



Refugees flee combat zone in Angola

ANGOLA: BEHIND THE CIVIL WAR

[The following report was approved by the National Committee of the Socialist Workers party at its January 2-4 meeting in Milwaukee. Tony Thomas presented the report on behalf of the Political Committee of the party.]

By Tony Thomas

The Political Committee has proposed that we launch a national campaign against U.S. imperialist involvement in Angola. We want to help stop the intervention of the State Department, the CIA, and the Pentagon in the Angolan civil war. We want to help bring the secret moves of the Ford administration into the open and compel Kissinger and his cohorts to disclose the whole truth about their covert operations in Angola.

It is already known that Kissinger allotted at least \$33 million for arms and other aid for the Angolan National Liberation Front (FNLA) and for the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Sen. Hubert Humphrey stated a few weeks ago that the Ford administration is going to ask for another \$150 million for this coming year.

'Another Vietnam?'

The American people as a whole are worried. They are pressing for an answer to the question: "Is Angola to become another Vietnam?" The question is being argued on a broad scale. This is a debate in which we are already involved. We propose a response like the one given during the Indochina war—a broad campaign of mobilization and propaganda around the slogan, "U.S. out of Angola. Not one penny, not one bullet, not a single adviser or soldier, into Angola."

We should not underestimate the danger of American military intervention, despite Kissinger's pledges not to commit U.S. troops. The American Committee on Africa reported on December 19 that American soldiers are being pressured by officers at various bases to resign and sign up as mercenaries for the FNLA and UNITA. The committee also disclosed that American air force units have been put on alert to fly tactical air strikes in defense of South African troops in Angola, should the situation require it.

The propagandists of the Ford administration repeat the same line used to justify intervention in the Vietnamese civil war. They point to the alleged

threat of a "Communist take-over." They remain silent about the four centuries of Portuguese imperialist domination. They remain silent about Washington's long-term policy of active support to Portugal's war against the right of the Angolan peoples to determine their own fate.

Washington aid to Lisbon

In the ten years before the rebellion in Angola erupted in 1961, Washington gave \$298 million to Lisbon in military aid. In some years during this period the United States provided more than half the Portuguese military budget.

After the Angolans began fighting for their freedom in a way reminiscent of the American colonists of 1776, Washington continued to help the Portuguese. Portuguese officers and troops were trained at American military installations, including the Green Beret base at Fort Bragg.

During the last years of Portuguese colonial domination, American imperialism increased its support to Portugal against the African rebels.

Tad Szulc, formerly a correspondent of the *New York Times*, described the policy toward southern Africa laid down by Kissinger in 1970: "In a National Security Decision Memorandum secretly issued by the NSC [National Security Council] in January 1970, the administration set forth a new policy of 'communication' with white regimes in southern Africa (including Portugal as the ruling power in Angola and Mozambique) on the grounds that 'the whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come about is through them' and that 'there is no hope for the blacks to gain the political rights they seek through violence, which will lead only to chaos and increased opportunities for the Communists.'"

What imperialists are after

Wall Street's interest in Angola centers on its resources.

Angola is the third-largest coffee producer in the world. Much of its production goes to the United States.

Diamond mines owned by American, South African, Belgian, and Portuguese interests produced more than two million carats in 1972 alone, with an export value of some \$110 million.

The country has important deposits of iron ore, manganese, phosphates, copper, granite, marble, and asphalt.

Most importantly, Angola has oil. Gulf Oil's

concession in Cabinda produces about 10 million tons a year. By the turn of the century, Gulf projects pumping out more than 100 million tons a year from these fields alone. Exxon, Texaco, and the French Total corporation are exploring for oil in other parts of Angola.

In the Cunene River Valley in southern Angola, a large hydroelectric power plant has been built by South African and Portuguese capital. In the next few years the source is scheduled to provide the bulk of the power needs for Namibia and other South African-held areas as well as Angola.

Other known resources remain largely untapped. Angola's geographic location gives it important strategic value. It is in position to control the mouth of the Congo River; and it borders on territories occupied by South Africa. Zambia and Zaïre depend on Angolan railroads and ports to ship their copper to world markets.

Moreover, Angolan events influence the affairs of Zambia, Zaïre, the People's Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), and the South African colony of Namibia in a direct as well as indirect way. Many of the ethnic groups or nationalities in Angola extend beyond the boundaries between these countries, which were drawn by the European colonial powers.

Angola's freedom struggle

Despite the help given by American imperialism to Portuguese colonialism, the liberation struggle led by the Angolan National Liberation Front, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and the fighters in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique eventually broke the Portuguese grip.

The armed actions began in 1961. The main ones took place in northern Angola where fighters of the Angolan People's Union, led by Holden Roberto, launched an uprising. The forces involved in this revolt were able to secure control over an area reaching 200 miles from the Congo (now Zaïre) border.

Portugal's response was the use of terror not only in the northern region but in Luanda and elsewhere. As many as one million people were forced to flee the north into Zaïre, Congo (Brazzaville), and Zambia.

Until the mid-1960s, it was the FNLA that carried out the main military actions in Angola. This is contrary to some of the claims of the MPLA and its supporters that the FNLA never fought as a real national liberation group and that only the MPLA was committed to the armed conflict.

In fact, the FNLA played such a prominent role that the Fourth International in 1964 correctly recognized that the FNLA was leading the struggle and should be supported accordingly. The Fourth International, of course, did not support the FNLA politically, for its program was limited to winning national freedom.

