

Angola: The Struggle Continues

Interview with Paulo Jorge, MPLA

Paulo Jorge is currently a member of the Central Committee and External Affairs Coordinating Committee of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). LSM's Ole Gjerstad conducted this interview in Bissau on May 6th to learn about recent developments in Angola and the contradictions behind recent MPLA-FNLA-UNITA conflicts. While readers of past issues of LSM News are aware that certain problems exist in the MPLA-LSM relationship, it has also been clear that we continue to support MPLA as the only progressive and revolutionary force in Angola. In a formal meeting with MPLA comrades, Jose Eduardo, Paulo Jorge and Pedro Alves, a firm desire to re-establish fraternal relations was expressed.

MPLA -- PAIGC -- FRELIMO

COMRADE JORGE, PERHAPS YOU COULD EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF MPLA'S CURRENT VISIT TO GUINEA-BISSAU?

The MPLA delegation came here to inform our PAIGC comrades of the situation in Angola, to learn of new developments in Guinea-Bissau and to exchange opinions on international problems. This is normal because, as you know, MPLA and PAIGC fought against a common enemy for many years and we have grown to be close comrades. We are also here to celebrate May 1st. For the first time May 1st is being openly commemorated in Guinea-Bissau and we enjoy being together with our PAIGC comrades on this particular date - International Workers Day.

DURING THE WAR YOU HAD CLOSE CONTACT WITH PAIGC AND FRELIMO THROUGH CONCP (CONFERENCE OF NATIONALIST ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PORTUGUESE COLONIES). ARE THERE ANY CONCRETE PLANS TO CONTINUE THIS COOPERATION IN LIGHT OF GUINEA-BISSAU'S RECENT AND MOZAMBIQUE'S FORTHCOMING INDEPENDENCE?

The links developed during the armed struggle will, we hope, be maintained. Perhaps we will establish a special form of cooperation between the three countries and governments. MPLA would like to see the spirit of CONCP continue to grow in the future, and we are sure PAIGC and FRELIMO are thinking in the same vein.

Problems of Angolan Independence

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING MPLA AT THIS STAGE IN THE PROCESS LEADING TO ANGOLAN INDEPENDENCE?

We have had a transitional government in Angola since January, composed of three nationalist organizations - MPLA, FNLA (Angolan National Liberation Front) and UNITA

(National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) - plus representatives of the Portuguese government. Within this transitional government some problems and difficulties have developed. The major problem is what I would call the struggle of the progressive revolutionary force, that is MPLA, against the Angolan and Portuguese reactionary forces. One of the other nationalist organizations - FNLA - is causing serious conflicts by using aggression and provocation against the militants and population of Angola. Because they have no political support, they are trying to seize control by force.

When they began this, MPLA responded only defensively, because we wished to avoid the possibility of civil war. Some people thought this was a weakness of MPLA because we didn't immediately reply in kind to the provocations and aggressions perpetrated by FNLA. However, as FNLA attacks increased, the Major Staff of MPLA's armed forces decided to respond in kind, to prove that MPLA is indeed both a political and military force, and to stop all forms of aggression against our people.

The third organization, UNITA, collaborates in creating these conflicts. UNITA is pretending to a neutralist position, but in fact we have seen UNITA join forces with FNLA several times, particularly over political questions within the transitional government. This collaboration has been the basis of many serious incidents in which hundreds of people have lost their lives.

MPLA's position is to respect the Alvore Agreement (between Portugal, MPLA, FNLA and UNITA) because we consider this a fundamental document that could lead our organizations and our people to independence in November. If other Angolan organizations were to respect the Alvore Agreement, we are sure we could reach independence day peacefully. But at this time, taking into consideration the attitudes of reactionary forces in Angola, we in MPLA are sometimes forced to use military action in order to maintain a minimal level of peace and security.

SO FAR THERE HAVE BEEN DEFINITE SIGNS THAT FNLA, AT LEAST, IS NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT OR LIVE BY THE AGREEMENT. COULD YOU RECOUNT SOME OF THE GRAVE CONFRONTATIONS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE PAST MONTH?

