

ONCE AGAIN ON THE SITUATION IN THE ANGOLAN MOVEMENT

By Livio Maitan

Far from diminishing, the controversies around the Angolan freedom movement have flared up again in recent weeks. Following an attack by Pravda [December 16, 1964] against Holden Roberto, which was repeated in various countries, particularly by Communist parties of pro-Moscow persuasion, grave declarations of similar kind have been attributed to leaders of the Congolese movement. In addition, on the initiative of the Youth of the FLN [Front de Libération Nationale], a meeting was organized in Algiers February 3 in celebration of February 4, 1961, which the MPLA [Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola] maintains was the day the anti-imperialist struggle in Angola began.

First of all, let's take a look at what the Congolese say. In a press release dated January 13, the CNL [Conseil National de Libération], after expressing solidarity with the African peoples in their struggle against imperialism and racism, accuses Holden Roberto "of putting his soldiers in the service of the Léopoldville killers in order to combat the patriotic forces, particularly in the province of Kwilu." In going further than Pravda, the CNL also affirms that Holden Roberto is reported to have participated in meetings with the "Binza group" composed of Adoula, Bomboko, Kandolo, Nendaka, N'Dele and Mobutu, the alleged aim of which was to prepare the arrest and assassination of Patrice Lumumba. "Holden Roberto, who enjoyed the confidence of the late P. Lumumba might have been the key piece in furnishing information on the latter to this group and to the American embassy."

Repeating the accusation about Roberto conniving with the Americans, the communiqué continues:

"Information that has come into our hands, the authenticity of which we guarantee, shows that Holden offered Tshombe his fullest support in exchange for which Moise Tshombe was to grant the GRAE [Governo da Republica de Angola no Exilio -- Government of the Republic of Angola in Exile] his support. The GRAE went so far as to place at the disposition of Tshombe's government, units of the ALNA [National Liberation Army of Angola] to serve as cadres in units of the so-called National Congolese Army [ANC]. In addition, Tshombe is said to have promised Holden to do his best to get the Portuguese, 'his long-time friends,' to open secret negotiations with him in order to 'block the route to the Angolans established in Brazzaville whose sympathies are with N'Krumah, Modibo Keita, the Arabs of North Africa and the Communist countries.'" The press release ends with an appeal to the Organization of African Unity.

Besides this, according to a November 29 Tass dispatch, Gaston Soumialot was said to have declared in Zanzibar that "Roberto

Holden was an enemy of the Congolese people. He granted aid to Tshombe and called on his partisans to fight for Tshombe's regime. Recently partisans of Holden, coming from Angola and fighting in Tshombe's ranks, were killed or taken prisoner during combats in the region of the Congolese towns of Mahagui, Aru and other places."

Spokesmen of the GRAE -- the official delegation in Algiers and the mission in Europe, for example -- have indignantly denounced all these accusations. Among other things, they have underlined the fact that the CNL press release was put out by a few members of the CNL living in Brazzaville and that Christophe Gbenyé, head of the Revolutionary Congolese Government, declared during a trip to Algiers that he did not know anything about the press release in question. At a press conference in Brussels February 4, Rezende Alvaro, director of the GRAE's information service, after calling attention to an accusation by one of Tshombe's ministers that Holden Roberto had furnished arms to the Mulélists, "formally denied the lying assertions" of Pravda and "of a wing of the CNL."

"No Angolan combatant," he stated, "has fought at the side of the Congolese forces and the mercenaries against the Congolese revolutionaries. And we are ready to accept the naming of an African commission of inquiry designated to establish the truth about this grave accusation."

Rezende Alvaro, who also denied the allegations that the struggle in Angola had come to an end, took up Pravda's accusations, making the following declaration:

"It is sad that Pravda, the newspaper of a great party like the CPSU, chose a moment when all of Africa and the whole Third World is opposing South African apartheid and neocolonialism and condemning the adventurist American policy in South Vietnam(1) and Central Africa, to lodge accusations against our government, which it refrains from proving but which do grave injury to our honor and our struggle for freedom. We consider the attitude of the organ of the CPSU to be an attempt to rehabilitate the Moscow revisionists whose credit went down in the Third World after their collusion with imperialism and their responsibility for the reverses suffered by nationalism in certain regions of Africa, particularly in the Congo. Moscow is trying to re-establish its credit among our peoples in order to overcome the bad impression made in the Third World by its collusion with imperialism, a collusion sufficiently brought to light by the Russian capitulation in November 1962 in Cuba in face of the Yankee blackmail, denounced more than once by the powerful

(1) On February 11 the GRAE representative in Algiers signed a joint declaration of the African freedom movements condemning the American aggression in Vietnam and expressing their unconditional support to the Vietnamese people by congratulating "the North Vietnam armed forces for their quick and precise reply." [See World Outlook February 19.]

People's Republic of China which, for the people of the Third World, now represents the vanguard of the anti-imperialist movement in the socialist camp."(2)

As for Soumialot's accusations, GRAE circles do not exclude the possibility that Angolans actually did fight against the Congolese partisans. But the GRAE had nothing to do with this. It is quite probable, they say, that it involves Angolan mercenaries who fought in the Katanga army, and who later went to Angola with the acquiescence of the Portuguese to return to the Congo when Tshombe came to power.

