

Angola: Developments & Dangers

Much has happened since the last issue of *LSM NEWS* in the unfolding contradictions within the Angolan struggle. Under severe pressure from the OAU and individual African countries, the MPLA reversed its earlier decision to have nothing to do with Savimbi's UNITA and the two movements entered a 10-point agreement guaranteeing to "end all sorts of hostility and propaganda" hindering cooperation, to defend and advance the interests of the masses, to work toward the creation of common organs, and not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. This was followed in early January by another agreement between MPLA, FNLA and, indirectly, UNITA, pledging each to "end all types of hostilities and propaganda which may impede frank and sincere collaboration" and "create a favorable climate of close cooperation and mutual respect" (*Financial Times*, Britain 1/10/75). These moves by MPLA were obviously made to derail the growing collaboration between Mobuto, the FNLA's Holden Roberto, the secessionist FLEC of Cabinda and the Chipenda faction of MPLA (which has since joined FNLA). They were also made in the light of increasing CIA and right wing Portuguese efforts to "destabilize" the situation in Portugal and remove power from the leftist-oriented Armed Forces Movement (AFM) leadership. (Rightist elements of the AFM only today [11 March] failed in an attempted coup.)

There followed a five-day meeting, beginning on 17 January in Algarve, Portugal, between the three movement leaders and officials of the Portuguese government. This "Angola independence summit" ended in an agreement which called for the formation of a Provisional Angolan Government on 31 January 1975 and total independence on 11 November. The transitional government now in operation consists of a 12-member cabinet and a 3-member Presidential Council, with equal representation to MPLA, FNLA and UNITA. Portugal retains partial control through a Governor-General, the military, and key ministerial posts. With something like 30,000 troops still in Angola, Portugal heads the ministries of Economy, Transport & Communication, Public Works, Housing and Town Planning. FNLA heads the ministries of Interior, Health & Social Affairs, and Agriculture; MPLA, the ministries of Information, Planning & Finance, and Justice; and UNITA, Labor and Social Security, Education & Culture, and National Resources. In addition, each movement will have a junior position within ministries it does not head, thus minimizing the possibilities of premature power plays. This cabinet, under the Governor-General, will rule Angola until the election of a constituent assembly in October, which will in turn elect a President and write a constitution. Only MPLA, FNLA and UNITA will be allowed to run candidates for the constituent assembly. An Angolan army is to be formed according to the following timetable: From February to June, each movement will contribute 500 men monthly while Portugal contributes 1,500 men; from June to September the movement contribution will go up to 1,500 a month and Portugal's to 4,500. The 24,000 Portuguese troops still in Angola by the end of April will begin to pull out in October and there are to be no Portuguese troops left in Angola by 29 February 1976 (*Daily News*, Tanzania 1/17/75).

That this is a positive development is clear; but that it is fraught with dangers is also clear. Should these plans unfold as agreed, I think there is little doubt that MPLA will emerge the dominant force in the constituent assembly and Neto will be chosen Angola's first president. Dr. Neto has recently stated, however, that there are 40,000 mercenaries being trained by crack South African instructors who "may attempt an alliance with a section of the Africans who served in the colonial army" (*Sunday Times*, Zambia, 1/12/75). In a later interview, Neto warns of difficult times ahead, saying ". . . there is an internal reaction. There is a group of Portuguese that is not yet used to the idea of independence. One way or another, they think they will have to continue dominating our country" (*Sempre Fixe*, Portugal, 1/25/75).

In addition, the imperialist powers, especially the U.S. through its CIA, are maneuvering for a right wing putsch in Portugal which would alter the future of Angola; they are also angling with Mobuto and co. for a victory - via elections or force - for "moderate" (read: non-MPLA) forces so as to consolidate neo-colonial control by the multinational corporations which dominate much of Angola's resources and wealth. As Neto has said, "Who exploits the iron ore in Angola? The Germans! Who exploits the oil? The Americans and the Belgians! And to whom belongs the Benguela Railroad? To the English! To whom belongs the diamond company? To the Americans, the Belgians, the French and the English! Who is exploiting the oil in the district of Cabinda? The Americans! . . . We are aware the imperialists are trying to divide our people to continue their exploitation. The example of Cabinda is notorious . . . [and] in future we will see other parts of Angolan territory in the same position. They will be mobilized by the imperialists to satisfy the interests of certain powers. Great powers. Today there is a silent invasion in our country. Not all who carry arms today, after the '25th of April,' were fighting the Portuguese. Some of them are not even Angolan nationals. These are real difficulties which we cannot forget. And we cannot forget that behind all this are those who want to continue exploiting the oil, the iron, the diamond, or gold, all the natural riches of our country" (*Ibid.*).

It is impossible to predict even the immediate future in Angola. Much depends on developments over the coming months in Portugal, where elections are scheduled in April, and on the fragile and precarious unity among the three liberation movements - each subject to different external pressures and ideological pulls. We can be certain of only one thing: much vigilance and determination will be required if Angola's war of independence is to move forward successfully into the struggle for socialist transformation and avoid the various and deceptive paths leading to neo-colonial accommodation and continued exploitation of the Angolan masses.

by Don Barnett



Agostinho Neto