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OF THE

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ON

THE PROBLEMS OF PORTUGUESE COLONIES

BY

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Prime Minister of India

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Respected Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Friends from Africa, Ladies and gentlemen :

I deem it a privilege to welcome you all to the inauguration of the Seminar on "The Problems of Portuguese Colonies" sponsored by the Indian Council for Africa. It is a matter for gratification and a source of inspiration and impetus to us, in our efforts for understanding and helping African peoples, that today's Seminar is being opened by our beloved Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru.

In this second half of the twentieth century, Portugal has proved to be the most reactionary among Colonial powers. While other Colonial empires have crumbled or are in the process of crumbling, Portugal seems bent on hanging on to her possessions in Africa, India and elsewhere, heedless of the inexorable march of time which has rendered Colonialism an outmoded concept, heedless of progressive international opinion which will no longer tolerate the exploitation of one people by another.

Portugal's continuing to cling to her colonies is a pathetic phenomenon ; but it is also an understandable phenomenon. For, Portugal herself is in the grip of naked and unashamed dictatorship. Indeed, she lacks at home the freedom and the democracy which she has denied her overseas territories. We can easily appreciate why, after five centuries of her overlordship in Africa, there are only half a million people, out of a total

population of 11 million, who enjoy the franchise, when we remember that in Portugal itself only a little more than one million, out of a total population of 10 millions, have the vote. Again, if Portugal has resorted to ruthless repression of nationalists in her African colonies, some explanation of this is to be found in the fact that at home she has suppressed all opposition and thrown leading intellectuals into prison.

But the problem today is no longer a matter only of academic or constitutional interest ; it is one which involves the freedom and happiness of millions. The continent of Africa since yesterday in ferment, is today virtually passing through fire. In practical terms, what has Portugal's rule meant to Africans ? Portugal's much-vaunted boast of conferring Portuguese citizenship on the people of Angola has to be equated with the fact that, after five centuries of her "civilizing mission", a bare one per cent of the Africans enjoy citizenship rights. The rest are *indiginata*, subjected to all manner of controls, among which is the oppressive "contract labour" system which condemns the Africans to labour half the year for niggardly wages. It is this hateful system, on a par only with the "indentured labour" system in South Africa against which Mahatma Gandhi offered relentless passive resistance, it is this hateful system of forced labour that has been responsible for the export of 3 million slave labourers to Brazil and North America in little over a century. The campaign of repression let loose in Angola has already cost over 500,000 lives ; over 130,000 refugees have sought sanctuary in the Congo. The Portuguese objective clearly seems to

be the liquidation of every literate African in Angola. This in brief is a picture of the situation which President Kennedy found necessary to consider "so serious as to become a cause of concern to the world comity of nations".

In Mozambique, segregation of the natives has been perfected, the Natives must carry the pass book and obey the 9'o clock rule in their movements. There is only one African out of 6 million holding a University degree ; less than one-tenth of one per cent of the African population have achieved the status of citizenship. In the words of an expert observer :

"Behind the Curtain of silence, there flourishes an apartheid system of separate and unequal treatment more severe in many respects than that which exists within the Union of South Africa".

In the Portuguese Colonies of Guinea, Angola and Mozambique, it is thus seen that Portuguese citizenship has reached only a microscopic fraction of the people. The facile explanation of this is that "the mass of Africans are culturally, linguistically, morally and intellectually unprepared to exercise Portuguese citizenship" !

In recent times, we have heard of Portugal's promised reforms for her territories overseas which claim to introduce "complete equality for all subjects irrespective of race, religion and culture". This tall talk of liberalization of citizenship rights has been dubbed in informed circles as ridiculous. We are told that the French tried this experiment in Africa earlier and failed. The reported economic developments in Portuguese territories has, in fact, improved living facilities, but only for the

200,000 white settlers ! - The mass of the people are still wallowing in abject poverty and primitive backwardness. Literacy has reached a meagre 3 per cent of the people.

Comparable to her claim of having conferred peace and plenty on her subject people elsewhere is Portugal's claim in Goa. For instance, we have Portugal's recent statement saying, "Life in Portuguese India is perfectly normal, development and economic progress continues, and the patriotism and firm decision of the population to remain Portuguese can never be doubted." For a piece of blatant perversion of this truth, this claim is hard to beat. But it can deceive none. Portugal's invitation to international observers to see and study conditions in Goa squares ill with her persistent refusal to let the UN Sub-Committee on Angala to inquire into the situation there and her repeated flouting of the General Assembly's resolutions demanding information on Portuguese non-self-governing territories in Africa. Portugal's righteous indignation and sanctimonious horror at the hint of the possible use of Indian armed forces for the liberation of Goa and its integration with India, appears to be ludicrous hypocrisy against the background of the merciless military massacres she has perpetrated on African peoples struggling for their freedom.

