

LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN ANGOLA

by *UNITA International Representative*

The first European contact with the part of Africa to become known as Angola resulted from Portugal's effort to find a new route to the wealth of the Far East. Harassment from the people who flanked a good part of the Mediterranean had made a steady trading relationship with the East via the Mediterranean virtually impossible for the Portuguese by the 14th and 15th centuries. Portuguese ships gradually edged down the coast of Africa during the 15th century, finally touching on what is now Congo Province, north of Angola, in 1482. Contact, five years later, was made with the ruler of the land, who was known as the Mani-Congo (the King of the Congo).

Evidence that Europeans were interested in Africa mainly for the trading benefits came as early as the first 20-30 years after this initial contact. The Portuguese began the practice of trading directly with other states, the Loango which is Cabinda today, Ngola, from which A+Ngola = Angola gets its name, and Matamba, rather than through the Mani-Congo.

The Portuguese did not find the gold and silver which they thought would lie in the interior but they did find a source of slaves, purchased at first to work on San Tome Islands, off the coast of Nigeria gulf, where a number of Portuguese had settled. Slaves were sold to the traders in North Africa and then, much more importantly, for the plantations in newly discovered America. It is estimated that approximately 20,000,000 Africans from Angolan territory were thus enslaved in the first 100 years after Portuguese contact.

The slave trade seems to have prospered throughout West Africa in the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. No one knows exactly how many slaves were transported from Africa

to North and South American and Caribbean plantations, but a rough approximation is 50,000,000.

What is known is that the Europeans made phenomenal profits in selling slaves in America for far more than they paid for them in Africa, and that slave labor produced the goods (sugar was the most important) on which Europeans again made exorbitant profits by exporting to Europe.

The desire to more fully control this profitable trade provided a major impetus for the Portuguese to finally invade Angola in the later part of the 19th century. The penetration of the Portuguese, however, was sporadic and in general, slow. But the Angolan population resisted, at times extremely skillfully and courageously, despite their disadvantages in regard to military power. Queen Nzinga of Matamba, for example, held the invaders at bay at Luanda for years.

It is important to note that Portuguese direct control over land rarely extended more than a few miles from the coast, and it was in the last half of the 19th century that the Portuguese undertook a series of battles to extend direct colonial control. The superior military strength of the Portuguese in cooperation with England was the deciding factor of our conquest.

Clearly the most indefensible aspect of Portuguese policy is the forced labor system which is essentially slavery. The Portuguese authorities admit that forced labor exists, and say that it is necessary and even a good thing for its victims (blacks in Angola). The system essentially works like this: an upcountry planter informs the government that he will be needing so many men. These men are provided for him by the local Chief of Post. Nati-recruiters go into the villages and collect the necessary number of

men who are then turned over to the planter. The planter to be sure of getting all the recruits he needs usually has to pay off the Chief of Post. The Chief of Post naturally contrives to gather as many laborers as possible in order to secure his kickback. The native is bought as an animal; his owner prefers him to remain as fit as an ox or horse. His employer cares little if he sickens or dies because when he sickens or dies his employer will simply ask for another one.

The technical knowledge of the Portuguese was and continues to be so low that Don Dinis, then King of Portugal, had to recruit foreigners to lead the Portuguese fleet. Nowadays, Portugal is the only European country with an illiteracy rate of 45%. Those who took part in maritime adventures were overwhelmingly illiterate and today still the majority of the Portuguese settlers in Angola are illiterate.

Portugal sent to Angola and other colonies, not only illiterates, but also criminals who were undesirable in their own society. These "lumpen" individuals could only survive in Angola by "mixing" with African women whom they viciously exploited. This is supposed to be the reason for the mythical "absence of racism" in Angola.

The Portuguese government in vain tries to convince the world that nationalist activities are a product of foreigners. Since Diogo Cao came at the confluence of the Congo River in 1482, the Angolan people have resisted Portuguese domination and subjugation. There have been 500 years of constant struggle, 500 years of massacre and torture. This Angolan period saw its best sons fighting with courage and dying with honor.

