

Interviews in Depth

Angola MPLA



Seta Likambuila

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INTERVIEWS IN DEPTH

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Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola



Interview with Seta Likambuila
MPLA Field Commander and
middle cadre discusses
contradictions and advances in the
Angolan revolutionary process.

Seta Likambuila

Sixth Region Commander Seta Likambuila was interviewed by Don Barnett of the Liberation Support Movement on the Angola border in July 1970. Commander Likambuila was one of the MPLA guerrillas who helped open the Eastern Front (Third Region) in mid-1966 and has risen over the past four years from a zone chief of operations and reconnaissance to his present position as commander of the newly opened Sixth Region in the Huila district of Angola. This interview was designed to probe some of the problems faced by the MPLA in implementing its various military and civilian programs within Angola. While the overall progress of MPLA is not to be doubted, it is also the case that every advance in the revolutionary struggle gives rise to its own peculiar set of problems or contradictions, and that it is in the resolution of these problems in day-to-day practice that further progress becomes possible. MPLA is to be commended for its unceasing efforts to expose, clarify and resolve the unfolding contradictions within the Angolan revolutionary process and, by sharing its experience with other comrades, for contributing to the acceleration of the revolutionary process on other fronts in the worldwide anti-imperialist struggle.

LSM -- Perhaps, Commander Likambuila, you could begin by discussing the way in which people are recruited into the armed struggle in Angola and some of the problems faced by MPLA in this important work.

LIKAMBUILA -- We always recruit our guerrillas from among the villagers, and in some cases from the towns and cities. Since our struggle is for the whole people, we must also recruit those who are to fight from among the

people. Our political commissars and activists go to the villages to teach the people about the politics of our struggle. When they reach a village they call the people together and talk to them about MPLA and the armed struggle we are waging against Portuguese colonialism. The people know they are exploited and oppressed by the Portuguese; we don't need to tell them much about that. They only want to know how they can fight against the Portuguese and win. Those who are capable and willing offer to join the guerrillas usually the younger people. We never recruit by force; all of our militants are volunteers.

We always have some problems, however, because very few of the villagers are educated and it is often hard to get them to understand the difficulties of the struggle; why we are fighting and how it will be a long struggle. Most understand and join, but some who haven't understood remain in the villages and only join later.

The main difficulty we have in recruiting comes from our not having adequate supplies and material. The villagers see that our guerrillas move without clothing and that they lack blankets, medicines and other things. They see that there is much suffering and this makes some hesitate to join the struggle. Others, after joining and working for a time, begin to understand the difficulties of having no blankets, uniforms and so on; they ask permission to go and work in Zambia and other bordering countries in order to get the things they need. We often give them permission to go and after they have gotten what they are after they return - but this situation gives us a bit of a headache.

LSM -- How do you deal with such requests from guerrillas to go and work in Zambia? How do you determine whether a man should receive such a leave of absence?

LIKAMBUILA -- The guerrillas ask us, putting their problems to the detachment chief or zone commander. Usually they say, "Comrade commander, I have no blanket

and no uniform and I am suffering. It would be good if you could allow me leave for about a month so that I can go and search for these things." The commander then has to study the problem; to see if he can get a uniform or blanket for the comrade who has requested leave. If he is able to get these things he will tell the guerrilla; "I have got a blanket (or a uniform) which I am going to give you, so you don't need to go work in Zambia." If he isn't able to get the needed things he says that he will study the problem. Then he meets with other commanders of the zone and they discuss the problem. If they have no way of helping that comrade, then they will usually agree to give him a few weeks or a month to go seek them elsewhere. Some of the guerrillas who get leave go to see their parents or other relatives in Zambia who try to help them get the things they need to stay in the bush. Many guerrillas in the Eastern Region have relatives who earlier fled to Zambia to escape Portuguese oppression.

LSM -- How do detachment leaders or zone commanders deal with the problems of discipline among the guerrillas?

LIKAMBUILA -- Actually, discipline is a major question in our organization. Since all of our guerrillas decide for themselves to fight for their country, they generally have good discipline. But discipline in the armed struggle also has to be taught and learned if it is to be maintained. Commanders and other leaders teach the guerrillas about the politics of our struggle - how they should stay and fight for the people, about the cooperation between the guerrillas and the villagers, about MPLA's programs in education, medicine, culture and so on. They also must be taught discipline in handling weapons and ammunition; how to maintain their weapons, never lose them; and how to use them under all sorts of conditions or difficulties. But again politics, political education, is the principle means by which we maintain discipline. Political understanding of the struggle and its objectives is the surest, the only, way to maintain discipline - to insure that the guerrillas practice self-discipline.

LSM -- When MPLA forces penetrate a region controlled by the Portuguese and enter a village, what do they tell the new recruits from the village regarding the struggle and the relation of the guerrillas to the people?

LIKAMBUILA -- The political commissar of the zone, or the activista politico or group leader, will begin by explaining to the new recruits why we are fighting with guns - because there are many ways of fighting in the struggle for independence. They teach them something about the history of Angola; how the Portuguese colonizers came to this country, seized slaves and land and fought those who resisted; how the Angolans have suffered for centuries from forced labor, taxes, miserable wages, brutal treatment, forced collection of rubber, low prices for their crops, animals skins, etc., and how we have learned that the only way to drive out the Portuguese colonialists is by fighting in a disciplined way with guns.

Then they are told about the relationship between MPLA guerrillas and the people, the villagers: "Guerrillas of MPLA are the sons and daughters of the villagers, of the people, so you should never mistreat your own fathers, mothers and children. As a guerrilla you come from the people and fight for the people. When you abuse or mistreat the people you cease to be a guerrilla." They are also told how we organize our work in relation to the people. In the detachments, guerrillas should plant their own fields in order to supply their own food, but the villagers should help the guerrillas with alimentation because they are the parents of the guerrillas who are fighting to free them from Portuguese oppression. So the fathers and mothers must cultivate; everyone, not just those with guns, must contribute to the struggle by working in some way. Some of the old men cannot handle guns, but they help the guerrillas through cultivation, or by hunting or making things of use such as skin pouches, water containers, etc.

