

Origin of the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA

By Ernest Harsch

[First of three articles]

The long Angolan struggle for national independence is entering a critical stage. A coalition regime of the three nationalist groups and the Portuguese was installed in Luanda January 31. Within weeks, Luanda and other cities and towns were rocked by fierce street battles, leaving hundreds dead, as the rival nationalist groups began contending for power in the oil- and mineral-rich country.

The threat of an engulfing fratricidal conflict—similar to that which took place in the Congo in the early 1960s after the departure of the Belgian imperialists—places in question the future of the Angolan struggle for independence.

The chief threat is that the Portuguese will renew military action in Angola either directly through the deployment of troops or indirectly through a United Nations "peace-keeping force." Such an outcome would be a major setback for both the Angolan liberation struggle and the African revolution as a whole.

The lineup of forces in Angola is complex. There are the three major nationalist groups, the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA—People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola), the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA—Angolan National Liberation Front), and the União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola (UNITA—National Union for the Total Independence of Angola).

There are also a number of smaller nationalist organizations, as well as the Frente de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda (FLEC—Cabinda Liberation Front), a group that advocates the secession of Cabinda from Angola.

On the Portuguese side are the representatives of the Movimento das Forças Armadas (MFA—Armed Forces Movement) administering the colony, as well as the Portuguese companies operating in Angola. The estimated 500,000 Portuguese settlers in Angola are also a significant force, although their interests do not necessarily coincide with those of the MFA.

The regimes in neighboring African countries, particularly in the Republic of the Congo and in Zaïre,¹ also have an interest

in the outcome of the Angolan conflict and may try to influence the actions of the Angolan nationalist groups.

Finally, there are the American, French, Belgian, and other imperialist interests that are eager to protect and to expand their exploitation of Angola's labor force and vast natural wealth.

The blame for the violent clashes between the Angolan nationalist groups is not easily pinpointed. Because of the many forces involved, caution must be observed in analyzing the conflicts.

An additional complication is the frequently biased reporting of foreign, particularly Portuguese, journalists in the country. Another is the mislabeling and slandering of the three nationalist groups by each other and their backers. Some of these slanders involve the rewriting of history for factional purposes.

For instance, the Stalinists, who back the MPLA politically, deny that the FNLA ever played any significant role in the independence movement. Vladimir Kudryavtsev, a political analyst for *Izvestia*, said in a Novosti Press Agency release published in the May 30 *Daily World*, newspaper of the American Communist party: "From the very beginning MPLA has been the main force in the armed struggle for the liberation of Angola from the yoke of the Portuguese colonialists."

William Pomeroy, another Stalinist, was more explicit. He claimed in the April 11 *Daily World* that the FNLA was "heavily financed and assisted by U.S. imperialism." According to him, "The FNLA kept to its base camps in Zaire throughout the liberation war in Angola, the main brunt of which was borne by the Marxist-led MPLA under Agostinho Neto."

Such misrepresentation of the facts only serves to obscure the real situation in the Angolan struggle.

Roots of the Nationalist Movement

The differences between the Angolan liberation organizations go back many years and are an integral part of the

cratic Republic of the Congo. It was a Belgian colony until June 1960. Many of the colonial names have been changed since then, including the capital, Leopoldville, which was renamed Kinshasa. Before the name change to Zaïre, it was popularly called Congo (Leopoldville) or Congo (Kinshasa).

nationalist movement's evolution and history.

The MPLA arose out of the nationalist currents that developed among the African intellectuals during the post-World War II period. Other nationalist groups also emerged from this layer, either in Angola's cities or among Angolan students in Portugal and other countries. Some of these groups still exist.

Viriato da Cruz and Mário de Andrade, two of the principal founders of the MPLA, were associated with the nationalist literary journal *Mensagem—A voz dos naturais de Angola* published in Luanda in the early 1950s. Agostinho Neto, like Cruz and Andrade, was a prominent poet in that period.

According to René Pélissier, in his contribution to the book *Angola*,² the Portuguese Communist party appeared to have worked within the Liga Nacional Africana (LNA—African National League) and other nationalist groups and recruited a few members and sympathizers during the 1950s. In 1955, Pélissier wrote, the Partido Comunista de Angola (PCA—Angolan Communist party) appeared in Luanda, although he noted that it was very weak. His account states that Neto and Andrade may have been members of the PCA at one time.

In December 1956, several of the Angolan nationalist groups merged to form the MPLA. The repression by the Portuguese security police forced Cruz, the secretary-general of the MPLA, to flee abroad. According to Pélissier, the MPLA's strength within Angola in the late 1950s was limited to a few clandestine cells.

