

Interviews in Depth

# ANGOLA MPLA



**SPARTACUS MONIMAMBU**

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# Interviews in Depth MPLA-Angola #1

Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.



Interview with Spartacus Monimambu  
MPLA Commander and member of the  
Politico-Military Coordinating  
Committee (CCPM).

## INTERVIEWS IN DEPTH

### MPLA/ANGOLA

#1

### SPARTACUS MONIMAMBU

This interview with Spartacus Monimambu was taped in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 21 March 1968 by LSM member Don Barnett. (Parts of the interview appeared in the Guardian issues of April 27 and May 4 and 11 1968 under the title, "In the Liberated Areas of Angola".)

Commander Spartacus Monimambu, aged 28, was born in the Zaire district of northern Angola. After completing Form III, he left Angola and eventually received military training in Ghana, Morocco and Algeria. He has been a Commander of MPLA's guerri-la forces in the Eastern Region since that front was opened on May 18, 1966. Currently he is on the MPLA Central Committee and a member of the four-man Presidential Commission.

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LSM: As Military Commander of the Eastern Region, how do you happen to be here in Dar es Salaam at this time?

MONIMAMBU: I came here for medical treatment. I was wounded in the back of the head by a bullet. It started on 18 October, last year. The Portuguese came from Lumbala with 25 trucks filled with troops. They had two companies, about 300 men, and came to attack our principal base, to destroy it if they could. But we organized our own defensive and offensive operations. We sent many groups ahead to stop them and started to fight them when they reached the Lufigi River. There were at least seven fights before they approached our base. They were already very tired when they reached the place on the 23rd. They had six planes dropping bombs all day from morning till evening. They also used mortars, firing 42 rounds into the base, and bazookas -- but these didn't cause much damage. They found us in trenches and couldn't penetrate the base. When they reached the perimeter, about 150 yards away, we fought back. They met such a strong resistance that they ran away, returning to their camps. None of our people were killed. I was hit by a bullet which lodged under my skull in the back of the head. Two others received light wounds. After that I stayed inside for two months organizing things, and we carried out two attacks against Lumbala and Chilemba. When we came back I was called by our chief representative to be treated here outside. When I was wounded I went two weeks without seeing; I couldn't read or write. I received some treatment inside but here in Dar es Salaam, at the Aga Khan Hospital, the bullet was removed. The doctors confirmed that I was very lucky, and near to dying. But fortunately I'm still alive and

ready to go back to Angola and fight again.

LSM: MPLA opened its 3rd Front in the Eastern Region in May 1966. What was the purpose of opening this new front -- in addition to the two already established in Cabinda and northern Angola -- and what have you accomplished there over the past almost two years?

MONIMAMBU: This front was opened in order to extend the struggle to all of Angola. We advanced the motto in 1967 to generalize the struggle inside Angola in order to force a dispersal of Portuguese troops. You know, according to the laws of guerrilla war, we can't afford a concentration of enemy forces. We must make them disperse so we can attack them in small groups. Regarding our general progress in the Eastern Region, we began with one section of only 18 miles, but six months later we reached the level of having five zones in the Eastern Region -- Zones "A", "B", "C", "D" and "E". Now we can say that all of Moxico district and half of Cuando Cubango district are under our control -- not completely controlled by our freedom fighters, but the Portuguese can't go there and oppress the people or arrest them or kill them or do what they did before 1966. We have cut their communications. They just come with their planes and bomb, but they can't go easily into the bush. Always they find guerrillas ambushing them, killing them. And we have already organized our militias, with women also, who are patrolling, doing reconnaissance and so on -- they are helping us in very significant ways.

LSM: How do you cope with the logistics prob-

lem -- bringing in supplies and materiel?

MONIMAMBU: We have many bases inside. Each zone has its HQ base, we call it the Post Command. And from there we supply those who are on the front with ammunition, food, some medicines, etc. Almost everything comes from the outside, but we have already captured some weapons, ammunition and medicine from the Portuguese. There used to be some Portuguese shops in the area, but not now. We are not against the Portuguese people, but these people, the settlers and shop keepers, they are now armed and working together with the soldiers. The Portuguese with guns in their hands are our enemies and we must destroy everything belonging to them. It is now our policy to destroy everything which is against our objectives.

LSM: Do you get support from the governments of Tanzania, Zambia and Congo (B)?

MONIMAMBU: Of course. We get solid support from the OAU. All of the African states are now in a good position to help us but some, such as Tanzania, Zambia, Congo (B), Algeria and Guinea, are more helpful than others. If they don't, particularly those which are close to our borders, then our struggle can't progress easily. Tanzania is the most helpful. Zambia also, but they themselves have many difficulties at present. We hope in the future that things will go very well. We can't say the same thing, regarding outside help, for the Congo (K). As you know, we were expelled from Congo (K) in 1963. Since that time we haven't been able to operate there. We can't bring our freedom fighters or cadres through their territory to northern Angola. If they discover us trying to do so, we lose every-

thing and our people are imprisoned and ill-treated. Just last June many of our comrades were captured and their equipment is still being held by the Congolese authorities. They support traitors like Holden Roberto and don't like to see MPLA freedom fighters going through Congo to Angola.