Nevertheless, the detachments always face problems

getting enough food - especially in the Eastern Region (Moxico and Cuando Cubango) where the people have been driven by the Portuguese into the forests and grow only cassava and millet. We need other food crops like maize, ground nuts and vegetables and are trying to cultivate these crops now with the help of UNTA, the National Trade Union of Angola, which is responsible for organizing agricultural labor and getting implements we need, such as hoes and axes, from the outside.

To the young people of the village we explain about our Centers of Revolutionary Instruction (CIR) and SAM (Medical Assistance Services) training schools, where many young guerrillas receive education in reading and writing, economics, politics, history, etc., or training as medical aides, as well as military training. We have three CIR's now and are planning to create many more.

We also help the villagers form a local militia and explain how they will have to provide protection for those who are working in the fields or sleeping in the village at night. We give some training to those chosen for the militia and are now able to provide them with a few rifles. Earlier they used only spears and bows and arrows.

LSM -- What kind of problems do the local cadres face in organizing and carrying out the tasks of distribution and exchange of goods? What are the typical problems, for example, which they report to the zone commanders or political commissars?

LIKAMBUILA -- Well, it is the political commissars who are responsible for seeing that these tasks are carried out among the people. They work through the village action committees which are instructed on how to set up people's stores.

They organize groups to go to the border to get things which they used to get from the Portuguese merchants.

These things, supplied by the MPLA, are then carried to the people's stores. The regional and zone leaders of logistics and supplies decide what is to go where. Once in the people's stores, these goods are exchanged for the villagers' crops, skins and other products. The people don't have money, so these goods are exchanged at fixed prices - so many units of cassava, say, for a shirt or a pound of sugar. In this way we achieve a distribution of goods from inside and outside, between militants and civilians.

As to the problems faced in this area - well, first, there is the difficulty of just not having enough clothing, soap, salt, etc. Then there are problems with transport equipment - difficulties in getting enough containers for their crops, especially sacks or bags, and also canoes - because in some places the people use river transport. They are also short of materials for keeping accounts. The action committees are responsible for keeping records of what they sell and receive, so they need books and ballpoint pens or pencils.

LSM -- How does the MPLA deal with the problem of recruiting and training middle cadres? Cadres, for example, trained in medicine, engineering, agriculture or specialized military spheres such as demolition or the use of mortars?

LIKAMBUILA -- Our organization needs many such cadres to perform revolutionary duties in the areas of medicine, engineering, agriculture, radio electronics, education, etc. We also need people who are capable of teaching these skills to others, and of replacing those who are wounded or killed in the struggle - such as happened with Dr. Boavida in 1968. Many cadres are trained inside Angola, at the CIR's, SAM's, command posts and other places. Still, because we lack training materials and equipment, some of our militants are sent outside to study.

As for recruiting, our zone commanders or squadron

leaders select those they believe to be capable and disciplined to go outside for study; men and women who have demonstrated that they have the discipline and capacity for learning military or technical subjects. About sixty of these militants are sent out to study each year. When they finish their studies they return to work in Angola.

LSM -- MPLA is now a large movement with responsibilities in many military and civilian spheres. How does the MPLA organize itself to carry out these various responsibilities?

LIKAMBUILA -- Our movement is organized into various levels and groups so that it can carry out its work smoothly and efficiently. At the top level we have the Political-Military Co-ordinating Committee (CCPM) composed of five men including the President, Dr. Neto. These leaders are chosen at the national level, at the National Congress of MPLA representatives. Each member of the CCPM is responsible for a different area of work and together they co-ordinate all aspects of MPLA political and military activity. All have an equal voice on the CCPM and no one member, even the President, is above the others. The President acts as co-ordinator or chairman, but if he is absent another will take his place. All decisions made at the CCPM level are collective decisions.

At the next level there is the Steering Committee which meets once or twice a year and decides on all matters at the national level. All regional commanders and political commissars, chosen by the CCPM, are on the Steering Committee. There are approximately thirteen members, but the number is not fixed; new regions such as the sixth are being opened as the struggle advances and in one case two sub-regions have been created in the vast third region. At present there are six regions; or five regions plus two sub-regions.

Members of the Steering Committee, the regional commanders and political commissars, are always inside the country, doing their various jobs in each region. They receive instructions from the CCPM and pass them down to the zone commanders.

Together, the regional commander, political commissar, chief of operations and reconnaissance and chief of finance and logistics make up the Regional Command. They decide on all matters concerning their region and each has his special job to do. The senior leader is the regional commander, followed by the political commissar. But apart from this and their particular tasks, they all take part in regional-level military operations and are responsible for teaching guerrilla tactics to the militants. They are also responsible for dealing with and resolving region-wide matters and problems ... problems which cannot be handled by the zone commanders such as how to deal with enemy prisoners or the settling of murder cases.

Below the regional level is the Zone Command made up of the zone commander, political organizer, chief of reconnaissance and operations and chief of logistics and finance. Zone leaders are also chosen by the CCPM. The Zone Command, with the help of the regional commanders, are responsible for carrying out political education among the people and guerrillas of their zone. They also plan and lead military operations involving guerrillas of their zone. They cannot just wait for operations from the regional commanders, who are constantly moving from place to place within the region; zone commanders must exercise tactical flexibility in planning and carrying out zone level combats and other operations, such as political work in the Portuguese concentration-camp hamlets around the posts and barracks and in the towns.

We have also formed, and are still in the process of forming, squads or columns which will be larger and more mobile than our guerrilla detachments. Each

column of 150 men is led by a column commander under the control of the zone commander. There will be about five such columns in a zone. The zone chief of operations is responsible for planning large-scale ambushes, attacks on posts, sabotage operations, etc. Then he discusses his plans with the other members of the Zone Command. When they are agreed, the plans are passed on to the column commanders. The chief of operations must calculate how many men are needed for a particular mission, what types of weapons and ammunition they will need and, in the case of an attack on a small enemy post, whether they will try to advance and occupy the position or not. When a mission is decided upon, the zone leaders don't just sit back while others carry out their plans; they must also participate in the combat.

