

# World Outlook

A WEEKLY INTERNATIONAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE MILITANT BASED ON SELECTIONS FROM INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS, A NEWSMAGAZINE REFLECTING THE VIEWPOINT OF REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

AUGUST 27, 1976

## Angola: behind the MPLA's 'socialist' mask

By Ernest Harsch

In countless communiqués, speeches, and radio broadcasts, the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA—People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) has claimed that it intends to build a "socialist" society in Angola.

But the MPLA's "socialism" is limited to its rhetoric. Its actual policies tell a completely different story.

Since the end of the Angolan civil war in February, the MPLA regime has continued its efforts to control and demobilize the masses. In the Luanda area in particular, it has sought to contain and beat back any independent workers' struggles, arresting scores of labor and political activists.

At the same time, this "socialist" regime has obligingly invited imperialist interests to resume their exploitation of Angola's vast natural wealth. Two major oil and diamond companies have already accepted the MPLA's invitation, and other imperialist concerns are scrambling to grab a share for themselves.

From the actions it has taken to suppress any independent initiatives by the masses, it is clear that the MPLA fears any challenge to its course toward accommodation with imperialism and to its plans to construct a stable, neocolonial regime in Angola.

In order to contain this potential threat to its rule, the MPLA has adopted a two-sided policy. So far, its principal tactic has been to try to fetter the workers movement through trade-union and "people's power" bodies directly controlled by the MPLA, as well as exhorting the masses to "sacrifice for the revolution."

The other aspect of the MPLA's policy has been to wield its iron fist against those who remain unconvinced by its demagoguery or who attempt to organize any independent struggles.

### 'People's power'

The massive labor upsurge that swept Angola following the April 1974 coup in Portugal had an important impact in loosening Lisbon's hold on the colony. For the first time, the Angolan workers had an opportunity to organize themselves on a broad scale. They formed trade unions, workers committees, neighborhood commissions, and "people's power" groups. Although they were established independently of the MPLA's control for the most part, these groups in the Luanda region generally looked to the MPLA for political leadership.

Rather than basing itself upon this labor upsurge to advance the struggle for real independence, the MPLA, like its nationalist rivals, saw the upsurge as a threat to its own narrow scramble for power.

After joining the coalition regime with the FNLA, UNITA,<sup>1</sup> and the Portuguese colonialists in January



Soldiers in the MPLA army, Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola (FAPLA). Main task at moment is maintaining control over Angolan territory formerly held by rival UNITA forces.

1975, the MPLA issued appeals to the workers to halt their strikes, supported strike-breaking legislation, and in February even sent troops against striking dock workers in Lobito.<sup>2</sup>

For several months in early 1975, the MPLA capitalized on its support among the Mbundu population of the Luanda region to draw the workers and neighborhood bodies into its factional struggle against the FNLA and UNITA. By the end of July, however, the MPLA had managed to drive the FNLA and UNITA out of Luanda and no longer needed these groups as factional tools. It forcibly dissolved and disarmed some of them and transformed others into bureaucratically controlled organs for imposing MPLA policies on the masses. In September and October 1975, it began arresting a number of leaders of the workers committees and "people's power" groups who had not shown the proper degree of subservience to the MPLA leadership.

Thus, by late 1975, the various independent mass organizations had been politically decapitated. Originally established as part of the mass upsurge from below, they had been transformed into bureaucratic instruments encharged with carrying out MPLA directives from above.

This system of mass control was institutionalized on February 5 with the adoption of the People's Power Law, which provides for the election of

"people's committees" on the neighborhood, village, commune, council and provincial levels. Only the neighborhood and village committees are to be elected directly, however. Each of the successively higher bodies are to be elected by the members of the subordinate committees within their jurisdictions.

Significantly, the law does not provide for any country-wide "people's committee," elected or otherwise.

To ensure that "undesirables" do not creep onto the electoral rolls, the MPLA tacked on a series of restrictions to the franchise. Denied the right to vote are sympathizers and former members of the FNLA and UNITA, as well as those who practice "racism," "tribalism," or "regionalism," that is, anyone who reflects the particular interests of the Ovimbundu, Bakongo, or other peoples of Angola. Also barred from voting are those deemed guilty of "economic sabotage" and "laziness," charges frequently hurled at labor activists and strikers.