The FNLA was built on a social base totally different from that of the MPLA. Its main roots are in the Bakongo nationalist movement in northern Angola, although it has sought to extend its influence among other social and ethnic groups in the country.

The Bakongo are descendants of the ancient Kongo kingdom, which was conquered and destroyed by the Portuguese, French, and Belgian imperialists and slave traders. They now live in the Republic of the Congo, Zaïre, and northern Angola. The Bakongo resisted the Portuguese invasion in sporadic wars and uprisings throughout the last half of the nineteenth century. Before the revolt of 1961, the last major uprising of the Bakongo peasants was in 1913-14, when they called for the ouster of the Portuguese-appointed Kongo king and for an end to forced labor. The Bakongo wanted to choose their own king.

Conditions similar to those that led to the 1913-14 uprising were still present in the 1950s and influenced the rise of the modern nationalist movement in the Bakongo

1. The Republic of the Congo is frequently called Congo (Brazzaville). Before its independence in 1960, it was part of French Equatorial Africa.

Zaïre, until October 1971, was called the Demo-

2. Douglas L. Wheeler and René Pélissier, *Angola* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971).

areas. In December 1955, there were public protests against forced labor. Three months later, the Portuguese launched a wave of arrests and deportations.

It was against this background that the União das Populações do Norte de Angola (UPNA—North Angola Peoples' Union) evolved into the União das Populações de Angola (UPA—Angolan Peoples' Union) in 1958, under the leadership of Holden Roberto. The UPNA had backed a Protestant candidate for king of the Kongo, but the UPA gave up any efforts to restore the Kongo monarchy, adopted a pan-Angolan nationalist perspective, and called for the independence of Angola. In 1962 the UPA merged with another group to form the FNLA.

Another major factor that heightened the nationalist sentiment among the Bakongo was the anticolonial struggle that was beginning to sweep the rest of Africa. Ghana won its formal independence in 1957. In 1960 the Bakongo in the French and Belgian colonies north of Angola also gained an end to direct colonial rule. This inspired the Bakongo and other peoples in Angola; and in 1959, after elections had been promised in Belgian-ruled Congo, demonstrations against Portuguese rule were staged in Angola.

1961: The Turning Point

In an interview published in the February 15, 1964, *El Moudjahid*, the central organ of the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN—National Liberation Front), MPLA leader Viriato da Cruz described the conditions in Angola that bred mass discontent against colonial rule.

"These masses," he said, "comprised around 800,000 workers in the rural zones, subjected to forced labor, around 350,000 Africans living in conditions of underemployment and joblessness in the urban zones, and around 1,000,000 Angolan émigrés, who were submitted in their turn to superexploitation by the Belgians, the English and the South Africans.

"In brief, more than 2,000,000 Africans torn from their social and geographical surroundings by the disintegration of the traditional societies, by violence and by the theft of their land, vegetating outside the traditional framework of their lives, in zones of insecurity and despair, deprived of their old ties."

These conditions fueled the steadily rising unrest that preceded the 1961 explosion.

In March 1959, the Portuguese authorities arrested hundreds of Africans, including leaders of the MPLA. The Portuguese air force and 2,000 troop reinforcements were sent to Angola. Again, in June 1960, there were mass arrests in Luanda, Lobito, Malange, and Dalatando.

The next month Portuguese troops terrorized the *muceques* of Luanda, burning houses and torturing women and children. When villagers from Agostinho Neto's home area protested his arrest at the



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administration headquarters in Catete, troops opened fire, killing thirty demonstrators. In November, twenty-eight nationalists from Cabinda were slaughtered in a Luanda prison.

Although the MPLA continued to function from exile, issuing appeals and protests, the Portuguese repression further decimated its cells within Angola.

In the rural areas, unrest was also reaching a high pitch. In the Baixa de Cassange area east of Malange, about 30,000 African farmers had been forced to grow cotton for the Cotonang company. The peasants had to sell their crops at a government-fixed price well below that of the world market; the annual income for an African family was US\$20 to US\$30.

In November-December 1960, the African producers stopped work and refused to pay taxes. According to Pélissier, the MPLA, UPA, and the Congolese Parti de la Solidarité Africaine (African Solidarity party) may have had some influence among the cotton growers, although the "cotton revolt" itself was largely spontaneous.

The Portuguese moved in military forces and carried out a massacre of the African population. Pélissier wrote that "there were certainly summary executions and bombardment with napalm." It is estimated

3. Literally "sandy places," the African shantytowns that surround Luanda and other cities.

that as many as 10,000 Africans were killed.

