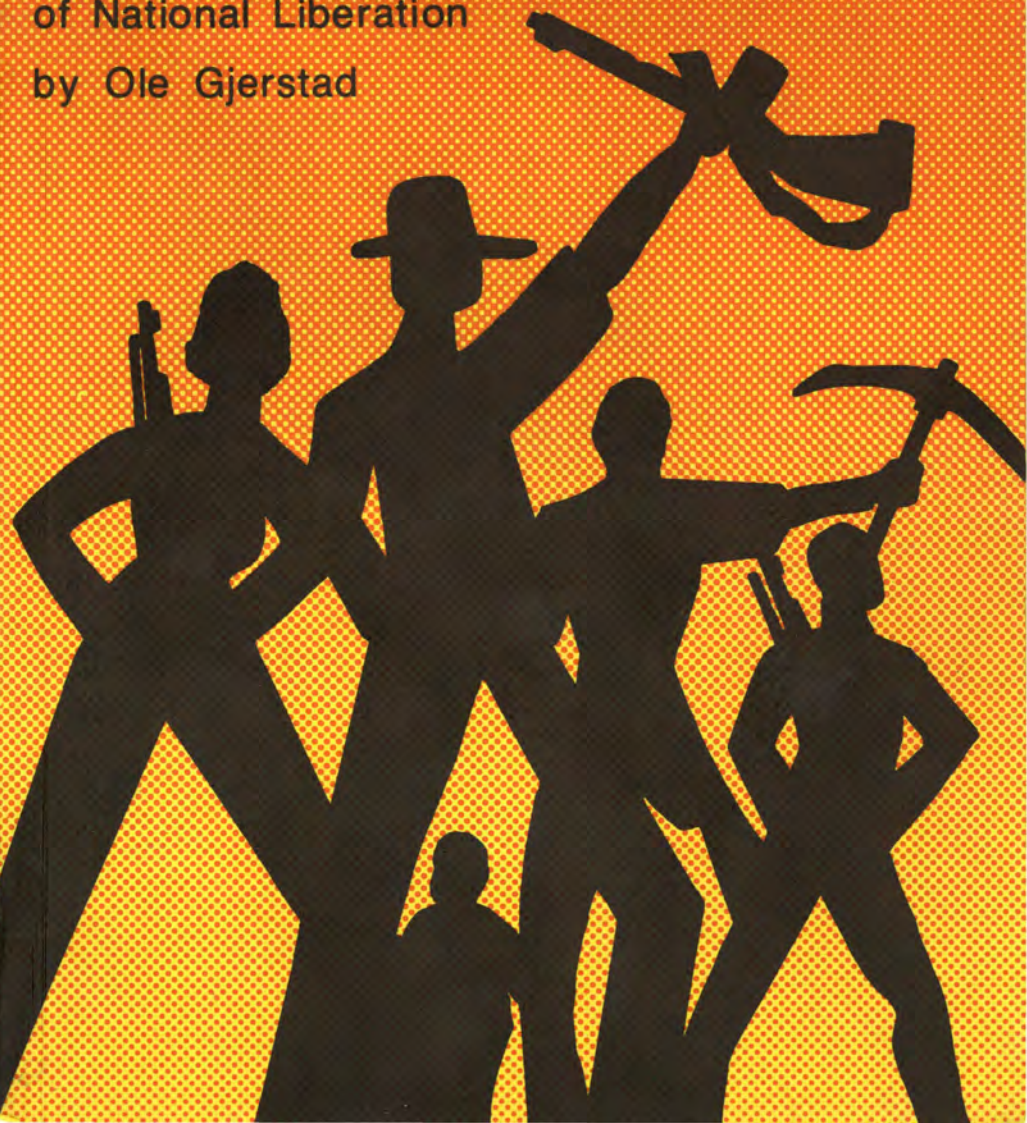


The People in Power

An Account from Angola's Second War
of National Liberation

by Ole Gjerstad



The People in Power

LSM Press

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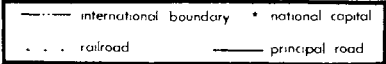
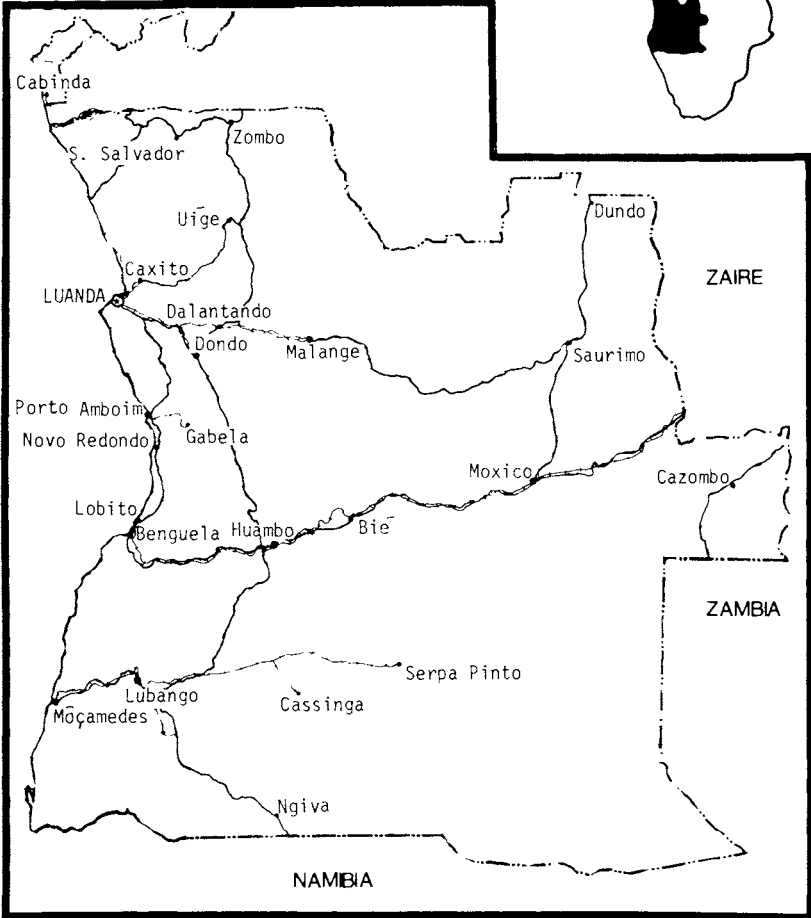
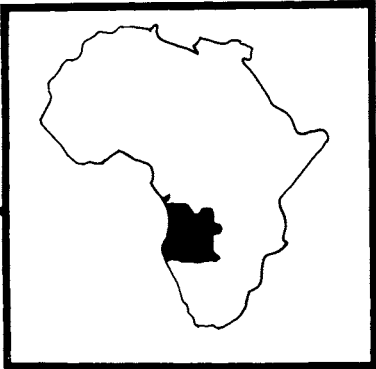
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ANGOLA



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Preface

For thirteen years the guerrillas of the Angolan liberation movement fought Portuguese colonialism in a war that was virtually ignored in the capitalist countries. Then, with the collapse of the fascist regime in Lisbon and the dismantling of its colonial empire, the Angolans found themselves at the center of world attention. For the nine months of the Second War of National Liberation (July 1975 to March 1976) their country was the stage of a momentous clash between the combined forces of international imperialism and those serving the cause of national liberation.

In the flow of information surrounding this event, the basic content of the Angolan revolution has been all but lost to most North Americans. This is in part due to the obvious distortion of the established media. However, no small amount of confusion has arisen from the lack of understanding of the social and political realities of a colonially underdeveloped peasant society like Angola. With its embryonic level of class formation, with a strong regional consciousness and a high rate of illiteracy, it is useless to insist that Angola should follow the path of the industrialized countries - whether to socialism or bourgeois democracy. Those on the Left who refuse to support the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) because it is not a solid "working-class" party, are as guilty of Western ethno-centrism as those who insist that liberal democracy is the god-given way of humanity.

People's Power is the basis of the Angolan revolution. People's Power is the force that will enable the Angolan people and MPLA to build socialism. It is a force which springs from the conditions in the country and which has already transformed the lives of millions of Angolans in the villages and shantytowns throughout the country. It was the rise of People's Power which, more than anything, defeated the imperialist invasion

armies in the Second War.

As a mechanism to move from underdevelopment and super-exploitation to socialism, however, the concept is not limited to Angola. Applied also in Cuba and the other former Portuguese colonies of Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, People's Power means the release of the creative energies of the masses of the population and their active participation in forming the new states, the synthesis of colonial oppression and the resistance of the masses. As such it holds an enormous potential for other revolutionary movements now fighting in the countryside of the imperialist system. Like China and Vietnam, the emergence of these new popular democracies in Africa strengthens our view that historical materialism can also be creatively applied outside the strict framework of advanced industrial capitalism. The political mobilization undertaken by the NLF of Vietnam, the PFLO in Oman, FRETILIN in East Timor and PAIGC, FRELIMO, MPLA and EPLF in Africa shows us that contemporary national liberation struggles can indeed take the countries concerned, and thus the imperialist system, a big step closer to socialism.

A thorough analysis of the rise of MPLA and People's Power in Angola would teach us a great deal about this process. The objective of this short pamphlet, however, is a modest one: by conveying my own experiences I hope to illustrate how the Angolan people concretely asserted their power at one particularly crucial stage of their revolution. The account is based on my journal notations during November and December of 1975 when, at the end of a long trip which had also taken me to Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, I travelled through the MPLA areas and came to share the moments of boundless joy and enthusiasm as well as those of tragedy and deep sorrow that came to the combatants and population of free Angola as events unfolded.

This pamphlet is one more product of eight years of cooperation between Liberation Support Movement and MPLA. It is published through the collective effort of many LSM comrades - as editors, typists, graphic artists and printers. But most of all, it speaks to the efforts of all those Angolans who, with the enemy literally on their doorstep, did everything possible to let me share in their experience so that, through the following pages, people abroad could see the essence of the revolution. Many fell victim to the bullets and grenades of imperialism; the rest are today shouldering the enormous task of building a new Angola. All of them knew they were not fighting for Angola alone, that their struggle is our struggle and that their victory is an important step ahead for the international anti-imperialist struggle.

O.G.

Note to the Second Edition

The year that has passed since the first publication of this pamphlet has added emphasis to some of its original observations. First, the forces that fought to keep MPLA from power during the Second War today continue their aggression against the People's Republic of Angola. South African troops, based in occupied Namibia, periodically raid southern Angola to destroy property and terrorize the population. Zaire under Mobutu also remains a base for armed attacks, involving among others French and American military personnel. The defeated "liberation movements," FNLA, FLEC, and UNITA, no longer a political force within Angola, are trained and equipped by foreign powers to continue their violent "destabilization" of the young People's Republic.

Second, the early steps toward a socialist transformation of Angola have been accompanied by intense class struggle within the country. While striving to resolve ethnic and regional contradictions and build a genuine national unity of all progressive and patriotic segments of the people, MPLA has also had to face resistance from those who oppose its socialist objectives. This resistance has taken the form of economic sabotage by corporations and individual capitalists, as well as an attempted *coup d'etat* by "ultra-revolutionaries" whose doctrines have no basis in Angolan reality. Such internal struggle has frequently peaked in periods of armed attacks from across Angola's borders to put the MPLA government under double pressure.

Finally, the past year has shown that the tremendous support for MPLA during the Second War was far from a case of passing mass euphoria, as many observers speculated. With the many difficulties involved in building their nation, the people have nevertheless strengthened their identification with MPLA. Mass campaigns in the spheres of production, education, and health have contributed to a growing consciousness among Angolans of the objectives of their continuing struggle. Whether against the forces that attack from abroad or against those who sabotage from within, the leadership of the liberation movement continues to enjoy the overwhelming support of the population throughout the country.

The substantial change from our first edition is the replacement, in Appendix 3, of an interview with Nito Alves, leader of the attempted May 1977 coup, by the interview with MPLA Secretary Lucio Lara. His analysis of MPLA's transition from liberation movement to vanguard party is of great significance in understanding the further evolution of People's Power and the need to forge the political tools that will make socialist construction possible.

July 1977 O.G.

Glossary

CIR	Center for Revolutionary Instruction
ELNA	National Liberation Army of Angola (FNLA)
ELP	Portuguese Liberation Army
FAPLA	Popular Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)
FLFC	Cabinda Enclave Liberation Front
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Front
JMPLA	Youth of MPLA
MFA	Armed Forces Movement
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
OMA	Organization of Angolan Women
OPA	Organization of Angolan Pioneers
PAIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde
PC	People's Commission
PIDE/DGS	International Police for the Defense of the State / General Security Administration
PRA	People's Republic of Angola
UNITA	Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNTA	National Union of Angolan Workers

On the Wave of People's Power

'MPLA is the people. The people are the MPLA.' The slogan, in red paint on a rough concrete wall, is the first thing to meet the eye as I clamber out of the Portuguese jet, tired and confused after hours of detours and waiting while the airline decided whether the war made it too dangerous to land here in Luanda, Angola's capital. But finally I'm here, after years of reading about the country and working in solidarity with the liberation movement. And at a time when the eyes of the world are focused on Angola. Only four passengers get off - three journalists and myself. The plane has its blinds down and the runway lights have been switched off. A fine drizzle compounds the dark humidity and the air seems to close in on me as I cross the deserted runway. Inside the terminal building, the parting settlers have left their last mark by ripping apart the lounge furniture. Posters cover the walls in the hall where a policeman and a lone FAPLA* soldier check our papers: "Produce to Resist," "Generalized People's Resistance"; mostly strong realist artwork in red, black and yellow, the colors of the Popular Movement.

When working with MPLA militants in the past, we often talked, sometimes half jokingly, about my visiting the country after the defeat of colonialism. But now, with Independence less than one week off, the scenario is different than we envisaged then. Invasion armies are occupying more than half of Angola's territory and are less than twenty miles from the northern limit of the capital city. Western strategists have predicted the fall of Luanda within days and, according to the *Johannesburg Star*, gangs of thugs are making the streets unsafe. "There won't be a Communist left alive," swears Holden Roberto, the leader of the American-backed National Front for the Libera-

* See glossary for all abbreviations.

tion of Angola (FNLA).

One has the feeling that climax is near after fourteen years of armed struggle, pitting the Angolan liberation movement against Portuguese colonialism and its foreign backers. The war started on 4 February 1961 when activists of the MPLA, formed in 1956 from a number of clandestine groups, attacked a Luanda prison to free their incarcerated comrades. The Portuguese, both troops and settler vigilantes, driven to paranoia by events in the neighboring Congo, responded with savage ferocity, and the ensuing wave of massacres cost at least thirty thousand Angolans their lives and led many more to flee the country. In this "First War of National Liberation" MPLA effectively ended Portuguese control over large areas in the North and East of Angola and set up its own embryonic structure of democratic and popular rule. Tens of thousands of peasants from these liberated areas made up the mass base of the Popular Movement, fighting as guerrillas, working in the fields, as carriers, or on the elected village action committees that organized the non-military aspects of the struggle. In the towns, liberation movement cells worked clandestinely, spreading anti-colonialist ideology and engaging in occasional sabotage actions against colonialist targets. The Portuguese, by sending troops from Europe and conscripting Angolans, maintained an army of more than sixty thousand in their attempt to stem the tide of liberation.

The pressure on Portuguese colonialism mounted through the 1960's as liberation wars also spread rapidly in Portugal's two other African colonies. Closely aligned with MPLA, FRELIMO in Mozambique and the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau forced the Lisbon regime to commit ever greater portions of the national budget to its African wars while the metropole, itself heavily dependent on foreign capital, remained a poor and stagnating partner of the Western alliance. No amount of foreign assistance could save the regime from its colonial predicament. And it fell, paradoxically, to the armed forces, the very tool created to perpetuate Lusitanian hegemony, to deliver Portugal from forty years of fascist dictatorship. In the early morning of 25 April 1974 a group of officers from the loosely organized Armed Forces Movement (MFA) seized power in Lisbon.

Within six months of the coup the last Portuguese soldiers had peacefully left Guinea-Bissau while in Mozambique, FRELIMO and the Lisbon junta had signed an agreement for national independence to come in June of 1975. The momentum of these liberation struggles left the new regime with no options but to withdraw its demoralized troops and hand the countries over to the legitimate representatives of the people. In Guinea-Bissau this amounted to little more than a formality as the PAIGC, controlling most of their national territory, had already proclaimed independence in 1973.

In Angola, however, a number of factors contributed to

complicate the situation. As the richest of Portugal's overseas "possessions," the country long ago started to attract white settlers, many of Portuguese stock for whom the crowded and poor motherland presented limited opportunities. The colony opened up boundless opportunities for farming, cattle-breeding and plantations. By the early 1970's the non-African population numbered about three hundred thousand: plantation owners, industrialists, shop-keepers, skilled workers and government functionaries whose outlook was shaped by colonial privilege and who opposed any step that would undermine this. The wealthy among them felt closer to South Africa and white Rhodesia than to Portugal, and the "independence" they aspired to was on the model of Ian Smith's regime.

For a long time Angola remained largely the preserve of these settlers and metropolitan Portuguese companies. But with the growing need for revenue to finance the war, the colonial regime carefully opened the door to foreign investment in the mid-60's. Multinationals like Krupp, Gulf Oil and Texaco were among the first established, but with most of the charted minerals still untouched and huge regions still unexplored, the race for quick profits had barely started when colonial fascism collapsed. As with the settlers, the foreign corporations blossomed under the Portuguese military umbrella - which they had to a great extent financed - but cautiously refrained from flying any flag but their own "business as usual" in the period following the coup.

If the individual conglomerates already entrenched in Angola felt they could live with the progressive nationalism of the MPLA, the caretakers of the international capitalist system saw things differently. At stake was not only the fabulous wealth of the country, but also Angola's place as a "Free World" preserve. Situated just off the key shipping lanes around the African cape and bordering on South African-occupied Namibia to the South and the neocolonial bastion of Zaire to the North, an anti-imperialist Angola would jeopardize the capitalist status quo in the whole of southern and central Africa. The railway that takes Zambian and Zairean copper to the smelters of Europe and North America runs through the country, and the hydro-electric power complex which is scheduled to furnish power for industrial expansion in Namibia is situated in its southern district of Cunene. When in the Spring of 1975 US imperialism suffered its calamitous defeat in Indochina and FRELIMO consolidated its position in Mozambique, also a threat to the old status quo, Angola took on the importance of a great test. "The biggest US interest in the area (southern Africa) is in Angola," Dr. Kissinger had reported in his now-famous policy study on southern Africa.¹ It was here that the trend towards popular revolution which prevails in Africa and throughout the Third World had to be checked. But MPLA had since beginning the armed struggle received material and political support from the



Posters plaster the walls of Luanda / LSM photo

socialist countries. This made it easier to, once again, conjure up the threat of the Communist Monolith, bent on world domination.

As in Vietnam and Cambodia, imperialism had an ample supply of collaborators. Holden Roberto's FNLA, whose initial aim had been the resurrection of the old Kingdom of Congo with Holden himself as ruler, had since early in the war made the annihilation of the MPLA a primary objective. The US, while heavily supporting the Portuguese, kept their neocolonial options open by putting Holden on a ten thousand dollar annual CIA retainer starting in 1961. Closely counseled by his in-law, President Mobutu of Zaire, Holden's strategy for "independence" was to build an army of conscripted Angolan refugees in Zaire while persuading the US and European governments to pressure Portugal into handing Angola over. Mobutu's interests lay in using, through Holden, the oil, coffee and other riches of Angola to save his own regime from impending bankruptcy. With a low level of activity and no political education, however, the FNLA army (ELNA) was constantly plagued by desertions and revolt. In early 1974 it counted little more than two thousand troops with hardly any military experience and by no means had the force to play the part assigned to it.²

A second "liberation movement" appeared willing to pick up the slack. The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), under the leadership of Jonas Savimbi, had been formed in 1966 with a presence in the South and Southeast of the country. While Savimbi's supporters abroad alternated a heavy Marxist-Leninist vocabulary with an anti-white perspective, the UNITA forces in Angola seemed more pre-occupied with fighting the MPLA than the colonial troops. In the Zambian capital of Lusaka, UNITA members were frequent visitors at the American embassy. During the early 1970's, Savimbi reached an "understanding" with the Portuguese, by which they left his command alone in a "liberated" region in eastern Angola and even supplied his troops as long as UNITA committed itself to help thwart the westward drive of the MPLA.³

25 April found MPLA in a difficult position. A Portuguese offensive, combined with the efforts of FNLA and UNITA, had made military progress slow and increasingly difficult. Within the Movement enemy agents and opportunist elements had taken advantage of an uneven political level and a lack of vigilance and found their way into strategic positions. The leading *provocateur* was Daniel Chipenda, a long-standing member of MPLA's top leadership who appears to have maintained links with both the Portuguese, UNITA and FNLA at the same time. After his unsuccessful attempts to have MPLA President Agostinho Neto and other leaders assassinated, Chipenda launched his "Eastern Revolt" faction in 1973, passing as "defender of the people of the South and East" against the "domination of the North." Chipenda's following included many of the experienced guerrillas and com-

manders and so had considerably weakened MPLA's capacity by the time the MFA officers seized power in Lisbon. Within months after this event a small group of members, mostly intellectuals who had drifted to the margins of the struggle, issued (in Brazzaville) a proclamation under the name of the "Active Revolt" faction, again disputing the legitimacy of the Movement leadership.

Outside MPLA, Holden and Savimbi were quick to come to terms with the new Portuguese regime even as its President, General Antonio de Spínola, was feverishly preparing a neo-colonial solution for Angola. In meetings with Presidents Nixon and Mobutu, Holden and Savimbi, Spínola, personally in charge of Angola's "decolonization," worked out a plan that would bring UNITA, FNLA, Chipenda (representing the MPLA!) and white settler groups into a provisional government. The plan would effectively keep Angola and its dazzling wealth, of immense economic importance to Portugal, safe for capitalism for the foreseeable future.⁴

For some time it appeared that these maneuvers to isolate the Popular Movement internationally would succeed. Though Spínola was forced to resign in late September 1974, strong forces within the new Portuguese regime supported "the American solution." Within Angola UNITA and FNLA were working openly while Savimbi, in particular, used tribalist language to mobilize his own Ovimbundu population group while promising the settler population a continuation of colonial privilege. Holden, on the other hand, did not yet seem confident to end his fifteen years of comfortable exile in the Zairean capital of Kinshasa.

The most violent reaction to the changing political climate came from the reactionary circles of the white population who had a strong direct interest in maintaining the status quo. Unlike in Portugal itself, the fascist forces in Angola remained very much intact after the coup. The notorious secret police (PIDE/DGS) continued its activities and ultra-right elements, linked to settler organizations, remained in control of the military, largely neutralizing the progressive drive of the MFA. In response to the spontaneous outbursts of the African population and the widespread appearance of MPLA symbols, bands of vigilante colonists went berserk in July of 1974. Reinforced by elements of the army, they launched a campaign of terror and intimidation opening fire on peaceful Luanda crowds and "cleaning up" the city's *musseques*⁵ with their automatics. Nobody knows the exact toll of these massacres, but most estimates range from six to eleven thousand dead and wounded.

At first powerless in the face of this terror, Luanda's African and mulatto population, supported by progressive Whites, evacuated the more vulnerable parts of the city. Then, regrouping in the *musseques*, they started to organize armed self-defense groups. These were composed of mainly young people sometimes no more than twelve or thirteen years old; students,

workers and those who had somehow made a living on the shady fringes of the colonial system. Some military leadership was provided by those who had served before with the Portuguese army but had now been disarmed and dismissed in the explosive situation. Though the activists strongly identified with the MPLA - the result of years of clandestine work - this People's Power "movement," which today rules in Angola's towns and villages, had few direct links with the Popular Movement army and leadership, still confined to the liberated regions of rural Angola. Rather it was the manifestation of the tremendous force that colonial fascism for so long had suppressed; an explosion of human creativity which was seeking its outlets first and foremost in the defense of the people and their immediate interest. As the months passed, self-defense committees spread to other towns and expanded their activities to meet other needs of the population: for more and cleaner water, better food distribution, medical care and a minimal measure of education. These People's Commissions were in some ways similar to the village committees of the "old" liberated areas. They used MPLA slogans and adopted MPLA structure; they accepted the leadership of Dr. Neto and his comrades in the struggle. But they grew up outside of the liberation movement structure, accountable to nobody but themselves and could rely on their own strength alone to fight off repeated attacks by reactionary colonists.

In October 1974, after Spínola's exit from the presidency, MPLA signed a ceasefire with the Portuguese and the following January agreed to join UNITA and FNLA in a transitional government which was to lead Angola to independence on 11 November. The agreement allowed MPLA to work openly to mobilize the masses of the population now in need of political leadership. Thus, in cooperation with progressive elements in the Portuguese regime, the Movement managed to block the attempts to isolate it within the country. It was willing to work with the puppet forces because it was confident that this would win it still greater support among the people and help expose the reactionary character of Holden and Savimbi's groups.

