
Angola

MPLA Examines May Coup

In a report that reads rather like a taut espionage mystery, the Political Bureau of the MPLA has released its version of the events leading up to the May 27 attempted coup in Angola. The 30-page report, published recently, is the most detailed account yet of what the MPLA has called the factionalist activities of the coup's leaders, Nito Alves and Jose Van Dunen.

While the document asserts that the coup attempt failed because it received

little or no support from the Angola's workers and peasants, it does give some indication of the depth of the factionalism that had divided the MPLA itself. It is extraordinarily frank for a document of its kind in assessing the weaknesses within MPLA that provided the plotters with fertile soil in which to spread their divisiveness.

The report also charges that Western intelligence agencies were involved with the plot although it fails to

William Namodi Tshwane	26 Jul 76	not announced until 14 Oct 76 when police told family he had been buried 'and nothing can be done about it'; shot by police, died in custody; official reason 'justifiable homicide'
Ernest Mamasila, 35	17 Nov 76	'suicide by hanging'
Thabo Mosala	30 Nov 76	'internal hemorrhaging ulcer' (an opposition leader in Transkei)
Joyi Twasifene	—	no known details; Transkei
Wellington Mlungusi Tshazibane, 30	11 Dec 76	'suicide by hanging' (Oxford educated mining engineer)
George Botha, 30	15 Dec 76	'jumped 6 floors down stairwell'
Dr. Nanaoth Ntshuntsha, 43	8 Jan 77	'suicide by hanging'
Lawrence Ndzanga, 52	8 Jan 77	'cardiac failure'
Elmon Malele, 52	20 Jan 77	'stroke'
Matthews Mabelane, 22	15 Feb 77	'fell from 10th floor ledge' at the John Vorster Sqaure police building
Aaron Khoza, 45	29 Mar 77	'suicide by hanging'
Phakamile Mabija, 27	7 Jul 77	'fell from 6th floor of police station,' allegedly trying to escape
Elijah Nkwenkwe Loza, 59	1 Aug 77	'died in hospital three weeks after suffering stroke'; in maximum security detention since 27 May 77; under banning order since Nov 76
Dr. Hoosen Haffejee, 27	3 Aug 77	'death consistent with hanging'; 25 abrasions over body
Bayempin Mzizi, 62	14 Aug 77	police say he was found hanging from cell window bar
Steven Biko, 30	12 Sep 77	causes not yet explained; police aver he had been on one week hunger strike; pathology reports indicate serious brain injuries

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provide any specific details. "The coming months will bring to the surface the concrete facts of imperialist intervention in this conspiracy in which pseudo-leftism served as a screen for imperialist participation," the report states.

Early Moves

The coup leaders began their activities inside MPLA almost as soon as the Portuguese dictatorship fell on April 25, 1974. "It was a time of ideological indecision among some of the youth," the report relates, "who had access to a flow of revolutionary literature which they avidly devoured and immediately applied to the Angolan context as the cure-all for every political problem."

As various "committees" sprang up within the now legal MPLA, Alves and Van Dunen formed a study group basing their analysis initially on the writings of Enver Hoxha, the Albanian Communist leader, but quickly mov-

ing on, by early 1975, to an analysis inspired by Mao-Tse-Tung—an "incoherent analysis of classes of Angola," according to the report, "nothing more than a simplistic transposition" of Mao's theory.

Reflecting what appears to be long repressed frustration on the part of MPLA's leaders, the report says the

group quoted the writings of Lenin and other Marxist writers "to justify this or that position of the factionalist group."

Facing a threatening military situation that the report says "took precedence over MPLA's organizational problems and the need for ideological clarification," the Political Bureau admits to a "certain passivity" towards the factionalists, who attacked the caution of MPLA's leadership in issuing analysis "not based on a serious study of Angloan social realities" as "rightist," "social democratic," and later as "Maoist," after the Chinese position became clearly one of support for FNLA and UNITA, "anti-Soviet," and "anti-communist." The report admits that these charges affected both "honest militants" and diplomats from friendly countries, not identified specifically, who were often besieged by the group.

The report relates repeated attempts on the part of the coup leaders to gain control of MPLA over the past three years—from the Lusaka Conference of MPLA in Zambia in September 1974, through the constant placing of loyal factionalists within the civil service, the MPLA's Revolutionary Instruction Committees (the cadre training groups), and ultimately to the attempts to control the movement's Mass Organization Department and the army, FAPLA. These efforts are related in detail in the report, tracing the precise moves of many of the individuals involved as the strength of the factionalists grew.

Extending Tentacles

Ultimately, the report admits, the plot reached high into the upper echelons of the movement to include Provincial Commissioners, the top government officials, in five of sixteen provinces, as well as a significant number of military commanders.