Even with these restrictions, the MPLA still hesitated to hold the elections. They were originally scheduled for May 13, but were postponed because of a series of workers' struggles that broke out in early May.

### Strikes and slowdowns

Industrial workers in Luanda and other cities staged strikes and slowdowns to back their demands for wage increases and better working conditions. The strikes have continued for at least two months. According to the July 2 *Washington Post*, "the government ordered striking workers back to

jobs at the sole coffee sack factory."

According to a May 9 *Prensa Latina* radio broadcast datelined Luanda, Interior Minister Nito Alves "said that at the time when production was paralyzed in the capital, the electoral vote would lose much of its real revolutionary significance."

President Agostinho Neto also took the strikes seriously. "There can be no solid or stable political power," he said, "while the factories and the countryside are not producing towards the consolidation of real economic independence."

According to a report by David B. Ottaway in the May 24 *Washington Post*, the MPLA was also concerned "because leftist opposition elements have been using the councils as a springboard to attack the new government." The elections were postponed, he said, because the MPLA leaders "suddenly realized they had not made adequate preparations to control the selection of candidates."

To screen out any dissidents, the MPLA decreed that all candidates for the neighborhood committees must be proposed by one of the MPLA-controlled labor, youth, or women's organizations.

The decision-making powers of these "people's power" bodies appear limited to the organization of such local tasks as setting up market cooperatives in the shantytowns or carrying out educational activities. Their main function is to implement the policies of the MPLA leadership.

The various workers committees set up or taken over by the MPLA in the factories have a similar role. In a report in the February 28 issue of *Le Monde*, correspondent René Lefort quoted a manager of a coffee plantation as describing the workers committee there as "a simple consultative body." He added that "the powers of management are intact."

In the nationalized industries, the MPLA has set up management committees, some of whose members are elected by the workers in the factory and some of whom are appointed by the regime. As with the "people's power" groups, those members who are

*Continued on next page*



Manchester Guardian

1. Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (Angolan National Liberation Front), União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola).

2. For a description of the antilabor actions of the MPLA and its partners in the coalition regime, see *Angola: The Hidden History of Washington's War*, by Ernest Harsch and Tony Thomas. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976.

## Behind MPLA's 'socialist' mask...

Continued from preceding page

ected must be proposed by the local union.

The principal union federation in Angola is the União Nacional dos Trabalhadores de Angola (UNTA—National Union of Angolan Workers), which is directly controlled by the MPLA. During the strike wave that began in May, UNTA General Secretary Aristides Van-Dunen visited the Textang factory to denounce the strikers. On May 13, an UNTA delegation in Cuanza Sul Province passed a resolution demanding that the regime suppress the strikes.

The UNTA has also played a major part in the MPLA's campaign to impose speedup and longer working hours. Lefort reported that "according to the regional secretary of the union, the primary interest of the workers, in all cases, is to increase production."

Although the MPLA has tried to provide a pretense of democratic rule, the real power in Angola rests with the governing Revolutionary Council and with the MPLA's ten-member Political Bureau.

### 'Traitors' beware

MPLA officials have tried to justify the arrests of political dissidents and independent labor leaders by branding them as "reactionaries," "ultraleftists," "traitors," "saboteurs," "racists," "divisionists," or "agents of imperialism."

The April 17 issue of *Diário de Luanda*, which is controlled by the MPLA, carried an article slandering Father Joaquim Pinto de Andrade, a leader of the former Revolta Activa<sup>3</sup> who was imprisoned briefly by the MPLA. The article went so far as to label Andrade a "true partner of the Devil."

According to a pamphlet released by the CDALPA<sup>4</sup> in Lisbon in March, many of those arrested by the MPLA were members or leaders of various "people's power" groups, workers committees, neighborhood commissions, student organizations, or other local bodies in Luanda and Benguela. An arrested leader of the UNTA in Benguela was accused of trying to form "Marxist-Leninist study groups in the factories."

Some of the arrested dissidents were also members of clandestine leftist political groups, such as the Organização Comunista de Angola (OCA—Angola Communist Organization) and the Comités Amílcar Cabral (CAC—Amílcar Cabral Committees). Unlike the MPLA, some of the underground groups identify themselves with the Angolan working class and have called for the establishment of a workers and peasants government.