The prediction proved accurate. People flocked to join MPLA's mass organizations or enroll in the schools it set up. The FAPLA training camps had to turn away many volunteers for each one it could accept. On 4 February 1975, the fourteenth anniversary of the beginning of armed struggle, President Neto was given a tumultuous welcome by a crowd of well over a hundred thousand when he entered Luanda. And as MPLA's popularity increased, the other movements grew more isolated. While Savimbi's charisma and tribalist-opportunist politics retained for him the loyalty of the majority of Ovimbundu (who make up approximately 35% of Angola's population) and many Whites, FNLA had little support outside of the extreme northern areas near the Zairean border. In fact many of the supposedly ELNA troops which



Postering Luanda / LSM photo

arrived in Luanda were Zaireans who could speak neither Portuguese nor any Angolan language and whose relationship to the city's population was that of regular occupation troops.

MPLA's ability to mobilize the population immediately forced the US to reconsider its plan. In January, conceding that the Popular Movement had captured the political momentum, the American National Security Council secretly assigned the CIA to funnel huge quantities of military and financial support to FNLA and UNITA in order to force through a military solution in favor of imperialism, this at the time when MPLA was almost completely cut off from outside assistance. This started the escalation that was to climax in the present "Second War of National Liberation."

The transitional government accomplished little as fundamental political differences crystallized and led to one stand-off after another. When UNITA and FNLA failed to have the People's Commissions banned, the latter's troops in Luanda and the other coastal cities unleashed a campaign of intimidation and terror, arresting and killing hundreds. This violence, reported in the Western press as uncontrolled violence, worthy only of semi-savages not "ready" to rule themselves, was in reality carefully planned and executed to crush the groundswell of the popular revolution. It is reminiscent of the Nazi occupation of the Warsaw ghettos or more recently of the Chilean junta's "pacification" operations. Today I see empty mass graves and torture instruments, like an improvised electric chair, in FNLA's former quarters. Settler groups, linked to FNLA, were engaging in sabotage actions and recruiting for the fascist ELP mercenary forces that were being organized in Zaire and South Africa. When in May MPLA and the People's Commissions responded by sponsoring a "week of People's Power" through demonstrations, rallies, cultural and educational events in Luanda, the armed confrontations in the city took on the scale of regular street battles. In these, the *musseque* self-defense groups carried much of the burden as the FAPLA, the Popular Movement's regular force, was still in an early stage of its formation and suffered from a lack of equipment.

As the war escalated and spread to all parts of Angola and settlers were crowding the docks and airports to leave, MPLA and its sympathizers took the offensive. By the end of July Luanda was completely free from enemy troops, and one month later the liberation movement controlled twelve out of the country's sixteen districts. Only the southern high plateau of Huambo and Bié remained UNITA territory while regular Zairean troops, ELP mercenaries and FNLA occupied the two northern districts, Uige and Zaire. With a supply of arms from friendly countries, primarily the Soviet Union, now resumed, MPLA could finally turn its political strength into military power and cut the neocolonial forces down to size.

This should have been the end of the war and set the stage

for a peaceful transition to independence. Instead, the curtain went up on a last-ditch plan to save Angola for imperialism and prevent an MPLA-dominated government from taking over on 11 November. Ever greater quantities of American, French and other European weapons found their way to FNLA and a growing number of Zairean regular troops in the North. Still more of Mobutu's troops, in the guise of FLEC militants, were massing on the border of the oil-rich Cabinda enclave, the major objective of Zairean involvement. ELP mercenaries flocked to the regions under UNITA and FNLA control and in South African-occupied Namibia, Daniel Chipenda and his followers were being trained to "lead" a combined South African and mercenary mechanized column which invaded Angola on 23 October. The South African regime had obviously concluded that it could not afford another Mozambique on its borders. An MPLA government in Angola would be likely to provide SWAPO, the Namibian liberation movement, with a much needed strategic rear and at the same time block an important avenue for South African economic and political expansion into black Africa. Through the ploys of "dialogue" and "detente" apartheid Prime Minister Vorster had prepared the ground for years; if Angola was now to get "out of hand," all this solicitous preparation could easily be in vain. The Portuguese government, again dominated by conservative forces, acquiesced and helped cover up the invasion, despite its responsibility for Angola's territorial integrity until the day of independence.

In short, the imperialist plan which is now rapidly unfolding, consists of capturing the entire coastal belt including Luanda and forcing the Popular Movement back to guerrilla warfare in the bush. An FNLA-UNITA government can then be formed to seek additional aid from its foreign patrons and quash the "rebels." If we are to believe the UPI, Reuters and their colleagues, it looks like they are close to succeeding.

The Angolan capital is a troubled city but not at all what the news agencies have led people abroad to believe. There are food lines but these you can find in many other African and Third World countries not at war. One day, while taking a shower, I listen to the correspondent of Radio South Africa report that there is no water in the capital. He is even staying in the same hotel as I am! The telephone system, electricity and public transport seem to function no worse than in other African countries I know. The city people are friendly and I never have to wait more than a couple of cars to hitch a ride anywhere.

Down at the waterfront fishing boats unload their catch which is sold right there amid great shouting and bargaining. Fish has become the major source of protein for Luanda's population, but the price has doubled since the beginning of the Second War. The best craft have been sailed abroad by their

settler owners and those remaining have a problem keeping up with the demand. The wide waterfront esplanade is lined with modern office buildings, punctuated on one end by a high cliff where an ancient fort still flies the Portuguese flag and on the other by the twenty-story Hotel Presidente. Built by the Krupp conglomerate and virtually finished when the Lisbon coup happened, it has never yet been opened to guests.

Beyond the hotel are the docks where goods are piling up, some things deteriorating badly in the heat and humidity. With many of the businessmen gone and their companies out of operation, loads of merchandise remain unclaimed and encourage pilfering among the workers. The loot finds its way to the black market which has inevitably appeared in the wake of the Portuguese exodus and with the difficulties of war. The Luanda stevedores have struck for higher wages several times since the coup and, still unhappy with the settlement, they are now on a slow-down campaign which adds to the congestion of the port. Ships with urgently-needed foodstuffs are waiting at anchor with no immediate prospects of being unloaded. As the dockers are already among the better-paid in Luanda and also solidly support the MPLA, the Movement leadership finds itself in a difficult position: the port *must* be kept in full operation but, both economically and politically, the government-to-be can ill afford the rise of a labor aristocracy. In essence, it is a problem of instilling political consciousness by which the workers come to view their own material interest not in isolation, but in relation to the liberation struggle and the situation in the nation.

Past the waiting ships across the bay, the long sandy spit of Luanda Island, in reality a peninsula, forms a natural breakwater. On weekends townspeople still congregate on the outside beach facing the blue, salty Atlantic. On the harbor side the *musseque* reaches the water's edge. At the sealed-off pier a Portuguese warship is waiting to take the Governor and the last Portuguese troops away at zero hours on 11 November.

Trying to locate old comrades I find myself in parts of town which have been all but abandoned. The large apartment blocks on Avenida Brasil have had their windows shattered. One that served as FNLA's main quarters is gutted and gaping holes in the walls tell of past mortar and bazooka battles. The debris still has to be cleared from the pavement. The nearby Avenida dos Combatentes, formerly an area for settler and well-to-do Angolans, is equally desolate as most of the former inhabitants have either left the country or prefer to stay in their new-found - and safer - homes somewhere else. It's strange to walk by here at night. Where once, in the evening hours, the large families used to overflow onto the teeming sidewalks, one can now see only one or two dim lights in each dark, threatening concrete colossus. Cats and stray mongrels rummage among the trash and wrecked cars.

One evening, from the quiet Vila Mar district on the hills above the harbor, I clearly hear the artillery from the northern front; distant thuds like someone beating a huge drum to warn of impending danger. Over the past few days refugees have also been arriving from Benguela, two hundred and fifty miles down the coast, which was captured by the "Chipenda column" almost without a fight. Such news does little to boost the morale here in the city but, considering the seriousness of the situation, people seem amazingly calm and easy-going.

The most immediate danger I face in Luanda is the traffic. Many of the *retornados*⁶ had to leave their vehicles behind and many are still on the streets - most without proper documents, unsafe and as often as not driven by people who don't know how. With each ride I can only crouch in the back seat and hope for the best. I once accept a ride in the shell of an old taxi. Only two forward gears function; blue smoke seeps up through cracks in the floor. The only apparent safety measure is a sign on the dashboard: "Oh Lord, don't let Death be a passenger in this car."

Most of the Movement cadre I know from the past are scattered around the country on various political and military assignments. The veteran militants have been spread thin to maximize their strengths among the tens of thousands of new recruits and sympathizers who are full of zeal and commitment, but as yet lack political and military experience. Finding new comrades, though, poses no problem. At a dinner with friends I meet Rui Patcheko who works in the MPLA's *Gabinete de análises políticas*, the office which does much of the research and writing for the leadership. He tells me of how he first read LSM materials when he worked clandestinely in fascist Portugal. At the MPLA's Department for External Relations I'm being helped by Adão Manuel Neto who was fourteen when the war first came to his village, about one hundred miles northeast of Luanda. For eight years he fought with MPLA in the forest of the Cuanza-Norte district before going to Congo-Brazzaville in 1969 to complete his education in one of the Popular Movement's schools. He arrived here in Luanda only six months ago. Of his seven brothers, two were killed in combat against the Portuguese; two have been killed by FNLA and the remaining three are all with FAPLA somewhere on the northern front. Adão has not heard from them since the invasion started; all he knows is that his family has fled back into the forest where they survived during the thirteen years of anti-colonial war.

Talking to the city people and Movement militants, the history of the war comes alive. In another office I find Paulo Miguel Fernandes, known to everyone as Mandrake, like the magician in the cartoons. The eldest son of a Luanda Methodist pastor, he went off to join the liberation movement in 1969 while still in secondary school. He finally located the guerrillas in the Dembos forest area to the North and stayed there

Missinger... Washing... the sup... forces f... Popula... Liberation

The Agony of Angola

Unita
Ang
terve
Unita
denial of military
Africa

"This is a serious warning for Africa when, for the first time, Russia is not acting with caution. They are openly coming with their arms and... Their..."

Dr. Say... Nigeria... states which... "It (MPLA)... The secretary en... Angola was not... issue at the NAT... ference which er... He indicated... in concern... developm... ns. Th... entor...

In Angola Soviet success would lead to

on elsewhere in Africa

guessing... the minority MPLA, Russia wants... Directing the former... preventing a unite... urban... the dest...

NITA
capital
falls



REDS CONTROL South Africa

Angola which will be at its mercy.

Role of Communist Party

Honour the fight

Speaking at a dinner... Also Says It Isn't 'Analogous to Vietnam'

Said FNLA leader Holden Roberto in New York: "I am strongly against apartheid but I will say this for South Africa, when they see a neighbour's house burning they come to put..."

Missinger... your... realism

ANGOLA COMPLETE

until nine months ago. Cut off from the outside and short of supplies, the combatants of this "First Politico-Military Region" of MPLA fought under extremely hard conditions. For Mandrake, a city boy, it was a new kind of life. "We rarely had enough food or clothes. There were no shoes either and almost no salt." Medical conditions were equally grim with many of the fighters and the local population dying from both diseases and wounds inflicted in action. Our friend was wounded once but his most painful memory is that of an aching tooth. "It had to come out so some of the comrades held me down while one used a pair of pliers from a mechanic's toolbox which we had captured. Ooah, how that hurt!"

Under the command of Nito Alves⁷ the Region's guerrillas tied down large numbers of colonial troops with ambitious and small-scale actions. "We did not have the equipment or ammunition to engage in anything big. The best thing to do was to fire your clip and then simply disappear," ... like Mandrake!

Soon after their return to Luanda, Mandrake and four of his comrades, all unarmed, were arrested by FNLA after an argument with some of the latter's Zairean troops. For five days they were held in a basement under terrible conditions, with no food and one cup of water each every two days. On the sixth night they were taken in a truck to a village past Caxito. "By this time," he explains, "I was sure we were going to be killed and told my comrades escape was our only hope. The truck finally stopped in a completely dark place and as we were being marched off I started running. Unfortunately, in the confusion my comrades all set out in my direction turning our group into an easy target, so when the first bullet whistled just over my head I stopped. The excited FNLA commander then lined us up and ordered us to lay flat, face down. I was in the middle. The commander had a pistol and the soldiers had G-3's. There was one burst of automatic fire, followed by a single pistol shot. Then the same thing again and the comrade on my right twisted on the ground with a gurgling deep in his throat. I waited a few seconds and shifted a bit to the left just as my turn came. Something hit me in the right side below the armpit. I contracted in pain, shifting back into my previous position so that the pistol shot only hit me in the left upper arm. I slumped and lay still feeling numbed and not quite sure whether I was dead or alive. Then two more volleys on my left. The last comrade was not instantly killed either and tried to get up and run. A final long burst from a G-3 must have killed him on the spot. I just lay still, breathing into the wet sand until I hear the truck move off."

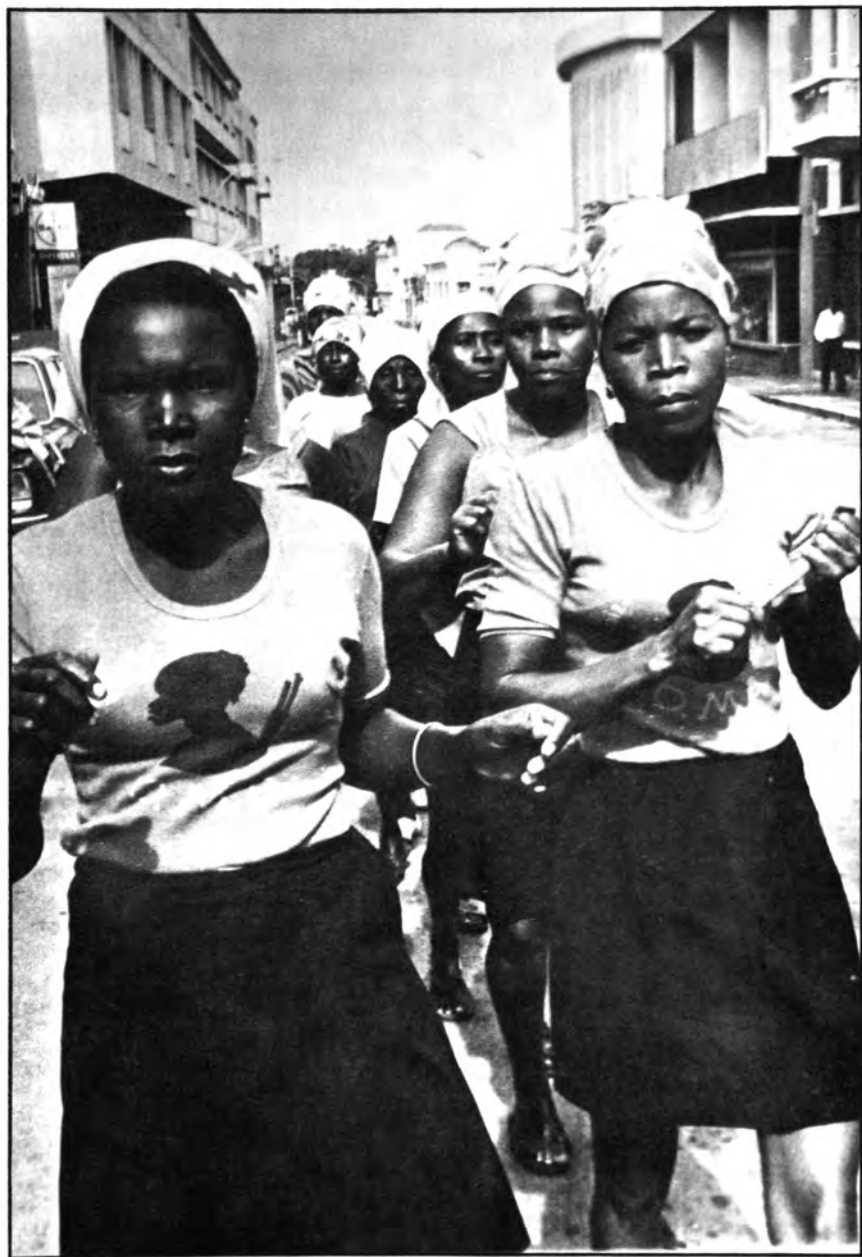
Mandrake speaks of his experience in an unemotional, almost detached manner like somebody describing a game of cards. What he resents the most is being unfit for combat service as his arm is not fully healed. Not used to the horrors of war, I am the one to get emotional, a feeling that grows as I later

collect similar accounts from many parts of the country. This particular massacre took place in late March 1975, only days after FNLA had executed fifty young MPLA sympathizers at Kifangondo, near Luanda. Such are the forces who, with American dollars, fight to save Angola for "democracy and Christianity," much like their counterparts have done in Indochina and Chile.

MPLA today is an impressively strong mass movement. But for the small group who met secretly in Luanda nineteen years ago, to call themselves the "Popular Movement" reflected more their vision and ambition than the reality of the time. Gathered from a handful of small clandestine groups, the founders of MPLA hardly represented the masses of the Angolan people, neither ideologically nor by their class background. They were young and better-educated than most. Many were from urban backgrounds and some had studied in Portugal. Some of MPLA's founders had been associated with the Portuguese Communist Party and other elements of the anti-fascist opposition, and socialist ideas made up a strong element in their new brand of nationalism. Among them were Agostinho Neto and Amilcar Cabral, later the Secretary-General of PAIGC, who was working in Angola at the time. Because they were white, of mixed race or *assimilados*,⁸ because of their schooling and travels, they had been able to break out of the narrow confines of the settler or traditional African universe. The anti-colonial currents flowing through black Africa helped give their rebellion against Catholicism and the authoritarian regime a more definite direction. And gradually, as their understanding of colonialism grew, the cultural emphasis of their activities was replaced by a more overtly political program. The formation of MPLA was an important step in this direction.

The new organization soon extended its underground network into other parts of the country, but essentially retained its urban character. Its progressive nationalist propaganda was directed primarily at the workers and functionaries of the towns; strikes and protests were the chief means by which the Movement intended to pressure the Portuguese into giving Angola its independence. This strategy had its roots in the still Euro-centric perspective of socialist thought and in the experiences of other African nationalist parties, most of which found their strength in the indigenous petty bourgeoisie and the embryonic working classes of their respective countries. The few peasant-based revolutions to have been successful - in China and Vietnam - had taken place far away and were not well known among African patriots.

The Salazar regime, however, unlike its British, French and Belgian colleagues, remained intransigent. Underdeveloped Portugal, poor in modern industry and large corporations, still needed political control to exploit its colonies and was not about to withdraw. It was determined to decapitate any independence movement and responded to the early tremors of na-



OMA militants / LSM photo

tionalist demands by dispatching PIDE and troop reinforcements to its African possessions. In the late 1950's, waves of repression began to create serious problems for MPLA. Leaders were arrested or forced into exile, informers worked to infiltrate the organization and political activity became increasingly dangerous. But on all sides, other colonies were moving toward independence and it was inevitable that, sooner or later, the "wind of change" would break the calm imposed by Portuguese might.

The massacres of 1961 radically changed the course of the liberation struggle. Colonial terror made it almost impossible to work in the towns, and large parts of the countryside were in upheaval. Clearly, it would take more than strikes and political pressure to force a colonial withdrawal. The struggle which was necessary would have to be a mass struggle; it would have to obtain the support of Angolans far beyond the tiny segment of urban workers and progressive intellectuals. More specifically, the focus of the struggle would have to shift to the countryside. Eighty-five per cent of the Angolan people lived in the rural areas and colonial presence was far weaker there than in the cities.

At the height of the massacres, a nucleus of MPLA cadre was implanted in the Dembos forest area, only a few hours drive north of Luanda, to set up the "First Politico-Military Region" of the liberation movement. Joined by villagers seeking protection from the bands of bloodthirsty soldiers and settlers, they set up a base area with shelters and fields that essentially remained intact through the anti-colonial war. Indeed, the local villagers came to make up most of the fighting force, though an increasing number of urban youth, like Mandrake, arrived to join them in later years. From 1963 onward, a similar situation developed in Cabinda and then, starting in 1966, in the vast eastern districts of Lunda, Moxico and Cuando-Cubango.

The Eastern Front, in particular, gave MPLA the opportunity to deepen its popular base. Through Zambia the Movement had access to supplies from the outside world, both military hardware and other necessary goods like clothes, medicines, blankets, soap and salt. This provided part of the material basis for mobilizing the emiserated peasants who were trying to eke out a subsistence from their small plots under colonial super-exploitation. Within four years of operations, several hundred thousand participated in the struggle and reconstruction in MPLA-controlled areas. This front, too, became the primary political training ground for the young cadre who had fled Angola, often by way of schools and universities in Portugal, to join MPLA abroad. In Moxico's bush and sparse forests many of them made their first real contact with the masses of their own people; eating their food, living in their rough shelters and learning their concerns. They worked as teachers, medical assistants, agricultural cadre and military commanders.

Here they found that the ideological and often abstract concerns which had led them to join the struggle hardly applied. As Amílcar Cabral observed in Guinea-Bissau, "The people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children." To gain the support and participation of the peasants, the liberation movement had to persuade them that their lives would improve as the struggle advanced. No explanation was necessary to demonstrate their exploitation; the question was rather: "If we fight, can we really win? If we join you, will we be protected from Portuguese reprisals?" And as the MPLA sank roots in the remote bush areas of northern and eastern Angola, the cadre from the cities found that their own perspective of the struggle changed. Their work with the people transformed their own aspirations as it gradually transformed the MPLA, making it in essence and not in name only, a *people's* movement.

Periods of intense political work always preceded the expansion of the armed struggle to new zones and the guerrilla force was just one of many organs of People's Power to rise from this process. The Youth of MPLA (JMPLA), the Organization of Angolan Women (OMA), the National Union of Angolan Workers (UNTA), and the Organization of Angolan Pioneers (OPA) shared the task of mass mobilization with the armed militants. Within their framework food production was improved and equal distribution of goods assured. CIR⁹ schools, People's Stores and mobile clinics appeared as the liberated areas were consolidated. Democratically elected village action committees worked with the cadre to support the bush schools and clinics and set up local militias to defend the people against Portuguese attacks when the guerrillas were not at hand. For the first time since colonial penetration the villagers thus gained a measure of real control over their own lives. This kind of mobilization was the force which drove the liberation war forward.

Though the colonial police apparatus retained its grip on the cities, liberation movement propaganda could not be kept out. Continuous arrests with imprisonment, murder and torture made difficult the growth of their clandestine structure, but the Movement's presence could not be uprooted. This was particularly so in Luanda, which had long been an enclave of progressive politics in relation to the rest of the country. But with industrial expansion and the rapid growth of towns like Lobito, Benguela, Malanje and Moçamedes, the leaflets and underground militants of MPLA made a considerable impact in these areas as well. By 1974 MPLA was well-known and also recognized by most urban Angolans as *their* organization, even by that vast majority who had had no direct political involvement.

The instant vacuum which followed the Lisbon coup was soon

filled by a tremendous surge of political activity. Independence, democracy, freedom; options which under the heel of PIDE and the colonial army had seemed so distant, now suddenly appeared within reach. Years of fear and hatred for colonialism and its representatives had built up among Blacks, Mulattos and progressive Whites, a mighty force which now sought an outlet. The reactionary violence in Luanda and other cities reinforced the need for organization. But MPLA, the force that the majority identified with, was yet in no position to exercise effective leadership. The People's Power "movement" which rose in these turbulent months of 1974, therefore, was just that: the people rising to assert itself; in all its force and in all its heterogeneity; a spontaneous release of suppressed energy. It was like a deluge that no dam and no single spillway or riverbed could contain, less a cohesive "movement" than just a concept to describe, however inadequately, a great revolutionary outburst.

People's Power with its People's Commissions and military groups provided an enormous reservoir of strength for President Neto and his comrades. Its mass support in areas that had never been touched by the armed struggle made it impossible for Spínola and his allies to isolate MPLA within Angola, and in the early confrontations of the Second War, FAPLA might not have prevailed without the heroic support of the *musseque* militia. Their men and women, some only in their early teens and with a strange assortment of weapons and uniforms, turned out to be an invaluable force in driving out FNLA and its Zairean troops from Luanda. Still more important, in the long run, was the work of mass mobilization which was started; organizing the people of each *bairro*¹⁰ around their concrete problems, the formation of factory workers' committees, setting up schools to replace colonial education.

But from this basis, to build a force to resist the invasion armies and set up the structures of the new state, has not been altogether a smooth process. Like all other events of the real world, the Angolan struggle is full of "impurities" that the textbooks of revolution do not mention. To fully integrate People's Power into the liberation movement, to give it leadership, to control its operations and turn its weaknesses into strengths is a task which cannot be accomplished overnight. The *musseque* militia, for example, was to a large extent made up of people who in the past had been forced to make a living as best they could, frequently by theft and banditry, and who between battles could easily use their new-found power for personal gain. Young Angolans who had been studying in Portugal and abroad returned with their politics - from Maoist to social democrat - which often had little relevance to Angolan conditions. Like their peers who had stayed in Angola and who frequently dominated the People's Commissions, their zeal and enthusiasm far outweighed their political experience. Pervasive



Angolans in Luanda's shantytowns / LSM photo

among all elements was an inevitable measure of opportunism: in times like these much can be gained by jumping on the bandwagon of revolution. The fact that People's Power is now formally part of the Popular Movement does not immediately change its characteristics. For such a conglomeration of ideas, social backgrounds and aspirations to find a place within a democratic, disciplined organization will be no small part of the continuing Angolan revolution.

