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ANGOLA: A TIME FOR WORKING

Lisbon & Three Liberation Movements Agree to Independence

Angola took the last major step toward independence on January 15, when Portuguese representatives and leaders of the three liberation movements signed a pact leading to independence day on November 11, 1975. Signing for the Angolans were Agostinho Neto of MPLA, Holden Roberto of FNLA and Jonas Savimbi of UNITA.

The pact is complex: each liberation movement will contribute 8000 militants to an Angolan national army, the overall total of 24,000 being matched by Portuguese forces. The movements will keep the rest of their troops in areas where they are now dominant. This integration into a national army will take place May 1, when excess Portuguese troops will begin to leave the country. By February of 1976, all Portuguese forces will have left Angola.

The pact provides for the election of a constituent assembly before independence. This assembly will elect a president who will accept sovereignty from the Portuguese. Meanwhile, a Portuguese high commissioner will run the executive jointly with a presidential council and a cabinet, both representing the three liberation movements. The presidential council shall have three members, one from each movement. The cabinet will also reflect careful balance. The Information Ministry is being taken by MPLA, but the minister will have two deputies representing the other two movements. FNLA has the Interior Ministry, again with deputies; and UNITA has the Labor Ministry with the same system. Six other ministries are to be divided equally among the three movements. Portuguese will head the Ministries of Economy, Communications & Transport, and Public Works.

In addition, a 10-man National Defense Council will be headed by the high commissioner and include the three members of the Presidential Council, the three members of the unified military command that is to be set up, and representatives of the Portuguese Army, Navy and Air Force. It will have responsibility for defense and internal security and will oversee the military accord that seeks to keep the three groups apart except for those forces that will integrate May 1. (N.Y. Times, 1/16/75)

The agreement with Lisbon was easier than the uniting of the three liberation movements that preceded it. The liberation leaders met in Mombasa, and on January 5, emerged from three days of closed door meetings to announce a unity pact. (UNITA had already signed accords with MPLA and FNLA and did not take part in the Mombasa talks.) Neto and Roberto pledged "to safeguard the territorial integrity of Angola with the oil-rich enclave of Cabinda as an integral part." They also committed themselves to a democratic society "eliminating racial, ethnic and religious discrimination." (Financial Times [Br.] 1/6/75). The earlier 10-point agreement between MPLA and UNITA had called for establishing a climate of co-operation, defending together the interests of the masses and the struggle for the extinction of the remnants of colonialism and recognizing the exploited masses in the reconstruction of Angola. (Daily News (Tanz.) 12/21/74)

MPLA : The Most Important Liberation Movement

With the signing of these accords, MPLA is now assured that Agostinho Neto is recognized as MPLA's leader and that the organization will play a prominent role in the future of Angola. MPLA leadership has been the most revolutionary of the Angolan struggle, examining such crucial aspects as the role of women, racialism, tribalism, capitalism and other kinds of discrimination within Angola. Only MPLA appears to have adapted goals that will shake these systems as they exist and result in more than a change of leadership. Some independent leaders of character saw the need for the MPLA role and gave Neto their support through the grim times of the last six months, such leaders as Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Samora Machel (FRELIMO) and the people in the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement.

FNLA's strong base is in a tribal appeal rather than a revolutionary one; that is among the Bakongos of the Northwest. UNITA's base seems more elusive. Savimbi has definitely organized somewhat among the Kwanyamas and seems also to be the darling of white middle-class realists in Angola. If MPLA can overcome its weaknesses and continue to move forward, it is the movement deserving of support from revolutionary support groups. This in spite of the recent acrimonious divisions within MPLA (hopefully on the way to being resolved with the new agreements signed) and also in spite of the criticism against Neto which is that he has not given over those areas in which he is weak--administration and political organizing--to those with those skills within MPLA. (As opposed to the universal praise for his ability in diplomacy and ideological concepts.)

The Internal Problems of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola

Although the situation is still somewhat confused, the recent agreements and pacts indicate that MPLA may be emerging from its troubles of the last six months with its leadership and organization intact and without a lost of its vision of the future Angola.

Throughout 1973 and into 1974, severe differences developed between MPLA President Agostinho Neto and the Eastern Region commander, Daniel Chipenda. The following summary of what happened in August & September, 1974, is taken from LSM NEWS, (Dec. 1974).