To further silence these leftwing forces, the MPLA banned the newspapers *Angola*, *Poder Popular*, and *4 de Fevereiro*. The former editor of *Angola*, Rui Ramos, has been arrested.

On April 28, the regime announced the establishment of a People's Revolutionary Tribunal, which is to try "crimes against the Angolan revolution." A law signed by Agostinho Neto May 3 specified that the court would also judge crimes against "the state and the MPLA." The verdicts of the court cannot be appealed.

3. Active Revolt, a dissident tendency within the MPLA, now dissolved.

4. Comité de Divulgação e Apoio à Luta do Povo Angolano (Information and Support Committee for the Struggle of the Angolan People).

The only major case the court has heard so far was that of the thirteen British and American mercenaries who had been captured in northern Angola in February. But judging from the MPLA's slander campaign against the imprisoned dissidents, it may also be preparing to bring them before the People's Revolutionary Tribunal, perhaps on charges of being "agents of imperialism" or "saboteurs."

In an April 9 declaration, Interior Minister Nito Alves threatened that



MPLA Defense Minister Iko Carreira. Complains of 'anarchist feeling' and 'tendency for absolute egalitarianism' in the army.

some of the political prisoners may be executed. The dissidents could also be sent to the political "rehabilitation" camps the MPLA set up to supplement the old prison system inherited from the Portuguese.

### Strengthening the iron fist

Since the end of the civil war, the MPLA has continued to expand its police and military forces.

By March, there were 45,000 troops in the MPLA army, the Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola (FAPLA—People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola). In late February, a compulsory conscription law was adopted, stipulating that all Angolans between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five must serve two years in the armed forces.

"The draft will soak up the unemployed among Angola's six million and will be a convenient way to consolidate support for the regime," Caryle Murphy reported in the February 29 London *Sunday Times*. "Already the MPLA keeps close political control over its armed forces. Each army unit, for example, has a 'comite dos combatentes' which links the soldiers politically to the movement."

The MPLA's political control over its own troops does not yet appear to be complete, however. In May, Defense Minister Iko Carreira complained that there was a "certain anarchist feeling" and a "tendency for absolute egalitarianism" in the armed forces. He said that the troops showed little respect for their commanders. According to the May 17 issue of the Lisbon daily *Jornal Novo*, Carreira said that the MPLA had been forced to recruit "lumpen" elements, which had led to a "lowering of the political level" within the military.

"It has already been confirmed by the Luanda authorities themselves

that there are military units who are beyond the control of the General Command, acting on their own in an atmosphere of total indiscipline," the May 24 *Jornal Novo* reported. According to an MPLA commander, "infiltrators" within FAPLA have provoked unrest and incited the population in the Lubango region.

A plan for the reorganization of the armed forces was published in Luanda May 21. Distributed to the press by Commander Bakaloff, it called for the Central Committee of the MPLA to assume direct political control over the armed forces. Later the same day, President Neto canceled the report. He did not indicate any opposition to it, but said that it had been revealed "precipitately."

FAPLA's main task at the moment appears to be to maintain control of those areas of Angola formerly held by its rivals. Together with thousands of Cuban troops, it continues to carry out actions against guerrilla units of the UNITA, which still retains support among the Ovimbundu and other peoples of central and southern Angola.

In the Mbundu-populated region around Luanda, the MPLA's principal repressive forces are the police and the militia. According to Carreira, the purpose of the militia, the Organização de Defesa Popular (ODP—People's Defense Organization), is to "fight saboteurs, divisionist elements and all those people who try to alter the strategic tactical orientation of our movement." (Quoted in the *Daily News of Tanzania*, February 24, 1976.) In May, Carreira added that the ODP was also responsible for protecting workplaces.

Like the "people's committees," the ODP is organized on various levels, from the regional level downward. The two most important officials in the regional units are directly appointed by the FAPLA General Command. The regional ODP then appoints similar officials at the next lower level. This appointment process continues on down to the cell units, which are each composed of five persons. The cells are to be set up in factories, government agencies, offices, universities, farms, and other places to ensure effective control over the entire population.

To supplement the ODP units in the factories, the MPLA has established Comissões de Vigilância (CV—Vigilance Committees) under the control of the UNTA. According to the CDALPA



MPLA trooper. Angolan security forces armed and trained in the Soviet Union have portrayed arrested dissidents as 'partisans of Trotsky and Bakunin.'

pamphlet, the CVs have the responsibility to "watch the workers, increase productivity, and prevent the distribution of revolutionary literature and pamphlets."