In this way MPLA has come to embody a spectacular array of different class elements and ideological currents. It counts Blacks, Whites and Mulattos; workers, peasants, lumpen, petty bourgeois and even some of the scattered "real" bourgeois. In other words, it has retained the character of a front. While during the anti-colonial war, the movement sought to unite all those opposed to colonialism, now its basis of unity is the willingness to fight the invaders and their Angolan agents. In the fashion of other revolutionary liberation movements like the NLF of Vietnam, MPLA at this time subordinates internal class conflicts to the need for uniting all genuinely patriotic elements. In the words of President Neto, the primary contradiction at this point is "the irreconcilable class contradiction which opposes the interests of our people to those of international imperialism. The existing contradictions among the people, between the various classes and anti-imperialist social groups, belong to the category of secondary contradictions and, as such, must be resolved."

As a front, MPLA reflects the level of class formation in the country. By themselves, neither Angola's infant working class, nor the progressive petty bourgeoisie, nor the vast but heterogeneous and ideologically weak peasantry could have fought a successful liberation war. Within MPLA their combined force has radically changed the course of the nation. And in the slow and painful process of a people's war, a new outlook has been formed which transcends the particular interests of each separate class or segment of the population. With national independence, their minimum objective will have been achieved. But from early on in the struggle, the militants of MPLA have looked beyond independence to a state that will truly serve "the most exploited sectors of our people." The experiences of the liberation struggle and those of independent Africa in the 1960's - a helpless prey of neocolonialism - have demonstrated the futility of political freedom without a fundamental restructuring of society. "The economy will be designed to serve the Angolan people and never voracious imperialism," President Neto says in his speech on Independence night. "With the alliance of the workers and the peasants as the nucleus, all patriotic sectors will be united . . . in the struggle for the construction of a society without exploiters and exploited. . . . The working masses will exercise power on all levels, the only guarantee for the formation of a new human being and of the

triumph of our revolution."

The President's words outline the direction of the continued Angolan revolution. They carry a vision, not of something in a hazy, distant future, but of the objectives for which all Angolans in the MPLA-controlled parts of the country are now working. As I travel through the country, visiting the *musseques* and villages of the "most exploited," the factories, schools and FAPLA camps, I witness how the enormous tasks of this period are tackled and how the many contradictions are struggled with.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. The National Security Study Memorandum, 1969. See *The Kissinger Study on Southern Africa*, Spokesman Books, Nottingham, 1975.
2. For a more detailed history of FNLA, see "Angola: Myths and Realities" in *LSM NEWS*, Winter 1975-76 issue.
3. See *Ibid.* Correspondence between Savimbi and the local Portuguese commanders was published in *Afrique-Asie* (Paris), Number 61, 8-21, July 1974. Marcello Caetano, the deposed Portuguese Prime Minister writes in his account: "The enemy's opening of the Eastern Front constituted a tremendous preoccupation and Costa Gomes, on assuming responsibility for Angola's defense, approached the case with intelligence and decisiveness. (General) Bettencourt Rodrigues received the task . . . to pacify the region, which he did by reaching an understanding with the people of UNITA, an insurrectionary group which under the leadership of Savimbi operated with the disagreement of the MPLA." *Depoimento*, Rio and São Paulo 1974, pp. 180-181. [My translation, O.G.]
4. See "Angola: the Carve-up of Africa's El Dorado," in *The Sunday Times* (London) 20 October 1974, pp. 10-11.
5. The Angolan name for the vast shantytowns circling the inner city.
6. Meaning "those who return"; i.e. those settlers who left Angola on the eve of Independence.
7. Former Minister of Internal Administration, Alves led an abortive coup attempt on 27 May 1977.
8. Africans who because of their "level of civilization" classified as Portuguese citizens.
9. Center for Revolutionary Instruction: schools where the people of the liberated areas learned literacy as well as practical and military skills.
10. Quarter, part of a town.



Bairro Operario: "The Workers' Quarter"

Mandrake is the one to introduce me to *Bairro Operario*. On our tours of Luanda, he keeps pointing out the great changes that have taken place and we both agree this needs to be documented in greater depth. Luanda today is living through a great upheaval with the ferment and popular surge in the African parts of the city starting to shape a new future for its people.

But the outside world hardly knows. I could tell many stories about the exploits of the "media mafia" in relation to this war. About journalists reporting from the front without ever leaving the air-conditioned Hotel Tropico and being more concerned with what their editors expect than what is actually happening outside. The greatest tragedy of this kind of journalism is not so much in the lies and inaccuracies that reach the outside world as in the complete silence about the real political situation in the MPLA-held parts of the country. While cigar-chewing veteran war correspondents are moving little flag-pins on their maps and cursing the Movement's refusal to take them to the battlefield, the men mixing drinks across the bar counter are being organized in a union to run the hotel.

Very few Western correspondents venture into the *musseques* to find out how most Angolans live or visit the factories to see how they manage to keep producing. All around them a revolution is unfolding but they do not know. Or if they do, they don't take much interest. My own two or three hour visits in the various locations, however, have left me with many questions and few real insights, and so I ask Mandrake to recommend one particular part of town where I could spend my "free" time.

Luanda's shantytowns are different from those of most other African cities. While in Lusaka, for instance, the "townships" are split up and located several miles from each other and from the European parts of town, the Portuguese let "their" slums mushroom wall-to-wall with the colonial quarters. Here,

the Africans flowing into the city from all parts of Angola mixed with the mulatto population and even the odd poor White (unthinkable in other parts of Africa) to form a unique racially mixed culture. Though most of this *musseque* population lived miserably in contrast to the inhabitants of "the asphalt city," their proximity to the center of colonialism, with its cultural and political spin-offs put them in a special position in relation to the masses of Angolans. The large mulatto population, in particular, both suffered and profited from their ambivalent position. While Portuguese officials looked to them as caretakers of colonial interests, their relatively privileged access to education and higher status also led many Mulattos - as well as African *assimilados* - to intellectual and political protest. Most of these "Creole islands"¹ of Luanda have thus become strongholds for MPLA and People's Power.

It is a hot afternoon when Mandrake and I first drive down to the quarters of *Bairro Operario's* People's Commission (PC). At the end of the pleasant Avenida João II with its palm trees and flower beds, we leave the asphalt and make our way through the reddish mud and puddles left from last night's rain, past the project of cheaply-built apartment blocks and into the *musseque* proper. The shops or small *cantinas*² are still open for business and outside the bread shop a line is forming in anticipation of the evening's delivery. Most likely, there won't be enough to go around and so families send children or sometimes granny to line up hours in advance. Pieces of cloth or plastic bags mark their place in line as the children play in the dust or the women gather for an exchange of news in the shade. The houses are made of mud-and-wattle or of rough, unplanned boards with tin roofs. It gets baking hot inside at this time of the day and the closed shutters give little protection. The afternoon is still drowsy; with sunset and the return of the men, the pace will pick up.

But what is visible from the street is only the quiet front of *musseque* life. Behind each house is a courtyard, surrounded on its other three sides by various structures patched together from tin sheets, plywood, cardboard and odd lumber. These serve as additional quarters for the large families, rainy season kitchen or shelter for the goats and chickens. Families of twelve to fifteen people are often crammed together here, which explains how an estimated twelve thousand Angolans can find room to live in an area which can be no bigger than half a square mile. The yard is the center of family life, where clothes are washed, food cooked and eaten, where the small children spend most of the day and guests are entertained. And, as is common in Africa, the *luandenses* have a free and easy-going way of socializing, spending much time with friends and neighbors, sharing their meals of *funji*,³ fried fish and perhaps some *ouca* beer.

The People's Commission is located in one of the bigger houses in the heart of the quarter. Strings of black, red and



People's Commission in Bairro Operario / LSM photo

yellow pennants are suspended across the street in front and the colorful poster display on the wall is dominated by a large portrait of President Neto and a slogan: "The People in Power." A group of youngsters is sitting by the entrance, barefoot and dressed in odd pieces of army clothing, dumped by the Portuguese forces before their departure and now to be seen all over the city. Two of the boys are white, one of them crippled by polio.

The PC's front house has two rooms. In the narrow hall a group of mothers and children are waiting to see the doctor who is using the first room for consultation. The "doctor" turns out to be a third-year woman medical student who comes in for a few hours every afternoon. Morning sessions are handled by another student and together they try to prescribe cures for at least the most common of the people's health problems: infections, parasites and a whole range of diseases arising from the miserable conditions of *musseque* life. The second room has been turned into a dispensary where an elderly male nurse dresses wounds and gives injections. These services, for the first time ever available in *Bairro Operario*, cost about one dollar a visit for "those who can afford it." Those who cannot afford this much, pay whatever they can spare. Visits to private clinics in the white part of town cost \$20 and up; i.e. one week's wages for the average African worker. Accordingly, health services are something new for most of these people; something which in the past was reserved for the inhabitants of the "asphalt city" whereas the rest were left to rely on traditional healers.

The history of the clinic goes back to the massacres of July 1974 when white vigilantes roamed the streets, spreading death and terror. At that time progressive doctors, nurses, students, anyone with a knowledge of medicine who turned out to help, had their hands full. Now, with the exodus of many Portuguese and the demands of the war, there is a desperate shortage of personnel. Yet most Luanda *baïrros* have a clinic like this one. With MPLA in full control of the city, supplies are obtained gratis from the main hospital to which the students also refer cases of serious illness or the ones they cannot properly diagnose. Though this system of medical care is temporary and in many ways inadequate, it has nevertheless provided the majority of Luanda's population with far more than they had access to before. In one year and under the most difficult conditions, People's Power has accomplished what colonialism never aspired to. The people's creative energy, bottled up for decades, is now bursting through the widening cracks in the old system, transforming Luanda into a liberated area in every sense.

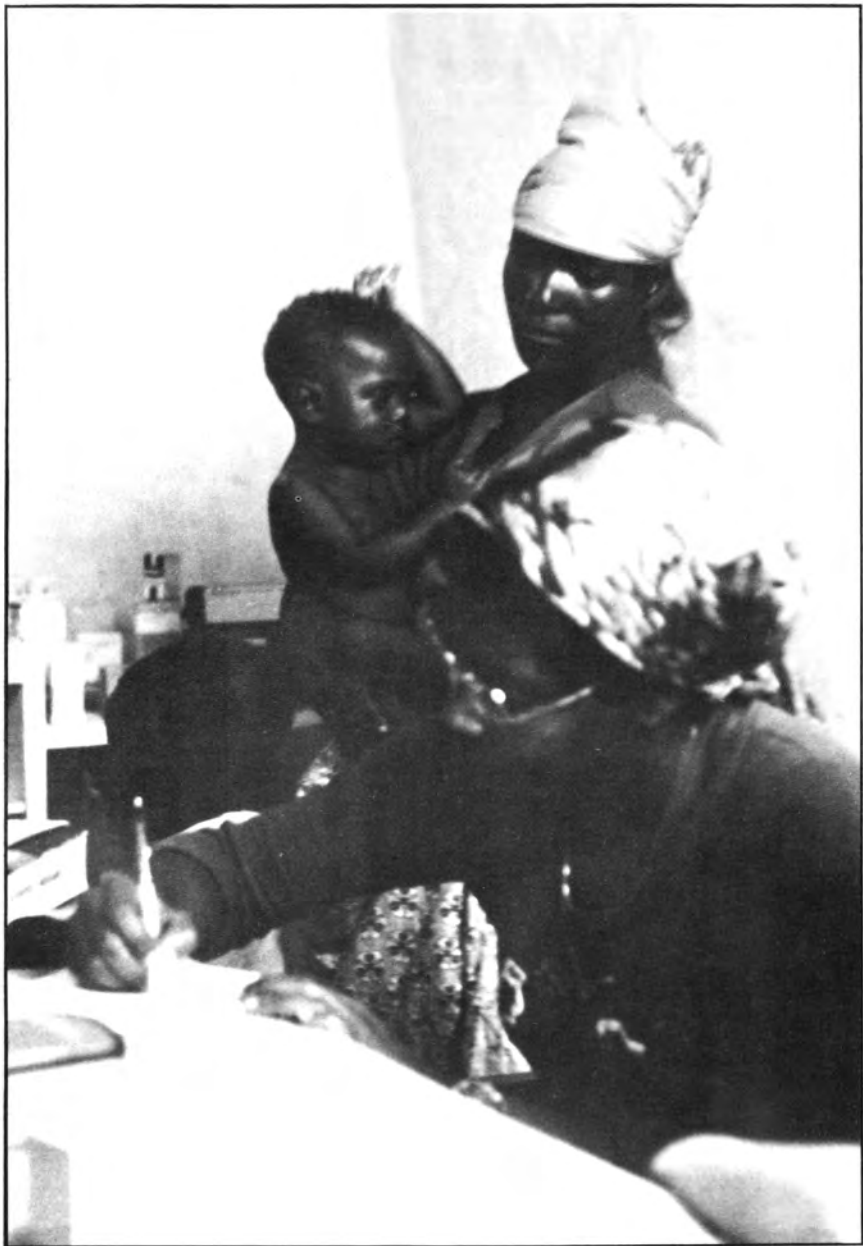
Out back, the large yard is swept neat and clean. Almost half is covered by a newly constructed tin roof under which old school desks have been placed to make it a classroom and good

place to hold meetings. Another building extends the length of the yard. It has five small rooms, each with a door facing the yard. When I ask Mandrake if this used to be a guest house, his response is a broad smile. "Of sorts . . . , it was a brothel." Each cubicle now serves as office for one or two of the PC's subcommittees. There is barely space for a table and two chairs and the partitions are so thin you can hear every movement in the adjoining rooms. Only a few months ago Portuguese troops came here to unload their frustrations on African prostitutes who for lack of other means of income, had become part of the inevitable appendage of colonialism and war. And it does not disappear easily. "Prostitution is Slavery" has been painted, red and clear, on the houses of some women who persist in the trade; it is part of a campaign to stamp out such vices. But, as any PC activist will acknowledge, the question is not primarily a moral one; it is not closing the brothels that will free the prostitutes from their lot. The priority at this time is to find alternate ways for them to earn a living. In a context like that of *Bairro Operario* material incentive is still the magnet that pulls the people toward a new life.

The work of the People's Commission is handled by seven different subcommittees or departments: the Department for Education and Culture (DEC), Information and Propaganda (DIP), Internal Administration (DAI), Mass Organization (DOM), Housing and Collective Work (DHO), Food and Cooperatives (DAC) and Social Welfare (DAS). The Department of Defense has ceased functioning since the *bairro* self-defense units were integrated into FAPLA. Leadership consists of an executive committee made up of the seven department "responsibles." The veteran among them is Elisio Napoleão, in his mid-thirties and a native of *Bairro Operario*. He is a functionary with the city Public Works Department and, like the other activists, comes here every day after work. In addition to his PC duties, he is also a member of the workers' commission of the city's Public Works Department. As DAI "responsible," his duties are to act as the Commission's secretary and keep track of its finances.

"When we started, a year ago," he explains, "we had no money whatsoever. Our initial expenses were covered by random contributions from the population. But as we started expanding our activities - the clinic and schools, for instance - we needed a regular income. For this place," he looks around, "we have to pay 1500 escudos (\$60) a month. Now most of the households pay 20 escudos (80¢) a month toward our expenses and some pay more." Between January and October 1975, the Commission collected \$6,200 towards its work, including the income from the clinic. "In this way we are just breaking even. But the needs of this quarter are enormous and we'd like to be able to pay some of our activists to work here full time."

Indeed, the needs appear truly enormous, in many ways not unlike those of American big city ghettos. *Bairro Operario* is



Woman doctor in People's Commission clinic / LSM photo

marked by its proximity to the "asphalt city"; it grew up as a product of the latter and by an interaction which rendered beauty and prosperity to the colonial façade, wretchedness and desolation to the vast slums. As its name suggests, many of the men here belong to the regular workforce, as dockers, bricklayers, carpenters, factory workers or functionaries. Despite their poor pay - generally \$60 - \$80 per month - they are relatively well off. In a situation of perennially high unemployment and insecurity, a number at least equal to this have been forced to live off the white city in other ways; as bootblacks, beggars, petty thieves and bandits; as so-called "lumpens," the "driftwood of humanity" in Eldridge Cleaver's words, the "scum layer of society" according to Marx. The dog-eat-dog mentality of predatory capitalism appears as entrenched among these elements as among the owners of the quarter's small shops and *cantinas*. Together such segments of the population have served as the early base for fascist and reactionary movements in other countries - from Italy in the 1920's to Saigon and Santiago in our time. In FRELIMO's Mozambique, the hardcore among them have been sent to reeducation camps where they work the land while learning about the revolution and the role they are expected to play. Here in Luanda's shantytowns many have joined the FAPLA where they form a significant, but potentially unstable, element. Those who remain are chiefly concerned with self-preservation and, opportunism the hallmark of their class, may well work with the PC's or the factory committees and at the same time be engaged in black-marketing and speculation. It is against them that MPLA's watchword, "Discipline in the Rear Guard," is primarily directed.

With a class composition of this kind, *Bairro Operario* might seem like a difficult place to do political work. And it is, even though the situation, as I now find it, has improved over six months ago. The terror from outside, whether by Portuguese vigilantes or by FNLA, helped weld together the inhabitants within the framework of People's Power. "When FNLA was still in town," says Filipe Junior, the twenty-two-year-old "responsible" for Education and Culture, "our work was extremely difficult. They arrested and sometimes killed people they found with our schoolbooks or other materials." The experiences of this period - and the success of People's Power in uniting the people and isolating the immediate enemy - caused a leap in political consciousness. The myth of Angola's "race war" was once and for all exploded, and the two opposites in the conflict stood out clearly. The foreign invasion on the side of FNLA and UNITA has later made this principal contradiction even clearer. I learn to appreciate the impact of this one evening at an outdoor film showing with a Chinese production about the Red Army facing the joint forces of the Kuomintang and the Japanese invaders. No soundtrack is needed to distinguish friend from foe, and the mere appearance of a scheming Chiang and his evil co-

horts on the screen provokes angry howls of "Holden!", "Savimbi!", "Traidores!"

As the weeks pass and FAPLA, with the help of Cuban volunteers, goes on the offensive, the pressure on Luanda subsides and the atmosphere gradually becomes somewhat more relaxed. But in the continuing battle to implement "Produce to Resist," to mobilize the population for the liberation of the country and "Maintain discipline among the rearguard," other contradictions arise which, even if not primary, must be dealt with to ensure the progressive direction of the struggle. The sometimes chaotic situation - a war and the vacuum resulting from the exodus of educated and technically trained Portuguese - leaves lots of room for those who are primarily concerned with advancing their individual interests, a trait not confined to the lumpen. "Of course, there are opportunists who want to move in fast to take over the open positions," an MPLA leader has frankly told me earlier. "We must combat corruption and opportunism of all sorts." Here in *Bairro Operario*, Elizabeth Geita, the twenty-year-old head of DAC (Department of Food and Cooperatives), elaborates. "Our aim now is to get control of food distribution. Speculation is common, especially for staples like rice and manioc meal, and everybody's in business. Mind you, a lot of people are out of work and are getting desperate."

The DAC was started three months ago when Luanda faced shortages of many foodstuffs, in response to the people's demands that something be done. Since then it has gradually taken control over the wholesale of basic foods, ensuring that each shop or *cantina* gets something and that the goods are retailed at the set prices. Sanctions against shopkeepers who charge more include the impounding of the merchandise and even the closure of the shops. "This makes us unpopular with some people," says Elizabeth. "For instance, some time ago we received a report that a certain young couple was black-marketing cigarettes and wine. For a packet of 'AC' cigarettes, twelve escudos in the store, they charged twenty. A comrade and I went to see them, but the man recognized us as PC members and locked the door. Only when the other comrade threatened to kick it in did he open the door. The man told us he had no goods left, but when we started to search the place, he handed over a carton with six packets of cigarettes. We suspected that there was more, however, so instead of returning home, we stayed on near the house for a while. Soon a man arrived, disappeared inside for a moment and then left, smoking a cigarette. Seeing this, we went straight back and started searching the house. Under the bed I found a box with ninety-one packs. The next day the man's wife, who had been away, came over here, complaining and shouting that the People's Commission is nothing but a new PIDE. I could mention several examples of this. Of course, there are some who are hostile to our work but so far there has been no violence."

Such hostility is an inevitable aspect of the unfolding

struggle to replace colonial rule with a people's democracy. Here in the city, where colonial mentality runs deep, the notion is not uncommon that the collapse of the old system has opened the door to a new free-for-all race to power and prosperity. Four decades under the rigid discipline of colonial fascism have created a yearning for less restriction and more individual opportunity. But to prevent the President's talk about the end of exploitation from merely remaining rhetoric, practices such as black-marketing must be checked, against the opposition of some, but with the support of many more. During the difficult months earlier this year Luandans learned the advantages of organization, and as they are preparing for the hardships and scarcities of what might be a long and difficult war, they are not about willingly to fall prey to a new generation of exploiters.

Apart from the medical services, the schools were the first of the People's Commission's civilian programs to be put into action. In fact, some classes started before the People's Commission proper was formed. Filipe, also a native of *Bairro Operario* and conversant in both English and French, tells me they have seven hundred students in the day classes and three hundred at night. Absenteeism must run high, though; I never see more than half that number whenever I visit the Portuguese-built austere brick structure near the PC headquarters. The late classes are for those over fourteen and most of the students, 75% male, seem to be in their late teens or early twenties. The classes run two to three hours per day, five days a week. The most advanced students are in the beginning of the second grade, and are already doing three-digit multiplication and division. "The emphasis is on basic literacy and the history of Angola. Our history text is the one written by MPLA and most of the other materials are prepared by ourselves or by other *bairro* schools." Filipe pulls a stack of stencilled papers out of his briefcase. "Only the math text is left from the Portuguese curriculum" The teachers are mainly high school students or others with secondary education. Thirty of them just finished a one month crash course for this kind of teaching.

Is it not difficult to get people, especially the young ones, to come to school? "Yes," he nods, "it is a struggle. But we have groups of *dinamizadores*⁴ working in the various parts of the *bairro* to motivate them. The greatest difficulty, however, is to create a good political atmosphere in the school. We always emphasize that teachers and students have equally important responsibilities to the revolution; the teachers to teach, the students to learn." Equal numbers of elected students and teachers make up the school board and a political commission which is in charge of organizing meetings for the whole school on Saturdays. These meetings are to discuss the political situation in Angola and internationally. The school also has a theater and singing group which performs on special occa-



Top: Reading the bulletin board in Bairro Operario /LSM photo

sions, like Independence Day and 10 December, MPLA's anniversary.

João Paim is twenty and a student of electronics. At the PC he is responsible for the Department of Information and Propaganda. "Until last year the media served strictly to reinforce colonial fascism. This is now changing, of course, but we must still work to bring information to a level where the masses can relate to it. The TV people, for example, should join forces with the people; they should come into the *musseques* and make programs about the resistance and people's culture down here."

João's department produces a "people's paper" - a small collection of items from MPLA's organ, *Vitoria Certa*, as well as articles from the daily press - "homemade" in the *bairro*. Copies are mounted on boards and placed at strategic locations where they serve as an important source of information for that vast majority who cannot afford to buy the daily papers. The DIP also puts out, though irregularly, a small stencilled bulletin dealing with issues of particular relevance to *Bairro Operario*. "Still, communication with the masses of the people is a problem. Many cannot read and therefore radio, television, films and public meetings are essential." A crowd of mainly youngsters gather around the TV set in the PC yard every evening for the news and the occasional other programming. *Radio Nacional*, now government-run, has become a powerful factor in the political process; its frequent news, political programs and revolutionary music are heard on the thousands of transistor sets of which every house in the *musseques* has at least one.

With its explosive expansion in Luanda, MPLA has far outgrown its former structure. With People's Commissions doing much the same work as the Movement's "old" mass organizations (both OMA and JMPLA have their own branches in *Bairro Operario*), the temporary confusion as to who is doing what sometimes detracts from the overall product. But, after all, "It is from confusion that light is born," as João comments with a grin at my periodic exasperation in trying to find out exactly how things work.

The communication problem that João refers to, however, is not exclusively due to the lack of technical facilities. The PC programs dealing with aspects of daily life - better food distribution, a campaign to get electricity into the quarter - generally spark much enthusiasm, as did the militia groups at a time when people were fearing for their lives. But when it comes to more overtly "political" programs, the alleged problem of most of Luanda's People's Commissions is the "passivity of the masses." The political meetings I witness are rarely attended by more than a hundred people - and this despite considerable preparation on the part of the young activists. A three-day seminar on dialectical and historical materialism has to be cancelled due to a complete lack of interest outside the small circle of department "responsibles."

