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AGENDA ITEM 79

Non-compliance of the Government of Portugal with Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations and with General Assembly resolution 1542 (XV) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. EREBIH (Mauritania) said that his Government, obedient to the will of the people, took an unequivocal stand on the question of Angola. In deference to the Charter of the United Nations, it could not share Portugal's point of view concerning the so-called "overseas provinces". The photographs which had been displayed filled him with indignation; he could not conceive how Portuguese could have allowed themselves to be photographed in the midst of such carnage. The photographs submitted by Portugal in no way detracted from the effect of those submitted by Guinea. It was clear that Portugal should be made to act humanely towards the territories under its administration. The deaths and mutilations would certainly not intimidate the Angolans or prevent them from continuing the struggle, in which he wished them every success. Portugal must be made to bow to the will of the majority. If United Nations resolutions could be flouted with impunity, that could only lead to the destruction of the United Nations and to anarchy. He hoped that the United Nations would hasten to the assistance of Angola and of all the oppressed peoples.

2. Mr. CISSE (Senegal) welcomed the States of Sierra Leone, Mongolia and Mauritania, which had been admitted to the United Nations at the present session, and assured them of Senegal's sincere co-operation.

3. His country was one of the newly independent States and it had attained sovereignty by peaceful means, through the courageous action of the Senegalese people. He could have hoped that all the colonial Powers, realizing the inexorable march of history, would have granted independence to the peoples they administered, in an atmosphere of peace and co-operation. While it was true that the methods used by the various colonial countries differed greatly, according to whether the aim was the settlement of a conquered territory or exploitation

pure and simple, it was clear that the Portuguese method was the worst of all; that fact accounted for its attitude at a time when all the other colonial Powers were making efforts to liberate the countries formerly under their control. Hence it was not surprising that the nationalists in the Portuguese territories, aware on the one hand of their oppressed condition and on the other hand of the wave of independence passing over Africa, had taken up arms to reconquer their freedom and their human dignity.

4. All Africans who had at one time been under the domination of another people naturally sympathized with those who were shedding their blood in their efforts to attain independence. His Government had broken off diplomatic relations with Portugal because of that country's stubborn policy of racism and exploitation. Portugal was the only country which was still persisting in its refusal to decolonize and there would be no peace or justice on the earth so long as the law of the stronger continued to prevail and Portugal was allowed to oppress other nations. It was for that reason that his Government had supported the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV)). Indeed, he felt that the Committee's debates were meaningless if they did not fully appreciate the importance of that Declaration, the implementation of which would put an end to the type of problem at present under consideration.

5. It was high time that strong measures were taken with regard to the genocide being perpetrated by Portugal. It was clear that mere words would not make Portugal change its present policy. Portuguese colonialism had reached its culmination; if it was not stopped, Portugal would continue to disregard the Charter and the numerous relevant resolutions.

6. Angola was a striking example of the brutal repression Portugal was practising in the countries under its domination. Thousands of patriots were being imprisoned or expelled from their land or mercilessly exploited. A State which carried out such a policy was unworthy to be represented in the United Nations, which had solemnly proclaimed in its Charter the ideals of liberty, justice and equality. Portugal was defying not only the United Nations but also the conscience of mankind. The photographs submitted by the representative of Guinea were further evidence of Portuguese methods. He was surprised that the representative of Portugal had submitted photographs for the Committee's consideration; what the Committee asked of Portugal was full information concerning the Territories it administered.

7. Nevertheless, despite its napalm bombs, its tanks and its guns, Portugal could never halt the irreversible march of history and it would ultimately be expelled from all its colonies.

8. Senegal was a neighbour of the so-called Portuguese Guinea and its Government had often been obliged to take action against incursions by the Portuguese into his country. In Portuguese Guinea, as in Angola, the inhabitants were mercilessly harried. Vast numbers of refugees were crossing the frontier into Senegal. In their man-hunts Portuguese aircraft sometimes flew over Senegalese territory. His Government had made vigorous protests to the Portuguese Government and it wished to declare publicly that it could no longer tolerate such provocations. The States which had attended the Conference held at Monrovia in May 1961 had condemned the policy pursued by Portugal in its various colonies and would continue to take that position so long as the Portuguese Government persisted in its efforts to halt the advance of the colonized peoples towards freedom. Although some members of the Committee might favour ideas and methods which were totally opposed to the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the majority would always be strong enough to establish justice in conformity with the principles dear to the United Nations.