The secret police body directly in charge of political repression is the Direcção de Informação e Segurança de Angola (DISA—Angola Directorate of Information and Security). Many of the dissidents now in prison were arrested by DISA agents.

The Soviet and Cuban governments have played a crucial role in helping the MPLA strengthen its repressive forces.

Much of the heavy equipment being used by FAPLA was provided by Moscow during the civil war. Western sources have estimated the value of the Soviet arms at about \$300 million. During the visit of Angolan Prime Minister Lopo do Nascimento to Moscow in late May, the Kremlin agreed to continue bolstering the Luanda regime by providing it with further military aid.

The importance the MPLA ascribes to Moscow's support was reflected in the composition of the delegation that accompanied Nascimento. It was the most important delegation the MPLA had sent abroad so far and included the defense minister, the deputy chief of staff of the armed forces, and the chief of intelligence and security.

According to a report in the April 29 *Jornal Novo*, the head of DISA, Commander N'Zage, has taken a course in "security" in the Soviet Union. This Soviet training was evident in the MPLA's witch-hunt against the left. The arrests of members of the CAC and "people's power" groups in Luanda in October 1975 were accompanied by a typical Stalinist slander campaign, which portrayed the dissidents as "partisans of Trotsky and Bakunin."

The Cubans, however, have had the most direct hand in training and advising the MPLA's police and military forces. They are helping the MPLA reorganize the former guerrilla units of FAPLA into a highly disciplined conventional army.

According to a dispatch from Luanda by David B. Ottaway in the May 26 *Washington Post*, "Domestically, the Cubans are presently helping the new Angolan government in many domains, from the training of a state security corps and a civilian militia to the reform of the country's prison system." Ottaway reported that the Cuban security personnel were also instructing Angolan police in techniques of crowd control.



# ... danger of imperialist domination

From the MPLA's point of view, the political support extended to it by Moscow and Havana is a central dimension of their aid. It helps to strengthen the MPLA's bogus claim that its policies are "socialist" and gives it a political cover for its witch-hunt against the Angolan left.

## 'Crown jewel'

Angola was the "crown jewel" of Portugal's colonial empire. It has important deposits of oil, iron, manganese, phosphates, and other minerals. Before the outbreak of civil war in 1975, it produced 8 percent of the world's diamonds and was the world's third largest exporter of robusta coffee. It is estimated that, with the exception of South Africa, Angola has the greatest economic potential of any African country south of the Sahara.

The desire of the major imperialist powers to maintain and expand their exploitation of this vast natural wealth was the main threat to Angola's independence following the collapse of Portuguese colonialism and was an important factor fueling the factional warfare between the three Angolan nationalist groups.

Since it won the civil war in February, the MPLA regime has invited foreign companies to invest in Angola. Although the MPLA relies heavily on anti-imperialist demagoguery in its public pronouncements, its invitations to imperialist investors have been a standard feature of its economic program since early 1975.

During the civil war, however, many foreign concerns, particularly those owned by the Portuguese imperialists or colonial settlers, either abandoned their interests in Angola or temporarily withdrew their personnel. The uncertain economic prospects of a country wracked by civil war and labor unrest was the primary reason for this. Some of the foreign firms may also have been concerned that the MPLA's pledge to build "socialism" in Angola was a serious one or that it might not be successful in reining in the labor movement.

The MPLA's actions during the past few months have helped to dispel their concerns. Its efforts to stabilize its neocolonial regime by arresting leftist dissidents and labor activists and by tightening its control over the masses already appear to have convinced some of the imperialists that their investments will be relatively safe in Angola.

