

# THE ANGOLAN REVOLUTION ENTERS ITS SECOND YEAR

by MICHEL PABLO

From the 4th to the 6th of February, 1961, a multitude of people led by militants wearing the insignia of the MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) attacked prisons, the radio station and the military barracks in Luanda.

Portuguese police, army and civilians responded by killing more than 3,000 Africans in one day alone — February 5th. Having escaped the Luanda massacres, some of the nationalist cadres managed to reach the countryside where they organized resistance among workers employed on plantations in *Baixa do Cassange* in the Malange district.

Encouraged by these examples, the peoples of the north took up armed struggle and since then there has been war in Angola.

All the evidence indicates that a new "Algerian war" has been kindled in southern Africa within the immediate neighbourhood of imperialism's last reserves on the continent: the Union of South Africa and the Rhodesias.

Caught between a blazing Congo in search of its abortive revolution, and a part of Africa where a strong European minority exists, well organized and fully determined to defend tenaciously its exorbitant privileges, Angola has been called on to face a bitter struggle. However, about the final outcome there can be no doubt at all.

## IMMEDIATE ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND OF THE WAR

On the face of it, it was the Angolan masses who took the initiative of "violence" and Portuguese imperialism, in order "to defend itself", was obliged to reply. In reality, however, the Luanda events of February 1961 followed a long series of provocations and all kinds of exactions on the part of the hated Portuguese rule.

The Angolan multitude's attack on the military and civil prisons of Luanda on the 4th of February, 1961 was aimed at freeing nationalist leaders and militants under arrest since March 1959. On the 8th of June, 1960 in Luanda the police had also arrested the nationalist leader *Agostinho Neto*, who was taken to Lisbon and then deported without trial to the Cape Verde Islands. When the people of Dr Agostinho Neto's native village called for his release in a peaceful demonstration the Portuguese army replied with the massacres of *Icolo* and *Bengo* in which 30 people were killed and 200 wounded.

On the 25th of June of the same year 1960, Abbé Joaquim Pinto de Andrade, an African priest who is well-known in Angola for his anti-colonialist attitudes, was also imprisoned and then deported without trial.

During July 1960 Portuguese troops, who had received considerable reinforcements since the Congo's independence, made frequent terror raids on the African quarters of Luanda and into the interior of the country, engaging in brutalities, massacres and tortures among the African population.

The aim was, of course, to prevent by repression the Congo Revolution's extension southwards, especially as the *Bakongo* inhabitants of the northern part of the country belong to the same people as the freed "French" and "Belgian" *Bakongo*. Moreover there can be no doubt about the almost direct influence Congo events had upon Angolan resistance.

From the date of Congo independence (1st July, 1960),

the idea of resistance, including armed resistance, against the Portuguese colonialist administration had begun to gain ground not only among advanced nationalist circles in Luanda but also in the forest regions and towns of Cabinda and northern Angola.

It was precisely these small groups of resistant peasants which had started to assemble in the forests of northern Angola and Cabinda from that time onwards, and who were under Lumumbist political influence, (1) that responded to the Luanda massacres of February 1961 by launching a campaign of reprisals against European dwellings, plantations, shops, offices and communication centres around 15th March, 1961.

But the more deep-seated and fundamental origins of the Angola war, which can develop along no other path than that of War-Revolution, the path of the Angolan Revolution, are naturally to be found in the characteristics and consequences of the centuries-old yoke placed on the country by Portuguese imperialism.

Portuguese occupation of the territory that today constitutes Angola has only been in any way effective since the Treaty of Berlin of February 26, 1885, which sanctified the division of Africa among the imperialist powers. And so great and stubborn was resistance and repeated revolt — about once every twelve years — among the population of the interior, that *military conquest* of Angola by the Portuguese was only achieved as late as 1922. This means that administrative occupation of this vast territory, about two and a half times the area of France and inhabited by nearly four and a half million people, did not effectively commence until that date (1922).

From that time forward colonization by European settlers who now number about 200,000 started to extend into the interior and great concessionary enterprises started to grow up, which exploited vast coffee plantations, diamond, iron and manganese mines, and oil fields.

