

HOMAGE TO COMRADE NETO

- Lucio Lara,
Member of Politbureau,
Secretary Central Committee MPLA Workers' Party

Comrade President,
Dear Friend,

How naive we were when, in the incessant overcoming of obstacles that our struggle has been, we believed that you were invulnerable.

Under your command, Commander-in-Chief, we became accustomed to not believing in defeat and in forging victories for our people.

The certainty of victory was you, who knew how to smile in the face of danger, who knew how to create with dry eyes, who knew neither fear nor doubt before the objectives that were early laid down.

From Portuguese prisons in Angola, Cape Verde and Portugal you knew how to draw the requisite experience to turn them into schools of struggle for our people. From the blows of the PIDE you knew how to learn that it is not men who hate, but monsters, and that racism suffered in one's own flesh can be transformed into revolutionary anti-racism, into love for mankind.

You knew how to make of the medical science that you acquired and practised with zeal a weapon to struggle against the exploitation of man by man, to struggle for dignity. How many of the young people who passed through your consulting room in the Bairro Operário became dedicated patriots outstanding leaders of the struggle of the oppressed Angolan people.

You knew how to be the son who learned from his mother how to wait for the hour of intoning anthems to freedom.

You knew how to be the family head who gave immense affection to his wife and children, as the only compensation for endless absences which have now become permanent.

You knew how to be the friendly brother, the kind relative, from whom a word of warmth was always to be had.

Uncontested leader of a heroic people, you be-

came the father of all the Angolan children, the son of all the mothers of Angola.

In the coffin in which you rest forever, you will not have heard the clamour of the cries of sorrow that your passage unleashed through the streets of the city. Everyone, on their feet, wanted to pay tribute to you and to cry out how their hearts revolted against your departure.

Forgive us, Commander, for this momentary disarray, these bitter tears that we had wanted to be able to contain.

The sorrow is great and it is communicative. The sorrow of the pioneers is passed on to the mothers, and that of the workers is passed on to the soldiers and the peasants.

But we shall also defeat sorrow, just as we defeated the South Africans, and we are going to continue to transform this beloved land into the country that you projected for the future.

Our people, your people, are discovering at this moment that you were a giant, greater even than the image of you that we all had. And it is with determination that we memorise all your guidelines, and here and now solemnly pledge that we will implement them enthusiastically in organising the Party and the State, in the Nation's economic and social progress.

We shall indeed fight without let-up for the total liberation of our people, for the elimination of all the vestiges inherited from colonialism. We shall indeed, the whole people, drive from our national soil the enemies who obstinately refuse to believe in our invincibility.

We shall indeed respect and continue to implement the sacred principles of our socialist option, which are already a visible trail in the new society that we are forging here.

We shall indeed, Comrade President, inject ever more worker and peasant blood into the Party and Government apparatus.

We shall indeed institute People's Power and create the People's Assembly, your last concern.

We shall indeed practice modesty, austerity,

audacity, so as to fulfill your incisive directive that the most important thing is to solve the problems of the people.

We shall indeed strengthen the Defence and Security forces and the ODP, so that our borders become inviolable, so that our people feel security and tranquility.

We shall indeed, Comrade President, strengthen the Party, strengthen its unity, strengthen the unity of the people, dignify Angolan women, educate and see to the future of our Pioneers, your Pioneers.

We shall indeed, President Friend, intensify the building of our Party which, under the banner of Marxism-Leninism, will lead Angola to Socialism, under the leadership of the working class.

We shall remain true to your memory and your teachings, Comrade President, and we shall seek in you the inspiration to overcome the most difficult obstacles.

Dear Friends,
Comrades,

Our great deceased is not unknown to you, is not unknown to the world.

The son of teachers, he was born 57 years ago today, in the village of Kaxikane less than 100 kilometres from Luanda.

The history of his life is truly the modern history of our people's struggle for independence and for dignity.

A health worker, he succeeded in graduating in medicine, a number of times knowing the harshness of Portuguese fascist prisons in his student days, and then gaining great international prestige, which led Amnesty International, in 1961, to make him Political Prisoner of the Year.

A born fighter who was undaunted by any obstacle, he was always accustomed to achieving things by dint of wanting to.

He understood early on that only organisation gives force to the struggle. In contact with progressives the world over, he was able to acquire a truly Marxist consciousness. He worked as a mili-

tant in various youth and student organisations and in 1952, with Angolan shipworkers, he founded the African Shipping Club, a communication link between Angolan patriots who were in Portugal, and those in Angola who were laying the foundations for the liberation movement, which was going to give rise to the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in 1956. The Shipping Club was already instrumental in the denunciation of the massacres of February 1953 in Sao Tomé.

Always seeking more effective methods of clandestine struggle, in 1958, together with Amilcar Cabral, Marcelino dos Santos and other young people from the former Portuguese colonies, he founded the Anti-Colonialist Movement (MAC), with the aim of forging the national consciousness of a youth in danger of alienation, and also for the purpose of denouncing the fascist nature of Portuguese colonialism outside Portugal.