There are many; they have occurred in several regions of the country, but the most serious have been in Luanda. For example in April about 65 young MPLA militants were shot down in cold blood by FNLA. These young people were on their way to a CIR school (Center for Revolutionary Instruction) near the capital. They were intercepted by FNLA members and shot down. This genocidal attack was clear proof that FNLA was trying to liquidate our cadre, and the people retaliated quickly and strongly.

Particularly in the *muceques* (urban shantytowns), FNLA constantly attempts to kidnap our people and terrorize the civilian population who clearly support MPLA and are against FNLA's criminal activities. In these areas we have organized "action committees" to carry out the legitimate desires of the Angolan people, in particular the workers and peasants. People's power is an essential part of building a revolutionary country; FNLA and UNITA are against the people's power and react against popular support for it and MPLA.

Also, FNLA people sometimes attack MPLA bases where our freedom fighters and leaders are located, trying to provoke serious incidents. MPLA is now responding. Indeed FNLA has not succeeded in capturing a single base or military position. We are prepared to meet all such challenges in order to defend our revolution and the supreme interests of the Angolan people.

UNTIL JANUARY 1976 THE PORTUGUESE ARMY IS SUPPOSED TO BE A PEACE-KEEPING FORCE IN ANGOLA AND THEY STILL HAVE A LOT OF PERSONNEL, PERHAPS AS MANY AS 40 TO 60 THOUSAND SOLDIERS. WHAT IS THE POSITION OF THE PORTUGUESE ARMY?

The actual position of the Portuguese forces is passivity toward the situation in Angola. We can understand this, because we know that the Portuguese soldiers do not want more fighting. But on the other hand, we think that until November the Portuguese armed forces and authorities have certain responsibilities in maintaining peace and order in Angola. Unfortunately, inside the Portuguese forces based in Angola there are some reactionary elements who are not fulfilling the program of the Armed Forces Movement. This

foot-dragging by some reactionary officers complicates the situation in Angola because they do not try to prevent clashes.

PERHAPS YOU COULD EXPLAIN THE SITUATION IN CABINDA, AND YOUR VIEW OF THE SO-CALLED CABINDA LIBERATION MOVEMENT, FLEC (LIBERATION FRONT FOR THE ENCLAVE OF CABINDA).

Cabinda is an integral part of Angola, very rich in oil and other natural resources. Only the MPLA fought in Cabinda and we controlled most of its land. FLEC is an organization that was formed after April 25th by some people who now claim that Cabinda is a separate entity and its population is separate and distinct from the rest of Angola. In fact, we think these maneuvers stem from foreign interest in our oil.

MPLA's position is to defend our territorial integrity. All African countries, even after independence, have retained the borders defined by the Berlin Conference of 1885. No country's borders have been changed after independence, this principle is recognized by the OAU (Organization of African Unity). As well, the Portuguese government and the Secretary-General of the United Nations signed a declaration affirming that they will respect the territorial integrity of former Portuguese colonies. Even in the Alvoré Agreement it is clearly stated that Cabinda is an integral part of Angola. MPLA will defend this integrity and use armed force if foreign interests oblige us to do so.

WHERE DOES FLEC HAVE ITS ROOTS? WHAT IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE CABINDAN PEOPLE?

FLEC was formed by some people born in Cabinda who were living in Zaire or the People's Republic of Congo. But we don't think this organization is a creation of these countries. In our opinion foreign powers from the United States and France are pursuing their oil interests through this intervention. Through groups like FLEC, imperialist powers are trying to split the district of Cabinda from the rest of Angola. But we don't think FLEC itself can cause us problems, they have no force to fight against MPLA.

MPLA was the only liberation movement which fought to liberate Cabinda and the people there fully support MPLA. We could see this clearly during President Neto's visit to Cabinda in February of 1975. The people came en masse into the streets and to the airport to greet our President.