It constitutes the most eloquent page of consciousness of freedom and liberty of the Angolan people. The names of Queen Nzinga, King Ngola, King Mandume, King Ekuikui, King Matianva and others excel. The history of Portugal does not deny the military value

of the war of resistance of the Dembos, Cuanhama, Bailundo and more particularly that of the Cuanhama people who heroically fought the Portuguese in Angola and the Germans in Namibia--South West Africa.

Angola is Portugal's largest colony, fourteen times larger the size of Portugal and almost twice the size of Texas. It has an area of 481,000 square miles. Angola has a population of five and a half million people, out of which 200,000 are whites and 30,000 are mixed. It is bordered by the Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa) and Zambia on the East and Namibia (South West Africa) on the South. Angola and Portugal's other African colonies, namely: Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, San Tome Islands and Principe are among the stronghold of oppressive colonialism.

Of course, Portugal has not revealed the true conditions in her colonies to the United Nations, of which she has been a member since 1955. What is revealed is not repression, but only the beginning of revolt. Thus, Angola like Portugal remains a strict dictatorship and the full range of the facts with documentation about Angola is less available than almost about any other part of Africa. However, the reality is pretty much the same today as it has been for four hundred years.

The changes inside Angola after the technical abolition of slavery were largely semantic. Masters kept their former slaves by calling them contract workers (servicais). They obtained additional workers (as previously they had obtained slaves) from agents who received them from chiefs by means of gifts and bribes.

Also the colonial administrators would draw up contracts between employers and vagrants (Africans not under contract), forcing the latter to work under five-year contracts. Contract workers were treated worse than slaves under this system because the employer felt no proprietorship, nor obligation. To-

day, the most oppressive aspect of the Portuguese policy is the forced labor system, which is little more than slavery.

Portugal maintains that the African countries under her rule are somehow destined to form an integral part of Portugal without any right to a life of their own choosing. Her colonial policies are oppressive and cruel. While claiming to give Africans the spiritual benefits of civilization, Portugal has instead zealously exploited the economic riches of the colonies. An editorial from a Portuguese newspaper in 1935 could well assert: "Africa is for us moral justification and *raison d'etre* as a power. Without it we would be a small nation, with it we are a greater country."

EDUCATION

Cultural assimilation is frequently mentioned as Portugal's contribution to native policy in Africa. At the present time in Angola, however, as in the other colonies, there is a clear demarcation between the "civilized" population (populacao civilizado), who are entitled to enjoy rights as citizens of the Portuguese Republic, and those not yet qualified as such (nao civilizados). The former automatically include Europeans. Africans and Mulattos are included only if they fulfill necessary "qualifications." Any African can, in theory, enter the ranks of a nao indigena and become assimilado if he meets the following standards:

1. He must be a Catholic.
2. Have proof that he is 21 years old.
3. Demonstrate ability to speak and read Portuguese.
4. Earn sufficient income to support himself and his family.
5. Possess good character.
6. Give evidence that he has not evaded military service, and many other microscopic facts that I need not mention.

Only then, however, is an African eligible for higher education. One of the reasons for

the limitations on assimilados is that facilities for education are such that the possibility of Africans achieving assimilation is practically confined to the urban areas. Also, the strict age limit for admission to the Liceus, the State High Schools, means that Africans are not often qualified for admission, while the fees charged by private high schools prevent the entry of many African children.

HEALTH

The African's need for medical assistance is as desperate as it is for education, and less adequately provided for. The Medical and Health Services are responsible to the Ministry of Overseas Territory and are in touch with the Institute of Tropical Medicine. It is estimated today that there is one bed for every 2,200 persons in Angolan hospitals. Government physicians number about 150 with an additional hundred in private practice (including medical missionaries). Government and company hospitals are segregated. To illustrate, there are separate wards and operating rooms in some Luanda hospitals. Medical services practically never reach the villages and countryside and preventive medicine seems to be limited to erratic efforts to inoculate for small pox and sleeping sickness. Malnutrition is general and its main effect is in spreading tuberculosis.