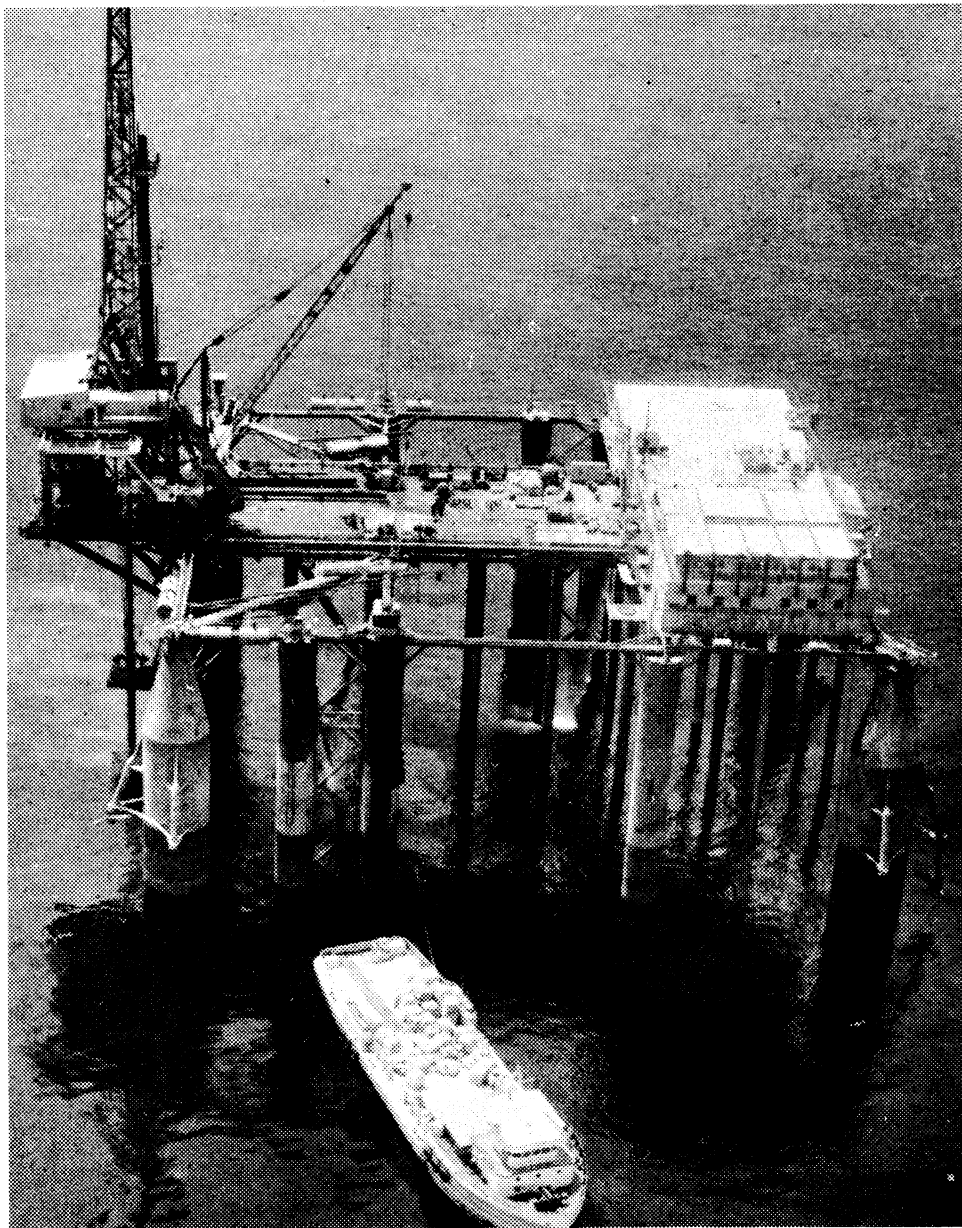
"Representatives of many western companies have paid visits to Luanda for discussions with the MPLA government about reviving the economy," the May 31 issue of the London weekly *West Africa* reported.

## Gulf's slice of the pie

The American Gulf Oil Corporation is by far the most important foreign concern to have resumed its operations in Angola so far.

By the end of May, the production from its 125 wells off the coast of the Cabinda enclave had climbed back up to 100,000 barrels a day, about two-thirds of its normal production level. Before resuming its operations, Gulf paid the MPLA regime \$102 million in back taxes and royalties that had been held in escrow since December.<sup>5</sup> Based on the present royalty agreement,

5. Texaco, which has a 25 percent share in another Angolan oil operation that was shut down in January, has also resumed its royalty and tax payments, giving the MPLA nearly \$1 million.



Gulf oil installation off coast of Cabinda. 'Income from Gulf's operations is vital to MPLA's economic plans.'

payments by Gulf to the MPLA government will average about \$500 million a year when production gets back to its former level.