I cannot help but wonder whose judgement called for such a seminar in this environment and at this time. The Chinese, it is true, study and apply dialectics to tasks of production in fields and factories. But only after decades of socialism and on a solid educational basis. Here in the *musseque*, on the other hand, among the unskilled workers, their families and the lumpen who make up the bulk of the population and among whom less than half are literate, who would attend such an event? That the masses are now thought to be "passive," after the pitch of struggle six months ago, is perhaps not as much a reflection on the masses themselves as on the relationship between them and the core of the PC activists, all of whom, if not still students, hold relatively well-paid jobs and were not that well-known in the *bairro* before the events of last year. Since the time of the Lisbon coup, they have devoured what revolutionary literature they could lay their hands on and thrown themselves into the process of building a new Angola. They are eager to move ahead, to wipe out any trace of the old, often forgetting how deeply-rooted the legacy of colonialism is in a city like Luanda. The contradictions they face are similar to those of the first generation of MPLA militants with a petty-bourgeois background. And "class suicide," integration with the masses, what have taken these veteran militants years and years of struggle and sacrifice to accomplish, will take the young PC activists no less.

The People's Power movement is the arena for such a struggle. Through their work the young activists, with many things still to learn, have begun to confront the ideological heritage of colonialism: elitism, impetuosity, isolation from the masses. The enthusiasm that came with the early surge of People's Power is now giving way to a more long-range - and tempered - view of the tasks ahead. But a foundation has been laid for the fight to overcome past class differences and for the people of Luanda's *musseques* to assert the power that is theirs. This is the essence of the new Angola. It is a process that conservatives like the editors of the London *Times* may contemptuously refer to as "back-street idealism," but which revolutionaries all over the world can learn much from.

NOTES

1. See John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, Vol. 1, Cambridge, Mass., 1969, pp. 16-22.
2. Combination of small store and cafe.
3. A stiff porridge of manioc meal and water.
4. "Dynamizers" or "animators"; political activists who work at the mass level to mobilize people around the PC's programs.



FAPLA: The New People's Army

Amanhã vamos a praia. "Let's go to the beach tomorrow," comes a voice out of the dark. It is all but dry humor as we wade shoulder deep through the dark sea toward the Corimba beach south of Luanda. It's past midnight and with the moon not yet out, the warm night is almost impenetrable. A thin black ribbon on the left indicates Mussulo Island, a long, narrow spit that connects with the mainland thirty miles to the South. A few dozen African fishermen and their families inhabit this peaceful stretch of sand and palm trees, casting their nets before dawn to take their catch fresh to the Luanda market every day. On our right, the white beach is visible only as a greyish shade while the mango groves behind are swallowed in the black void of the steep hillside. The only sound is that of our column moving through the water, two hundred and eighty commando trainees from the *Resistencia Popular* CIR and their instructors. The water test is a highlight of their training program.

Shoulder deep ..., to my shoulders, that is. But I am six feet, four inches and so is Mukushi, the Head Instructor who is at my side leading the column. As we move towards still deeper water, there is splashing and subdued giggling from behind. "Think of us who are not as tall as you." I turn around to see only the eyes and the cap of the comrade next in line. His rifle is held high to protect it from getting wet. Behind him, two lines of heads, more or less submerged, bobbing up and down with the movement of our walk. Mukushi turns closer to shore.

This is my third day with the *Resistencia Popular* militants, photographing and collecting information on them and their training. The invitation - or challenge? - to join in the test is an honor. I could not refuse. And besides, like all the trainees, I did not know what it involved; only that it had to do with walking in water. And there is none around the Grafanil

base. The first part of the test, therefore, was a fifteen mile hike at forced pace through the blazing afternoon sun. Our initial gaiety with singing and shouting slogans subsided rapidly after the half-way mark, then picked up again as we rested and were fed Portuguese combat rations while watching the last rays of sunlight fade in the beautiful calm Atlantic. A sharp whistle broke the idyll and sent us scrambling over the steep cliff and down the last stretch to the water's edge.

That was four hours ago and I can now feel how each step becomes more and more of an effort. The water is heavier and my boots are sucked in by the soft bottom sand. But Mukushi pushes ahead with his program. We walk, duck, crawl and try to run in the salty mess. Our one "rest" consists of squatting for a few minutes, a bit closer to the shore but still so that the water reaches above our shoulders. Mukushi moves down the line to see how the recruits are doing, half-jokingly splashing water on those who are trying to retreat to higher ground. A dug-out with two fishermen glides by. "The local people have been told we are coming," I'm told, "lest they mistake us for the enemy and open fire."

A strong tide finally forces us ashore about two miles short of the spot where our trucks are waiting. It takes us less than an hour to reach them from the shore side, and to make up for this short-cut, Mukushi decides on an hour of combat exercises on the beach: push-ups, somersaults, kangaroo jumps and ..., mad rushes back into the water. Those who are simply too exhausted to carry through with it all are excused. The rest do the best they can. *A luta ... continua*, the struggle continues; *a luta ... deve sacrificios*, up ... down, push ... push; the struggle ... demands sacrifice! Nobody seems to be trying to get out of it as long as they have a drop of strength left. Not only are the recruits here as volunteers, those I have talked to take a definite pride in what they are trying to do. It is two a.m. before we board the vehicles, two hundred and fifty of us in the two big trucks! Freezing cold, I still fall asleep on the way home, held up by the bodies packed solidly around me and with rifles, canteens, grenades, knees and elbows poked in between every bone in my body.

My time with FAPLA has shattered old ideas of what armies are like - or can be like. A brief experience with the NATO-run forces of my native Norway taught me that there are basically two kinds of soldiers. First, the hardened professionals whose world outlook is saturated with militarism and who spend their careers just longing for a piece of "real" action. When this remains elusive, as is the rule, they have to find substitutes, like shooting elephants with machine-guns on so-called "peace-keeping" missions in the Congo. Under their authority is the vast mass of conscripts whose chief objective is to get through their term doing as little as possible. This second group spend

their last six months in uniform counting the weeks, days, and hours to go before they can hand in their gear and return to their jobs, university courses and girlfriends. Seeing my older friends reach unsuspected levels of regimented apathy and indifference while in the service, I have never since regretted leaving the country after my physical screening and orientation course. In more recent years, hearing American friends talk about Vietnam, British about Suez and Portuguese about Africa, the replacement of elephants by Vietnamese and Africans seems easy enough with the interests of God, country and Western civilization at stake.

As I am now learning, a liberation army - a people's army - has little in common with the forces of imperialist NATO. Like the Chinese and Vietnamese armies, FAPLA is the result of long and bitter years of guerrilla warfare against foreign oppressors and their indigenous allies. From the small band of patriots who attacked the Luanda prison with clubs and knives on the morning of 4 February 1961, MPLA slowly built a guerrilla army as the Movement expanded its base in the bush and forests of Cuanza Norte, Cabinda and the eastern districts. "We are not militarists," the combatants used to insist when explaining their struggle. "We do not like to shoot and kill. Armed struggle is the highest form of political struggle; the colonialists have left us no other way to gain our freedom."

Thus the war by which MPLA, little by little, edged the Portuguese out of large areas of Angola was hardly the stand-up-and-fight type of war, nor the uncontrolled peasant revolt that the colonial government initially anticipated. The "invisible" guerrillas struck when least expected and vanished in time for the enemy's counter-attack. They made road travel dangerous and thus isolated Portuguese outposts. The colonial regime would "prove" its full control over Angola by flying glib Western journalists over huge areas without seeing a single "terrorist."

But the most important battle was that being played out in the hearts and minds of the people. By winning over increasing numbers of the rural population, MPLA undermined the very basis of colonial presence. The enemy grew more isolated and more vulnerable. Political work was primary and always preceded military advance. Local food supply had to be secured and the militants depended on carriers and people to do reconnaissance from among the villagers. And the gradual strengthening of the guerrilla units, bringing more and more of the peasants under arms, made possible the consolidation of the new structure of people's power in the liberated regions: new schools, the introduction of medical assistance and the setting up of the first cooperative plots. From operating in small units to ambush and otherwise harass the enemy, the liberation fighters after a few years launched their first sustained attacks on isolated Portuguese garrisons. In 1969 the armed struggle reached the popu-

lous Bié province and in 1972, in the atmosphere of great upheaval in neighboring Namibia, the southern province of Cunene erupted in a wave of attacks and sabotage actions.

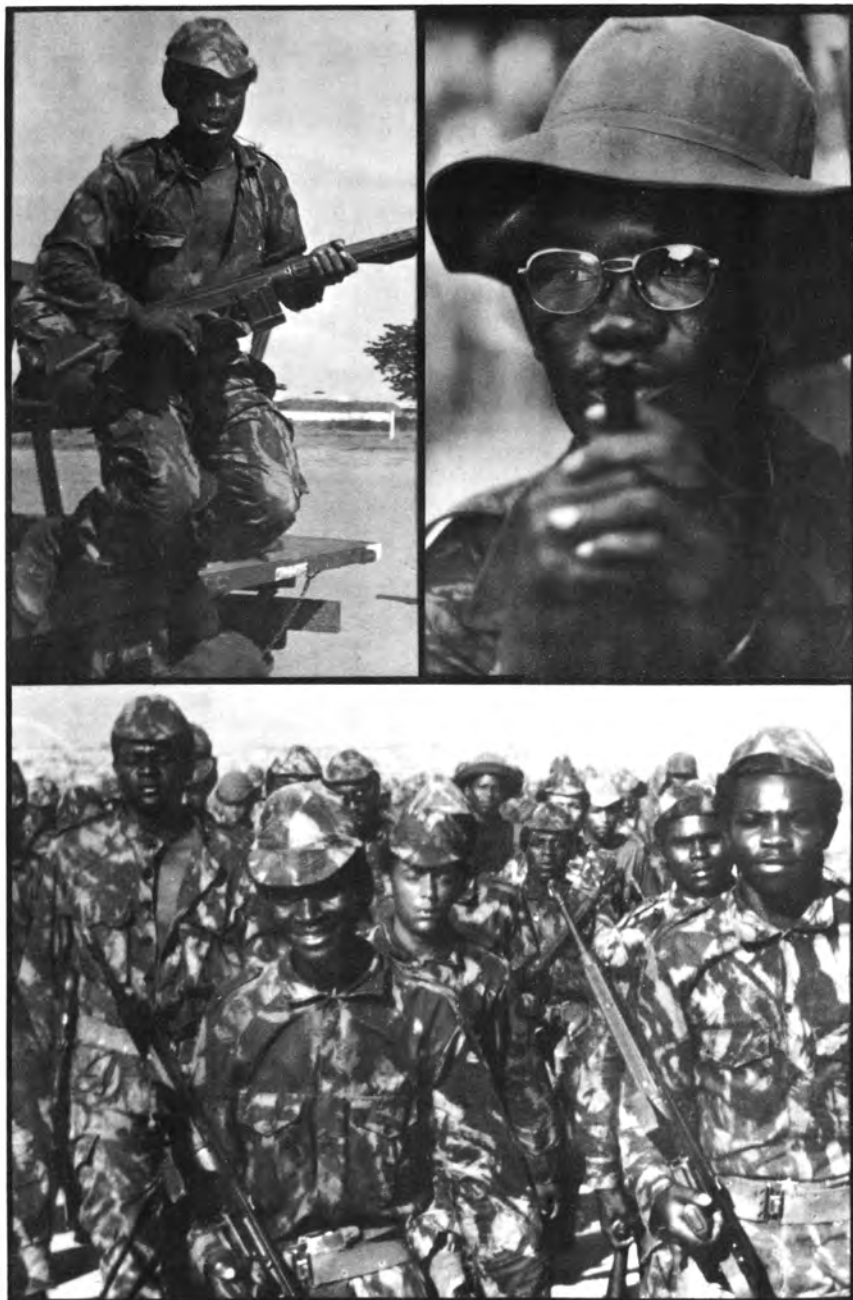
This was the dynamic which the colonialist generals feared the most and one which they recognized could not be checked by military means alone. Thus a program of "concessions" and internal "reform" was announced in conjunction with a barbaric chemical warfare offensive against the MPLA-controlled areas of Lunda and Moxico. The aim of this campaign of "bombs and smiles" was to create a belt, several hundred kilometers wide, where no person could survive and therefore impossible for the guerrillas to penetrate.

To counter the effects of this Portuguese effort, the MPLA leadership launched the Movement of Readjustment among the militants in the East. This "vast campaign of criticism and self-criticism" had as its objective to raise both the ideological and military level and to improve methods of work throughout the liberation movement. Significantly, Readjustment led to the creation of the Groups of Active Militants, rank-and-file bodies to discuss the problems of the struggle and strengthen the link between the leadership and the masses. It also led to the creation of the Department of Political Orientation (DOP) which has since developed into one of the Popular Movement's key organisms. Through raising the political level among its combatants, MPLA managed to carry out military operations of unprecedented magnitude and quality. In 1973 the campaign was launched in the Cabinda region, as well.

If Readjustment did not prevent the defection of Chipenda and his followers and the emergence of the "Active Revolt," it was no doubt the force that, more than any other, enabled MPLA to survive these setbacks. Nevertheless, the Movement appeared shaken during those crucial months of 1974 when a strong united front under its leadership might have left crumbling colonialism no alternative but to recognize it as the only legitimate representative of Angola's people. As it was, MPLA's internal problems gave imperialism the break it needed to start building up other "liberation movements" - FNLA, UNITA, FLEC - in the race for power.

Such was the situation when some eighty of MPLA's guerrilla commanders met to assess the new demands of the struggle. On 1 August (1974), in a "Declaration to the Angolan People, the Guerrillas of MPLA and the Soldiers of Liberated Angola," they announced the formation of the Popular Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA):

Our country is now on the threshold of the objective for which half a million patriots have died and hundreds of thousands have been mutilated. . . . At this hour, imperialist forces are agitated and attempts are being made to destroy that for which you struggled for thirteen years. . . . Comrades! Continue to fight



CIR recruits / LSM photo

for the preservation of our achievements; for the total liberation of the country; to defend the interests of the most exploited sectors of our society; for a democratic, popular and progressive regime.¹

So far the focus of the armed struggle had been in the relatively remote bush and forest areas where the objective had been to isolate the Portuguese and where only a minority of Angolans had come into direct contact with the liberation movement. In the period to come, therefore, the chief task would be to train as many as possible among the hundreds of thousands who were now openly declaring their support for MPLA in the towns and villages across the country. Future confrontations loomed, not only with a colonial or reactionary settler army, but with the Blacks of UNITA and FNLA who had been actively fighting the Popular Movement since early in the anti-colonial war. Further, the arena of such a struggle would include the urban areas where the frictions between the movements were manifestly the strongest. In short, the politico-military task of the new FAPLA was qualitatively different from that of the guerrillas during the First War of National Liberation.

Within months of the October (1974) cease-fire agreement with the Portuguese, CIR's were established in all the major urban centers. However, a desperate lack of both experienced cadre and equipment held back the training. Nevertheless, in meetings and political lessons, in literacy classes and discussions, thousands of Angolans learned their liberation ABC in the twilight months of early 1975. For each book and weapon there were scores of eager hands; spread thin over Angola's sixteen provinces, the MPLA cadre had to turn away thousands of disappointed volunteers.

It was therefore an army in its first stages of formation which first set out to check the wave of the reactionary violence in Luanda and other cities toward the middle of the year. In the capital, the FAPLA militants fought side-by-side with the *musseque* defense brigades. In Cunene, Malanje and Moxico, villagers brought their traditional weapons to back up the combatants. With its odd assortment of weapons and uniforms, the ranks of FAPLA swelled from a few thousand to forty thousand in little more than a year. On the basis of its political strength among the masses, accumulated through a decade and a half of war and political mobilization, MPLA rallied a military force far stronger than what the Pentagon strategists thought possible under the existing conditions.

Their training was highly cursory, their political level uneven, their motivation for fighting varied; yet the men and women of FAPLA were able to halt the invasion forces and abort the imperialist plan to capture Luanda by Independence Day. Just north of the city, a column of ELP mercenaries and Zairean regulars were turned back and decimated in a battle that raged for three days. In the South, the so-called "Chipenda column"

of more than seventy armored cars with support vehicles, all manned by South Africans and mercenaries, rapidly cut through MPLA's defenses and captured the major southern towns before being forced to a grinding halt along the Queve River, two hundred kilometers from the capital. For the next three months, the Queve came to mark the front line across which FAPLA and the invasion forced pounded each other with increasingly heavy armaments as the war escalated.

On a visit to Caxito, sixty kilometers north of Luanda, I meet Ruide Matos whose life history LSM published several years ago.² Trained in Cuba, he was working for MPLA's Department of Information and Propaganda when we recorded his story in 1970. Now he is one of the commanders responsible for driving the FNLA/ELP/Zaireans from this former base of theirs. As we walk along the main street, filled with debris from the wrecked buildings, Rui talks about the transformation of the MPLA forces. "In the East we fought a guerrilla war; now things are very different. We are defending our territory; we are fighting for the towns, ports, roads, bridges. This has become a conventional war." The initial success of the South African invasion exposed FAPLA's lack of experience and equipment for this type of combat. "But we have been learning fast," says Rui. "Three months ago our young people would get up and run from the trenches when they saw the Panhard's³ coming. Or they would shoot at random when the enemy was still far off. Now, they keep calm. We smoke or just talk through the artillery bombardments, and not until the enemy is very close do we fire. We have better weapons and more confidence, and we have the motivation of fighting for our people. The mercenaries are disillusioned and the Zaireans only want to go home; they no longer have the spirit to resist our advance."

Like Thieu's puppet troops in South Vietnam, the FNLA and its foreign allies came to northern Angola as occupants. They conscripted the men, confiscated property and abused the women in the areas under their control, acting more or less like the colonialists had done. No attempts were made to organize the lives and work of the population. Their strength was in their weaponry alone. Now that this is no longer sufficient, their forces, again like those of Thieu, are completely disintegrating. In their retreat they loot and plunder, destroying what they cannot take with them and massacring the civilian population. The ELP chief, Colonel Santos e Castro, has gone to South Africa; Holden is back in his Kinshasa headquarters and the last-ditch CIA effort to send in large numbers of fresh mercenaries can change nothing.

Within FAPLA, when the pressure of combat is on, it is still the seasoned veterans who provide the necessary core of stability. Down by the Cuanza River, thirty miles south of Malanje, I meet a detachment who make up the rear defense line



MPLA Guerrilla / MPLA photo

of the Mussende front. They have come from the front line, twenty miles further south, earlier in the day for a twenty-four hour rest and to guard the important Salazar Bridge. For many, this is their first time on combat duty and, though there are few complaints, they find life here rough: little sleep and small rations in addition to the constant psychological pressure of being face to face with the enemy, here composed of South Africans, ELP fascists and UNITA troops. They doze in the shade of the large baobab trees and clean their weapons. In a farmhouse which serves as command post, two Cubans are setting up a radio set, while in a back room a young militant, his eyes yellow with fever, is being tended by a medic, also Cuban. The medic talks freely about his task here, defending a revolution eight thousand miles from his home. "The Angolans have courage, but they lack skills. The colonialists never taught them to be doctors or technicians. This is our job with the MPLA."

Our conversation is interrupted by the roar of diesel engines. Four trucks, covered with shrubs and branches for camouflage, pull off the road and are immediately surrounded. Wounded soldiers are unloaded and carried inside. Others talk excitedly, many at once: it seems the other side has opened an offensive. The South African artillery has a range far superior to that of FAPLA's heavy gun and is handled with deadly precision. The militants reassemble their weapons and pack their gear. The agitation of the newly-arrived has spread to the rest. An explosion on the opposite escarpment, then one on our side, sends us all scrambling for cover. The South Africans are obviously aiming for the bridge.

It is for Commandante Mona, the FAPLA Political Commissar, to restore calm in the ranks. While I'm sent back to town (no visitors at the front!), he gathers the fighters for a meeting which lasts through the afternoon. Then he spends all night talking informally, preparing them to return to the front. When we meet again the next day, he looks drawn but satisfied. "Of course they were frightened," he says, rubbing his face with a moist towel which he carries wrapped around his neck. "These comrades are green; many have never been under fire before. Some of them are from the city where they are used to a good bed and enough to eat every day. So I talked about the guerrilla, about the time we had nothing to eat for three months but green mangoes; about how we had to sleep in our wet clothes and could not light a fire for weeks." In the front line these youth will hear more of the same from the more experienced combatants who have simply stayed in their positions throughout the artillery barrage before repelling the enemy attack. And a week after this event, Commandante Mona accompanies his units when they go on to liberate the town of Mussende and push the front another fifty miles southwards.

The Second War of National Liberation is like a fire raging through a slum; the fire wreaks havoc and indiscriminate de-

struction, it takes lives and turns into ashes things that will take years to replace. Yet, by clearing what is no longer fit for human habitation, it has a sanitary effect. In a similar manner, this war has erased, often brutally, parts of the colonial structures and heritage which would otherwise have remained in place for years to come. It has confronted the Angolan people with contradictions which would otherwise have taken a long time to emerge. Its character has made it easier to distinguish friend from foe and has closed the door on the neocolonial option that the US, South Africa and their allies are pushing so hard for. While sectors of the population for some time gave their support to the "pro-Western" movements, UNITA in particular, Savimbi's alliance with the racist South African regime is a step which no one can misunderstand. In Malange I meet Cesare Aurelio from Luso. He was a sergeant with UNITA until he gave himself up to FAPLA only a few days ago. "It is difficult to understand," he says when I meet him in Commandante Mona's office, "if we are fighting for the freedom of our country, why we do so under the white South African officers who are more racist than any Portuguese I ever met here."

In this way, the war has raised the level of unity among Angolans. But it puts an enormous pressure on the people; those who for years fought the Portuguese troops must now fight foreign invaders and their own countrymen as well. In one way or another, the struggle absorbs everybody; there is less and less room in the middle. Now that liberation is so close, the demands are higher than ever.

Any war transforms a people. In a liberation war such transformation is given direction by the people's movement. In Angola, FAPLA has become the chief tool of this process, a forge where the country's youth are remolded to better serve the revolution. Most of the recruits are very young, between eighteen and twenty, and an increasing proportion are from the rural areas. "We need the people with education to work for the Government," I have been told by one of Commandante Mona's deputies. "And besides, those from the countryside can better adapt to life in the army. They are used to hard work and rough conditions; they can more easily accept the spirit of sacrifice and discipline which is necessary." Building revolutionaries, however, takes both time and conscious effort and the Movement leaders know from experience that war *per se* will not provide the political strength of a people's army. Four or five months ago, when weapons and instructors were hard to come by and a full-scale war was imminent, thousands of volunteers were assigned to the front with a bare minimum of political training and some without ever having fired a shot. Today, however, with greater resources and a better organization at hand, FAPLA is giving the shaping of its new militants renewed attention.

The course at CIR "*Resistencia Popular*" is a vast improvement on past efforts. Many of the five hundred trainees have

already been to the front but, wanting to become commandos or military police, have been sent back for more thorough preparation. For what they set out to accomplish, the course is short - ten weeks. The day starts at six with literacy classes for those (the majority) who can neither read nor write. Breakfast and roll call at eight are followed by military training until noon. Divided into squads of thirty with one instructor to each, the recruits learn to handle a variety of light arms and explosives. Combat formation is practiced in the bush on the perimeter of the base: how to cross a minefield, how to spread out under attack, how to set up an ambush. On the soccer field they practice "leap from moving vehicle," i.e. how to act if they themselves are ambushed. At a given signal the truck shoots ahead and its load of militants have to be off and in firing positions within seconds. This is without fail the greatest source of hilarity and sprained ankles in camp. Each group is on for fifteen minutes during which the truck never stops, just slows down enough for the men to catch up and get on. "They have two months to learn what we did in two years," a visiting Cuban instructor remarks.

The afternoon session is divided between more military exercise and political education classes while the evening is set aside for reading and discussion. Political education takes various forms, depending on the needs of each squad. One group is discussing the question, "Who is the principal enemy?" with the instructor explaining the links between Holden and Savimbi, on the one hand, and South Africa and the US on the other. Gilo, one of the veteran instructors whose group is predominantly illiterate, is using theater. Three recruits squatting in the dust represent "the people." When two sinister-looking characters, FNLA and UNITA, appear and start bullying them, MPLA, in the person of a big militant with a broad smile, intervenes and chases the bandits away to the loud applause of the group. In the large dining hall Dedē, the CIR Director, is in charge of the off-duty instructors and the politically more advanced recruits. At twenty-five, with three years of clandestine work in Lisbon and Luanda and one year in FAPLA behind him, Dedē is responsible for the entire Center including political education. A banner spans the wall behind him: Discipline is the sentinel of our political line. This group is examining the watchword, "Dedication to the Struggle!" What does it imply to make the struggle the primary thing in our lives? What are the values that hold back our commitment? Most of these cadre - black, white and mulatto - have a background of relative privilege including post-primary education. Through discipline and political understanding, through preparation to confront the enemy in combat, they too are now struggling to transcend their class position and learn to identify with the masses of their people.

Discipline is stressed, not as an end in itself but as a means to build a new kind of men and women. "In MPLA we have



FAPLA militants / LSM photo

never been authoritarian," says Dedé, "but to become cadre of the revolution we must combat our individualism. We must learn to act in collectivity and to put our personal interests second to those of the people." Revolutionary discipline bears little resemblance to the rigid and often ridiculous codes of bourgeois armies. The CIR program is not intended to create automatons who blindly obey any order. To be a disciplined militant of FAPLA is to recognize its structures and apply oneself creatively to improve its work. Such discipline is based on political understanding and comradely trust, on a positive acceptance of the goals of the struggle and mutual respect among the militants, whatever their rank and experience. It cannot be drilled into people's heads: a course like this one can only aim to plant the first seeds which can later sprout and grow in the fertile soil of the revolution.