LSM: I imagine that makes it very difficult to supply the Northern Front.

MONIMAMBU: That is the greatest difficulty we face in our struggle. Otherwise, the 1st or Northern Front would be the most powerful one. But meeting such difficulties has helped us raise the level of our struggle. They are hard to solve, but not impossible. We are solving them little by little; step by step we are going forward. The Eastern Front is now very strong. And this year we are going to open up the 4th and 5th Fronts in Bié and Lunda. Preparations have already been made but we are still waiting for more materiel. The fighting has already begun -- it remains only to send more groups and weapons into these regions. That will be accomplished this year. The connection between the Eastern Region and the Northern Region will be through the 4th Region, through Lunda.

We are continuing to organize guerrilla activity throughout the country. We even have some clandestine groups in the urban areas, in the towns. But they are not yet strong enough to attack -- you know, destroy power plants, machinery, etc., and carry out economic sabotage. But this is a stage which will be reached in the future. Our organization, MPLA, was founded in Luanda, as you

know. But our people had to leave that area and come outside to organize. The struggle had to be initiated again, after 1961, from the outside. In the meantime, the Portuguese have organized their defenses to try to keep us from reaching the towns. The PIDE (Secret Police) and Portuguese volunteers in the towns are trying to get Angolans to be spies and agents for them. The struggle will reach a much higher level when the town and plantation workers, the most conscious elements, are well organized and the struggle enters the urban areas. The Portuguese will then lose confidence and their troops will become demoralized. That is why we must extend our struggle to the whole of Angola, in order to reach the mines, plantations and big cities and sabotage the economy. When the proletariat, the urban and rural proletariat, is well organized, receiving instructions from the Party and realizing them in practice, then things will go much better, much better than now.

LSM: What strategy are the Portuguese using to contain your expansion in the Eastern Region? Do they try to defend fixed positions and send out large armed patrols?

MONIMAMBU: At the beginning they tried to come in large numbers and destroy us in our base areas. They tried twice and failed. Since then they have changed their tactics. They still defend themselves in their barracks, but it is hard for them to go into the bush. They come with many trucks, planes overhead and foot soldiers on either side of the road. This is how they take food and other supplies from their main post to other posts. When they want to go into the bush they have to mobilize a large

force, one or two companies. Then they come to attack us or to pacify a certain area -- trying to seize the initiative. But we are prepared for that. We mobilize many units -- not concentrated at any one place but with one group here, another there, etc., and each one attacks at the appropriate time. In this way we divide the enemy column into small groups which we are able to handle easily. The Portuguese always find it difficult to kill or capture our guerillas. The only thing that gives us a headache is the bombing -- but it isn't destroying many things. They bomb every day, in the bush, in the abandoned villages. But it does not jeopardize our struggle.

LSM: The Vietnamese have been able to withstand a great deal of bombing through tunneling and deep trenches. Have you been able to adapt the local population to some of these defensive tactics against bombing?

MONIMAMBU: Yes, of course, we have already taught them to use trenches, as we ourselves are doing -- digging trenches around our bases and camps, camouflaging ourselves for protection against bombs and bullets. The people in our liberated villages dig many trenches around the village, some 50 yards away from their houses. When the bombers come their chairman orders everyone to run to the trenches. If someone is unable to reach the trenches in time, we tell him to just lie down flat on the ground. People now have seen that the bombs are not as dangerous as they thought before -- because the Portuguese were telling them "If you join those terrorists", as they say, "we are going to bring in our planes and bomb you and the ground will be levelled and everything

destroyed". But they have seen that after two years the people are still living, the freedom fighters are still going ahead and the Portuguese are still finding it difficult to regain control of the semi-liberated areas. So the people believe in us now. And they have become more conscious because we give them political education and organize them -- and they themselves are better off than before, they are freer and even producing more.

LSM: Recently, on January 3rd of this year, MPLA announced that it was going to shift its HQ from Brazzaville to Angola. How do you think this will affect the course of the struggle?

