

# The Struggle for Freedom in Angola

by Lucio Lara

THE war that has just started in Angola is the result of the brutal and rotten colonial policy of Portuguese officials who are incapable of realising the deep changes the world has known in the last decade.

The Angolan people's claims have always met with the violent hate of the colonial administration, and the people's unrest has developed into a chronic disease which is aggravated every day. Since the arrest, in 1959, of about fifty Angolan patriots, tension rose considerably and the people began to demand political organisation and a concrete action against the oppressor.

In January and April 1960, Angolan patriots, revealed the explosive situation prevailing in their country to Afro-Asian peoples and, for the first time, special resolutions on Angola were adopted to stress the urgent need for an efficient aid to the struggle of the Angolan people.

Simultaneously, the Popular Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA) launched an appeal to all political parties, all mass organisations and patriots, urging them to unite in a solid front capable of facing the tremendous responsibilities of the liberation campaign.

On June 13, the MPLA released a statement to the Portuguese Government, denouncing the bloody repressions and warlike provocations conducted in Angola. While reaffirming the people's desire for a peaceful solution, the statement made the following conditions for such solution: The solemn and immediate recognition of the Angolan people's right to self-determina-

tion; full and unconditional amnesty for all imprisoned patriots; the implementation of public liberties; the immediate withdrawal of Portuguese armed forces; a round table conference with the participation of all Angolan parties and representatives of the Portuguese Government with a view to reach a peaceful solution of the colonial conflict in Angola.

At the same time, the MPLA released a message to the Portuguese people, warning them against their Government's attempts to drag them in an all-out colonial war and urging them to take a fair position against oppression and exploitation which the Portuguese Government is perpetrating in their name against other peoples.

The reply to this message came in the mouthpiece of the Portuguese Government *Diário da Manhã*, which in its edition of June 19, 1960, was stated: "Portugal will never accept to discuss self-determination for her overseas territories". . . And through its cabinet members, the Portuguese Government continued refusing to admit even the existence of a problem of colonial nature in overseas territories "where peace is still prevailing."

## Beginning of Repression

All diplomatic approaches failed to "liberalise" the Portuguese colonial system. Insisting to go against the "wind of changes" that was (and still is) blowing in Africa, Portuguese authorities reinforced their military apparatus in Angola and intensified their means of repression.

In July 1960, a massacre in the village of Icolo-Bengo caused the death of thirty people and over 200 were wounded among a population whose only guilt was demanding, peacefully, the release of Dr. AGOSTINHO NETO, honorary president of MPLA, who had been arrested together with another great patriot, Rev. PINTO DE ANDRADE and over 800 nationalists. Icolo-Bengo was the home town of Dr. NETO.

The people became more and more concerned over the fate of patriots arrested in 1959, who were being tried behind closed doors by a specially military court. They did not hide their willingness to take action.

On December 6, 1960, a few days before the adoption at the United Nations of the Declaration on the granting of independence to all colonised peoples, the leaders of MPLA proclaimed during a meeting held in London by some political organisations in Portuguese colonies, that all peaceful means to settle the Angolan issue having been exhausted, one way was still available to the people: Direct action for self-defence.

The 4th of February last marked the first violent explosion. MPLA commandos ambushed a military jeep patrolling through African quarters of Luanda, seized the arms and with other rather rudimentary weapons, valiantly attacked three prisons where thousands of political detainees were jailed.

This operation did not succeed. However, the undesigned presence on the spot of many foreign correspondents contributed to calling the attention of the whole world, the more so on the following day. Portuguese settlers supported by the army and the police, shot dead 3,000 Africans in the capital alone as a reprisal for the six Portuguese victims who died during the assault on the prison.

The nation-wide armed rebellion quickly developed after March 14, as a result of the acts of violence perpetrated by the Portuguese owner of the "Primavera" farm situated in the suburbs of Sao Salvador, against the labourers who claimed a salary increase and a reduction of the fourteen hours daily work that was

imposed upon them. The farm owner went as far as opening fire on the workers who revolted against their master and killed him. All settlers living near the "Primavera" farm immediately undertook a "black man hunt." To face this threat, Africans had to organise themselves, and it can be said that the chain reaction that followed led to the war which is now taking place in the north of Angola. Political parties did not hesitate to take sides in favour of the people and to organise armed resistance.

## People Take up Arms

A statement dated June 22, and released by the General Command of the MPLA Militia forces, read among other things:

"The MPLA Militia has joined the people in their armed struggle from the very first day. Militia men spread throughout a vast zone covering 100,000 square kilometres (30,000 square miles) along the advanced combat lines with the main purpose of raising the standard of struggle, and of uniting the action of all patriots with a view to spare as much human lives as possible. They did that by either conducting operations or by closely co-operating with the various bulks or freedom-fighters."

