

Combat the Mania of Militarism

PAIGC

From the Palavras de Ordem Gerais, issued by the PAIGC and signed by Amilcar Cabral, Secretary-General, November 1965. Translated from Portuguese.

Comrades,

In order to continue to develop our struggle victoriously

We must develop and strengthen the day by day political work with the people, among the militants and combatants of the Party:

(1) In the liberated zones, we must take all the necessary measures to normalize political life. The local committees (*tabankas*) of each zone and region must be consolidated and function normally. They must hold frequent meetings with the population, in order for them to be aware of the struggle, the watchwords of the Party and the criminal intentions of the enemy.

(2) In the areas which are still occupied by the enemy, we must reinforce the Party's underground work, the mobilization and organization of the peoples, and prepare the militants to act and support appropriately the actions of our militants. In particular, in the urban zones (cities and towns) we must establish watchwords to strengthen the work of the militants, re-establish the bonds where they have become loose, prepare the members of the Party, especially the workers, for action against the enemy and in defence of our material goods.

(3) Among the armed forces (army and guerillas) wherever we are, we must develop political work, hold frequent political meetings, demand serious political work from the political commissariats. We must make the political committees of the People's Army, composed of the political commissars and the commandant of each unit function properly.

We must combat the mania of *militarism* and make each combatant an exemplary militant of our Party.

(4) We must reinforce political work and propaganda among the enemy forces. Make posters, leaflets, letters, write things on the streets, send messages, etc., in order to inform the enemy forces of the policy of our Party. We must establish prudent contacts with elements of the enemy forces who want to contact us, act with audacity and initiative in that field, bring those elements to serve the Party in favour of our struggle, and against the criminal colonial war. We must do everything to help the enemy's soldiers to desert, and to guarantee them, by any means necessary, their safety so as to encourage them to make the decision to desert.

(5) We must do political work among those Africans who still serve the enemy (civilians and soldiers), bring these brothers to change their way, either to serve the Party among the enemy or to desert with weapons and ammunition and join our forces. But we must act strongly, destroy all those who deliberately betray us, who continue to fight on the enemy's side, against our Party and our people.

(6) We must do everything to strengthen our fraternal relations with the neighbouring countries, with their people and authorities. We must not permit any member of the Party to become involved in the internal affairs of those countries. We must be vigilant towards elements of those countries who may wish to become involved in our affairs, or take advantage of our struggle. We must act firmly against those agents of the enemy who are citizens of the neighbouring countries. We must place at the frontiers only those in whom we place absolute trust, who are honest, devoted and able to carry out their duties. In particular, we must take all necessary measures in order urgently to improve our relationship with Senegal, to establish good cooperation with its authorities, in defence of our interests. . . .

On the Application of Some Principles of the Party

In the present stage of our struggle, and in order to strengthen our organization in the face of its large responsibilities, it is not enough to make every leading organism of the Party function, it is not enough to do valid political work and act efficiently, victoriously at the military level. In order for the Party to be better everyday and to meet its responsibilities, it is indispensable to apply the principles of organization and struggle which the Party has adopted as being fundamental norms of its actions at all levels of life. Such is the case of the principle of *criticism and self-criticism* for the resolution of internal problems and contradictions, of the principle of *collective leadership* in the life of the Party, the principle of *democratic centralism* and *revolutionary democracy* in the decisions to be made at all levels and in carrying out the watchwords of the Party.

(1) We must develop the spirit of criticism among the militants and leaders. We must give each one, at each level, the opportunity of criticizing, of giving his opinion on the work and behaviour of the others or their actions. We must accept criticism, wherever it may come from, as a contribution to the betterment of the Party's work, as a demonstration of active interest for the internal life of our organization. We must remember that criticism is not to speak ill or to make intrigues. To criticize is and must be the act of expressing an honest opinion, in front of the interested parties, based on facts and in a spirit of justice. It is to evaluate the judgement and action of others with the aim of improving this thought and this action. To criticize is to build, to help to build, to give proof of sincere interest in the work of others, and in the improvement of such work. It is to combat *gossip*, the mania for intrigue, tattling, unjust and unfounded criticisms. To evaluate the thought and actions of a comrade is not necessarily to gossip. It is to praise, to encourage, to stimulate, but also to criticize. We must not spare a compliment to those who deserve it, even though we must be vigilant against personal pride and vanity. We must compliment joyfully, honestly, in front of others, all those whose thought and action serve the progress of the Party. We must also apply just criticism, honestly denounce, censure, condemn and demand the condemnation of all those who engage in acts which contradict the progress and the interests of the Party. We must combat errors and faults face to face, help

others to improve their work. We must learn lessons from every mistake we or others may make, in order to avoid making new mistakes, so that we do not do foolish things others have done. To criticize a comrade does not mean to be against him, to make a sacrifice of which the comrade is the victim. It is to show him that we are all interested in his work, that we are one and the same body, that his mistakes hinder all of us, and that we are aware, as friends and comrades, of the need to help him overcome his deficiencies and to contribute each day to the improvement of the Party.

