Southern Africa Fights Colonialism
The Portuguese-held possessions in Africa comprise the last remaining colonial empire in the world. Of the 28 million people calculated by the United Nations to be still living in dependent status throughout the world, exactly half live in the Portuguese colonies in Africa—Angola, Mozambique, and Guine-Bissau.

Although the Portuguese have plundered Angola, Mozambique and Guine-Bissau for the last 450 years, they have only been in control since the 1920s when armed resistance from the African population was finally crushed. In the 1930's Dr. Antonio Salazar then-dictator of Portugal, for political and economic reasons began to revive a Portuguese imperial consciousness. This meant a closer integration of the administration and economies of Portugal and the colonies to the advantage of Portugal. A system of price control, forced cultivation and compulsory quotas to Portugal of certain crops, and restrictions on industry in the colonies ensured Portugal a supply of raw materials—cotton, coffee, cocoa, for example—at prices which gave its textile and coffee industries an advantage in the world market.

The price of the colonial policy for the Africans of Mozambique, Angola, and Guine-Bissau has been high. Although slavery was abolished on paper
by the Portuguese, the system of contract labor which took its place shows the reform to be meaningless. By means of tax requirements and vagrancy laws (a person not working for cash payment--i.e., a Mozambican peasant--is considered a vagrant and is to be "rehabilitated" by forced labor) people are forced to spend months at a time building roads or cultivating cash crops for which they are paid virtually nothing. Portugal also has a deal with South Africa by which Mozambiquans are sent as cheap mine labor to South African gold mines in return for a fee paid to Portugal for each laborer sent, and a certain percentage of South African railway traffic through the port of Lourenco Marques.

Forced cultivation has meant either being taken to work for a certain period of time on a large foreign-owned plantation, or being forced to use your own land for production of a specified cash crop, to the neglect of food production.

While Portugal sells "its" coffee (for example) at a great profit--60% of which goes to the U.S.--that coffee is actually being produced by the peasants in Angola, shown above working on a coffee plantation.

A peasant's son from Cabo Delgado province (Mozambique) described the effects of this policy on his own family and neighbors:

"The time of cotton production was a time of extreme poverty because we only produced cotton at a low price and we didn't have time to cultivate our fields."

The low price he was talking about, for 519,000 people officially said to be involved in cotton production in Mozambique in 1956, was estimated to be an income of $11.17 per person for an entire year of work. Ruth First states, however, that estimates should be closer to 1 million people, which would make the yearly income that much lower.

A Mozambican peasant, Joachim Maquizal, tells how Portuguese colonialism affected his life:

"...the company paid money to the government and then the government arrested us and gave us to the company. I began working for the company when I was twelve...The whole family worked for the company; my brothers, my father--my father is still there. My father earned and still earns 150 escudos a month($5.30). He had to pay:
195 escudos tax yearly. We didn’t want to work for the company but if we refused the government circulated photographs and a hunt was started. When they caught them they beat them and put them into prison, and when they came out of prison they had to go and work but without pay....Thus in our own fields only our mothers were left...All we had to eat was the little our mothers were able to grow. We had to work on the tea plantations, but we didn’t know what it tasted like. Tea never came to our homes.”

After World War II there was a general movement for independence throughout Africa. This was true also in the Portuguese colonies, and by the middle fifties clandestine movements had formed to protest the oppression. Repression was severe, arrests were numerous, and the level of protest grew in the three colonies, although any kind of organization by Africans was outlawed. There were numbers of strikes, written and verbal pleas, demonstrations and finally gatherings which resulted in massacres by the Portuguese.
By the late 1960's it became clear that such sporadic, non-unified resistance would only result in repression and death, and that more organized political structures were needed. Thus political groups were formed. It became increasingly clear that such moderate actions as strikes that were being used against Portugal only resulted in the destruction of the participants. Portugal was unwilling to permit any meaningful reforms or moves toward independence. Many of these political groups developed into liberation movements by the early 1960's. They were organized toward ending Portuguese colonial rule in Africa. Armed struggle for liberation—the only open alternative to Portuguese oppression, began in Angola in 1961 under the leadership of the MPLA, Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola; in Guinea-Bissau in 1963 under PAIGC, African Party for the Independence of Guine and the Cape Verde Islands; and in 1964 in Mozambique under FRELIMO, the Mozambican Liberation Front.

