

ANGOLA:

An Initial Balance Sheet

Angola Three Years After Independence

By José Maia

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"1977—Year of the First Congress of the MPLA, of the Founding of the Party, and of Production for Socialism"—that was the endlessly repeated slogan. It became a standard phrase in the radio news broadcasts, in the editorials of the *Jornal de Angola*, in reports, in official letters, and even in the everyday language of the more zealous officials. This pompous slogan of a case-hardened bureaucratic leadership concealed a shameful lie behind two formal truths.

The true statement about the holding of the "First Congress" of the MPLA¹ in fact

1. In 1971, the old Steering Committee called the First Congress of the MPLA. The official reasons given why it was not held were "lack of an opportunity and of financial resources" (see the pamphlet *O que é o Congresso* published by the First National Seminar on Organization, Luanda, July 1977). In reality, what prevented it from being held was the first signs of conflicts with Chipenda. In place of a congress, a "Readjustment Movement" was begun in 1972. Its main result was to put the Steering Committee "on ice" and form another leadership, which was just like the preceding one, except that it did not include Chipenda.

In 1974, after April 25, the First Congress was called again in Lusaka. This occurred under pressure from two sources. *Revolta Activa* [Active Revolt], a faction led by J. Pinto de Andrade and Gentile Viana, which had strong influence in intellectual circles, criticized the lack of internal democracy and the rule of an "all powerful president." The guerrilla faction in the east headed by Chipenda, *Revolta do Leste* [Eastern Revolt], also pressed for the holding of this congress. Although it was present at this assembly, the MPLA leadership (Neto) did not recognize its validity.

Finally, the Third Plenum of the Central Committee held in October 1976 called for holding the congress in 1977. The premier of the

concealed the travesty of democracy that was being rigged up. This ran the gamut from pushing into the background those who belonged to currents opposing the traditional apparatus (whose crimes will be taken up later) to imprisoning and shooting them.

It included the co-opting of functionaries, who had not participated in the rank-and-file bodies (the Grupos de Ação) and were chosen for their docility, to supervise the various organs of the movement. It involved dividing up the places on the incoming Central Committee and the presentation of these worked out in corridor "struggles" among the various factions.

Among the contending groups were the traditional apparatus (Lúcio Lara, Carlos Rocha Dilolwa), the right-wing nationalist old guard (Mendes de Carvalho, Manuel Pacavira), and the petty-bourgeois technocrats (Lopo do Nascimento, the ministers of foreign trade and fisheries). There were also groups with much more well-defined interests, such as that headed by Secretary of State for Communications Bento Ribeiro, the advance scout for Italian capitalism, the most enterprising in Angola.

There were manifold factions with confused political and economic programs, varying from an Argentine-style state capitalism (Lara) to more familiar forms of neocolonialism with less of a progressive façade.

The "First Congress of the MPLA" will give formal expression to the relationship of forces resulting from the backroom alliances and wheeling and dealing among the bureaucrats. *It will not be the fruit of democratic debate nor will it plant the seed of socialism.*

The statement about the "founding of the party" is also formally true. A party will be founded, but it will not be a party of the workers and peasants, as is claimed; nor will it be Marxist-Leninist, despite the invocation of this term. Of the Leninist norms of democratic centralism, the demo-

Angolan People's Republic, Lopo do Nascimento, set the date for the beginning of the congress as December 4, the twenty-first anniversary of the founding of the organization.

The congress was held December 4-10, 1977, and approved the organization's new name—"MPLA, Party of Labor." It also approved the new statutes and theses, as well as confirming the forty-five new members of the Central Committee.

cracy is being swept under the rug and the centralism made authoritarian.²

On this point at least there is total agreement among the various factions and even among the most reactionary chauvinists (Mendes de Carvalho, for example). In this respect, the lessons imparted by East German and Soviet advisers have been accepted without resistance.

The shameful lie is the slogan "production for socialism," because what this would mean, if the term were being used properly, is production for the workers, under their control and with their participation in making the basic economic-policy decisions. I will come back to this question further on. In particular, I will take up the caricature of socialist planning outlined at the Third Plenum of the Central Committee in October 1976.

Along with this, I will show that while the MPLA's "progressive" verbiage may easily turn the heads of centrists, since they are not screwed on very tightly anyway, it does not hold up under Marxist analysis.

So, the year 1977 will not go down in the history of the Angolan workers movement for any of the things touted in the official

2. In the pamphlet *O MPLA e o Partido* [The MPLA and the Party], which was published in October 1977 and contains the Documentos de Estudo para o Partido [DEP—Study Documents on the Party], there is a tendency to dwell on the "subordination of the lower bodies to the higher ones, of the action groups to the Steering Committee," "of the minority to the majority," etc. And the democracy that would make this centralism a conscious instrument is reduced to vague banalities. But it is noted that in no case should "internal democracy endanger the discipline and unity of the party." Democracy is reduced finally to "defending individual points of view" in the rank-and-file bodies.

What sort of guarantee will this be for the right to maintain "individual points of view" in an organization that is going through a terrible witch-hunt, in which "being seen with a factionalist" or "a conversation that he had with 'x' in March of last year" is liable to be punished by imprisonment, expulsion from the party, or loss of your job.

What sort of guarantee is this when you consider the circular issued by the Comissão Política Provisória de Luanda on July 21, 1977, and signed by Mendes de Carvalho. It said: "We recommend the removal from the Action Groups and Action Committees of all the factionalists and those who speak on their behalf, support them, or identify with them."

slogan. What marks the year is the major defeat suffered by the working-class movement as a result of the May 27 events [the attempted coup by the Nito Alves wing of the MPLA].

May 27 was the point at which the revolutionary process began to be reversed. It was the culmination of setbacks that will be reviewed further on. What it represented was the laying of the foundations of the bourgeois state that is now being built. This defeat is all the more grave inasmuch as the revolutionary crisis opened up in Angola by the decolonization seemed likely to offer a better perspective for moving forward to socialism than anywhere else on the continent.

The MPLA in the Anticolonial Struggle

The MPLA was the only liberation movement in Angola that did not let itself get entangled from the start in the web of tribalism. It also benefited in the last analysis from the inability of Portuguese capitalism to shift over to neocolonial solutions. The Portuguese capitalists could not do that without running the risk of losing out in competition with other imperialist forces.