FNLA slandered

At the same time, the FNLA was slandered by the MPLA, which called it a tool of Western imperialism and of Tshombe's regime in the Congo. The truth was that Tshombe, who was backed by Portugal, Belgium, and Washington, severely harassed the FNLA.

The Fourth International defended the FNLA against these slanders. Comrades like Livio Maitan pointed out in articles that even if the FNLA had sought aid from Washington, what was essential was not such links but how the struggle of the Angolan masses for independence was carried on.

During this period, the MPLA was very weak—in 1963 it came close to dissolving. It lacked links with the fighters in Angola and with the refugees in Zaïre. However, in subsequent years it established links with Mbundu religious (Methodist) and ethnic leaders in central Angola. By 1967 it was able to gain bases in Zambia and Congo (Brazzaville), carrying out actions against the Portuguese in the areas bordering these countries.

The UNITA entered the field in 1964 and 1965. It began as a split from the FNLA led by Jonas Savimbi, who was the foreign minister and deputy commander of the FNLA. The UNITA was joined by pro-Mao splitters from the MPLA who attacked that organization as "tribalistic" and "pro-Soviet." During the later 1960s and the early 1970s, the UNITA claimed to have no outside support. It said

that all its activities were based inside Angola in contrast to the activities of the MPLA and the FNLA, which were primarily based abroad at that time.

The areas liberated by the UNITA were in south-central Angola, which is inhabited chiefly by the Ovimbundu people.

Fall of Caetano regime

The inability of Portugal to continue the burden of the colonial wars was decisive in bringing about an end to the Salazar-Caetano regime and in touching off the mass struggles that have shaken Portugal since April 1974.

The Portuguese imperialists sought to prop up various neocolonialist and white-settler organizations so as to postpone granting independence. All three liberation groups opposed this neocolonialist scheme and demanded immediate independence. All three, especially the FNLA, stepped up their guerrilla actions against the Portuguese.

On May 26, 1974, right after the downfall of Caetano, 20,000 Blacks demonstrated in Luanda, demanding independence. On July 15, in response to racist attacks on African communities, a general strike was staged, followed by occupations of universities and high schools by students, faculties, and staffs.

This upsurge brought the Angolan working class into the political arena.

With the growth of non-Portuguese imperialist investments in the 1960s and 1970s, the working class expanded in Angola. In 1973, out of an African population of five to six million persons, there were 130,000 workers employed in manufacturing, mainly concentrated in Luanda, Lobito, and Nova Lisboa.

In the wave of mass actions in Angola following the April 1974 coup in Portugal, the workers in Luanda, Lobito, Benguela, and Nova Lisboa launched a wave of strikes for better pay and working conditions and against racist moves.

In marches and demonstrations, participants carried the banners of each of the liberation groups.

Transitional government

To meet the problems posed by this wave of mass mobilization and workers' struggles, the Portuguese signed an agreement that brought the UNITA, the FNLA, and the MPLA into a so-called transitional government with Portuguese officials.

Independence was to come later, following elections.

The establishment of the transitional government coincided with the opening of a new phase in the struggle. This phase has been marked by the breakup of the Portuguese colonial hold over Angola, by the efforts of the masses to establish their own government, and by the struggle of the various imperialist powers and other forces to gain control over the situation, or at least to take advantage of it.

The outstanding feature of this period has been the Angolan civil war—that is, the fighting between the three nationalist factions. This fratricidal conflict has greatly facilitated imperialist intervention. One of the aims of Washington, for instance, has been to deepen and exacerbate the hostilities.

Most of the groupings on the left have offered support to one or another of the nationalist factions



Portuguese colonial troops on 'search and destroy' mission. Lisbon's army in Africa was trained, armed, and financed by Washington.

in Angola. Some of the Maoists support the FNLA or the UNITA; the pro-Moscow Stalinists, the group around the *Guardian* in the United States, and most of the ultraleft groups support the MPLA.

As the comrades know, this is a question in dispute in the world Trotskyist movement. The comrades of the International Majority Tendency favor supporting the MPLA. Their position has been presented most vigorously by C. Gabriel in an article "On the Question of Angola" published in the December 8, 1975, issue of *Intercontinental Press*. The leadership of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores in Argentina agrees with the IMT on this.

The comrades of the IMT argue that in Angola the MPLA is supported by the working class and that because of this the MPLA must be supported no matter how inadequate or wrong its program may be. They contend that the MPLA must be credited with leading the workers' upsurge and that the victory of the FNLA and UNITA would signify the suppression and even massacre of the most radical wing of the workers. They also claim that the MPLA is more progressive than the other groups and has enacted a more progressive social program in the territories it controls.

These comrades contend that the FNLA and the UNITA are not legitimate national liberation movements, but are venal agencies of Washington and other imperialist powers. The FNLA and UNITA are pictured as "tribalistic," that is, based on ethnic groups. The implication is that "tribalistic" types are more "backward" than the MPLA, which is pictured as a "pan-Angolan" movement.

The reality is somewhat different from that. So I'd like to take time to show how false and misleading this picture is.

National question

I think the issue that most of the supporters of the MPLA fail to weigh properly is the national question—what they choose to call "tribalism."

The MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA all claim to represent a "pan-Angolan" movement; and each of them pictures the two others as "tribalistic." The truth is that each of them is based on one of the country's three main ethnic groups.