REPRESSION

The colonial system has a way of reaching down to every male African since each must possess an identification booklet (cadernete). This contains the individual's photograph, fingerprints, labor record, tax payments and the name of his wife and children. Each African male must show his booklet on demand and have it properly visaed when moving from one point of Angola to another. The assimilado must also show his identification card. In some parts of Portuguese Africa (Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe) an employer must sign his employee's booklet every day.

The internal military patrol (guarda fiscal) tries to prevent desertion from contractual labor obligation. In addition, the Angolan border, especially that touching the Congo, is patrolled most recently by tanks and even super-modern electronic airplanes. African students who have graduated from secondary schools are screened carefully before being allowed to leave Angola for higher education in Portugal. Those university students who are suspected of harbouring advanced thoughts are not allowed to return to Angola. I, myself am a victim of this barbaric repression which forced me to compulsory refuge in the United States. There are many other Angolans, wherever they may be, bearing also the shameful designation of a refugee. Some of us refugees, are subjected to harassment by local authorities and intimidation because of political affiliation. In some cases, our scholarship funds have been withdrawn and we have been threatened with deportation because of the mishap of bearing no travel documents.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION

In Luanda as well as in the northern part of Angola, the Angolan intellectuals tried to regroup in 1953 to form clandestine movements in order to fight against fascism. From 1953-1958 in Luanda, P. L. U. A. (Partido da Luta Unida dos Africanos) and M. P. L. A. (Movimento Popular da Libertacao de Angola) were founded. These nationalist movements which began in Luanda were confined to urban areas. It is true, however, that M. P. L. A. despite its geographical and social limitations, represent an intellectual effort for the liberation of Angola.

Despite persistent opposition of the Portuguese government to grant the territories freedom and independence, liberation movements have taken up the struggle against the colonial oppression.

In exile, the emigrants were organized into regional associations to defend, in common, their own interests. These interests were soc-

ial in nature, but later these associations became political movements. In Congo Kinshasa the U. P. A. (Uniao das Populacoes de Angola) was a leading organization in this movement. The U. P. A. was clandestinely organized in 1954, although there were earlier nationalistic activities among expatriates from Angola in Kinshasa. By 1958, the activity of the Union had secretly spread to all parts of Angola. Its program includes a plan for complete and immediate independence for Angola, strengthening of Pan-Africanism and opposition to racial segregation and oppression. More recently other nationalistic groups have arisen in Angola and the other Portuguese colonies in Africa.

U. N. I. T. A. (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) represents a new tendency inside the country that of relying on its own forces. U. N. I. T. A. wages an armed struggle as the main form of struggle. U. N. I. T. A. represents a new step in the struggle for liberation, a political party born from inside action, instead of being an action initiated from the military camps based in neighboring countries.

The importance of correct ideology in guiding liberation struggles cannot be overemphasized. As Frantz Fanon once stated: "The deeper I enter into cultural and political circles of Africa, the surer I become that the danger which threatens Africa is the absence of ideology."

Through the 1960's Africans were granted national independence but became neo-colonies. Thus, in analyzing the correct liberation movement, the organization's ideology must undergo close scrutiny so that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. And yet an ideology cannot be evaluated in isolation from the struggle itself.

Ideology evolves through the interaction between the stated theory and its verification in practice. Thus, in order to evaluate U. N. I. T. A.'s ideology, it is essential to investigate both the philosophy of UNITA and its manifestation in reality. U. N. I. T. A. bases its actions

on an objective analysis of material conditions. In a country with an 85% rural population, U. N. I. T. A. correctly analyzed the correct conditions of Angola, that the vast majority of organizational work had to be done among the peasantry since the peasants as the majority and not the urban working class would form the backbone of the Angolan liberation struggle. This decision enabled UNITA to avoid the cost in human lives which many revolutionary groups paid due to their incorrect strategy of trying to launch a revolution in a rural country from an urban base. Another example of a correct ideological position leading to correct revolutionary practice is the establishment of UNITA's head quarters inside the Angolan borders. An objective analysis of material conditions necessitates concrete facts. These facts however cannot be gathered from outside Angola. Consequently, Jonas Savimbi, UNITA's head, and other leaders of the organization are based within the country. In addition, this presence of the leadership helps cement the bonds between the intellectuals and the proletarian masses.