The long and hard struggle that the MPLA waged over a fourteen-year period for the minimum aim of ending colonial rule created the objective conditions for a qualitative break (even if only a pragmatic one) with the process of neocolonialization that developed in the African countries gaining their independence in the 1960s.

A number of factors came together that led to a break with the traditional nationalist orientation and brought the MPLA into a complex historical process of radical, revolutionary nationalism. It was obliged by the intransigence of the colonial power to arm the masses. It went through the experience of training cadres and organizing and mobilizing the peasants in the vast areas of Moxico, Kuando-Kubango, Uíge, and Cabinda.

The MPLA was a pole of attraction for the African student youth, some of whom had spent time in Portugal and gotten their first experience in party work in the Portuguese CP. In a number of cases after 1965 these youth went through a political apprenticeship in the semi-Maoist anti-reformist splits that were influential in the Portuguese student milieu at that time.

Another factor was the MPLA's policy of alliances. It was fraught with ambiguities and limitations, to be sure. But in opposing the imperialist bloc allied with Portugal, it moved toward the Soviet bloc. The MPLA also went through an initial experience of organizing a political struggle on a continent-wide basis in the CONCP.³

However, at no point did the MPLA take the basic steps that would have assured a de facto choice of an anticapitalist road. In any case, the whole process during the period of the anticolonial struggle had an empirical character and did not lead to any programmatic conclusions. In fact, the MPLA's program (divided into a maximum and a minimum like all stagist programs) in nowise differed from those of the traditional nationalist forces.

This program stressed the character of the organization as a national front. On that basis, it called for "broad unity of all political parties" and "every stratum of Angolan society, all Angolans without distinction as to political tendencies." This was the minimum part of the program.

The purpose of the front was to accomplish the tasks of "national liberation" and "establishing a republican and democratic system based on total independence." That was the maximum program.

All this was supposed to lead (without any explanation of how) to "the sovereignty of the people over the state" and the transformation "of Angola into an economically independent country."

During the entire period of the anticolonial struggle, the MPLA leaders in their statements never departed from this reformist program, which was reiterated subsequent to April 25. (See, for example, the well-known interview with Lúcio Lara in Brazzaville and published in the colonialist Luanda weekly *Notícia*.) The objective of their opportunist line was to make sure that no social layer got "detached" from the tasks of "national liberation."

The conferences and accords of Nakuru, Alvor, and Mombasa with the proimperialist movements UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola] and the FNLA [Angolan National Liberation Front] showed that the reference in the MPLA's program to "broad unity of all political parties" was not just rhetoric.

On the other hand, the movement's essentially pragmatic evolution itself set limits on its development. Its activity and experience in struggle were confined to organizing masses of peasants, with whom it maintained a relationship of paternalism and giving orders. This did not equip it to take up on a theoretical and organizational level the problems arising from the complexity of the social formation represented by the urban masses (who came definitively to the forefront of the political and social struggle after April 25). Nor did it prepare the MPLA to deal with the problem of freeing the Angolan economy from the domination of the capitalist world

Colonies) included the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde), Frelimo [Mozambique Liberation Front], and the MPLA, and was established to develop a common strategy for the struggle against Portuguese colonialism.

market, since this could only be done by anticapitalist means.

Throughout the history of the MPLA, tendencies arose that challenged the limitations of its program and activity, the multiclass character of its political line, and its exclusive concentration on the tactic of guerrilla warfare in the "bush."

Such tendencies wanted to provide an alternative giving a socialist content to the movement's program. They stressed the need for working with the proletarian masses whose strength was steadily growing in the industrial suburbs of Luanda, Nova Lisboa (now Huambo), and Lobito. But these tendencies were viewed with the greatest distrust by the central apparatus.

One example of such a tendency was the few dozen youths who tried in 1968-69, against the directives of the leadership in Brazzaville, to organize nuclei of MPLA sympathizers in Luanda. These groups were broken up by the PIDE [the Portuguese political police] in 1970, and their members were sent to the concentration camps of São Nicolau, in the south of Angola, and Tarrafal. Out of this layer came the "ideological nucleus" of the "Nitistas" [supporters of Nito Alves], that is, Nado, Juca Valentim, and Zé Van Dúnem, who were later shot on the orders of the MPLA leadership.

The organization was already highly centralized. At the top, Agostinho Neto seemed to hold full personal power. But the real leader was Lúcio Lara, the organizer of the movement.

Whenever differences arose, they resulted in expulsions and anathematization of those involved as "counterrevolutionaries" (e.g., Viriato da Cruz, the Active Revolt group, Eastern Revolt). This is the least of what happened. There were also shootings, for example, the execution of Comandante Paganini in the west in 1973. He was accused of being an accomplice of Chipenda.

All of this hardly prepared the MPLA,

4. Costa Andrade, a loyal retainer of Lara, a poet and editor of the only Angolan daily, *Jornal de Angola*, in a slander suited to the hysterical tone of this paper, accused the Luanda group after Nito Alves's putsch of belonging to the PIDE. The only evidence he offered was "the strange coincidence that its appearance coincided with the new Caetano policy of 'using the methods of social psychology and infiltrating the liberation groups,'" which was tried in 1968-9.

I would note that more than half the Angolan government (to speak only of the government) cannot be accused of being linked to this "infiltration" in the 1960s. The present ministers of Finance (Ismael Martins), Fisheries (Vitor de Carvalho), Foreign Trade (Benvindo Pitra), Social Affairs (Conceição Vahekeni), Public Works (Resende de Oliveira), Health (Coelho da Cruz), Justice (Diógenes Boavida), the Deputy Minister of Internal Commerce (Maria Mambu Café) and others waited until 1974 to join the MPLA and become anticolonialists when colonialism was already breathing its last.

3. The Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas (Conference of Nationalist Organizations in the Portuguese



bureaucratized as it was from the outset, to serve as a testing ground in which the unavoidable differences over revolutionary alternatives in the postcolonial period could be discussed out and resolved in democratic debate.

One of the reasons that the apparatus was reticent about extending the struggle beyond those areas close to the command centers in Zambia (the east) and Congo-Brazzaville (Cabinda) was the difficulty of keeping the activity of the local units under the control of the central leadership.

