

Mistimed Angolan Quarrels

DAVID BAAD

DISCOURAGING REPORTS have been reaching the Western press in recent weeks on the progress of the nationalists' struggle in Angola. The military operation itself does not seem to have radically changed. As has been the case since shortly after the beginning of the rebellion in March 1961, the Angolans are grouped in small guerilla units. They continue to harass Portuguese military regiments sent to "pacify" North Angola. They dig holes and throw up obstacles on roads to disrupt Portuguese commerce. And they continue to sporadically burn plantations to further hinder the Portuguese economy.

The Angolans remain short of arms. They are ill-clothed and their nourishment is found off the land. Communication among the guerilla units and between the guerilla units and the Congo, from whence come supplies and tactical direction, is still almost totally by runner. But the Union of the Populations of Angola (UPA) which has provided direction and support for the military action since its inception claims that some areas of Angola near the Congo border are under their control and, more important, it is clear that the Portuguese Government cannot bear for long the economic strain of a prolonged military action, involving more than 20,000 troops. Nor can it bear the serious reduction in exports (mainly coffee) from Northern Angola caused by the Angolan harassment and the mass exodus of Africans to the Congo. There are now more than 150,000 refugees in the Congo, almost all Kikongo

DAVID BAAD, *editor of Student, Brussels, has just visited the Congo, from where he made a study of the needs of Angolan youth organisations.*

speaking peoples from the Northern Angolan Congo Province.

WHAT HAS BEEN DISCOURAGING is the increasing evidence of pronounced disharmony within the Angolan nationalist movement. It is difficult to say how much effect this has had or will have on the prosecution of the guerilla action. Leaders of the UPA claim that it has had no effect. The disharmony is discouraging, however, in view of the apparently increasing possibility that the Salazar Government will soon give way, raising the hope of potential negotiations with nationalist organisations which would lead to independence. The recent student strikes and demonstrations in Portugal, the first in at least 35 years to have been prolonged for as long as two months in face of Government opposition, were for winning student organisation rights and university autonomy but they reflected at their base, according to observers, the rapidly spreading Portuguese popular dissatisfaction over fighting a drawn-out and hopeless colonial war in face of almost unanimous world censure.

At least eight different Angolan nationalist organisations are now operating in Leopoldville. Three of these organisations—the UPA, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and the Democratic Party of Angola (PDA)—are committed to winning independence by all means and all are engaged, in one degree or another, in the military action. The other organisations—the Movement for the Defence of Angolan Interests (MDIA), the Ngwizako, and the Nto-Bako and the National Angolan Front (FNA)—claim to be for Angolan independence but wish to achieve it by non-violent means. None of the four non-violence movements, two of which (the MDIA and Nto-Abako) believe in close co-operation with the Portuguese, is taken seriously by the FNLA or by MPLA leaders, who say that none of these movements represent anyone inside Angola. Other observers say the MDIA and Nto-Abako are essentially Portuguese puppet organisations. The eighth organisation, the Movement for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (MLEC) is an organisation only of the peoples of Cabinda; it reportedly has co-operated in the past with the MPLA and also with the PDA.

Within this complex, the UPA and PDA have now united to form, first, an Angolan National Liberation Front (FNLA) and a short while, later, at the end of March, an Angolan Government-in-Exile. FNLA leaders, Premier of the Government-in-Exile Holden Roberto (UPA) and Vice-Premier Emmanuel Kunzika (PDA), with whom we talked at length in Leopoldville, claim that the door is open to the participation of the MPLA in their united front. MPLA leaders, on the other hand, point out that the Front was created without any prior consultations with the MPLA and they suggest that the Front was created as much for purposes of isolating the MPLA as it was for creating genuine unity. They suggest that the leaders of all Angolan nationalist movements should establish a working committee which would start from scratch to create a formula for genuine, lasting unity. This the FNLA has rejected on grounds that two of the three movements involved in armed struggle have already unified. It is up to the third to join the two.

IT IS CLEAR that it is the position of the UPA, MPLA and PDA which is being supported by the majority of other African Governments; it was also their statements before the UN Sub-Committee and their discussions with UN delegates in New York last November, December and January which were instrumental in the UN's clear support of the Angolan struggle against Portuguese colonialism. Although there are rumours that the Portuguese Government might use the Nto-Bako and the MDIA to establish a so-called representative African Government in Angola, thus outflanking the UPA, MPLA and PDA, any lasting solution in Angola would clearly have to involve the Parties engaged in armed hostilities.