"... Chipenda withdrew to Lusaka mobilizing significant support for what he called the 'eastern revolt' faction among Zambian officials, who effectively barred the movement of men and supplies to MPLA, thus causing the near collapse of the struggle in the Eastern Region. A third faction, led by Pinto de Andrade and his brother Mario, emerged in Brazzaville and, calling itself the 'active revolt' faction, criticized both Neto and Chipenda for their personal power struggle, saying that 'Neto exercised his position without being accountable to anyone. But because of his personality and prestige (they) would agree to let him continue on condition that his powers be limited and subject to checks....' (Jeune Afrique, 14 Sept 1974). On Chipenda, Andrade felt that he was not fit to become the movement's leader.

"Neto, for the time being shifting his headquarters to Dar es Salaam, where he had the firm support of President Nyerere, claimed that the 'active revolt' faction of Andrade was comprised of militants who had long since removed themselves from the struggle, while Chipenda was 'driven by personal ambition, a thirst for power.' (Ibid.). Under terrific pressure from Nyerere, Kaunda, Ngouabi (Congo) and Mobutu, a 'congress' of MPLA was held for the first time in twelve years in Lusaka in August. 400 delegates from the three factions attended-- 165 from Neto's group and Chipenda's, and 70 from the 'active revolt' faction. It lasted almost two weeks before Neto and Andrade and their comrades walked out. The remaining Chipenda delegates elected him 'president' of MPLA. Then, between August 31 & Sept. 2, another pressure-packed meeting was held in Brazzaville during the Ninth Summit Conference of the Heads of State of East and Central Africa. An agreement was reached whereby Neto remained president and Chipenda and Andrade became co-vice presidents. A 39-member Central Committee was formed with 16 members from the Neto faction, 13 from Chipenda's 'eastern revolt' and 10 from the 'active revolt' of Andrade. (Afrique-Asie, 22 Sept, 74). A political bureau of nine members was also formed, each faction providing three members, including the president and two vice presidents."

This hammered out agreement began to disintegrate almost immediately. Chipenda withdrew from Lusaka to Kinshasa with 700 followers at the invitation of Mobutu and Holden Roberto (FNLA). He also took several steps incompatible with the stated aims of the MPLA or outside the agreement of Brazzaville. In the first few days of September, he met with leaders of the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) and agreed to the principle of a separately independent Cabinda. Then the most important meeting to date on the future of Angola took place. Sept 15, Spínola held talks with Roberto (FNLA), Savimbi (UNITA) and representatives of Chipenda on the island of Sal. Mobutu was also there. The purpose of the talks was to organize an Angolan future that would cut out Agostinho Neto. Spínola proposed a 12 member government with two seats for each movement and six seats for various other tribal and interest groups. The two seats for MPLA would be taken by Chipenda and Andrade excluding Neto. (There is no evidence that Andrade was a party to this.) Spínola's plan was apparently embraced by those present who went forth to implement it. However, Spínola had problems: he had not informed the rest of the Portuguese government of his plan and this example of his high-handed method of operation was a part of his forced resignation at the end of September. With the fall of Spínola, Neto was re-instated as the recognized head of MPLA by the Portuguese negotiators, a move that was correct recognition of his legitimate role. During the Sal talks, however, also around Sept 15, Chipenda made another move that cut him off from MPLA. He denounced the Brazzaville agreement saying that "Neto was not elected MPLA President by any congress, he was not elected by militants, but only by four chiefs of state....As I said in Dar es Salaam: I was elected MPLA President at a legitimate congress, called by MPLA, and allowing only our militants to vote" (O Seculo, Portugal, 15 Oct 74).