His busy life at the Medical Faculty and in prisons did not prevent him from meeting the wife and companion with whom he was going to travel the long road of the struggle he started.

After completing his course he returned to Luanda where, apart from practising medicine, he started to give impetus to the watchwords of the Manifesto of the MPLA, which was then going through a period of structuring.

It was not difficult for the colonial henchmen to find out that Agostinho Neto had become a pole of attraction for both young and old who, on the pretext of medical consultations, were preparing with him clandestine work in organising and raising people's consciousness.

Prison once more and deportation to Lisbon and Cape Verde made the people of Icolo e Bengo demonstrate peacefully, upon which they were subjected to violent repression which ended in a massacre.

This was a time of the mass imprisonment of all Angolans suspected of political activities.

When the MPLA was restructured, Agostinho Neto was made Honorary President.

Then came the glorious signal of 4 February, which started a new stage in our liberation strug-

gle. The attack on the Luanda prisons by armed patriots armed only with machettes was going to start the Angolan people's liberation war which, despite the ferocious repression of the Portuguese troops, lit up forever the flame of liberation in our country.

From the dungeons in Cape Verde and Lisbon, he entered the period of restricted residence which, thanks to the co-operation between the MPLA and a group of Portuguese progressives, made it possible to plan his spectacular flight to Morocco, accompanied by his wife and two children. There Agostinho Neto met the first guerrilla groups who were being trained with the help of the Algerian National Liberation Front, and from then onwards he assumed the leadership of the problems of the struggle, until he was elected President of the MPLA in December 1962, at the MPLA's first National Conference.

The vicissitudes of a struggle waged under conditions of an extreme lack of means and without any valid support from abroad, never for a moment decreased his unshakeable confidence in success, but on the contrary motivated titanic effort to supply the guerrilla groups in the First Region who were grappling with enormous difficulties as regards weapons.

The crises provoked by the imperialist manoeuvres, in 1963, led President Agostinho Neto to create the Second Politico-Military Region, in Cabinda, where were successfully forged such valiant combatants as the outstanding hero Hoji Ya Henda.

Agostinho Neto's strategic thinking early realised that the First and Second Regions were not sufficient for the MPLA to advance the armed struggle forcefully.

The Third Region was then opened in the centre and east of the country, and this gave fresh vigour to the liberation struggle.

This was the time of the audacity that our President always showed.

Already with more support from socialist and African countries, hundreds of combatants were transferred over thousands of kilometres, from Cabinda and the First Region to the Third Region, where

a new type of struggle was started, based on the establishment of bases deep inside our territory.

This was a time of audacity in preparing and sending in the big Cienfuegos, Kamy and Bomboko columns, taking war material to the First Region, clandestinely crossing hundreds of kilometres in the territory of what was then Congo-Kinshasa and on Angolan territory.

It was a time of audacity, using the success of the first onslaught on the Eastern Front to extend the armed struggle to new regions of our national territory.

Tirelessly, President Agostinho Neto went to the various military regions, each of which was so far from the others, to encourage the combatants, to see to the supplies situation, to correct negligence, to give impetus to action. "Action, more action, ever more action", was the constant refrain on his lips when he spoke to the guerrillas.

The new regions presented new kinds of problems. Repeating rifles and small automatic pistols proved ineffective in the face of the material used by the enemy. Chemical warfare was devastating the people's crops. President Neto realised that a qualitative leap was needed.

The first concern was the men. It was necessary to see to the men, to their improvement, instruction and political consciousness.

The second concern was the material. More powerful weapons, more effective means. And also hoes, machettes and seeds to enable the guerrillas and the people who supported them to develop a small-scale self-supplying war economy.

Centres of Revolutionary Instruction flourished, and the people started to see the first text books, the first medicines and the heralding of a new era.

The first forms of People's Power appeared.

Thanks to the effort of President Neto and the confidence he inspired, better weapons and better equipment started to flow to the guerrilla bases.

The first artillery groups successfully entered the theatre of war. Enemy barracks were already being attacked with more adequate weapons. The con-

fusion that imperialism generated regarding the MPLA was being dissipated.

Neto was also an eminent diplomat who used as his weapons truth, political courage and boldness.

The MPLA started to be supported by the OAU. And it was the President himself who took an OAU military delegation to visit the liberated areas. At international gatherings, together with Frelimo, the MLSTP and the PAIGC, the MPLA developed intense action against Portuguese colonialism, which was already disintegrating. This joint action gave rise to indestructible bonds which gave fresh impetus to the continent's Liberation Movement.

The same is taking place with the liberation movements of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

President Neto was frequently chosen by all the African liberation movements to be their spokesman at OAU or Non-Aligned conferences.

Relations with socialist countries, the reliable rear base of the National Liberation Movement, were given constant attention by President Neto, who earned from all the leaders of the Parties and Governments sincere solid friendship which was going to contribute to the establishment of close relations after Independence.