9. Mr. WOLNIAK (Poland) recalled that the question of Portugal's non-compliance with the provisions of Chapter XI of the Charter dated back to the eleventh session of the General Assembly. The crux of the matter was not the mere fact of non-compliance with certain rules or regulations, or even the requirement that Portugal should transmit information on the conditions prevailing in the Non-Self-Governing Territories under its administration; what was involved was the very existence of peoples in the Portuguese colonies, particularly in Angola and Mozambique. Conditions there presented a glaring example of the tragic plight of indigenous people living in what amounted to a modern type of slavery; people whose human dignity was constantly degraded; people who suffered under a régime of terror and who were the victims of mass murders and inhuman treatment on the part of the Portuguese colonialists.

10. Many of the African representatives who had spoken in the debate had been able to give details concerning the conditions actually prevailing in Angola. The photographs which had been displayed were a further illustration of the brutality of colonialism in the Territories under Portuguese administration. To continue to ignore world opinion, which was well aware of the tragedy of Angola and Mozambique, would be not only to underestimate human intelligence but also to jeopardize peace in Africa and in the whole world, not to mention the disastrous defeat it would ultimately bring to Portugal.

11. It seemed incredible that, after the adoption of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, Portugal, the weakest of the colonial Powers, was continuing to carry out acts of terrorism in its colonies. It was scarcely conceivable that the most backward country in Europe, with a record figure of illiteracy and a dictatorial régime, would be able to carry on war against over 10 million people, living in overseas territories covering an area twenty-two times as large as its own, if it had no allies. Among the countries which had abstained from voting on the Declaration were some Powers which appeared to believe that, by supporting Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique, they might manage to maintain the status quo in the so-called Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland or at least delay the process of

national liberation in Central and South Africa. There appeared to be no doubt that United Kingdom, United States and Belgian capital, together with Portuguese capital, was interested in exploiting the mineral resources of Angola and Mozambique. "Law and order" in Angola were being imposed by Portuguese forces using arms supplied by Powers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The results could be seen in the pictures on display, which needed no comment. Clearly, the fate of millions of indigenous people was of little importance compared to the strategic value of bases on mid-Atlantic islands and in Portugal. He hoped that the Powers concerned would not remain silent in the debate or try to disclaim all responsibility for Portugal's actions by uttering platitudes concerning their readiness to co-operate.

12. The essence of the problem lay in the fact that the people of the Portuguese colonies were deprived of their fundamental right of self-determination which was laid down in the Charter and confirmed in the Declaration on the granting of independence. The situation was all the more dangerous in that Portugal, in defiance of General Assembly resolution 1603 (XV), had launched a devastating colonial war against the Angolan people. In the circumstances it would seem advisable for the Committee, guided by the principles of the Charter, the Declaration on the granting of independence and General Assembly resolutions 1541 (XV), 1542 (XV) and 1603 (XV), clearly and unequivocally to declare its stand with regard to the Non-Self-Governing Territories under Portuguese administration. Having taken that stand, the Committee should proceed to recommend urgent measures for compelling Portugal to abandon forthwith its acts of police and military terror against the peoples in the colonies under its administration and to respect their right of self-determination. Those steps should be taken without delay so as to prevent further massacres of the Angolan people, to forestall similar action against the people of the other Portuguese colonies and to remove a possible threat to world peace.

13. The question of Angola was soon to be debated in the General Assembly, whose responsibility it would be to pass judgement and if necessary to apply sanctions. He would therefore suggest that the decisions to be adopted by the Committee might be of assistance to the General Assembly in assessing the situation in Angola. The Committee should undertake to collect all available information on the situation in the Portuguese colonies, including petitions and statements of petitioners. It should certainly not confine itself to such information as Portugal might deign to submit, for the statement made by the Portuguese representative at the 1193rd meeting had by no means implied that his country would be ready to transmit information in future. He hoped that the Committee would adopt a draft resolution condemning that attitude on the part of Portugal.