Each column is divided into five sections of 30 men under a section leader. These sections contain three smaller groups of ten men each. When a heavy attack on the enemy is planned, the whole column will go; but if it is a smaller mission only one or two sections may take part, or if it is a very small mission it might be carried out by a single group. The chief of a group is responsible for commanding that group, resolving minor problems among his men and doing some of the preliminary work in recruitment. He might recruit some villagers, who are then sent to the section chief who will divide them among his groups or send them to the column commander to divide among the sections. The group leader is also responsible for organizing cultivation by his group; determining what kind of crops are needed and what materials they will use. He also generally takes part in all actions against the enemy.

LSM -- In the past MPLA forces were organized in smaller detachments. What are the reasons for this new formation? For bringing these detachments together into larger mobile columns?

LIKAMBUILA -- Actually, at first - in the Eastern Region in 1966 - we were organized in larger units, but later

we broke up into smaller detachments in order to engage the enemy in many attacks at different places and to organize the villagers. We destroyed roads and bridges and carried out hundreds of ambushes and limited attacks on the Portuguese posts and barracks. But the enemy has now changed his tactics and moves into the liberated areas in large numbers during their dry season offensives. We then had also to change our tactics to suit the new battle situation. Now when the enemy comes we can employ a whole column which can do the work because it is equal to or stronger than the enemy force.

Also, as I said, at first our attacks were very limited. Now, with mobile columns which can move in large numbers with heavy weapons, we can carry out much larger attacks. We are better able to annihilate whole enemy units and attack and occupy Portuguese positions. In this way we can gain more enemy weapons and ammunition, which is very important as we move deeper and deeper into Angola and farther away from friendly borders.

LSM -- When was this decision to form mobile columns made and how much progress have you made in implementing it?

LIKAMBUILA -- It was decided in late 1969 but only began to be put into practice in 1970, especially in the Third Region. By now we have also got columns in the Fourth and Fifth Regions and it is our intention to generalize this formation in all six regions.

LSM -- Have there been any instances so far of successful MPLA use of these mobile columns in combat?

LIKAMBUILA -- Yes. We used 60 men in our recent attack on Karipande barracks; only two sections, but they were able to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy - killing over 100 Portuguese soldiers. We didn't occupy Karipande, but if two sections can accomplish this much, you can imagine what a whole column could do. Also, in

the Fourth Region, in Bié, we have carried out several column attacks and in one instance the Portuguese didn't even have a chance to call for reinforcements.

LSM -- In his New Year's speech this year President Neto indicated that some of the detachments were too passive, were not engaging in enough combats or seeking combat. Has the shift to mobile columns been intended, at least in part, to deal with the problem of passivity?

LIKAMBUIA -- Yes. The formation of columns is also important because after a while our small groups came to spend most of their time with the villagers; they concentrated on safeguarding the villagers and became less active in planning and carrying out attacks on the enemy. At first, when the Portuguese were active and moving in the area, the detachments engaged in many ambushes and other combats, but then when the enemy stopped moving, the detachments became like militias. They protected the villagers but became less mobile and aggressive against the enemy. Now, with the formation of large mobile columns, the work of protecting the villages is left mainly with the local militias and the number of guerrilla combats against the enemy is increasing.

LSM -- Have there also been problems of passivity among the group leaders? How do you deal with the case of a leader who doesn't engage in combat or who seeks to avoid combat?

LIKAMBUIA -- Yes, we have had such problems with group leaders and even with commanders. With a chefe do grupo we would first call a meeting with zone leaders and ask him why he has been avoiding combats, spending so much time with the villagers, etc. Then we would call a meeting with the guerrillas in his group and the villagers found around his detachment. We try to raise his consciousness and combativity and often find that some particular problem has caused him not to be active. In this case he is criticized and advised and given a month

or several months to improve his practice. But if the guerrillas and the people say that he is not capable, that he has been criticized before and has not improved or that he purposely does wrong, then he will be demoted from chefe do grupo to a regular guerrilla. If he were a zone commander, he would be demoted to a section or column commander or transferred to some other job which better suits his capacities.

LSM -- Have you found that marital relations among the guerrillas and leaders have had an affect upon their morale or combativeness? Does the fact that a militant is married and has children cause him to be somewhat passive? How has the MPLA dealt with this and related problems?

LIKAMBUILA -- At first we found that many of our guerrillas and leaders had their wives and children absent from them and often far away. When they didn't see them for a long time, some of them started to become inactive in their work and in the case of commanders, their leadership sometimes became passive. The movement studied this problem and decided that it could perhaps be resolved if we moved the wives and families of the militants closer to them. Because, if they are apart for a long time, a man will begin to worry whether his wife or children are suffering, whether they have been killed or wounded by the Portuguese and so on. But if they are near, he can go and have a look and then return to his work. Some of the wives of the comrades are also guerrillas, and this is no problem; but those that are not we move into the zone or region where their husband's column operates.

LSM -- How does MPLA deal with sexual relations between the guerrillas and villagers and between guerrilla men and women? What are the MPLA rules in this area and what are some of the problems that come up in enforcing them?

LIKAMBUILA -- It is prohibited for a guerrilla to have

sex-play or intercourse with any guerrilla woman, unless they are engaged - and even then they cannot have sexual intercourse until they are married. It is also prohibited for guerrillas to play with village women. If a guerrilla does, and she is married, he will be punished or demoted, and if he has intercourse with an unmarried girl he will be forced to marry her if she becomes pregnant.

As for enforcing these rules, we have had problems in the past but they are becoming less frequent. Many of our guerrillas are now married and more and more of the unmarried ones are sent to the CIR's or SAM's where there is strict discipline maintained by the political commissar and other leaders. Also, the action committees and political organizers have seen to it that those who have violated these rules are punished or demoted and the others are learning from this lesson.

LSM -- I realize that you can force the guerrillas by punishment or the threat of punishment to obey these rules, but what do the political organizers and other leaders tell them about the problem? How are they educated to see the positive value or need for self-discipline in the matter of sexual relationships?