MPLA HAS STATED THAT IN ANGOLA THE OLD COLONIALIST SECRET POLICE "PIDE" (LATER RENAMED "DGS") HAS BEEN DISMANTLED TO A MUCH LESSER EXTENT THAN IN GUINEA-BISSAU, MOZAMBIQUE OR EVEN IN PORTUGAL. COULD YOU COMMENT ON THIS?

PIDE was very strong in Angola and PIDE agents are still operating in our country. Frankly, this makes us wonder if they are not still operating in Portugal to some extent. We have asked the Portuguese authorities to smash this organization, arrest all PIDE agents in Angola and send them back to Portugal for imprisonment or whatever.

There is another paramilitary organization in Angola that has not yet been destroyed. This organization was formed in order to defend the interests of the settlers and big plantation owners. The Portuguese authorities are now trying to liquidate this reactionary organization, but its members are still at large and do all they can to oppose real independence in Angola.

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR THE ELECTIONS THAT ARE SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER? WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO HOLD THEM?

The process of this election is very difficult and complicated. First, we must know the population of our country precisely. Starting with so little, it is very difficult to record the names and birthplaces of all the people in a country. Second, our people have never before participated in elections, so we have no experience in the electoral process. Then, of course, there are the objective conditions under which we are living. We are confident that MPLA would win a genuine election, but we are very wary of how the other organizations would react to this, particularly FNLA. We believe that if we hold this election, we will see more serious clashes. We in MPLA are preparing for the elections - but so far we are not sure if they will or should be held.

AS A SUMMARY PERHAPS YOU COULD IDENTIFY THE MAIN ELEMENTS WHICH THREATEN THE COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE OF ANGOLA.

In our opinion the main problem is lack of respect for our transitional government. If all Angolan forces, in cooperation with the Portuguese authorities, respect the Alvore Agreement we think we can reach independence by peaceful means. But many incidents demonstrate that the other organizations do not respect the Alvore Agreement. And the imperialist powers are meddling in the internal affairs of our country. This is at the root of our conflicts.

MPLA has fought for fourteen years with arms in hand and we are prepared to counter any provocation or external aggression. If the imperialist powers or reactionary Angolan forces try to block our revolutionary process, we are determined to continue the armed struggle. There is no other alternative.

People's Power

YOU MENTIONED EARLIER THAT MPLA IS ESTABLISHING "PEOPLE'S POWER." COULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS MORE AND HOW YOU ARE CONCRETELY IMPLEMENTING IT?

By people's power we mean that the Angolan masses must have their say in our revolutionary process and must participate fully in the activities and decisions in all spheres: economic, social and cultural. As you know, during the struggle we organized the people into "action committees." Now, we are organizing the people on a much broader scale into this kind of structure - with committees and popular assemblies - so that the higher institutions of the government and the party can respond to the wishes and needs of our people. For us, it is essential that the Angolan people be active participants in the political development of our country.

HOW ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING YOUR PROGRAMS IN THE URBAN AREAS, WHERE MPLA COULD ONLY OPERATE UNDERGROUND DURING THE WAR? HAVE YOU, FOR EXAMPLE, ESTABLISHED CENTERS FOR REVOLUTIONARY INSTRUCTION IN THE *MUCEQUES*?

During the war urban political activity was clandestine and we were only able to have meetings with small numbers of people and to spread MPLA's political line through watchwords and slogans. After April 25th we started legal political activity and were able to openly mobilize and politicize large numbers of people. This political activity has greatly increased since November 1974, when a big MPLA delegation arrived in Luanda.