It is no accident that, besides the Luanda group mentioned earlier, virtually all the military chiefs of the only guerrilla pocket not in direct contact with the Steering Committee, that is, the First Military Region (Dembos and Uíge) came historically to form factions.⁵ This includes Van Troi, Sihanouk, Bakaloff, Nito Alves, Monstro Imortal, and Ho Chi-Minh,⁶ along with others. All were arrested and shot following May 27.

Angola—An Economically Deformed and Dependent Country

Such limitations on the internal life of the MPLA blocked a dialectical resolution of the differences that had historically arisen within it. The leadership preferred to settle the differences by expeditious administrative methods. This indicated that the MPLA would not be able to emerge as a coherent revolutionary leading force in solving the coming socialist tasks.

Programmatically disarmed and with its

5. With the exception of Kiluange, a member of the Central Committee and secretary of state for veterans, who is today the only commander from the First Military Region who has not been shot.

6. The last four were members of the Central Committee of the MPLA. Monstro Imortal and Nito Alves were also members of the Political Bureau.

military experience confined to areas of small agricultural production, the MPLA did not seem to be the revolutionary driving force that could give impetus to a process of the struggle growing over into a struggle for socialism. However, *only such a qualitative leap in accomplishing the tasks of the revolution would have made it possible to free Angola from its economic subordination to the capitalist world market.*

Deformed by colonial and imperialist exploitation, the Angolan economic structure before independence was oriented exclusively toward the production of raw materials to meet the needs of the imperialist market and the ruling colonial power. (More than 90% of Angolan exports were unrefined raw materials.)

Angola's oil, diamonds, and iron were controlled by non-Portuguese imperialist capital. Cabinda Gulf Oil, dominated by American capital, pumped the oil from the continental shelf off Cabinda. Diamang, representing English capitalists and South African capitalists such as Oppenheimer, mined the diamonds in Lunda. The iron ore in Cassinga was exploited by the German capitalists of the Krupp combine. The bulk of Angola's foreign currency came from these operations.

Coffee, sisal, cotton, and other export crops were under the control of Portuguese capital, sometimes in association with that of other countries. (Cotonang, a cotton export combine, was owned by Portuguese and Belgian capital; the French bank Mallot et Cie had a share in CADA, which controlled 80% of the coffee crop.)

On the other hand, after the first surge of nationalist guerrilla activity in the mid-1960s, Angola became a field for massive investments of imperialist capital, which came in to establish processing industries (textiles, petroleum refining, fish products, beverages, cement, and so on).⁷ These industries were based on a transfer of

capitalist technology and an unrestrained exploitation of cheap labor.

This push to exploit cheap labor had a crucial political and social impact in that it led to the growth of the rural proletariat on the coffee and cotton plantations (in Uíge, Kwanza Sul, and Malange) and on the sugar plantations (Tentativa-Caxito and Cassequel-Catumbela). Masses of people swarmed into the *muçeques* [shantytowns] of Luanda, Lobito, and Nova Lisboa. They became proletarianized in the emerging industrial belts of these cities.

The transportation network is also an important example of an economy shaped by imperialist domination.

The three main rail lines and the three main ports are essentially conduits for taking out imperialist plunder.

The Benguela railroad carries copper from Zambia and Katanga to be exported out of the port of Lobito. This line is owned by Tanganyika Concessions, in which most of the stock is held by the South African Oppenheimer group.

The Moçamedes railroad carries iron and manganese from Cassinga to be exported out of the port of Saço (Moçamedes).

The Malange railroad carries export crops (cotton, sisal), which are shipped out through the port of Luanda.

In a hot, tropical country, there is virtually no refrigeration network on the national level for distributing and storing perishables (fish, fruit, vegetables). The main center of the fishing industry, Moçamedes, has one of the biggest refrigeration

7. In 1965, the Salazar government adopted a law permitting the formation of companies in which the majority of the stock was held by foreigners (non-Portuguese). The interests, dividends, and profits deriving from such investments were to be freely transferrable outside the country.

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complexes on the continent (ARAN), but it is exclusively for the export trade.

As a final indication of the nature of this economy, let us look at the Cunene project in the far south of Angola. Work on this hydroelectric complex (twenty-seven dams and electricity generating plants) began in the last years of colonial rule. The total South African and Portuguese investment in this project was 17.5 billion escudos [approximately US\$700 million at the time], higher than the investment in the Cabora-Bassa dam in Mozambique. The electricity to be produced was intended for the industries in South Africa and Namibia.

These structural conditions of a dependent economy are compounded by the objective weight of Angola's underdevelopment. The country has a backward social structure and virtually no professionals or technicians.⁸ Thus, the departure of the Portuguese technicians and the sabotage of the economy by the colonial bourgeoisie beginning in the period immediately prior to independence had catastrophic consequences for the organization of industrial and agricultural production and the flow of supplies of raw materials and consumer goods.

The MPLA's Limited Economic Solutions

In face of this pernicious colonial legacy, the MPLA's economic plan, it soon became clear, was to give priority to building a strong state sector. It did not involve a determined attack on the ties binding the country to the imperialist market.

Law No. 3/76 (March 1976) regulating nationalizations and confiscations specified that, besides "abandoned businesses," the concerns subject to nationalization would be those "whose remaining in the private sector is contrary to the national interest." As the second deputy premier and director of planning, Dilolwa, explained to the weekly *Planificação* in January 1977 in Luanda, the extension of nationalizations of, and state interventions in, agricultural and industrial enterprises was "owing fundamentally to their abandonment by their owners."

Once again, things were decided on an empirical basis.

The sectors of the economy bound up with the colonial bourgeoisie, specifically the export crops (coffee, sisal, and cotton),

8. Taking into consideration the demographic structure of the work force in traditional agriculture and the prevailing wage levels, we can estimate, on the basis of the Gross National Product, which was 32.7 billion escudos in 1972, that 90% of the population (all but a tiny part of the Black population) had a per capita income of 2,200 escudos per year [about US\$81 at the time]. The remaining 10% (including virtually all the white population) had a per capita income of 35,200 escudos [about US\$1,300], or sixteen times what the others had.

were put under state administrative supervision as a result of the plantations being abandoned.⁹

The nationalization of or intervention in the processing industries, most of which were also linked to Portuguese capitalism, took place under a combination of pressures.



9. However, petty-bourgeois hesitation is proverbial. It is symptomatic that in an almost entirely nationalized branch such as fisheries, the major processing company, the Mampeza cannery in Benguela, is American owned and has not been nationalized. This goes for the only company in the second biggest processing industry (after breweries, which are the biggest), the cement company SECIL, which is Danish owned and is still in the private sector, although this factory's operations are certainly important to the "national interest."

