

SPEECH BY AMILCAR CABRAL

PRESIDENT OF PAIGC ON THE OPENING DAY
OF THE CONFERENCE

(edited English translation)

Amilcar Cabral opened his speech by welcoming the delegates and then went on to express his appreciation to Italy for allowing the conference to take place in Rome and for having disassociated itself from the Caborra Bassa project. He then called on Italy to go even further in helping Africa to develop its own history. He said: "In the presence of the Vatican we must denounce the criminal complicity of the Portuguese Church in Portuguese colonialism. The Pope should take action against the Portuguese Church and I am making this appeal in the name of 100,000 Catholics in my country.

Those who have come to our country are aware that part of our national territory, in particular the bigger cities, are still occupied by foreign troops. The situation now is that Portuguese troops are moving back to these cities where they remain isolated and paralysed. Our forces, on the other hand, are acting against these very cities. There is therefore an inversion of the situation as compared to the beginning of our struggle. Today there are no longer columns of Portuguese troops which can go right through the country. They can only use planes to bomb our liberated areas or launch concentrated assaults in selected areas in terroristic attacks on the civilian population.

We, on the other hand, consistently attack the ports of the Portuguese. Recently we were able to attack 26 big tanks.

Our action is also directed against the boats on our rivers.

We are also preparing in Cape Verde in order to pass from the political level to the military level.

You will see, therefore, how a population which was largely illiterate is now capable of engaging in a war which is becoming a modern war. We do have great difficulty since we are short of military

material but with help of our friends the prospects are now quite favourable for us. The Portuguese certainly know that they cannot win this war.

On a political level we believe that our people are learning how to develop our self-determination. In our country we no longer have a foreign administrative power. Two-thirds of our territory is independent and visitors have been there for some weeks without seeing a Portuguese official, only their planes.

We feel that we now have the elements of a free state in our country. We have political organisation, we have also set up popular courts and in the villages it is our peasants who judge those who commit crimes. We have also developed a trade system and are now preparing to organise our first popular national assembly. **You see that we no longer need the Portuguese, we have seized our independence ourselves. But we want the Portuguese to leave our country totally.**

Since we have achieved such progress internally, there is a contradiction between our internal and external situations. In our country we are sovereign but on the international level we are not recognised.

On the international level, all those who help us are our friends while those who help Portugal are our enemies. We do not want to interfere in the problems of others whatever the nature of these conflicts may be. We want to pursue a policy of independence, of peace and the solution of our country's problems.

In Africa there are still many contradictions between African states. Elsewhere, even among our allies, there are also contradictions and many problems. This inevitably affects our own progress.

Our Great Progress

But we are making great strides forward. We are diversifying our agriculture, developing our home industries and training the officials for the new administration. We wish to tell you how proud we are of our cultural work, of our new schools, of our new teachers and of the 15,000 pupils all over the country in primary schools. We have built hospitals in the countryside and we have trained doctors, nurses and set up quite a number of medical centres in the liberated zones. As for the situation in Portugal, we must say that we have always drawn a distinction between Portuguese colonisation and the Portuguese people. We hope that Portuguese opposition internally will find a common platform on the basis of the independence for our people. We have always had good relations with the Portuguese opposition of all tendencies and we want to develop better relations with the Patriotic Front of Liberation of Portugal. This is most important. We also hope that the actions of the Portuguese workers and students against the Portuguese war can be further developed. We greatly admire the people of Portugal but we also know that the actions of the ruling class has reduced Portugal to poverty. **Portugal does not produce planes itself yet it is using highly sophisticated planes against our peoples.** Who is supplying these materials? First, the member countries of Nato, and even though people in these countries say that these planes are not intended for use against us it is obvious that you do not give a sharp knife to an idiot who is likely to use it against someone. That is what Nato is doing.

We are not fighting against Nato. We do not think it is necessary for us to destroy Nato for our country to be free but we denounce the fact that Portugal uses Nato arms against us.

We urge that those who are anti colonialist should develop new actions to end this complicity of the Nato powers in the colonial war in our countries. We believe that all those who can act and do not act are likewise responsible.

We hope that all aid to the Portuguese government may be ended so that Italy may not be an accomplice to Portugal in the colonial war.

I wish to refer briefly to the aid which Sweden gives us today. We have developed friendly relations of cooperation with the Social Democratic Party and other organisations. Sweden has given us concrete aid and we believe that this is a useful example for all other western countries. The Portuguese government also think so and it has carried out a lot of propaganda against this aid but I can announce to you all that Sweden has decided to even increase the aid which it is giving us. I hope that other western countries will follow this example. We must isolate Portugal to a greater extent. We must act against this government at all levels, the forms of action depend on the concrete conditions in each country.

This is the affair of the movements in each country.

In this conference we will discuss and suggest concrete measures towards this goal and we hope that in each country a unity of action will develop as much as possible, but in any case each organisation must continue to work in favour of our struggle.

Friends and Allies

I wish to say a few words about our allies and friends throughout the world. We must say to the representatives of African unity that aid from Africa is not in correspondence with the needs of our struggle so far. We know how much the Secretary of the OAU is desirous of giving us aid and we hope that each African state will do its best to grant our needs.

We must here denounce all those in Africa who are against the National freedom of our people. There are people who act even worse than the Portuguese and we denounce them. Like Banda who is an ally of racism in South Africa and of Portugal, and we must ask that an action be developed against him. But we also call your attention to the disguised Bandas.

In the Socialist camp we have always had a sure ally in the liberation struggle. It is the duty of the socialist camp, their historical duty, not only moral duty. And we must say that without the help of the socialist countries it would be very difficult to carry on our struggle.