LIKAMBUILA -- First, they are always told not to engage in sex-play with the guerrilla girls who are still learning or who are married because it creates problems in the struggle, it brings conflicts among the guerrillas; especially if two guerrillas become entangled with one girl. "If you wish to play," we tell them "you should propose marriage to the girl and not start a casual relationship. Because if she becomes pregnant and moves to a different place, she will not be your wife and it will not be possible for you to take care of the child. So it is better to keep good discipline, and to marry if you wish instead of just playing about."

LSM -- How do guerrilla men and women go about getting married in the course of the struggle? Does the move-

ment have to approve such marriages?

LIKAMBUILA -- Yes, the man reports their intentions to the column commander, who reports to the zone commander. The Zone Command then prepares a request to the Steering Committee asking that the couple be allowed to marry. Sometimes the girl is still schooling or is stationed in a different place, so the Steering Committee decides when they are to meet and get married.

LSM -- Have you had any problems concerning leaders at various levels seeking certain privileges, seeking to live at a higher level than the guerrillas under their command?

LIKAMBUILA -- Actually, yes, because for a time we had two kitchens in the command posts of the zones, one for the guerrillas and one for the leaders. Sometimes the leaders got more to eat than the guerrillas; the same food, just more of it. The guerrillas, in some cases through misunderstanding, came to think that the leaders were getting more and better food than they were. There was some suspicion and complaining about this. The problem was then studied by the Steering Committee and it was decided in 1969 that the system of two kitchens be abandoned. Now we have only one kitchen in all our camps and everyone eats from the same pots. In this way we managed to solve the problem.

LSM -- What about the distribution of special goods from the outside, such as sugar or cigarettes? Are these things shared equally among all the militants, both leaders and regular guerrillas?

LIKAMBUILA -- Yes, especially in the case of things like sugar. When they are sent inside to be distributed among the detachments it is the responsibility of the chiefs of finance to see that the things are equally divided. Of course, with cigarettes we get very few of them, and they are divided among those who smoke.

LSM -- In the past many of the men in your detachments were unarmed . Have you reached a level of combat now where you are able to arm all members of your detachments and columns?

LIKAMBUILA -- Yes, all of the men in our detachments are now armed. Even the militia and members of the action committees, who in the past were armed only with traditional weapons, are now provided with rifles. We are now able to get more weapons and ammunition from the enemy, to capture guns such as the German G3 and the American FN. This has helped us to arm both the detachments and the militias.

LSM -- How are the village action committees formed and organized?

LIKAMBUILA -- The action committee members are chosen by the villagers, both men and women. Our political organizers go round to the villages in a newly liberated area and explain our struggle, carry out political education. The villagers are then asked to organize themselves, to form action committees, so that they can take part in the struggle and resolve some of their own problems; because even when the country becomes independent the self-governing of the villagers will depend on the action committees. So the political organizers ask the people to choose those who are capable of leadership for the action committees. Then they vote for the various officers of the action committees, the president, vice-president, secretary; treasurer and political activist, who acts as the adviser or councilor in political matters. A woman is also elected to represent OMA (the Organization of Angolan Women) on the action committee; and women can also be elected to any of the other offices.

LSM -- Are the action committees elected for an indefinite time, or are new elections held at fixed times, say at the end of one or two years?

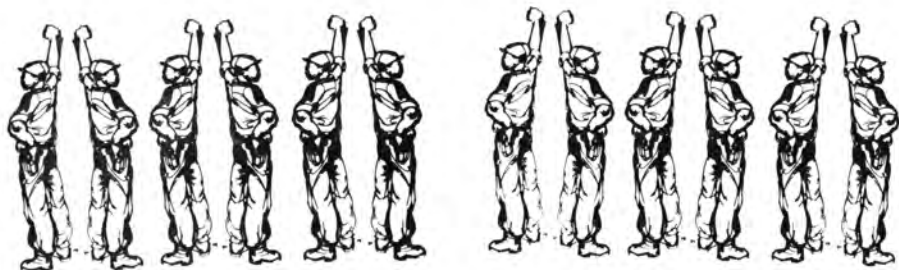
LIKAMBUILA -- Some remain for a year or two, but others may remain right up to the day of independence. If any action committee is found to be weak by the people, they will report to the political organizer about it and he will discuss the matter with the political commissar of the zone. The political commissar will then issue an order that the villagers should sit and elect new officers to the action committee. This may be done at any time, even after only six months from the last election.

The action committee has the responsibility to form a militia and it can punish militiamen if they disobey orders. For example, one day President Inyaniboji of Zone D in the Third Region, sent three of his militiamen to take and guard the women in their fields. When they reached the fields, the militiamen left the women unguarded and went off hunting. The women complained about this when they returned to the village and the three men were removed from the militia for three weeks and made to work in the collective fields for this period. The punishment given depends upon the mistake committed by the wrong-doer.

The action committee is also responsible for keeping accounts and preparing reports about the people's store and the people's plantation. At the end of each year these reports are sent to UNTA, which is responsible for organizing the work of Angolan peasants and workers.

LSM -- Traditionally, Angolan peasants - at least in the Eastern Region - cultivated family fields, and it is only since the revolution came to this area in 1966 that they have started working on collective plots. Has it been difficult for MPLA to convince them of the necessity or value of collective agricultural work?

LIKAMBUILA -- Actually, it has been; especially in Moxico where each family had its own fields and they weren't accustomed to working collectively. When the struggle started in this region we began teaching them





about collective farms, but at first they didn't understand and didn't want to follow our advice. Later they came to understand better and began working on the collective farms, but even now they still continue to cultivate family plots in addition to the collective ones controlled by the action committees. They are coming to learn, though, that collective farms are better or at least necessary. The militia, for example, must patrol and guard those working in the fields, but they couldn't do this if they weren't given a share of the harvest. Then, before the revolution, when they had only private family plots, some faced problems of hunger and were forced to exchange what few things they had for some cassava or millet or maize. In the past they couldn't just take things from another's fields, but now they all have a share in the harvest of the collective plots and are more secure against hungry periods. And it is also easier to help the guerrillas with food from the collective fields; people don't worry and say that they don't have enough for the guerrillas. In some cases, the villagers have decided to cultivate all their land collectively. They found that they could produce more and in better ways on the collective plots, so they did away with family fields altogether. Most villages, however, have not yet come this far.

