



When
bullets
begin
to flower

edited by
Margaret Dickinson

POEMS
OF RESISTANCE
FROM
ANGOLA
MOZAMBIQUE
AND GUINÉ

When bullets
begin to flower

SELECTED
AND TRANSLATED
BY
MARGARET DICKINSON



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Contents

Index of authors	7
Introduction	9
The background	14
The poems	37

PART I BEFORE THE STRUGGLE

Arise and walk	<i>Rui de Noronha</i>	38
Contract workers	<i>Agostinho Neto</i>	39
Song of agony	<i>Gouveia de Lemos</i>	41
The return	<i>Arnaldo Santos</i>	43
The long road	<i>Gabriel Mariano</i>	44
Magaica	<i>Noémia de Sousa</i>	45
Mamparra M'gaiza	<i>José Craveirinha</i>	46
Poem	<i>José Craveirinha</i>	48
Mamana Saquina	<i>José Craveirinha</i>	49
Letter from a contract worker	<i>Antonio Jacinto</i>	51
Black mother	<i>Viriato da Cruz</i>	53
Black blood	<i>Noémia de Sousa</i>	56
If you want to know me	<i>Noémia de Sousa</i>	59
I want to be a drum	<i>José Craveirinha</i>	60
Attention	<i>Mindelense</i>	62
Western civilisation	<i>Agostinho Neto</i>	63
African poetry	<i>Agostinho Neto</i>	64
Mulatto Margarida	<i>José Craveirinha</i>	65
Manifesto	<i>José Craveirinha</i>	67
Poem of Joao	<i>Noémia de Sousa</i>	70
Here we were born	<i>Marcelino dos Santos</i>	75
Mussundo my friend	<i>Agostinho Neto</i>	78

The blood and the seed	<i>Agostinho Neto</i>	80
A different poem	<i>Onesimo Silveira</i>	83

PART 2 DURING THE STRUGGLE

Hoisting the flag	<i>Agostinho Neto</i>	86
February	<i>Agostinho Neto</i>	89
Fourth poem	<i>Fernando Costa Andrade</i>	90
Judgment of the black man	<i>Kaoberdiano Dambara</i>	92
The people went to war	<i>Antonio Jacinto</i>	93
To you, the people	<i>Mario Cissoko</i>	94
Those strange times	<i>Armando Guebuza</i>	95
We must plant	<i>Marcelino dos Santos</i>	97
When my brothers come home	<i>A. Almeida dos Santos</i>	99
Love poem	<i>Antonio Jacinto</i>	102
Partisans song	<i>Anonymous</i>	105
Our sure road	<i>Sampadjudo</i>	106
A militant's poem	<i>Jorge Rebelo</i>	108
The theme	<i>Onesimo Silveira</i>	109
The long day's march	<i>Onesimo Silveira</i>	109
Your pain	<i>Armando Guebuza</i>	110
We shall not mourn the dead	<i>Helder Neto</i>	111
To point a moral	<i>Marcelino dos Santos</i>	116
Poem	<i>Jorge Rebelo</i>	127
Biographical notes		130
Sources for the poems		133
Suggestions for further reading on the background		133
Index of first lines		134

Index of Authors

NUMBER OF POEMS

FERNANDO COSTA ANDRADE	1
MARIO CISSOKO	1
JOSE CRAVEIRINHA	6
VIRIATO DA CRUZ	1
KAOBERDIANO DAMBARA	1
ARMANDO GUEBUZA	2
ANTONIO JACINTO	3
GOUVEIA DE LEMOS	1
GABRIEL MARIANO	1
MINDELENSE	1
AGOSTINHO NETO	7
HELDER NETO	1
RUI DE NORONHA	1
JORGE REBELO	2
SAMPADJUDO	1
ARNALDO SANTOS	1
AIRES DE ALMEIDA SANTOS	1
MARCELINO DOS SANTOS	3
ONESIMO SILVEIRA	3
NOEMIA DE SOUSA	4

western civilisation

Agostinho Neto

Sheets of tin nailed to posts
driven in the ground
make up the house.