Meanwhile, at a time of crucial importance - August 1974 - the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA) were formed.

It was during the Second National Liberation War, after the Truce Agreement with Portugal in October 1974, that the personality of Dr Agostinho Neto as a statesman was going to compel the recognition of the whole world.

The violent South African aggression suffered by the Angolan people on the eve of independence led some people to think that the only way the MPLA could safeguard its existence would be for it to accept the proposal made by friends and enemies for collaboration with the puppets who had allied themselves with South Africa and international imperialism. The balance of power appeared to be favourable to imperialism which, in its calculations, did not reckon with the determination of a leader who believed in his people and who did not fear

the worst threats.

Fully assuming his functions as Commander-in-Chief, President Agostinho Neto was able to lead the MPLA forces on the road to victory, using with particular sagacity the weaknesses of the enemy and our reserves, re-inforced at the opportune moment, by the internationalist effort of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces.

After the proclamation of Independence, a new era opened up for the Angolan revolution, which set out to create a society in which the exploitation of man by man would be wiped out.

Comrade President was rapidly to secure the helm of government.

After the South Africans were driven out, with the country ravaged by war, speed was needed in rapidly laying the foundations for new economic development aimed at meeting the interests of the masses.

A difficult task in a country destroyed by war, without sufficient technical cadres to run all the enterprises in which an alienated petty-bourgeoisie tried at all costs to keep the reins of running the affairs of State.

It was a time of great options. The Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the MPLA laid down new development paths.

Confiscations and nationalisations were starting to transform the economic situation inherited from the colonial period.

The creation of the national currency was a new affirmation of an independent life.

The spirit of audacity of the uncontested leader started to make itself felt in every sphere.

There were obstacles of every kind but the Revolution did not stop.

The factionalist coup attempt left a painful memory which President Agostinho Neto never succeeded in ridding himself of.

But the Revolution advanced. It advanced with the audacity of the leader.

And then came the First Congress in December 1977. And finally came the Party of the Proletariat. A new gain, an audacious gain which had been long

planned but which it was only possible to implement in the forge of the political, economic and social situation of the first years of Independence.

Unanimously elected President of the MPLA-Worker's Party, decorated with the National Hero medal, Comrade Agostinho Neto imparted a rapid pace to the building of the new Party, to the Rectification Movement.

From the first militants to the first cells, from the first cells to the first Party Committees in places of work, there was a whole process which was going to bear fruit in the restructuring of the youth, the reorganising of the Organisation of Angolan Women and the organising of the first trade unions in the National Union of Angolan Workers.

In the countryside the co-operative movement did not cease developing.

The best path was sought for the national economy and it progressed, slowly, but it progressed. But the leader wanted to move faster, and this without prejudice to an internationalist attitude towards the liberation struggles, towards other friendly peoples.

Diplomacy started to play an active part in hastening economic development. Co-operation agreements were signed with many countries. The field of international relations was expanded. Successive goodwill missions were received by President Neto, and the retrograde reservations some countries had regarding Angola soon gave way to sympathy and co-operation, even with regimes with a different ideology.

It is in this painful hour that it is possible to assess the enormous prestige that President Dr Agostinho Neto enjoyed throughout the world. Moving messages have come from all over the world, from eminent personalities. Thousands and thousands of them from Bié, from Cabinda, from Cunene, from Kuito, ando Kubango; from Uige, from Moxico, from Benguela, from Huambo, from the Lundas, from Malange, from Zaire, from Kwanza Norte, from Kwanza Sul, from Huila, from Moçamedes and from Luanda, but also from Mongolia and from Britain, from Sudan and from Mexico.

And for you, distinguished Heads of State and distinguished delegates, who have come here to pay tribute to our beloved President, it will be easy to note the emotion of our people at this sad event, but also the emotion they feel at your friendly presence, for which our people warmly thank you.

Esteemed Mother Maria da Silva Neto, it is a great sorrow to lose a son. Our people, our Party, are with you in your immense sorrow and undertake to give you all the support you need.

Comrade Maria Eugenia Neto,
Mario Jorge, Irene, Leda,

The Party shares your deep sorrow. The solution of the problems of our People and our Party has robbed you of many hours during which your husband and your father wanted to be with you, to benefit from your love, to give you the warmth of his presence.

Such is the destiny of heroes.

Our Party assumes the responsibility of caring for you with the same affection that our President devoted to you.

Brothers and sisters of Agostinho Neto, our People and our Party bow their heads before your suffering.

Neto Friend!

Comrade President,

Comrade Commander-in-Chief,

The pledge we have made a short time ago will not be in vain.

Your fidelity to Marxist-Leninist principles will be a living example to the youth and all the Party members. Your concern for the problems of our people will be a priority in our action.

The light of your example will shine forever in the Angolan nation.

Farewell, Neto Friend.

Farewell, Comrade President.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!

VICTORY IS CERTAIN!