The friction between the FNLA (UPA-PDA) and the MPLA appears deep despite their common adherence to full struggle for total independence. In March for example the MPLA circulated accusations from Marcos Kassanga, former General of the UPA Army, claiming that the UPA had been responsible for "savagely killing some 8,000 Angolans." Holden Roberto was said to be trying to force all Angolans to accept the supremacy of his own tribe (Bakongo), of his own religion (Protestant) and of French as Angola's official language of the future (instead of Portuguese). On the other hand the UPA has long said that the MPLA is a Party of mulattoes and Portuguese, whose domination would be as unacceptable to the Angolan Africans as was Portuguese Government domination. There have also been suggestions, in private discussions with UPA leaders, that the MPLA is heavily infiltrated by "communists." The main thrust, however, of the UPA position has been that the MPLA represents absolutely no one in Angola itself and is simply a collection of doctors, philosophers and engineers, a reference to the fact that the MPLA leadership is, for the most part, university educated.

Some observers say that an important element in the suspicion and open antipathy of the UPA and MPLA, at least, is the fact that the two movements have grown up entirely separate from another. There has at no point been any profound contact between the two groups. Holden Roberto and Mario de Andrade, the

President of MPLA, met each other for the first time in May 1961 at the Conference of African States in Monrovia.

THE MPLA was founded in 1956 as a combination of a number of organisations of Angolan intellectuals which had existed in the Luanda area from the late 1940's. The President of the MPLA was Agostinho Neto, the world-renowned Angolan African poet, famous in particular for his graphic poetic descriptions of forced labour. MPLA leaders say that from 1956 to 1959 they were able to establish a number of study groups, many in major Angolan cities other than Luanda, which actively discussed independence, which drew up manifestoes, had contact with missionaries and other people who could take their message to the outside world. The MPLA drew up its first official Manifesto on Angolan independence in 1956. This later served as a basis for its Statutes and its Programme which are printed and which now circulate widely.

A Norwegian missionary, Rev. Juel Nordby, who served in Central and Southern Angola between 1950 and 1960 says that the work of the MPLA was well known among Africans associated with his missions and that it was instrumental in provoking an increasing nationalist consciousness among the African populations.

THE UPA, on the other hand, was founded in the Congo, rather than in Angola, and derived most of its original popular support from the large Angolan population living in Leopoldville Province in the Congo. Because some of this population is migratory, going back and forth across the Angola-Congo border, the existence of the UPA presumably became known as well among at least the Kikongo speaking peoples in Angola itself. The organisation was political in nature from the beginning, Holden having been influenced in particular by his contacts with President Nkrumah of Ghana as early as 1954.

A singularly most significant development for Angolan nationalism was the rapid political evolution in the Congo, beginning at least as early as the Leopoldville demonstrations of January 1959. Two things happened. On the one hand the idea of independence, being called for by Joseph Kasavubu in the Congo, rapidly filtered among the Bakongo peoples, not only north but south of the Angolan-Congolese border, producing a more profound nationalist feeling than had existed previously among the African population, long cut off from most of the news about developments in the rest of Africa. Secondly, the potential impact of these ideas frightened the Portuguese into increasingly repressive measures.

It was shortly after this that a large part of the MPLA leadership was arrested including Agostinho Neto and Fr. Pinto de Andrade, the brother of the MPLA President. Most of the other leaders fled the country, many going to Conakry where the new MPLA office was established. Meanwhile in Northern Angola, the possession of a photograph of Kasavubu was made a crime punishable sometimes by imprisonment and on other occasions by death. Portuguese asked Africans if they had heard of Kasavubu or they were tested to see how they reacted to the word "independence". The wrong responses often meant imprisonment.

Refugees from North Angola who told us of these developments also told a particularly horrid tale of 15 of their fellow villagers being decapitated, their heads being placed on sticks in the village square. The Africans were told that if Kasavubu was really their King he would come to their village and restore the lives of the decapitated.