We must develop the principle of criticism at each one of the Party's meetings, in all committees and in the armed forces. Both in the guerillas or in the army, after each operation against the enemy, we must evaluate the results of such action and the behaviour of each combatant. We must learn lessons from that action in order to do more and better actions. In school, in production, in commercial activity, in assistance — all levels of our life and struggle — we must be able to criticize and accept criticism.

But criticism (a proof of the others' wish to help us or of our wish to help others) must be complemented by a process of self-criticism (a proof of our wish to help ourselves in the improvement of our thought and action).

We must develop among all militants, leaders and combatants, a spirit of self-criticism, the capacity which each one has to analyse concretely his own work, to distinguish what is good or bad in it, to recognize his own mistakes and discover their causes and consequences. To criticize oneself is not to say simply 'yes, I recognize my fault, my mistake — and forgive me,' and then be ready to commit further mistakes. It is not to pretend to be sorry for one's mistake and then feel that in effect it is others who do not understand one. And least of all self-criticism is not a *ceremony* which one undergoes in order to commit further mistakes with a clean conscience. To criticize oneself is not to buy an indulgence or to do penitence. Self-criticism is an act of honesty, courage, comradeship and of awareness of our responsibilities, a proof of our will to do our duty, a demonstration of our determination to be better each day and to improve our own contribution for the progress of the Party. Sincere self-criticism does not necessarily involve acquittal. It is one's engagement with one's conscience in the aim of not committing further mistakes. It is to accept our responsibilities in front of others and to mobilize all our capacities in order to do more and better. To criticize oneself is to remake oneself in the aim of serving better.

(2) We must apply the principle of collective leadership progressively at all levels of the Party. We must do everything so that the leading organs of the Party may really function, not on the basis of one, two, or three people, but of all of its members, men and women.

Collective leadership means leadership by a group of people and not by one or more people of a group. To lead collectively, in a group, means to study problems together, so that a better solution may be found. It means to make decisions together, to take advantage of the experience and intelligence of each and everyone in order better to direct, to command. In collective leadership, each person in the executive must have specific, well-defined functions,

and be responsible for the execution of the decisions taken by the group in terms of his functions. To lead collectively means to give each leader the opportunity to think and act, to demand that he be responsible, that he have initiative, that he demonstrate with determination and freedom his creative capacity, that he serve well the work of the group, which is the product of everyone's efforts and contributions. To lead collectively means to coordinate the **thinking** and action of those who form the group, so that there be the greatest success in carrying out the groups' tasks, within the limits of its competence and the framework of the activities and interests of the organization. But it is not and could not become, as some may think, the right to uncontrolled opinions and initiatives, the creation of anarchy (lack of government), disorder, contradiction among leaders, empty discussion, a passion for useless meetings. Nor does it mean to allow incompetence, ignorance, intellectual insolence free rein, so that one may feel that everyone is leading. If it is true that two heads are better than one, we must know how to distinguish the heads, and each head must know exactly what it has to do. In the framework of collective leadership we must respect the opinions of those who are more experienced, we must learn with their experience, and they must help the less experienced ones to learn and to improve their work. In the framework of collective leadership there is always someone who ranks higher in the Party and who therefore has greater individual responsibility, even though the responsibility of the group's tasks is shared by all the members of the group. We must give them prestige, help them to improve themselves, but not permit that they take care of all of the group's responsibilities. We must, on the other hand, fight the spirit of laziness and lack of interest, the fear of responsibilities, the tendency to agree with everything, to obey blindly, without thinking.

We must combat the spirit of the petty king, the traditional chief, the boss or the foreman among the leaders. And we must also combat the spirit of the vassal, of the subject at the service of the chief, and of the zealous worker, servant or boy, among the leaders and militants. In the framework of collective leadership, the higher ranks of the Party must demand from those below them the rigorous fulfilment of their duties in the spirit of intelligent and constructive cooperation. The lower ranks must demand from the higher ones the distribution of specific duties, clear watchwords, and the taking of decisions within their competence.

