

A PORTUGUESE LETTER

JOAO CABRAL

Representative in London of the Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

ON the very borders of South Africa lie two territories where race oppression is both more extreme than in the Union and less dramatic in its results. At least, whatever mass violence there has been in Angola and Moçambique has never splashed its way across the headlines of the world's press: for the Portuguese colonies constitute Africa's "zone of silence". The news that does escape is spasmodic—usually through a visiting journalist or missionary who has managed to penetrate the curtain of security—and, recently, through the few African exiles who have managed to escape abroad. Five delegates from Angola attended the All African Peoples' Conference in Tunis this year.

To disguise the tragic situation in the colonies, Portugal, like South Africa, has developed a "newspeak": since 1951 the colonies have been known as "overseas provinces"; the colour bar operates under the name of "assimilation"; and the series of massacres since 1953 have been perpetrated in the pursuit of "peace and national harmony." A few years ago, Portuguese officials were boasting that Portugal was the first country to set foot in Africa and would be the last to leave; today a new mystique has been developed—that "the essence and the soul of Portugal is to be a country spread over the four continents."

It is this very mystique which makes Portugal the most vulnerable of the colonial powers. The myth of "one nation and one country" forces Salazar to disperse his limited military and administrative resources over a widely scattered empire, from Macao in China, Timor in Indonesia and Goa in India, to Angola, Moçambique and Guinea in Africa, and the S. Tomé and Cape Verde Islands. Besides, these eight colonies are not compact land units, but rather diffused administrative entities, most of them consisting of a number of small enclaves. Goa, for instance, which is called pompously "Portuguese India", comprises Goa proper and two enclaves: Daman 350 miles, and Diu 450 miles north of Goa. While only Goa was the scene of organised national struggle, Portugal could hold her own. She concentrated 12,000 troops (their arms received from N.A.T.O.), and a large number of P.I.D.E. agents there, to terrorise half a million Goans. Portuguese terror means torture in the crudest form—nationalists have been tied to a jeep and dragged to the nearest

town, petrol poured upon them and set alight (1957).

But now the peoples of the other seven territories are intensifying their struggle for liberation. Nationalist movements, most of them still weak and unco-ordinated, are emerging in Angola, Guinea, Moçambique and the S. Tomé Islands (after the ruthless suppression of a spontaneous nationalist rebellion in 1953). The *Uniao das Populacoes de Angola*, *Movimento Popular para a Libertacao de Angola*, *Movimento Africano para a Independencia da Guiné* and *Movimento Anti-Colonial* are today organised nationalist movements, and the beginnings of co-ordination between them arose with the formation of the *Frente Revolucionaria Africana para a Independencia Nacional das Colonias Portuguesas* (F.R.A.I.N.) at the Second All African Peoples' Conference. The Salazar dictatorship is simply not in a position to resist a united effort by the overseas territories for independence. Not only is Portugal the most backward country in Europe, but the Government represents no more than a small clique within the metropolitan country itself. Resistance to Salazar is growing in Portugal, so he cannot count, as other colonial powers have been able to do, upon the backing of a comparatively united population at home. Nor can he even count upon Portuguese settlers abroad. Six Europeans, for instance, are among the 57 leaders arrested for offences against the State in Angola. There are also *assimilados* and coloureds among them. For Portuguese policy over the last ten years has tended more and more to force an identity of interest between the *assimilado* and the unprivileged. The so-called anti-racialist policy of encouraging a minute proportion of Africans to adopt the Portuguese way of life and abandon their own (a legal qualification for assimilated status), has more and more given way to a classic colonialist policy—the settlement of the African territories with the population overflow of Portugal. Poor whites are now doing work that *assimilados* did; and colour discrimination takes the more obvious apartheid forms. The *assimilados*, by reason of the downgrading in their social status if for no other, white settlers and professionals because they too are victims of a fascist rule, are making common cause with the Africans in the new liberation movements. Among the 57 Angolans are civil servants, students, teachers, accountants, engineers, clerks, printers, an architect and a well-known European doctor (Dr. Julieta Gandara). The African rank and file have of course no right to a trial—they are simply massacred or deported to the concentration camps of

Bie and Baia dos Tigres. Over 200 Africans, captured with the 57 leaders, suffered such fates.

This professional and racial variety among the rebels is an indication of the growing strength of the resistance. That resistance exists at all illustrates the intensity of nationalist feeling. For since 1953 the Government has indulged in a campaign of violent repression which would do credit to the Gestapo. Two hundred people from the Cabinda district of Angola have been arrested or reported missing; 100 more Africans have been arrested since March 1959 in other African colonies; 14 are in exile; and more than 1,000 killed in massacres in S. Tomé in February 1953, and more than 50 at Bissao, Guinea, in August 1959. Thousands of Bakongo from Northern Angola are refugees in the Belgian Congo. On July 25th, 1960, the first of three trials involving the 50 Angolan nationalists and 7 Portuguese, accused of endangering the external security of the State, began in Luanda. Dr. Palma Carlos, the Lisbon lawyer briefed to defend 8 of them, was prevented by the P.I.D.E. from leaving Portugal. These prisoners had been arrested in 1959; and in the same year, in June, 52 other Angolans were arrested, among them Dr. Agostinho Neto, doctor and poet, who was actually flogged by the Chief of Police in front of his family and neighbours; and Father Joaquim Pinto de Andrade, Chancellor to the Archbishopric of Luanda, who was deported to Portugal, no lawyer having been allowed to see him since his arrest.

Salazar has, of course, realised the limitations of his forces. For the last four years or so, he has been strengthening his alliances, particularly with South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Spain. These are the countries with a real stake in the maintenance of the Portuguese empire. They are also the countries where the majority population has most to gain by its dissolution. Any major disturbance within the empire may well bring Salazar's fascist regime tumbling down—Franco can then hope to survive for little longer; and South Africa and Southern Rhodesia are left with their defences wide open. The withdrawal of N.A.T.O. aid to Portugal might well by itself bring about the end of one of the worst dictatorships in colonial history; and a determined effort by a united front, in Portugal and the colonies, such as is already forming itself, may have far-reaching effects indeed throughout Southern Africa and Western Europe.