“OUR STRUGGLE AT HOME AND ABROAD”

Interview with Miguel Murupua
Deputy Secretary for External Affairs of Frelimo

Parallel with the people’s war being fought in Southern Africa, goes a continuous campaign to gain international support and sympathy for the freedom movement, and to inhibit aid from the West for the white minority regimes. Just before Christmas, Sechaba talked with Miguel Murupua, Frelimo’s Deputy Secretary for External Affairs, who was returning from a mission to the United Nations in New York. Comrade Murupua had presented a petition to the United Nations on behalf of his organization; shown Frelimo’s film on the guerrilla war to the members of the Committee on Colonialism; and lobbied delegates so successfully that Portugal found herself totally isolated (with South Africa and Brazil) in the most recent vote on Mozambique. The resolution was passed by 96 votes to 3. The NATO countries, including Britain, USA, France, Italy, Greece and Turkey, for the first time abstained rather than vote with Portugal.

Independence Not From UN

“There are those who say that the UN serves no purpose in the struggle for freedom,” Comrade Murupua told us. “It is true, our independence will not come from the United Nations; but our struggle should not be on the military front only. We want to tell the world that there are still possibilities of peace, if Portugal wants it. If Portugal does not want it, we go on fighting. We don’t want to be accused of loving war and disregarding other means of struggle. Independence will not come through the United Nations – but it is the best centre from which to speak to the world.”

FRELIMO feels that a point has been reached in the Mozambican struggle, where it is important to speak to the world. The Frelimo Congress of 1968, held for the first time on Mozambique soil, and attended by foreign observers from East and West, marked a new stage. The fighting, which began in 1964 in one province, is now going on on three fronts (in the provinces of Niassa, Cabo Delgado and Tete); large areas of these provinces are now liberated zones, where Frelimo has taken on responsibility for administration, for setting up schools and health services, for reorganizing the agricultural system, and the system of trade to fill the vacuum left by Portuguese withdrawal.

New Democracy

A new democracy is being born in these liberated areas, where laws are being made by elected representatives at local level, and administered by judicial committees elected by the villagers.

This is a period of consolidation in the liberated areas, and of expansion of the war from bases deeper and deeper in Mozambique; and it is a period of growing interest and sympathy in the outside world. “We want support on a broad basis now,” said Comrade Murupua. “We want to concern people not only in our military struggle, but in the great human struggle involved in building a new Mozambique. We have groups of sympathisers not only in the socialist countries, which have supported our revolutionary purpose from the start, but in Europe and America – I have just come from a visit to Canada. We are convinced that we are going to amass support in the West, and that the near future will see more and more organisations supporting our struggle. And little by little, governments will begin to take notice. An effective expression of public support for us in Britain, for instance, Portugal’s oldest ally, as they call her would be a real moral shock for Portugal.

“Then we need practical support too – we need medical supplies, and school supplies, and agricultural supplies. We hope that the solidarity committees now springing up in so many countries will help to raise money for these, and organise schemes to send us drugs and field hospitals, books and writing materials, seeds and hoes and pesticides.”

Helping each other

Sechaba asked Comrade Murupua what effect he felt the launching of guerrilla war in Zimbabwe had on Mozambique. “But Southern Africa cannot be separated – it is all one,” he insisted, “Smith and Vorster and the Portuguese all recognise this unity, they fight for each other – so our fighting is one, too. If the African National Congress fight in their area, and the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union in theirs, and M.P.L.A. in theirs, and P.A.I.G.C. in theirs – we are all helping each other. But our policy is not to commit our troops to fight elsewhere, and not to accept people from outside to fight in Mozambique.

We feel co-operation is very important, for all the freedom movements – but we understand that the best help we can give each other is so pursue the struggle in our own countries. That is why it is very stupid nonsense for the Government of South Africa to be talking about A.N.C. and Frelimo troops massing to invade the Republic – they are just trying to win imperialist support for themselves, with their propaganda.

“We in Mozambique have already felt the effect of the intensification of the struggle in Zimbabwe. In 1965 and 1966 we were fighting against troops from South Africa,
Today, it is much more difficult for South Africa to send her men to Mozambique, because they are being held down in Rhodesia, and they cannot be spared in the Republic itself. This is not a small thing to us. It helps a great deal.