Some rags complete
the intimate landscape.

The sun slanting through cracks
welcomes the owner

After twelve hours of slave
labour.

breaking rock
shifting rock
breaking rock
shifting rock
fair weather
wet weather
breaking rock
shifting rock

Old age comes early

a mat on dark nights
is enough when he dies
gratefully
of hunger.

african poetry

Agostinho Neto

WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Out on the horizon
there are fires
and the dark silhouettes of the beaters
with arms outstretched,
in the air, the green smell of burning palms.

African poetry

In the street

a line of Bailundu bearers
tremble under the weight of their load
in the room
a mulatto girl with meek eyes
colours her face with rice powder and rouge
a woman wriggles her hips under a garish cloth
on the bed
a man, sleepless, dreams
of buying knives and forks so he can eat at table
in the sky the glow
of fires

and the silhouette of black men dancing
with arms outstretched,
in the air, the hot music of marimbas

African poetry

and in the street the bearers
in the room the mulatto girl
on the bed the man, sleepless

The burnings consume
consume
the hot earth with horizons afire.

mulatto margarida

José Craveirinha

I own a kind of lyric poem
in the fifty escudos* from my pay
which gives me fifteen minutes of sincerity
in the bed of the mulatto woman
who when aborted
paid the midwife
with the English sailor's swiss watch

* about 15 shillings

Mulatto Margarida
On the number 3 bus route
hair straightened with a steel comb and brylcreem
a misericordia medallion hung on a gold thread
the boss's Our Lord God
and you Joaquim, driver of the orange taxi,
they know I'm a good customer
— just three days after the end of every month.

And the brown body of Mulatto Margarida
is dressed in nylon the canteen owner bought
is fed on two ounces of tea,
some rice and peanut soup
from Zeca Macubana who inherited blue eyes
from romantic nights
of jazz
in the Rua Araujo
while an elastic belt
supports the fallen womb.

And I know poetry
when I take away with me the purity
of Mulatto Margarida
in her fiftieth bout of gonorrhoea.

a different poem

Onésimo Silveira

The people of the islands want a different poem

For the people of the islands;

A poem without exiles complaining

In the calm of their existence;

A poem without children nourished

On the black milk of aborted time

A poem without mothers gazing

At the vision of their sons, motherless.

The people of the islands want a different poem

For the people of the islands:

A poem without arms in need of work

Nor mouths in need of bread

A poem without boats ballasted with people

On the road to the South

A poem without words choked

By the harrows of silence.

The people of the islands want a different poem

For the people of the islands:

A poem with sap rising in the heart of the

BEGINNING

A poem with Batuque and tchabeta* and the

badias+ of St. Catherine,

A poem with shaking hips and laughing ivory.

* A dance

+ A term for the women from Santiago.

The people of the islands want a different poem
For the people of the islands:

A poem without men who lose the seas' grace
and the fantasy of the main compass points.

february *

Agostinho Neto

It was then the Atlantic
in the course of time
gave back the carcasses of men
swathed in white flowers of foam
and in the victims' boundless hate,
brought on waves of death's congealed blood

And the beaches were smothered by crows and
jackals with a bestial hunger for the battered flesh
on the sands
of the land, scorched by the terror of centuries
enslaved and chained,
of the land called green
which children even now call green for hope.

It was then that the bodies in the sea
swelled up with shame and salt
in the course of time
in blood-stained waters
of desire and weakness.