LSM -- Is the food grown in the collective plots turned over to the people's stores for distribution, or is it given directly to the guerrillas?

LIKAMBUILA -- It is given to the people's stores, controlled by the action committees. People's stores have now been organized in every zone. Before the struggle began the people lived in their villages by the rivers and sold some of their products to the Portuguese merchants. With the few escudos they received they bought some salt, matches, soap and other things. Once the struggle started, people in the liberated areas could no longer go to the Portuguese shops, so our movement started organizing people's stores. At first these were run by the guerrillas under zone commanders; but later, when the action committees were formed, the people's stores were put under their control. The people

now have no money, but they take their crops, skins, beeswax, honey and other products to the stores and exchange them for cloth, clothing, cooking fat, salt or other things they need. The prices of all the goods are established by the Steering Committee and are the same throughout the liberated areas. So if a man brings in some fish they are weighed and their price determined; he can then purchase an equal value in cloth, soap, etc. But sometimes, since not all the stores are well-stocked, and the supplies are usually low, a person will not get all the things he wants when he brings in his goods. He will be credited for the amount he doesn't receive in other goods and will come back later.

LSM -- How many villages and about how many people are served by each people's store?

LIKAMBUILA -- Zones are divided into sectors of five or six villages each and there is at least one people's store in a sector. The number of people in a village can be anywhere from 20 up to 100, so on the average I would say a people's store serves between 80 and 125 villagers. At present, in Zone C of the Eastern Region, there are six sectors and 21 people's stores, eleven of these being major stores.

LSM -- You mentioned earlier the MPLA trade union organization, UNTA. What kind of responsibilities do UNTA members have in organizing production workers and, in particular, the peasantry?

LIKAMBUILA -- At the present stage of the struggle, UNTA is concerned mainly with organizing the peasantry in agricultural production. They are responsible for studying and solving problems of crop rotation, determining what type of crops will grow in particular areas and experimenting with new crops which are needed. They are also responsible for supplying agricultural tools such as hoes, axes, knives, machetes, etc., to the people's stores for distribution to the villagers, and are in charge of seeing that the people's stores and

collective farms are managed properly. Inside Angola, UNTA members are usually attached to the regional or zone commands and are responsible to them.

LSM -- What is the people's general attitude to these new self-managed stores? Have any particular problems arisen in the areas of management, the keeping of accounts, or in regards to transportation and supply?

LIKAMBUIIA -- Since we started organizing the stores our people have been very pleased about being able to get the things they need much easier, or at all. Before, many were without clothing, needles, salt, sugar, soap, matches, cooking oil, blankets and other things. But since 1968 our movement has been able to supply larger amounts of these things to the villagers through the people's stores. Of course, even now what we have is very little and the number of Angolans living in the liberated areas is growing, and now must be over half-a-million.

Some problems have also come up in transportation. Groups of volunteers from the villages are organized as carriers and sometimes walk a month or six weeks to the border for military supplies or goods for the people's stores. These carriers would often have to leave their work in the family fields, their hunting, etc., for as long as three months at a time. Then, when they returned, many found that they didn't have any surplus crops or other things to exchange for what they needed from the people's store; things they perhaps just helped to carry long distances. So there arose problems - some people complained that they didn't like to go to the border and collect things for the people's stores, as these things didn't belong to them; others thought they should be paid so they could buy some of the things they carried for the people's stores. Some would say, "If we transport war material that is good, because weapons and ammunition serve all the people. But we don't want to carry clothes and other things which only serve some of the people who have got goods to exchange."

You see, our movement helps those carriers who come to the border without clothes, salt, food, etc. Many people come wearing just rags, so if we have clothing in the depot we give them some; and the same for other things like soap, salt, etc. But this help wasn't clear to them and some started talking about it as pay for their work. So before long people began flocking to the border to carry things; even if there was nothing to carry they came thinking they would be paid for their work. Our political commissars and organizers had to explain matters to these people, because many times we had nothing in the depots to give them. Goods often came to the depots from very far away and, as they are badly needed by our people and the guerrillas, they are immediately sent inside. So, those who came and received help were pleased; but those who came and got nothing were unhappy, thinking that their friends had been paid while they got nothing. Our political organizers had to explain to them that our movement adopted this system only to help those people who came wearing rags or animal skins, or were without salt or soap, etc.; that the movement, seeing how much some of the comrades were suffering without these things, decided to help them, realizing that many would not have goods to exchange for what they needed at the people's stores, or had suffered from lack of salt or sugar during their long journey. We have to make them understand that what they are given is not payment, but help from the movement due to their suffering; that in transporting supplies for the movement they are making an important contribution to the liberation struggle, just as are the guerrillas and other comrades working in different ways.

LSM -- Does MPLA have officials for each region who are responsible for supplies and for analyzing the needs of the different zones and sectors in order to determine what kinds of things should be sent where?

LIKAMBUILA -- Yes, in both regions and zones we have chiefs of logistics and finance, and there is also one member of the CCPM who is responsible for these things.

The CCPM decides on and is responsible for general matters of supply and finance, but reports are received and studied from the zone and region chiefs. There are usually different needs in the different regions and zones. In one place they may need more rifles instead of submachineguns; in another place they may ask for bazookas, saying they have adequate rifles, and so on. And this applies also to civilian needs. The action committees discuss their problems and decide on their needs for the people's stores. They then meet and explain their needs to the political organizer who reports this to the zone command. The zone command studies these reports from the various sectors and sends its own report to the regional command, which decides how the available supplies are to be distributed and what additional supplies are to be requested from the CCPM.

LSM -- The material conditions of the people in Zone C were quite bad when I was there in 1968, especially as regards clothing. Has this situation improved much over the past two years with the development of people's stores and the reorganization of logistics and supplies?