On the night of February 3-4, 1961, small groups of Africans attacked several Portuguese prisons and installations in Luanda, suffering heavy losses. An armed white militia was formed and on February 5, after a funeral for some of the slain Portuguese troops and police, the whites began a bloody massacre of Africans in the *muceques*. According to Patricia McGowan Píneiro in "Politics of a Revolt,"⁴ more than 3,000 Africans were killed on that day alone. On February 10 there was another attack by a group of Africans, with similar results.

The MPLA claims that it initiated these attacks and dates the beginning of the "national revolution" from February 4, 1961. But according to Pélissier, it is not known who led the actions.

Whatever the case, the repression that followed nearly destroyed the MPLA within Angola. The MPLA headquarters in Conakry, Guinea, virtually lost contact with the survivors, some of whom managed to escape Luanda and reach the Dembos area, a mountainous region northeast of Luanda.

Next came an insurrection in northern Angola. The date of March 15 was apparently chosen by the UPA to coincide with a debate on Angola in the United Nations Security Council. A few weeks before, Holden Roberto told Frantz Fanon, the well-known anticolonialist intellectual, according to Fanon's wife, "Pay close attention to March 15, the day of the debate in the U.N.; some very important things are going to happen in Angola."

Unlike the isolated actions in Luanda the month before, the March 15 revolt quickly gained a mass character. The Portuguese referred to it as the "Great War."

The initial assaults against plantations and administrative and police posts took the Portuguese by surprise. Using battle cries of "UPA" and "Lumumba,"⁵ the rebels staged guerrilla actions along the northern border area, in Cabinda, and in the Dembos. According to Pélissier, the revolt in the southern Dembos reached the scale of a minor popular uprising.

"Since March 15, a large triangular slice of Angola—its base along the Congo frontier and its apex reaching 200 miles south, uncomfortably close to the capital city of Luanda—has come almost completely into the hands of African revolutionaries," Hamilton Fish Armstrong reported in

4. Published in *Angola: A Symposium* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

5. Patrice Lumumba, the outstanding Congolese nationalist leader who was murdered in February 1961.

the May 15, 1961, *New York Times Magazine*.

Pélissier stated, "The eastern corner of the Congo district [later divided into Zaïre and Uíge districts] was now Portuguese in only nine fortified posts; the rest was abandoned to the rebels. The UPA brought forward its commandos unopposed in the north-south central corridor, from the frontier down to the Dembos. It registered its greatest psychological success in forcing the Portuguese into the error of abandoning the powerful fortress of Bembe. . . ."

By June, the UPA began burning coffee crops and destroying plantations in the areas they held in the Congo, Cuanza-Norte, and Luanda districts in an effort to break the economic ties of the Portuguese settlers and force them to abandon the land they held in the north. The Portuguese counterattacks, in part, became a struggle to regain what could be salvaged of the coffee, which in 1961 was worth about \$55 million and accounted for 40 percent of Angola's foreign exchange earnings.

Although the UPA sent emissaries south, it was unsuccessful in spreading the revolt beyond the Bakongo areas, with the exception of some Mbundu.

The Portuguese reprisals against the rebels—and against the African population as a whole—were barbarous.

In the north, the Portuguese air force, with napalm, rockets, and machine guns, indiscriminately bombed and strafed rebels, villagers, and refugee columns. The Portuguese settlers, inflamed by exaggerated horror stories of massacres of whites by the rebels,⁶ swiftly organized into a "militia" and moved against the African population.

"They fired on sight," Pélissier wrote, "burned down villages and spared prisoners only until they had talked. . . . This was a frankly racial war, without pardon and without foreign witnesses. . . . Its victims were villagers who had nothing to do with the commandos and the more or less organised guerrilla bands. By this indiscriminate killing, the militia, and then the army, caused the Africans to unite on the side of the UPA."

But the massacres were not just limited to northern Angola. They were carried out against Mbundu in the Cuanza Valley and they even reached some parts of central and southern Angola. The Portuguese claimed they had smashed "terrorist plots" in those areas.

The white terror was just as devastating in the cities. The Reverend Clifford J. Parsons, a Baptist missionary and author of "The Makings of a Revolt,"⁷ who was in Angola at the time of the insurrection, described the situation. "Above all in

Luanda," he said, "three weeks after the outbreak of the revolt, I was myself the confidant of those who were witnesses to the nightly murder of innocent Africans in the outer suburbs. At that time there was no fighting within a hundred miles of Luanda, yet wanton killing went on in this way, and even in broad daylight."

In another report, Parsons said, "Thousands of colored people have been slaughtered and mutilated. Each night, the Portuguese secret police have broken into houses and dragged Africans into the streets, where they were shot."

