

BOOK REVIEW: Rui de Pinto. *The Making of a Middle Cadre: The Story of Rui de Pinto*, Richmond, British Columbia: LSM Press, 1973. Pp. 107. Taped and Edited by Don Barnett. Illustrated by Selma Waldman.

This autobiography is another in a series prepared by the Liberation Support Movement, under the direction of Don Barnett in Canada. In the words of its author, Rui de Pinto, a mestizo born in Luanda, his account was given to Don Barnett in July 1970 "so that many people can understand and feel how we feel about our struggle." The story of Rui de Pinto is clearly one of the most fascinating in this remarkable series which has recorded the life histories and experiences of a number of African revolutionaries.

At the end of his story, Rui de Pinto affirms, "I think that I am not yet a revolutionary," a judgement the reader may have difficulty accepting. The story of Rui is arduous and complex; it involves mixed allegiances and values. In his foreward to this volume, Barnett explains "that the Rui de Pinto life history is but a microcosm of a very general process in which certain members of the colonized petty bourgeoisie 'defect' from the class of their origin and throw in their lot with the oppressed masses." Barnett elaborates on this process: "The unfolding contradictions in Rui's life and consciousness, the subtle interplay of material and subjective elements--of class privilege and racial abuse, personal ambition and recognized social need, life-style and ideals, inclination and opportunity --led Rui through a transforming maze of conflict and resolution from a level of abstract concern for the masses to that of concrete engagement in their life and struggles."

The story begins with the recounting of his early years in Luanda, the capital of Angola. His family was middle class, his father worked as a customs agent for the port authority. Both his parents had a Portuguese father and an Angolan mother. As a young boy a series of incidents makes him aware that his color somehow differentiates him from others, as the racism of Portugal's Lusotropical society creeps into his life. He also begins to note differences in social classes as he recalls the slavlike contract workers of Angola and the importance a teacher gives to his grandfather's name.

He goes to Portugal for further study at the age of fifteen years. This was in 1958 when General Humberto Delgado was the opposition candidate for the Presidency, a time when the opposition for the first time in more than three decades

was able to manifest its views effectively. Rui attends an art school where he is one of two Africans from the colonies. Later he enrolls in an agricultural school where some of his school-mates are sons of wealthy Portuguese landowners.

This was at about the time of the outbreak of fighting in Angola, in Luanda in February 1961 and in the north a month later. Rui confronts a group of soldiers and a distinction is made: they are Portuguese, he is Angolan. When requested by his school director to read a speech to an assembly in which the Angolan terrorists were to be condemned, Rui refuses. He reaches another level of political awareness.

In his rebellion he opposes the authoritarianism of the school, its regimentation and order. He breaks his relationship with a girl from Mozambique, afraid that it will tie him to a life of conformity. He separates from his family. He questions his bourgeois values, and attempts to escape from Portugal in a small sail boat bound for Morocco. The boat founders in rough seas, one of his companions dies from exposure after many days, and finally they are picked up by a Spanish ship which takes them to Cadiz. From there the secret police return them to Portugal--for interrogation, torture, and imprisonment.

Once released from prison, Rui has matured politically. He makes contact with a member of the Portuguese Communist Party. He returns to school, this time in Evora to the south of Lisbon, an area of workers' agitation. Finally, another escape is attempted, this time successfully carrying him through Spain to France and eventually to Paris where his talent in art leads him to a job and his inclinations in politics to the MPLA, the Angolan liberation movement. After some time in Paris, he rejects most material values and longs to become involved in the struggle to liberate Angola.

He returns to Africa where there is a brutal confrontation with rival UPA forces in the Congo. The sharp differences between the two groups which predominated in the early sixties are vividly recalled. Finally he goes to Brazzaville, then to Dar es Salaam, and on to Lusaka. There the MPLA assigns him to train and command one of the first mobilization squadrons for combat against Portuguese forces in the vast eastern region of Angola. Within Angola, Rui describes an encounter with Portuguese soldiers. The details of battle reflect the commitment and determination of the African to struggle for Angolan people as well as the reluctance of the Portuguese to fight hard for their fatherland.

This is an engaging story, one which draws the reader close to the thought and ideas, tensions and anxieties, and the maturation of one yearning to become a revolutionary. As such it offers insight into the complexities of the liberation struggle itself--in the striving for mass rather than elite values, in the reassessment of the mixed alien and indigenous culture, in the desire to become involved in the problems of people. This story allows for first-hand understanding of the Angolan struggle and thus nicely supplements the few existing accounts of reporters and scholars who have been able to put their impressions into writing.

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