MONIMAMBU: This is very important for us. As you know, every revolutionary struggle must be carried out inside the country. And this cannot be done very well if the leaders themselves are not among the people. We are a mass organization, a popular movement, so we must be among the people. They must see that the leaders themselves are inside to direct and orient the struggle. This will give more courage to the people, and even to the guerrilla fighters. All of our political leaders, except for two or three, have now been trained militarily. So they can go inside and lead and help train the local leaders. What we need, what we want, is for local leaders to become conscious enough to lead their own people in the villages. The top leaders must bring these people to a high level of political consciousness and understanding. Again, sending the HQ inside the country is going to increase our support from outside. They will see that we are very serious, that we are really leading the struggle inside Angola. A thing that Holden's GRAE has not done since 1963, though they have

had every chance to do so. This will also prove that MPLA, which has declared itself to be the vanguard force, has a liberated area, where we are free, have begun to build popular power and are carrying forward our economic and administrative programs. . . .

LSM: So you think it effects the morale of both the guerrillas and the civilian population to see that the leaders are there, running the same risks as they are?

MONIMAMBU: Yes. This will give their morale a great boost. And they will not want to run away to become refugees sitting in another country waiting for others to help them. No! They will see that they themselves must be inside with the leaders, risking everything for their country.

LSM: Another problem seems to be that exiled leaders tend to accustom themselves to a much higher standard of life than the people they are leading, so that you get a privileged group within the movement which can have dangerous consequences.

MONIMAMBU: That is the point. We want our leaders inside the country, together with the people.

LSM: Maybe you could now comment generally on the relationship within Angola between the military and political leadership.

MONIMAMBU: Our principle is to combine the military and the political. Everyone must be both, political and military together. We know that our basic problem is a political one, but it cannot be solved without violence. So, while the military aspect is secondary to the political, there is an interdependence between the two. The

military and political actions must compliment each other and develop parallel to one another. That is why we have both political and military leaders in the central committee, or as we call it, the Comité Director. Here, both military and political people come together and lead the struggle together. But the people inside the country understand the necessity of representation outside, because without this there would be little chance of getting supplies or carrying out diplomatic activities.

LSM: Is the head of each zone a military leader, a political leader, or a combination of both?

MONIMAMBU: In each of the five zones there is a Military Command, headed by a First Commander who is himself both a military and political leader. Then in the whole of the Eastern Region, made up of these five zones, we have a Regional Command comprised of the five zone commanders. Four of these, including myself, are on the Eastern Region Steering Committee. So we are both political and military leaders. There is no difference between political and military leaders inside now. Every person holding a leadership position participates in both the military and political aspects of the struggle.

LSM: How does the popular militia function in relation to MPLA's guerrilla forces?

MONIMAMBU: Without the militias the semi-regular forces of MPLA couldn't control this area. Moxico itself, you know, is four times larger than Portugal. So, to control this area, we need the help of the militia. That is why we are working hard to organize and train them. Their leaders have been trained by us inside, politically and militarily. The problem is that they don't have

sufficient arms. But with the three or four guns they have in each group they are able to patrol their area and help protect their people. You know there are people going to fish, to their gardens to cultivate, to the bush to collect honey from trees -- they are still going everywhere. But each one has an important mission: to look after the place, to see who is coming in and who is going out. We have passes which are given to the leaders of the people and to the military leaders. Everyone who goes from one place to another must have his pass. Without this they will not be allowed to travel. They will be arrested, taken back to the place they came from, and then judged. If someone is a spy or a collaborator with the Portuguese he will be punished by the people themselves. They will just come to ask us what to do, telling us what they have decided and asking us what we think -- because we have the power to look after everything. Even though they have their organization to look after the people's troubles, we are the most powerful force inside the country so we have the final decision if a traitor is to be punished. The militias do fight sometimes, when they see Portuguese troops coming and have no time to tell us so we can send help. They fight with those primitive guns, muzzle loaders -- that is why we need so much of that black powder, for those primitive guns. We can't give them modern guns because we don't have them in sufficient numbers.

LSM: When a Portuguese patrol approaches a village, do you have arrangements for village defense or do the people retreat into the bush until the Portuguese have passed through?

LSM: Have you been able to train people to make gun-powder within the country?

MONIMAMBU: The problem is that the chemical products which they need to make this powder are difficult to come by. We have tried already in Lusaka and here in Dar, but it has been very difficult up to now.



MPLA cadres at meal of cassava. From left: Center of Revolutionary Instruction (CIR) Professor Mapamundi, Commander Monimambu

MONIMAMBU: When the freedom fighters are far from the place it is up to the militia to organize their own defense -- until we can bring in some of our fighters to help them, if it is possible. If not they must defend themselves with their guns, their primitive weapons and their flesh. They are doing it . . . many of them. Some will collect the women and children and take them to a safe place and guard them; others, the men who are courageous or who know how to defend themselves, will begin to fight with whatever weapons they have -- spears, bows and arrows, primitive guns, etc. Two or three of them will leave and try to find the guerrillas and bring them back to help the people.

LSM: What is the normal settlement pattern in this area? Do the people live in dispersed villages or are there distinguishable villages, units where you have several hundred people living together in a village?