With the exception of small urbanized layers, it is false to claim that an Angolan nationality exists in anything like finished form. The bulk of the population of Angola consists of ethnic groupings in well-defined geographical regions, spilling over into other countries in some cases.

These groups have their own distinct languages and culture, and they have their own body of historical experience as distinct peoples. In short, each of the three has the attributes of a nationality.

Angola's boundaries, after all, were determined by imperialist colonial powers, and not by the ethnic boundaries or the desires of the African

masses. Also, Portuguese capitalism blocked the economic and political integration of the various Angolan peoples.

The liberation struggle developed unevenly, with each of the three groups representing one of the three main nationalities in the country.

The MPLA's base is the Mbundu who live in north-central Angola and around Luanda. They number roughly one to one and a half million.

The FNLA is based among the one to one and a half million Bakongos in the northwestern area of Angola.

The UNITA finds its support among the more than two million Ovimbundu who inhabit the central region and southern Angola.

Ethnic divisions

In fact, except for a few brief periods, the military positions of the groups have reflected the divisions of these different ethnic areas.

Ethnic divisions are also to be found in the urban areas. For example, in Lobito, the second most important port city, tens of thousands of demonstrators greeted the arrival of Jonas Savimbi and the UNITA when they took the town in November. Not surprisingly, Lobito is a center for the Ovimbundu.

When the MPLA secured control of Luanda, their own newspapers reported that for days thousands of workers of Bakongo and Ovimbundu origin demonstrated, demanding transportation to FNLA- or UNITA-held areas. Thousands were able to get away to Lobito where they were met by pro-UNITA demonstrations.

We have to anticipate that the victory of either side in this civil war may mean pogroms, with victims running into the tens of thousands. Already leaders of the MPLA have talked about turning the Bakongo areas held by the FNLA into "another Biafra."

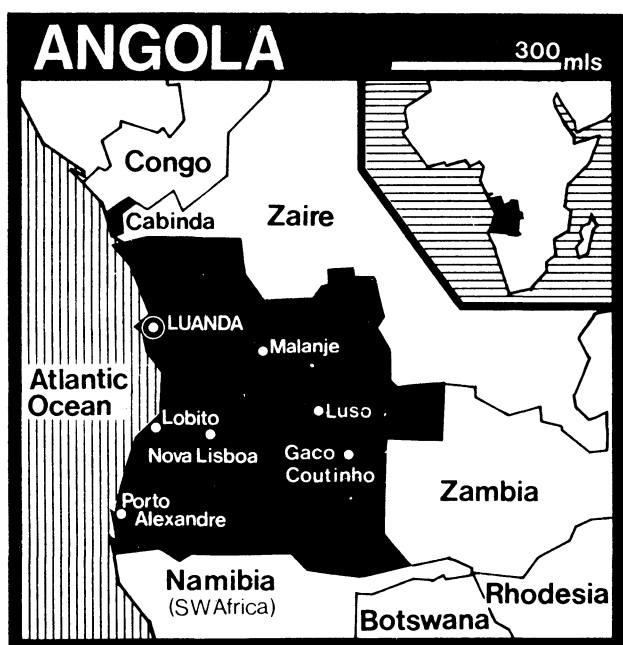
In Africa, the word "Biafra" is synonymous with the civil war in Nigeria and the immense slaughter that occurred over the so-called tribal issue. A similar perspective is involved in Angola. Each of the groups—not just the MPLA—is using the animosities among the nationalities to further its goals.

We must make it clear that we aren't exactly "Angolan patriots." Being a "pan-Angolan" is not necessarily more progressive than being for helping the Bakongo, the Ovimbundu, and the Mbundu establish working relations against the common enemy—imperialism.

Right of self-determination

As Leninists we understand that the road to uniting the masses in Angola against exploitation and oppression is not to denounce the national aspirations of these peoples as "backward tribalism," but to support their right to self-

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Manchester Guardian

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determination, which includes the right to autonomy or even secession.

Urging a victory for one of these nationalist factions against the two others leads to exacerbating the tensions. The MPLA, for instance, has announced that the supporters of the other groups will not be allowed Angolan citizenship, a threat that is bound to strengthen their determination to fight to the death against an MPLA victory.

One reason why none of these groups has really cut across the lines of nationality is that they stand on procapitalist and anti-working-class social and economic programs that are basically similar.

That was also one of the reasons why the Portuguese brought the nationalist groups into the transitional government. The Portuguese wanted to use them to curb the working-class upsurge.

This goes counter to the arguments pushed by supporters of the MPLA in the Trotskyist movement who claim that the MPLA is more "progressive" than the UNITA or the FNLA, or at least more sensitive to pressures from the working class.

All three groups complied with the dictates of the Portuguese. Particularly active were the UNITA and the MPLA, which are supported in the urban centers.

Antistrike campaign

One of the first measures the groups took was to appeal to the workers to stop their strikes. The appeal was soon followed by a decree empowering the government to place striking dockers and other workers under military control.

The various groups tried to use the antistrike campaign to gain factional advantages, as well as to try to maintain their bases among the workers.

For example, when the dockers in Lobito struck, the MPLA used this as an excuse to send troops against the UNITA. The MPLA claimed that UNITA troops were responsible for the strike, since the dockers were Ovimbundu supporters of the UNITA.

This is not to say that the UNITA played a more progressive role in that situation. After the MPLA attack on the strikers was beaten back, the UNITA helped break the strike by claiming that the dockers were blocking Zambian supplies for African liberation forces.

