

With the Guerrillas in Angola

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*Don Barnett and MPLA guerrillas Fronteira and Feira/LSM
Photo, 1968*



Don Barnett (1930-1975)

About the Author

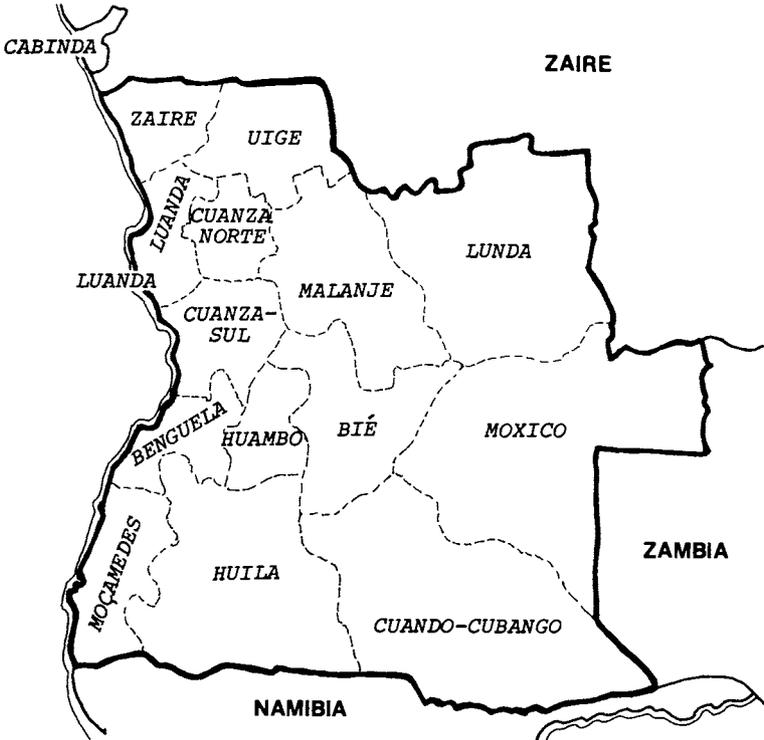
On 25 April 1975 Don Barnett died of a heart attack at the age of 45. His death was a great loss to Liberation Support Movement -the organization he founded and led- and to the international socialist movement. Don committed his teaching and writing skills to active support for revolutionary armed struggles throughout the imperialist system, particularly in Africa. His personal commitment was to be an "intellectual *revolutionary*" rather than take the course of many of his academic contemporaries, who chose instead to be "revolutionary *intellectuals*." Don grasped the need to be an actor in history, to establish revolutionary organizational forms and practice guided by scientific socialism. In North America he worked tirelessly to carry out some of the many tasks of revolution. For extensive periods he lived and worked in Africa documenting the struggles for national liberation there.

Don used to say that his most profound experience was his travel with MPLA guerrillas through the war zone in eastern Angola in 1968 and his close contact there with one of the world's most exploited peoples. His pioneering report, *With the Guerrillas*, has played an important role in mobilizing worldwide support for the struggle of the Angolan people and their vanguard, the MPLA. Don's comrades and successors in LSM carry on this important collaboration in the internationalist spirit which guided Don Barnett's life: "What is required is a moving beyond metropolitan nationalism to a creative fashioning of internationalist links and productive relationships with imperialism's masses in armed revolutionary struggle." (1967)

AFRICA



ANGOLA



With the Guerrillas in Angola

We arrived at Hanoi II yesterday after a journey on foot of 14 days and about 175 miles. Our starting point was an elaborate temporary camp some 30 miles inside Angola from the Zambia border. Here the MPLA held its First Eastern Regional Assembly on August 22-25, 1968. It was attended by some 200 people including 85 delegates, members of the *Comité Director*, and six foreign journalists. My own invitation came as a result of having written several articles on MPLA and the other liberation movements of southern Africa. Living in Dar es Salaam for over a year, I had the opportunity to meet and interview a number of MPLA leaders. When President Neto came through in June he asked if I wanted to visit Angola to get a first-hand view of the struggle. I jumped at the chance. MPLA had already impressed me as the most advanced liberation movement in southern Africa. With its riches and key geopolitical position, Angola could well become Africa's Cuba within the next few years - or perhaps its "Vietnam."

On August 26th the various delegations began leaving the assembly camp for one or another of six zones in the vast Eastern Region. The *Comité Director*, enlarged by the addition of seven new members (two others were expelled after a long criticism-and-self-criticism session), remained in the camp to complete its meetings.

Our group set out at noon, about a third heading for Zone "D" and the rest of us for the Zone "C" base camp, Hanoi II. The senior and responsible officer was Anival Luwaza, Zone "D" Chief of Armaments and Supplies. We were a very mixed bag of 43 people. Twenty-three were under the charge of Prof. Mapamundi. They consisted of the professor's wife and baby, plus 21 Pioneers going to attend the CIR school at the base. Sixteen of the students were young girls aged 13 to 18. Another three women were going to study nurses-aid at the Medical Assistance Services school (SAM). Under Luwaza were ten guerrillas, armed with about six weapons, the wife and child of a wounded guerrilla, and the Zone "D" Political Organizer, Comrade Biekman. Finally, there were myself and Tom Chibaye of the *Zambia Mail*.

The terrain in this part of Angola has three main features: semi-desert savannahs, swampy valleys or marshes cut by twisting rivers and scrub-forests covering low-lying hills. It was now the end of the dry winter season. The rivers were low. The temperature reached the 90's at midday and dropped to near freezing at night. We usually marched during the day. The heat plus the ankle-deep sandy roads and paths made walking extremely difficult - at least for me. We crossed about eight rivers; a few by narrow dugout canoe, the rest on foot. Each day's journey was between fixed points, as we moved from one village or camp to the next. On four occasions we walked better than 25 miles. The other marches ranged from 10 to 20 miles. We always slept in the forest; sometimes in village huts, sometimes in the bush.