It was then that in our eyes, fired
now with blood, now with life, now with death,

* The Angolan revolution began on February 4th 1961 with an attack on Luanda prison.

we buried our dead victoriously
and on the graves made recognition
of the reason men were sacrificed
for love,
for peace,
even while facing death, in the course of time,
in blood-stained waters

And within us
the green land of San Tomé
will be also the island of love

fourth poem

Costa Andrade

There are on the earth 50,000 dead whom no one
mourned
don't the earth
unburied

50,000 dead
whom no one mourned

Kaianga has gone to war, Kaianga has gone to war
I don't know if he'll come back

The people have gone to war, the people have gone
to war

I do know: the people will come back.

to you, the people*

Mario Cissoko

Yours, this symbol in ebony,
symbol dyed by your own rough hands,
symbol dyed by your love,
Yours this red, yellow, green
joined together by skilled effort
during long hours of sleeplessness.
Long life to my people
and to he who sets out for the awakening of his
branches torn down by countless gales.

* This is translated directly from a French original.

You, people of strong cause,
you march in the first wave,
I, soldier of the front line
support you,
I deploy the columns.
Reunited we shall face the fallen dawn.
Let us crush the fascist invader
and in the explosion of freedom, we shall embrace!

those strange times

Armando Guebuza

Those strange times
Which smothered in sweat
The day's full length
And peopled the fearful night
With shadows
Of a new day

partisans song

(anonymous)

Leave your spade
Your hammers and your spens, companions
In the forest's heart rise up
With your spear, your knife and your gun

Forward in our fight
With weapons and with courage — hurry

All our people have risen up
They have but one road — freedom

There is no prison, no torture and no death
Which makes us fear

Our people is our strength
And what we seek is their progress and their joy

By the light of our party
Stand firm in our struggle

On the plane, in the paddy fields
In the city and the forest's heart, stand firm!

We are one
One force, one future in our land

Give your life brother
For the victory of our people's freedom

Tomorrow is liberty
Your sons will enjoy the fruits of your fight

Let us, companions
Let us march to freedom and to progress

our sure road*

Sampadjudo

Our sure road is pain and blood
straight road to the sun
the sun of our freedom

Listen Caboverdian,
the siren of the future must sing
in the factories of our land
Look, Caboverdian
how the flower of the future opens all
things
in the garden of our land

* From a Portuguese translation of a creole original.

Building a hospital, a school
or studying in a distant land

My place
is there, where FRELIMO decides

The line of battle
is where the Revolution takes me

WE ARE FRELIMO SOLDIERS,
ACCOMPLISHING THE PARTY'S TASK
DIGGING THE BASIC SOIL OF
REVOLUTION
FOR AN END OF EXPLOITATION MAN
BY MAN
TO BUILD COMPLETE NATIONAL
INDEPENDENCE.

poem

Jorge Rebelo

Come, brother and tell me your life
come, show me the marks of revolt
which the enemy left on your body

Come, say to me "here
my hands have been crushed
because they defended
the land which they own

"Here my body was tortured
because it refused to bend
to invaders

"Here my mouth was wounded
because it dared to sing
my people's freedom"

Come, brother and tell me your life
come relate me the dreams of revolt
which you and your fathers and forefathers
dreamed
in silence
through shadowless nights made for love

Come tell me these dreams become
war,
the birth of heroes,
land reconquered,
mothers who, fearless,
send their sons to fight.

Come, tell me all this, my brother

And later I will forge simple words
which even the children can understand
words which will enter every house
like the wind
and fall like red hot embers
on our people's souls

In our land
Bullets are beginning to flower.

Biographical notes

FERNANDO COSTA ANDRADE was born in Lopi, Angola in 1936. As a student in Lisbon, he was active in the Cultural Movement of the Casa dos Estudantes do Imperio.

He subsequently studied fine arts in Yugoslavia.

Publications: *Terra de Acacias Rubras* Coleção Autores Ultramarinos Lisbon 1961;

Tempo Angolano na Italia Edição Felman Rego, San Paulo, Brazil 1963

MARIO CISSOKO was born in Guine' in 1946 and is an active member of the PAIGC. He writes mainly in French.