Since the collapse of the coalition regime and the initiation of civil war in July 1975, there has been no change in the attitude of these groups, including the MPLA, toward the workers.

In Luanda, under MPLA control, harbor work has been returned to almost around the clock, hours having been lengthened with no pay increases. There may be some labor resistance there, judging from the continual denunciations by MPLA leaders of workers who do not comply with the speedup as saboteurs.

Another indication is the report, acknowledged by leading comrades in Europe, that a crackdown on working-class militants took place recently in Luanda. This followed an earlier report of a purge of "left-wing" members of the MPLA.

The recent arrests of militants occurred in the context of a witch-hunt in Luanda against "Trotskyism" even though there is no indication that a large, or even any, Trotskyist group exists in the country. Comrades in Portugal have reported that Angolan students interested in Trotskyism, who returned to MPLA areas, were driven out by the MPLA at gunpoint.

MPLA's anti-working-class stand

On the crucial question of the working-class upsurge the facts show that the MPLA has taken the same basic stand as the FNLA and UNITA. The MPLA aims to break strikes, lengthen hours, and block independent organization of political action by the working class.

One claim made by the IMT comrades is that the MPLA is supported by the most radical layers of the working class, who would be suppressed if the other groups entered Luanda. Even if this were true, it could be argued just as cogently that with an MPLA victory in Lobito, the MPLA would suppress the pro-UNITA working-class militants such as the dockers against whom the MPLA sent troops.

Whatever support the MPLA may have obtained from the working class in the Mbundu areas, it has already broken strikes and arrested working-class militants in Luanda, and suppressed expressions of real working-class political radicalism.

The class lines in Angola do not follow ethnic

lines but exist between the workers and the leaderships of all three nationalist factions. The indicated course for the workers and their allies, in Luanda, Lobito, the Bakongo, Mbundu, and Ovimbundu areas, and all other parts of Angola, is to press ahead independently.

The workers and their allies need to break from each of these groups and form a party of their own based on a revolutionary working-class program.

Only by following that kind of program can the workers cut across the factional divisions and national animosities feeding the civil war. A program of class independence is required by the Angolan working masses to defeat the anti-working-class policies of the three nationalist groups and their neocolonialist and imperialist backers.

Still another element in the situation is the imperialist support given to the UNITA and the FNLA, including the use of South African troops. Does this automatically require us to support the MPLA?

First of all we have to consider our criteria. If we put a plus wherever the White House puts a minus, or if we put a minus wherever the White House puts a plus, it would be very simple to determine our policies.

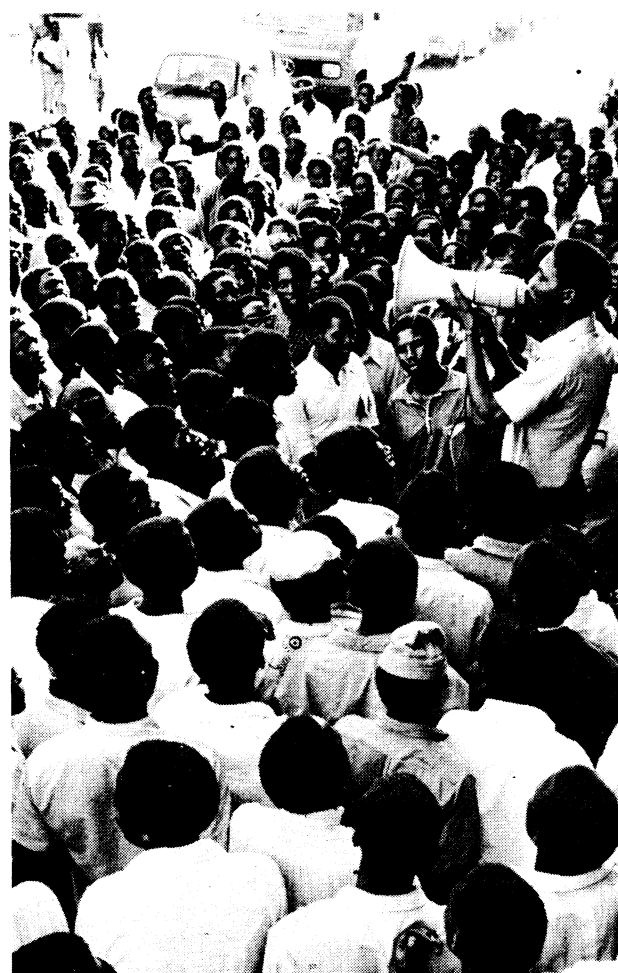
We already went through this in the discussion with the IMT comrades on the Portuguese Socialist party's defense of its democratic rights last summer. Should we have opposed this defense because the CIA claimed to have channeled funds to the SP and because Wall Street's propagandists claimed they were defending democracy by favoring the SP over the Communist party? We answered no—although we of course sharply opposed the class-collaborationist policies of the Portuguese SP.

In Angola we must begin by checking the stands of the three groups in relation to imperialism. Here again we find no basic difference. The MPLA has made it very clear—as have the UNITA and the FNLA—that it favors foreign imperialist investments in Angola.

In fact, while they participated in the transitional government, the nationalist groups found themselves in mutual accord in this respect. All three favored continued foreign investment, with the proviso that in major resource industries the government should hold 51 percent of the ownership.