The methods of work at "*Resistencia Popular*" set out to accomplish this. The instructors, for instance, have few privileges in relation to the recruits. If their quarters are less cramped and their drinking water refrigerated, their hours are longer and their responsibilities more demanding. Within the camp there is hardly any time off; apart from the military training and political education classes, constant meetings and discussions take up most of the time. Those who have a light teaching load, e.g. in political instruction, are expected to attend the groups of their colleagues or the special classes taught by Dedé. One instructor whose wife is among the eight women recruits, can be with her only on the rare occasions that their leaves coincide.

The relations between recruits and instructors are characterized by the same kind of collective spirit which I have seen earlier in PAIGC and FRELIMO units, where each person is respected for his or her contribution to the progress of the group. The instructors do not wield absolute power. While their authority is never questioned during training or on maneuvers, the frequent meetings and evening discussions give everyone an opportunity to raise their criticisms and self-criticisms. On such occasions, rank differentials cease to count. The topics of discussion range from the militants' comportment to the international anti-imperialist struggle, though the dialogue usually gravitates toward problems and tendencies which affect them directly. The task of leading the discussion is often given to recruits while instructors participate on an equal footing with the rest. In fact, it is common that criticism centers on the central role of instructors, "Not to make him look bad, but to help him better carry out his responsibility," as Mukushi puts it.

It is this strong element of democracy which gives a people's army its full force. It contributes a sense of collectivity which transcends the army to incorporate the whole nation, a collective consciousness which is invaluable both in military

situations and in the many tasks of national reconstruction where FAPLA also will play an important part as a driving force of People's Power. Working with the people to clear new land and rebuild villages, to repair the roads and get the factories going, the FAPLA combatants must be the carriers of new ideas; a force to liberate Angola not only from the foreign invaders and their lackeys but from the poverty of colonial underdevelopment, from the oppression of superstition and ignorance. With their graduation in a few weeks, the recruits at CIR "*Resistencia Popular*" will be on the road to fight this gigantic battle.

NOTES

1. *Road to Liberation, MPLA Documents on the Founding of the People's Republic of Angola*, LSM Press, 1976, p. 37.
2. *The Making of a Middle Cadre, The Story of Rui de Pinto*, LSM Press, 1973.
3. French-made armored cars, also built under license in South Africa.



The Factory is a School of Politics

"There is definitely an Angolan working class, though, at the moment, it is neither very large nor fully conscious of its political force." Dr. Carlos Rocha - better known by his *nom de guerre*, Dilolwa - has taken a few hours from his cramped schedule to discuss some of the basic problems facing the new People's Republic. An MPLA cadre since the late 50's, Dilolwa is the head of the Movement's Department of Education and Culture and responsible for the MPLA's journal, *Vitoria Certa*. A few weeks ago he was named Minister for Economic Coordination and Planning in the first PRA Government. In khaki slacks and an open neck shirt he seems strangely out of place in the spacious leather and mahogany furnished office he has inherited from the colonial administration, but the apparent contradiction fades with the setting as Dilolwa's intensity engulfs the conversation. "This working class has entered the political arena in a violent manner since the Lisbon coup and there has been a very interesting, explosive development of its political consciousness." He leans forward to stress his point. "In the People's Republic of Angola this class will have the opportunity to evolve very rapidly. As you know, we have already nationalized the entire educational system and all schooling is now free. In the factories there will be technical training. We must enable the working class to become conscious of its historical responsibility and place itself at the head of the modern, progressive state which Angola will become."

In relation to Angola's fabulous potential, its industrial development never got very far under Portuguese colonialism. With the mother country itself poor and underdeveloped, the resources of its colonies remained largely untouched until the early 60's when the burden of colonial war forced the Salazar regime to open its doors to foreign investment. In Angola, giant corporations provided both increased revenue and stronger

ties with imperialist economic interests. With its integration into the world capitalist economy the ranks of Angola's wage laborers swelled. Expanded port and transport facilities needed more manpower; new plantations, mines and processing plants drew African families out of the villages and shantytowns to work at the menial jobs under a growing number of settlers and highly skilled Europeans who arrived on attractive, tax-exempt and free-housing contracts.

Three factors made Angola a good prospect for the multi-nationals: the natural wealth, a cooperative regime, and super-cheap, "controlled" labor. As in Portugal itself, no workers' organizations were allowed outside the corporative framework of colonial fascism with the result that working conditions were often no better than those of slave labor.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the collapse of the fascist regime in April 1974 caused upheaval among Angolan workers. Years of hard and dangerous work by the MPLA underground mobilizers now paid off as the workers' discontent with wages and conditions of work further fueled their general resentment of the authoritarian regime and its police. Alongside the popular explosion in the *musseques*, a flood of new demands, walk-outs and slow-down campaigns erupted as the workers tested their mounting strength in step with the disintegration of the old system. This wave of labor unrest was an important part of People's Power and MPLA sympathizers played a central role in setting up workplace committees to organize the workers and represent their interests. Needless to say, all this was bitterly resisted by the regime and the colonial bourgeoisie which was not yet prepared to relinquish its grip on the rich colony.

With the crystallization of political differences and the coming of the Second War, the situation changed considerably. MPLA more and more assumed the role of the *de facto* government over the regions under its control, and it became the aim of the reactionary forces to sow confusion and create divisions among the population. Armed settler groups robbed banks and blew up a water reservoir in Luanda and FNLA attempted to infiltrate with sabotage units. The colonial police did nothing to deal with growing theft and banditry. As the *retornados* started to leave, they took with them everything that might be of value - and much of what they couldn't take was wrecked. Today, in Luanda alone, hundreds of cars, trucks, buses and even fire engines litter the streets and back alleys. Boats have been run aground; furniture in private houses and machinery in the factories have been smashed. White owners and managers simply left their companies to grind to a halt with no qualified personnel to take their place. Some, as a last gesture to vent their bitterness, doubled or quadrupled the wages of their employees, then left with the money before payday. It was in truth a rear-guard action little different from the scorched earth tactics of the FNLA in the North.

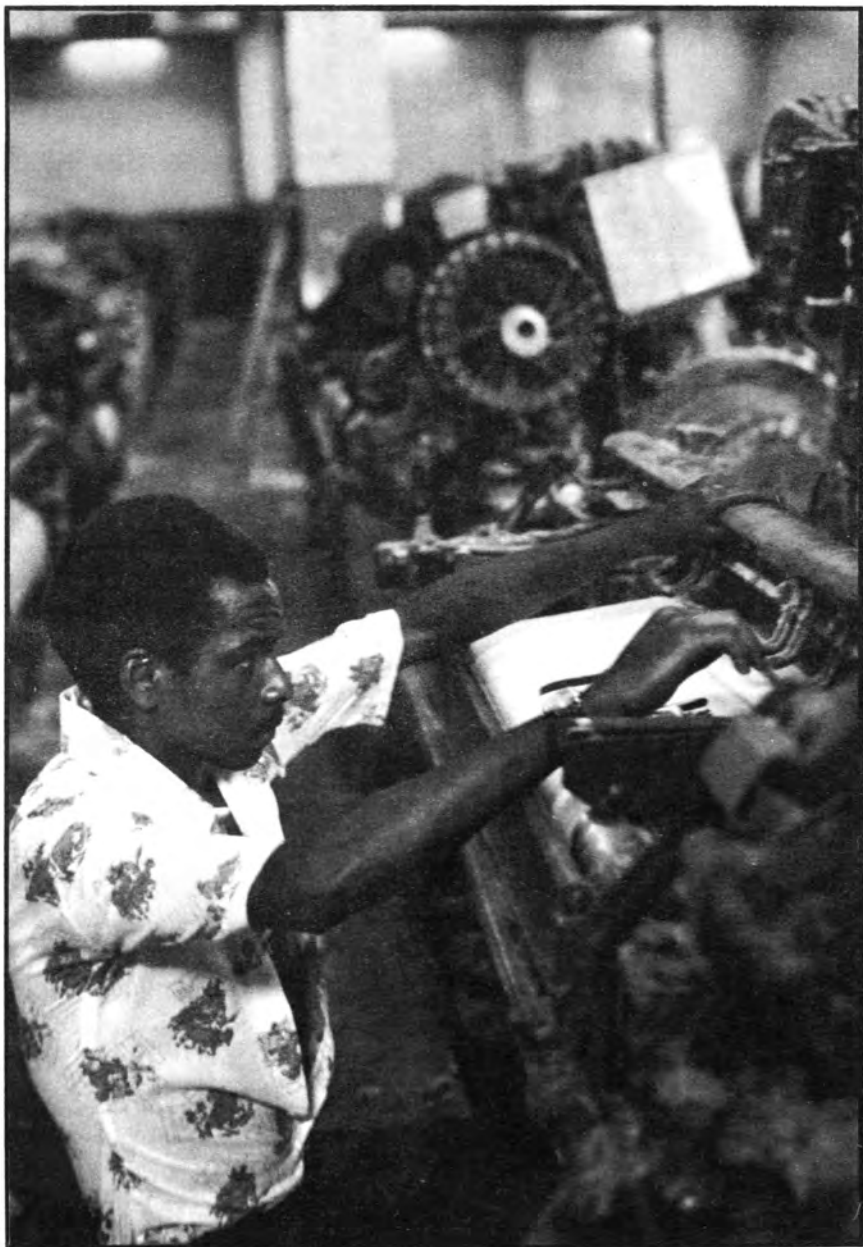
In this situation "Produce to Resist" became a matter of survival: to support the military effort, food and clothing had to be produced, gasoline refined and imported goods unloaded in the port. To obtain urgently needed foreign currency, the Cabinda oil wells had to be kept in operation and last year's crop of coffee beans, still sitting in Luanda's warehouses, exported. As many factories as possible had to be kept in operation until such time as - it is yet too early to say when - the new government can turn its attention to the huge task of restructuring the entire national economy.

To prevent the total breakdown of the Angolan economy, MPLA cadre now work day and night with the factory committees and the People's Commissions at the crucial task of keeping the wheels turning while reinforcing unity among the people. With the numerous problems of daily life and work brought on by the war and the chaotic retreat of colonialism, it is urgent that the workers see beyond their own particular interests; that they subordinate their immediate grievances to the necessity for closing ranks. Under the present conditions, with shortages and technical problems on many fronts, higher wages will only fuel inflation and the black market and create new inequalities rather than improve the supply of food and other goods. The only remedy is to increase production and ensure equal distribution. Not for a moment forgetting that Angola remains a class society, the liberation movement has nevertheless no choice in the face of the invasion armies. "If we emphasize the (internal) class struggle," the President has said, "we'll obviously weaken the anti-imperialist front. That could mean losing control of the country. And, besides, what would be the point of a class struggle under the heel of South Africa?"

The liberation war does not freeze the struggle to eradicate the differences created by colonialism. Within the framework of People's Power, the actions of workers have, on the contrary, advanced their strength and class consciousness. The exodus of settlers led many of Luanda's factories and smaller workshops to close down about five months ago. Most of them have now been reopened at the workers' initiative and under their control.

One such place is Soferros Industries, a metal workshop in the heart of the crowded *Bairro Popular*. A wall newspaper at the gate is the responsibility of the workers' committee as are the black, red and yellow banners spanning the street out front. Soferros used to be owned and run by a Portuguese, who, apart from a part-time clerk, was the only White in the shop. "He wasn't such a bad guy," says Francisco Sampaio, "but he was always on the shop floor pushing the men to work harder."

Soferros was in operation until one morning, at the height of the July (1975) confrontations in the city, when the workers arrived to find the gate locked. They immediately organized a search for the owner and finally located him at the airport



Textang textile worker / LSM photo

among the hundreds of settlers trying to leave the country. "His suitcase was all packed and he was very sad," Francisco recalls. "He told us he had to leave because, as he said, 'Angola doesn't need people like me now.' But he gave us the keys and a folder of business documents. We then went to UNTA for assistance in running the shop. They sent us to the Ministry of Finance which sent us to CADCO. There we were registered as a cooperative and were given help to sort out the paper work."

Francisco, who, with his eight years at Soferros, is the senior worker here, is now a member of the three-man Administrative Commission responsible for office work. They were all regular workers before and the other two still spend most of their time at production. A university student comes in twice a week to teach the three of them some basic bookkeeping and other clerical skills. The Administrative Commission and a six-member Workers' Commission have been elected by the employees to run the shop "until such a time when it becomes necessary to replace us."

On 1 September Soferros reopened with twenty-two workers - compared to thirty-seven before - and a starting capital of two thousand, five hundred dollars for three invoices that had been paid in the interim. By vote among the workers wages were increased 10% and now range from \$3.25 a day for the two apprentices to \$10 for a few of the most highly skilled welders. Orders continue to come in, mainly for protective bars for store and apartment windows and metal furniture frames. The only significant new product is the *pioneiro*¹ toy gun, a few lengths of pipe welded together which sells for \$2. Since September demand for the shop's products has increased steadily to the point where they now have orders for three weeks of full production. Yet, in the present situation, it is difficult to do any long-term planning, or even determine whether the operation is financially viable. The cash box is nearly empty and so far all materials and production supplies have come out of stock. If the war continues for a long time, the source of raw materials may well dry up and so may the market for Soferros' present products. And in any case, with a reorganization of the economy, its role is bound to change. But for the time being, the important thing is to keep the shop in operation. In so doing, the workers are gaining experience in how to run the shop themselves - in how to work as an organized, disciplined team. These are skills that will soon prove valuable in the construction of an economically independent Angola.

At Soferros, as in many other plants I visit, productivity is lagging badly. There are many practical reasons for this. In some factories the most valuable machinery has been removed or destroyed to make it doubly difficult for those who remain. In some cases hundreds of workers remain idle because there is nobody available with skills to repair sophisticated equipment that keeps breaking down, often because the operator has not

been properly trained. In more and more of the city highrises, for instance, the elevators are coming to a standstill. The shortage of vehicles has resulted in an acute transportation problem. Those who are lucky and find a ride to work will generally be there on time. For those who have to walk, on the other hand, it may take two hours to get across town from the *musseque* to the industrial areas. With periodic food shortages, some workers also have to spend hours in line-ups to get meat or bread. The establishment of cooperatives both in the *bairros* and the larger factories will help to eliminate this problem but this solution is still some time away.

The question of productivity, however, is as much a political as a practical question. "Many of our people think that liberation means freedom from all authority and work discipline whatsoever," explains one of the CADCO comrades. "In some shops the workers have voted to double their wages while we produce half or even less of what we did last year. How long can we last like this?" The workers' committees try hard to deal with this question. At Soferros, for example, they have political meetings twice a week for thirty minutes before working hours. "We discuss our own work, the progress of the struggle and how they are related," Mateus Andre, one of the welders, tells me. "Many of us volunteered for FAPLA but only a few were chosen. Now, instead of being resigned, we understand that we nevertheless participate in the struggle, that by working hard and improving our operation here, we help liberate Angola." These are the *people* of People's Power.

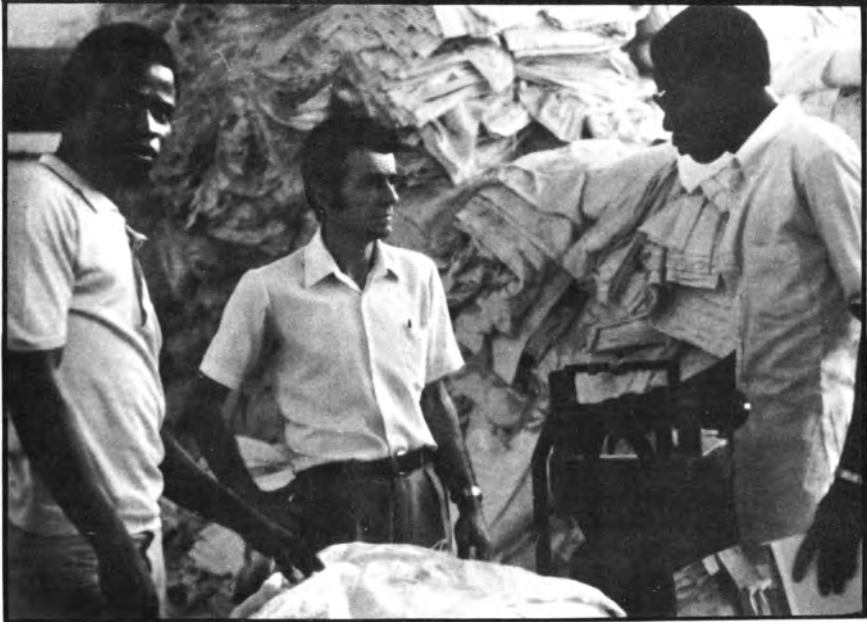
There is much political work to be done before this level of consciousness is generalized. And in this, the cadre of UNTA, CADCO and the Industrial Development Institute (IDI) play a crucial role. UNTA, MPLA's trade union organization, provides political cadre for the largest industries and is working to establish a framework for a new national labor syndicate. IDI and CADCO are both recent creations and the majority of their staff are young professionals - engineers, architects, economists; black, white and mulatto - or students who, with the momentum of the struggle, have moved from passive sympathy to a more active political role. They provide assistance in administration and bookwork, help establish workers' cooperatives and try to coordinate the restructuring of the abandoned colonial enterprises. It is also their task to explain government policy and relate it to the concrete situation in each place of work, to translate official decrees into action and take the lead in the difficult tasks of criticism and self-criticism. And to be effective they - like their peers in the People's Commissions - must in the process try to bridge the sometimes intimidating social gap between themselves and the factory workers. In this way, the essence of People's Power is the same within the factory walls as outside.

It is Quelhas, a mechanical engineer on the IDI staff, who

first takes me to the Textang textile mill in Luanda's old industrial section along the waterfront north of the city core. Beyond the port and the railway terminal the rains have turned the road into a bottomless pit that nearly swallows Quelhas' battered Fiat. Heavily loaded trucks are hopelessly stuck; some of them appear to have been there since the last wet season. On the left, near the sea, I can see the walls of the former PIDE prison and straight ahead is the old fort of San Pedro do Barra, cut into the steep cliff and virtually unassailable from the shore. Last July six hundred FNLA troops were holed up here while negotiating their organization's final withdrawal from Luanda. A little closer and further up the hill, steam and suspect fumes emerge from the pipe labyrinth of the Petrangol refinery which, except for a week during the siege of San Pedro, has been kept in continuous operation.

The Textang factory was built twenty years ago with Portuguese and British capital but, by European and American standards, much of its equipment must have been outdated already at that time. The workers in the intake and spinning sections are covered by the fine fibers that float thick in the air. The cotton comes mostly from the fields of Malanje, the railhead two hundred and fifty miles to the East, while the brightly-colored synthetics are imported from Japan. Textang now has enough raw materials for three months, but there is enough cotton ready in Angola to last the existing mills two years, according to Ribeiro, a member of the Administrative Commission who accompanies me through the hot and steamy production halls. Their supply of spares for the French and Swiss-made machinery is adequate for the present, but IDI has asked all Luanda's mills to take stock of what they have so that purchasing can be coordinated in a rational manner.

In many ways Textang is a microcosm of Luanda, and a history of the struggle within its walls would teach us a lot about the Angolan revolution. Since the late 1950's MPLA activists were active among the fifteen hundred workers and PIDE visits with interrogation, beating and arrest were frequent. With the fall of colonial fascism and the rise of People's Power, the Movement's activities intensified with several of the workers joining FAPLA and the *musseque* self-defense units. But FNLA, through the management, also got a foothold, and its handful of sympathizers would denounce MPLA to Holden's troops who periodically set up check-points at the factory gates to "sort out the communists." Two workers disappeared as prisoners of the FNLA and several others were severely beaten. A few of the National Front sympathizers are still here, but apart from an obvious tension between them and the rest, there is no trouble. "We leave them alone to do their work, but in Carmona and Huambo, FNLA and UNITA are killing everyone associated with MPLA," a loom operator says angrily. "Still they claim to be fighting for Angola!"



Top: Workers in a clothing factory / LSM photo
Bottom: Workers talking with the "only" Portuguese remaining at Textang / LSM photo

With the start of the Second War, Textang's technicians and administrators, all Portuguese, started to leave. Of the thirty supervisors, managers, production analysts, etc., only one remains. Were they threatened? "Not at all. In fact, most of them were quite friendly toward us," says one of Ribeiro's colleagues. "Still they left without saying anything. One by one they simply disappeared, so we never had the chance to discuss things with them." One of the exceptions was a guard officer who went to South Africa where he enrolled in the ELP/FNLA mercenary corps only to be captured by FAPLA near Caxito a few weeks later. At the beginning of the settler exodus, seeing what was happening in other factories, the workers organized guard duty to protect the machines against sabotage. Still, some of the *returnados* got away with tools, office equipment and, in the case of one, the cash box of the company's soccer club.

Unlike Luanda's other large mills, Textang never ceased operations. With the number of skilled and managerial personnel rapidly dwindling, a group of MPLA members among the workers took the initiative and asked the Movement for assistance. Soon after, IDI was asked to assign an adviser and the four-member Administrative Commission was nominated, all MPLA militants and three of them office workers with lower level administrative experience. The nominations were circulated and considered ratified when a week later no objections had come forth. The next step was to convene a plenary meeting to elect a new fifteen-member Workers Committee. "The old committee was simply installed by the bosses and the FNLA. They were even paid extra. How could they serve our interests?" asks one of the older workers in a lunchtime discussion over cold *funji*, fish and beans. "It was just another colonialist trick."

A whole range of problems now faces the Textang workers in their struggle to keep the factory going, to learn the things that the colonialists refused to teach them and to work while learning. Those who were office clerks now try to do the former manager's work. On the production line former helpers are machine operators and have to do the work of mechanics, as well. Those who prove most adept are "reclassified" and given the key tasks, while the lone remaining Portuguese technician is overall supervisor, trouble-shooter and responsible for breaking in new people on the most difficult jobs. It is not hard to imagine the problems that arise in such a situation and it sometimes happens that a whole line of machines has to shut down while a mechanical problem is being solved. The essence of this stage, however, here as with the other aspects of People's Power, is the rate at which people are learning - learning to operate machines and, most importantly, learning to rely on their own effort. For decades colonialism taught people like the workers here at Textang that without Portugal to guide them, they would be lost as simple savages in the modern world. Every length of cloth, therefore, that leaves the mill for the market is a

direct negation of the colonial rationale.

The ownership question has not yet been settled. Textang is too large to be run as a cooperative, and Quelhas seems to think it will be nationalized once the government gets time to turn its attention to the issue. Owned by the State, run by the workers: Angola's rapid and painful decolonization leaves socialism as the only rational alternative to a total collapse of the nation's economy.

But only the rough contours are now visible and within these, many issues remain to be settled. Some come up during a meeting between the Workers' Committee and the Administrative Commission. To me it is like a course in political economy and workplace organizing at the same time. The Workers' Committee is the highest political authority in all factory matters while the Administrative Commission acts as an executive. In the six weeks that this system has functioned, a conflict over the question of wages has arisen between the two, Quelhas tells me. The basic wage was increased from \$60 to \$83 a month with the election of the new committee. But the workers claim that in times like these, with manioc meal at 50¢ a pound, fish twice the price of six months ago and everything else up 20-30%, this is not nearly sufficient. The Commission, on the other hand, holds that the factory can afford no increase; that, in fact, its financial situation is critical even at the present level. A wage hike, a Commission member tells me, must await a reorganization of the entire Angolan economy when perhaps the Government will subsidize industry or somehow give it a new base to stand on. The response of some workers to this has been a slackening off in work discipline resulting in new lows in production statistics; this after a month of marked improvement preceding Independence. It is a kind of conflict for which there are no textbook solutions.

We gather in the plush boardroom at the rear of the offices, Quelhas and the Commission members behind a table facing the others who fill the soft leather furniture or lean against the walls. First point on the agenda concerns my presence which is readily agreed to once I commit myself to "tell the truth" on my return to North America. Next is the "reclassification" of workers to fill a number of open positions. Each section of the factory has at least one member on the Workers Committee whose responsibility it is to comment on the supervisor's nominations. The nominees themselves are also present. In the beginning there is little debate and the nominees are upgraded one by one. But such reclassification means higher wages, the thing on everybody's mind and which finally comes into the open when one of the nominees asks to be upgraded two levels, instead of the proposed one, because of financial problems. This is a point that everybody can relate to and the discussion departs from the agenda never to return. When will there be a general wage increase? Are earlier promises just

lies? A member of the Administrative Commission reads out a gloomy list of figures and exhorts everyone in the room to observe the President's call for "discipline in the rear guard." Many of the workers, on the other hand, feel trapped in the present situation and one problem after another is raised: lack of transport, climbing food prices, the attitude of some of the new cadres who act a bit too much like administrators. Ribeiro, in particular, is criticized for his "elitist" attitudes in seldom going onto the shop floor, for failing to consult with the workers' representatives and for being so concerned with production that he neglects the need for political meetings. A few workers dominate the discussion while most seem content just to listen.