Though we brought some supplies with us, food was scarce for the first week or so. It consisted mainly of rice, noodles, cassava (raw, roasted or mashed into a paste called *funji*) and coffee. The population within 100 miles of the Zambia border is very thin. The density was always low, but since the opening of the Eastern Front in 1966 over 4,000 Angolan peasants have fled as refugees to Zambia. Portuguese bombings and the burning of villages are the main threats. The whole of this vast Eastern Region can now be considered semi-liberated. Fortified Portuguese bases and posts, plus a few small towns, dot the area. During the dry season some truck convoys - usually large and with air cover - are sent in with Portuguese supplies and troops. But bridges have been destroyed and road transport is under the constant threat of guerrilla ambushes. The Portuguese also burn the bush surrounding their posts and barracks and send out foot patrols. With the natural cover removed, surprise guerrilla attacks on Portuguese positions are difficult to achieve in the dry season.

Most of the supplies for the Portuguese bases have to be flown in. During the long rainy season - which begins in October - this is the only means of Portuguese transport. Rivers swell and flood the flatlands and valleys, which become shoulder-high with water. Roads are washed out. The savannahs grow green to eight feet and are impossible to burn. Fields, previously readied, are planted with cassava, maize and millet, and the forests grow thick with natural cover. The rainy season belongs to the guerrillas. It is the time when they make their major offensive moves.

During our journey to Hanoi II, I saw much evidence of Portuguese dry-season tactics. We walked through vast stretches of burnt-out forest and savannah, passing village after village which had been razed to the ground. When the bombings started in late 1966 the peasants abandoned their traditional villages and garden crops near the rivers. Some were herded into concentration camp "hamlets" near the Portuguese posts. Most moved onto their fields, tilled by slash-and-burn methods, lying within the margins of the forest. Last year the Portuguese began using Ameri-



Angolan village/LSM Photo, 1968



Village woman and child/LSM Photo, 1968

can and German-made helicopters as their major offensive weapon. They come in twos or threes, strafe villages and fields, then land troops which set blaze to the area. The peasants have now moved deeper into the forests. There they live in small makeshift villages, clear patches of land for cultivation, hunt the fairly abundant forest game, and walk long distances each day for water from the rivers. Some have built new camouflaged huts under the trees. Others live in small family groups around cooking fires and without shelter. Detecting the sound of planes or helicopters, they disperse and run for cover under nearby thickets or at the base of the larger trees. All belongings are buried or otherwise hidden during the day.

The third day of our journey was the longest and toughest. We were awakened by hand-clapping at 5 a.m., as usual, and had a cup of coffee for breakfast. During the morning formation and drill Luwaza criticized the students, particularly the girls, for making too much noise, being lax in discipline and forgetting that they were in a war. A local guerrilla unit of about 15 men also participated. We set off at 7 a.m., walking in three groups separated from one another by a few hundred yards. I was in the last group, which contained our only automatic weapon, a machine gun. At 11 a.m. we crossed a swampy valley and forded our first river. Taking off my shoes and rolling up my pants was not good enough. I got wet up to the waist and almost ruined my Portuguese grammar book.

Most of the people in this area speak Mbunda, but all of the MPLA cadres, and a few of the guerrillas and local people speak some Portuguese. None of the Angolans in our group spoke English beyond a few words and phrases.

We walked till 2:00, had lunch and a rest, then set off again at 3:30. This time we walked along a sandy road bordering the green marsh. Portuguese vehicles had passed this way earlier going in the opposite direction. We moved quickly as Luwaza feared they might return and catch us without adequate cover. Our tracks would certainly be easy to follow. We were a large and relatively slow-moving group, certainly not an effective combat unit. Our objective was to reach Hanoi II safely and without making contact with the Portuguese.

We moved on until 6 p.m., rested, ate some roasted cassava (*mwanza*) and walked on with one short break till 9 p.m. Then, at night as planned, we crossed the road linking the Portuguese posts of Ninda and V. Gago Coutinho. Scouts had been sent ahead to make sure the way was clear. We ran across in groups of two or three and moved away quickly. At midnight we entered a thicket about a mile from the road and prepared to spend the night in the bush. I was exhausted; feet sore, back aching, hungry. We had marched over 12 hours covering some 30-odd miles. The others showed signs of being tired also. But they had carried packs weighing up to 40 lbs., while I had only my canteen and a few books and medicines.

The generally high spirits, humor and songs of the young people never failed to amaze me. Even after a long hard march they would joke and talk in small groups and the girls often sang as they prepared our food. Our youngest self-sufficient member was ten years old. He carried his own bedding and I never once heard him complain. His parents had been killed in Zone "D." Now, as an orphan, he was going to attend school at the base. At night, around the camp fires, the girls would quietly sing MPLA and traditional songs until the 8:30 order for silence. The spontaneous grouping of people around fires for the night was largely by age and sex. Young boys at one fire, older ones at another; then the girls, married couples and guerrillas. Tom Chibaye and I were joined at our fire by two of the armed guerrillas. Each group would eat around its own fire, lit usually just before dark. Night sentries were posted about 50 yards from the camp.

On the fourth day, we passed within five miles of Ninda Post. Walking through the sand and ashes of burnt forest we saw the footprints of a recent Portuguese patrol. Visibility was very high in this area and we moved on quickly. Around 2:30, after a hot, dry and dusty march, we stopped for a rest by the side of a road. There was a river pool nearby and a few of us went in for a quick dip and bath. It was like heaven - the water cold and clear. I drank my fill while swimming.

An hour later three Portuguese helicopters passed low over the valley. We ran for cover into the forest bordering the road. They didn't spot us, though we could see them clearly about 150 yards away. The sound of approaching enemy aircraft was always picked up by the guerrillas several seconds before it reached my ears. Someone would shout "Aviãõ." I would listen carefully to pick up the faint roar of the motors. Most would already be running for the nearest cover. Earlier, two other helicopters had passed over, but not quite so close.