The government already held a 51 percent share of Gulf Oil's concession in Cabinda and a similar share in the diamond concession owned by South African, Belgian, Portuguese, and American interests.

Moreover, many of the Portuguese holdings had already been nationalized owing to MFA (Armed Forces Movement) decisions in Portugal.



Luanda dock workers on strike in 1974, shortly after overthrow of Caetano regime in Portugal. Under MPLA rule, hours have been lengthened with no pay increase, and antistrike drive has been carried out.

The only major action of this kind that was demanded, particularly by the MPLA and the FNLA, was expropriation of the coffee plantations and farms. On this point there was joint agreement, a consensus that was reached without great difficulty since most of the smaller Portuguese coffee planters had already fled Angola.

In addition, each of the groups has shown its willingness to solicit imperialist political, material—and even military—support against its enemies.

MPLA Solicited MFA Support

The MPLA, for example, solicited the support of the MFA regime while it still governed Angola. Although the Portuguese rulers were divided on how to respond, their main line after the transitional government was set up tended to be in support of the MPLA. For example, when the MPLA forced the FNLA and UNITA out of Luanda, the Portuguese army announced that it would prevent any attempt by the FNLA to return to the city. The MPLA received thousands of rifles, trucks, ships, and other equipment when the Portuguese withdrew from Angola, while most of this type of equipment was withdrawn from UNITA and FNLA areas (some of which was taken to MPLA areas).

The MPLA also has sought, and boasts of having received, material and political support from the governments of the smaller imperialist powers such as the Scandinavian countries, Holland, Belgium, and Canada. This support may have declined in recent months because of U.S. pressure.

We should add that the MPLA has maintained good relations with some of the biggest imperialist companies holding concessions in its territories—even those whose governments are actively supporting the UNITA or the FNLA.

Gulf Oil and the MPLA

Gulf Oil holds the biggest imperialist concession in Angola, grossing more than \$1 billion a year from its Cabinda wells, which are to be stepped up to ten times their current output in a few years.

There are many reports from the MPLA, from the U.S. State Department, and from sources in Gulf Oil, that relations between the MPLA and Gulf Oil are very good. There have even been reports that Gulf is trying to put pressure on the State Department to change its current anti-MPLA line.

Gulf Oil was the main financial stay of the MPLA until December 22, when the State Department forced the company to suspend payments.

In September and October Gulf Oil gave \$116 million to the MPLA. It planned to make another \$95 million payment by December 31. However, after Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Edward Mulcahy put the squeeze on Gulf Oil, the company halted payments.

The September-October payment was three times the reported U.S. aid to the FNLA and UNITA combined. It matched the reported Soviet aid to the MPLA for the entire year of 1975. Thus from the formal point of view is on the receiving end of American imperialist aid—the MPLA was the recipient of the most American aid until a few weeks ago. Of course, the aid did not come from the Ford administration but from the biggest imperialist company operating in the country.

The stopping of payments for the time being came after a battle between the State Department and Gulf Oil. Gulf had tried to induce the State Department to take a less truculent stand toward the MPLA. Kissinger was strong enough to win this battle. The contest is indicative of the divisions in the American ruling class over intervention in Angola.

The friendly relations between Gulf Oil and the MPLA are not unique. Other companies of the same type get similar treatment.

This does not prove that the MPLA is controlled by Gulf Oil. It only underlines the point that each of these nationalist organizations holds an identical position toward imperialism; each of them maneuvers with imperialism; each is willing to make political and economic concessions to gain imperialist support.

Factional rivalry

The groups are real nationalist movements with mass support; consequently they are not dependent on imperialism. It is their factional rivalry, deepened now to the level of a civil war, that has exacerbated their readiness to invite aid from



Left to right: Neto (MPLA), Roberto (FNLA), and Savimbi (UNITA). The civil war involves three nationalist factions, each of which follows procapitalist, anti-working-class policies.

abroad to match their opponents in heavy arms and sophisticated military equipment.

To seek imperialist aid is common among such nationalist groups. Moreover, the various imperialist forces often intervene—as in this situation—on several sides to make sure that their interests are preserved no matter who wins.

It may be that the main strategy of the State Department in the current conflict is not to tip the scales decisively in favor of one of the sides—which could easily have been done by sending more massive aid to the UNITA and the FNLA or by more massive involvement of South African troops.

The State Department may be aiming at maintaining a balance of power between the three groups, preventing the total defeat of the UNITA and the FNLA. As time goes on, the Angolan masses may become exhausted and each faction will become more receptive to attempts by imperialism to increase its influence in return for support.

Moscow's intervention

Kissinger gives as one of his reasons for supporting the FNLA and UNITA the intervention of the Kremlin in the Angolan situation on the side of the MPLA.

Moscow granted an estimated \$100 million worth of military supplies to the MPLA.

The Kremlin's aims are the same as in other colonial and semicolonial areas. It seeks to strengthen the diplomatic influence of the Soviet Union, but without extending the world revolution or really assisting the national liberation of Angola.

In fact, like Washington, Moscow does not appear to be aiming to bring about a total victory for the side it favors. The Soviet bureaucrats are looking for chips to be used for bargaining purposes within the context of "détente" with American imperialism. That is the basis of the Kremlin's approach to the MPLA.

Another objective is to counteract Peking's prestige in Africa. By backing a supposedly progressive MPLA, pitted against the UNITA and the FNLA, which have received support from China, Moscow's image can be enhanced at the expense of Peking. In Africa, Moscow has long been regarded with less sympathy than Peking. In fact, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, two countries whose leaders are closely aligned with the MPLA, have closer relations with Peking than with Moscow.