The day before Rezende Alvaro's press conference, the GRAE delegation in Algiers issued a press release under the titles: "Tshombe threatens the Angolan revolution" and "Resident GRAE kept under surveillance." The press release states that Holden Roberto, who was scheduled to go to Zambia, "was formally barred by the agents of the Congolese 'sûreté'" from leaving the territory of the Congo, and this was on orders from Munongo, Tshombe's 'Minister' of the Interior."

"The kitchen where such measures are cooked up," continues the press release "is known to everyone, and the GRAE, which reaffirms its fraternal solidarity with the people of the Congo, cannot refrain from observing that it finds some Congolese ready to betray the cause of a brother people (victimized and massacred), only out of loyalty to the orders of enemies of Africa. The GRAE has called the attention of the General Secretary of the Organization of African Unity to this state of affairs in order to pass on the information to all the states belonging to this body."

Replying once more to Pravda, the document declares: "The GRAE repeats, once again, that the only reason it has remained in Congo-Léopoldville is because of the logistic advantages offered by the frontier between Congo-Léopoldville and Angola, and also the presence in Congo-Léopoldville of nearly a million Angolans (émigrés and refugees) of which most are invalids, aged people, sick persons, orphans and widows. The GRAE, besides, has never excluded transferring its center to other neighboring countries of Africa..."

As for the attitude of the Algerians, it is evidently inspired by the decision taken by the Committee of Three. The official Algerian press in general favors unification of the Angolan forces (see, for example, the February 4 issue of Alger Républicain).

(2) In criticizing Sous le Drapeau du Socialisme, an organ published by a small minority of the Fourth International in open violation of discipline, Rezende Alvaro uses "arguments" against Michel Raptis which are absolutely inadmissible and which we condemn in the firmest way. In addition he resorts to amalgams that are completely erroneous and arbitrary.

In addition it is reported that the Algerians will participate in the celebration to be held March 15, the anniversary of the beginning of the struggle observed by the GRAE. The anniversary will thus provide an opportunity for gauging whether the Algerians wish to maintain their present official position or move more openly in favor of the MPLA.

The Angolan situation, consequently, continues to remain very complex -- besides the country's specific features, the role of African and international factors is growing in weight. For our part, we would like to again emphasize several constants overriding some of the events and recent controversies.

(1) The MPLA enjoys considerable backing abroad and it is supported by the Soviet government and by the pro-Moscow Communist parties, but it has not become rooted within Angola up to now. Its activity is limited to the Cabinda enclave, where the FLNA [National Front for the Liberation of Angola] has also claimed up until recently to have forces.

(2) The Savimbi affair stirred political circles abroad particularly, but the former minister of the GRAE -- who, however, did not join the MPLA -- did not take along real forces.

(3) The FLNA continues to be the main force struggling in Angola and exercising an influence among the greater part of the Angolans who are refugees in the Congo.(3)

As for the arguments being circulated about this or that Angolan leader rumored to be "an agent of American imperialism" or a "friend of Tshombe," we repeat once again that aside from the fact that no serious proof has been offered up to now, this would not be of decisive importance. The real problem is to ascertain whether or not there is a movement that is struggling, whether it exercises preponderant influence among the masses at a given stage. If these conditions hold, then it is the duty of revolutionists to display active solidarity with those who are struggling, independently of the attitude or possible orientation of a leader or even of an entire leadership. Clarification is made possible and becomes a necessity in the dynamics of the struggle which bring out the political and social divisions and establish the conditions for a finished revolutionary orientation to prevail.

(3) This has been indirectly confirmed by the MPLA which again stated even in the sessions of the Commission of Three that it favored "a dialogue with the FLNA with the aim of forming a united front." If it were really believed that the GRAE and the FLNA were only instruments of imperialist agents, that they were nothing but replicas of the MNA [Mouvement National Algérien] during the Algerian war, how could one want a united front with them?

It goes without saying that revolutionary Marxists support all the forces actually in struggle against the imperialists, independently of the leaderships they adhere to. While not pretending to remain aloof from the fray like pious preachers, they do not believe they are called on to mix into every factional dispute that develops.

As for the tragic situation in which the FLNA and the GRAE now find themselves, we are more than ever convinced that they must seek some way out as soon as possible. In the Congo, under Tshombe, there is no future for them -- they risk being made prisoners or hostages or being wiped out. (Tshombe has already permitted the Portuguese to make raids on Angolan territory against the forces of the GRAE.) The problem cannot be solved by continual procrastination or by diplomatic ruses. There is no possibility of exploiting the interimperialist conflicts; the possibility of real aid and collaboration can be assured only by certain African states and workers states.

Despite all the difficulties that are involved, it is necessary to make some decisions. The struggle must be extended on a wider scale within the country; and the GRAE must transfer to a different African state.

This appears to us to be a condition for a new departure, for the opening of a new phase in the struggle of the Angolan movement.