On an international level, UNITA's view that the imperialist system is at the root of oppression and exploitation in the world, leads to her support of all oppressed throughout the world. Of particular note is UNITA's declared solidarity with the working and oppressed people in America and around the world made public as early as their 1968 central committee meeting at which it stated: "Our struggle against colonialists in Angola is at one with that of the working and oppressed people in America who are containing America's imperialists who are Portugal's suppliers of money and military hardware used to destroy the African people of Angola. We reaffirm that we are conscious of the profound value and scope of the struggle of all oppressed people in the Americas. We must combine our struggle."

Jonas Savimbi, UNITA's President, has often been called the most dangerous man in Angola. UNITA's original cadre were mem-

bers of this radical faction of GRAE who split with Holden Roberto as the contradictions within the party began to mount and it became amply clear that Roberto's pro-American views could not be reconciled with the liberation of Angola. As foreign minister of GRAE during the years 1962-1964, Savimbi came into increasing conflicts with Holden Roberto over the following issues: 1. Moving the headquarters of the movement inside Angola as the basis for gaining liberated areas and administering them; 2. Lack of ideological direction and scientific socialist orientation; 3. Need for self-reliance at this initial stage of the revolution.

In breaking away from an established recognized national movement, Savimbi and his fellow revolutionaries were not setting any precedent in the liberation struggle of Africa although they were dismissed by some as an antagonistic splinter group. They were in fact following the footsteps of such figures as Kwame N'Krumah who found it necessary (when it became evident that the necessary changes could not be made within the party) to break away from the United Gold Coast Convention in Ghana and form the Convention People's Party in 1949; Kenneth Kaunda (President of Zambia) who broke away from the African National Congress in 1958 to form what is now UNIP in Zambia; and Sobukwe who led the break away from the African National Congress and formed the Pan Africanists Congress (P. A. C.) of Azania.

The contemporary history of revolutionary struggle supports Mao's thesis that the establishment of rural revolutionary base areas and the encirclement of the cities from the countryside would be of crucial practical importance in Angola.

UNITA was the first movement in Angola to correctly analyse the concrete conditions prevailing in that country.

Thus it recognized that the peasantry would represent the backbone of the revolu-

tionary movement although in alliance with the small percentage of civil servants and intellectuals. The emphasis which the organization gives to the peasantry is not to imply that the level of their practical political consciousness was advanced, for indeed it was not. The peasants in Angola are more politically naive than the urban population. However, they are also more reliable when mobilized.

The program of the party is first presented to them. Party cadres enter the villages, live with local population in order to grasp the real existing problems. At this stage, as they are becoming familiarized with the situation they are, in fact, the students of the masses. Subsequently, the party is able to produce a concrete program. And it is at this stage, once the analysis followed by synthesis is made, that the masses become the students of the party cadres-manifesting the permanent and dialectical relationship between the

Nigeria...

Continued from page 56

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vanguard party and the people. The peasantry responds to concrete facts that affect their daily life under Portuguese exploitation and colonialism such as: forced labor in mines and coffee plantations, exceedingly high taxes and low wages, lack of schools for their children, lack of salt and sugar and markets in which to sell their products. When they consciously and voluntarily accept the means of fighting against these injustices then they form in their local villages a political committee which makes their own decisions, produces their own food, and creates their own militia along the lines of self-reliance. From this low level of political mobilization carried out over a long period among the peasantry, the party can move to higher levels of political education. Step by step consciousness is created. It is through this process that the rural population is integrated into the armed revolutionary struggle.

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CPL Report... Continued from page 9

Now that Mao has broken his east wind his camp followers in Canada are in disarray. Most have gone off the deep end with nationalism. The old-line (Khrushchev-Browder-Buck-Kashton-Hall) revisionists are more of an obstacle to revolution due to the Soviets determination to put them to use and also the desire of the bosses to steer people into the swamp of "peaceful" everything.

Again the class struggle is sharpening -- with most of the upheavals being unadulterated class fights. The missing link has been Communist leadership. Now, while Nixon, Brandt and Co. are handing medals for class betrayal is the time to announce the good news that our Parties are bent directing the proletarian war for STATE POWER.