14. If it acted on the lines he had suggested, the Committee, despite Portugal's disregard of United Nations decisions, would be able to assist the United Nations to complete the liquidation of colonialism and finally to liberate all oppressed peoples.

15. Mr. MAURICE-JONES (Sierra Leone) said that, although his delegation shared the general horror and indignation that Portugal's attitude inspired in the Committee, it had not intervened earlier because

it had wanted to hear what further arguments Portugal might adduce to justify its non-compliance with resolution 1542 (XV). To its astonishment, however, there had been nothing new in the Portuguese representative's statement. As before, that representative had endeavoured to justify his country's non-compliance with its obligations on the grounds that its overseas territories were provinces of metropolitan Portugal and that the General Assembly was consequently not competent to request Portugal to transmit information on those territories.

16. Now, however, whether under pressure or otherwise, the representative of Portugal had voluntarily made certain concessions which, in the opinion of the Sierra Leonean delegation, had seriously undermined his position: he had supplied some information, in the form of photographs, on conditions in at least one of Portugal's dependent territories. Although they were no doubt intended to counteract the impression created by those submitted by the representative of Guinea, the fact that they had been produced was to be welcomed. The photographs not only demonstrated the brutality being perpetuated in Angola, but they constituted evidence of the nature of the information which Portugal was prepared to supply on the Non-Self-Governing Territories it administered.

17. His own delegation was anxious to co-operate with Portugal in giving effect to the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples. Now that Portugal had taken a first step in supplying information, he wished to ask the representative of Portugal whether that sudden change was to be regarded as an admission that the territories listed in General Assembly resolution 1542 (XV) were Non-Self-Governing Territories on which information should be supplied. Doubtless the Portuguese representative would answer in the negative; that, however, would only demonstrate his inconsistency, for he had in fact done what he had been asked to do: he had supplied information. That information not only demonstrated Portugal's inability to administer overseas territories but it also indicated the backwardness of the metropolitan country. Moreover, the photographs submitted by both parties clearly confirmed that there was a war in Angola, a so-called province of Portugal; in other words, Portugal was at war with itself. The United Nations had never been intended to harbour warmongers; indeed, one of the qualifications for membership was that the country should be peace-loving. He was surprised that Portugal was so arrogant as to retain its seat among peace-loving peoples.

18. Portugal was the only colonial Power which had failed to fulfil its obligations under Article 73 of the Charter, but it was not alone in its endeavours to suppress the people in its dependent territories. Previous speakers had referred to the help Portugal was receiving from certain colonial Powers in the form of supplies of arms; those allegations had not been refuted by any of the colonial Powers. It was one thing for a colonial Power to fulfil its obligations under the Charter by supplying information, thus winning the Committee's approbation; it was quite another thing for some of those colonial Powers to supply arms to a defaulting country, well knowing that those arms would be used not only in defiance of the provisions of the Charter but to help in the process of subjugating the peoples of dependent territories. On behalf of the smaller nations he demanded an assurance from the colonial Powers that they had not aided Portugal in suppressing the people of Angola by supplying it with arms and that they would not do so in future.

19. Several representatives of the colonial Powers had indicated in private their resentment at Portugal's failure to fulfil its obligations under the Charter. It was significant, however, that not one of the major colonial Powers had given its views on the question. He hoped that, when the time came, they would show the Committee by their votes that they condemned Portugal for failing to abide by the Charter. He appealed to Portugal to allow reason and good sense to prevail by providing the Committee with the necessary information on the Non-Self-Governing Territories which it administered and to join the other nations in giving effect to the Declaration on independence.

20. Mr. FRAGOSO (Portugal) reserved his delegation's right to reply to some of the comments made. With regard to the allegation made by the representative of Senegal concerning incursions into his country by Portugal, he wished to state that Portuguese Guinea had suffered three armed attacks launched from Senegalese territory. He would revert to that matter in due course.

21. In reply to the question the representative of Sierra Leone had asked, he recalled that he had made his position clear regarding the understanding on which the photographs had been submitted and that that understanding had been confirmed by the Chairman.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.