We camped at Kamchocho base about four miles into the forest from the road. The local guerrilla detachment was gone. Comrade Luwaza was worried as to what lay ahead. Why all the Portuguese helicopter activity in this area? They were heard again before dark. Four scouts were sent out to check. Luwaza decided to sit tight. We were to remain at this camp for four nights. It was very hot and water was scarce. The river was several miles away. Billions of flies filled the forest and it was impossible to keep them off one's body and food. They seemed intent upon entering your eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Their buzzing torment ended only when darkness came. Twenty or thirty peasant families were around scattered fire places down the slope about a half a mile from our camp. Beyond them a mile or so was the kitchen area where we spent our days. The best time at Kamchocho was between 6:00 and 8:30 at night - eating, lying on blankets around the fires, and the girls singing softly and laughing not far away. Every morning we packed our bags and they were hidden in the

bush, ready in case a quick departure became necessary.

Here, as in every small "village" we passed, meetings were held with the local people. These always began with songs of greeting by the assembled peasants, invariably arranged in a circle by sex and age. Tom and I would be introduced by Luwaza to the people. Sometimes we were asked to speak. Luwaza would translate very freely into Mbunda. Then came political talks by Luwaza and the political organizers, pleasantly blended with MPLA songs. The people were always enthusiastic. Even the young children knew the words to the main songs. When asked about their problems the people spoke freely. All mentioned the bombings and helicopters and asked for weapons to defend themselves. Local militias were armed with spears, axes, bows and arrows and an occasional old rifle. After songs of thanks for our visit, we would usually be introduced to the local political cadre, leaders of the women's organization (OMA) and militia, head of the village action committee and sometimes, the president of the sector. Group and sector leaders were often old men - the traditional village headmen and chiefs. When these traditional leaders were conservative or lacked enthusiasm for the revolution they were by-passed in the local elections by young militants.

Zone "C" has four sectors, each containing a number of "groups" or villages. We were now in Sector 2. The peasants here were extremely impoverished. They had a little wild honey, the occasional catch of game and small amounts of cassava brought in from distant fields. Few had any clothing other than bits and pieces of rag. Most had eye and skin diseases and the children all showed the usual signs of malnutrition. No huts or other shelters were built at Kamchocho. The people slept close to their fires at night for warmth. There are tse-tse fly in the area and no domesticated animals are kept. I was bitten on the hand one evening. It drew blood, swelled up and itched. I'd need an injection against sleeping sickness when I hit Lusaka next month.

The second day at Kamchocho spirits were high. Some of the guerrillas had gone off to hunt and came back with a duiker. We all had a little meat for the next few meals, the first protein I'd had for ten days. The scouts returned saying there'd been a successful ambush of some vehicles heading for Ninda Post. This accounted for the bombings we'd heard and the large number of helicopters in the area. Later the local guerrilla group which had carried out the ambush returned to their Kamchocho base. They had another south of Ninda to which they withdrew after their attack. The leader showed us the arm chevron of a Portuguese captain killed in the action. They also captured five grenades and five rifles. He said his unit of eight guerrillas hit the last four trucks in the Portuguese convoy at 7:30 in the morning. The attack lasted less than a minute. The guerrillas used grenades and rifles. Three of the trucks were destroyed and about 40 Portuguese soldiers killed or wounded. The guerrillas



*Child with bronchitis being taken to Zambia for treatment/
LSM Photo, 1968*



Meeting of villagers and guerrillas/LSM Photo, 1968

came away from the action unscathed.

That night there was a meeting with the local people and I recorded about an hour of lively singing. They really enjoyed it when I played the music back and they heard their own voices. Here, as everywhere I stopped, the people accepted me warmly as an American comrade. I must have shaken a thousand hands. They know the Portuguese are being helped by the American government and that most of the planes and helicopters used against them are "Made in USA." They are told, however, that there are many progressive North Americans who support them in their struggle against Portuguese colonialism and the imperialists. Not once did I detect a sign of racism among the peasants or guerrillas.

On the ninth day of our journey we left Kamchocho. At 2 p.m., after marching 25 miles, we reached a bush village deep in the forest. There was a river about two miles away. In the late afternoon, after washing out some of my clothes, I walked down the hill to the river with Comrade Biekman and took a much needed bath. The president of the local action committee gave us a gift, a small chicken which was prepared for our dinner. The women of the village gathered around our fire in the early evening. They expressed their thanks for our visit and sang a few songs. We could hear the faint sound of bombing some distance away but didn't put out our fires.

We set out early the next morning for Lwasosi, about six hours away. This was in Sector 3. The village lay about five miles from the valley and relatively far from the nearest Portuguese post. The population as we moved westward was becoming more dense and somewhat better off. The villagers here cultivate cooperative plots and share the harvest. They also have some chickens and use dogs in the hunt. There are a few storage bins and most of the villagers sleep in tree-hidden huts. Clothing, however, is still scant and skin and eye diseases rampant. Portuguese foot patrols had never reached the village, though the general area had been bombed several times.

That night, at a political meeting with the people, I recorded some more songs. Just as we were about to begin, someone shouted "Aviãõ." The people immediately dispersed in every direction. It was only thunder, however - a prelude to the season's first rain.

When it started at 9 p.m. we were rushed off to one of two small huts which I hadn't seen before. Most of the members of our group spent the night in the open under their blankets. In the morning they crouched close to the fires, shivering and trying to dry their clothing. It started drizzling again as the first unit marched out of the village around 8 a.m.

Moving down into the valley we soon crossed the first of two rivers. Shoes off and pants rolled above the knees, we followed the twisting river till it let us out on the other side before coursing back into the marsh. The rain had stopped. It was now cool and pleasant. I walked the next few miles bare-

foot. The sandy road we were on led to a bridge destroyed the previous year. The Portuguese no longer used the road. This time we had to strip completely as the narrow river was over four feet deep at its shallowest crossing point. The women had gone ahead, crossing first and already moving up the steep road into the forest.

After a few more miles we reached the village of Katolo. A number of fields along the way were being readied for planting. The area seemed more fertile than any we had yet passed. At one point we had a magnificent view of the Cuando River valley, about five miles to the south.

Once in the village and following the usual greetings and introductions, we were directed to a large rectangular hut. The thatched roof sloped to within a few feet of the ground. There were no walls. Inside were four pole and grass beds and a small table. I hadn't slept on a bed since leaving the assembly camp and it seemed like a real luxury. For lunch we were brought fresh boiled fish and *funji*. There was a meeting with the surrounding villagers in the afternoon and that night we were entertained with some excellent drumming, dancing and singing.