It must be clearly understood that any connivance, by, if not collusion between, the NATO powers in Portugal's repressive policies will be signal disservice to the cause of freedom and democracy, peace and security in the world. Such a policy will weaken the forces for freedom and democracy, and alienate from them the

sympathies and support of millions of people not only belonging to the free, non-aligned nations of the world, but also those struggling for their freedom. As our Prime Minister has so rightly said, "The Great Powers in the NATO would be tested by the African and Asian peoples by their attitude to Portuguese Colonialism in Angola." This would apply equally to the case of Goa and other Portuguese Colonies.

The United Nations must take a decisive stand on the issue of the early liquidation of colonialism in all parts of the world and the establishment of complete independence in all colonial territories. Portugal must be brought to book for her repeated flouting of the U.N. Charter. Her invoking of "the domestic jurisdiction" clause in Article II must be repudiated and exposed. If Portugal does not obey the United Nations and continues to flout the Charter, Portugal must be expelled from the United Nations and isolated, as an extreme step.

There is no doubt that Portugal can no more stem the tide of Freedom in Africa than Canute could stem the tide of the Ocean. But should freedom be won necessarily at the terrible cost of bloodshed, loss of life and destruction ?

Our great and revered leader, Mahatma Gandhi, showed us how freedom can be attained without violence ; indeed, he won freedom for India without violence. To the student of history it must be clear that freedom won through violence is too dearly won, often proves illusory and impermanent ; that violence breeds only greater violence, hatred breeds only greater hatred. In other words, war has solved no problems and on the other hand, it has created new and more difficult problems. As against this,

we have the statement made by some spokesmen of Africa that they are not wedded to non-violence, that non-violence cannot be a one-way traffic, that African people will resort to violence, if need be, to assert and obtain their inalienable right to freedom.

It is not our wish to offer what might appear to be gratuitous advice to the African people in their freedom struggle as to the means of waging that struggle; we only wish to help them in their struggle to be free. For, free Africa *must* be. That that freedom must come as quickly and as painlessly as possible must remain the hope of all. Avoidable human suffering, the price of violence and the toll of war must be spared, if they can be spared in this age of so-called enlightenment. The question of the freedom of Portuguese Colonies is bound up inevitably and inextricably with the freedom of all people. The world cannot truly exist half slave, half free.

The pressure of international opinion must prevail sooner than later; but that opinion has to be informed, educated and mobilized, if it is to be effective at all. In that process and towards that end, this Seminar on the Problems of Portuguese Colonies must participate, and make its contribution. The Seminar has been convened by the Indian Council for Africa for discussing and devising ways and means of strengthening the nationalist forces in the Portuguese Colonies, in order to hasten the process of liberation of the subject peoples, fighting for freedom. Since we believe in the Charter of the U.N. and in the United Nations and their ultimate ability and efficacy to adhere and implement that Charter, this Seminar will also try to focus the attention of the United

Nations on the urgency of the liquidation of Portuguese Colonialism, not only in the interest of the principles embodied in the Charter, but also in the interest of world peace.

In the Seminar's task of sober and sincere discussion of the various aspects of Portuguese Colonialism and its liquidation, we are fortunate in having the blessings, and will soon have, the guidance we need from Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru. In that task, also, we are privileged to have the close and willing cooperation and collaboration of so many of the distinguished spokesmen, freedom fighters and thinkers from Africa, as also of our friends and colleagues in this country.

As for the Indian Council for Africa, its aims and objects, as well as its activities in the last year or two, I will refer you to the report which has been put in your hands. In brief, the Indian Council for Africa is pledged and devoted to the work of promoting understanding, friendship and cooperation between the peoples of India and Africa. The Seminar, the second of its kind this year, is only a concrete step in that direction.

Before concluding, I must again thank all of you and particularly our friends from Africa, for responding to our invitation to attend and participate in the Seminar. Our special thanks are also due to our beloved Prime Minister for agreeing to inaugurate the Seminar. On behalf of the Indian Council for Africa and on behalf of you all, I now request Shri Jawaharlal Nehru to inaugurate the Seminar.

