

# Angola Prepares For Second Party Congress

The Second Ordinary Congress of the MPLA-Workers' Party is scheduled to take place in December 1985. In preparation for this Congress, the Party held its First National Conference in Luanda, 14-19 January 1985. The task of this conference was to assess the work done from the time of the 1980 Special Party Congress up to the present time, including the internal life of the Party, the state, and mass organizations. The Conference was attended by 552 delegates who came from every province of the country. Five Commissions were established, covering issues of the Party itself, social and living conditions of combatants, the economy, production, and education and teaching.

The Opening Speech by President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos became the Conference working document. In this speech, the President provides a lengthy overview of the economy and spells out many of the Party's problems and weaknesses. Since the role of the Party has been identified as one of the most important issues to be discussed at the December Congress, it will be helpful to review some of the comments made in Dos Santos' speech.

In December 1977 the MPLA transformed itself from a mass movement into a vanguard party, and in February 1978 began to review membership and recruitment through the Rectification Campaign. New Party members were to join through their places of work, and during the first year emphasis was placed on industrial workers in urban areas. In 1979 the Rectification Campaign was extended to the rural areas, with priority being given to peasant as-

sociations and cooperatives, and wage labourers on the state farms.

By December 1980, the Rectification Campaign had covered the entire country. The Party then had just over 31,000 members (8.6% of whom were women) with just over half being workers and peasants.

Though the Rectification Campaign was considered a success at the time it occurred, in his January 1985 speech President Dos Santos said that the campaign ended without achieving its goals in the countryside. In particular, the criteria for membership were too restrictive, i.e., the number of agricultural workers was too small, or state farms were not organized, or there were too few peasant associations and cooperatives. As a result the Party is poorly represented in the rural areas, and while central and provincial Party structures were strengthened by the campaign, most of the Party Cells at the local level remain weak. The

## MONOGAMY AND PARTY MEMBERSHIP

One of the conditions for MPLA Party membership has been strict monogamy. But there has been a problem of how to deal with the more clandestine concubinage of the cities, compared to the open and traditional polygamy out in the countryside, where this membership condition would affect proportionally more people. A decision has been made to modify the monogamy ruling, permitting older men to maintain their polygamous unions even as Party members, but younger peasants were expected to adhere to the monogamy ruling.

small number of Party members in comparison to the country's total population was also noted as a problem, as this also affects education and recruitment.

Another problem brought up by the President is the top heaviness of the Party structure: the number of administrators is too high compared to the number of members. This means that there is a danger that administrative concerns will take precedence over political concerns. While this situation has been partly overcome by a membership campaign which was launched in December 1981, the need to strengthen the Party's base organizational structure is still considered a priority.

After considering the above and other problems, the Commissions of the National Conference recommended that the December Congress examine in more depth growth of the Party, ideological unity within the party, and the party's authority, prestige and links with the masses. Also to be discussed at the Congress are the parallel market, corruption, the role and responsibility of state enterprises, etc. But overriding all concerns at the Conference was that the requirements for the country's defence along with improving supplies for the population must be given absolute priority.

In November 1985, Angola will celebrate ten years of independence. Yet since the beginning of the struggle for independence in 1961, Angola has not known a day of peace. As a result of the South African-backed war in Angola, hundreds of thousands of Angolans have been made internal refugees. Economic development has been put largely on hold, as



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the majority of human and material resources must be directed towards survival. Daily, there are reports in the newspapers and on national TV of ambushes against villages, public buses and economic targets. Internal commerce is seriously hampered by both the lack of transport and of consumer goods. Travel, except by plane, is restricted in many areas. On top of this, a drought in some parts of the country, is displacing people from their homes.

The fact that Angola has sur-

vived a decade of independence is itself reason for celebration. Since 1975, South Africa and UNITA – using both conventional and guerrilla tactics – have been intent on economic and social destabilization of Angola. Economic destabilization has occurred, as evidenced by the fact that Angola is compelled to spend 80% of its foreign currency earnings (or 50% to 60% of the national budget) on defence, rather than on the implementation of development programmes. Social disruption is widespread. Be-

tween the war and drought, over one million of Angola's 7.5 million people (1982 population figure) have been displaced, or one out of seven people. Now the war is one of attrition, of South Africa and UNITA trying to wear down the resolve of the country to resist. This has not been achieved. Instead, there is a sense in Angola of an individual and national pride that the country *continues* to resist the strongest opponent on the continent – *apartheid* South Africa.