Earlier, two helicopter victims were brought in on stretchers. They were being carried from Zone "D" to a hospital near the border. They had already been traveling a week and at least another lay ahead of them. We went to see them early in the evening. One of the wounded was a small girl about six or seven. She had grenade fragments in her head, arms and legs. She moaned under a blanket close to the fire. The other was a young guerrilla whose arm had been blown off near the shoulder. It amazed me that he was still alive. He'd received no medication. One of the leaders commented that he was a very strong-willed and brave man. I returned to my hut and gave Luwaza some pain pills, aspirin and penicillin for the wounded.

Pain and suffering were not unusual. They were a normal if horrible part of daily life - both before and during the revolution. Everything possible was done to make the patients comfortable, but their presence in the village was not allowed to upset the evening's festivities.

Later that night, when I'd returned to my hut after recording some drum music, Luwaza brought me a small cup of the local brew. I had indicated earlier that I would like a taste of it. Made of millet and honey, it tasted something like gin, though not quite as strong. I was told by Comrade Biekman that some of the villagers drank far too much of it.

Next morning the president of the action committee brought Tom and me some gifts: a live chicken, a little bottle of *pili pili* (ground red peppers) and a small bowl of roasted peanuts. He said the latter were good with the roasted cassava we were eating. And indeed they were. Our hunters returned just before dark with two duikers. They were met with enthusiastic applause and congratulations. The meat was hung high near the

hut for the night. I was given a few pieces to roast over the fire near my bed. It was very tender and tasty, but my stomach couldn't take all that unexpected food. It started to give me trouble later that night.

On the 13th day of our journey we left Katolo for Hanoi II. The first group left early, the second a couple of hours later, and finally our unit set out about 11 a.m. A river had to be crossed some five miles to the north and it was dangerous for us to cluster at the landing in the open plain. Each of the two small dugouts, poled by its owner, could carry only two passengers. It took half an hour to reach the other side and return for the next load.

Once on the other side of the river we were in Sector 4, a vast area extending westward into Bié. We walked along a hard narrow path between the valley and hills for about an hour, then turned left into the forest. Villagers along the way came out to greet us with MPLA songs. Some walked beside us chatting excitedly; others ran into the fields to inform their friends of our arrival. In mid-afternoon we stopped near one of the villages for food. Later we decided to spend the night. One of the girls was quite ill with a bad stomach. Another, Tamara, was very upset on learning that her father had lost an arm to the helicopters. He was being cared for at a village not far from us. She cried and begged to be allowed to go visit him. The next morning she was given permission to accompany him to the hospital.

The last day of our journey, September 8th, began at 7 a.m. We walked for three hours without water, finally being given some by a few peasants just up from the river. They gave us as much as we wanted to drink and filled our canteens. Their own calabashes nearly empty, they would have to return once again to the river. It was at least an hour away. We ate raw cassava while resting in the bush, then set out again. An advance party came out to meet us from the base at around 2:00 and by 3:30 we were descending along a twisting path into Hanoi II. A group of students and women guerrillas met us with song while standing in formation. We were then introduced to the Zone "C" Commander, Mundo Real, given something to eat and shown to our quarters.

The rest of this account was written after I'd left Angola. Unfortunately, as will be explained below, I lost my diary and notebooks, among other things, during the September 25th Portuguese attack on Hanoi II. What follows is therefore reconstructed almost entirely from memory.

It took me several days to learn the physical layout of Hanoi II. The base was relatively new. Construction had only begun in June and, as of my arrival, was not yet fully completed. It sprawled over an area of about one square mile. The forest at this time of year was fairly thin and the cover it afforded was not all that one would have hoped for. The valley and our water supply lay down the gentle slope of the hill about half an hour's walk to the east.

The PC or command post was in the southwestern sector of the camp. Here, at 10 to 20 yard intervals, was an irregular row of huts, each located to maximize the cover of nearby trees. Mundo Real, plus the other MPLA senior officers at the base, had their huts in the PC area. Close-by was a small open kitchen used to prepare food for the visiting journalists, Dr. Boavida and three MPLA commanders awaiting instructions from the Central Committee.

My hut was at the end of the row toward the center of the camp. It was round, about ten feet in diameter, with an overhanging conical roof and walls made of split poles and thatching straw. The floor was sandy soil stripped of growth and exposed roots. The furniture consisted of a low wooden-pole bed with a straw mattress, a small desk, three chairs and a little handmade table where I kept my equipment. There were three door-size openings in the wall to allow for rapid exit when necessary. Near the center of the hut was an open space where I could build a fire for warmth at night and in the early morning. Most of my three weeks at Hanoi II would be spent working, eating and sleeping within the confines of this hut. An outhouse was dug



*Regional Commander Janguinda (killed in action, August, 1969
LSM Photo, 1968*



*Don Barnett fishing with MPLA guerrilla/
LSM Photo*



Dr. Agostinho Neto, President of MPLA; to his right, Diloloa, Director of the MPLA Center for Revolutionary Instruction/LSM Photo, 1968



Villagers of the Eastern Region/LSM Photo, 1968

a short distance behind the huts toward the forest to the west.

About 100 yards northwest of the PC was a cleared area used for calisthenics and morning and evening *formatura* or parade. At 4:45 a.m. everyone in the camp, except those who had been on guard duty the night before, were awakened by hand-clapping. By 5:00 the guerrillas were at the parade ground ready to begin their exercises, which would last half an hour. This was followed by the morning formation: singing the MPLA anthem, arms and marching drill, assignment of daily duties and special missions, and formal presentation of the detachment by the camp commander to the zone commander. The guerrillas were then dismissed to clean up for breakfast.