As resistance within the colonies developed against Portuguese rule, Portugal realized that it was unable to finance what had become a long and expensive war. To encourage foreign economic investment and therefore military commitment, Portugal opened its previously locked doors and invited international investment in the colonies, particularly by its NATO allies. U.S. companies now have extensive investments in Angola and Mozambique, where companies like Gulf are extracting oil, or have mining concessions for the gold, diamonds and ore, and where great profit is realized by exploiting cheap labor.

This policy has paid off for both Portugal and the capitalist countries. Portugal not only receives taxes on the profits of the foreign companies in its colonies but is the beneficiary of extensive foreign aid—military and economic—from countries which find they have an interest in continued Portuguese rule in Africa. It is to this end that President Nixon gave a $436 million loan to Portugal in the Azores last December, that the U.S. trains the Portuguese military both in Lisbon and the U.S., that Green Berets have been seen in the last 8 months in Angola, and that 200 U.S. military advisors were seen entering Mozambique two years ago. It is also for these reasons that many of the bombs, napalm, and herbicides that are being dropped on the people of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau have U.S. military or NATO markings on them.
Participation in NATO has given Portugal access to the advance weaponry and technology of its allies. While many NATO countries will state that NATO military equipment is meant for use only in Portugal itself, in practice this is not followed and much NATO arms and resources are being used in Africa.

As the poorest country in Europe, without the extensive aid that Portugal receives from NATO countries and South Africa and Rhodesia, it would be unable to invest 160,000 troops and a million dollars a day in three wars and still have some semblance of balance of payments at home.

ARMED STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

“Our action is directed toward the conquest of the future. And for the future toward which we are struggling, we must fight to resolve the present contradictions between our desire, our right to self-determination, and the arrogant colonialist imposition, by force of arms, of its domination over the Angolan territory.

Our patriotism at this moment can only be expressed through participation in the struggle. And by the struggle I mean participation in both the military and political actions taking place inside the country.”

Agostinho Neto, President MPLA
Armed struggle has been going on for ten years now, in Angola, Mozambique and Guine-Bissau. What have their liberation struggles meant in the lives of the people?

In Angola MPLA controls almost one-third of the country, which includes five liberated regions, and the semiliberated or contested, zones extend through the eastern half of the country. In Mozambique the three northern provinces—three-fifths of the country where over one million people live—are free. In Guine-Bissau over two-thirds of the country is free, and more than half the population lives in liberated territory. The Portuguese are now only in small enclaves and the coastal cities of Guine. The first national elections are soon to be held in Guine, and this fall PAIGC will be sending a representative to the UN to request recognition of Guine-Bissau as an independent nation.
These victories represent the determination of people who are fighting under incredible hardships. Even in areas where the Portuguese have been thrown out on the ground, they still bomb from the air. In Mozambique, as an example of conditions, during the dry season there is no natural vitamin C, and vitamin C is supplied by one Fizzy tablet per week to each person, when it is available. In Angola herbicides have destroyed much of the food supply & natural vegetation. Fighting has been thus far in the eastern region which is mountainous and cold, and there is a severe blanket shortage. There are few medicines available, food shortages, and lack of weapons in each of the three liberated areas, and all supplies going to the interior must be carried on the heads and backs of the people.

Despite these hardships, the liberation movements have established educational and health systems where the Portuguese provided virtually none. Even as the fighting is going on, schools are being built, children are being taught, clinics are being established, nurses, doctors and paramedical help is being trained. Liberated lands are farmed—collectively & individually—new crops are being raised using new methods, local industries are beginning and networks of “people’s stores” provide the people with their economic needs.