LIKAMBUIA -- Yes, things have become a good deal better since 1968. At that time we still had little outside support, but now we are receiving material support from a number of organizations, such as Liberation Support Movement, and many people are clothed and have other things they previously lacked. Of course, we don't yet have nearly enough to meet the people's needs and the number of people living in the semi-liberated areas keeps increasing. Many still suffer from a lack of basic necessities such as clothing, salt, soap, blankets, medicines, school supplies and cooking oil.

LSM -- Do any difficulties arise in implementing MPLA programs due to conflicts with traditional practices in the areas of law, religion, politics and so on?

LIKAMBUIA -- Yes. Many Angolans have adopted Christianity and become Protestants, Catholics or members of

the Watchtower movement or other small sects. When the armed struggle started in Eastern Angola we found it very hard to win the co-operation of these people, because they said: "If you spill the blood of others you will be burned by God." They also tended to believe the Portuguese propaganda about guerrillas being foreign terrorists who only came into the country to steal people's things and leave them in poverty. So these and other things made it difficult at first to win these Christians over to the side of the revolution, to get them to understand and support our revolutionary struggle.

Another difficulty arose because at first many of our cadres didn't speak the local languages found in the Eastern Region. The people would become suspicious and tend to believe the Portuguese lies about our being foreigners. It took time to convince them that we were their sons and daughters and to win their co-operation. Even now in some places the people need to see and speak to cadres who talk the local language. As you know, there are over 100 languages in Angola and some are spoken by only a few thousand people - so this can be a difficulty.

As to traditional beliefs in magic and witchcraft, we have been trying to educate our people about these things and have abolished certain practices. At first certain foolish witchdoctors tried to witch our guerrillas or use their magic against the Portuguese, saying that those who fight always use war magic. But their magic didn't work and we have managed to convince most of the people that it is only through fighting with weapons that we can defeat the Portuguese. Some religious leaders also tried to prophesy military events, saying they had dreamed that such and such a detachment would be attacked by the Portuguese and that many guerrillas would be killed. This year I attended one of the Watchtower services and they said it was no use fighting, as God would be returning to earth very soon to settle things. But these prophecies don't come true

and we explain to people that believing these things can be very dangerous to the liberation struggle.

At the CIR's and in our political education we explain that some witchdoctors, who use charms for treating sores or wounds or who can cure diseases, are allowed to carry on their work; but those who use charms or other magic for punishing or killing others have been ordered to burn their medicines. You see, some of the medicines used in witchcraft, like poisons and some of the charms, are actually effective in bringing about bad sickness or death. For example, a witchdoctor uses a charm against a man and lets him know that if he meets with a certain girl he will go mad. Well, an accident may happen and that man meets the girl on a path. If he believes in the power of the charm, he may in fact go mad. Sometimes this is done by old villagers against guerrillas who want to marry their daughters. Many of our militants want to marry, but since this is a war of liberation and they are not paid, they have no money for lobola (bride insurance); and even though we have asked the villagers not to demand lobola during the struggle, many have resisted this idea and a few will even use magic to stop their daughters from marrying guerrillas without lobola money. So we have prohibited medicines which are used to punish or cause harm to others. We have made much progress in this area, especially with the young people, but it is very difficult to change the beliefs of old people.

LSM -- Traditionally the people of the Eastern Region underwent long training periods in the circumcision camps. Has the revolutionary situation forced any changes in this practice?

LIKAMBUILA -- Yes. In the past children remained in the circumcision camps for as long as a year, from May of one year to May of the next. But now even the old men are trying to shorten the length of the training period. Many of their children have come to understand the importance of education in the schools and don't want to

spend a whole year in the circumcision camps. Some get circumcised in the clinics or hospitals and then remain at home while they recover. Also the pressure of the revolution makes it difficult to have long circumcision camps, and young people want to join the guerrillas or the militia or go to the CIR's. Some of the old men still send their children to the camps in the bush where they get circumcised and are trained, learning the rules of the camp and of adult society. But the camps are shorter and some of the young people don't go at all.

One interesting situation occurred recently in the village of Mwetuta along the Zambian border. According to custom, no uncircumcised men are allowed to enter a circumcision camp. Well, one of our militants who was uncircumcised went to Mwetuta circumcision camp with our medical aide who performed the operation on a number of Angolan children. The militant was 35 years old and knew better, but he broke discipline and was drunk with cachipembe when he entered the camp. The owners of the circumcision camp found out and came to see us saying, "According to our customs no uncircumcised person is allowed to enter our camp, since he will see many things which are not supposed to be seen or known by women or uncircumcised men. So this man who came to our camp must be circumcised. If he is not, we will find ways of dealing with him." Knowing that the old men would try to punish the man, perhaps through witching, we discussed the problem among the cadres and decided that he had to be circumcised. Our medical aide performed the operation here in the base and the villagers were satisfied.

LSM -- Are there any problems which emerge due to traditional leaders being replaced by younger, more politically conscious men or women on the village action committee?

LIKAMBUILA -- In the past when village headmen or chiefs became old they would choose or nominate those who were to succeed them. Once the chief had died, his chosen suc-

cessor would be selected as the new chief - even though the old chief had chosen a son or daughter because they were faithful and loyal to him, and even if the villagers didn't like the person selected, they were bound to honor the request of the dead chief. Now, in the liberated areas, things have changed. Actions committee presidents and other members are chosen or elected by the people and old presidents don't select their successors. A village headman or chief may be elected president if he is respected in political matters and is a strong supporter of the revolution. Usually, however, it is a younger person who is elected; a man or a woman who is wise and capable in political affairs. The old chiefs and headmen who are not elected to the action committees usually continue to be respected and control certain customary practices in the villages; but it is the action committees that are in charge of all political and economic matters.

LSM -- In 1961, before the armed struggle started in the Eastern Region, the Portuguese began paying the chiefs a salary and demanding greater demonstrations of loyalty. Have you found that some of these paid chiefs sided with the Portuguese after 1966 and betrayed the revolution?

LIKAMBUILA -- Yes. The Portuguese used to demand that these paid chiefs become traitors to their own people. They were paid in order to punish the villagers, to collect taxes and to collect people for forced labor at the Portuguese posts or plantations and mines. They were ordered to immediately report any strangers or newcomers to their area to the chefe do posto. The money they received, even though it was a very small amount, tempted many of these chiefs to remain with the Portuguese and betray the revolution. Even today, some of the chiefs are still working for the Portuguese.