The kitchen and eating area lay in the eastern sector of the base closest to the river valley and water hole. A twisting mile-long path led down to the valley from the kitchen. Breakfast was at 7 a.m. Food was prepared in large vats for all camp personnel except those visitors and officers mentioned above. This was a time of scarcity. The long dry season was drawing to a close and the rains about to begin. With the rains would come the wild forest fruits. The peasants, who had already cut and burned their fields, would sow cassava, maize, millet, peanuts and a few garden crops. But that was for the future. Now there were only the remains of the last season's millet crop and small amounts of cassava. The pigs and goats normally kept by the villagers had long ago been eaten, sold or stolen by the Portuguese. Only a few skinny chickens remained. Most of the hunting dogs had been killed. Their barking was a threat to the villagers. The vast stretches of forest burned by the Portuguese had upset the migratory patterns of the game, normally abundant in this area. Even the usually reliable rhythm of the bees was disturbed and honey, the major source of sugar, was extremely hard to come by. Only the flies seemed to flourish, concentrating in their millions wherever there were living things and their waste to feed on.

Each of the several surrounding villages collectively cultivated a plot for MPLA. In addition, the guerrilla detachment had begun to cultivate fields of its own a few miles from the base - the usual crops plus vitamin-bearing vegetables. They also kept a dozen or so chickens in the kitchen area. A few guerrillas were always out hunting game. Staples such as salt, sugar and cooking oil had to be brought in from the outside. The needs of those gathered for the Regional Assembly in Sector 1, however, had resulted in a temporary shortage of these and other supplies at Hanoi II. The newly built People's Store - at least one of which was set up by MPLA in each sector - was also awaiting supplies. Throughout the semi-liberated zones peasants would sell or barter their surpluses at the People's Stores for needed staples such as soap, salt, fat and clothing. Medicines, when available, were dispensed without charge and low prices were fixed for all other items. The guerrillas scrupu-

lously observed MPLA's rule against taking anything from the villagers without fair payment. Previously any surpluses generated in the countryside were drained off by the Portuguese in lieu of taxes or sold at Portuguese shops for incredibly low prices. Difficult as it was, life was considerably better now than under the forced-labor-and-taxes tyranny of the Portuguese.

During my three weeks at Hanoi II the diet of both peasants and guerrillas was meager indeed. It consisted largely of millet and cassava - that tough, year-round root crop resistant to almost all environmental dangers. Unfortunately, though it fills your stomach, cassava is a carbohydrate containing little else in the way of food value. The usual meal at the base consisted of cassava or millet flour, boiled and stirred into a thick paste (*fanji*), and eaten with a "relish" of boiled venison. Occasionally, fish or chicken were used as the relish and I was sometimes given boiled rice or noodles instead of *fanji* or roasted cassava. We were living on what Dr. Boavida described as a "starvation diet": no fat, no fruit, no sugar, no vegetables. Fortunately, I had some one-a-day vitamins and a small package of salt.

Northwest of the kitchen area about 50 yards was the medical training school and clinic. The building had just been completed; a rectangular affair, some 20 by 30 feet, with thatched walls and a corrugated tin roof camouflaged by branches and leaves. I attended the opening ceremony of the school on 12 September. Dr. Boavida, head of the SAM (Medical Assistance Services) in the Eastern Region, spoke of MPLA's great need to train medical assistants and extend medical care to the villagers. To achieve this would require not only trained personnel but also significantly larger quantities of preventive medicines and medical supplies. After a few other speakers a young married woman spoke for the students, expressing their thanks for the opportunity to attend the SAM school and their desire to serve the people.

These students, five men and five women, were to receive six months of theoretical and practical training and then be sent out to work in the villages. To end the official opening we were treated to a lunch of rice, chicken and a slightly fermented millet drink.

The CIR school was formally opened the following week. It was located about half a mile north of the kitchen. The single school building was a narrow rectangular structure with open walls, a camouflaged tin roof and about 20 rows of benches. A small blackboard and desk stood at the front. A director and two other teachers would instruct about 40 students in courses ranging from literacy to political and military theory. The students were all pioneers or guerrillas; males and females ranging in age from 10 to 50. It was the 50-year-old named Malasa who spoke on behalf of the students. He had spent 21 years with the Portuguese army and police before being imprisoned in 1963 on the false charge of aiding "outside agitators"

in the distribution of anti-Portuguese literature. Soon after his release he joined MPLA. At the CIR he would be trained as a political organizer.

Dwelling huts for the 100-odd inhabitants were scattered in small clusters around the base. Most of the guerrillas slept in round open-walled structures with low thatched roofs. The unmarried female students and guerrillas were housed in larger rectangular dormitories which held eight or ten wooden beds. Trenches, four to six feet deep, had been dug near the huts, kitchen and other buildings.

Additional structures in the camp included several long split-pole desks and benches for writing and study, rows of high supported beams for drying meat and a small stockade. There were no prisoners during my stay at the base. I was told that the most common cause for imprisonment was falling asleep on guard duty. There were three four-hour shifts of night guards, posted at possible entry points around the perimeter of the base. The guards' commander moved around constantly checking-up on his men. Every night at about 7 o'clock we were given a new set of passwords. A guerrilla, standing stooped halfway through one of the low doorways of my hut, would whisper two words in Portuguese or Mbunda which I would repeat and then try to memorize. Anyone approaching an outer guard who failed to respond with the proper password would be shot. Within the camp a guard would normally shout "Halt," to which one would reply "*Comarada*," followed by his name. Though it dropped to near freezing in the early hours of the morning, guards were not allowed to build fires.

The evening *formatura* began at 5 p.m. Special missions and other matters were discussed and guards assigned for the night. The dinner hour started at 6 o'clock. Everyone had to be in their huts by 7:00 and all conversation and other noise was to stop at 7:30. My meals were brought to the hut and I usually ate dinner alone, after the flies had departed. Except for an occasional trip to the latrine, some 50 yards away, I rarely left my hut after dark. When there was no moon it was pitch black and very easy (for me at least) to get lost. On a few occasions when I ventured out I had to be steered back to my hut by one of the guards.