We must combat the spirit of factions or cliques, the desire for secrecy among certain people, personal quarrels and hunger for power.

Collective leadership must strengthen the capacity for leadership in the Party, and create the conditions that will allow the Party members to show their worth.

(3) We must develop, respect, and make respectable, the correct application of democratic centralism in the practice of the Party's decisions and watchwords. We must concretely limit the functions of each leading organ, study deeply each problem or new initiative, make objective decisions and give clear watchwords for each task and for the practical fulfilment of the Party's watchwords.

Democratic centralism means that the decisional power, the establishment of tasks, of dire action, is concentrated within central organs or entities, with well-defined functions, but that those decisions and orders, etc., may be taken democratically, in terms of the interests and opinion of the mass representatives, based on the respect for the opinion and interests of the majority. It means that each decision related to a new problem must be made after a wide and free discussion by the interested parties, from the base to the summit, if it concerns a matter related to the whole life of the Party. After that discussion, and in accordance with the results of that discussion, the central organs must make a decision which must be immediately carried out at all its respective levels without further discussion.

It is *centralism*, because the power, the capacity to decide and lead is concentrated in special organs, and no other organ or individual may use that power. It is *democratic* because the utilization of such power by those organs does not depend solely on the will of those who rule, but is based upon the interests and opinion of the majority. In order to improve our practice of democratic centralism, we must be attentive to the aspirations and opinion of the masses in respect to all important problems of our life and struggle. We must make all the basic organisms of the Party and all the leading organs function well. We must develop criticism and self-criticism and accord prestige to the leaders who fulfil their duty.

Democratic centralism is a school of discipline, of respect for the opinions of others, of democracy, and of the capacity to put into practice the decisions that are taken.

(4) We must practice, at all levels of the life of the Party, the principle of revolutionary democracy. Each leader must assume his responsibilities with courage, must demand from others respect for his activity and must respect the activity of others. Nothing must be kept hidden from the masses. We must not lie and we must fight those who do. We must not disguise difficulties, mistakes and unsuccessful ideas. We should not believe in easy victories and in outward appearances.

Revolutionary democracy demands that we must combat opportunism, tolerance towards error, unfounded excuses, friendship and comradeship when these run counter to the interests of those of the Party and the people, the feeling that one is indispensable in his post. We must practice and defend truth always, in front of the militants, the leaders, the people, whatever difficulties may result from the knowledge of such truth. Revolutionary democracy demands that the militant should not fear the leader, and that the latter should not fear the militant or the masses. It demands that the leader live among the people, ahead of and behind the people, that he work for the at the people's service.

In the framework of revolutionary democracy, the power comes from the people, from the majority, and no-one must be afraid of losing power. The leader must be a loyal interpreter of the will and aspirations of the revolutionary majority and, it must not be the owner of power, the absolute ruler who takes advantage of the Party without serving it. In this framework, we

must avoid demagoguery, promises which we cannot keep, exploitation of the people's sentiments, and the ambitions of the opportunists. We must act in agreement with reality, give each one the possibility of making progress, of verifying, through his actions and those of others, that the Party is everyone's doing, and that we all belong to the Party which is our tool in the conquest of the people's freedom and the achievement of progress. In the framework of revolutionary democracy and in the concrete conditions for our struggle, we must always increase the force of the people, for the radical transformation at the base of the life of our people, in preparation for a stage where the weapons and the means of defence of our revolution will be entirely in the hands of the people, once we have conquered the power. We must not be afraid of the people but must bring it to participate in all decisions which pertain to it. This is the fundamental condition for revolutionary democracy, which we must accomplish little by little, in accord with the development of our struggle and life.

Revolutionary democracy demands that the best children of our land lead our Party and our people. We must eliminate, step by step, the bad elements of our Party, those who are ambitious, opportunistic, demagogic (deceivers of the people) those who are dishonest or who do not fulfil their duties. We must make room for those who understand and live fully the life of our Party, those who wish really to serve the Party and the people, those who fulfil and wish to carry out still better their duties as militants, as leaders, and as revolutionaries. The correct application of the principles of criticism and self-criticism of collective leadership, of democratic centralism and of revolutionary democracy, are the effective means of obtaining one of the most, if not the most, important victory of our life and struggle, and that is:

To make the Party belong more every day to those who are capable of improving it.

To make of our Party an efficient instrument in the conquest of freedom, peace, progress and the happiness of our people in Guinea and Cape Verde.