It is true that we receive material from certain African countries, like Algeria for instance which gives us what it can but unfortunately it does not produce arms. We have even received material in the beginning from Morocco but we must say that it is not sufficient for the struggle we are carrying out today. It is the socialist countries and especially the Soviet Union which help us particularly. We have received important aid from other Socialist countries with regards commodities such as Rumania, Bulgaria, Cuba, GDR, Hungary, and we hope that all these socialist countries will do their utmost to increase their aid because they are historical allies – our struggle is theirs.

In the other countries we must specifically mention the support developing daily in Holland, in Belgium, and in France. We must mention that in our wounded the blood of Frenchmen is circulating and this comes to us every 15 days.

We favour the creation of committees of support throughout the western world.

We particularly hope that the Communist Parties in Western Europe and other left parties, and all progressive organisations anti-colonialist in principle will take all measures to help our struggle.

We have received aid from the Italian Communist Party and hope that this aid will be developed.

I must call your attention to a point raised in Western Europe by some who say they intend to help us but they want to see if we are receiving aid from

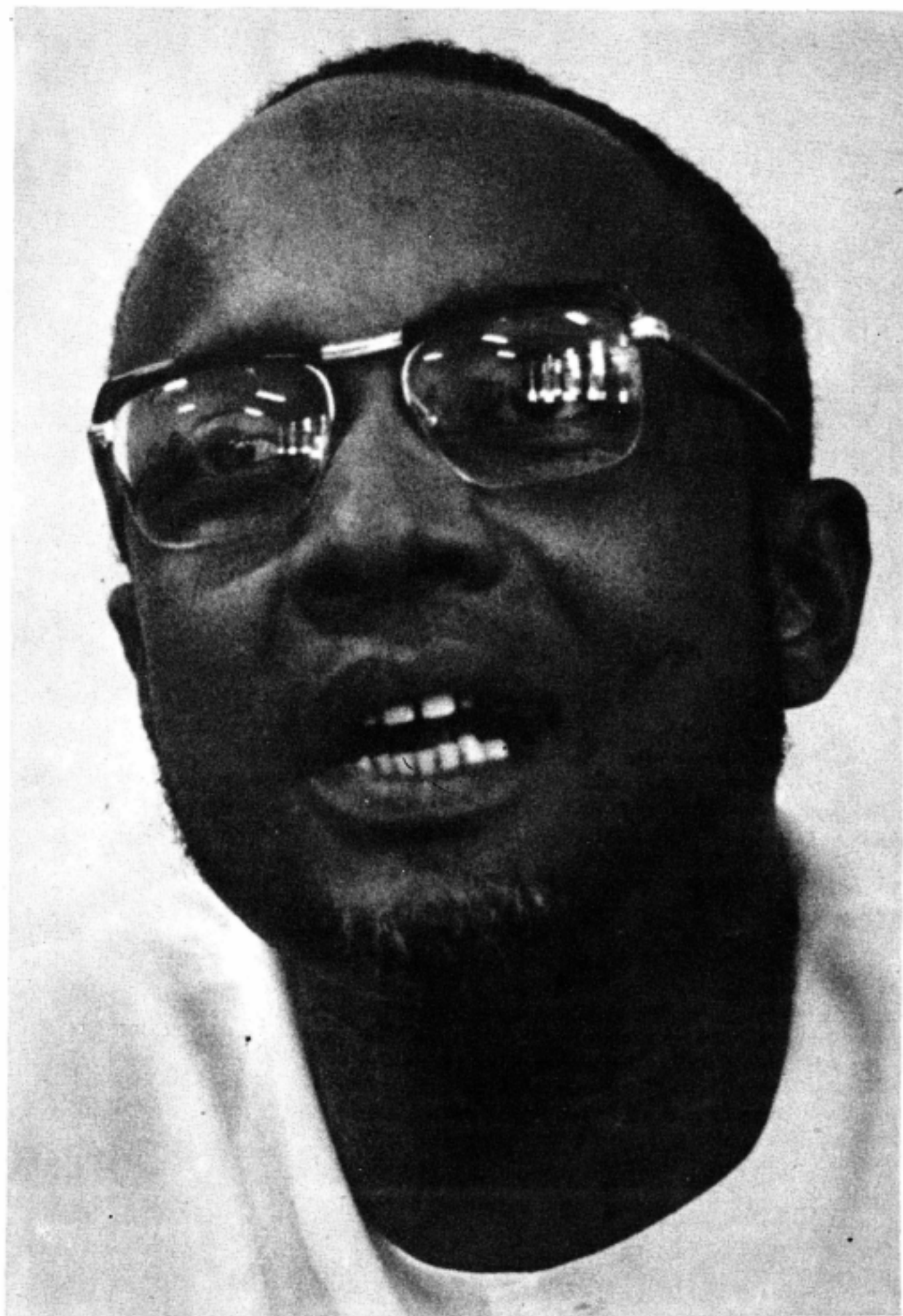


Photo Jeffrey Blankfort

Communist countries. We cannot understand this. We believe that the concrete conditions of life of our people – the difficult struggle we are carrying out fully justifies the principle that we should accept aid from everyone and we must say clearly that we are not anti-communist. Those who wish to help us should do so but they should not raise conditions.

Others are concerned that we may leave our old friends in order to find new ones. This concern should be left aside. We need old friends and new ones. Nobody should fear for us if we do not fear for ourselves. The basic principle of our struggle is that those who are struggling

for freedom and independence must first be free in thought and action. We are sure that all our friends in Western Europe will understand this principle. We are absolutely convinced that our struggle is an act of solidarity towards all people in the struggle for national freedom, but also for all people struggling in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America in the general framework of anti-imperialism.

We hope that all opinions, all tendencies which meet here in Rome for solidarity with us will find here a basis for the unity of the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggle.

(Loud prolonged applause)