JOSE CRAVEIRINHA was born in Lourenco Marques, Mozambique, in 1922. Poet, journalist and outspoken critic of the colonial regime, he was arrested and tried together with twelve other Mozambican intellectuals in 1966. He was found guilty of being a FRELIMO supporter and imprisoned. His health has recently been deteriorating. Publication: *Chigubo* Coleção Autores Ultramarinos da Casa dos Estudantes do Imperio, Lisbon 1964.

VIRIATO DA CRUZ was born in Porto Amboim, Angola, in 1928. He was one of the initiators of the "Vamos descobrir Angola" movement and editor of the radical literary magazine "Mensagem". For a time he was Secretary General of MPLA and he is now a member of the Afro-Asian Writers Committee.

Publications: *Poemas* Coleção Autores Ultramarinos da Casa dos Estudantes do Imperio, Lisbon 1961.

Also numerous articles including "What kind of Independence for Angola?" *Revolution* (Paris) 1964 and "Des responsabilités de l'intellectuel noir" *Présence Africaine* no 27-28 1959.

KAOBERDIANO DAMBARA was born in the Cabo Verdes in 1939 and is a member of PAIGC.

He writes mainly in Guine' Creole.

ARMANDO GUEBUZA, was born in Mozambique in 1942 and went to secondary school in Lourenço Marques. He is now FRELIMO Inspector of Schools, in charge of the primary school programme inside liberated Mozambique.

ANTONIO JACINTO was born in Luanda, Angola in 1932. A writer and militant nationalist, he was condemned to fourteen years imprisonment on political charges.

Publications: *Poemas* Collecção Autores Ultramarinos da Casa dos Estudantes do Imperio, Lisbon 1961.

GOUVEIA DE LEMOS comes from Mozambique. He is a journalist and poet.

GABRIEL MARIANO was born in the Cabo Verdes in 1928. He writes both in Portuguese and Creole.

MINDELENSE comes from Guiné and is working with the PAIGC.

AGOSTINHO NETO was born in the Catete region of Angola in 1922. He studied medicine in Lisbon and Coimbra and is a qualified doctor. A militant nationalist all his life he has served several terms of imprisonment. He is now the President of MPLA. Publications: *A sagrada Esperança* (a collection of his poems published in Russia in the original Portuguese and in translation in Russian and Italian.).

HELDER NETO comes from Angola and is working with MPLA.

RUI DE NORONHA was born in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique in 1909 and died in 1943. Publications: *Sonetos* Imprensa Central Minerva de Lourenço Marques. S. D.

JORGE REBELO was born in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique, in 1940 and studied at Coimbra University. He is now FRELIMO Secretary for Information and edits the magazine *Mozambique Revolution*.

SAMPADJUDO was born in Cabo Verde in 1928 and is a member of PAIGC. He writes mainly in Creole.

ARNALDO SANTOS was born in Luanda, Angola in 1936, a poet and short-story writer.

Publications: *Fuga*, 1960; *Quinaxixe* Edições da Casa dos Estudantes do Imperio.

AIRES DE ALMEIDA SANTOS was born in Bie, Angola in 1919. He is a civil servant and lives in Luanda.

MARCELINO DOS SANTOS was born in Mozambique in 1919. He studied political science at the Sorbonne and remained for years in France as a political exile. He returned to Africa with FRELIMO was formed and is now a member of the Council of Presidency.

His poems have been translated into several languages and collections have been published in Moscow.

ONESIMO SILVEIRA was born in the Cabo Verdes in 1936. He lived in San Tomé for three years and spent some time working as a civil servant in Angola. He joined PAIGC and is now acting European representative while continuing his studies in Sweden.

Publications: *Hora Grande* (Poems) Publicações Bailundo de Lisboa, Angola 1962; "Consciencialização na Literatura de Cabo Verde" (an Essay) Edição da Casa dos Estudantes do Imperio, Lisbon 1963.

NOEMIA DE SOUSA was born in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique in 1927. She was very politically active during the 1950s when she was also producing her best work. She now lives quietly in Paris.

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