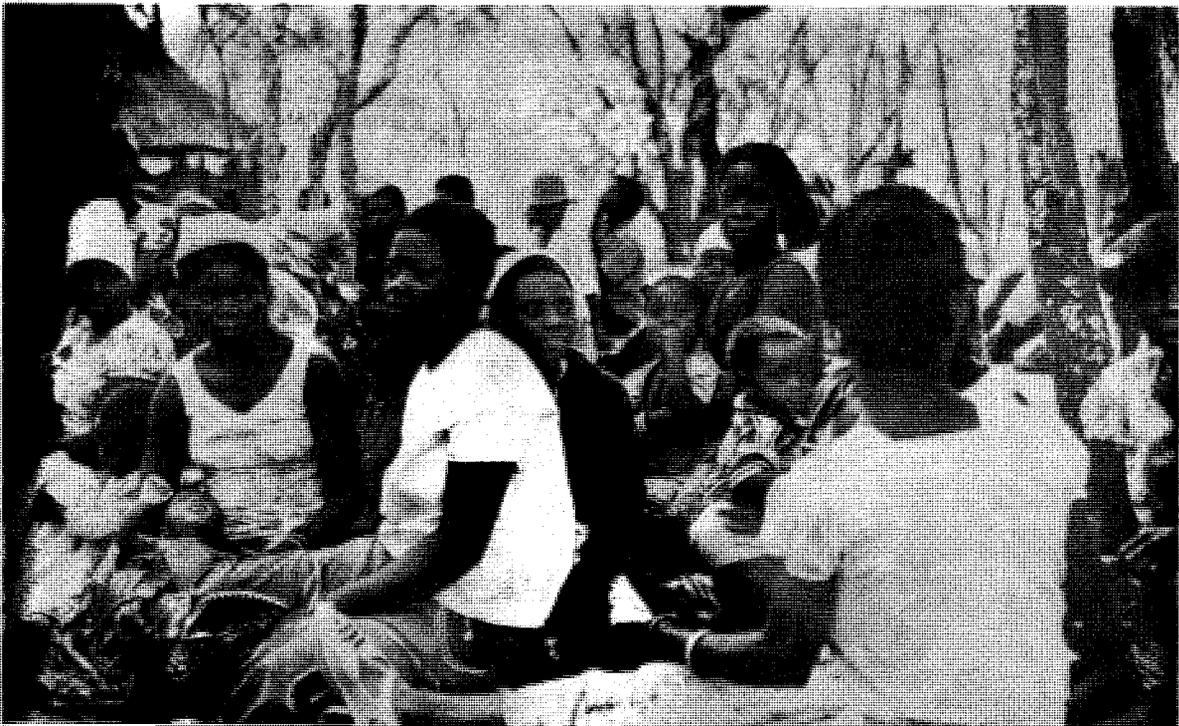
We have received great support from the people, and have opened several CIR schools in order to prepare the militants who are supporting MPLA. The majority of people coming to these centers are young men and women - students, workers and peasants. They learn military tactics and strategy, guerrilla warfare. In the political sphere the militants are taught the political line and program of MPLA - what we intend to build in independent Angola, the dangers presented by imperialist forces, the meaning of independence and democracy, etc.

In addition, we have organized medical training schools and dispensaries. We are mobilizing the people into self-defence units, and organize frequent meetings among the people to explain the position of MPLA and discuss different problems we face.

DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH EXPERIENCED CADRES TO CARRY OUT YOUR PROGRAMS? OR DO YOU ALSO RELY ON PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME INTO THE STRUGGLE MORE RECENTLY, SINCE APRIL 25th?

We have many experienced cadres, but not enough for the work we intend and need to do. We are combining the cadres who have been in MPLA for many years and accumulated much political and military experience, with those who have less experience but worked underground in the towns. Thus we are successfully combining old and new militants and sending them to different places to teach our people.

FROM WHAT GROUPS - IN TERMS OF CLASSES AND REGIONS - DO YOU RECEIVE THE MOST SUPPORT?



Angola Medical Committee

Angolan women gather for political meeting.

MPLA has the support of more or less the entire people of Angola. But we receive the strongest support from workers, peasants, students and revolutionary intellectuals - especially young people. From different regions and different tribes people are coming to join MPLA. This is the reality in our country.