Cuban intervention

The intervention of Cuba, which is reported to have as many as 5,000 troops in Angola, is subsidiary to the involvement of the Soviet Union. For diplomatic reasons, Moscow prefers not to send Soviet troops. From the Cuban viewpoint, the action may be considered worthwhile as a demonstration of opposition to imperialism.

Kissinger has denounced Moscow's support of the MPLA, claiming that this puts in question the détente as a whole. At the same time, Kissinger has not proposed any serious countermoves such as cutting off grain sales to the Soviet Union. But even if this propaganda were to be taken at face value, does this mean that we should support the "right"

of a workers state to take advantage of a situation like the one in Angola and that this calls for giving political support to the MPLA?

We don't think so. The interests of the world revolution do not coincide with the interests of the parasitic Soviet bureaucracy or its narrow diplomatic maneuvers. The military and diplomatic support given by the Kremlin to the MPLA is not meant to help the Angolan masses but to place the MPLA regime under obligations to Moscow.

If we were to base our stand on the actions of the bureaucratic representatives of a degenerated or deformed workers state, we would face a difficulty.

North Korea and China have sent advisers and some military aid to the FNLA and the UNITA. Romania, another deformed workers state, has pursued a policy of courting and aiding all sides in the current conflict. So which camp do we choose among these workers states that are fishing in the troubled waters of Angola?

Do we believe that Cuba and the Soviet Union are more "progressive" in supporting one petty-bourgeois nationalist faction than Peking and Pyongyang are in supporting a different petty-bourgeois nationalist faction?

If no confidence can be placed in the capacity of any of the factions to advance the socialist revolution in Angola or on an international scale, it follows that the aid offered by the bureaucracy of a degenerated or deformed workers state will not change that political conclusion.

For example, the counterrevolutionary bureaucrats who run the Soviet Union aren't at all opposed to the strikebreaking or the arrests of militants—especially under the cover of a witch-hunt against "Trotskyism." In fact, they may have made such a witch-hunt one of the conditions of their aid to the MPLA.

It is clear that a revolutionary-Marxist position in the Angolan civil war cannot be automatically derived from the Soviet and Cuban intervention in behalf of the MPLA, or from the Chinese and North Korean intervention in behalf of the UNITA or the FNLA.

The civil war involves basically three unprincipled nationalist factions that follow procapitalist, anti-working-class and class-collaborationist policies.

South Africa's intervention

The most ominous development in the Angolan civil war is the intervention of South Africa. This is one of the consequences of the unprincipled character of the contestants, who invite foreign intervention, no matter how reactionary its nature.

The South African intervention has passed through several phases.

The initial South African incursions began in late June or July. Their immediate objective was the pursuit of SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) guerrillas from Namibia who had crossed the border into Angola. South African troops had been barred from such forays under Portuguese rule, even under the Salazar-Caetano dictatorship. The Portuguese feared that South African incursions would pave the way for South African penetration of the area.

The pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas was followed in August by seizure of the Cunene dam and military occupation of the area.

It is important to note that the FNLA and UNITA did not serve as puppets of South Africa in this imperialist invasion. Instead, it was the FNLA and UNITA that spearheaded the fighting against South Africa in June, July, and August, along with the MPLA. This is not surprising since these are areas where the local population supports the UNITA and the FNLA units led by Daniel Chipenda.

Deepening civil war

It was the deepening civil war that prevented the three organizations from joining forces and driving the South African forces out of Angola.

In October, reports began to appear in the press that South African troops were involved in a drive of UNITA and FNLA forces up the coast from the South. According to the MPLA, the column included several hundred South African troops, some of whom were masquerading as mercenaries. Other sources claim that today five or six thousand South African troops have invaded Angola with more troops being stationed in the border areas of Namibia.

Because of the South African censorship and the efforts of the FNLA and UNITA to cover up the South African moves, it is not clear at the moment which field of operations is primary, pursuit of SWAPO, occupation of the Cunene valley, or military thrusts against the MPLA.

The South Africans have intervened for four obvious reasons: 1) to maintain control over the Cunene region; 2) to strengthen their grip on Namibia; 3) to tip the balance in the civil war toward the UNITA and the FNLA; 4) to facilitate the counterrevolutionary designs of the State Department.

The UNITA and FNLA must be condemned for blocking with the South Africans, just as the MPLA had to be condemned for collaborating with the Portuguese colonial army against the FNLA and UNITA.

As for the Vorster regime in South Africa, it must be pilloried along with the Ford administration for intervening in the Angolan civil war. Vorster is using South African troops to help pave the way for use of troops from other imperialist powers. Our slogan must be "South Africa out of Angola!"

What position for revolutionaries?

Our judgment of the civil war between the nationalist groups in Angola can be summarized as follows: 1) All three of these groups favor collaboration with imperialism and are opposed to working-class mobilization and any real struggle for socialism. 2) All three of them seek to inflame animosities between the main nationalities in Angola. 3) At the same time each of them has a real mass base and has played a real role in the struggle for independence.

In our opinion, no political support ought to be given to any of these three nationalist groups. The victory of any one of the three offers no special promise of advancing the Angolan masses toward socialism. To impose the rule of one nationality over the other two nationalities offers no stable solution to the problems facing Angola and would only facilitate imperialist designs on the country.