Lunch hour has come and gone and, with the air-conditioning system out of order, the afternoon heat makes it difficult to function. A decision is finally made to discuss the question of wages among the workers in each section of the mill with a view to an increase next month. Quelhas who has steered the discussion along its zig-zag course, summarizes the main points and appeals for a higher level of unity on these difficult questions. "Only by coming together in discussion can we break down the separation between us and the mentality created by colonialism: passivity and a feeling of inferiority with some, arrogance and feelings of superiority with others." He pauses and looks around the room. "We can make this work only through democratic-centralism, by applying constant criticism and self-criticism. But we must be objective in our outlook and not let personal interests and ambitions take charge."

The discussion at Textang quite well reflects some of the present contradictions of the Angolan revolution. The creation of workers' committees aims at both overcoming the shortage of skilled personnel and preparing the workers themselves to "become conscious of their historical responsibility," in the words of comrade Dilolwa. To break down the tendencies toward fatalism and imposed timidity which colonial domination has instilled in many Africans is a priority of this period. At the same time, with Angola now in the hands of Angolans, it becomes urgent to combat a compartmentalized view of society. The ideology of racism, regionalism and the social stratification of the past must be struggled against. A new motivation for work must be developed, based on the aims of a unified, socialist Angola and not on monetary considerations alone. Ideological debate, therefore, is not a luxury to be indulged in only by a privileged few; it is a tool to be used by the masses of the people in the fight to create a new Angola. "The struggle of ideas is a necessary part of the class struggle," is the message of a *Vitoria Certa* editorial.

Countless meetings in the places of work, political rallies, radio programs, poster campaigns and discussions in the *bairros* are the weapons applied in the liberated areas. The battle is



Textang textile worker / LSM photo

fought to promote a better understanding of the present situation and its needs, to discuss the watchword "Produce to Resist" in all its aspects. Economistic "struggles," such as demands for higher wages, lower bus fares or free housing, are repeatedly denounced by MPLA leaders as unacceptable in the current conditions. With the nationalization of many enterprises, housing and public transport, the question must be posed, says President Neto in a speech, "against whom are we struggling? . . . To have a better life, we must all be conscious of the fact that it is necessary to work again, again and again." At this time, the struggle for complete national liberation, for better conditions and popular democracy converge in the struggle for production. It is on this battlefield, concludes the MPLA paper, "that the working class will discipline itself, achieve class consciousness and develop its capacity to lead the struggle of our country. . . . The factory is a school of politics."

NOTES

1. Pioneer: member of Organization of Angolan Pioneers (OPA), the mass organization for children up to the age of thirteen.



The Fields of Malanje

Two main highways lead out of Luanda, one going north toward Carmona, the other south-east. I am going down the latter in the company of two cadres from the Department of National Reconstruction, well equipped with extra gas, canned food and travel papers for Malanje, two hundred and fifty miles from the coast. The road is good and we cruise comfortably at seventy miles an hour as the Cuanza Norte province with its gently rolling hills opens up around us. It is still early in the rainy season and the vegetation carries the fresh green, which will later fade and, come March, turn into a yellow-brown garb, too scanty to keep the sun from drying out the soil which now is rich and black. The plots near each village sport new corn, barely a foot high. Old women are drying crushed manioc on the hot blacktop; they rarely look up when we pass but the bands of youngsters in their charge wave and give us the two-fingers-up "*Vitoria Certa*" sign.

For the first hundred miles our road is also the main route to the South, to the rich high plateau of Huambo and Bié and, now, to the front where South African and mercenary troops are reported to be massing. Our side is not idle either; we pass two convoys of FAPLA trucks, Cuban and Angolan troops together with a couple of the fearsome multi-tube 122mm rocket launchers in tow.

There is a checkpoint at each major intersection - two empty oil drums with a stick or a piece of string across - where FAPLA militants check our papers and sometimes ask for cigarettes. There is nothing threatening about their request; cigarettes are simply in short supply in the interior and, in any case, few of the militants have money. Some *pioneiros* have followed their seniors' example and set up their own roadblocks, strictly unauthorized and at times in the most unlikely places. Somewhere up in the mountains east of Dondo, with nothing but

rock and open plains in sight, we enter a curve at good speed, relaxed and unsuspecting, only to find a solid metal rod blocking our track at perfect windshield height. The driver slams on the brakes as I, half asleep in the passenger seat, catch a glimpse of tiny bodies in oversized fatigues scattering in panic.

Sideways on the gravel edge, front wheels in the ditch, we are still hunched back in our seats, trembling, when the leader, barely twelve and with toy gun in hand, carefully approaches.

"Documentos?"

His comrades are soon with him and they pass our papers around. None of them can read but they are careful to check the stamps. They peer into the car.

"A contribution for OPA, please?"

So that's why. "Sorry, you're too young to smoke."

"OK, you can pass. *Vitoria e certa!*" No grudges on either side as we spin back onto the road and they swing aside their deadly rod, saluting. It is we who need a smoke now.

My five weeks in Luanda have left me with a tremendous respect for the accomplishments of People's Power and MPLA. The atmosphere of a new Angola has left its imprint on every aspect of city life, from the *musseques* and factories to the downtown hotels where technicians from the socialist countries or from progressive European organizations have replaced businessmen and wealthy tourists. But Luanda does not represent the whole of Angola; the vast majority of the country's population still lives in the countryside under conditions that are very different from those of the urban population. To get a more balanced view of the Angolan revolution today I have taken the advice of Commandante Juju at the FAPLA headquarters to visit the interior.

Of the eight thousand Whites who used to inhabit the town of Malanje, less than a dozen are left. The central city is all but deserted, shops empty and their display windows boarded up. At sundown the downtown square, modern office towers on three sides, reminds me of the ancient Aztec sites of Mexico: massive monuments of a civilization long past. But the sounds of a bugle from the FAPLA camp and drums from nearby *bairros* tell of something new in the offing.

Malanje town, on a fertile plateau, is the center of the district of the same name, a rich agricultural area which attracted nearly twenty thousand settlers during the colonial period. It was best known for its cotton. In the season, the wealthy planters would arrive by plane from Luanda and then head north-east to their *fazendas*.¹ Seventy miles from the town the road descends into a steep gully before again levelling out a thousand feet below, straight as a ruler to the horizon. Here begins the Kassange Basin, the land of cotton. In the picking season this plain looked like an immense white carpet since virtually nothing but cotton was grown here. This is how the masters of the *fazendas* knew it. Their crops went to the

Belgian-owned Cotonang Company which used to enjoy a monopoly on cotton processing in Angola. For their workers, thousands of African families, the season meant working without a break from dawn to dusk - when ready, the cotton cannot wait. The long off-season was a time of no income when each family had to get by as best it could from the tiny scraps of land set aside for beans and manioc on the fringes of the cotton fields.

But Malanje is more than the Kassange Basin and its cotton. With a good network of roads and its rail connection to Luanda, the district became a main target for colonial expansion during the 50's and 60's when much of the land was expropriated for large-scale farming by Portuguese or foreign companies. The African population had the choice of moving to another area or staying on as landless laborers, at miserable wages and as prisoners of the vicious *cantina*² system. This was contrary to Portuguese law, but in Malanje, as throughout the colony, what was written in the books was strictly secondary to the interests of the colonial masters. The newer farm enterprises bred cattle and grew sugar cane, coffee, tobacco and food crops to sell on the coast. Their extensive use of insecticides killed the fish in nearby creeks and so deprived the local population of yet another important source of food.

Local industry, based on agriculture, prospered until the very end of Portuguese occupation. The town has two modern rice husking plants, several oil and flour mills and three tile factories to exploit the rich clay deposits close by. Only a few of these industries are now functioning and grass grows in the driveway of the vast Cotonang processing plant on the city's eastern fringe. The many garages and small workshops which used to service the plantations, are also closed and their yards littered with broken-down or deteriorating equipment. Very few Africans ever learned how to operate or repair the white man's machines. In short, the last twenty years saw Malanje develop as a prosperous settler economy, run by and for the colonialists, sucking in those Africans the system needed and expelling as waste those for whom it had no use. Like millions of other peasants in Africa, Asia and Latin America, this is how the people of Malanje were gradually integrated into capitalist civilization. And then, in less than one year, this entire structure crumbled.

The Kassange Basin massacres in January 1961 were the first to shake Angola in the contemporary struggle for independence. At the end of the previous year the cotton workers had launched a strike to protest a fall in cotton prices and the subsequent failure to pay the workers. The paranoid Salazar regime, watching events in the neighboring Congo, left little time for peaceful settlement. From NATO bases in Portugal troops and bombers were called in with orders to shoot on sight and drop their loads of bestial napalm. It didn't take long before most of the cotton region's villages were razed to the ground and thou-

sands of men, women and children killed.³ A few months later, when the upheavals following 4 February and the rebellion in the North spread throughout the country, thousands more were killed all over the district, including the town itself.⁴

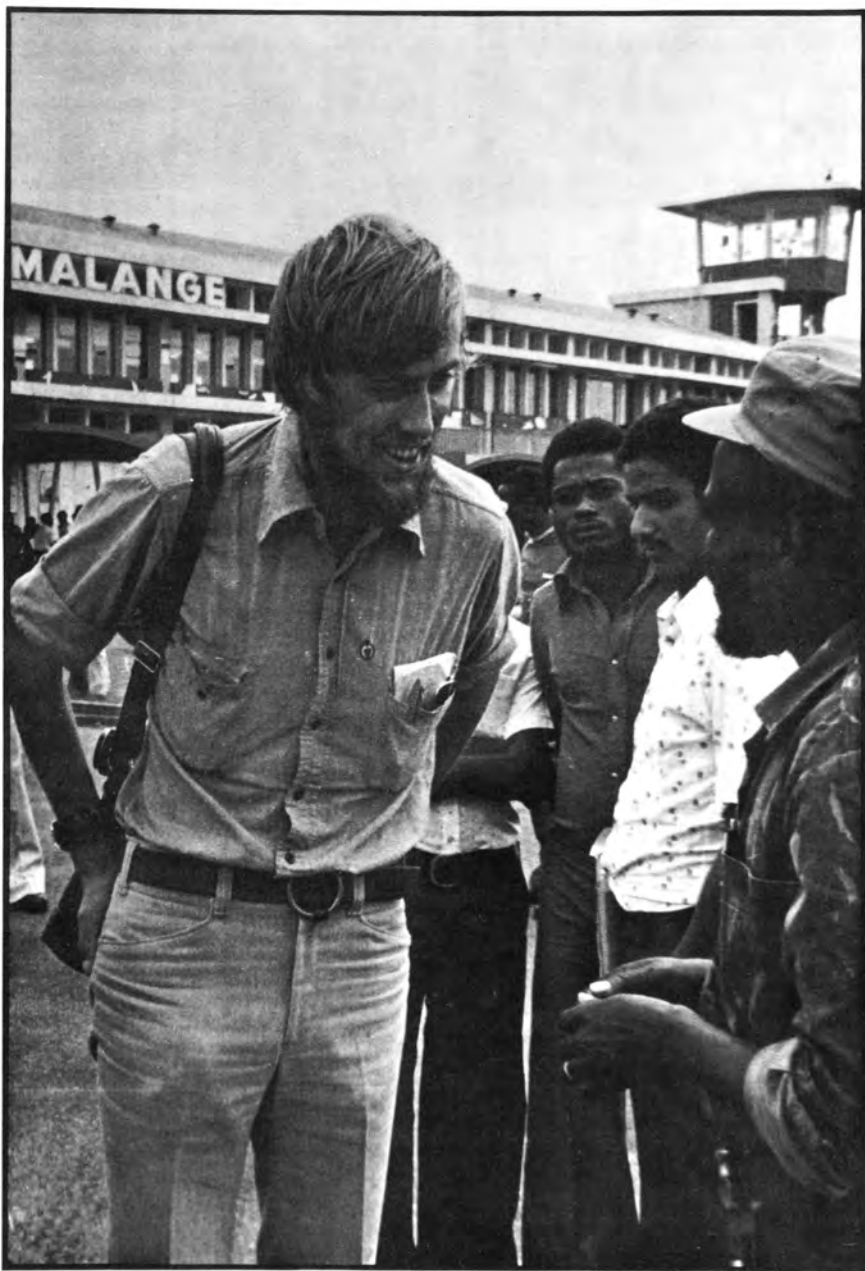
MPLA guerrilla activities did not reach Malanje, but the Movement nevertheless built a strong clandestine organization in the area in the early and mid-60's. One of the key organizers was Lolo, today District Political Commissar, who, as a Department of Public Works functionary travelled a lot and was in regular contact with the Luanda-based leadership. "We had a network of cells that covered most of the region. But our strength was in town, particularly among the functionaries and other 'intellectuals' like myself. Our work was mainly propaganda. A few of our activists were Whites, but the vast majority of Portuguese were reactionary."

Lolo relays his story at a relative's house one Saturday night over a jug of local *cuca*. A group of young FAPLA fighters, on weekend leave from the Mussende front, thirty miles to the South, have joined us and make an attentive audience. "But PIDE was also very active and our network was constantly threatened. In 1968 several other comrades and I were arrested and kept in jail until April 1974."

Portuguese army presence was strong, too. The military expected MPLA to use Malanje as a corridor to link the Eastern Front with the Dembos Forest base area, and troops patrolled the district intensively to prevent such a breakthrough.

25 April changed almost nothing here. For six months afterwards PIDE continued its work and Lolo and other MPLA cadre were even rearrested. The Portuguese military were divided among themselves; a group of progressive MFA officers transferred from Cabinda (where the army's relations with MPLA were good) were in a minority to those who had links with the plantation owners, industrialists and, later, the FNLA. In December 1974 UNITA, FNLA and MPLA each established official quarters in Malanje and started to work in the open. Building on past support, Lolo and his comrades emphasized mass mobilization. Local chapters of OPA, OMA and, in particular, JMPLA spread from the town to the villages to give the peasants, for the first time, a means of effectively advancing their interests. Mass meetings and short political courses were the main tools of mobilization. A small group of FAPLA cadre later arrived from the East to open a CIR. FNLA by this time had already established close ties with local settler leaders like Edouardo Castro and João Andrade Gomes, both solid plantation owners and merchants, who after a visit to Zaire agreed to provide the National Front with a downtown highrise and modern apartment buildings. UNITA came to receive most of its support from the *petits blancs*, the poorer settlers, but was never able to establish much of a base in Malanje.

As in the rest of the country, the tension between the



Ole Gjerstad with Commandante Mona (far right) at Malange airport / LSM photo

three movements intensified as the Transitional Government in Luanda made no headway whatsoever in building unity. So intense was the population's opposition to Holden's men that most refused any contact with them at all. The National Front finally gave up its "outreach" efforts when, in May 1975, its "People's House" near the airport was attacked and the FNLA troops inside killed by the people of the neighboring *bairro*. The Portuguese retained their full military force and many of the settlers made discrete preparations to leave, moving most of their funds and valuables to Luanda or Portugal.

Armed confrontations started in June in the form of isolated incidents in the rural areas. With this, the settlers flocked to town for protection in a climate of extreme fear and agitation. According to Commandante Mona, UNITA played the role of *provocateur*. "For a long time we managed to limit the confrontations, but with Luanda and other cities in a state of regular war, we were at the same time preparing for the worst. Finally, with the assassination of comrade Movimento, one of our most popular commanders, our militants had had enough and moved to kick the enemy out."

By this time the Portuguese army had started to evacuate the settler population and those few Africans who decided to leave with them - mainly families who in one way or another had been closely linked to colonial interests. FNLA escalated its familiar intimidation campaign and from the roof of its office tower started to bombard the *bairros* most supportive of MPLA with anti-aircraft cannons. "With this there was no way to stop the war," says Filho do Povo (Son of the People), one of the young FAPLA combatants based in the city. UNITA left almost immediately for their Huambo stronghold, a hundred miles to the South, and the last settlers were taken to Luanda in army-escorted convoys. With FNLA, however, there was to be no compromise. Within the first week of August its force was besieged in the city center after losing about half of its eight hundred fighters. It was only a question of how long the remaining half would be able to last.

This was a situation almost identical to that in other districts, such as Mossamedes and Lubango⁵ in the far South, where UNITA and FNLA forces were facing total elimination. But to avoid further bloodshed, MPLA agreed to a Portuguese proposal to let the enemy retreat to their base areas under the escort of the colonial army, provided they left their arms and equipment behind.⁶ In Malanje the agreement stipulated that FNLA would leave, unarmed and under Portuguese protection, for their Carmona headquarters the next day. But the thought of what awaited them in Carmona, returning defeated and stripped of their equipment to an already humiliated National Front leadership, must have bothered the FNLA officers considerably. Late the same night, therefore, their forces boarded their vehicles and, armed to the teeth, broke the FAPLA encirclement. "They were

out of town before we had time to act," says Filho. "We had relaxed our vigilance too early."

The only FAPLA detachment along the road to Carmona was at Cota village, thirty miles or so north of Malanje. It was after midnight when the commander of the fifteen-man unit got the call to stop the FNLA force. Immediately the villagers were gathered and the few extra weapons distributed. Old hunting rifles, bows and arrows, and even *katanas* (machetes) were not rejected. Those who could not participate were evacuated to a safe distance from where they could hear the ghastly scene of the FNLA column falling into the improvised ambush. None of the villagers I talk to are certain of the figures; of how many fell on each side, how many escaped or whether any prisoners were taken. "Many died and many ran away," is the best answer I can get. But it seems that no more than four or five vehicles got through. Those who managed to turn back were intercepted by the FAPLA from Malanje in hot pursuit; the rest were shot up and set on fire. And for weeks afterwards FNLA soldiers were being hunted down by villagers in the neighboring forests.

All this is now four months in the past and since then the district has been peaceful. Linking the MPLA-controlled Eastern Region with Luanda and the coast, Malanje was a strategic target for the invasion forces at the peak of their November offensive. At one point Zairean and mercenary troops with their armored cars and heavy artillery came close to cutting off the road connection with the coast, but now FAPLA is receiving equipment to match that of the enemy. North of Cota, near the spectacular Duque de Bragança waterfalls, the invasion force is now re-treating toward Carmona. To the South, South African attempts to break through FAPLA's lines have been frustrated and from the inflow of fresh militants and hardware, it seems that FAPLA is now preparing a counter-offensive.⁷

The collapse of colonialism in Malanje is total. But just as colonial oppression had been different from that in Luanda, so is the assertion of People's Power. "As FAPLA advanced, the people advanced behind them," says Lolo. Clothes, furniture, appliances; what the settlers themselves and the FNLA had not already removed was now "expropriated." The hostel where I am staying has nothing but mattresses on the floor and dining room furniture which has just been brought from Luanda. *Fazenda* buildings and farm equipment - symbols of colonial oppression - were destroyed in spontaneous outrage and highly bred cattle slaughtered for food. By the time the war with FNLA was over and the Movement cadres could turn their attention to these things, millions of dollars worth of useful material was beyond repair. "Only now, as we are starting the work of reconstruction are the consequences obvious to all," Lolo concludes. "A costly lesson, but perhaps inevitable."

The breakdown of the economy affects the African population to the extent they were integrated into the old order. In

the outlying areas the people continue to grow their food and have very little else. In town, those who worked in the shops and factories are straining to get by on a day-to-day basis. The food they have planted in their *bairros* will not be ready for several months yet and with the manioc meal at 50¢ a pound here as well, only a few have any money left. They seem to get by borrowing something here, something there and helping each other. When transport is available, they take trips to visit their kin out of town who will share with them what there is. And when the situation looks particularly difficult, the women gather edible herbs and roots which, pounded and boiled, help stretch dwindling supplies until other means can be found.

In Malanje reconstruction means starting from the beginning. There can be no return to a colonial structure which was based on the super-exploitation of the people; the economy shall instead have to be completely reorganized to better meet their needs. If Cotonang is ever to operate again, it will be under conditions very different from those of the past. If any of the *retornados* are to come back, it will only be after the Government has assured itself that they have a contribution to make to the collective good. The overwhelming priority now is to organize the population to produce food and other things essential to survival. The first violent reaction - or revenge - to colonialism has died down; the imposing task of reconstruction is waiting. Overall plans for rebuilding the district will have to be integrated with a national development plan and the Luanda Government, in its short existence, has not yet had time to address itself to the issue. In fact, the local MPLA cadre continue to run the administration of the district as they have done since last August.

One of these is Carlos Silva, draftsman and one of the few professionals to remain in Malanje. "The denial of education to our people was perhaps the worst of all the crimes of colonialism. Now we need technicians more than anything: mechanics, engineers, agronomists, veterinarians - people with skills they can pass on while doing the work."

Carlos himself heads the local Department of National Reconstruction (DRN), one of MPLA's key departments. Recently he proposed to the Government to give his department the right to utilize abandoned land and equipment. "The things are here, and it is urgent we start now," he explains. "First we must reorganize food production and get the crops planted before stocks run out altogether. Then we can turn our attention to the more long-range questions." In some places this work is already well under way. In the larger *bairros*, the corn is already two feet high, the beans are in, and many families are planting groundnuts, as well. "We have launched a campaign for those who normally spend their days at home to increase their food production. The old people, the children and the women looking after the children - everyone must participate if we are to pull

through this year."

The *bairro* crops will barely suffice for local consumption. Food for the Luanda market will come mainly from the new cooperatives which are being formed both near the district capital and as far away as the small town of Brito Godins, one hundred and fifty miles to the North. In all, sixty-five cooperatives have formed over the past two months, with between thirty and seventy-five families in each. Many more are in the organizing stage. Most of them have taken over the land and the abandoned *fazenda* facilities and, for the time being, the tractors and other equipment remain intact. The five cooperatives on the outskirts of Malanje town, for instance, share a pool of a dozen tractors with ploughs, harrows and a few harvesters. This year machines prepared the fields, and when they were done, the people of each cooperative took over, planting and weeding with their traditional long-handled hoes. Their own food will come from smaller, individually worked plots; these crops are all for exchange. Most of the planting is already done and food crops for the cities - corn, beans and groundnuts - now dominate where only last year cotton and tobacco grew to fill the coffers of absentee landlords. Where profits used to call the tune, to meet the people's needs is now becoming the objective of work.

The cooperatives are the product of close collaboration between MPLA and a group of Basque fathers who have weathered the storms of the past year in stubborn pursuit of their calling. In fact, their order first arrived here in 1959 for the specific purpose of setting up cooperatives among the villagers. That, however, proved nearly impossible, explains Father Pedro who arrived shortly after the initial group and is now the veteran of the mission. "Portuguese law gave us the right to do this, but in practice the regime put every obstacle in our way. Instead, the big colonists corrupted the *sobas* (village headmen) and local officials to drive the people off their land." In fifteen years the padres managed to establish only one cooperative. But this was enough to earn them constant PIDE harassment and the antagonism of local settlers. The changes in Lisbon meant little here in Malanje and when the padres early this year brought suit to reclaim the land illegally occupied by plantations, only eighty out of fifteen hundred plots were granted. Only now are they making headway, though a host of practical problems, such as shortages of seed, fertilizer, gas and spare parts, are slowing down their progress. Their relations with MPLA? "We work for the people," says Pedro, "and so does the MPLA. This is where our interests meet."

Each cooperative has elected a council of five villagers as "responsibles" for the work. So far, the different cooperatives relate to each other mainly through MPLA cadres or the padres, but there are plans to form a confederation of all production cooperatives in the district. This body will take care of storing, transporting and selling the produce on the coast,



Preparing the soil in Malange / LSM photo

or exchanging it for necessities which the people here cannot themselves produce, such as soap, salt, oil or cloth. If anything is left over after that and once expenses for next year's tools and fertilizer are set aside, it will go to the villagers themselves in form of cash. MPLA's plans call for investment in "social overhead" - schools and clinics - but this will require more political preparation yet. "We can only take one step at a time," says Carlos.

The present phase still means going beyond the traditional forms of cooperation that the Malanje people, mostly Kimbundu, have inherited from their ancestors. In Kimbundu villages the land is still communal property, though it is worked by individual family plots with each family retaining the product of their work. Only in hunting is the prey shared out, with the headman taking a major part. The community retains considerable power; thus only in villages where the majority support the idea, is it possible to form a cooperative. These customs have made collective work easier to introduce than in regions where private property has been long established. But that so many have been ready to go beyond their old forms of collectivity, according to Carlos, is also due to today's difficult conditions. The traditional mode of life can no longer respond to the villagers' needs. The penetration of colonialism showed them what machinery and organized effort could accomplish, and now the abandoned plantation fields, too big for the individual peasant, are there, waiting to be worked. This incentive to collectivize is reinforced by the policy of the new government which, in the Constitution, commits the People's Republic to "increasing cooperative methods" and "solving the land problem in the interest of the peasant masses." Concretely, this commitment will be implemented through financial and technical assistance to make the cooperatives the backbone of the country's agricultural production.

In essence, People's Power means the same here in the countryside as in the city: the massive intervention of the people to build a new society in the wake of the colonial collapse. No one harbors the illusion that this will be easy. But social equality and mass participation have taken the place of exploitation and privilege as a basis of the new structures now emerging and with the initiative in the hands of the peasants themselves, it will not be long before they will see the first fruits of their labor. Already this year the carpet covering the Kassange Basin will not be all white.