Pélissier noted, however, that the killings were not entirely at random. ". . . every African *assimilado*⁸ regarded as a potential leader was suspect, and many were arrested and some were executed."

As early as May, a Portuguese officer estimated that 30,000 Africans had been killed. The number of deaths by October 7, when the Portuguese announced that their military operations were "complete," are thought to be as high as 50,000. Many of the dead were the victims of disease and famine caused by the war.

The Struggle in Exile

The defeat of the revolt, and the massive Portuguese reprisals, drove hundreds of thousands of refugees across the border into Congo (Kinshasa) and other countries. The estimates of the total number of Angolans in exile at present in Zaïre, the Republic of the Congo, and Zambia range from one million to three million (some had emigrated in search of jobs, and others fled from the fighting that continued sporadically during the decade after the 1961 revolt).

The areas of UPA strength within Angola were virtually depopulated by the war. In Zaïre district, for instance, there were 102,777 inhabitants in 1960. By 1968 this figure had dropped to around 30,000. The forced migrations of the Bakongo, and the continued Portuguese repression in northern Angola, forced the UPA to base itself among the Bakongo exiles, principally in Congo (Kinshasa). It still carried out occasional military operations in Angola, launched from its bases across the border.

In March 1962, the UPA joined with the Partido Democrático de Angola (PDA—Angolan Democratic party), a small group based among the Bazombo in northern Angola, to form the FNLA. A month later the FNLA set up the Governo Revolucionário de Angola no Exílio (GRAE—Angolan Revolutionary Government in Exile).

8. The Portuguese used the term *assimilado* to describe those Africans who had been educated and "assimilated" into the Portuguese culture. A common imperialist practice was to try to pit the *assimilados* and *mestiços* (those of mixed African and Portuguese parenthood) against the *indegenas* ("natives").

Before the Congo won its independence from Belgium, the UPA's activities were officially banned in that country. But the UPA maintained ties with Patrice Lumumba before his assassination. And the support of Joseph Kasavubu, the leader of Abako (Alliance des Bakongo), saved the UPA from Belgian interference. When Kasavubu became president of the new Congolese Republic, however, he turned against the UPA.

In August 1961, Cyrille Adoula, a personal friend of Roberto, was recognized as prime minister, and the UPA was once again able to function from the Congo in relative freedom. It was allowed to open training camps in Congolese territory and in June 1963, the Adoula regime recognized the GRAE.

The reactionary Moïse Tshombe, who came to power in July 1964, employed government troops, Belgian paratroopers, and European mercenaries to crush Congolese rebels. Roberto described the harassment of the UPA in a 1965 interview with *Révolution Africaine*, a weekly journal of the Algerian FLN.

"The obvious collusion of the Portuguese with Tshombe," he said, "had grave consequences for us: confiscation of arms and munitions, acts of intimidation and harassment, blocking of the Angolan-Congolese border, tacitly giving the right to pursuit to the Portuguese army against our refugees on Congolese territory. Attacks against our rear bases, suppression of our radio broadcasts, open activity of the Portuguese secret police (PIDE)⁹ in the Congo."

On January 25, 1965, Roberto attempted to leave the Congo to visit Lusaka, Zambia, at the invitation of President Kenneth Kaunda. But according to a GRAE statement, he was formally forbidden from doing so by Tshombe's secret police. A February 2, 1965, Agence France-Presse dispatch reported that Tshombe had feared that the GRAE might try to contact Congolese insurgents abroad. On February 4, 1965, a GRAE representative in Brussels stated that the GRAE had been accused by the Tshombe regime of furnishing arms to the rebel forces of Pierre Mulele in eastern Congo.

Despite these difficulties, the FNLA and GRAE remained based in the Congo, according to the GRAE, because of logistics advantages and the presence of the refugee population. With the ouster of Tshombe in October 1965 and the coming to power of General Joseph Mobutu, the pressure on the FNLA eased somewhat. It later managed to get aid from the Mobutu regime.

Slanders of the FNLA had been circulated by the MPLA and other groups since the early 1960s. On December 16, 1964, Moscow

9. Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado—International State Security Police.

6. According to Pélissier, only between 200 and 300 Europeans were killed throughout the revolt.

7. Published in *Angola: A Symposium*.

joined the campaign to discredit the FNLA. An article in *Pravda* claimed that the GRAE was linked with U.S. imperialism and with the Tshombe regime. These slanders were repeated, with embellishments, in other countries over the years, particularly by the pro-Moscow Communist parties.

