

MPLA & FNLA form council

On 13 December, after more than six months of negotiations, an agreement between MPLA and FNLA was finally signed in Kinshasa. It was witnessed by the Foreign Ministers of Tanzania, Zambia, Zaire and Brazzaville.

Under the agreement, a Supreme Council for the Liberation of Angola has been formed to co-ordinate the struggle in all its aspects. Holden Roberto becomes President of the Angolan Political Council while Agostinho Neto is President of the Unified Military Command. In the Council itself, Roberto and Neto are President and Vice-President respectively.

MPLA and FNLA both retain their identity as separate movements within the Supreme Council, and there is no question of a merger at this stage.

A side effect of the agreement is that GRAE, the so-called Revolutionary Government in Exile, is finally to disappear, some years after recognition for it was withdrawn by the OAU.

As supporters of the MPLA and of the Angolan national liberation struggle, the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guine welcomes this new development for the possibilities it can give for a united effort against Portuguese colonialism in Angola. The President of MPLA, Dr. Agostinho Neto, explained the background to the negotiations very clearly in an interview made in July last year by the Swedish journal Kommentar.

President Neto explains

The contacts must be seen in the light of our actions from the day our movement was formed. In 1956, in our first manifesto, we spoke about the unity between all patriotic forces in Angola. In the 11 years since the start of the armed struggle, we have made a number of attempts to achieve unity with FNLA. These approaches were directed first to UPA, led by Holden Roberto, then to FNLA with the same leader.

We made several attempts to get contacts during 1961-63 when UPA were active inside the country. It is UPA which has always been against unity with MPLA. They have found various reasons for their negative attitude; MPLA is an organisation of intellectuals, MPLA is a communist organisation etc.

What is new about it is not that MPLA has taken an initiative, since this has been done several times before. We have documents, showing the different proposals we have put forward. The new aspect of the situation is that Holden Roberto has accepted to hold talks with us. This he has always refused before.

The map shows MPLA's six military-political regions and also the different districts of Angola. Recently the district of Huila has been divided into two districts: Huila and Cunene. MPLA controls areas in all regions except No 6.



The militants within FNLA have very clearly expressed their approval of the attempts to unite all patriotic forces. They have for instance sent a message of approval of our attempts. When we had a meeting with Holden in Brazzaville, the militants in Kinshasa and other parts of Zaire arranged big celebrations to express their joy.

If, as the results of our efforts towards unity, the Zaire government permits the transit of military material, an immediate advantage for us will be that the armed struggle in the first region would take a big step forward. It would also lead to a change in the character of the struggle, as then we could also form an urban guerrilla army and make attacks of a very different kind from before. Changes could be foreseen even in the political sphere, as the pressure on the Portuguese government would increase.

But behind our interest in creating unity is not only the problem of permission to transport material through Zaire to the first region. This is certainly an important reason, but there is a strategically more important purpose: to try to unify our people.

Our common border with Zaire is very long - 1200 miles - and there are a large number of Angolans in Zaire: figures around 600,000 have been mentioned this year. It is very important that we mobilise all these people and get them to fight for our freedom in a united front. In the future we must also avoid factionalism. Conflicts between factions are always very serious, especially if the ethnic differences can be exploited and made into tribal contradictions. We are working today for complete unity within our lines and in the future we shall see this complete unity within our whole people.

These are the reasons why we are approaching FNLA. Although I am not sure, I believe that if we achieve a positive result, it will mean advantages both for our movement and for our people.