The Cabinda oil wells are an important part of Gulf's overseas operations. According to a Gulf spokesman, production from the Cabinda wells normally contributes about 10 percent of the parent company's earnings from foreign oil operations, or about \$20 million a year.

The Cabindan oil is still being exploited on the basis of Gulf's oil agreement with the Portuguese colonialists. But the Luanda regime has declared its intention of acquiring state control over most essential industries, including oil. In line with this policy, Prime Minister Lopo do Nascimento announced May 13 that negotiations with Gulf would begin for a new contract "under new conditions."

According to the March 6 London *Economist*, Gulf officials are not opposed to ceding a 55 percent share of their Angolan subsidiary to the MPLA regime. In fact, before Angola gained its independence, Gulf had already negotiated a contract with the Portuguese authorities that gave Luanda a half share in Gulf's operations. But that agreement was never put into practice.

The income from Gulf's operations is vital to the MPLA's economic plans. With the decline in other industries as a result of the civil war, oil now provides about 80 percent of Angola's foreign exchange. Previously, it accounted for only 40 percent.

## Washington turns the screws

In December 1975, while Washington was funneling arms and money to the FNLA and UNITA, it pressured Gulf

into withdrawing from Angola and halting its payments to the MPLA (by that time Gulf had already paid the MPLA \$116 million in 1975). As a result of the failure of the American intervention in Angola and the defeat of the FNLA and UNITA by the MPLA, Washington has made a tactical shift and is now seeking an accommodation with Luanda.

The State Department's decision in February to allow Gulf to resume its operations marked the first significant overtone by Washington to the MPLA regime.

Despite this tactical shift, its overall aims remain the same. American imperialism's basic strategy toward Angola—and to the rest of independent Black-ruled Africa as well—is to ensure that it remains part of the capitalist world and that American companies have as great an access to its natural resources as possible. The outcome of the civil war has simply forced Washington to try to implement its neocolonialist strategy in Angola through the present regime.

The large royalty and tax payments by Gulf to the MPLA give U.S. imperialism a strong lever in its dealings with Luanda. The White House is undoubtedly hoping to use this lever to wrangle further concessions from the MPLA.

The MPLA, for its part, has made it clear that its diplomatic doors to Washington remain open. On May 25, it returned the official residence of the former U.S. consulate in Luanda, complete with an apology for the temporary takeover of the building by Cuban and Angolan troops.

At the same time, the White House has continued its pressure on the MPLA to have the Cuban troops

withdrawn. On June 23, the U.S. representative to the United Nations vetoed Luanda's bid for membership in the world body. "The continuing presence and apparent influence of Cuban troops, massive in number in the Angola context, is the basis of our view," U.S. delegate Albert W. Sherer, Jr. explained.

Washington may also be seeking to pressure the MPLA from another direction. During the civil war it funneled money and arms to the FNLA and UNITA through such neighboring regimes as those in Zaïre, Zambia, and South Africa. It is possible that American money and supplies are continuing to find their way to the UNITA guerrillas, who have stepped up their activities in the past two months.

As part of its efforts to shore up the Black neocolonial regimes allied with Washington, the White House has requested approval from Congress of a \$27.5 million economic aid package to the regime of Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia. It has also indicated that it will ask for an increase in U.S. military aid to the Zaïrean regime of Mobutu Sese Seko. During the civil war, some of its funds to the FNLA and UNITA were hidden in similar aid packages, particularly to the Mobutu regime.

Since it is a standard practice of the American imperialists to keep as many options as possible, Washington may at the same time be keeping its eye open for figures within the MPLA who are even more favorable to the West than the present leadership.

## A race for profits

In the imperialist scramble to plunder Angola's valuable mineral resources, the American oil interests are at the head of the pack. But other imperialist firms are not far behind.

In 1972, Angola produced more than 2 million carats of diamonds, valued at about \$110 million. The company that exploits the diamond fields in northeastern Angola is the Companhia de Diamantes de Angola (Diamang), which is controlled by Portuguese, South African, American, British, and Belgian capital.

Since the April 1974 coup in Lisbon, production in the Diamang concession has dropped drastically to about 15 percent of its former level. This was caused by the departure of more than two-thirds of the company's 20,000 Black workers and by a sharp rise in smuggling.