MONIMAMBU: We never like to concentrate large numbers of people in one place. We divide them. Each traditional chief has his people in a particular place; the others are sent out to different places. This allows us to control a larger area.

LSM: How many people would you say are living in an average village in the semi-liberated area?

MONIMAMBU: It depends on the number of people who belong to such and such a chief. Sometimes there are 50, sometimes 80; and we have decided that no more than 100 can remain together in one place -- with their houses close together but still a little separated. It depends on the bush. If it is not heavy, then not too many people will stay together; if it is heavy then they will be safe. All the houses will be well camouflaged and can't be seen from the planes.

LSM: In Vietnam they have used tunnel warfare to defend villages. By connecting villages with tunnels they can resist an incoming force and leave if they have to. With a few guns and a great deal of mobility -- moving quickly from one firing position to another -- they can be very effective and appear a much larger force than they in fact are. Have the Angolan peasants been taught or seen the value of tunnels or does the terrain not allow for it?

MONIMAMBU: You know, our struggle is not an isolated one. We are profiting from the experience of others. We must learn from the Chinese experience, the Cuban experience, etc. But now the most advanced form of guerrilla struggle is in Vietnam; they have developed many successful tactics. We are not yet employing tactics as the Vietnamese are doing. But we know this will be done in time -- step by step. Our people have not yet tried to build those tunnels underground. But we ourselves, the guerrillas, we have already tried to make houses and shelters underground. The people are now beginning to see how a man can live underground. But they are not used to it. They say: "We can not live without our houses, we will die underground," and so forth. They are still doubting -- but they will follow our example when they see that we have developed this tactic, that it is useful to them. . . then they will do it. We are still giving them political and military education; in the future they will understand and follow our example. But you must know that we have troubles with the tunnels. Our ground here in the Eastern Region is very sandy; it is not strong soil, just sand. And during the rainy season it gets flooded. That is the problem. . . the biggest problem we face in doing what the

Vietnamese are doing with tunnels.

LSM: Perhaps you could discuss the scale of MPLA's operation in the Eastern Region. How much territory and how many people are involved?

MONIMAMBU: The Eastern Front is about 800 km. long and some 500 km. deep. But these figures were calculated last year. Our people are still moving ahead, they are now in Bié and to the north we have already sent organizers and a guerrilla group into the Lunda district. So I can't tell you at this time exactly how far our zone of operation extends inside the country. As for the territories controlled by us, or semi-controlled by us, they are Moxico and most of Cuando Cubango districts -- with many enemy posts in between. You can't find a single place in this area where people have remained in their traditional villages. They have already abandoned them. Or the Portuguese have caught them and brought them near their posts to live in concentration camp villages. Most have run away. But it is up to them to choose. They can either go to the Portuguese for help or to the freedom fighters. Most people come to the bush to live with us, some go with the Portuguese. But those who go with the Portuguese don't stay more than two or three months. After that they will die of hunger because they can't go into the bush to look after their crops. They are allowed to go there just one day a week, followed by Portuguese guards. But it is not enough for them; they feel they are in a prison, that they are not free there. So many of them run away and come to join us. Or when the freedom fighters go there they ask us to take them away from the place. There is not a very large population in these areas. Now we can say that there are more than 30,000 living with us in the

semi-liberated areas. But not all of these people have been politicized. We have sent organizers to many places to politicize the people, mobilize them, organize them. We have found that those who quickly take our motto to their hearts are the young chaps. The older ones, they just want to be safe, to avoid being killed, and they just continue doing their ordinary activities, that's all. It is very difficult to deal with the old people. . . I find it very difficult. But we know that you find people like that everywhere. They still need much help -- with medicine, clothes, salt and soap. These are the most important needs of the people inside, because now many live without these things. They understand what our difficulties are in getting these things. We have already tried to do something about this. The problem is not completely solved but a part has been solved and we have given some satisfaction to the people.

LSM: About how many people would you say are living in the concentration camp villages?

MONIMAMBU: Maybe a few thousand. In every post you'll find 50, 150 or 200 -- the numbers vary. But many of them are now hiding in the bush.

LSM: Your own operations so far have been restricted largely to ambush tactics, attacking the Portuguese forces when they leave their posts. You're still operating with relatively small units and not hitting the Portuguese in their own bases. Does that mean that you have difficulties with training or supplies when it comes to the use of mortars, bazookas or rockets? Do you ever use these weapons to attack Portuguese bases?