The Portuguese had, however, reached Angola in 1482 and in the century that followed they occupied many strongholds along the coast. From about 1700 to 1850 the country's chief exports were slaves and 15 million Negroes were sent to the plantations of South America. (2) The slave traffic was officially abolished in 1836, but *disguised* slavery — a characteristic peculiar to Portuguese imperialism — has continued for millions of Angolan workers!

## THE WORKERS OF ANGOLA

These may be divided into three main groups:

(a) *Forced labourers*, who are veritable beasts of burden, most of them peasants, and make up about 50 per cent. of the mass of African workers. In theory, however, the system of free work has been in operation in Angola since 1906. Forced labourers are recruited by agreement between settlers and administrators, and they often work 12 hours a day receiving an average of less than \$3.50 per month. The administrator instructs the native chiefs to send him strong, sturdy men for coffee and palm cultivation. These are sent to Tonga and to Catete where they cultivate the fields under the watch of the armed

(1) As explained below.

(2) According to Father Diuconi.

forces. (3) Forced labour is without doubt one of the main causes of the material, physical and cultural degradation of the African.

(b) *Free labourers*, who work in settlers' enterprises under a unilateral contract signed between the government and the settlers, with a fixed daily wage of about seven dollars a month! The labourer receives his wage a fortnight after the end of the month. In the meantime he makes use of vouchers entitling him to feed himself from the settlers' stores, and which must be paid for out of his wages. Moreover trade union rights do not exist and 95 per cent. of African workers are deprived of any legal trade union organization. (4)

(c) *Intellectual workers*, who are given the title of *assimilados*, have, in principle, the same rights as the Portuguese. Their number, however, is less than 1 per cent. of the total African population.

According to official figures Angolan workers number 800,000, of whom 150,000 work in industry and more than 500,000 in agriculture.

But wage labour for private employers and for the colonialist State, as well as forced labour (for the construction and upkeep of roads, bridges, brick-making, plantation work) in reality encompasses some two and a half million Africans - men, women and children under 12 years of age.

### THE ANGOLAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Where social conditions of this sort exist, where 99.3 per cent. of the population —the *natives*, as they are called by Portuguese law— can take no part in elections, where the illiteracy figure is more than 99 per cent. and constitutes a further obstacle to reaching the status of *assimilado*, no path is left open but the path of "violence", armed struggle, as the only means of collective national liberation and individual rehabilitation.

Before the Angolan national political movement took the "Algerian" and "Cuban" road —the road of armed struggle— it went through all the phases common to the general history of liberatory movements among colonial peoples.

For a long time they nursed themselves on illusions about assimilation with the occupiers, or reforms, or achieving independence in "association", in "co-operation" with

(3) This is how Marcelo Caetano, former Portuguese colonial minister, justifies forced labour:

"Labour does not appear spontaneously... in other words: demand does not correspond to a proportional supply of hands. Recruiting agents have had to comb the bush in search of men fit for work in the plantations, factories, mines, ports and communications, and the administrative authorities have had to intervene in order to discipline recruiting, the more so because the State needs workers for public works... And as European establishments cannot always be set up there where labour is abundant, the consequence is that recruiting for work for third parties [i.e. private employers] by means of contracts generally of six months' duration, causes the despatch of workers to regions far away from where they live." (M. Caetano, *Os Nativos na Economia Africana* - Coimbra, 1954).

(4) There are only two legal trade unions, the *National Union of Drivers, Railwaymen and Metal Workers* and the *National Union of Employees in Commerce and Industry*, preponderantly European and whose leaders are nominated by the Governor General and the Minister of Colonies.

Illegal trade unionism is represented by the *Union of Negro Workers and Labourers of Angola* (UTONA) which has its headquarters inside Angola, and the *National Union of Workers of Angola* (UNTA) which has its headquarters in Leopoldville.

the imperialist metropolis "by legal means". All this, however, was naturally a movement confined to "advanced" intellectual circles and was doomed to failure in the peculiar circumstances of an atrophied Portuguese imperialism which seeks "prestige" and economic power in the mediaeval exploitation of an empire of some 13 million inhabitants.

It was the intensification of the fascist nature of the Salazar régime, established in Portugal in 1928, that impelled the development and maturing of the Angolan national movement.