The people of Malanje, and throughout free Angola, face a momentous challenge. To build socialism on the ruins of colonial fascism and super-exploitation will mean many years of hard work and sacrifice. There is no well-trod path to follow nor any guarantee of success. Externally, the forces of imperialism retain an arsenal of weapons - military, economic, political

and cultural - to abort or sidetrack the Angolan revolution. Internally, the contradictions embodied in Angolan society - in class, race and regional differences - leave visible only the rough contours of the future. The correct resolution of these contradictions will require no small amount of struggle among the people and within MPLA. And as this struggle proceeds, the demands on the Movement's level of organization and ideological cohesion will increase.

Yet, the dialectics of the struggle have set in motion a process that has already eliminated many of the barriers that block social progress in so many African and "Third World" countries. The character of Portuguese colonialism forced the Angolan people to take destiny into their own hands. The rise of a liberation movement capable of building a new society while it was fighting not only exposed the colonial myth, it gave the people a new awareness of themselves, a new sense of identity which provided the basis for the present People's Power explosion.

In the same manner, without cooperatives and hard work, the people of Malanje would have continued to live in semi-starvation and misery; without the factory committees, industry would have come to a standstill and the workers would have lost their means of survival; without the defense groups and People's Commissions, the *musseques* would have become uninhabitable. After starting as a response to the colonial collapse and the war, these institutions, like the armed struggle, have now taken on a momentum of their own, advancing the consciousness of the people in step with their evolution. Through these new forms of organization, Angolans not only give the lie to racist doctrines of their inferiority, they show by example that their new ways are superior, that the economy can be run for people instead of profit.

The ascendance of People's Power has put the masses of the Angolan population at the center of this process. The MPLA government has taken steps to make mass participation the basis of the new state apparatus so as to check the development of a stifling bureaucracy, one of the greatest potential threats to popular rule. If the tremendous energy released by the emergence of People's Power can continue to flow, this will be the best guarantee for the further advance of the Angolan revolution.



Peasant of Malange / LSM photo

NOTES

1. A country estate or plantation.
2. Whereby part of the wages were paid in the form of goods from the plantation store (*cantina*) at prices well above those in town.
3. See Marcum, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-125, and *Road to Liberation, MPLA Documents on the Founding of the People's Republic of Angola*, LSM Press, 1976, p. 17.
4. For an account of these further massacres, see Don Barnett and Roy Harvey, *The Revolution in Angola*, Bobbs Merrill, 1972, pp. 199-200.
5. In the colonial period Lubango was known as Sá da Bandeira.
6. In Huambo, it was MPLA which retreated in this manner, leaving UNITA in control of the district.
7. It is interesting to note that during the period of my stay here, the Western press carried no less than two Associated Press reports, datelined Lusaka, Zambia, announcing UNITA's capture of Malanje town and "a hundred Cuban troops."

Postscript

As I left Angola, in the last week of December 1975, the combined FAPLA and Cuban forces were rapidly liberating the northern part of the country. During the following month, military and political pressure forced the South Africans to an inglorious retreat to the border area near Namibia. With that, the UNITA and FNLA (Chipenda) forces disintegrated and beat a disorderly retreat into the sparsely populated bush country of the South-east. Defeated and exposed, the South African regime finally withdrew its last occupation troops from Angolan soil on 27 March 1976. After fifteen years and two wars, Angola was finally ruled by its own people.

Since then, the majority of UNITA and FNLA supporters and militants have taken advantage of MPLA's policy of national reconciliation to return to their homes and start a life as normal Angolan citizens. Scattered guerrilla activity against MPLA continued for three or four months but has now been put to an end. However, continuous attacks on Angolan villages are launched from across the Zairean and Namibian borders and have indeed intensified after the July visit of the US Secretary of Defense to Kinshasa.

The few reports on Angola to reach the Western media after the end of the Second War, have focused on this continued fighting and alleged splits within the MPLA "over the spoils of victory." It has become clear, therefore, that the forces which led and financed the war against the Popular Movement have not reconciled themselves to defeat. Military pressure is maintained, economic sanctions attempted (see Appendices 1 and 2), in the diplomatic field the US has threatened to veto the admission of the People's Republic to the UN, and the press has it that Angola is still virtually in a state of war, plagued with internal power struggles that can allow anything to happen. In short, we are seeing another "destabilization" campaign in the

making. Puppets like Savimbi and Holden are kept on ice to be hauled back into the limelight when their services are needed.

The Angolans are not likely to be caught unaware, though. One of the things that impressed me most during my time with them was their great interest in events outside their own country - even as the eyes of the world were centered on Angola. Just as I wanted to know about their struggle, the FAPLA militants, the activists of the People's Commissions and countless others rarely missed an opportunity to inquire about life and politics in the capitalist countries, and especially about the US and Henry Kissinger, to them the outstanding symbols of imperialist aggression. "Where are the American people now that their government is fighting us?" was a question that caused us many a long and involved discussion.

What the media here portray, however, is at best marginal to the process within Angola where one of the chief efforts over the last eight months has been to build the principles of People's Power into the structures of the state (see Appendix 3). Last February the People's Power Act was passed in the Revolutionary Council, and in May the Luanda People's Commissions held open elections, something which will be held in all parts of the country as independence is consolidated. "We will never be able to have a socialist state without the effective participation of the masses," wrote *Vitoria Certa* in July.

This is being borne out in practice as national reconstruction gets under way by a program of political mass mobilization. This year's coffee and sugar harvests were made possible by the turnout of tens of thousands of volunteers. While foreign engineers and medical personnel are making valuable contributions - e.g. in repairing the damaged roads and setting up a system of national health care - agricultural cooperatives and factories are getting underway through the efforts of the Angolans themselves. By September, one hundred out of one hundred and twelve industries in the province of Huambo were back in operation, schools had been reopened across the nation and Government Stores were being established to secure the fair distribution of food and other essential commodities.

Granted this is only a small beginning. As a result of the war it has not yet been possible to activate all sectors of the economy, and "we are not producing nearly enough," the Prime Minister, Lopo de Nascimento, exclaimed in a frank speech recently to the workers at the fishing port of Cacuaço.

As during the war, the fundamental obstacle remains the lack of people with political experience and appropriate skills - the major heritage of colonialism. The training of MPLA cadres abroad during the anti-colonial war is surely paying dividends, but they are spread thin in the economy and government administration. And between them and the masses of the people, the class of functionaries and bureaucrats created by colonialism to serve its interests can, if not checked, grow to sabotage

the realization of People's Power. To this class the Prime Minister extended a strong warning: "the petty bourgeoisie, mainly the functionaries, have started to show their teeth," he said. "We need to take measures to pull those teeth." Those who are not prepared to relinquish the privileges handed down by colonialism, should not expect to retain their positions very much longer.

In ways like this the vitality of the struggle for a new social order persists. Its essence arises from the conditions of today's Angola. The success of the rural cooperatives and the factory committees, the ability of the new regime to link itself directly to the masses and advance their interests: these are the factors that will determine the course of the new Angola. Those who view the People's Republic simply as a representative of foreign interests or as a pawn in big-power contention on the African continent will therefore fail to draw the lessons of the Angolan revolution.

October 1976

Appendix 1

Produce to Resist

INTERVIEW WITH DR. CARLOS ROCHA (DILOLWA), MEMBER OF THE POLITICAL BUREAU AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF MPLA, MINISTER OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC COORDINATION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA.

RECORDED AND EDITED BY OLE GJERSTAD, LIBERATION SUPPORT MOVEMENT, 23 December 1975, Luanda, Angola.

LSM: Today, less than two months after the proclamation of independence, what are the major problems confronting your young People's Republic?

Dilolwa: First and foremost there is the war, the war of resistance to expel the enemies of our people from Angola. Our principal enemy is imperialism, acting through internal and foreign agents. Its Angolan puppets are well-known: Holden Roberto and his tribalist FNLA, UNITA, and FLEC, a localized group demanding the secession of Cabinda.

Our foreign enemies include the army of racist South Africa which has invaded our country from the South, the Zairean army which has entered from the North, the troops of the so-called Portuguese Liberation Army (ELP) which wants to recolonize Angola at any price and, finally, a variety of mercenaries from the United States, France, Belgium and other countries.

Our struggle is now far more difficult in many respects. We are fighting a conventional war with heavy equipment and large concentrations of troops, organized in companies, battalions and so on. To build such an army in a short space of time is no easy task. We still carry out ambushes and other guerrilla-type actions, but these are very secondary.

All other activities in our People's Republic are currently subordinated to the essential task of expelling the enemy. We are trying to maintain production of food and other essential commodities, directly or indirectly connected with the war. Our entire economic and administrative structure works to support the war effort.

LSM: "Produce to Resist": this seems to be the essential watchword of the current period. Perhaps you could explain?

Dilolwa: Our nation is in a state of *generalized popular resistance*, a resistance which takes many forms and in which everybody participates. The FAPLA (People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola) confronts the invasion forces with arms. In the rearguard we must produce to feed the militants and rebuild what has been destroyed. We must also make Angolan culture a weapon in our fight - you have yourself seen the surge of national culture to which this war has given rise. These aspects are all important; the rearguard must always back up those fighting in the front lines.

LSM: National reconstruction has begun both in Luanda and in the liberated rural areas. Can you describe some of the concrete problems in this work?

Dilolwa: There has been a tremendous drop in production in nearly all spheres. Some areas, for instance most of the coffee-producing districts, have been completely devastated by the war. And, of course, large regions are still occupied by the invasion forces.

Even more serious is the great lack of skilled and qualified personnel in all fields. The Portuguese completely controlled the administration as well as the economic machinery of our country. With the great majority of them gone, this whole system has collapsed. We are now trying to reorganize with the help of some of the Portuguese who remain, most of whom are honest people - some even revolutionaries. Many Angolan cadres today have to take on tasks never entrusted them by the colonialists but which have to be done. By combining our efforts we have started to confront the immense problems which we face in the reconstruction of our country. The lowest point has definitely been reached, and we have started the difficult climb toward peace and prosperity.

Starting almost from scratch as we are, there are many roads open. We are by no means obliged to use colonial models and, in fact, we are finding new ways of organizing production which are more in line with the needs of our people. For example, in the factories abandoned by their owners and the Portuguese skilled and administrative workers, committees, elected by the workers and appointed by the State, are now doing the work of those who left.

LSM: In the countryside, cooperatives are being formed where previously there were only large plantations or small individually worked plots. Why have you chosen this form of organization?

Dilolwa: Eighty-five percent of Angola's population lives in

the countryside. Several hundred thousand worked on the colonial plantations but the large majority exist within the so-called "traditional" economy; that is, they grow crops mainly for their own subsistence. It is necessary to modernize these aspects of our economy in order to bring it into the twentieth century. The plantation workers, a rural proletariat, were highly exploited by the plantation owners, while the self-subsistence peasants were becoming increasingly marginalized by the development of the colonial economy. The formation of cooperatives by both these groups is the best way of improving their lives. The plantations abandoned by their owners and managers can be turned into cooperatives, with the possible exception of the very big ones, like the sugar cane plantations with their complex administration, for which we shall have to find other forms. If all cultivation were to be on small individual plots, it would be difficult for the State to provide the necessary assistance for increasing production; we could not possibly send agronomists, mechanics, etc. to help each single peasant. If, on the other hand, many join their efforts in a cooperative, they can get credit, purchase machinery and obtain advice from specialists.

This, mind you, is not to say that things will be easy. In the past all large enterprises were run by Portuguese and thus the Angolan peasant only knows how to work his own little chunk of land. Even with competent assistance, the reorganization will be a huge effort. We are bound to make mistakes, but it is in making mistakes that we'll learn. A start has to be made somewhere and so we are starting, with courage, with audacity.

LSM: What other measures will your government take to free Angola from its dependency on the international capitalist system?

Dilolwa: Our Movement is anti-imperialist. This is something we have never tried to hide, and this is why we are now being attacked! Our economy is truly at the periphery of the imperialist system with everything this implies. We thus have a long road ahead; a road strewn with difficulties, especially in view of the present invasion.

The People's Republic of Angola will adhere to MPLA's policy of non-alignment. Our Government will be open toward cooperation with all countries on the basis of mutual advantage. Such cooperation must be truly in the interest of the Angolan people and our country must be left to control its own wealth. Thus, as stated in MPLA's program we accept the presence of privately owned companies on our territory, as long as these companies are subject to the laws of our country and function within the framework of our plans for the development of the country.



Dilolwa (Dr. Carlos Rocha) / Tempo Magazine

LSM: One can see signs of a boycott by capitalist interests abroad?

Dilolwa: Yes, there are signs. Take the case of TAAG, Angola Airlines, which has ordered two Boeing 737 jet liners from the United States. The American Government, however, has refused Boeing permission to export these planes, despite the fact that they have already been paid for. This is particularly difficult to accept in view of the fact that during our war against Portuguese colonialism, the US permitted the sale of Boeing 707's to the Portuguese Air Force. These planes were strictly for military use, while TAAG is a civilian and *privately owned* company. This action by the US government is certainly a flagrant violation of existing regulations.

Still more important is the total refusal by Western countries to grant Angola credit. All purchases have to be in cash. In this way they perhaps hope to kill our young Republic, something which is not at all possible.

LSM: But, on the other hand, have you not been approached by foreign corporations interested in exploiting Angola's fabulous natural resources?

Dilolwa: Certainly, there are private interests, even among the giant multinationals, which cannot accept the adventurist policies of their regimes. Because what these most reactionary circles of the West are trying to do in Angola is nothing but an adventure. To send today, at the end of the twentieth century, troops of racist South Africa to kill an independent African country is truly stupid and cannot be supported even by many of the large capitalist companies. Thus some of them have approached us and, as I said earlier, we remain open to cooperation. We expect to sign the first agreements already next year [1976].

LSM: What will be the conditions for their operating in Angola?

Dilolwa: The private corporations, like Gulf Oil, Diamang and Petrangol, are by far the largest operating in our country and represent, directly or indirectly, powerful international concentrations of capital. Still, we are prepared to work with them provided that this is a two-way relationship. If they are not prepared to cooperate ... well, then they really haven't learned from the colonial period. For fourteen years we fought colonialism and today we are in the midst of the Second War of National Liberation. It's not for fun we are fighting. Certainly, no other arrangement than mutual cooperation is acceptable to us.

LSM: Some of the large companies operating in Chile were in active alliance with both domestic and external reactionary forces - the CIA and others - to sabotage the *Unidad Popular* government. Do you feel you can control such forces once they are installed in Angola?

Dilolwa: We think that an understanding between us and private corporations is possible. As for the CIA, it is no doubt well entrenched in Angola, not only in the regions controlled by the enemy, but also in ours - in the guise of businessmen, diplomats and others. We indeed expect to be confronted with its maneuvers in the future and we are alert.

LSM: What forces can you mobilize against this campaign from abroad?

Dilolwa: First, we are mobilizing our own people in the way I already described. Abroad our Movement and Republic have many friends we can rely on. More than thirty countries have already recognized our Government and others are about to do so. For example, several northern European countries supported MPLA during the anti-colonial war with funds voted by their Parliaments. Though none of them have yet officially recognized the People's Republic of Angola, our relations are very good. In other countries there are organizations similar to your own, the Liberation Support Movement, which with its activities has contributed a lot to convey the true image of our struggle. It appears, too, that the attitude of the American Congress toward our Republic is not at all hostile and this, we believe, is very important. In all, we think that the solidarity with our Movement and Government will increase a great deal in the months to come.

LSM: Returning now to the domestic situation, what class structure has resulted from the integration of Angola into the world capitalist economy? For instance, is there an Angolan national bourgeoisie?

Dilolwa: No, there is no Angolan bourgeoisie. Until very recently, Portuguese colonialism kept Angola well protected from the large international monopolies and the Portuguese themselves took control of the coffee plantations, construction activities, etc. Thus, an Angolan bourgeoisie was never allowed to develop. There are some bourgeois individuals, like a handful of Angolan plantation owners, but they are few and far between and by no means do they constitute a class. Interestingly enough, these few bourgeois are nationalists and anti-imperialists.

What we *do* have in Angola is a relatively large petty bourgeoisie. This is a class consisting *not* so much of merchants and small-scale entrepreneurs as in some other African countries, but mainly of bureaucrats and functionaries. This petty bourgeoisie was dependent on colonialism for its subsistence. Still it was truly anti-colonialist because its members always occupied the subordinate positions and were prevented from rising on the social ladder. They were people who became frustrated and alienated in their own country and many became revolutionaries and cadres of the liberation movement. Today, as well, this group is anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist.

LSM: Here in Luanda there is another group one cannot fail to notice: the marginals or "lumpens" ...

Dilolwa: ... Petty thieves, prostitutes, parasites of various kinds - true, we have a great mass of such people, a by-product of the colonial system. For the most part they too want national independence; they are both anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist. But they are very dangerous because, from a political point of view, they are extremely unstable and can easily be used by the enemy. Looking at history, we find that many of the counter-revolutionary forces of our epoch were made up of such elements.

LSM: There are not many African countries with a national working class. What about Angola?

Dilolwa: There is definitely an Angolan working class, though at the moment it is neither very large nor fully conscious of its political force. Its basis is in both industry and agriculture; it produces a great part of the material value in our country and thus its role is essential.

This working class has entered the political stage in a violent manner since 25 April and there has been a very interesting, explosive development of its political consciousness. In the People's Republic of Angola this class will have the opportunity to evolve very rapidly. As you know, we have already nationalized the entire educational system and all schooling is now free. In the factories there will be technical training. We must enable the working class to become conscious of its historical responsibility and place itself at the head of the modern, progressive state Angola will become.

LSM: Peasants, workers, marginals, petty bourgeois and even a few bourgeois, all these elements are present within the MPLA. But are their interests equally served by the Movement?

Dilolwa: The social classes I have referred to are all of the people and support the liberation struggle. Together they constitute the driving force of our revolution.

But certainly, within the anti-imperialist front, their weight and comportsment is far from equal. The peasantry, by the force of its numbers and position, is the principal force of the revolution, while the working class must come to occupy the position of the leading force. This is not as simple as to make a worker President of the Republic. This worker could well be a traitor; in the puppet armies there are also workers, peasants, petty bourgeois. No, there is nothing mechanical about this process; it must be understood in a wider sense. By its ideas and its practice the Movement must defend the interests of the most exploited classes, workers and peasants, and in the process the role of these classes will be promoted. They must be conscious of their duties toward society, toward the revolution. Only by becoming conscious of their historical responsibility can they assume the power which is theirs. This, of course, is a long process ...

LSM: ... and one which requires turning the Movement into a party?

Dilolwa: It is written in the Proclamation of 11 November that our Movement must evolve in step with the dynamics of the revolution. The large anti-imperialist front, composed of all patriotic elements, is absolutely necessary and must be retained. But it is not sufficient; the front must be led by a party, a party evolving within the front by a process of selection and gradual expansion. In a way this process has been at work since the beginning of our struggle. Many people have fallen by the wayside and, no doubt, many are yet to fall. It is a kind of natural selection, a positive process which will advance with the revolution.

LSM: With the departure of so many Portuguese a sort of vacuum has developed, and we can now see that many Angolans are trying to move into positions where they would simply replace the *retornados*. What does this mean for the revolutionary process?

Dilolwa: There are several kinds of vacuums. There is the power vacuum which arose immediately after 25 April with the unwillingness of the colonial troops to go on fighting for a doomed cause. Thus the Portuguese gradually lost all control in Angola. This vacuum was at its greatest just before Independence and is now being filled as we are expanding and consolidating our control.

Then there is the vacuum resulting from the exodus of the

PRODUCE TO RESIST

Why are we going to produce in order to resist the imperialist aggression? Our work in the fields, factories, offices and schools is a work of liberation, a form of combat... However, you can't have production and distribution without organization; therefore, the democratic organs in the factories, schools and neighborhoods. Let's not conduct anarchic strikes which endanger the national economic strategy, but instead reinforce the control of enterprises by the workers and peasants....

We are not going to increase the salaries of public officials, because we know this would only benefit a minority of bureaucrats while the people in the shantytowns and villages must bear such precarious living conditions, without water, bread, medicines or transport. We must, indeed, deliver a hoe to every official who doesn't produce the acceptable minimum; yes, we must combat parasitism.

We are going to improve, within the limits of the possible, the living conditions of our people, the most exploited masses of our country, guaranteeing the supply of basic essentials such as bread, manioc, fish, petroleum, meat and medicine....

We are going to conduct political education campaigns so that all our people participate effectively on the front of production; we are all going to throw ourselves into production in order to win.

We will win the battle of production; to produce is to resist.

Long live the unity of all workers.

Long live national unity.

The struggle continues.

The Political Bureau of the MPLA

Portuguese, the vacuum of cadres. Of course, there are opportunists who want to move in fast to take over the open positions and this is a tendency which must be carefully analyzed. The gap must be filled, the wheels must be kept turning, but the cadres must be competent - technically, politically, morally. We must combat corruption and opportunism of all sorts. As you know, the Government itself has set the example by cutting its salaries and other remunerations by 50%. In the Transitional Government the Ministers received generous salaries, extra allowances for moving to Luanda and other such rewards. These things are all gone and now there are even many functionaries who earn more than the President of the Republic. By itself this may not make a great difference to the nation's finances, but the example should come from above, shouldn't it? It leaves our Government in a better position to combat the tendencies toward opportunism.

LSM: To fill this gap with the kind of cadres you want will obviously take time. In the meantime there are immediate problems which have to be solved; people must eat. ... What measures have you taken to deal with the most serious of such problems?

Dilolwa: Well, you know that our people do eat. You may have seen lines outside the city shops and certainly there is a lack of certain things, but the essential goods are available.

In order to normalize the situation we have recently taken measures to improve the operations at the port of Luanda where there have been problems for a long time. We are reorganizing industrial and agricultural production as I have already described, and we have created a state transport corporation. This latter will be extremely important because in Angola the truck owners played the same role as their Chilean counterparts: they not only transported products, they provided all the links between producer and consumer, between the village fields and the city shops; and now most of them have left, many with their trucks, and the shortages we are now experiencing are in no small way due to this breakdown in the distribution apparatus.

I should also point out that the fishing industry which has been virtually paralyzed for months, is again starting to move. Nearly all of the boat owners have left, taking the best craft with them, but we have started anew with what remains. Within the next couple of months there will be a trade school of fishing opening here in Luanda as well. These are some of the measures taken to solve the most immediate and serious problems in this situation of war.

LSM: I have been struck by the force of People's Power. What is the political content of this movement?

Dilolwa: People's Power was born here in Luanda in the period immediately after 25 April. Initially, it took the form of armed self-defense brigades in the *bairros* in response to the violent attacks by the Portuguese army and settlers. But the problems of the *bairros* were many: lack of food, water, sanitation, schooling. ... Therefore the people of the *bairros* created their People's Commissions to deal with these problems in an organized fashion. Soon this work was taken up in other towns and also in the villages. The People's Commissions became a formidable tool for the masses to promote their interests.

This is a force which must be preserved. People's Power has been written into our constitution as the basic principle for the organization of social life, not only in the *bairros* but at all levels of the State. At present we are preparing a law for the implementation of this principle.

LSM: There has been a debate concerning the relation of People's Power to MPLA. What were the diverging positions?

Dilolwa: People's Power was from the very start the power of MPLA. The members of the People's Commissions identified with the MPLA, they hoisted the MPLA flag, they adopted the structure of our Movement in their work. Therefore, from the very first session of the Transitional Government, FNLA and UNITA attacked People's Power, insisting that the Alvor Agreement allowed for only three liberation movements: MPLA, FNLA and UNITA - and not the People's Power movement. They were prepared to recognize it only if it was declared part of MPLA. But this we could not accept, since the movement was truly an independent manifestation of the power of the people and not an integral part of MPLA. So we made the People's Commissions remove the flags and all other MPLA symbols.

After two days of hopeless discussion within the Government, UNITA and FNLA moved a resolution to outlaw People's Power. MPLA, however, managed to prevent it from getting the necessary two-thirds majority. Still, from this moment the movement existed semi-clandestinely; not prohibited, but not legalized either. It existed *de facto* but not *de jure*. UNITA and FNLA intimidated the People's Commissions' activists and there were even armed attacks.

After FNLA and UNITA had left Luanda there was no longer any reason to maintain this ambiguous relationship. People's Power, it was clear, had to be subordinated to the leadership of MPLA; as organs at the base, its work had to proceed within the framework provided by our Movement. Its present institutionalization and integration in the State structure is a continuation of this process.

LSM: Finally, Comrade Dilolwa, it is a widely held view abroad, and also among people who supported MPLA during the anti-colonial struggle, that the current war in Angola is primarily a conflict between the super-powers and that progressive and revolutionary elements in the capitalist countries should not support either side. What is your response to this?

Dilolwa: The super-powers are not fighting in our country. We receive support from socialist countries today as during our war against Portuguese colonialism, when the Portuguese were receiving American arms. This, however, did not make the anti-colonial war a struggle between the super-powers. This Second War of National Liberation is between the Angolan people and imperialism, acting through its agents. This must be made clear to the peoples of the world so that progressive forces everywhere may organize in solidarity with our people.

Appendix 2

An Economy to Serve the Masses

THIS INTERVIEW WITH COMRADE DILOLWA WAS PUBLISHED IN *TEMPO* MAGAZINE (Maputo), No. 292, 9 May 1976. (Translated and edited with the generous help of Ednaldo de Araquém.)