In fact, I do not think that any of these groups can "win" the struggle in view of the broad popular base each has. If one of them does gain a decisive victory over the others, its current political outlook could signify a bloodbath in which the real winner would be imperialism.

Our position is one of opposition to the factional war. We stand for the program of socialism—for the struggles of the workers, the youth, and the peasants that point toward a socialist society. We are opposed to the program and practices of each of the nationalist groups. We are for a class-struggle policy for the masses.

Responsibility of American socialists

Our job as American revolutionary socialists is to oppose imperialist intervention in Angola, particularly American imperialist intervention. Our job is to build meetings, organize picket lines and demonstrations, and do everything possible to deepen the opposition that already exists against intervention in the Angolan civil war.

If the imperialist intervention increases, as seems

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quite likely, we may decide to favor the victory of one or another of the groups on tactical grounds, but of course without giving it any political support. In fact, we would continue to oppose that group politically.

However, as I have indicated, it would not be correct for us to take such a stand at this point. Our main concern is to mount an effective campaign against Washington's intervention in the civil war and against its aim of blocking the national liberation and social struggles of the Angolan peoples.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

I would like to begin by taking up a few of the factual questions that comrades raised during the discussion. I think it is important to realize that many of these factual questions are very hard to answer, as comrade Fred Halstead pointed out. We try to go by concrete information: things that have been verified, usually even by pro-MPLA sources, such as many of the newspapers in Portugal, many of the publications in Angola published by the MPLA itself, as well as the reports of comrades who have been able to go to Angola.

Our statements on the slanders of the MPLA against the FNLA are not something recent. This was the position of the Fourth International throughout the initial years of the struggle. Only in the last couple of years did the International Majority Tendency make a shift on this.

It is rather dangerous to make flat, unqualified statements about one group favoring imperialism while another does not, or about one group not being a real national liberation movement while a different one is. The concrete facts have to be taken into consideration. The facts show that the other two groups are not simply puppets, despite the assertions of the MPLA.

It is not a matter of an Angolan Ky or Thieu or somebody like Ngo Dinh Diem, who was brought over to Vietnam from New Jersey. The analogy with Vietnam in this respect does not hold.

Movements with mass support

The FNLA and UNITA are real movements, real movements that have proven many times over that they have mass support. Even the MPLA says that it has no hope of politically winning over the people in regions like the Bakongo. And those areas are not just tiny pockets. Each liberation group has roughly a quarter to a third of the support in Angola.

I think it is important to take up some of the points that comrade Sam Manuel made. What do the three groups stand for? On the basic question of their attitude toward imperialism there is no fundamental difference.

One comrade mentioned that the MPLA does not call for a mass campaign against U.S. imperialism—perhaps because the MPLA does not want to disrupt détente. The MPLA's attitude is not primarily related to the détente between Moscow and Washington. It is true that the MPLA does not call for a big mass campaign against American imperialism. But that's not because of concern about the détente. They are looking ahead and holding open the possibility of friendly relations with American imperialism. This is the counterpart of the policy of the other two groups, who have been trying to outbid the MPLA in seeking friendly relations with American imperialism.

That tends unfortunately to be the character of the politics of these groups in this struggle.

At some point the situation could change in such a way that we would call for material support to the MPLA—or the UNITA, or the FNLA, or some combination of the three—while maintaining our political opposition to its program.

Our point of departure is opposition to American imperialist intervention, and if this ends up placing us in the same camp as one or another of the national liberation groups, then so be it.

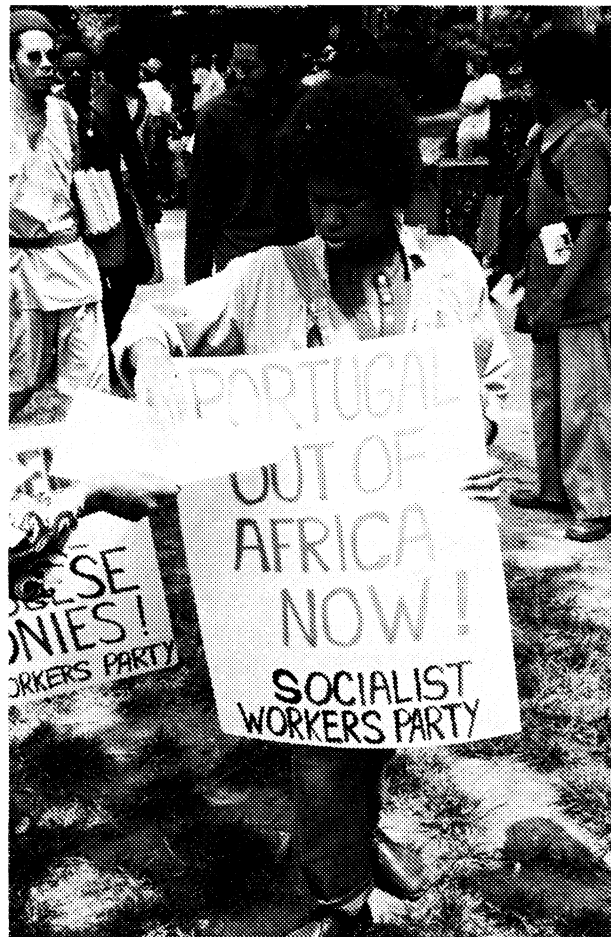
Three groups could evolve

It is possible that over time one or another of the three organizations could evolve in such a way that they would cease to be national liberation groups,

would lose their mass support, would become puppets of imperialism. That could happen. At this stage there is no basic difference of this kind among the three groups.