10. However, Tanganyika Concessions, the main stockholder in the Benguela railroad, owes the Angolan government 1.5 billion kwanzas [approximately US\$38 million].

One factor was the economic objectives of the government. Control of the sector oriented to the internal market is the key to building state capitalism, through which the MPLA wants to establish its economic credibility. Another factor was the abandonment of these installations by their owners. Finally, the express will of the workers played a role.

Those sectors of the economy linked to non-Portuguese imperialist capital, which, as we have seen, are the main sources of foreign currency, remain in private hands, although the terms of the contracts are subject to revision. This goes for Cabinda Gulf Oil, the Benguela railroad,¹⁰ and the Cassinga mines. The mines are either paralyzed or the state has assumed the predominant voice in supervising them, as it did recently in the case of the Diamang holdings (where it assumed a 61% interest).

The government has decided to nationalize the industrial sector of processing (which although it was expanding in the final years of colonial rule remains tiny in the context of an underdeveloped economy). Also to be nationalized are the export crops.

A project has been undertaken to organize the peasants in cooperatives to produce consumer goods for the internal market (with extremely inadequate results up to now). For example, vegetables and fresh foods continue to be supplied to Luanda, badly, by small private concerns.

Another government aim is to establish control over foreign trade. In this respect, it wants to centralize the export business under state control. A state company, IMPORTANG, is to control imports. "Maximum" levels of imports are to be set for private concerns.

The government also wants to establish control over internal trade. This involves setting up state companies for wholesale trade on the national and provincial levels. A state company, EDINBA, is to handle interprovince distribution of food products. Another state company, EDINBI, is to handle interprovince distribution of industrial products.

Transport is also to come under government control. This involves setting up a national airline, TAAG; a merchant marine fleet; a national rail company, ETP; and a maintenance system, MANAUTOS. State concerns are also to be set up to provide essential services, such as hospitals, general medical care, education, and so on.

These measures are not sufficient to create the objective conditions for a socialist transformation of the society when, as in the case of Angola, the imperialists remain ensconced in the basic sectors of the economy.

Furthermore, similar, and in some instances more drastic, measures have already been carried out in other countries, such as Algeria and Libya. And they have not freed those countries from imperialist economic domination.

However, the fundamental reason that these nationalization measures amounted to no more than "quantitative advances" was that the working masses played no role in controlling the productive process. The role of the masses has to be analyzed in its development subsequent to April 25.

The Angolan Masses in the Anticapitalist Struggle

The analysis of the MPLA in the period of the anticolonial struggle that has been made above essentially also fits Frelimo and the PAIGC.

However, the development of the situation in Angola after April 25 was markedly different than in the other main Portuguese colonies. This meant that the pragmatic petty-bourgeois leaderships had to strive in different ways to achieve the same objective, one that was accomplished belatedly in Angola—the building of a bourgeois state.

After April 25, the PAIGC and Frelimo geared themselves up to take over the state apparatus they inherited from the colonial regime. They took advantage of the centralized system and accentuated it by establishing a one-party state. Since they monopolized the nationalist field (their only competitors being discredited elements such as Joanna Simeão or FLING [Struggle Front for the National Independence of Guinea-Bissau]) and the imperialists were relatively resigned to their taking power,¹¹ they did not need to resort to

11. The September 7, 1974, putsch, with the occupation of Rádio Clube de Moçambique, was a last desperate act by the ultracolonialists and could only be abortive.

It should be noted that Frelimo appealed not to the African masses to crush the colonialist putsch but to the Portuguese armed forces, based on the Portuguese-Mozambican accords signed in Lusaka.

12. They did more than make appeals. The first armed units of Frelimo that entered Maputo went in expressly to control any outbreaks by the African masses as the colonialist repressive mechanisms were breaking down. This was before the first transitional government headed by Chissano.

13. Held in September 1974 at the call of the leading apparatus. It coordinated MPLA activists coming from the "underground" inside the country and outside (mainly Portugal). It was held in Lundoje (Moxico) on the western front.

14. Pepetela, deputy minister of education and a member of the Lara faction, wrote in his short story "A vibora de cabeça ao contrário," written in the form of a fable, that Nito's "confused and ultraleftist" speech made him a dangerous alternative to the leadership. But he adds cynically that Nito was a necessary evil at that time and for a while longer. Nito was to be gotten rid of as soon as possible.

mobilizing the masses. They were able from the start to adopt the language of "statesmen," calling for "order and productivity."¹²

The MPLA was in a different situation. April 25 found it in a full-blown internal crisis that affected both its political and military structures. Two dissident groups, Active Revolt and Eastern Revolt, were challenging Neto and Lara for power. They had paralyzed an apparatus that was used to functioning in monolithic way.

Only the support of the numerous Luanda group at the Interregional Conference¹³ enabled the Neto leadership to survive. It had already been prepared to accept a triumvirate with Chipenda and J. Pinto de Andrade.

The decisive speech was given by the leader of the Luanda group, Nito Alves, a guerrilla fighter in the First Military-Political Region, an unknown figure to the apparatus.¹⁴ His followers represented a capital city convulsed by agitation and mobilizations unequalled anywhere else in the country.

In return for this support, the Neto-Lara group was obliged to accept seven members on the Central Committee from the First Region and Luanda. At the same time, it had to bring Monstro Imortal and Nito Alves (who was co-opted shortly after the conference) into the Political Bureau.

But it was only because of these internal difficulties that the MPLA leadership made such concessions to a faction that, according to the "Report of the Political Committee on the May 27 Attempted Coup d'Etat," had already shown signs of "strange affinities . . . which were characterized by factional political activity that



Presidents Neto and Mobutu embrace

was in fact outside the structure of the MPLA, although they maintained the cover of the organization."

The first signs of crisis in the colonial repressive apparatus (appearing most not-

ably in the DGS [the military political police] and the Portuguese armed forces) following the fall of Caetano were to lead to a breakdown of the status quo that had been maintained by terror in the cities. We saw this process in particular in Luanda. A breach was opened up through which the masses could emerge forcefully on the political scene.