Tempo: Comrade Minister, we know that the economy of Angola suffered certain distortions because of the war with imperialism. Perhaps you could briefly summarize the development strategy of the Transitional Government, with all the difficulties created by not only the Portuguese Government but also the puppet regime. Then, how can the present phase of development, following the declaration of Angola's independence be characterized?

Dilolwa: In the first place, the Portuguese never had a plan of development in Angola. What they called the Indicative Plan (*plano de fomento*) was not really a development plan, but a collection of partial plans - plans for capitalist enterprises and state intentions, which were simply written reports. No one felt obligated to fulfill these plans, so that very seldom were any ever fulfilled. On the contrary, development proceeded differently than expected.

The banking institutions, for example, did not feel obligated to participate in the plan and thus granted credit according to their own criteria and not according to the plan. Consequently, we never had a development plan.

In any case, this so-called Indicative Plan clearly showed the intentions of the Portuguese government. For example, a very small percentage of investments, less than 10%, was designated for agriculture, despite the fact that 85% of our population lives in the countryside. And the agriculture which did benefit from this investment, was not in any way the agriculture which employed 85% of the population but commercial agriculture in the hands of half a dozen property owners.

Consequently, growth was completely distorted, aiming at the production of certain export products such as coffee, sisal, cotton, and, most importantly in recent years, minerals such as petroleum. The Portuguese had created a scheme for a distorted

and crippled economy that in no way corresponded to the interests of the Angolan people or to the needs of Angola as a country. This criticism is well-known, for it is the same type of phenomenon seen in every underdeveloped country exploited by imperialism.

The Transitional Government which was formed on January 31, 1975, also elaborated an economic plan that does not really merit the term "plan," because it was simply a pile of more or less good intentions without any coherence. It reflected the political composition of that government, which had four parts: Portugal and the three so-called liberation movements. Each ministry elaborated its own list of good intentions in order to establish a certain strategy, and after this the matter was closed.

Today we function without a real plan; we want our plan to be made quickly, but it requires a whole infrastructure. We must have a serious statistical service, a serious information service, a whole planning service. We have neither the adequate equipment nor the necessary cadres. This will be a long process; it would be adventurist or demagogic to have a plan already.

In short, we are working without a plan, but we know what we want to do. Our objective is to completely transform the ruling economic order, conquer the economic independence of Angola and create an autocentric economy, i.e., an economy which would really serve the needs of the Angolan people and the interests of the Angolan nation, a balanced economy in which the sectors complement one another in an integrated whole. This objective is clear in our minds, but it is necessary to pose it in concrete terms which take into account the potential of our country.

In the present phase, then, we have to take account of the realities of our country. On Independence Day we announced a campaign of economic resistance. It was a matter of producing for the war effort - Produce to Resist - above all producing the essential and strategic items such as food, fuel, textiles, etc.

Only on March 27 did Angola become completely free of foreign troops. We have been in control of the whole national territory for less than a month and consequently there are important areas in our country that only now can be reached, as for example the desert mines. The area around the Cunene Dam, for example, is an important area from the economic point of view. Near the dam we find the greatest concentration of *bobino* cattle. Consequently, at this moment our immediate objective is to place everything back on its feet, get the economy into gear and create the instruments to radically change the economic structure.

Clearly, when we say place everything back on its feet, we mean this in a general sense, because there are exceptions. We are not going to resume, for example, a big wine industry;

we must start with what is most important. Consequently, despite the fact that the level of production remains very low, our economy already presents qualitative advances in some areas. Today, we completely control the banking system, with its great importance to the country's economy. We control a whole series of enterprises which juridically belong to their old owners but in practice are controlled by the Angolan State. We need to legalize this control within the new order. Thus, we have promulgated the Law of State Transaction which enables the State to nationalize certain enterprises - with or without indemnification, according to the particular case - and deals with the administration of abandoned enterprises and the forms of participation of the workers in such administration.

Tempo: Is it premature to talk of the nationalization of the key sectors of the economy? What is the case with oil and coffee? Whenever the issue of Angola comes up, oil is mentioned.

Dilolwa: In the case of the coffee industry, it is not premature, because coffee has already been nationalized following its abandonment by the settlers. Thus coffee is completely under the control of the State or the peasants, organized in the agricultural cooperatives.

As for oil, we are not presently prepared to undertake nationalization but rather to negotiate new agreements with the companies. We are going to begin with the Gulf Oil Company and we think that within six months a new agreement will be concluded. This will replace the agreement which existed with the colonial government. In the diamond industry we are following the same course of action.

Tempo: The international economic relations which the People's Republic of Angola is going to establish will reflect, in a certain sense, its foreign policy. Imperialism, through Portuguese colonialism, had already created a situation of dependency which ties Angola to imperialism. How does the government think it will be able to free itself from these ties and create alternatives to or diversity in its relations?

Dilolwa: There are various types of ties. Regarding commercial ties, we had a large volume of trade with the United States and Portugal. Half of our coffee used to go to the United States. Today we have broken with the United States and our commercial ties with Portugal have practically ceased as well. We have decided to diversify our commercial ties. As you know, both Angola and Mozambique maintain ties with socialist and other African countries. We see that it is necessary to diversify our commercial relations throughout the world.

The most important ties are perhaps those concerning technology. The dependency of Angola on Western technology is very important, since all underdeveloped countries, not possessing a strong technology, are violated by Western countries. For quite a long time we will remain dependent in this way. As a result, we already feel the effects of the United States boycott, since we need spare parts for our American-made machinery. Again, the solution lies in diversification.

Tempo: Comrade Minister, perhaps you could define Angola's priorities in the economic field?

Dilolwa: We define agriculture as the basis and industry as the decisive factor. In the field of agriculture, it is necessary to dynamize production in creating new schemes, and since the plantations were abandoned, changing relations of production will not be so difficult. Most of the big agricultural enterprises will be transformed into state enterprises, the small and medium-sized into cooperatives.

Further, we are going to initiate forms of cooperation for the peasants who live in a traditional way. Agriculture is our economic base, it sustains the population and can no longer be abandoned. The State has to help with specialists, technical aid, and a whole series of essential products: pesticides, fertilizers, etc. It is easier to aid the peasants if they are organized in cooperatives, and because of this, the organization and politicization of the peasantry is fundamental. For the first time Angolan peasants will be able to receive bank credit. At the same time, we will set a price policy which does not put agriculture in a situation of dependence on the city.

We will start industry of a new type, processing agricultural products and thus increasing their value rather than exporting them raw.

Like all underdeveloped countries, Angola is a country whose population is undernourished. Nevertheless it is a country which has exported great quantities of food. Angola exported food that the Angolan people could not buy only because their poverty did not allow them to. At the cost of the undernourishment of the people, the colonial upper class bought their luxury goods from abroad.

We believe that industry must serve agriculture; it must absorb the products of agriculture and at the same time also supply enough fertilizer for agriculture. We have the basis for accomplishing this task. Angola is rich in phosphates and it will not be very difficult to build installations to produce phosphate fertilizer. We also have oil and petrochemicals which could aid our agriculture. The metal industry that already exists in embryo has to be remodeled for producing agricultural equipment. We have to restructure existing industry

so that it can serve the great popular masses. The objective of production can no longer be profit but rather the satisfaction of the people's needs.

The mining industry will produce for export because it will not be easy to immediately construct smelters capable of transforming our iron ore into steel. We will also have to export crude oil for many years. As a consequence the mining sector will be dependent on the exterior. It would also be very difficult for us to consume our diamonds, mainly because our production is essentially used in jewelry and our people have no need for this.

In a second phase it will be possible to transform locally the products of the mines, construct a petrochemical industry, etc. It will be necessary to transform the raw materials in Angola. There will also be other raw materials, other minerals that we will discover because the territory of Angola has not been well-explored. In this regard there are good prospects for the future.

The essential thing is that we know how to utilize the foreign exchange provided by the mineral sector to develop our agriculture and industry into a well-integrated whole, that we employ this exchange in constructing a scheme of complementary sectors in order to develop the most backward regions and not to concentrate efforts in what the Portuguese called "poles of development," which generally coincided with great centers of white population.

Tempo: Comrade Minister, you referred recently to difficulties created by imperialist lackeys within Angola. Who are these?

Di Lolwa: Well, the struggle continues. Imperialism attempts by all means to maintain its domination over Angola, or at least to maintain Angola within its orbit. But it has now adopted other methods. There is still war in Angola, i.e., there still exist enemy pockets that must be destroyed. We must liquidate the remaining bandits from the puppets, UNITA and FNLA.

These imperialist lackeys are a part of the internal reaction that must be fought militarily and annihilated. But there exist other more camouflaged enemies who at the present moment in Angola wear the cover of ultra-leftism, who say that everything is going too slowly, that we must move more rapidly, that it is necessary to liquidate imperialism quickly. These want to appear as super-revolutionaries; they want to appear more revolutionary than MPLA itself, when MPLA has proved many, many times that it is a revolutionary movement. MPLA is an organization founded in 1956, with a very progressive manifesto, worked out in the interest of the popular masses - and MPLA still preserves this quality today.

MPLA will never betray the Angolan people, but nevertheless

ultra-leftists appear and say that we are going too slowly. This endangers our progress, because when one runs too much he may stumble and fall, and thus the whole journey is lost. Certainly this is what they seek. We cannot let ourselves be dragged down by these "leftists." We know what happened in Chile, we know perfectly well that the military coup was prepared by a series of strikes, strikes against President Allende himself, strikes by workers themselves, and we know now that the truck drivers' strike was financed by the Americans.

Imperialism is very sophisticated, and when it cannot fight directly, it tries to manipulate public opinion so as to alienate the people from its true vanguard, to create false vanguards so that it is much easier for imperialism to intervene directly. The example of Portugal is also very pertinent as there were also "leftists" who badly damaged the work.

Tempo: Comrade Minister, what is the role of the Angolan bourgeoisie at this moment?

Dilolwa: The role of classes in a country must be studied in its historical context. We must begin with definition of classes and know what the principal contradiction is at each moment. We must know who are our enemies, who are our friends and, in the final analysis, who are the Angolan people: which are the classes which constitute the Angolan people. The principal contradiction is that which opposes us to imperialism. In this phase all those classes which oppose imperialism form part of the Angolan people. The petty bourgeoisie, e.g., continues to oppose imperialism. It participated in the First War of National Liberation and in the Second; and it will continue to participate in national reconstruction. Therefore, it is really anti-imperialist.

We must consider that there exists a contradiction between the laboring masses - by this I mean workers and peasants - and the petty bourgeoisie, but this has to be considered a contradiction among the people and has to be resolved as such, by criticism and self-criticism, persuasion and revolutionary education. This is fundamental and not understanding this would mean falling into extremist politics.

Tempo: Comrade Minister, we remain at your disposal for anything else that you might want to say, for our people, who are anxious to hear news of the Angolan people in this difficult phase.

Dilolwa: I would like to salute the people of Mozambique, who also triumphed, under the leadership of FRELIMO, a party with which MPLA always had fraternal and comradely relations, over the colonialist and imperialist enemy. FRELIMO and the people

of Mozambique are engaged in a process of total liberation. It was a pleasure to hear Comrade Samora Machel announce that the frontiers with Rhodesia would be closed and that it was necessary to help the fraternal people of Zimbabwe to liberate themselves. It showed clearly that FRELIMO was remaining faithful to its internationalist principles. This cost Mozambique a lot from an economic point of view, but we must always place political interests ahead of immediate economic considerations. This internationalist line is entirely correct; it is a policy which we, too, are going to pursue.

Our liberation does not end with the liberation of Angola; we think that we must liberate every country on our continent still under racist domination. This is our duty. We will also be faithful to these principles, we will join with Mozambique in this struggle and our people will always be together in the task of the construction of our African countries. I believe that the liberation of the ex-Portuguese colonies has already given an enormous impulse to the whole African continent; and Africa will soon feel the impact of our joint advance.

Appendix 3

MPLA: From Movement to Party

INTERVIEW WITH LUCIO LARA, ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY OF THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF MPLA'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE. "We will create a Party as an instrument for the laboring classes and build socialism."

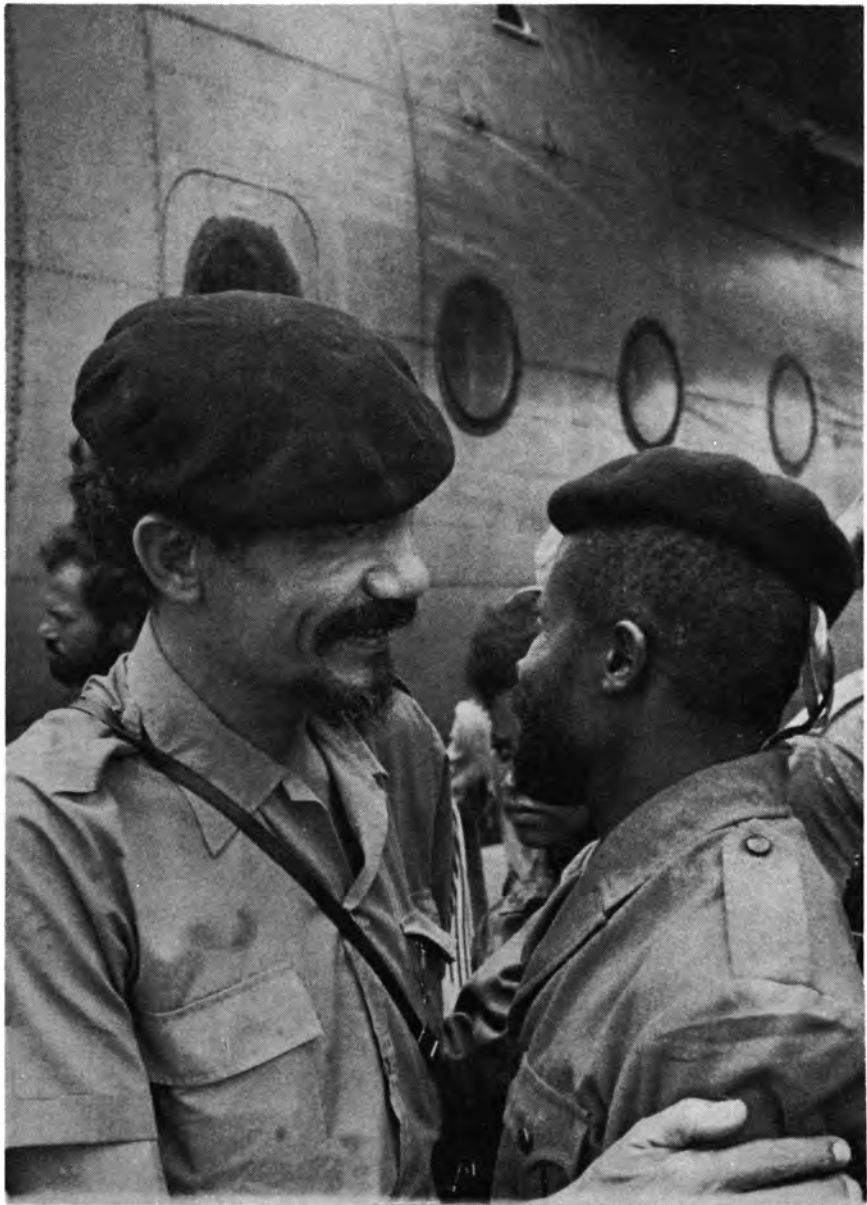
Just before the first anniversary of Angolan Independence, the Central Committee of MPLA decided that a Marxist-Leninist party had to be formed to give proper leadership to the Angolan revolution. At the same time 1977 was declared "Year of the Formation of the Party and Production for Socialism."

With the many contradictions - racial, tribal, and regional - that still exist in Angola, the need for a strong organism to direct the transformation of the country has become crystal clear. Such a task, according to President Neto, cannot be undertaken by "a movement which comprises several political currents, including an anti-socialist current."

*Below, Lucio Lara gives an analysis of MPLA's efforts to set the course of the socialist transformation during the first year of independence and take the People's Power "movement" to a stage of greater ideological clarity. The interview was recorded in Luanda in December 1976 by Hillevi Nilsson and Elisabeth Hedborg and originally appeared in *Kommentar*, (Stockholm, No. 1, 1977). The translation and editing for this edition is by LSM.*

KOMMENTAR: Lately there have been discussions whether the MPLA will form a party. What was the result of those discussions?

LARA: At the meeting of the Central Committee in the beginning of November this year it was decided that a congress is to be held in 1977, at which the question of forming a party will be studied. There are various opinions about what such a party should be like and what place it should fill, and for that reason a congress has to decide this. Earlier on the dominant opinion in the Central Committee was that the MPLA should be transformed into a party. But now more and more members seem to think



Lucio Lara (left) with FAPLA commander at Malange / LSM photo

that the MPLA should continue to exist as a movement, and at the same time a completely new party should be formed. In that case it will be a Marxist-Leninist cadre party.

We feel that it would be politically unwise to abolish the MPLA, which has such a good reputation among the population of this country, in order to turn it into a party. Our people are not used to political parties, and it would be very difficult to explain to them that "now the MPLA is going to disappear, and a party is to be formed, but you are not allowed to be a member of it." It would be easier to change the MPLA into a mass party.

KOMMENTAR: Then why don't you do that?

LARA: The struggle between the classes in Angola has not as yet reached its most intensive phase. A movement like the MPLA, where all classes are represented, cannot resolve class conflicts and build socialism. In such a case we would have conflicts between ourselves, and that would prevent us from realizing our political aims. Already we must think of creating a party that can become an instrument for the working classes and with the help of which we can build up socialism. The MPLA could never be such an instrument, even if it has filled - and during many years to come will fill - a very important place as a front organization. But in order to build up a socialist Angola it is necessary to have a party that is clearly defined in terms of classes.

KOMMENTAR: But what do you do if others want to form parties as well?

LARA: That we will not allow.

KOMMENTAR: Isn't there a risk that this party will become a party for an elite, while the masses remain in the MPLA?

LARA: That risk does exist, of course, but it can be avoided by means of the criteria laid down for party membership. Party members will be only those who are self-sacrificing and devoted, persons who humbly accept to carry out the difficult tasks we have in front of us.

KOMMENTAR: What important changes has MPLA undergone in the process of transformation from a liberation movement to an organization which holds state power?

LARA: The changes are not so much in the structure of our move-

ment as in the scope of the problems we face. Earlier we had first to turn our attention to the military problems, though we also occupied ourselves with the economic and social aspects.

In the liberated areas we had a marginal subsistence economy while today we face the complex economic realities of a large country. Our administrative apparatus is not yet strong enough to control the entire national economy. We have also inherited the distortions of the colonial economy, such as the great wage differentials that exist within each company or between the different companies of the same branch of the economy. At times the workers have lacked understanding of our efforts in dealing with problems of this nature. This is in part because the workers of our country have only gained their class consciousness very recently. Also, we do not have enough cadres in all the places of work so that bureaucrats with little understanding of the workers' problems have often been left in charge of handling such problems.

MPLA has also grown tremendously. When our movement became legal (in late 1974), a huge mass of new members entered the organization, but for the most part, their political consciousness was far from the level we would have wished for. They were often moved by opportunism and emotion. We have not yet been successful in dealing with this opportunism. We have appealed to vigilance and we have tried to screen those who wanted to become members, but our methods have not been very effective. From now on we are going to be much more strict in accepting new members.* We are even going to clean up within the movement. It will not be sufficient for an MPLA member to carry a card which will give him or her certain advantages. Only those who participate in the day-to-day political work, i.e., only those who belong to an "action group" and take part in its discussions, studies and practical work, are real members of the MPLA. Those who do not meet these requirements will no longer be members; later on we will have to see whether they will be able to remain as sympathizers.

KOMMENTAR: How do the action groups function?

LARA: There are now such groups in most large places of work and they are functioning well. In the neighborhoods there are

*MPLA has three categories of members: *simpatizantes*, *aderentes* and *militantes*. The latter has here been used for "member." To belong to this category requires that a person has worked for MPLA for at least one year and has demonstrated a "thoroughly revolutionary practice." Any Angolan who supports MPLA's program and statutes can become a sympathizer. The demands on a sympathizer's activity are much lower than with the other categories.

still many problems. At this time we are more preoccupied with the quality than with the quantity of their members. This is part of our plan for a 1977 Congress and the formation of a party. During the guerrilla war, people joined MPLA almost instinctively. Now we have to build the organization systematically and on a scientific basis.

KOMMENTAR: Has MPLA's political line changed?

LARA: Our political line has become clarified. During the anti-colonial struggle we did not advance a clear Marxist-Leninist line, even if this was the ideology of many of our militants. With the political conditions at that time, we thought it unwise to stand forth as Marxist-Leninists. For instance, we had strong popular support in the towns where the fascist and anti-communist propaganda was also very strong. And as we had few possibilities to explain to the people what Marxism really is, many might have turned away from MPLA out of straight ignorance. Today, on the other hand, we work directly among the people and they can observe for themselves that the colonial allegations against Marxism were incorrect. They see that our political line is what can solve the people's problems.

KOMMENTAR: But you have met resistance from some segments of the population...?

LARA: This resistance was very strong before the exodus of Portuguese from our country (between June and November 1975). Even since then we have experienced some resistance from some of those colonial bourgeois who stayed behind and from some of the so-called Angolan petty bourgeoisie. We are still not sure whether this petty bourgeoisie is indeed Angolan; what is clear is that they have the same interests as the colonial bourgeoisie. Within these groups there is still considerable resistance to MPLA's political line. This resistance is expressed in continuing exploitation. Its consequences are often positive, because the people turn against exploiters of this kind.

There is also resistance from the Catholic Church - not from Catholics in general but from the Church hierarchy. Obviously they are worried about our politics and in some ways they directly work against us. They feel that Marxism stands in contradiction to Christianity. But this is not necessarily the case. The Bishop of the Methodist Church, Emilio de Carvalho, recently demonstrated that there is no antagonistic contradiction between Marxism and the Christian doctrine. To us it was very important that a Christian Angolan leader in this way supported our present common objective of rebuilding our country.

KOMMENTAR: What are the relations between MPLA and the new Angolan State?

LARA: The most important thing here is that MPLA directs the State. All key positions are occupied by MPLA members. Most Government departments are in the charge of comrades on our Central Committee or our Political Bureau. As much as possible, the higher administrative positions are also with members of our Movement. For example, we recently dismantled the Government's Ministry of Information in order to put all informational work directly under the control of the Movement.

KOMMENTAR: How effective are the relations between the MPLA Action Groups and the People's Commissions in the *bairros*?

LARA: We will continue to advance People's Power, but how fast we can do this depends entirely on the energy of MPLA's members. In the past there was some unclarity within the People's Commissions. Some considered themselves as the only movement and even tried to exclude from their ranks people who belonged to MPLA. This happened because many did not fully understand that the Commissions, the organs of People's Power, were basically the work of MPLA. The People's Commissions must be led by MPLA members if they are to serve the people in the best possible way. MPLA's Action Groups and the People's Commissions must be made to complement each other in the same way that the Movement and the State complement one another.

KOMMENTAR: What are the relations between MPLA and the mass organizations? Does the Movement recruit its members from the mass organizations?

LARA: MPLA's members always come in through the mass organizations. However, there is some unclarity in that the activists of the mass organizations also consider themselves as members of MPLA. This confusion is rooted in the fact that during the guerrilla war, these activists were normally also members of the Movement. But now the mass organizations will no longer need the close ties with MPLA. For instance, a member of OMA (the Organization of Angolan Women) will be able to belong to this organization and struggle for the rights of women without having to fully support all the principles of the MPLA. The same goes for OPA (the Organization of Angolan Pioneers); we can obviously not demand full ideological clarity on the part of a child, nor will we force all the children of our country to join OPA. In the schools we are going to start political education for the

OFA members and those whose parents do not approve of this, will not have to participate.

The youth organization, JMPLA, on the other hand, will be tied more closely to MPLA and become the youth league of our Movement. It will have the same principles and program as MPLA.

KOMMENTAR: What are the immediate problems that confront MPLA?

LARA: Above all, the continuing threat on the part of imperialism and the difficulties in making our structure function properly. In all fields there is a shortage of skilled personnel. The exodus of Portuguese settlers created a vacuum in the ranks of highly skilled experts as well as among the middle level technicians. Yet, I wouldn't call their departure a loss, because those who fled were not Angolans but Portuguese. Many of them possessed the know-how which we now lack, but they also represented a political burden for us. So, in the long run, they did us a favor by leaving.

The war itself disrupted a large part of the national economy. We took over a country with deep wounds and it will be a difficult task to heal these. The task is made even greater by the fact that those with education, even if their intentions are good, are marked by the mentality of colonialism and reaction. Often they do not understand that we are making a revolution and that we cannot sentimentally linger in the past but must tear down the old structures. We have to create a new Angolan system of education to serve the interests and needs of the masses of our people - an education with a progressive direction and one which can help us solve the urgent problems which we face. It will not be possible to go on with loads of theory and very little practical work. Instead we must as rapidly as possible train as many people as possible for clearly defined and concrete objectives. An example of this is the literacy campaign which we have just started. This is based on the revolutionary principles which we developed during the guerrilla war and which we now will attempt to put into practice on a national scale.

END



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