World opinion grows

One aspect of the inter-relationship of Southern Africa, is the Cabora Bassa hydro-electric scheme, which, though sited in Mozambique, "benefits South Africa in two ways — one, as shareholder drawing profits, and two, as the biggest user of the hydroelectric power." Cabora Bassa is guarded by Portuguese troops — who in turn are target for Frelimo forces, who are already fighting in the area. So the war threatens the success of the Scheme, and the fight for freedom in Mozambique makes itself felt in the Republic too.

What of the end of Salazar's regime in Portugal?
Will that too make its effects felt in Africa? "In the short run," said Comrade Murupa, "that is not important. Caetano is weak, and will follow the old policy, because the military wishes it. But in the long run, Portugal has to change, because of our fight. Portugal cannot afford the enormous military expenditure needed to hold three African colonies, all in arms against her. And as world opinion grows in support of our struggle, the holding will become more difficult. So what we have to do is — strengthen our struggle. At home. And abroad."

1950 with the US aggressors, the Belgian mercenary had come to Congo through the intermediary of the Union Minière.

There had been large areas in Congo where everybody had sympathized with the liberation fighters, "of course we had to make a clean sweep, everybody we saw was automatically regarded as an enemy and had to be shot dead."

From Congo to Biafra

"I am a mercenary as another is a turner at Renault or a car-seller at Citroën," the Frenchman who "also likes his job," confessed. Before his activities in Congo and Biafra he "took an active part in political life" fighting for 'French Algeria'.

The British mercenary termed himself a colonialist with tradition. Recruited through an advertisement in a Johannesburg paper, the racist regimes in Pretoria and Salisbury granted him residence after his return from Congo. His employment with an air company for charter flights in Rhodesia which was to take supplies to Biafra was utilised for underground activities against Nigeria. He said on T.V. that he was disappointed because the British Foreign Office "refuse to give me back my passport because I acted against the interests of the government. I suppose this is a consequence of my activities as a mercenary in Congo. Quite an odd pretext if one considers that we did collaborate with the British Embassy there and that we were supported by it."

— A.D.N. Report

Portugal's War Costs Increase

Portugal's defence expenditure has risen sharply this year to meet the cost of anti-guerrilla wars in its African territories, according to official figures released recently. The Government spent about $70 million on defence in the first six months of last year.

An increase of 25.5 per cent. over the first half of 1967, this represented 48 per cent. of all budgetary spending for the January-June period of 1968. In 1967 as a whole 43 per cent. of all spending — of 10.2 billion escudos (about $149 million) went on defence.

The role of South Africa

The role of the South African racist regime as a recruiting base of white mercenaries was confirmed by all those interrogated on T.V. The tortures and shootings of Africans were depicted by the Belgian mercenary who said many of his comrades from the Congo now possess night clubs and hotels which they bought with the money earned as mercenaries.

"When occupying a country one has the right to take everything that is there. "Yes, it was the South Africans, the white South Africans who pinched most of all," he added. "If I had the opportunity I would immediately return to Africa, to Congo."

Following voluntary engagement in the Korean War in

Shot because coffee was too hot

"There are many under-developed countries or states where it is possible to oppose revolution with the help of white mercenaries." With these words, in a West German television broadcast, a former Congo mercenary from West Germany affirmed his readiness "to begin working as a mercenary at any time provided that money is there." "The mercenary profession has always a future. I mention as an example Africa, Latin America or Asia," the West German said in the telecast in the course of which also a Belgian, a French and a British mercenary "after their return from Africa told their not-always-peaceful stories in the peaceful scene of every-day-life," as the introductory commentary put it.

The West German who had served in the army and then emigrated to South Africa in 1962, reported about his experiences in Congo with the Belgian mercenary Charles Masie whom he described as a "very good soldier, a true dare-devil, and an out-and-out thief." He described as a "real sensational event" the shooting of an African servant by this Belgian mercenary officer because the coffee served by the African was too hot.