LSM -- In Eastern Angola the descent rules are matrilineal and it has been the custom for young children to be raised by the mother's relatives and to move back

and forth between the village of their father and the village of their mother's brother. Now, with the considerable shifting about of villages and the danger of travel due to the armed struggle, have any problems or changes arisen in this practice?

LIKAMBUILA -- Yes, in the Eastern Front especially, the children inherited their names from their uncles, from their mothers' brothers rather than from their fathers. They believe that children are part of the mother not the father. In Luvale they have a proverb which means - "A cock just plays about and causes children, but these chicks will belong to the hen." So, when a woman gets married and has a child it will belong to the mother's family, take the name of her brother and father and succeed the uncle if he should die as a village headman or chief. Such a child is then raised by the uncle and spends most of his early life in the village of his or her mother's brother and father. Now this custom is beginning to change. Villages have been scattered around and the people shifted from one area to another; it is also difficult for young children to travel about freely. So, with children staying more with their father and his family, some are beginning to take the father's name and there is no longer any possibility of nephews succeeding their uncles as chiefs or headmen. They still go when they can to visit their mother's family, but things are changing.

LSM -- In the past many men took more than one wife. Does MPLA have any rules regarding the number of wives its guerrillas or cadres may have?

LIKAMBUILA -- At first the people had two or three wives, and the chiefs had even more - ten or fifteen, according to the custom of the tribe. We used to ask them why they had so many women. They told us that if you had many women you wouldn't suffer. If one was sick, you could go to the house of another, or if one goes on a mission or for a visit then the others that remain can take care of you; and if visitors come

plenty of food can be prepared. When the struggle began we started teaching people that it was wrong to have more than one wife. We explained that when a man had many women only one was really his wife; that the others were treated just like servants. We also said it was very difficult for a man to provide clothes and other things to more than one wife. After a time, the movement passed a rule that guerrillas could marry only one wife. Some of the villagers follow this, but some still marry several women.

LSM -- Did the Angolan Women's Organization (OMA) have any particularly strong feelings about changing from polygamy to monogamy?

LIKAMBUILA -- Oh, this pleased OMA very much, because they saw that polygamy caused many women to suffer. They say a woman is happier if she is the only wife in the house. Also, OMA is concerned with teaching the young girls and organizing the women to play a full part in the revolution. Some of the young girls have become guerrillas and others, who are not capable of this, perform other duties for the struggle - work such as needling, cultivating and nursing. We have learned that women are extremely good at intelligence and reconnaissance work; they are able to remain unnoticed among the enemy for several weeks or months. At first many guerrillas thought the women were useless, but this was because the women were so badly oppressed by the men. Now we have come to understand that the women are very important to the revolution. There are many women and girls in the guerrilla units and in the militias; they are learning at the CIR's and SAM's and some have been sent to other countries for advanced training in many fields.

There are many cases of courage and heroism by the women. For example, one girl was married to a Portuguese commander at Lovwa post in Zone B. After staying at Lovwa for six months, she led the Portuguese soldiers to a cultivated area where the guerrillas often

set up ambushes. One day she made contact with some villagers from a nearby detachment who came to get cassava roots. She told them to ask the guerrillas if they could prepare an ambush at a certain place, saying that she would lead the Portuguese soldiers there. On the agreed day, our D'Esta Vez detachment carried out a very successful ambush against the Portuguese. The girl's Portuguese husband was killed in that combat and she returned with and joined the detachment as a guerrilla.

In another case, one of our women guerrillas was captured by the Portuguese and, after two months of interrogation and torture, they persuaded her to lead them to the Command Post of Zone D. As they were approaching the base, she asked if she could go relieve herself in the forest as she was suffering from severe stomach pains. They allowed her to go and she managed to escape, running to inform the guerrillas that the Portuguese were near. The commander prepared an immediate attack on the Portuguese column, and managed to ambush them before they reached the base. In the meantime, the other comrades had a chance to prepare their things and move off to a different place.

These and many other cases have proved to us that women are very important in our fight against Portuguese colonialism.

LSM -- Do the women have programs setting forth their goals as women in the revolution?

LIKAMBUILA -- Yes, OMA has its programs and its goals for Angolan women. They teach the women that they must struggle to learn and become capable in many areas of work in the revolution, so that when Angola achieves its independence there will be equality between men and women; that they must struggle so as not to be oppressed again, as they were before the revolution, when the men, particularly the old men, thought that women were only useful in the house or village, making funji for meals

and doing other things for the men. They are taught that this is wrong; that women must become as capable as the men and participate in politics and all other kinds of work.

LSM -- Are there now any women who hold leadership or other responsible positions within MPLA?

LIKAMBUIA -- Of course, it is women who provide the leadership for OMA. Comrade Luisa is now President of OMA; then there is Maria Carlos, Maria dos Santos and others who play an important leadership role in OMA. There are also women who work as technicians; as radio operators, doctors and so forth, and a few are training as mechanics. In the political field, women are active as organizers and some are training to become political commissars. As yet, however, there are no women serving as zone or regional commanders and there are no women on the CCPM. We are moving in this direction, though, and I think it will not be too long before some women are chosen to serve in high leadership positions.

LSM -- Does MPLA practice criticism and self-criticism? And if so, to what extent is there criticism by the guerrillas of their own leadership at various levels? And how, if at all, does this function to improve the behavior of MPLA cadres?

LIKAMBUIA -- In our movement we do practice criticism and self-criticism. When someone does wrong or makes a mistake, whether a guerrilla, a cadre or a high-level leader, he is criticized and asked to discuss the problem. Even the villagers are called upon and have the right to criticize the guerrillas or the commanders directing the struggle in their area. For example, if one of the guerrillas is behaving very badly he will be called to discuss the matter with the political organizer and other leaders. They chat and try to find out what is wrong. Usually, the guerrilla comes to agree that he has done a wrong thing and says he will try to change and not do it again. Then a meeting is called with the

people and other guerrillas and the matter is discussed. If his wrong-doing has been against the people, they decide the case. If they say he will continue his wrong-doing even if they tell him to stop and he agrees, then he is transferred. This can also happen with zone and regional commanders if they are behaving badly or are weak in leadership.