MONIMAMBU: We have some bazookas and mortars, and we have already attacked 10 posts in the Eastern Region -- but the results were not too successful, the barracks were not destroyed. They were attacked and many of them were hit, but after that we couldn't occupy the positions, we couldn't enter the posts because we lacked rockets and mortar shells. We have mortar shells, but lack sufficient detonator caps and batteries for the rockets. We are trying to get them, but haven't succeeded yet. That is our problem. So when we plan to attack a post, we go with grenades and rifles. We must do something to demoralize the Portuguese troops, to prevent them from living peacefully in their barracks. We must attack them and call them into the bush where our freedom fighters are arranged to ambush them. That is our tactic.

LSM: Do you ever use road mines against Portuguese motorized columns?

MONIMAMBU: We don't have anti-vehicle mines -- not yet. Unfortunately, though we have the explosives to make those mines, we don't have the detonator caps. But we do use anti-personnel mines against Portuguese foot soldiers.

LSM: Last June, at a meeting held in the Eastern Region, a number of new programs were put forward. Perhaps you could comment generally on the progress that has been made. Let's take them one at a time, beginning with your efforts in the sphere of agricultural production.

MONIMAMBU: Agricultural production in the semi-liberated areas is increasing. In every zone the people are organized in sectors; a zone may have five or six sectors. In each sector there is a Revolutionary Committee of Action, a people's



Commander Spartacus Monimambu

organization which concerns itself with the people's problems. They have a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, etc. Committee members are elected by the people. . .there are about 500 villagers in an average sector. These people collectively cultivate what we call "people's plantations". All the people in a village work together in one field. The products which come from their collective work are then used for the benefit of the villagers themselves. These people's plantations don't develop quickly in all zones. Where we have made the greatest progress in agriculture is in Zones "C" and "D". We already have 35 collectives in these zones. The important crops grown are rice, cassava, potatoes, millet and maize. Apart from the collective each family has its own traditional garden. But on certain days everyone must work on the people's plantation, because on those days we use the militia to surround and protect the place. If they hear a plane coming from very far away they will go into their trenches and camouflage themselves. They are safe there.

LSM: How many days a week do they work on the people's plantation?

MONIMAMBU: They work two days on the collective, then two days in their own gardens. The other days are for meetings, literacy classes, political education, etc. So they have two days of agricultural work on the collective, two days of personal work, and two days of education; and then on Sundays they sing, dance, and so on, because national culture is important also. We want to develop it too.

LSM: Does MPLA tax these collectives? Do the guerrilla forces get food from these collective units?

MONIMAMBU: Yes, of course. We don't depend on help from outside when it comes to food. We are quite sufficiently helped by the people inside the country. We get help from those collective plantations. The women do everything. They collect the food -- they have their militias which go to different places collecting food for the guerrillas -- then they will come and give it to their women's chairman. She will present it to the chief of the sector who is in charge of looking after the guerrillas there. This is how we get food from the people.

LSM: Do the guerrilla units grow any of their food?

MONIMAMBU: Yes, in the central base we have places to cultivate tomatoes, onions, cabbages and things like that. We do this because we need the vitamins very much; and we do it better than the people themselves. They grow only the basic foods. So the things we need for ourselves we cultivate in the central base of each zone. But groups which go deep inside the country, ambushing Portuguese patrols or controlling strategic points, they must not do such jobs.

LSM: In the area of education and cadre training you have set up Centers for Revolutionary Instruction (CIR). How have these progressed?

MONIMAMBU: These Centers for Revolutionary Instruction are very important for us. Before the end of 1967 we had already trained more than

2,000 cadres outside, in many countries. But we find that it is more important to train them inside the country. We lack materials and have to do without many things -- but these CIR's are very helpful to us now. Between August and February the first course was held and it was very successful. And many people's cadres, people trained educationally, militarily and politically, are now able to go and organize people, be active among the people. They also learned how to maintain themselves -- to keep chickens, cultivate, sew, and so on. They were taught many things there. On 14 March we started the second course, the second part of the program. Angola is a country with many illiterate people, uninformed people who don't know how to read or write -- probably worse than any other African country. The Portuguese have done it deliberately. Now it is up to us. We can't wait until we are free, but must begin now to educate our people, to teach them how to read and learn.

LSM: What language do you teach them in?

MONIMAMBU: We have people who have been trained outside but who come from this region of Angola. They know every language there. The most important language is Luvale. But when one speaks Luvale, the Mbunda tribe can't understand it, the Chokwe tribe can't understand it. Now we have two languages: Luvale and Portuguese. But we also have people who translate from Portuguese to the other local languages.

LSM: Do the illiterate people who come to the CIR acquire literacy in their native language before they learn Portuguese? Do they first become literate in their traditional language?