At noon on September 10 we left the base for a nearby village. It was less than an hour's walk to the south. Over 150 peasants from a fairly wide area had gathered for the meeting. Songs, speeches and a question-and-answer period were followed by an hour of dancing by the youths. They formed a circle and established a complex rhythm by clapping their hands. One or two moved to the center and chose partners from the crowd. They danced for a few minutes and then the previously chosen youth would select a new partner. The couples were usually of opposite sex but sometimes two boys or two girls would enter the circle. After the dancing I was given a gift, this time a few

eggs. I had spoken briefly to the villagers earlier in the meeting and they showed their usual great enthusiasm for the visiting white comrade from America.

The next morning Tom Chibaye left Hanoi II with Luwaza and a few other Zone "D" officers and guerrillas, including Zone Commander Diamonte. They were headed for the Zone "D" base camp some five days' walk to the south across the Cuando River. Comrade Luwaza gave me half a cup of sugar and four cigarettes from Commander Diamonte before leaving. I had run out of both.

My interpreter, "Big Brain" Likambuila, had arrived a few days earlier and we started to work immediately. Likambuila speaks English, Portuguese, Russian, a little French and 17 African languages. He was the Zone "C" Chief of Operations and Reconnaissance. Having received almost a year of military training abroad, he was a member of the first detachment to penetrate Zone "C" in October 1966. Before approaching the villagers in the area they announced their presence with a two-pronged attack on Ninda Post and Sete Barracks.

Comrade Likambuila is 26 years old, a wiry 5'8" tall and very dedicated to MPLA and the liberation of Angola. Like the other middle cadre I met in Angola, he is a non-dogmatic socialist, committed to the armed struggle for national liberation and interested in reading everything from Che to Mao. He was forever smiling or laughing and could walk with the best of them - meaning 40 to 50 miles a day. We lived and worked closely together for over a month and became very fast friends.

My main objective at Hanoi II was to record the life-histories of four or five MPLA guerrillas. These I hoped to shape into a book on the Angolan struggle. I started with Likambuila so that he could get an idea of what I had in mind before we began working with the others in Mbunda or Luchazi. After a few days we started recording the story of Malasa, the 50-year-old guerrilla mentioned above. Within two weeks we were working each day with four guerrillas. Though the schedule had to be changed fairly often, here is what it was like during my last week at the base. Likambuila and Malasa came to my hut at 6:30 a.m. and we picked up where we'd left off the day before. Malasa had a very long story to tell. Likambuila translated into Mbunda, Malasa answered in the same language, Likambuila turned this into English and I taped the result. It was a slow and at times painful process.

At 10 o'clock Malasa left for his class at the CIR and Marsha came. She was a beautiful 14-year-old who had the honor of being the first female recruited to the guerrilla forces in Zone "C." She began her military training a year earlier at Hanoi I, before reaching puberty, and was now awaiting the opening of her course at the CIR on October 1st. We generally worked till noon.

After lunch and a rest, at around 1:30 p.m., Tululu would come. He was a 20-year-old guerrilla with two years experience



Likambuila/LSM Photo, 1968

and seven combats. He was recruited from a nearby village and had spent the last year with the guerrilla detachment at *Angola d'Hoje* (Angola of Today), a camp about one day from Hanoi II. He was brought to the base because of his hunting skill and was responsible for most of the venison we were eating. Tululu was a stocky 5'10" and gave the appearance of great physical strength. Like so many other Angolans from Moxico and Cuando-Cubango areas, he had earlier spent some time in Zambia. Fleeing the brutality of the teachers at Muie Catholic primary school, and not wanting to bring trouble to his parents' village, he walked the 200 miles or so to the border and spent almost a year with relatives on the other side.

Julia was taking medical training at the SAM school under Dr. Boavida. She came to the hut after classes at about 4:30 and we worked till it was too dark to function efficiently. At 26, Julia had already seen and experienced quite a bit. Married at 13 to a three-quarters Portuguese safari company employee, she had lost her only child at birth, travelled as far as Luanda, worked as a cook and bar-girl for three years in Livingstone, Zambia, and returned to Angola to join MPLA in 1967. She was tough and aggressive, had received military training at Hanoi I and had been through three Portuguese attacks on that base. She demanded and received equal treatment by the male guerrillas. Before starting school she had been responsible for preparing my food at the small kitchen. Most of the cooking chores, however, were in the hands of the men.

Likambuila would often come by after dinner for a chat or to work on his own story. The last two years of his account were very detailed and he liked to write it out with the aid of his record books and diary before recording. This he did in his own voice, with me intervening from time to time with a question. He rarely stayed more than an hour and I was always in bed and asleep well before 9 o'clock.

Life at the camp was rigorous and not without its difficulties. For one thing, though my work kept me busy most of the day, I had moments of depression and loneliness - partly because of the diet, partly because I was spending so much time in that little hut, and partly because I was cut off from that other world to which I'd grown accustomed while not yet fully integrated into the new world of the Angolan Revolution. Language and other cultural differences created a gap which could only be overcome in the long pull of time.

Water was another problem. I always seemed to be running out of it. Twice a day it would be drawn from the valley, but we were short of containers and had none of the large pole-carried water gourds. Supplying the needs of 100 people under such circumstances was no easy task. On the average I had a canteen and a thermos filled once a day, usually in the morning. This had to do me for everything - drinking, brushing teeth and washing. Occasionally I got a small basin of water which I would

use to bathe and wash and rinse a few pieces of clothing. After a time one becomes expert at water-conserving techniques, such as washing your hands in a basin of water without dirtying the water you don't use. My only real bath came in the second week when Likambuila, Malasa and I walked to a river pool an hour from the base. It was great, the only trouble being that I got hot and sweaty again walking over the hill and back up the slope to the base.

Food was also a problem. I would occasionally lay on the bed with my eyes closed trying to remember the taste of various delicacies such as peanut butter, oranges and chocolate milk. It was a good practical lesson for me on part of the price two-thirds of humanity has to pay for Western affluence. A few weeks of semi-starvation in the bush may be a better teacher on imperialism than a library full of books on the subject.

My work nearing completion, I was planning to leave Hanoi II for the border on 28 September. Malasa's and Marsha's stories were finished and only a few days of work remained with Julia, Tululu and Likambuila. Though messengers arrived fairly often with news of guerrilla encounters with the Portuguese (all such reports being sent to Likambuila as Zone "C" Chief of Operations), life at Hanoi II had been "peaceful" and I found myself forgetting that we were in the center of a very active war zone. The Portuguese changed all that on 25 September.