The people of Angola, Mozambique and Guine understand that they are fighting Portugal, not the Portuguese people, that the Portuguese people are oppressed by the same system that oppresses people in the colonies. They take a strong stand against racism. They state that the issue of racism divides people along wrong lines: they are not fighting to have a black dictator rather than a white dictator, but for liberation. Thus they see their fight as not only being against a colonial power, but against the capitalist and imperialist systems which are behind the colonial regime. Many of the African nations have won political independence while their economies have remained, or have come under the control of, foreign powers. The people of Angola, Mozambique and Guine-Bissau understand this. They are working for complete liberation in a classless society in which people can live a life that is in their interest, rather than in the economic interest of an exploitative power.

Therefore, life in the liberated zones is one in which everyone has equal responsibility for the progress of the struggle, and equally reaps the rewards. Everyone participates in all aspects of the struggle, military and civilian, food production, teaching, and fighting.
The course of the liberation struggle was succinctly analyzed by one Mozambican who stated recently "First we will throw out the Portuguese, and after the Portuguese leave, the South Africans will come and we will need to throw out the South Africans; and after we throw out the South Africans we will need to throw out the Americans." The people of the Portuguese colonies realize that they are involved in a protracted war, protracted because the stakes are so high for the imperialist nations. They also know that they will win.

The stakes are interrelated. Part has been discussed in mentioning U.S. and Western economic interests in Angola and Mozambique, particularly. The other aspect is the importance to South Africa that Portugal maintains its hold on the colonies. Angola, and Mozambique border on white minority-controlled Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), South Africa and South West Africa (Namibia). Under Portuguese domination they complete the picture of Southern Africa as a unified, white supremacist stronghold. Politically this is important to South Africa, for it sees correctly that were the Portuguese colonies to win their liberation struggles, resistance movements in the rest of Southern Africa would not only have support nearby, but a close base from which to operate. Economically, ties between Portugal and South Africa are continually increasing. As mentioned before, South Africa uses a lot of Mozambican cheap labor through agreement with
Portugal. Many South African companies have invested in the Portuguese territories. There are presently two hydroelectric dam projects being built in Mozambique and Angola, the Cabora Bassa and Cunene Dam Schemes, respectively. Not only is there joint South African, Rhodesian, Portuguese and Western financing involved, but South Africa and Rhodesia will benefit most from the hydro-electric power that will be generated. Completion of these dams is also to involve the settlement of a million white Europeans around each one, thus strengthening the white strongholds in Southern Africa. The two dams running east-west, will stretch just about clear across Southern Africa, and will serve as a northern boundary for white Africa—more to keep the liberation movements east than the whites in. All of this is part of South Africa's outward-looking foreign policy, which is working toward creating Southern Africa as an economic outlet and political state of South Africa.

For all these reasons South Africa is presently militarily and financially committed to the Portuguese prosecution of the war. South African troops are to be found not only defending South African investments-like the Dam schemes, but fighting alongside Portuguese troops. It is commonly felt that if South Africa feels that Portugal will lose the war, South Africa will wage them on its own behalf.

South Africa's economy itself is greatly bolstered by extensive U.S., West German and Japanese investment, and to say that the above is South African policy is also to say that it coincides with the interests of Western and Japanese imperialism. The return on investment in South Africa is the largest in the world (profit averaging 20%). That return is dependent not only on the cheap labor, and availability of natural resources, but also on the continued expansion of the South African economy. The four hundred U.S. companies involved in South Africa, just as much as the South African white minority government, see expansion beyond the borders of South Africa itself for both raw materials and markets as necessary for continued profits and a booming economy. Although the resources of Angola and Mozambique have barely been tapped, experts feel that in terms of natural resources they may be the wealthiest areas in the world. All of this makes it crucial to South Africa and the imperialist powers that Portugal maintain its colonialist position in Africa.
There are no accurate census figures; estimates vary tremendously. White settlement has greatly increased in recent years after intensified effort by the Portuguese Government to encourage white settlement as a counter to the liberation movement successes. Thus Angola: 79,000 whites by 1950; 209,000 whites by 1959; 400,000 whites by 1968. (Sources: Portuguese Government Information Bureau, New York Times, July 7, 1968.)
Chicago Committee for the Liberation of Angola, Mozambique and Guine-Bissau. For further information, literature, to donate material support to these liberation struggles, contact them at 2546 N. Halsted—the New World Resource Center—(Open Tues through Sat. from 2-8 p.m. Closed Sunday and Monday.)