The first mobilizations were for self-defense, and were carried out in the muçeques in response to the attacks of racist settlers and ultrarightists. The massacres conducted by these elements, especially in July and August 1974, led in Luanda to the appearance of embryonic forms of self-organization in the hardest-hit muçeques (Cazenga, Prenda, Golfe). This process later spread to the entire belt around the white city.

With the encouragement of an active semiclandestine press—*Revolução Popular*, organ of the Comitês Amílcar Cabral (CACs);¹⁵ and *Luta do Povo*, organ of the Comitês Henda¹⁶—the first Neighborhood

15. These were formed by Angolan students with experience in the "Marxist-Leninist" groups that gave origin to the Portuguese UDP [União Democrático do Povo—People's Democratic Union, an eclectic Maoist organization]. In the beginning, they claimed to adhere to the MPLA, but in 1975 they followed the official Chinese line closely, demanding that the accords between the "three liberation movements, the FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA" be respected.

Very influential in the Neighborhood People's Committees in Luanda, the CACs argued that these bodies should be "nonparty," a line that came into conflict with the MPLA's policy of controlling these mass organizations. They published *Revolução Popular* and a supplement for workers called *Libertação Nacional* (which was a factory paper). They had an influence over the Coordinating Committee of the Neighborhood People's Committees and its paper *Popper Popular*.

The CACs were suppressed by the MPLA shortly before independence. The MPLA took advantage of their criminal campaign against "social imperialist" military aid to Angola, at a time when the county was being invaded by South Africa and regular troops of the Mobutu regime. Their leading activists were jailed in São Paulo prison in Luanda and their organization was broken up. Some of their activists formed the Organização Comunista Angolana (OCA—Angolan Communist Organization) in Portugal, where they have the backing of the UDP.

16. The Comitês Henda are semi-Maoist in origin. Some of their leaders were activists in the MRPP [Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado—Movement to Reorganize the Proletarian Party, an ultraleft sectarian Maoist group in Portugal]. They were so-called "passives" because being foreigners in Portugal supposedly prevented them from interfering in the "internal life of another country." This group always claimed adherence to the MPLA, and its tactic for intervening was based on attempts to influence factions in the apparatus of the movement. Initially, they gained influence over Nitista leaders (Bakaloff, Nito Alves, Zé Van Dú-nem, Nado). But they lost all this influence to the

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People's Commissions began to form. Beginning in late 1974, they started pushing the theme of "people's power." They called for the following:

Formation of armed militias to resist the racist violence, supervision of the prices of merchants, organization of consumer cooperatives and teams to take care of sanitation, hygiene, and health. [Interview with the Prenda Neighborhood People's Commission, in the January 1, 1975, issue of the magazine *Angola*, published by the Liga Nacional Africana.¹⁷]

On October 16, 1974, the city hall of Luanda was occupied by demonstrators from the muçeques led by the Golfe neighborhood militia. On February 1, 1975, the First People's Assembly of Luanda met. This was the culmination of the "week of people's power," which was denounced by UNITA and the FNLA and supported, after some hesitation, by the MPLA leadership. The following motion was adopted:

The People's Assembly of Luanda is the highest decision-making body of the Angolan people. The coordinating body of the Neighborhood Commissions is entrusted with implementing the decisions of the assembly and the representatives of the people of Luanda. The members of the coordinating body of the Neighborhood People's Commissions will be elected by the people in Neighborhood People's Assemblies, and only the people can remove them from office.

Along with this, hundreds of strikes developed in the two most important industrial areas (Cacuaco-Luanda-Viana and Lobito-Benguela). There were strikes by the dock workers in Luanda and Lobito, by the railway workers in Benguela, by the steelworkers in Luanda, by the Shell Oil workers, in the sugar mills in Tentativa and Cassequel, by the Textang (textiles) workers, by the fishermen in Luanda and Benguela, and by other groups of workers.

The first attempts were made to get work going again in the factories that had been abandoned by their owners.

The colonial structure, ridden with sharp contradictions, could not hold up under the pressure exerted by a working class that was learning that it could make demands.

Portuguese Communist Party group (Cita Vales, Rui Coelho).

The "Hendas" (as they are known) have gained positions on the intermediary rungs of the state apparatus and are today close to the Lopo do Nascimento faction, for which they provide an "anti-Cuban" ideological cover.

17. This is an Angolan cultural association, a traditional meeting ground for nationalist intellectuals. Among those who were active in it were the intellectuals of the "Vamos Conhecer Angola" [Let's Learn to Know Angola] movement (1949), which was a school for national leaders such as Viriato da Cruz, Mário de Andrade, Agostinho Neto, and others. During the last colonial war (1961-74), its activities were kept under strict surveillance by the PIDE. After April 25, its leaders were pro-MPLA.

Against the background of this social agitation, the political situation was sharpening.

In the initial period after April 25, the Portuguese followed an openly neocolonialist policy. This phase was marked by the meetings between Spínola and Mobutu on the island of Sal in September 1974 and between Mário Soares, Mobutu, Chipenda, and [FNLA leader] Holden Roberto in Kinshasa. At the time, Soares, then Portuguese minister for foreign affairs, declared: "We all speak the same language."

This phase was followed by the slippery policy of the Vasco Gonçalves government, which said that it regarded the decolonization process in Angola as "special and different," different that is from what was planned for Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. It stated its position in a communiqué dated August 8, 1974, and this position was reiterated by the Portuguese government after the ouster of General Spínola. The communiqué said:

Once a cease-fire agreement is achieved, the Portuguese government will immediately establish a provisional government in which representatives of all the liberation groups will be included, along with representatives of the most important ethnic groups in the Angolan state, which will obviously include the white ethnic group.

Parallel to these last maneuvers by the Portuguese neocolonialists, the American imperialists reactivated the FNLA and UNITA puppet groups. Thus, in the post-April 25 period, the MPLA, unlike the PAIGC and Frelimo, would have to fight in the arena of mass struggle in order to win political power.

At this time, any observer following the Angolan situation with any degree of attentiveness would have noticed that the axis of the struggle was in Luanda.

The decision by Neto and Lara to allow the group led by Nito Alves and Zé Van Dúnem to participate in the leadership was an attempt to reestablish ties between the MPLA and the urban masses, links that had been neglected for many years as a result of a shortsighted policy.