HOW MUCH ORGANISATION there was, for either the well-known events in Luanda of February 1961, or in North Angola in March 1961, is not known. The UPA says it arranged for the March rebellion by organising mass defections of Africans from the Portuguese army on 15 March (to provide a military nucleus and arms) and that this was timed with instructions to labourers to begin the burning of plantations and the assaults on Portuguese plantation owners. The MPLA argues that the events of both February and March were essentially spontaneous, that given the impact of Congo independence and the most recent Portuguese repressions and atrocities the people were ready for a mass rising with very little leadership.

At any rate, when the uprising occurred the UPA was established in Leopoldville, ready to provide direction to what turned into a continuing rebellion, while the MPLA was located far away from the hostilities in Conakry. It was not until six months later, in October 1961, that the MPLA was able to set up headquarters in Leopoldville.

The MPLA says that it now has about 1,000 men under arms.

A conclusive assessment of the relative strengths or the future prospects of the major Angolan nationalist parties is virtually impossible. What seems depressingly clear at the moment, from discussions with numerous Angolan nationalists as well as with outsiders who are familiar with the situation, is that none of the Parties commands influence, as a Party, over even close to a majority of the Angolan population, three-fourths of which lives south and east of the war-affected areas.

The UPA claims to have mass support among the African population as a whole. It is certain that it is known and supported by the overwhelming majority of the Kikongo-speaking peoples who live in the war areas and who compose most of the refugee population. Some who admit that the depth of its support in other regions is much less clear, claim that as the African Party it will genuinely become the mass national party once it is possible to come into contact with the rest of Angola.

IT IS SUGGESTED, however, that many different factors will be important if the rest of Angola is opened to political party activity: (1) The emergence of a variety of new and regional parties; (2) The possibility that the UPA will be conclusively stamped as a Protestant party (roughly 500,000 Angolans are Protestants, 1,500,000 Catholics, the rest having no western religion); (3) The possibility that the UPA will be effectively accused of being an exile party whose leaders have not suffered the brutality of Portuguese colonialism; (4) The problems which the UPA will have in communicating with peoples of other Angolan regions because its leadership allegedly speaks only Kikongo or French (because they had their schooling in the Congo).

The popular support of the UPA is not significantly augmented in joining with the PDA. The leaders of the PDA say openly that their own support is limited to the Zombo peoples which live in the Bakongo regions. The PDA, originally called "Aliazo", was established as an alliance of the Zombo peoples, an important group known for its skill as merchants and as farmers.

What is clear is that the war in Angola is still being prosecuted by the Angolans over great obstacles. The Portuguese economy, based very much on what it has been able to extract from Angola, cannot stand the serious diminution of this base when simultaneously there is greatly increased expenditure for its army. An early collapse would pose many urgent questions for the Angolan nationalist organisations. The divisions within the movement may appear much more serious to the outsider than they will prove to be when the time arrives for beginning the transition to an independent Angola and when unity of purpose and action will be even more fundamental for dealing with the immense issues of constitutional structure and economic development. ●

The Schoolboy A STORY

JAMES J. RAVELL

YES, LIFE HERE in this country at the southern tip of the continent was hell. So thought the 15-year old schoolboy as he left the library with a frown

At school he was encouraged by all his teachers to read widely. That was how one improved one's command of a language, they said. Officially, this country had two languages, but there were also others spoken here. He was fairly good at his mother tongue, but had difficulty with the other official language. That was because his primary education was received in a district where his home language was almost the only language spoken. He was now, however, at a high school in a different part of the country, near a big city, where the medium was the other language. He realised that he had quite a lot of leeway to make up. That was why he had resolved to read as much as possible, especially books in his second language.

But he wanted to improve his knowledge of that language not only to fare better in the examinations or to follow the lessons more fully. Did not some of his teachers say at the start of the term that this language was also spoken in many other countries? Did they not say further that to a great part of the world it was almost an unofficial international language? Did it not have a rich literature? Was it not the language of Science, Philosophy and other learned studies? True, his mother tongue was also important—else why its official recognition? True, it was taught as a compulsory subject in most schools, but often, as was the case

JAMES J. RAVELL, a graduate of the University of Cape Town, teaches in the Cape Peninsula and is a regular contributor to The Rationalist.