After the fall of Spinoza, Neto began to consolidate his leadership of MPLA. A meeting of the 39-member Central Committee of MPLA was held in the first two weeks of October in Lusaka. Samora Machel of FRELIMO attended to try to smooth over differences but without much success because, although Andrade and the "active revolt" attended and participated, Chipenda's "eastern revolt" faction did not. This pointed out that Chipenda was continuing to operate outside the MPLA structure. And in spite of Chipenda trying to deal separately with the FNLA as the representative of MPLA, the Central Committee reached partial agreement on holding talks with FNLA for a united negotiating front on Angola. (The "partial" part probably was related to FNLA releasing MPLA prisoners they still held.) Following that meeting, on October 21, Neto established both that he was the recognized leader of MPLA by the Portuguese government and that he was welcome even in what was supposedly Chipenda's territory in Eastern Angola. He did this by signing a formal ceasefire agreement between the Portuguese and MPLA, forty miles inside the Zambian border in the Eastern Region. In addition, South African papers reported MPLA in virtual political control of the Angolan capital of Luanda. Such reports were confirmed when, on November 8, an MPLA delegation was greeted at the Luanda airport by a massive crowd estimated at 50,000 to 100,000 people--from 15 to 25% of the total population of Luanda!

The demonstrated strengths of Neto and MPLA led the other two liberation movements eventually into agreements recognizing Neto as President. In fact, two days prior to UNITA's signing an accord with MPLA, Savimbi, UNITA president, said that "UNITA has always recognized Agostinho Neto as the President of MPLA. If there is any talk about an alliance between UNITA, FNLA and MPLA-Chipenda; then let me assure you that such an alliance does not exist. The time is over that the MPLA had to be represented by three factions." (Diario de Noticias, Port. Dec 24, '74). The end seems to be an inclusion of Andrade and Neto both in a reunited and vigorous MPLA, but the expulsion of Chipenda. The final expulsion from MPLA took place in December after a rival Chipenda-MPLA office opened in Luanda.

The Gulf Oil Gambit

With the possibility of independence for Angola, a new movement quickly appeared in Cabinda known as FLEC (Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda). There were a number of powers who saw an independent Cabinda as of interest to them. Among them were Mobutu who would like to see oil-rich Cabinda as part of Zaire, Ngouabi who would like to see it part of the Congo, and Gulf Oil which would like to have it as a company country. There is not much open evidence as to the origins of FLEC, but what there is points to Gulf Oil and perhaps the active sympathy of President Mobutu of Zaire. (Zaire gave FLEC a headquarters and free radio time.) The situation came to a head on November 6, when MPLA and Portuguese troops moved jointly to neutralize growing FLEC military organization. The Portuguese commander of Cabinda, Brig. Gen. Barata was arrested and FLEC arms were seized. A group of 39 hostages was seized by FLEC and was held at a post on the Congo border. At the time of this action, rioting broke out in Luanda again, apparently unrelated. Although there had been rioting and death twice previously in the year, it was only with the collapse of FLEC that Gulf Oil decided the time was opportune to remove over 100 dependents of their employees to "safety" in South Africa.

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Remember Chile!

The future of Angola now looks much brighter than it has since the Portuguese coup of April 25. MPLA seems to have reestablished its political leadership within the country. MPLA leadership problems have on the surface been resolved and the resolution carries the potential of everyone having learned what kind of give and take at the higher levels must occur to maintain vitality and to stay in contact with the mass base from which MPLA must draw its strength for the progressive goals it has established. Gulf Oil and the other forces of Western domination such as Mobutu and the Portuguese Spinola represented, have been set back in their efforts to control the future of Angola. MPLA has banded together with FNLA and UNITA, and jointly they are headed toward independence.

FRELIMO

1974
1975

I wish I were able
to write a poem
which is as beautiful, as exalting,
as inspiring and profound
as our people's victory.

A poem which would tell
of the whole struggle, of the way
the people waged
and won it.

A poem such that on hearing it
a man of the people would say:
"It was so. That place
I know, it is the base where I fought.
"That massacre, I was there,
there I lost my two children.
"In that battle we shot down
three Portuguese aeroplanes.
"I lived in that village: repression
came one day brought in by traitors.
"Namatil I know. We took there
a whole enemy unit."

A poem which would recall
the heroes who have fallen:
with their bodies they built
the bridge,
necessary,
which led us to victory.

A poem which would explain
the reason why we have won:
it was the people who fought –
the whole people, guided
by a correct line.

A poem, finally, which would show
the purpose of our struggle:
the new life we are building,
freedom,
the pride of being who we are,
the radical
negation
of exploitation.

*
* *

Someone some day will write
of this which is already life
before becoming a poem.

frelimo