As I was to learn later, a new recruit from *Angola d'Hoje* had fallen into enemy hands. He was captured while at home in his village on a four day pass to collect honey. Earlier, he had helped in the construction work at Hanoi II. On the morning of 25 September he led the Portuguese back to the base.

It was 7 a.m. and I was already at work in the hut with Likambuila and Tululu. I was just recovering from a bout with malaria. The fever was down but I was still weak with aching muscles and joints. Tululu picked up the sound first, perking his head and saying "*Aviãõ*." Likambuila listened for a moment and then concurred. They both stepped outside to confirm their suspicions. I wasn't worried at first. There had been a number of false alarms in the past. The wind whipping through the forest often sounded like planes, and several of the latter had in fact passed overhead some distance away without spotting the camp.

A couple of seconds later Likambuila stepped back into the hut. "*Aviãõ*," he said, "you'd better pack up your things in a hurry." Most of my belongings were already packed. The first thing I'd do in the morning was strip my bed, putting the folded blankets and additional clothes I had worn at night into one of my two bags. It took less than a minute to clear my desk, pick up a few odds and ends lying about and stuff them into the bags. My small tape recorder was already packed. I left out the larger one we'd been working with to record the sounds of the planes as, I still hoped, they passed harmlessly by. Likambuila sent two

guerrillas for my bags and ran off to hide his own personal belongings in the bush.

After the guerrillas took my bags I went outside for a look, taking my pistol and tape recorder but leaving my canteen, sun glasses and hat on the desk. The first helicopter passed low overhead just to the valley-side of the command post. It then turned sharply to the right and headed back toward us. The pilot seemed to know exactly where he was going. There was no question now that this was the real thing. Moments later the first grenade dropped by the helicopter exploded a short distance from the hut and I found myself running beside a guerrilla toward a nearby trench. At the last second I decided against the trench. It was too close to the PC, an obvious primary target of the attack. Almost falling in, I jumped over the corner of the trench and headed westward into the forest. The long microphone cable had somehow gotten wrapped around my ankle and I must have been a funny sight trying to get it untangled as I ran and stumbled ahead. Finally I stopped and freed myself from the wire. A guerrilla moving up beside me took the recorder and slung it over his shoulder.

Shouting for Likambuila, I began to run again. By this time there were eight planes in the air: three helicopters, three light bombers and two armed reconnaissance planes. Fortunately, Likambuila and I found each other a few minutes later. We set out westward together through the thin forest and bush, Likambuila leading the way. Each time one of the planes made a bombing or strafing pass we would dive for cover at the base of a tree, beneath a fallen log or under a clump of bushes. Three weeks of inaction plus the malaria made it impossible for me to run more than 15 or 20 yards at a crack. Gasping for air and with rubbery legs, I simply fell into a fast walk or collapsed under the nearest cover.

The Portuguese apparently knew what our path of retreat would be. The planes, at least a good number of them, kept drifting to the west with us. At one point things got pretty tight. The three helicopters were circling our position and giving us little chance to move. Just as one was completing its pass to the east, firing from the open doorway and throwing grenades, another would come by and open up on us from the western side. We were effectively pinned for something like 15 minutes, being able to move only in short spurts of four or five yards and often having to stay put under thin cover for what seemed a very long time. Once, my head jammed a few inches between two trees and the grenades and machine gun bullets coming pretty close, I felt our chances of coming out of the thing alive were very slim indeed.

It took us almost two hours to get out of the target area and it was 9:30 before we stopped for a rest and examined our situation. By this time Likambuila and I were alone. The others moving west had fanned out in the forest singly or in groups of



MPLA guerrilla and bazooka/LSM Photo, 1968

two or three. Likambuila had hoped we would come across some of the other comrades. He knew the Portuguese would land troops and try to enter the camp. He also knew that the armed guerrillas would remain at the base to protect our rear. Having a sub-machine gun, he felt he should return to assist our comrades. On the other hand, he was responsible for my safety and couldn't very well leave me alone in the bush. We had no food and only a little water left in his canteen.

There was a village Likambuila once visited about five miles further to the west. We had to cross an open area to get there, however, and it was possible the Portuguese had landed troops at this spot to cut off our retreat. Another village lay considerably farther to the south. It would have been a hot, hungry and painful journey. Likambuila had sent out his socks and some other clothes to be washed the day before in preparation for our planned departure on the 28th. He now had to practically peel the heavy boots off his raw and blistered feet. We decided to move west.

Before reaching the open area Likambuila spotted a villager about 50 yards ahead running away from us down the forest path. The woman, taking me for a Portuguese, was fleeing for her life. Likambuila gave chase for a few minutes, shouting after her in Mbunda that we were comrades. It was no use. The woman quickly vanished into the bush. This happened again with another villager a short time later.

We walked across the narrow valley without incident and soon came upon the fields of cassava cuttings which indicated that a village was nearby. A man standing on the far side of the fields began to move away. This time, Likambuila's shouts yielded the intended results. The villager stopped backing off and allowed us to approach. After a brief conversation the man strode off to inform the other villagers of our arrival and to draw us some water from the river. We waited at the edge of the field.

Soon a number of people returned and after the usual enthusiastic round of handshaking we were led to the village. Chickens were scurrying about, chased by a couple of youngsters, and at least a dozen wooden bird cages hung from the trees. When I asked why they kept all those little birds the reply was simply that they enjoyed the music. Likambuila thought it best that we move into the bush, since the Portuguese might follow up their attack on the base by bombing some of the nearby villages. Two skin-covered wooden chairs were put down for us a short distance away from the huts and six or seven hot, hard-boiled eggs were brought a few minutes later. It was now about noon.