In fact, the first MPLA activists to enter the capital came from the First Political-Military Region (Nito Alves began working clandestinely there in January 1974) and from among the Luandan political prisoners released from the São Nicolau prison camp (the Zé Van Dúnem group).¹⁸

It was these elements, along with the semi-Maoist Comitês Amílcar Cabral and the Comitês Henda (with which they worked closely), that led the mobilizations

of the Luandan workers in the factories, in the muçeques, and even in the colonial army. In July they directed an uprising of Angolan soldiers in the Portuguese armed forces, who demanded the right to defend the muçeques from the racist attacks.

One of the factors that helped to radicalize the process was the presence in Luanda of armed delegations from the UNITA and FNLA, and their collusion respectively with the most reactionary colonial forces and with Mobutu. This provided a clear example of neocolonialism for the Angolan masses.

Unfortunately, in the name of "national unity," the CACs and the Comitês Henda held back from attacking the neocolonialist organizations. This kept the MPLA from being pressed to give a political character to its differences with the puppet organizations. It made it possible for the MPLA to become entangled in a policy of maneuvering to achieve a favorable balance of forces.

Beginning in January 1975, the MPLA sat in the Provisional Government alongside the puppets, *without anyone demanding an accounting*. At the same time, through the Nitista faction, it was able if not to control the mass movement, at least to exercise an influence in it.

While the MPLA was officially signing joint communiqués with the FNLA and UNITA, its governmental partners, it was obliged in its press to adapt to the mass radicalization.

Thus, in August 1975, the magazine *Angola*, published by the pro-MPLA Liga Nacional Africana, could run long articles opposing the "national reconstruction" policy of the "reactionary majority" government (in which the MPLA participated).

UNTA,¹⁹ the pro-MPLA union confederation, waged a campaign against the "placing of the dock workers under military discipline," a measure decreed by the Provisional Government in which the MPLA sat. It demanded "the immediate recognition of the Neighborhood Committees and all the organs of People's Power."

It called on the people to demonstrate outside the government palace to demand "recognition of the resolutions of the First People's Assembly of Luanda." Its Executive Committee raised "a strong protest against the transitional government's call for a suspension of strikes" (*A Voz dos Trabalhadores*, central organ of the UNTA, March 1975).

The very official organ of the MPLA, *Vitória é Certa*, ran a big headline in its May 24, 1975, issue proclaiming an "ultra-left" nostrum: "Production Cannot Be Increased Until Exploitation Is Ended." The article supported the strike at Textang.

18. The first official delegation of the MPLA, led by Political Bureau members Lúcio Lara and Onambwe, reached Luanda only on November 8, 1974.

19. União Nacional dos Trabalhadores de Angola (National Union of Angolan Workers).

The positions expressed by the MPLA press were symptomatic of two important factors operating in the Angolan situation at the time—the radicalization of the workers and the sensitivity of the apparatus to its pressures.

It was this sensitivity, reinforced by the organic link it had with the masses through the Nitistas, that made it possible for the MPLA to achieve its objective of controlling the mass movement.

Moreover, the concessions made at the Interregional Conference, the sharing of the leadership with the Nitista group, began to bear fruit. The "Political Bureau Report on the May 27 Attempted Coup d'Etat" explains explicitly:

At first the Nito Alves and Zé Van Dúnem group mingled in with other factionalist groups (such as the Comitês Amílcar Cabral, the Comitês Henda, and others), using these groups as a springboard. Then, after they had helped the MPLA leadership to neutralize their rival factionalists, the Nito Alves and Zé Van Dúnem

pressed the "ultraleftist" organizations in an attempt to gain complete control of the mass movement.

The main target of this repression was the Comitês Amílcar Cabral. This was for two reasons. One was the problem represented by their strength in the Neighborhood People's Commissions. The other was that their own irresponsible policy gave their repressors a pretext for going after them.

Since the Comitês Amílcar Cabral were more right-wing than the MPLA leadership as regards the concessions they wanted to make to the puppet groups, it was easy to slander them as allies of the FNLA and UNITA.

Moreover, the hue and cry these groups raised about "social imperialist" arms being sent to the MPLA could scarcely be understood by a population that recognized the need to drive out the heavily armed forces of the ELNA, the FNLA's army; and the FALA, the UNITA's army; as well as their Zaïrian and South African allies.

It was by taking advantage of such errors that the Nitista group was able, following the Second Week of Propaganda for People's Power in Luanda in August 1975, to win the predominant influence in

the Neighborhood People's Commissions away from the CACs. And as a result it was able to use these commissions as transmission belts for the slogans and directives of the MPLA.

The transformation of the civil war into a war of resistance to the invasion by the regular troops of the Mobutu regime and of South Africa enabled the MPLA to speed up the process of converting the Neighborhood People's Commissions into its instruments.

In October 1975, the delegates to the First Conference of UNTA learned to their indignation, from an addendum printed by mistake, that the statutes they had just adopted and the National Secretariat they had just put in office had been decided on previously by the Political Bureau of the

group emerged with a greater predominance.

Thus, using the Nitista faction, which at this point was already under the influence of the Cita Vales-Rui Coelho group linked to the Portuguese CP,²⁰ the MPLA sup-

FAPLA troops in action in Luanda during the civil war.



nections.

Covering up its relationship with a person who was the best-known leader of the Union of Communist Students, Cita Vales, was more difficult for the CP, but a lack of persistence is not a fault that we can attribute to the leadership of this party. This persistence, along with a lack of any shame, was shown in the circulating of a version that Cita had left the CP earlier. If she had left, it would have involved a split (although no one has heard of any such thing), since she had dozens of associates who were known to be CP members and were expelled, imprisoned, or shot after May 27 (e.g., Rui Coelho, Nuno Simões, Edgar Vales, Manuel Vidigal, to mention just a few). If Cita Vales had left, it would not have been because of any grave fault or betrayal on her part (because if that were so, the CP should have denounced her then). This means that whatever the relationship is between the CP and Cita Vales, the party should not have abandoned her to a repression that accorded her no legal or human rights.

20. After May 27, the Portuguese CP made various attempts to wriggle out of such compromising ties.

Rui Coelho, a member of Nito Alves's staff when Alves was minister of the interior, said in the "public confession" he was forced to make over Angolan TV that when he was in Portugal he was a member of the CP. In its transcription of this confession, *O Diário* [an unofficial CP paper] made a typographical error. It wrote that he said he was a member of the Portuguese CP

(M-L). Obviously this "typo" fooled neither the Angolans who read *O Diário* (the only Portuguese paper sold in Angola) nor the students at the law school of the University of Lisbon, who remember him as one of the most active members of the Union of Communist Students [the CP student organization].