In 1974, the Soviet magazine *Novoe Vremya* offered a new twist to the old slander: "It looks very much as if the plans of the CIA and its backers, the monopolies, which have enormous capital investments in Angola, coincide with the plans of Peking aimed at strengthening the FNLA as a counterweight to the MPLA."

There is no hard evidence to support these charges. The most that João Baptista Nunes Pereira Neto, a Salazarist writer,¹⁰ could produce was that the UPA received some "aid" from the American Committee on Africa, was "openly supported" by various Protestant organizations, and had ties to the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations through the UPA's trade-union group, the Liga Geral dos Trabalhadores de Angola (LGTA—General League of Angolan Workers).

It appears that Roberto may have had some hopes in the early 1960s that Washington would put pressure on Lisbon to negotiate with the nationalist forces.

For instance, in an interview published in the June 6, 1975, *Le Monde*, Roberto said: "When I was in the United States, I greatly admired President Kennedy, whom I met before his election. It was in 1961 that, for the first and last time, the Americans voted against Portugal in the [United Nations] Security Council. I returned to the United States in 1963, on the day of Kennedy's assassination. I couldn't meet him again. I have not set foot on American soil since then. I have never received aid from the United States."

In January 1964 Roberto said: "I came to the conclusion that the Western countries are hypocritical. They help our enemies. While paying lip service to self-determination, the United States supplies its North Atlantic treaty's ally, Portugal, with arms that are used to kill us." He also noted that G. Mennen Williams, assistant secretary of state for African affairs, had tried to convince the Congolese regime not to recognize the GRAE.

On July 8, 1965, Johnny Eduardo, the head of the GRAE official mission in Algeria, issued a statement condemning

10. In "Movimentos Subversivos de Angola," published in *Angola*, by the Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Política Ultramarina, 1963-64. The author attempted to "prove" that the rebels within Angola had no base and only survived thanks to foreign interests. He hinted that the UPA was backed by the CIA and the MPLA by the KGB.

President Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War and Washington's plans to bomb Hanoi. A few months earlier, Eduardo said in an interview with *Révolution Africaine*, "The struggle of the Cuban, Vietnamese



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and Chinese peoples, for example, are a great inspiration to us."

Holden Roberto has frequently declared that the FNLA would accept aid from any source, as long as no political conditions were attached.

In the early 1960s, the FNLA had ties with the Nkrumah regime in Ghana. FNLA officers were trained in Algeria by the FLN under Ben Bella, and in 1964 the Algerian regime recognized the GRAE (it later changed its position and supported both the FNLA and MPLA, calling for their unification). The FNLA received some aid from the Tunisian regime. The Organization of African Unity recognized the GRAE in 1964, but lifted the recognition in June 1971, sending some aid to both the FNLA and MPLA and pressing for their unification.

On January 3, 1964, Roberto announced that the FNLA had decided to accept aid from Peking, which it has been receiving off and on up to the present. He said the FNLA would also accept aid from "other Communist countries." According to Nicolas Vieira of the FNLA in an interview published in the February 15, 1964, *El Moudjahid*, "We have increased armaments available thanks to the support of friendly socialist countries, Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and People's China." The Soviet aid was presumably halted at the time of the *Pravda* attack on the FNLA later that year.

According to Kenneth L. Adelman, writ-

ing in the April 1975 *Foreign Affairs*, the FNLA also received medical supplies from the World Council of Churches and the World Health Organization in the early 1970s.

Unlike the MPLA and the UNITA, which use socialist terminology, the FNLA claims that it is purely nationalist, with no "ideology."

For instance, Henrick Vaal Neto, an FNLA representative during the negotiations with Lisbon in January 1975, said, according to the January 14 Lisbon daily *República*: "The FNLA has always tried to avoid affiliation with any ideological bloc. We think the Angolan people are mature enough to delineate their own ideology, always according to the Angolan reality. . . . What interests us Angolans, in respect to ideology, has nothing to do with 'isms.'"

Despite the FNLA's lack of a perspective for the Angolan independence struggle that could lead it to a successful conclusion—the ouster of all imperialist interests from the country and the overthrow of capitalism—it was still the only nationalist organization in the early 1960s that had any kind of mass base and was actively fighting against the Portuguese colonialists.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International, noting the FNLA's active opposition to Portuguese rule and its participation in mass struggles, issued a statement on February 17, 1964, which said among other things: "The most effective way in which revolutionary Marxists can help the Angolan freedom fighters find their way to the program of socialism is to participate actively in the struggles led by the FNLA, to help them obtain material support in fighting against Portuguese imperialism, and to back them in resisting every neocolonialist maneuver, above all those emanating from American imperialism."

