

THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN ANGOLA



DID YOU EVEN KNOW THAT THERE IS A REVOLUTION IN ANGOLA? CERTAINLY THE GREAT MAJORITY OF NORTH AMERICANS HAVE REMAINED BLITHELY IGNORANT OF THIS FACT, GIVEN OUR MASS MEDIA'S PREOCCUPATION WITH THE U.S. WAR ON VIETNAM. BUT LACK OF PUBLICITY ABOUT AN EVENT IS IN NO WAY NECESSARILY A REFLECTION OF THAT EVENT'S IMPORTANCE, AS EVEN A BRIEF LOOK AT THE ANGOLAN REVOLUTION SHOULD INDICATE.

THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN AFRICA'S SIXTH LARGEST COUNTRY (481,000 SQUARE MILES) IS THE RESPONSE TO LONG COLONIAL OPPRESSION BY PORTUGAL. CONSIDER THE DISMAL HERITAGE OF FIVE CENTURIES OF PORTUGUESE EXPLOITATION: 9 DOCTORS PER MILLION PEOPLE; AN INFANT MORTALITY RATE OF 60%; LIFE EXPECTANCY OF 28 YEARS; 96% ILLITERACY; ENDEMIC MALARIA, LEPROSY, SCURVY; AND NEAR-SLAVERY THINLY DISGUISED AS 'CONTRACT LABOR', WITH ALL THE PROFITS FLOWING TO A PRIVILEGED WHITE SETTLER ELITE AND THE PORTUGUESE OLIGARCHY, BACKED BY GROWING AMERICAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN FINANCIAL INTERESTS. THE LISTS OF GRIEVANCES COULD EASILY BE EXTENDED: SCEPTICS ARE REFERRED TO RECENT ISSUES OF THE U.N. STATISTICAL YEARBOOK.

BY THE BEGINNING OF THE SIXTIES, THE DESPAIR OF THE ANGOLAN PEOPLE HAD REACHED NEW DEPTHS. IN 1960, FOR EXAMPLE, PORTUGUESE FORCES HAD BEEN CALLED TO THE COFFEE-GROWING DISTRICT OF UIGE TO CRUSH A SPONTANEOUS UPRISING OF SOME 100,000 MEN. WITHIN A YEAR, ORGANIZED RESISTANCE TO COLONIAL BRUTALITY HAD COMPLETED INITIAL PREPARATIONS, AND ON 4 FEBRUARY 1961 ARMED REVOLUTION COMMENCED IN THE CAPITAL CITY OF LUANDA. IN THE ENSUING SIX MONTHS, 2000 PORTUGUESE AND 50,000 AFRICANS LOST THEIR LIVES (AFRICA REPORT, NOV. '67), THE LATTER FIGURE BEING EXPLAINED BY WHAT FIRSTHAND OBSERVERS CHARACTERIZED AS 'INSANE' REPRISALS BY PORTUGAL. TYPICAL WAS THE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT BY UNITED CHURCH MISSIONARY SID GILCHRIST CONCERNING "...THE BODIES OF HELPLESS AFRICANS, REMOTE FROM THE SITE OF THE REVOLUTION..., BURIED BY THE HUNDREDS IN THE GROUND BY BULLDOZERS, AND THROWN INTO THE CUANZA RIVER UNTIL IT STANK SO THAT CHAINS WERE PLACED ACROSS IT TO CATCH THE ROTTING CORPSES..." (ANGOLA AWAKE, RYERSON PRESS, 1968, PP. 53 - 54). SUCH ATROCITIES ARE THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCE OF THE ATTITUDE OF PORTUGUESE MILITARY AUTHORITIES THAT IS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE REMARKS OF ARMY MINISTER MARIO SILVA: "WE ARE GOING TO FIGHT SAVAGES. WE ARE GOING TO FIGHT WILD BEASTS WHO ARE NOT PORTUGUESE BECAUSE THEY OBEY ORDERS FROM INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM." (EHNMARK, ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE, P. 19)

IN THE PAST EIGHT YEARS, THE MOVIMENTO POPULAR DE LIBERTACAO DE ANGOLA (MPLA), THE VANGUARD OF THE ANGOLAN REVOLUTION HAS STEADILY WIDENED THE REVOLUTION'S MILITARY FRONTS. THE MPLA IS NOW FIGHTING IN 10 OF ANGOLA'S 15 DISTRICTS. THOUGH MPLA TROOP FIGURES ARE NOT PUBLICIZED, THE MOVEMENT'S SUCCESS CAN BE GAUGED BY THE INCREASING BURDEN ON METROPOLITAN PORTUGAL: IN 1962 LISBON'S TOTAL DEFENSE BUDGET (INCLUDING EXPENDITURES ON DOMESTIC REPRESSION AND FOR THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION - NATO) WAS \$200,000,000; BY 1967 LISBON WAS SPENDING \$175,000,000 EXCLUSIVELY ON DEFENSE OF ITS AFRICAN POSSESSIONS; AND BY 1968 PORTUGAL WAS SPENDING 40% OF ITS TOTAL BUDGET ON DEFENSE. ANOTHER BAROMETER OF MPLA SUCCESS IS THE STEADILY INCREASING NUMBER OF METROPOLITAN TROOPS MAINTAINED IN ANGOLA: FROM 45,000 IN 1963 TO 80,000 IN 1969. COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICES IN PORTUGAL HAS NOW BEEN EXTENDED TO FOUR YEAR TERMS, WITH THE AGE LIMITS BEING LOWERED TO 18 AND RAISED TO 45. SINCE 1968 WOMEN AND THE DISABLED HAVE BEEN CONSCRIPTED TO AUXILIARY MILITARY SERVICES.