MONIMAMBU: They do both together. Learning a word, how to write it and read it, they are taught in both Luvale and Portuguese. Until we have our own Language, a national language, we will have to use Portuguese as the common language in Angola. None of our traditional languages can be understood throughout the whole country -- and that is why we have to use the colonial language, Portuguese. There are also the Young Pioneers, those young chaps, who have had their primary school in the CIR -- apart from the old men, women and so on. Our students are of all ages. And then in every sector we have a primary school. The teachers have got books. We have prepared many books, revolutionary books, to help those who are teaching in the primary schools. These young people are very important to us; they are the future generation which is going to be the cadre of tomorrow. And that is why we can't leave them without schooling and without assistance from the party.

LSM: What is the basic content of the political education program? Is it essentially nationalist in character or is it socialist and internationalist?

MONIMAMBU: Political education is, first of all, nationalist. The people must understand that we are all Angolans, that we are one people, that we are fighting for our right to be free, and that Angola must be governed by Angolans.

But we know that tomorrow there will be many problems in Angola and that to solve them requires that we educate people in the ideological sphere. Our ideology is scientific socialism. We are going to be a socialist country tomorrow. There is no other way. When we become an independent country there is only one way to follow -- the social-



MPLA cadres at meal of cassava. From left: Center for Revolutionary Instruction (CIR) Professor Mapamundi, Commanders Monimambu and Dino.



MPLA guerrillas meet villagers and Popular Militia members

ist way. For us ideology is most important within the party because today we are just a mass movement, a popular movement, and not yet a real party, with the structure of a party. But tomorrow there will be a party with its philosophy, its determined ideology and its structure. And to reach that level we must begin to prepare the way from today. That is why the MPLA is very interested in giving ideological education to our militants. For the people in general, at least for now, they need mainly a nationalist education.

LSM: Maybe now you could comment now on the people's shops and trade centers -- on that part of your program which deals with the distribution of goods and services?

MONIMAMBU: This was the major problem. . . which made people fear living in the bush. They didn't want to live like animals -- without clothes, salt, soap, medicine and so on. They found it difficult in the beginning. We saw this as an urgent problem which had to be solved. We tried to organize, first of all, the distribution of goods sent by friendly countries to help us in our struggle. These were sent for the guerrillas, for the freedom fighters, but we are not fighting alone. Without the people, without their support, we couldn't move ahead, couldn't recruit more fighters, etc. We had to give satisfaction to the people's demands, which were just clothes, salt, soap and medicines. But just distributing the goods from outside sent to the guerrillas was not sufficient. So we have organized our budget and the party itself now allocates part of its funds to help solve this problem. We have also set up people's stores. We buy goods outside and our trucks take them to the border. Then the people come and collect

them and take them to their sectors. The goods are given to the action committees which turn them over to the people who run the people's stores for general distribution. In each sector we have one of these stores. Since these goods are paid for out of the party's budget, and in order to keep getting more goods, we have to fix prices. We can't just give them to the people free. They pay in Portuguese currency or with products. People bring in fish, meat, rice, potatoes, honey -- anything they happen to have -- and exchange it for clothes, salt, soap, etc. Medicines are free. The food and other products they pay with are then used as part of the rations for the guerrillas. The money is sent through the action committees to party headquarters. It is then exchanged for Zambian money to buy more goods or sent for various purposes to Cabinda, the Northern region, or our offices here in Dar es Salaam, Lusaka, etc.

LSM: Have you attempted to produce any of these basic goods within the semi-liberated areas? Have you set up any field factories or centers of production -- apart from agriculture -- inside the country?

MONIMAMBU: This is one of our objectives. But it was only last June when we began these programs and we had to start at the beginning. We have built a rice-husking factory, but we are still waiting for the machines. In Zones "C" and "D" we have plenty of rice now; we are just waiting for these machines to process it. This is our first project. Secondly, we are trying to organize people in cooperatives, as I mentioned earlier, so that they can exchange their products for the things they need. This problem is already settled between MPLA and the Zambian Government -- they are ready to buy our Angolan produce. It is

up to us now to arrange things inside.

LSM: Do you as yet train any people technically inside Angola?

MONIMAMBU: No. They will be trained outside. We are not able yet to train technicians inside the country.

LSM: Are you able to use and repair your own vehicles inside the country?

MONIMAMBU: There is only one zone where we can use vehicles inside, . . . because from there we can travel between Angola and Zambia. We have already brought in some materials by truck from Zambia. In other zones, for many reasons, we have not yet started to bring in our supplies by car. We keep one mechanic inside and one outside to do repairs on our vehicles.

LSM: Are you able to generate any of your own power supplies inside the country?

MONIMAMBU: No. We are still using batteries. We know there are many rivers which can help us with electrical power and irrigation, but there are many difficulties which make it impossible at this time -- lack of technicians, lack of equipment, etc.

LSM: You mentioned national culture. What are you doing to make people aware of their Angolan national culture?