Coup Leaders

Afrique-Asie



Nito Alves



Jose van Dunem



Cita Vales



Monstro Imortal

After the end of the 1976 Second War of Liberation, and especially after the Central Committee's October 1976 decision to curb Alves' growing strength by abolishing his major power base, his Ministry of Internal Administration, from the new government [see *Southern Africa*, June/July 1977], the factionalists turned to sabotage. The Provincial Commissioners "prohibited the free movement of goods" and hampered the distribution of imported consumer goods on which the government had spent precious foreign currency to alleviate some of the food shortages in the country. The report says that the commissioners even, at times, prevented the marketing of peasants' produce.

By late 1976, MPLA leaders realized increasingly that factionalism would be a problem that they would have to confront directly. The report asserts that in its fight against factionalism, "the movement's leadership always tried to win back the factionalists," a tactic used in past factional disputes. "It therefore always avoided administrative measures, preferring the method of discussing the problem through MPLA bodies."

Fanatical Phraseology

Mistaken by the factionalists for softness or even weakness on the part of the leadership, the method failed. "When honest militants tried to promote ideological debate, they were faced with the same hollow and increasingly fanatical phraseology, which could not stand up the slightest to militant analysis but which confused people and undermined any possibility of drawing benefit from meetings designed to clarify matters."

Above all, the report charges that the factionalists avoided at all times a discussion of concrete Angolan reality. "In their speeches, their writings, their statements at meetings," the report continues, "never was there the slightest indication of their economic concepts, or any reference to the acute problems of Angola's economy." The factionalists instead "misled people with vague and wordy promises of a bookish socialism which did not demand any sacrifice and which was 'easy' to build with quotations from the great classics."

As the tension mounted during the early months of 1977, MPLA decided to undertake an investigation of Alves and Van Dunen. With the date approaching in late May when the report was to be issued, the factionalists decided to attempt to take power.

But even as late as May 21 after President Agostinho Neto announced that the two were expelled from MPLA and even as MPLA leaders knew privately of a plot to overthrow the government, "the decision to recover those 'strayed sheep' for the MPLA" according to the report, "was explicit. Even here the MPLA's philosophy of giving erring militants an opportunity to mend their ways was respected."

Foreign Interest

Although the report does not detail external involvement in the coup planning, it does assert that "imperialist espionage agencies and especially French agencies and their European allies" moved quickly to take advantage of MPLA's factional disputes. The report also states that for several days before the coup attempt, Zairean and South African troops massed in increasing numbers on Angola's northern and southern borders.

Furthermore, the report says that both Mobutu Sese Seko, the president of Zaire, and Jonas Savimbi, UNITA's

leader, have made statements in favor of the coup. "In London a strange representative of Alves announced that he was going to Paris to meet UNITA elements," the report states, adding "Western chancelleries were optimistic as to the advantages the success of the coup would provide for capitalist interests."

The Political Bureau admits that "with the coup attempt of May 27, our structures are somewhat shaken." Still, MPLA's leaders persist in looking to the future—to continual increases in production and slow but constant revival of the economy; to the organization of education and health and the battle against illiteracy; to the planning of studies in preparation for MPLA's congress later this year. Already, reports the Political Bureau, it has embarked on a "broad movement of criticism and self-criticism throughout the movement," designed to "make it possible to uncover and correct some of the weaknesses which facilitated the factionalists' maneuvers." □

Still Under Fire

Despite the absence of hard evidence linking the West to the coup attempt, there is no doubt that the campaign to destabilize MPLA continues, both by overt acts of hostility along its borders, and unfriendly reports in the press.

Receiving little press coverage in the West, two communiqués released by the Angolan Ministry of Defense in July charge that South Africa has stepped up its military activity on Angola's southern border. Following at least seven incidents in May and June, the Defense Ministry says South Africa shot down a transport plane over the Angolan town of Kuangar on the Namibian border. Twelve people were killed. The next day the South Africans bombarded the town of Calueque to the west with artillery, causing many casualties. Calueque is near the Cunene river dam project.

Paulo Jorge, Angola's Foreign Minister, sent telegrams protesting the incidents, to both the Secretary General of the OAU and the UN. Denying that the attacks were carried out by UNITA, as the South African press and radio had claimed, Jorge said that public opinion had been "deluded by camouflage neo-colonialist and expansionist aggressive intentions."

Still the attacks continued. In late July the Ministry of Defense announced that South African troops had occupied Kuangar "with the aim of destroying our young Republic and thus hampering the irresistible advance of SWAPO combatants." The Ministry also said that Calueque and Santa Clara in the south and Caianda in the east, had been attacked.

Again the South African press claimed that these attacks were the work of UNITA, and this time their assertions could almost be seen as a prologue to a series of seven front-page articles on UNITA which appeared in the *Washington Post* in mid-August. The articles relate a seven-month trip inside Angola with UNITA by Leon Dash, a black reporter who also traveled with UNITA and wrote a four-part series in 1973.

Dash's eyewitness accounts of several guerrilla attacks and his bold conclusion that the guerrillas "effectively occupy the southern half of the country" is certain to enhance the international impression of UNITA strength. Yet the South African claim that UNITA has occupied Kuangar was the only time that UNITA appeared to control any town of any size.