In 1929 Luanda Africans founded first the *Liga Nacional Africana* (LNA), and then the *Grémio Africano* (African Club), which was later called the *Associação Regional dos Naturais de Angola* (ANANGOLA). African 'natives' tended to support ANANGOLA and *assimilados* to support the LNA.

Even this latter organization, which was more linked to the people, experienced an insuperable crisis during the second world war, its plebian rank and file demanding the abandonment of reformist methods and the adoption of methods of direct mass struggle. Its leadership, corrupted by imperialism and infiltrated by the police, was unable to respond to the aspirations of the masses.

Only in the first years after the war did a national *cultural* movement emerge, which was to be the herald of the present national *political* movement, from among the Angolan youth of the towns, especially Luanda, and those studying abroad in Lisbon and Paris. Angolan poets and writers, Negroes and mulattos, brought to birth the embryo of a national consciousness, introduced the liberatory ideas that agitated the post-war revolutionary world and subjected the Portuguese imperialist ideology to the weapon of criticism.

During the 1950s in the cultural field *Agostinho Neto*, *Mário de Andrade*, *Viriato Cruz*, *Ilídio Machado*, representatives of the budding Angolan national literature, crystallized the national aspirations of the Angolan youth and masses.

In December 1956 leaders of the *Partido da Luta Unida dos Africanos de Angola* (PLUA), an illegal mass organization that had been created a little earlier, and other organizations together created the *People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola* (MPLA), an African mass political organization, founded in Luanda and in the interior of Angola by Africans who had never left their country.

Parallel with these developments inside Angola, Angolan nationalists from among emigrants in the then Belgian Congo founded the *União das Populações do Norte de Angola* in 1954. It became the *União das Populações de Angola* (UPA) in 1958.

### NATURE AND PROBLEMS OF THE LEADERSHIPS OF THE ANGOLAN REVOLUTION

In the Angolan national movement the MPLA and the UPA are at the present the main political organizations which claim the leadership of the Angolan Revolution. It is difficult at the present time to ascertain the extent of their respective influence among the Angolan masses in struggle.

The MPLA seems to control the guerrillas operating in the districts of *Luanda*, *Quanza Norte* and *Malange*, while UPA controls those in the north of the country along the Congo-Angolan frontier. The UPA, which has its roots among the half million Angolans who live in the Congo as a consequence of a migration that first started two hundred years ago, was originally nothing but an off-shoot of the Congo national movement. So much so that its present chief leader *Holden Roberto* who appeared on the international scene for the first time after the Accra Conference of 1958, seemed at that time to be merely a disciple of Lumumba, introduced into the confidence of leading African nationalist circles thanks to Lumumba's prestige.

*Holden Roberto* claims to have started the armed strug-

gle of Angolan peasants which, he says, commenced on the 15th of March, 1961 in the district of Congo in northern Angola. He refuses to take part in the formation of an *Angolan Liberation Front* in which MPLA would participate on a footing of equality, and he proclaims his organization, the UPA, to be the sole and exclusive leader of the Angolan Revolution.

The MPLA does not deny the action undertaken by the peasants of the Congo district nor the political influence exerted on them by UPA (5). It does, however, affirm that the MPLA initiated the events of Luanda in February 1961, which precipitated the action of the northern peasants and which afterwards extended this action throughout the central part of the country. Furthermore, the MPLA insistently urges the creation of a United Front which would include itself and UPA.

On the programmatic level the differences between the two organizations seem unimportant at the present stage, both stressing the primary objective of a national anti-imperialist struggle for national independence.

But the Algerian and Congo experiences among others have clearly shown that the division of the national movement perpetuated in the course of direct mass action, is neither an accident nor the consequence of personal, tribal or ethnic rivalries. Division develops quite definitely along precise *class lines*, the national anti-imperialist struggle having an inexorable tendency, in the present historical context, to develop into Social Revolution with a view to *effective political and economic independence from the yoke of imperialism*.

Now, only a socialist régime can definitely secure such an aim. But even at the *national anti-imperialist* stage of the Revolution it is now usual to see the African national movement split into two tendencies, one "Bourguibist", that is to say, bourgeois and pro-Western, the other "Castroite", that is, oriented definitely towards socialism and effective disengagement from imperialism.

