, to fight against modern technology one must have modern technical means and well trained cadres. It is in this respect that we still have to mobilise our African brothers.

- Q. What might be the consequences for the OAU of the differing views of African countries on the question of dialogue with South Africa and Portugal? (Radio Cologne)
- A. The OAU is an organisation which is isolated from the political life of the African countries. It is not ~~now~~ an organisation in which a common stand is taken, except in very limited cases. The only reason, the only objective which, in our opinion, can bring the African states together is the struggle against colonialism and racism. In other spheres certain agreements on technical and economic cooperation and so forth can be made. But from the political point of view, the OAU can only observe, can only maintain a passive attitude to the actions of each country. This is due to the lack of homogeneity in the policies of the various African countries. I repeat: the only thing which is still valid in the OAU and which is accepted by all countries as a principle is decolonisation, the fight against apartheid. The moment that guiding line is broken, we will have a very serious situation in the OAU.

NATO

- Q. What is the position of the NATO countries towards the colonial war? (Radio Cologne)
- A. Ten years ago NATO members denied the existence of the liberation movements. We ~~have~~ ^{had} many difficulties with the authorities in western countries, because their alliance with Portugal was too strong and our right to independence was not recognised. I think that all countries are today aware that we have the right to have our independence, to determine our own future, to run our lives in accordance with the interests of our own people. This is why even within NATO there has been criticism of Portugal aimed at changing

the colonial situation, which is undesirable for various reasons.

Q. What do you think to be the fundamental reasons for the NATO country's effective complicity with Portugal and, more generally, for the desire of the western countries to maintain the status quo in Africa? ("Avanti")

A. There is no doubt at all that the principal motive resides in their economic interests. All the NATO countries are, through their capital, participating to differing degrees in the exploitation of the peoples in the Portuguese colonies. The European involvement is well known. Investments are increasing at a growing pace and important projects have been embarked upon only recently. Moreover, Portugal, in Europe, and its African colonies, occupy a strategic position which could serve as a base for offensive or defensive action in Europe. I think this is sufficient to explain the desire of the NATO countries to maintain the status quo in Africa. They are afraid of independence. They think that when people free themselves from colonial rule, it is to put themselves at the disposal of other countries, the socialist countries, to be more precise. The existence of a confrontation between capitalism and socialism is often very much felt in Europe, and this fear mobilises a certain body of opinion. However, if one analyses the development of the independent African states, one can see that almost everywhere there is a certain autonomy in relation to the various ideological currents. Some countries are very active and dynamic in the struggle against colonialism. They are simply fighting for a just cause. Others are not very active. They are not fulfilling their African duty. As concerns our Movement, we have stated on many occasions, and ~~we wish to demonstrate~~ ^{it is our concern to demonstrate} ~~that~~ ^{this, that} we are absolutely autonomous and do not follow directives from any world power. It is we who establish our policy, it is we who formulate directives for our life and, finally, it is we who determine our orientation.

Q. What role can a NATO country play in the context of the colonial war, in a positive way? ~~Can~~ Federal Germany, for example? (Radio Cologne)

A. Pressure is possible, first from the material point of view. Federal Germany, for example, and the other NATO countries, supply the material foundations for the continuation of this war. It is not only the arms, which are NATO arms, which are used in our country. There are all the technical facilities, even the technicians, experts sent either to Portugal or to the colonies who help Portugal to

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p pursue this war on the three fronts. There are also the investments made in the colonies. There are certain projects which are financed by capitalists from NATO countries and which help Portugal to maintain this situation and also to give a false impression about the (apparent) development of these colonies to impress world opinion. Therefore, if the NATO countries limit the use of war material, if Portugal has to use it only within the framework of NATO and not to carry out repression in the colonies, if there is economic pressure, the suspension of investments, and if there is also diplomatic pressure against Portugal, this could certainly greatly help us to strengthen our position ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ throughout the world.