AT MPLA'S LAST CONFERENCE, HELD IN THE EASTERN REGION, YOU REVIEWED YOUR INTERNAL STRUCTURE. PERHAPS YOU COULD DISCUSS WHAT CHANGES WERE MADE?

During our conference last September we analyzed the situation in Angola and reviewed the program and structure of MPLA. We decided to transform MPLA's armed forces into a regular army, the FAPLA - People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola. We did this so as to begin constituting a real national army. FAPLA is led by our Major Staff, a group of commanders and political commissars. Within FAPLA there are 100-150 people in a squadron, with three squadrons in each column.

In the political sphere, we now have a Central Committee which includes all people who are leading the movement, and a Political Bureau which serves as an executive of the Central Committee and handles the day-to-day leadership.

Toward an Independent Angola

WHAT ARE MPLA'S GOALS FOR ANGOLA AFTER INDEPENDENCE?

We intend to build a free country and establish political, diplomatic and economic relations with all peoples in the world. We intend to maintain a non-aligned policy, and to develop our natural resources to serve the needs of the Angolan people and not foreign interests. This is the major aim of our activities.

WOULD THIS INCLUDE NATIONALIZATION OF RESOURCES?

Nationalization is an integral part of the program and political line of MPLA. But we don't intend to nationalize the monopolies all at once or immediately. First we will meet with them to revise the concessions and agreements they established with the Portuguese government. An independent Angolan government cannot be bound to the past colonial agreements. During discussions with the monopolies we will try to establish agreements which are mutually beneficial. We will also discuss how to develop our country according to the new laws and principles that will be established in a free and independent Angola.

DOES THIS REPRESENT A DEPARTURE FROM EARLIER MPLA POLICIES?

No. What seems new is merely the way we implement our program, not the principles. Our present program is a tactical but not a strategic change.

WHAT IS MPLA'S POSITION ON THE SETTLERS AND WHITE ANGOLANS?

MPLA has a very clear position, based on the principles we have had since the founding of our organization in 1956. First, we never fought against the Portuguese people, we fought against the fascist and colonial regime. Second, we never fought against the white man merely because he was white; we fought those exploiting our people. Revolution is not a matter of color. Third, we contend that all people born in Angola are Angolans. For us the important thing is whether or not a person identifies him/herself with the revolutionary principles of MPLA to liberate the Angolan people from exploitation, colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism - whether or not they identify with the legitimate interests of the exploited classes.

We have no intention of expelling anyone with these principles from the country. Some white Angolans will decide to leave, but all those who wish to contribute to the development of our country are welcome to stay. Our only requirement is that they accept and obey the new laws and institutions we will build in an independent Angola.

Criminals who have committed crimes against the population are known to our people and will be judged by tribunals. But we are careful to avoid any spontaneous "justice" or vengeance, because it could provoke more problems inside the country.

International Solidarity

HOW DO YOU SEE THE WORK OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO WISH TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING MPLA?

During our armed struggle many national and international solidarity organizations - such as your organization, Liberation Support Movement - gave us very important support. Though we are nearing independence, we think these organizations have an important role to play by maintaining this solidarity. Our needs are different now so it is necessary to discuss the ways they can best help us according to their means and resources. Information is very important and groups like LSM can do valuable work informing the world of the real situation in Angola. We must succeed in mobilizing international opinion for the support of our movement and genuine independence.

THIS IS A VERY CRITICAL TIME NOW FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA. HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR SITUATION RELATING TO THAT OF YOUR COMRADES IN NAMIBIA, ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA?

With the independence of Angola and Mozambique, the situation in southern Africa will change. We feel that after the independence of these two countries it will be easier to express our solidarity with the liberation movements of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa in concrete ways. During our armed struggle close relations developed among the liberation movements of southern Africa. Precisely what kind of support we can give will depend on the needs of those movements. We think that we will best be able to help by providing facilities to our comrades in arms from those countries. Sooner or later, we are certain they too will achieve their independence.