Anyone who wants to have a clear picture of developments in the Angolan Revolution must bear especially in mind the peculiar role American imperialism is at the present playing in Africa, and more particularly in Black Africa.

For reasons which are at once *economic*, connected with the considerable agricultural and mineral wealth of this part of the continent, and at the same time *political*, related to the strategic importance of Africa in the "cold war", Yankee imperialism has determined on the one hand to oust the weaker imperialisms, and in the first place those of Belgium and Portugal, and on the other to put a stop to the implantation of Sino-Soviet influence in this region.

To this end it will make great play of black nationalism, supporting among other things formal independence under "national" governments evolving in its economic and diplomatic orbit. An instance of this is the operation at present being conducted in the Congo through the channel of the Central Government, both against Tshombe on the one hand, who is the instrument of interests that are chiefly British, but in part Belgian and even French too, and on the other against Gizenga, the instrument either of potential Soviet penetration, or else of the rebirth of an authentic revolutionary movement in the Congo.

To be sure, the Angolan national movement will not fail to take advantage of inter-imperialist rivalries, nor of antagonism between East and West in order to hasten the hour of formal national independence. But inasmuch as this independence can be fully realized only through the

(5) See also article entitled "The armed struggle" which appeared in the first issue of *Unidade Angolana*, "combat journal of the MPLA", published in Leopoldville since December 1961.

(Address: *Unidade Angolana*, 51, Avenue Tombeur de Tabora, Leopoldville, CONGO).

anti-imperialist, social and socialist development of the Revolution it is of some importance that the Angolan masses should be aware precisely which is the vehicle in the present Angolan national movement through which Yankee imperialism's activity is operating.

A year of savage repression by Portuguese imperialism, whose forces now reach a total of some 60,000 armed men, has been unable to put down the heroic resistance of the Angolan masses.

In spite of 50,000 dead, 150,000 refugees and several hundred political detentions, the struggle that has been started is continuing and will continue until its victorious conclusion.

But, as we have already said, it will be very hard. The fate of all southern Africa, where European settlement is strongly entrenched, is what is at stake in the Angolan Revolution. Hence the active solidarity with Salazar of the Rhodesias and the Union of South Africa, as well as United Nations moderation in its interventions on this question, which so far have all been verbal.

The prolonging of the Angolan war, its extension southwards, its deepening into a veritable Revolution, threatens to set alight a region as explosive and already turbulent as the Union of South Africa. It also threatens to lead to the fall of the Salazar régime which would give a considerable impetus to the revolution with which Spain is now pregnant.

This explains the solidarity and caution of imperialism reflected in the United Nations resolutions counselling Salazar to formal, controlled step-by-step decolonization of this land that has suffered for so many centuries.

It is, however, through the extension of the war into the southern part of the country which, although they are considerably fewer than the inhabitants of the centre and the north, is peopled by hardened nomad herdsmen, that the Revolution will be released to some extent at least, from the help presently provided by the Congo, which is conditioned by precise and definite foreign influences.

Such an extension would simultaneously divide the efforts of the repressive forces and at the same time bring closer a common front with the South African masses, who are the principal natural and inevitable allies of the Angolan Revolution.

Moreover, the early affirmation of a more precise social program for the Angolan Revolution, with the accent on the agrarian question in particular, would galvanize the activities of the peasant masses, the basic framework of the Revolution.

The European allies of the Angolan Revolution cannot but ardently wish for the rapid formation of an anti-imperialist united front of all Angolan political organizations. But their main duty is to prevent the delays, the gaps and the weaknesses which characterized their action in support of the Algerian Revolution, and to hasten more effectively to the active support of the Revolution that has begun in Angola. *This should be done concretely by the formation of broad representative committees for material and moral aid to the Angolan Revolution.*

These committees should be organized on the basis of an anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist United Front of all proletarian political and trade union organizations, for financial, medical, technical and military assistance to the Angolan Revolution, for publicizing and popularizing its cause and promoting the commercial and diplomatic boycott of Portuguese fascism.

It is a question of re-establishing by means of active and effective solidarity that utterly necessary welding of the European Revolution to the Colonial Revolution, in a new front that will be among the most valiant, the most poignant known to the liberatory struggle of peoples still subjected to imperialist slavery.

20th February, 1962.