That afternoon 20 or 30 comrades from the base drifted into the village in small groups and we moved further into the bush. Each reunion, particularly among the women, was a scene of happy embraces. At dusk we headed for the action committee president's

village a few miles to the north, arriving after dark. We were greeted by a large number of students, guerrillas and teachers from Hanoi II. They seemed surprised and delighted that I'd come out of the action uninjured and I was embraced by most of the men. Later, sitting around two or three fires, the day's events were discussed and re-enacted. Conversations were frequently punctuated by imitations of the sounds of machine gun fire, grenades and bombs. Except for a couple of babies who were crying for their mothers and Professor Mapamundi, whose wife was still missing, they seemed to be in fairly good spirits. I listened for a time and was then taken to a nearby hut. A fire was kindled between the wooden beds and the president loaned me two blankets for the night. Some roasted cassava and a piece of chicken were brought in a little later.

Before sun-up the next morning we walked back to the other village, moving beyond it about a mile to an area with good cover. Talk of the attack continued and a message was received from Commander Janginda. Through Likambuila I was able to get a more complete picture of what had happened. The air assault on the base continued late into the morning. Then the bombers shifted their attack to the western sector of the forest while the helicopters landed an estimated 25 or 30 soldiers in the valley to the east. The guerrilla detachment, which had remained at the base, engaged the Portuguese in a brief fire fight, then broke off contact and pulled back to an area northwest of the CIR school. No casualties had been inflicted on either side. The Portuguese entered the camp, searched and burned the huts and then proceeded to set fire to the forest. Some time later two guerrillas returned to the camp on reconnaissance. They ran into a small Portuguese patrol and in the exchange one of the guerrillas was shot in the forearm while the other threw a grenade killing an enemy soldier. Around 3:30 in the afternoon the helicopters returned to pick up the Portuguese troops. That was the end of the action.

On the morning of 27 September we returned to the base and rejoined the detachment just north of the CIR school - which the Portuguese had not discovered. The forest fire, though it smoldered nearby, had blown westward leaving the trees and bush in this area still green.

The walk back had been my most difficult. The effects of the malaria hung on and a slight fever had returned the previous night. Worse than that my back muscles cramped up and a few times I fell on all fours to relieve a spasm, once having to be dragged quickly out of a smoldering fire. They left me in the bush with Likambuila and Mapamundi when we neared the base. We'd passed the professor's wife earlier. She had stayed around the base all night searching for her two small children and was crying when we met her. She continued to cry with relief when told they were safe in the president's village. The six-year-old daughter had carried her baby sister out of the camp and all



*Center for Revolutionary Instruction (CIR) Professor
Mamamundi, his wife and their child/LSM Photo, 1968*

the way to the village alone. Everyone admired her courage and determination.

We waited over two hours in the burnt-out forest before two guerrillas arrived with some aspirin and malaria pills. I walked the last couple of miles without further trouble. Once at the encampment I spoke with Commanders Janginda and Mundo Real. Under the circumstances we agreed it wasn't possible for me to continue my work in Angola. The guerrilla who'd taken my tape recorder early in the attack held on to it and I felt extremely fortunate having recovered the tape containing two complete and two almost completed life histories. The mike, however, had taken quite a beating and was no longer working. After much discussion it was decided that Likambuila, Tululu and Julia would accompany me to Zambia. There we would try and arrange to finish their stories.

As for my bags, they were still missing. Like the personal effects of most of the others, they had been hidden in the forest during the retreat. But the fire had changed the lay of the land and though they searched for hours the guerrillas were unable to turn up any sign of my things. Most likely they had been burned or captured. Important losses as far as my work was concerned were my notebooks, diary, camera, about 140 photographs, the tapes of Biekman's and Likambuila's stories, and over 15 hours of recorded speeches and music.

The Portuguese attack was certainly a setback for MPLA guerrillas in Zone "C." The lost clothing, blankets, kitchen utensils, etc., would be hard to replace and the considerable work which had gone into constructing Hanoi II would now have to be repeated in another area. On closer examination, however, the attack demonstrated the essential Portuguese weakness and MPLA strength which, in my view, make the revolutionary process irreversible.

The Portuguese, possessing knowledge of the base and the tactical advantage of surprise, were nonetheless unable to mount a really telling blow against the guerrillas. Despite the material losses and the necessity of abandoning Hanoi II, the guerrillas suffered no losses of life or weaponry. In addition to the one guerrilla shot in the arm, two students received minor flesh wounds from grenade fragments and a number of others were hurting from bruised feet and scratches. Three women and Dr. Boavida had not yet returned to the base, but they were reported safe in a nearby village. One enemy soldier was killed.

Clearly, then, this attack evidenced both the general ineffectiveness of Portugal's air power and her weakness on the ground. With 80,000 troops spread thinly in isolated posts and barracks over the vast Angolan territory, the Portuguese seem unable to concentrate sufficient forces in the countryside to sustain an effective attack - even in the dry season and with the kind of intelligence they had in the case of Hanoi II. MPLA's strategy of generalizing the struggle and forcing a dispersal

of enemy troops is obviously paying off. It is aided by the simultaneous counter-revolutions Portugal is being forced to wage in Mozambique and Guinea (Bissau), by the difficulties this poorest of European countries is facing at home, and by the low morale of her conscript army drawn largely from an oppressed and illiterate peasantry. Though drawing increasing material support from fascist South Africa's three million whites, and barring a Vietnamization of the struggle through U.S. military intervention - the U.S., through NATO, is already Portugal's largest supplier of arms - the strategic military-manpower weakness of Portugal is likely to prove fatal within the next five years.

This is so, however, only because of MPLA's essential strength: its deep, widespread and active support among the peasant masses. If the area through which I travelled is representative of the other semi-liberated zones - and I have every reason to believe that it is - then MPLA has already achieved that popular base of support which is the *sine qua non* of a successful people's war.

Following the attack on Hanoi II, it was the local peasantry which provided us the necessary food, shelter and refuge. This support was given freely and in a spirit of full comradeship. It was a reflection of the vital interdependence which now exists between villagers and guerrillas, an interdependence rooted in the guerrillas' need for food and the villagers' need for protection against Portuguese intrusion. It was also a product of long months of political education and organization, and of the fact that MPLA's guerrillas are in a very real sense the sons and daughters of the people.



Villagers and MPLA militants (Spartacus Monimambu, center) /LSM Photo, 1968

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