Livio Maitan, a leader of the Fourth International, pointed out in an article in the March 5, 1965, issue of *Intercontinental Press*, "As for the arguments being circulated about this or that Angolan leader rumored to be 'an agent of American imperialism' or a 'friend of Tshombe,' we repeat once again that aside from the fact that no serious proof has been offered up to now, this would not be of decisive importance. The real problem is to ascertain whether or not there is a movement that is struggling, whether it exercises preponderant influence among the masses at a given stage. If these conditions hold, then it is the duty of revolutionists to display active solidarity with those who are struggling, independently of the attitude or possible orientation of a leader or even of an entire leadership. . . ."

"... While not pretending to remain aloof from the fray like pious preachers,

they do not believe they are called on to mix into every factional dispute that develops."

During the early 1960s, when the FNLA was the only group carrying out any significant actions within Angola, the MPLA was in virtual disarray.

The Portuguese repression had eliminated most of its leaders in Luanda and other cities and the survivors in the countryside had to contend with the Portuguese troops as well as hostile FNLA guerrillas, who were reported to have occasionally attacked MPLA members.

It was cut off from much of the Angolan exile community when the Adoula regime officially expelled the MPLA from Congo (Kinshasa) in November 1963. The FNLA barred MPLA guerrillas from crossing Congolese territory to reinforce the remaining MPLA rebels within Angola.

The OAU conciliation committee's recommendation in July 1963 to the OAU member-states to recognize the GRAE was a political defeat for the MPLA.

The MPLA tried to bolster its support by forming the Frente Democrática para a Libertação de Angola (FDLA—Angolan Democratic Liberation Front), with a number of miniscule groupings, some of which had dubious backgrounds. The MPLA allowed this front to fade out shortly after.

The reverses experienced by the MPLA heightened differences within the organization. It began to fragment. In December 1962 Viriato da Cruz, one of its principal founders, left the MPLA after having tried to unify the UPA and MPLA. The majority of the MPLA's members also left. For a while, Cruz declared that his group represented the MPLA, but on April 22, 1964, he joined the FNLA.

Mário de Andrade, another main leader of the MPLA for years, resigned from the leadership in July 1963. Agostinho Neto and Lucio Lara then gained control of the MPLA's central leadership.

After its expulsion from Kinshasa, the MPLA moved its exile headquarters to Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo. "A conference of some fifty MPLA leaders at Brazzaville from January 3 to 10, 1964, took stock of the situation," Pélissier wrote. "They had only two or three hundred soldiers left."

Since the MPLA was blocked from moving its forces into northern Angola, it sent a few guerrillas into Cabinda in January 1963. But the Brazzaville regime of Fulbert Youlou hampered the MPLA's activities, its policy being to support the Cabindan separatists of the Movimento de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda (MLEC—Cabindan Liberation Movement). The overthrow of Youlou in 1964 made it possible for the MPLA to function more freely.

In 1964, Neto visited Moscow, where he obtained financial support for the MPLA.

From the Stalinist statements attacking the FNLA and picturing the MPLA as the only significant Angolan liberation group, it is clear that Neto also obtained Moscow's political backing. The MPLA maintained contacts with the Portuguese Communist party through the Frente Patriótica de Libertação Nacional (FPLN—Patriotic Front for National Liberation), which was based in Algiers.

According to Pélissier, the MPLA had a military training camp at Brazzaville that was organized by Cubans. He noted that at one time the MPLA also received some backing from Peking. Basil Davidson, in an article in the January 7, 1972, *Le Monde*, reported that Peking, after a long interruption, had resumed arms aid to the MPLA.

The MPLA also managed to gain the support of various liberal and left-wing forces in Europe, primarily because of its Soviet backing and because its program was more concrete than that of the FNLA. Among other bourgeois-democratic demands, the MPLA called for independence from Portugal, agrarian reform, creation of a pan-Angolan culture, and eradication of illiteracy.

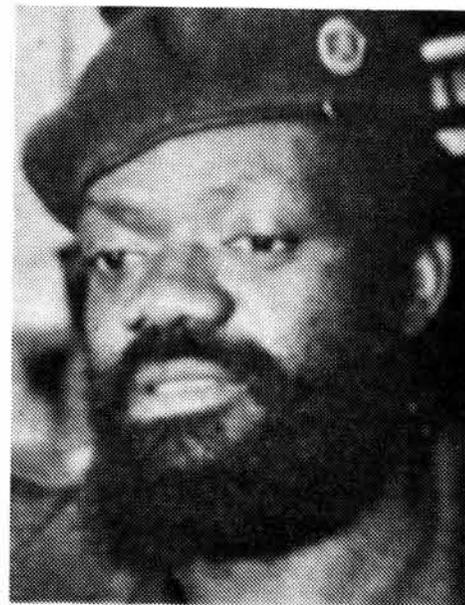
In 1964 the MPLA stepped up its action in Cabinda and moved a few leaders into sparsely populated eastern Angola, where they began military operations in May 1966. The MPLA had maintained its support among the Mbundu in the Dembos area and along the Luanda-Malange corridor. In June and July of 1966 the MPLA managed to send a column of 150 to 200 rebels through FNLA-controlled territory into the Dembos region to strengthen its forces.