DURING THIS PERIOD, NOTWITHSTANDING ITS U.N. RHETORIC TO THE CONTRARY, UNITED STATES POLICY HAS BEEN TO STEP UP MILITARY AID TO LISBON'S FASCIST REGIME - SUCH AID IS NOW UPWARDS OF \$400,000,000 ANNUALLY. FORMER U.S. DEFENSE SECRETARY MCNAMARA SOOTHINGLY ASSURED ALL INQUIRERS THAT "...THE AMOUNT PROPOSED FOR U.S. MILITARY SUPPORT FOR PORTUGAL IS JUSTIFIED BY THE USE OF PORTUGUESE BASES WHICH ARE OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO AMERICAN INTERESTS." (MOZAMBIQUE REVOLUTION, JUNE-JULY '67, P. 11) MORE REVEALING WAS U.S. ADMIRAL R.E. LIBBY'S 1967 STATEMENT TO A BRAZILIAN NEWSPAPER THAT IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF AMERICA TO SUPPORT PORTUGUESE POLICY IN AFRICA AND THAT LISBON'S COLONIAL WARS ARE COMPARABLE TO THE AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN VIETNAM. (LOC. CIT.) SIMILARLY, MELVIN LAIRD, APPOINTED BY PRESIDENT NIXON AS U.S. SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, HAS LONG BEEN A PUBLIC SUPPORTER OF PORTUGUESE RULE. FOR EXAMPLE IN A 1966 CONGRESSIONAL SPEECH, GLOWINGLY CITING AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "RED MENACE IN AFRICA" AND EMPHASIZING THAT "...WE MUST DEFINE AMERICA'S INTERESTS" NOT ONLY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA BUT "...IN OTHER EQUALLY IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE WORLD WHERE CONFLICTS ARE ERUPTING..." LAIRD PAID TRIBUTE TO "...THE IMPORTANCE OF PORTUGAL TO AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY WITH REGARD BOTH TO THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY AND AFRICA." (CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, 22 OCT. 1966) WITH LAIRD NOW IN THE PENTAGON AND WITH EXTENSIVE NEW GULF OIL COMPANY INVESTMENTS IN ANGOLA, ONE MAY SAFELY ASSUME 'BIPARTISAN' CONTINUITY IN U.S. ANGOLAN POLICY.

SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICIANS HAVE ALSO BEEN QUICK TO GRASP THE STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE ANGOLAN REVOLUTION: IN THE WORDS OF PRO-APRTHEID UNITED PARTY BOSS SIR DE VILLIERS GRAAF "WHILE ANGOLA IS CONTROLLED BY PORTUGAL, IT OFFERS SOUTH AFRICA A COMPLETELY SAFE BORDER AND A BUFFER STATE." (U.N. A/AC, 23 MARCH '68) THE VORSTER GOVERNMENT REALIZES THAT WITH ITS SUBSTANTIAL PETROLEUM RESOURCES, "ANGOLA COULD SAVE THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA IF THE AFRO-ASIAN BLOC SUCCEEDS IN CUTTING OFF SOUTH AFRICA'S VITAL OIL SUPPLIES." (JOHANNESBURG STAR, 1 AUG. '64) MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, APARTHEID'S PERPETRATORS APPRECIATE THAT LISBON'S FIGHT IS ONLY THE FIRST ROUND OF PRETORIA'S. AS NATAL ADMINISTRATOR THEODOR GERDENER PUT IT: "THE ANGOLAN TERRORIST LEADERS AND THE O.A.U. HAVE MADE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THEIR ULTIMATE AIM IS TO OVERTHROW NOT ONLY THE RULERS OF THE PORTUGUESE TERRITORIES BUT ALSO THOSE OF SOUTH AFRICA." (MOZAMBIQUE REVOLUTION, OCT-NOV '67)

BUT DESPITE THE COMBINED MILITARY MIGHT OF PORTUGAL, THE U.S., AND SOUTH AFRICA AND THE OTHER "FREE WORLD" CONCESSIONS AMASSED IN ANGOLA, THE MPLA IS ATTRACTING GROWING POPULAR SUPPORT. CONFESSED THE (SOUTH AFRICAN) NEWS-CHECK OF 12 JULY 1968: "THE ANGOLAN WAR HAS TAKEN A DRAMATIC TURN FOR THE WORSE. WHAT WAS BEFORE A PECK AT THIS PLUM OF SOUTHERN AFRICA HAS IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS BECOME A SUBSTANTIAL BITE WHICH IN TURN HAS AFFECTED THE SECURITY OF THE ENTIRE SUB-CONTINENT." CONFIRMS AFRICA REPORT OF JANUARY 1969: "THE MPLA EVIDENTLY CONTINUE TO EXTEND THEIR SPHERE OF ACTION THROUGH THE EASTERN AND CENTRAL GRASSLANDS." FREEDOM FOR FIVE MILLION ANGOLANS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF THE SAME FOR MILLIONS MORE AFRICANS IS NOW APPROACHING.

WITH YOUR HELP IT CAN COME SOONER.

A VITORIA E CERTA!

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
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