The book *A crise do apartheid em Africa* by Edgar Vales, which was published by Seara Nova before May 27 was taken off the market after May 27 because the author made the "grave political error" of being Cita Vales's brother. Our local Stalinist censors thus went back to the old tradition of their current, directing repression against people just because of their family con-

MPLA. Later the bureaucratic hacks explained that this had been done because of the "imperative national needs" created by the South African invasion.

Following independence (which came on November 11), the MPLA leadership and the government of the new People's Republic raised the slogan: "The Way to Fight Back Is to Produce." And they tried to put this slogan across in the factories and in all places of production.

On December 15, Law No. 11/75 on "Discipline in the Productive Process" was approved. Taking the pretext of "the war that has been forced on us by the enemies of the Angolan people," this act established penalties for a series of "crimes against production." These included "lack of punctuality and diligence," "strikes unauthorized by the unions," and so forth.

Article No. 18 (Part III) of the new law made the union shop committees into repressive instruments:

Members of union committees and union locals that fail to report to the Ministry of Labor such crimes against production will be tried and sentenced as accomplices.

In the same way, the MPLA sought to take control of the Neighborhood People's Commissions. On February 5, 1976, the government adopted the ironically named "People's Power Law." In Section 3, Article 44, this act states:

Nominations for membership in the grassroots people's commissions can be made only by (a) the MPLA Action Committees, (b) UNTA, (c) the MPLA Youth, (d) the Angolan Women's Organization.

Its prestige shored up by the expulsion of the South Africans and the Zairians from the country, the MPLA leadership moved to channel all the administrative life of the country through its structures. The main role was played specifically by the following institutions:

1. The steering committees and political commissariats, which are the highest party and state bodies on the provincial level.

2. The FAPLA. The armed forces went through a long process of reorganization in which a hierarchy was built up. This was not easy, since there was resistance from the young political-military commissars in particular.

3. The DISA, the political police.

Arming of the masses was dropped. The distribution of arms outside the regular armed forces was turned over to paramilitary structures of the party, the Organização da Defesa Popular (ODP—People's Defense Organization). These units play an important role only in those rural areas not yet under government control. For example, it is the ODP that organizes the *quimbos*, or villages, in Bié and Huambo where UNITA has lost its influence or not yet gained any.

In addition to launching the campaign around the slogan "The Way to Fight Back

Is to Produce" and adopting the law on "Discipline in the Productive Process," the government has appointed state/party administrative commissions with full executive powers to run the state enterprises and those companies that have been put under state supervision.

It is the central bodies that set the short-term norms of emulation and annual production quotas. This is done through the ministry planning boards, under the coordination of the National Planning Commission. They are assisted by the section leaderships and the UNTA, which plays a role in emulation plans. All of this is done in a bureaucratic way. Those who actually do the work of production, the workers, are not called upon to participate in deciding what is to be done or in supervising the execution of the tasks.

The final thing that the MPLA had to do to accomplish its "normalization" operation was to "clean out its own house."

A number of factors had prepared the way for the Neto-Lara leadership to undertake this job. Its prestige had been given a boost by the expulsion of the invaders. It had already taken the basic steps to take control of the mass movement, which was now channelled through its transmission-belt structures—the UNTA, ODP, MPLA Youth, the Angolan Women's Organization, and others. Moreover, it had the political, military, and ideological support of the Cubans. The Neto-Lara leadership knew that they had to get rid of the "thorn in their flesh" represented by the Nitistas.

In the first place, the Nitistas had political ambitions of their own. They were trying to become an alternative to the leading faction, and to this end they had occupied powerful positions in the party and state apparatus (especially in the FAPLA and DISA).

Secondly, the Nitistas' strategy involved mobilization and opposition, and it was attracting the more radical elements. These included the Luanda dock workers; the people in certain *mucques* with a tradition of struggle, such as Sambizanga and Rangel; and in particular the most combative elements in the FAPLA, specifically the political commissars.

These more radical elements were struck by the contrast between the beginning signs of corruption and careerism among the "political personal" and the day-to-day difficulties in the neighborhoods and on the battlefronts.

While the news media that the Nitistas controlled—the daily *Diário de Luanda* and the radio programs "Kudibanguela" and "People in Arms"—hailed Nito Alves as an "outstanding political figure, philo-

sopher, fighter, and poet," they also made just criticisms of the social situation. At this time, people could see disorganization, scarcity, and hunger (no mere literary expression in 1976 and 1977) going hand in hand with the appearance of a succession of Alfa Romeos, Volvos, and Mercedes at the homes of the new ministers and their respective consorts.

Following the Third Plenum of the Central Committee in October 1976, the Nitistas began to be removed officially from their ministerial and party posts.²¹ This culminated on May 20, 1977, with the expulsion of Nito Alves and Zé Van Dúnen from the Central Committee in a maneuver whose most immediate aim was to prevent them from taking part in the congress.

The Nitistas were forced into clandestine activity. And they proved unable to respond to these conditions in any other way than by adopting a putschist course. This is despite the fact that throughout May they were gaining support in a number of neighborhoods (Sambizanga, Rangel, Prenda, Nelito Soares) and in units of the FAPLA (the Ninth Armored Brigade, the Military Police, and the Women's Detachment).

Although it originated in an intra-bureaucratic faction fight, May 27 had tragic consequences in that it provided a pretext for unleashing repression against the most radical sections of the working people and the activists in the neighborhoods, the factories, and in the FAPLA. A particularly disastrous consequence of the May 27 events was that an atmosphere of terror²² was created that discouraged the masses from trying to engage in any activity outside the channels established by the MPLA.

The MPLA did not miss its chance to inflict a defeat on the workers that could serve as an effective warning. As a result, strike attempts since May 27 have been easily demobilized. An example of this is what happened at the Sigá bag factory in Luanda. Third Deputy Premier Loy intervened right in the middle of a workers assembly. All he had to do was allude to connections between the strike and "factional activities." An implicit threat was left hanging.

want to speculate about conspiracies, but this omission in the purge was a boon to the campaign against "Nitista sabotage" that aided in the repressive crackdown after May 27.

