

wird es dem sorgfältigen Leser manche Denkanstöße und Diskussionsanregungen liefern.

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BASIL DAVIDSON

In the Eye of the Storm

Longman, London 1972, Pp. 355

WILLIAM MINTER

Portuguese Africa and the West

Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1972, Pp. 176

After the liquidation of British, Belgian and French colonial empires, some of us thought that colonialism (as distinguished from neo-colonialism) had come to an end or at any rate that its long awaited demise was at hand. Unfortunately, the persistence of Portuguese colonial oppression and slavery have proved such optimistic opinions to have been mere wishful thinking. Basil Davidson and William Minter document the long history of oppression and revolt in the Portuguese-occupied territories and expose colonialism in its greed for the control of material resources and its cynical disrespect of the most elementary of human rights.

Davidson is undoubtedly a poet writing in prose and his introductory chapter entitled "The Seed of Midwinter", is a moving account of his stay with the Angolan liberation fighters. He describes the difficulties which these courageous men face in the forests, the material deprivations they put up with, and their inadequate arms supply. On the whole the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) appears fortunate in its leadership. Men such as Neto, "Paganini", Américo Boavida and Eduardo dos Santos strike one as knowing where they are heading for. In any case, they are more likely to introduce a just and humane system than the Portuguese have done in the centuries they have controlled Angola.

What has been the Portuguese justification for their occupation of African territories? They allege they have a mission to bring "civilization" to Africa but everybody knows that their main occupation on this continent has been slavery and exploitation. Africans have been regarded mainly as useful labourers who would provide the whiteman all he needs for a comfortable life, not only in the colonies where they provide direct services but also in the metropole where their wealth furnishes capital for other projects. The present ruler of Portugal, Marcello Caetano, has stated this view very clearly: "The natives of Africa must be directed and organised by Europeans but are indispensable as auxiliaries. The blacks must be seen as productive elements organised, or to be organised, in an economy directed by whites" (cited at p. 82 Davidson).

Even if we assume for a moment that the Portuguese had other motives apart from economic profit and believed in their "civilizing mission", the question which arises is what civilization did they have in mind and with what persons did they intend to fulfil this mission? As Davidson correctly declares, ". . . theirs was the civilisation of petty traders concerned almost uniquely with the slave trade. Few were literate. Most were imbued with an ingrained 'racism' which supposed their own God-given superiority. So far as the records show they had a total indifference to African culture, even a total ignorance of it. Men who would have lived in Portugal as penniless nobles or small employees lived here as little kings,

lording it over their domestic slaves, admitting only their own narrow interests" (p. 98). With such elements, most of them "degredados" (convicted criminals), it is no wonder that centuries of Portuguese rule has not brought any visible progress to Angola. Whether in education, health or housing the Portuguese colonies cut a poor figure when compared to the British and French colonies (and this should not be taken as defence of colonialism, however benevolent or enlightened it may have been in certain colonies).

The Angolans have been waging a valiant war for over ten years now in order to regain their independence and to control their own destiny. But why do the Portuguese cling on to their colonies for so long and how does tiny Portugal manage to control such vast territories as Angola and Mozambique? William Minter gives us an answer to this question: Portugal holds on to her colonies because unlike other colonial powers who abandoned colonialism (direct exploitation) only to practice neo-colonialism (indirect exploitation), she would in all probability be unable to retain any influence in these areas once she grants formal independence. Economically, she is very dependent on the resources of the colonies. But Portugal alone would be unable to take advantage of the vast resources of her colonies and could not have maintained her control in the face of resistance from Africans. Her survival is mainly due to the active support of the Western powers:

"Even in the initial stages of Portuguese colonization, major enterprises were under foreign control. In Angola, the Benguela Railway and the Angola Diamond Company are under the control of British, South African, and Belgian financial interests. In 1966 the Angola Diamond Company alone provided approximately 5 per cent of government revenue in Angola. In Mozambique, Sena Sugar Estates, the largest producer of sugar in the country, is British owned. Earlier in the century the Mozambique and Niassa Companies, with British, French, and German capital, had responsibility for economic development and even government control over much of the country" (p. 32).

The help given to Portugal in the past has been doubled in order to exploit the recently discovered resources:

"More recently, the spurt of development in Angola and Mozambique is based almost entirely on foreign investment. The searchers for oil are American, French, German, South African; those who exploit and refine it are American, French, German, South African; those who exploit and refine it are American, French, Belgian. The increased production of iron has been conducted by international investment, with Friedr. Krupp of West Germany at the head. The hydroelectric and irrigation projects on the Cunene and Zambesi Rivers are dependent on South African direction, and finance from South Africa and Europe. From Portugal itself, reports the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 'the real net flow of private capital to the overseas provinces is not very appreciable' (OECD Economic Survey: Portugal, 1966)" (p. 33).

The support given to Portugal by the Western powers is not confined to purely economic exploitation. It extends to military aid which is necessary for the maintenance of colonial domination. Minter shows in great detail the involvement of the Nato powers in the wars in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea. That the arms supplied to Portugal by her Nato partners are being used in Africa is by now admitted by all. In fact Portugal has never denied this since she considers the

colonies to be part of her territory, and according to this way of thinking, arms used in colonial wars are being used in Portugal and not elsewhere. Only the embarrassed Nato Partners have tried to advance the argument that Nato weapons are for defensive purposes in Portugal. Military support takes the form of supply of ships (built in France, West Germany or loaned by the U.S.A.), planes (American, French or German), exchange of knowledge and information of strategic value, and the provision of training facilities. For example, Portuguese soldiers have been trained in chemical and biological warfare at the VILSECK school in West Germany (p. 108). Some officers of the Portuguese army have completed their training at the Headquarters or the American First Infantry Division in Germany. German involvement in the military sphere is fairly balanced on the economic side (Telefunken, Friedr. Krupp, Siemens). Blohm and Voss (Hamburg) construct warships for Portugal to use in her colonies (p. 135).

Despite the success of the national liberation movements, it is clear that they are up against not only Portugal but the whole block of Western countries and that victory will be delayed by this massive support to the colonial power. The cessation of Western involvement can only come about if these powers were faced with a choice between the colonial and racist regimes, and independent Africa. So far such a situation has not arisen. The African countries have not always been conscious of their duties towards their brothers in Southern Africa and other areas under foreign domination. Nor have they been always conscious of their long-term interests. They have allowed themselves to be deceived and to be preoccupied with their so-called under-development, not realising that in the final analysis their present situation is the result of colonial exploitation. Indeed some African leaders talk and behave as if colonialism were a phenomenon to be encountered only in the history books and consequently are oblivious of the main problem in Africa which is the liberation of the rest of the continent from oppression and slavery. The recent attacks on Guinea, the assassination of Amilcar Cabral and Eduardo Mondlane, the violation of the territorial integrity of Zambia and Senegal by the racist regimes, are additional proofs, that no one will be safe on the continent of Africa until the racist regimes in the Portuguese colonies, Rhodesia and South Africa are removed.

It is worth noticing that the same countries which are "eager" to give "aid" to independent African countries are the very ones which support the racist regimes in Africa. The wealth which is created by the slave labour of Africans goes, as has been the case for centuries, primarily to Western Europe and the U.S.A. and these countries in turn hand over little bits to independent Africa. Will independent Africa have the courage to say to western Europe and the U.S.A.: "If you really want to help us, stop supporting those who suppress our brothers and sisters?" It would be naive to think that such appeals would solve the basic problem, for the economic interests involved are too great to admit of easy solutions and as the accounts by Davidson and Minter show, only the determined struggles of the African peoples will end colonialism.

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