Our opposition to the intervention of imperialism does not stem from any view that the imperialists are backing the wrong group or something like that. In our opinion, imperialism is intervening in this situation with the aim of imposing its control. Imperialism wants to hold back the independence of Angola, to weaken the MPLA in general. Even if we were to support the MPLA at some stage, we would not make the error of trying to pressure imperialism into supporting the MPLA.

I think it is important to note in addition that the American ruling class is not unanimous on the question of just which group to back. Even before the present debate there was pressure from those concerned about the danger of another Vietnam. The fact is that the American imperialist specialists in African affairs in the State Department were



Militant/Maceo Dixon

SWP has fought against Portuguese and U.S. imperialism in Angola. 'Our job now is to do everything possible to deepen opposition to U.S. intervention.'

unanimously opposed to Kissinger's policy. They held that the United States should seek a diplomatic settlement between the three groups.

Richard Clark, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa, went to Angola and talked with the leaders in the MPLA. After he came back, he maintained that there was no basic difference among the three groups. He said that the MPLA leaders assured him that they would turn away from the Soviet Union as soon as they were able to beat the other groups.

Oppose demanding Soviet withdrawal

I want to say a word about the campaign of the social democrats and the Maoists demanding that "the Russians" or "Soviet imperialism" get out of Angola. We are opposed to this. There is no such thing as Soviet imperialism, anyway, and all this does is play into the hands of American imperialism. It equates Soviet aid to national liberation movements with attempts by the imperialists to maintain their economic exploitation and social oppression of the colonial countries.

As revolutionists and as unconditional supporters of the right to self-determination of the Angolan people, we of course criticize the Kremlin's inadequate aid to the struggle against imperialism. We criticize the Stalinists' uncritical support to MPLA policies, including the MPLA's chauvinist attitude toward the Bakongo and Ovimbundu peoples and its attempts to crush these peoples. We criticize the Kremlin's political course blocking the development of a revolutionary socialist party in Angola. We do not agree with the Stalinist policy.

The interests of the Angolan workers and peasants do not guide the Soviet bureaucracy, any

more than the Soviet bureaucracy's policies represent the interests of the Soviet workers and peasants. But the threat, the danger in Angola is *imperialist* intervention.

Our job is to demand that the U.S. government get out. If the Soviet Union stopped sending weapons to the MPLA, would that be a step forward for the Angolan revolution? No. It would embolden imperialism!

We do not demand that *any* of the national liberation groups in Angola give up the arms they have received from *any* source.

It is the political course that all three groups have followed, not the source of their arms, that is playing into the hands of world imperialism. And as comrade Peter Seidman pointed out, the last thing we want to do is give Washington any cover for its own intervention anywhere. This is a particularly scandalous aspect of the Maoists' and social democrats' demand for the Soviet Union to get out. It is a capitulation to the pressure of American imperialism.

Call for unity

What do we think should be done in Angola? First of all, we call for the unity, in anti-imperialist action, of the three nationalist organizations or any other similar organizations that may exist in Angola. We call on them to unite against the various imperialist powers that have intervened.

When the Portuguese ruled there, we were for the nationalist organizations uniting in action to drive the Portuguese out of Angola instead of each one of them trying to maneuver in various ways with the Portuguese. We propose the same course in response to South Africa or any other imperialist power trying to get involved. At the same time our basic objective is to help the masses break from these organizations on a political level.

We don't have a neutral attitude toward the three groups in relation to the civil war. We are against the policies of each of them in the civil war; we are against their refusal to follow a united policy against imperialism. In my opinion, the fault does not lie with just the UNITA or the FNLA. At the time the UNITA and the FNLA were opposing the initial South African attacks—opposing the seizure of the Cunene Valley and so on—the MPLA took advantage of the South African invasion, tried to turn it to the MPLA's advantage.

Instead of launching a national campaign to unite the various organizations against South Africa, the MPLA advanced militarily against the UNITA and to a lesser extent against the FNLA.

Organize opposition

It is difficult at this distance to assess all the ins and outs of the factional war between the three groups. But we have no difficulty in seeing what our main job is, as Fred and other comrades said. This is to organize opposition to American imperialist intervention, not only in words but in deeds.

We will do that and to the extent that the national liberation groups in Angola are also consistent in their struggle to end all imperialist intervention we will find ourselves in the same camp.

But it would be an obstacle to make an incorrect assessment on the basis of a one-sided set of facts, so that we would find ourselves in the factional camp of one of these nationalist groups pitted against the others without adequate justification.

That would stand as an obstacle in our battle against imperialism, just as it has among the various groups in Portugal and around the world, who place support of one of the groups above the needs of the struggle against imperialism.

The main thing that we have to act on right now is not the polemic going on between the various groups or the polemic on this question in the Fourth International. The main decision this plenum must make to advance the interests of the Angolan peoples and the African revolution as well as the American revolution is to launch a campaign around Angola.

We have to establish the Socialist Workers party as the organization that is doing the most to get the United States out of Angola, that is trying to get everybody working together on this question, that is trying to override the factionalism engendered by the supporters of one or another of three groups.

I think that we are going to find a very broad response to such a campaign in the Black communities. I think we are going to find a good reception in the labor movement, in the student movement—wherever the Indochina experience is remembered.