LSM -- Do you carry on criticism and self-criticism at regular times, or are problems dealt with as they happen to arise?

LIKAMBUILA -- Well, the leaders meet once a month and discuss their work and any problems they are facing. But when problems come up which require criticism, we try to tackle them right away, because if we delay matters might get worse. Especially if it is a case of a chefe do grupo or zone commander being weak in leadership. The people will complain and in some cases won't give food to guerrilla units which are weak or whose leader practices bad behavior. The people like guerrillas who are active in combat, who don't just sit around dormantly. So we have to bring such matters up immediately and settle them.

LSM -- Perhaps you could give us an example or two of cases where leadership was criticized and the result was their transfer and demotion.

LIKAMBUILA -- In one case, a sub-regional director of CIR felt very strongly about our need for anti-aircraft guns and heavy weapons. Some other people also felt this way but they didn't understand the problems facing us. So this CIR director started telling people it was useless to carry rifles and light weapons; that we had enough of these and needed other things. So eventually the people there started refusing to carry rifles, saying "We don't want to take these light weapons; we want to bring in anti-aircraft guns and other heavy weapons." Well, mobilizing the people in this way was very bad; rifles and all other weapons are useful in

the struggle and we need to train cadres to use heavy weapons. As yet, only a small number of guerrillas have been taught how to use anti-aircraft weapons, long-range mortars, and so on. These, like all weapons, can be very dangerous to use if they are not understood. When other leaders learned of this bad conduct a public meeting was called and the CIR director was criticized among a gathering of villagers, guerrillas, cadres and regional commanders. He recognized that he was wrong but since demoralizing people as he did is a very bad thing, he was demoted to sub-director of CIR in a zone and removed from the regional command.

Another case happened with the chief of a detachment, before we formed columns. This chefe do grupo was found not to go for combats. The action committee reported this to the sector chief and the group leader was called to a meeting. We invited representatives from all groups in the zone - three guerrillas from his detachment, four members of the action committee, five villagers, three members of OMA and three young pioneers. The zone commander was also there. Before we criticized him we asked him to tell us how he was conducting his group and what was his method of making combats. He told us about his work and then we began questioning him. Some of the villagers asked him why he was made chefe do grupo and what the duties of a group leader were. He replied that a chefe do grupo was there to lead others, to see to it that discipline was maintained and to direct his detachment in combats and set a good example for his guerrillas. He was then asked, "If you know these things, how is it that you lead your detachment badly. The people say you do not lead your guerrillas in combat; that you just remain in the village with your wife and when you are asked to go and give leadership you just send your sub-chefe and again remain behind."

After a time of questioning like this, the group leader came to realize his mistakes. He said he would try to do better. We then asked the guerrillas and people if he should be allowed to remain as leader of

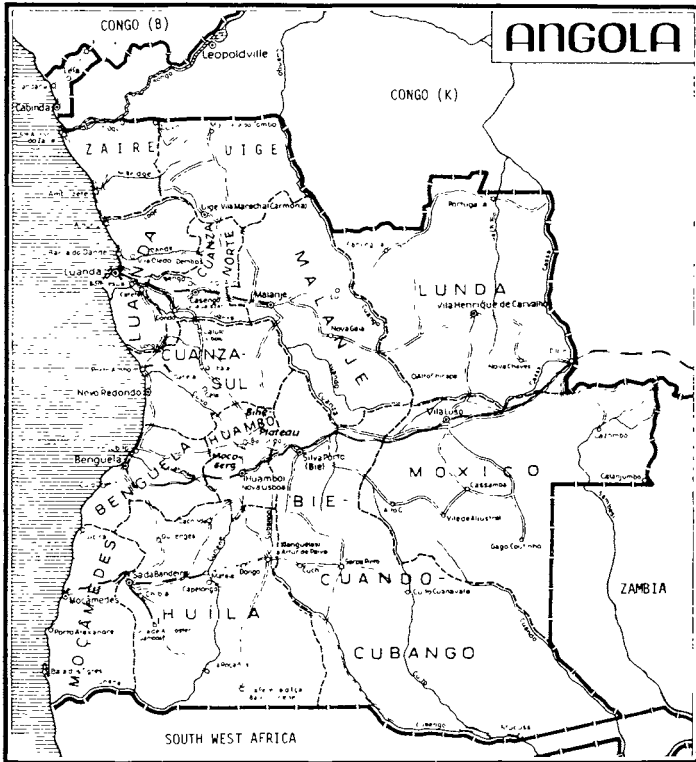
the detachment, but they said no, that he had been warned too many times already. We at first tried to transfer him to another detachment as chefe, but the guerrillas refused to accept him as leader. Finally, he was demoted to chief of a small control post, because he was just not capable of leading a detachment.

Another example took place in the Third Region when the people and guerrillas were aroused to criticism because of the inactivity of some of the regional commanders. They complained that these leaders sat in one place too long, without controlling the zones or talking to the people and guerrillas to find out about their needs and problems. They claimed that the regional commander and political commissar were passive and not taking their jobs seriously enough.

In a case like this, even though the Steering Committee appoints regional commanders, it is only the people and guerrillas in the area who can check on and judge the ways they are working. So, a big meeting was called attended by three members of the CCPM, members of the zone commands, and representatives from all groups and places in the region - about 200 people altogether from all levels. Then the problems were put forward and the regional commanders were asked how they had been working. They told what they had been doing and recognized many of their wrongs; they also criticized one another and explained that some of the things said about them were not correct. After much questioning, discussion and criticism, the members of the CCPM who were present posed the problem of allowing them another chance or transferring them to other posts. The people were strongly against their remaining as regional commanders. So the CCPM transferred the regional commander and political commissar to other positions outside the region.

Not all cases, of course, are handled in this way. Most of the problems and criticisms are smaller and not so serious. These are discussed as they arise at the

daily formaturas within the detachments or columns and at the CIR's, SAM's, etc.



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