From 1967 to 1969, the MPLA moved part of its military and political staff to Lusaka, Zambia, and then into eastern Angola itself. The Kaunda regime in Lusaka gave the MPLA some material aid, but threatened to cut it off if the MPLA forces attacked the Benguela railway, which Lusaka used to transport its copper to the Angolan port of Lobito. By 1970, the MPLA was claiming some guerrilla actions in the Dembos area and in the districts of Cabinda, Moxico, Cuando-Cubango, Lunda, Malange, and Bié.

Despite its early successes, the FNLA also faced setbacks. The pressures of trying to lead a struggle from exile resulted in splits from the FNLA and the GRAE.

In 1963 the União Nacional Angolana (UNA—Angolan National Union) was formed in Lubumbashi, the capital of Congo's Katanga Province. Led by Marcos Kassanga and André Kassinda, the UNA was composed of former UPA partisans, particularly Ovimbundus.

In July 1964, the GRAE Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Malheiro Savimbi and José João Lihauca, the director of the GRAE refugee aid service, resigned. Both



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denounced the GRAE's alleged inefficiency, lack of unity, and inadequate support to the rebels within Angola.

The departure of Savimbi, an Ovimbundu, and later of Alexandre Taty,¹¹ a Cabindan, was a reverse for the FNLA's perspective of broadening its social base beyond the Bakongo. However, according to Mangali Tula, the Bakongo now form only a minority on the FNLA's Central Committee. And according to Roberto in an interview in the June 6, 1975, *Le Monde*, only one of the FNLA ministers in the present coalition regime speaks Kikongo, the language of the Bakongo. What the proportions are within the organization as a whole remains unclear.

Tula also stated that from 1968 to 1970 the FNLA was reorganized. In 1970, the FNLA's two components, the UPA and PDA, were dissolved and the FNLA reconstituted itself as a party.

The FNLA, whose military actions had been at a lull for a few years, stepped up its guerrilla attacks again in 1968. It staged assaults in the districts of Cabinda, Zaire, Uíge, Cuanza-Norte, Luanda, and Malange, with occasional forays into Lunda and Moxico.

Another Contender Enters the Field

The third main Angolan liberation group, the UNITA, was formed by Jonas Savimbi in 1965. Its first guerrilla action was in December 1966 when 500 UNITA troops attacked the frontier town of Teixeira de Sousa on the Benguela railway, losing about half its forces.

In 1969, after the UNITA derailed a

11. A commando unit led by Taty and Kassinda attacked the UPA and GRAE offices in Kinshasa in June 1965.

freight train on the Benguela railway, the Kaunda regime, under pressure from the Portuguese, who temporarily closed down the railway, expelled Savimbi from Zambia. Savimbi then moved his entire headquarters into eastern Angola.

An OAU commission visited eastern Angola in 1968, but found little evidence that the UNITA was very active. However, the UNITA's strength appears to have increased by 1973, according to *Washington Post* correspondent Leon Dash, who visited UNITA-controlled territory that year.

Dash reported that thousands of Angolan peasants were living in UNITA-organized villages. "The UNITA guerrillas," he said, "... administer, apparently effectively, what appears to be a substantial area in eastern Angola."

The UNITA rebels claimed that they were fighting in Moxico, Bié, Cuando-Cubango, Huila, Lunda, and Huambo districts in central, eastern, and southern Angola.¹²

According to António Fernandes, the UNITA's secretary of information and publicity, in an interview published in the October 1974 issue of *Black World*, the UNITA was formed by dissidents from both the FNLA and MPLA who were opposed to trying to lead the independence struggle from exile.

Pélissier states that the UNITA's main base is among the Ovimbundu, who make up about 33 percent of the Angolan population. But according to Dash, the UNITA villages and guerrilla camps he visited included Chokwe, Lunda, Ganguela, and Luimbi. Dash also reported that Savimbi was the only Ovimbundu on UNITA's ten-member executive political bureau.