MONIMAMBU: Apart from Angolan traditional songs and dances, in our Centers for Revolutionary instruction we are trying to give people a consciousness of themselves as Angolans. We put on theatrical performances showing the people what

it was like before the Portuguese came to Angola, how the people were living, what their societies were like. Then what it was like after the Portuguese came and how our people resisted them. Then, after that, how the struggle for our liberation began, and how it is progressing. This is what we're trying to organize, so that tomorrow we will have cultural unity throughout Angola. This is for the people to enjoy, but it is also very important educationally. If the people see what it was like before the Portuguese, after they came, during the early resistance and the present liberation struggle, it will be easier for them to see themselves as Angolans. We have many intellectuals in Angola but most of them are not in the revolution; they are reactionaries collaborating with the Portuguese. Some try to be neutral but at this time there can be no neutrals, they must be either revolutionary or reactionary. They must choose. But aside from those who are working only for themselves, living their bourgeois lives, we have our own intellectuals within the revolution. And they are helping us with national culture. Some of these young chaps just coming from school are poets, like Dr. Neto, and we are trying to use their poems to build our theatre, trying to execute them in theatrical form. That is another part of the effort we are making. In addition, there are now many revolutionary songs which we are teaching the people.

LSM: MPLA mentions in one of its publications that it is building rudimentary organs of people's power in the semi-liberated areas. You've already mentioned the revolutionary action committees, but perhaps you can go into this question in a little greater detail. How do the people participate in decision making at different levels? How do you engage them in the process of making



Commander Monimambu, watching play presented by Center for Revolutionary Instruction (CIR) - presented at the First Eastern Regional Conference of the MPLA, August 1968.

new kinds of decisions?

MONIMAMBU: The action committees, you know, are related to MPLA's Central Committee, the Comité Director. The instructions come from the Central Committee and are passed through the military command to the action committees. But it is not possible for the Central Committee to control everything directly. That is why we have created three regional steering committees -- whose members also serve on the Central Committee. They represent the Central Committee in the regions. So the instructions come from the Central Committee. They meet in various places, make their decisions, and if these decisions pertain to the people inside the country they are sent through the military command (for security reasons) to the action committees at the zone level. These action committees will then meet and transmit the information to the people through the committees at the sector and group or village levels. We have four levels then: group, sector, zone, and region. Within a sector there are many groups, which are the village units. There is only one chief in a sector, but he has responsibility for a large area within which there are several small villages. These groups have their own organization. They, the people in each group, elect members to serve on their action committee.

LSM: Do you find that people in the groups and sectors tend to elect traditional leaders to the action committees? Or do they elect people with more progressive ideas?

MONIMAMBU: Today the traditional leaders are still respected. But if a traditional leader is not very interested in the struggle he will not have power, he will not be elected by the people. Someone else will be on the top. The chief will

remain chief but he will be without power. But if he is a good chief, a revolutionary one, it is better for him to lead his people.

LSM: So at the group level people elect their own action committee which sends representatives to the sector action committee.

MONIMAMBU: Yes. And then from the sector level they send their representatives to the zone action committee. In each zone there are some who are very intelligent and they represent their people on the Regional Committee. The Central Committee selects one or two from each zone who are militants, who are already politically educated, and they represent their zones on the Regional Committee. With the help of the military command these action committees keep registers of all marriages, births, deaths, and so on. They also administer justice. Those traditional chiefs are well versed in local laws and customs, but we must take care with the traditional laws and habits which are not adapted to the revolutionary conditions of today. So we must help them to settle some cases. In addition, they have their own police, recruited from the militia. The militia is para-military, but within a militia group they choose some to be police. They keep order in the villages, or groups, and in the sector.

LSM: Do you find that in the revolutionary situation of today people are considering different kinds of decisions than they would have before their areas were semi-liberated?

MONIMAMBU: Of course. There are many changes now. It is part of the progress we have made. People now see their problems differently. Most of them are happy now because they haven't paid

their taxes or tribute to the Portuguese for almost two years, and their products are not collected by the Portuguese in return for a very low price. They are very happy about this. And they think differently than before, their mind is now revolutionary and nationalist. They understand that Angola is our country and that only by struggle are we going to get it back in our hands.

LSM: There have been many reports of South Africa assisting the Portuguese with helicopters, mercenaries, etc. How do you think South African intervention will affect your liberation struggle in the long run?

MONIMAMBU: This is no secret to anyone. It has now been proved that South Africa is involved in the Angola struggle. First of all they see our liberation movement as a security problem for the whole of southern Africa.