Drawing a balance-sheet of attacks, acts of sabotage and ambushes undertaken by a platoon under the command of TOMAZ FERREIRA in 30 days of action along a 700 kilometres zone, the statement gives the figures of 230 Portuguese servicemen dead in the course of these operations, against ten dead and 90 wounded among patriots. Casualties inflicted to coffee and cotton plantations were evaluated to over one million sterling pounds without including destroyed farms, trucks set on fire, dynamited bridges, captured arms and ammunition, electric cables cut, etc. The statement emphasises "the overwhelming co-operation of the populations who have, at all times, helped patriots with the utmost enthusiasm."

Referring to the ferocious reaction of colonialists, the statement reads: "Being unable to strike the armed militiamen, the Portuguese army is

conducting atrocities against innocent population. Villages have been completely destroyed with napalm especially in the regions of Ucuia, Uige, Tomboco and Canda.

Without the slightest respect to international conventions, the Portuguese army has not only avoided taking prisoners by shooting all captives on the battlefield, but is also persecuting families who seek refuge in the Congo, without hesitating to cross the border sometimes as far as ten kilometres within Congolese territory, to massacre refugees."

It is noteworthy to state here that refugees, who fled to the Congo, come to 130,000 and that the number of Angolés killed during the past four months reached the figure of 50,000.

## Colonialist Barbarism

However, the Portuguese Government authorities do not intend to modify their attitude. Everyday, more ships and planes loaded with troops and military equipment arrive in Angola. The Portuguese command hopes to crush the resistance during the "cacimbo" (dry season) starting in June and ending in October. It is counting upon an army of 30,000 men most of whom are being specially trained for guerilla warfare.

It is also counting on the civilian European population which has been mobilised within the "Voluntary Corps" fighting side by side with the army, and in the Civilian Defence of the territory. In any case, the European population has developed a taste for killing Africans and many lynchings have taken place in cities where innocent people accused on false charges of having co-operated with freedom-fighters.

## Angola and the U.N.O.

Following a demand by the Afro-Asian group of nations, the Angola question was brought up before the Security Council of the United Nations in March last. The issue was debated and finally the United States voted against Portugal, its NATO ally, in an attempt to make believe that American policies towards colonised countries had changed. As a matter of fact, US Ambassador Stevenson voted with a

certain feeling of disgust at the Security Council, in favour of a resolution that urged Portugal to "co-operate with the United Nations" in granting Angola a self-government.

Despite its soft phrasing, the resolution lacked support with two votes less than the required number. One can easily understand the American attitude by noting that certain "automatic voters" such as Chili, Ecuador and Nationalist China—who always vote with the United States—this time abstained.

Stevenson then indicated in his speech in the Council that his sympathy was with Portugal and not with Angola when he stated, explaining his vote that "this is a gesture of concern, a gesture of goodwill and beyond that, an effort toward genuine co-operation in achievement of goals which are shared by all of us."

On the other hand, it is most significant that the positive vote had only been decided on the eve of the Council meeting following a meeting between President Kennedy and Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, who must have certainly taken into consideration an energetic letter addressed to Mr. Stevenson by 33 Asian and African countries.

When the issue was raised before the General Assembly in April last, a resolution was adopted by 72 to two votes, asking Portugal to stick to the U.N. Charter by creating a sub-committee to investigate on the situation in Angola. The United States voted for the resolution but the American delegate Charles Yost asked Portugal to consider this vote as a "friendly advice" and criticised the acts of violence which Angolés patriots were forced to use in self-defence against Portuguese atrocities.

In June last, the United States again voted reluctantly for a new resolution of the Security Council (nine in favour, no negative votes), asking Portugal to desist forthwith from all repressive measures. According to the *New York Times*, the American delegation was not pleased by the phrase "desist forthwith," and that it had tried in vain to introduce an amendment which would only express the desire for a "peaceful solution."

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The most shocking thing is that while they claim to be on the side of African peoples, the U.S. Government continues to favour Portugal through NATO. In June last, it was announced that the Portuguese Air Force was about to purchase from the United States 6,440,000 dollars worth of military equipment.

## **Need for Unity**

From the Angolese nationalist point of view, the most burning problems are, on the one hand, the need of urgent and concrete assistance from Asian and African countries and, on the other hand, the

immediate creation of a National Front which is, in fact, the only thing capable of facing Portuguese colonialist and imperialist machinations aiming at dividing the Angolese people.

It is known that talks have already taken place in Leopoldville and in Monrovia between leaders of the MPLA and UPA, the two most important Angolese organisations. The MPLA has even submitted a draft statute and programmes for the Angolese Liberation Front. The serious dangers that threaten the country and the living example of the Congo make us believe that such a Front will soon be a reality.