22. These are just a few cases of the hundreds of assassinations carried out by the MPLA leadership.

In Ngunza, the capital of Kwanza Sul, where the provincial commissar was a Nitista, on the night of August 6 some 204 alleged "factionalists" were shot down.

In Luena, the capital of Moxico, in the days immediately following the putsch in Luanda, all the political commissars of the FAPLA were assassinated on the orders of Central Committee member Sapilinia.

21. David Aires Machado, who used the pseudonym Minerva, minister of internal commerce, and therefore responsible for organizing the supply of consumer goods, is the only well-known Nitista in a high governmental position who escaped the October 1976 purge. I do not



The wave of repression also struck the UNTA. Its former general secretary, Aristides Van Dúnem, was reportedly likely to be condemned to death. On the pretext that they had been "infiltrated by the Nitistas," all the union commissions were suspended, awaiting the outcome of an inquiry.

Only by relearning clandestine methods of organization, opposition, and struggle; only by regaining their confidence through small victories; only if the coming vanguards learn the political lessons of this setback, will the Angolan working masses be able to shake off the feeling of defeat.

The Role of the Cubans

In the construction of a state apparatus and in "normalizing" administrative life and the functioning of various social and economic structures, the support of the Cubans has played an essential role throughout the Angolan process.

The Cuban intervention on the side of the MPLA after the South African and Zaïrian invasions was ambiguous and contradictory.

We should consider important by itself such a decision by a deformed workers state, by its voluntary and conscious disruption of the international status quo, without its borders or national interest being in danger. We know that this could only be done by a leadership such as the Castroist one.

In the most important stages of its historical development, the Castro leadership was built despite the Soviet aims or even in direct contradiction to them. Its links with the masses, like those of the Vietnamese, cannot be compared to the situation in other workers states.

However, we think that the well-known analysis, which was made explicitly by the Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez in his article "Operation Carlota" (published in the *Jornal do Angola*) is not correct in stating that the Cuban decision was made in a sovereign way and that the Soviets were presented with an accomplished fact.²³

The Cuban intervention did break the limiting and ideologically dangerous framework of "African solidarity" and "pan-Africanism" so much in vogue in the MPLA's propaganda. It forced the MPLA to recognize a higher and clearer form of anti-imperialism. However, the role that the Cubans played subsequently demonstrated that their involvement was essentially within the context of the general

Soviet strategy.

The Cubans were more perceptive and subtle in their understanding of the geopolitical phenomena of the so-called Third World. Thus, they could provide effective logistic support and political counseling. The Soviets (and other East European countries) have already demonstrated on several occasions (as in Egypt and Somalia) that they cannot do this.

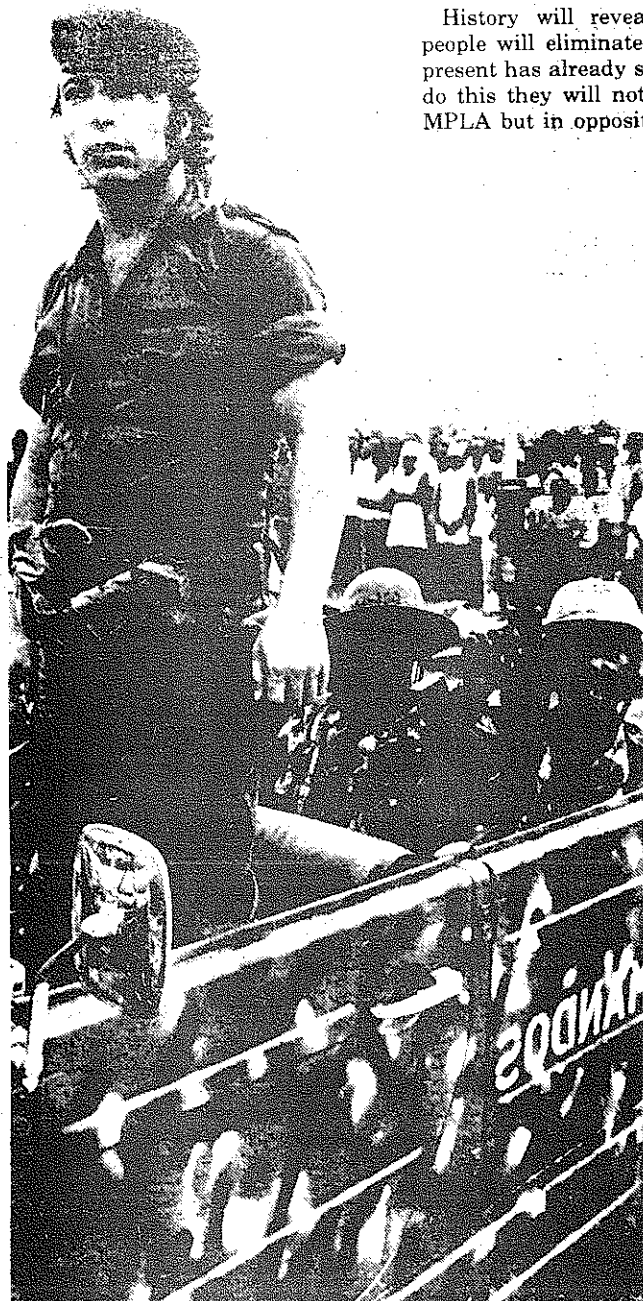
The Soviets are hindered by their great-power attitudes, their commercial ambi-

tions, and their political and economic arrogance (e.g., the shameful plundering of Angolan territorial waters between Porto Alexandre and Benguela by Soviet trawlers). Thus, the Soviets cannot have the flexibility that the Cubans do, a flexibility that in the last analysis is necessary to carry out the Soviet strategy—to build a "progressive" state.

Whatever tactical differences the Soviets and Cubans may have, their actions do not serve the interests of the workers.

As a result of the actions of the Cubans and the Soviets, the essential foundations have been laid for the emergence of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie based on the state capitalist sector. There are no organs of mass control. The state enterprises function in a bureaucratic way. There is a strong economic sector linked to imperialism.

History will reveal how the Angolan people will eliminate these obstacles. The present has already shown that when they do this they will not be organized in the MPLA but in opposition to it. □



23. García Márquez wrote: "The Cuban CP leadership had only twenty-four hours to decide. It did so unhesitatingly in a long and calm meeting on November 5. Contrary to what has been said on several occasions, this was an independent and sovereign decision by Cuba. Only after the decision was made, and not before, was the Soviet Union informed."