These racists and white settlers want to keep South Africa, South-West Africa, Rhodesia, Mozambique and Angola safely in their hands. They want these countries to remain under their control for economic and political reasons. You know that Mozambique and Angola occupy two strategic points. The South African racists know that if Mozambique and Angola become free the liberation forces will use them as base areas from which to attack the apartheid regime. We have already found young South African soldiers among the Portuguese troops. At Karipande, which is open to people coming from Zambia to shop, we have found soldiers who spoke Africans but no Portuguese. Then in Bié they use Africaner soldiers to guard the rich foreign-owned Cassinga iron mines. South African helicopters also come to supply their soldiers with ammunition, food, etc., and to do reconnaissance for

the Portuguese. As you know, there is an Agreement between South Africa, Rhodesia and Portugal. They meet every month to study how to stop the "terrorism" in southern Africa, how to carry on counter-guerrilla actions against the liberation movements in the various colonies and neo-colonies. There are thus many proofs that South Africa is already deeply involved in the Angola struggle. And the number of South African troops used in Angola will probably increase in the near future.

LSM: In what ways does the United States assist the Portuguese in Angola?

MONIMAMBU: Portugal is an underdeveloped country. They can't do everything themselves. They could not go ahead with these ultra-colonial regimes in Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Angola without the help of the NATO powers -- particularly the United States, West Germany, Belgium and Italy. The United States itself has many economic interests in Angola. They want to protect and increase these interests. You know it is those big monopolies which are leading everything. That is why you find Portuguese troops using many things -- guns, planes, bombs, equipment, cars, etc. -- from the United States. And they give them medical assistance, technicians -- those who repair their planes and so on -- and military experts in anti-guerrilla warfare. . . because they have much experience from their aggressions in North Korea and Vietnam. They also help train the Portuguese forces -- both the Americans and the West Germans are doing this. But they are not only helping the Portuguese. They are also helping our adversaries such as the GRAE of Holden, giving them money, medicine, food and clothes through Mobutu. They are all puppets of the Americans or CIA agents. And these CIA-supported organizations are always after

the revolutionaries and progressives here in Africa. They are the ones who trained some people to make trouble for the MPLA in the Congo (K). You know those American monopoly capitalists know very well that the Portuguese will lose one day, and they are preparing their men for tomorrow to rule the neo-colonial regimes. That is why men such as Holden and Savimbi and the other Angolan reactionaries are wanted by the Americans and are helped by them.

LSM: Do you teach people in your political education program about American imperialism? About international capitalism?

MONIMAMBU: Our first enemy is Portuguese colonialism. And the people must know this. But the most powerful enemy is the United States, and that is why we make great efforts to educate our people against imperialism -- and particularly the leader of the imperialists, the Americans. They are the greatest enemy of the people in the world.

LSM: Do you also explain that even within the United States there are progressive and socialist forces which are also fighting against U.S. imperialism?

MONIMAMBU: As I told you, we are not racialist in the MPLA. That is why you will see many mulattoes in our party. And we understand that tomorrow there will be Portuguese, Americans, etc., who will have the right to live in our country. But we must choose who is good and who is bad, who is a friend and who is an enemy, with regard to our objectives. We know that in America there are some progressive people who are against what their government and military leaders are doing. We know that there are some communist parties and

some philanthropic organizations which are not in favor of the war, which want peace, and such progressive people will be welcomed in Angola. It is very important for our people to know this, they must know it, because there are some Angolan organizations, such as UPA and the Savimbi group, which are trying to turn the people against all white men and mulattoes. They say that every mulatto is the son of a Portuguese and must be killed, and that everyone who is white must be killed. No! We must not follow this path. We are ready to welcome those who are good, those who are our genuine friends; and the enemy is an enemy, whatever his color, and he must be treated as such.

LSM: How do you see the relationship between your struggle in Angola and the struggle of the Vietnamese against U.S. imperialism?

MONIMAMBU: Morally, speaking in moral terms, the Vietnamese struggle is the leading struggle for freedom now in the world. So we are in great solidarity with those struggling in Vietnam. And we believe that the victory of the Vietnamese is our victory too. Because if Vietnam is facing the most powerful country in the capitalist world and is able to win -- and they are near to their victory now -- it shows us that we must be determined to fight and confident also of our victory in Angola.

The enemy can be very powerful, as the Americans are, or as the NATO powers are, but we shall still defeat them. The proof is that in Vietnam they have almost achieved their victory fighting against the most powerful enemy. And then our relationship with the Vietnamese people is very close. We too are oppressed people together with the Vietnamese. They are fighting for the same rights. And

we are both fighting against the same common enemy -- first of all the imperialist one. That is why some of our bases are given names such as Viet-Angola, Nguyen Van Troy Base, Ho Chi Minh Base, etc., in solidarity with the struggle being carried on by the heroic people of Vietnam. One day we hope to have some of our people trained by the Vietnamese, in order to benefit in full from their rich experience in guerrilla war.

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From left: Commanders Janginda and Toka, President Agostinho Neto, Commander Monimambu, Eastern Region Director Anibal De Melo, Commander Kota

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