Dash attended the UNITA's third congress. He reported, "The congress brought together leaders from all parts of UNITA's 'liberated' territories, from the agricultural Luimbi and Ovimbundu tribal regions, in the central part, to the semi-nomadic Cuanhama tribes from the south, to the Chokwe in the northeast."

According to Savimbi, all the UNITA's weapons were captured from the Portuguese or in clashes with the MPLA and FNLA. Savimbi also claimed that the UNITA received no military or economic aid from any foreign state, although Dash noted that it did get some aid from the World Council of Churches and the U.S.-based African Liberation Support Committee. In addition, Savimbi was reported to have visited Peking in 1968 and to have received a small amount of Chinese aid.

Savimbi also told Dash that he had requested, in separate letters to the MPLA and FNLA, to join the Supreme Liberation Council, but was rejected. The Supreme Liberation Council was set up on December

13, 1972, in an effort to unite the MPLA and FNLA, but soon fell apart.

Both the MPLA and FNLA have charged that the UNITA collaborated with the Portuguese forces during the war. These charges stem from a series of four "letters" published in the July 8, 1974, issue of the Paris magazine *Afrique-Asie*, which backs the MPLA politically. The "letters," purportedly written by Savimbi and two Portuguese officers in 1972, discussed carrying out military actions against the MPLA.

On July 19, 1974, António Fernandes issued a communiqué from Lusaka stating that the documents published in *Afrique-Asie* were forgeries.

Many of the UNITA's military and propaganda statements are colored with Maoist terminology. Dash reported, after discussing the UNITA's long-term strategy with Savimbi, "The guerrillas' strategy in the first stage of the war, he [Savimbi] said, is to persuade more and more of the African population to join them in the forests, thus isolating the towns. In the second stage, which is to come when the guerrillas have won over enough of the peasant population, they plan to attack the towns—which by

then will be occupied primarily by the Portuguese, according to the plan."

Savimbi said, "We are in a war that might last for generations."

This strategy was repeated by Fernandes in the interview with *Black World*. "We could not start the war from the cities," he said, "because the majority of the people live in the countryside, so we have to go back to the countryside, from the countryside to town, so we started the armed struggle inside the rural area directing it to towns."

Fernandes also claimed that the UNITA was formed "within the Marxism/Leninism lines" and that the UNITA was aiming for a "socialist" regime in Angola after independence. Wilson Santos, a member of the UNITA's political bureau, later clarified this point. According to a February 18, 1975, Agence France-Presse dispatch, he said that the UNITA "wants to build a Socialist society" in Angola—not one modeled on China, Senegal, or Congo, he said, but one that "fits in with the history and realities of our country."

[Next: The Battle Against Portuguese Neocolonialism]

Sex Discrimination Major Issue at UN Conference

Women's Lot: 'Underfed, Uneducated, Pregnant'

More than 1,000 official delegates and about 5,000 unofficial participants went to Mexico City for the ten-day United Nations International Women's Year world conference that began June 19.

Whatever the other results of the gathering, it has put a spotlight on the oppressed condition of women throughout the world. UN background papers drew a picture of the kind of life led by one billion women, the majority of women in the world.

As summarized by James Sterba in the June 26 *New York Times*, a typical woman from among these one billion "wakes at 5 A.M., eats little or nothing, straps her baby on her back and walks a mile to a field. There, for 10 hours, she bends and stoops, planting or hoeing. At 3 P.M. she scavenges for firewood and carries it and her child back home. There she pounds grain kernels into meal and prepares other food. By 6 P.M. she is ready for another walk—this one, a three-mile roundtrip—to fetch water.

"At dusk, she kindles a fire, then cooks, serves and eats an inevitably bland and nutritionally inadequate meal—the only kind affordable."

These conditions, found predominantly in the capitalist world, affect men as well, but women are almost universally worse off.

Their lot, says a UN paper, is "to be underfed, ill, uneducated and pregnant from the day of their first menstruation until menopause."

Equal pay for equal work was a demand supported by conference participants from both advanced and semicolonial countries. In Japan women's wages are less than half of men's wages, and in most West European countries women are paid about two-thirds of what men are.

While men in twelve European and North and South American countries average a 10.6 hour workday, a working woman with a family averages 11.6 hours work on weekdays and another 5.7 hours of work on weekends while men are mostly at leisure.

The pervasive discrimination against women was reflected in the leadership of the UN conference itself. The president of the conference was a man, and males dominated the inaugural session of speeches. Only eight of the top 300 officials of the UN are women, although 70 percent of UN secretaries and clerks are female.

New York Lieut. Gov. Mary Anne Krupak revealed in a speech to the conference that the American delegation was not selected by women but by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. □

12. The military claims of all three groups are probably exaggerated to some extent.