Diamang has begun negotiations with the MPLA regime with the aim of turning over its concession rights. The company may be hoping that the MPLA will take on the responsibility of halting the smuggling and of getting productivity back up to "normal" levels. (MPLA troops have already taken on the task of policing the area after the dissolution of Diamang's private security force of 500 troops.)

Diamang still plans to remain in Angola as the principal exploiter of the diamonds, however. The MPLA regime, which now owns an 11.6 percent share of Diamang, appears to agree on this. According to the March 5 issue of the French *Marchés Tropicaux*, "The negotiations with the Angolan government began in Luanda at the end of January. The MPLA seems extremely interested in avoiding the impression that it seeks to nationalize the company, according to the president of Diamang."

The Angolan diamonds, moreover, are still being marketed through the Central Selling Organisation of De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd., which

*Continued on next page*

## ...Angola: behind the MPLA's 'socialist' mask

Continued from preceding page

is controlled by the South African conglomerate, the Anglo American Corporation.

The major South African interest in Angola is the giant hydroelectric project on the Cunene River in southern Angola, in which Pretoria has more than \$200 million invested. According to South African Minister for Economic Affairs J.C. Heunis, work on the Cunene dam resumed in early April after the MPLA had guaranteed to protect the workers and equipment.

The Cunene project, which is near the Namibian border, is scheduled to provide water for Ovamboland in northern Namibia and most of the power for the South African, American, and British-owned mines in the territory. The project is the cornerstone of Pretoria's scheme to increase its economic exploitation of Namibia, which it rules as a direct colony.

The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), which is fighting for Namibia's independence, had previously declared that the Cunene project would be a target of its guerrillas. But it remains to be seen if it will carry out any actions against the dam given the reported MPLA "guarantee."

Writing in the June issue of the British monthly *African Development*, correspondent Roger Murray commented, "The MPLA has agreed to provide SWAPO with material assistance and the use of training camp facilities in southern Angola, and in return for this, SWAPO may be prepared to hold-off attacks on Kunene itself."

The MPLA, however, has claimed that it has made no deals with Pretoria concerning the dam project.

Among the other business interests eager to get on board is Grängestade National Mining, a Swedish company. According to a report by Bernard D. Nossiter in the June 3 *Washington Post*, the Swedish businessmen were invited by the MPLA to study reopening the Cassinga iron mines, which were closed when their former owner went bankrupt.

Nossiter reported, "The invitation to these businessmen, the sources here [Stockholm] contend, reflects a deliberate policy by [President] Neto to encourage links with the West."

### Modifying the rules

Like many similar nationalist regimes, the MPLA's capitulation to the imperialist powers is not totally abject. Nor is its anti-imperialist stance purely for show. Within the framework of neocolonial subordination, the new rulers of Angola are interested in strengthening their bargaining position with the imperialists as much as possible.

In order to gain a certain amount of control over the imperialist holdings in Angola and to compel the foreign companies to agree to more favorable economic deals, the Luanda regime passed a law on February 28 regulating the terms of state intervention in the economy.

It empowers the Revolutionary Council to nationalize any foreign or Angolan business, either partially or fully. Under the terms of the law, the regime indicated its intention of acquiring control over "strategic" industries. It can also confiscate businesses and property that have been abandoned by their owners.

In early May, the MPLA regime began nationalizing a number of Portuguese-owned industries and plan-



'Only the mobilization of the masses of Angolan workers and peasants under revolutionary-socialist leadership can overthrow capitalism, attain real national independence, and begin the construction of a socialist future. MPLA stands in full opposition to such a course.'

tations that had been abandoned, including the Champalimand steel works, a cement factory, textile and sugar companies, and twelve agricultural complexes. The fact that all of the nationalized firms had been abandoned by their owners revealed "the cautious approach of the MPLA government to the nationalisation scheme," a correspondent commented in the May 17 *West Africa*.

The nationalizations of the Portuguese enterprises came during a diplomatic rift between Lisbon and Luanda. The Luanda regime ordered Lisbon May 18 to withdraw all its diplomatic representatives from Angola. The MPLA charged Lisbon with being a "center of reactionary forces" because the Portuguese press publicized a tour by an FNLA representative and because Portuguese refugees from Angola had bombed an MPLA office in Lisbon.

Added factors in the rift were Lisbon's reluctance to release Angolan bank deposits held in Portugal or to back the Angolan escudo. Some of the present leaders of the ruling military junta in Lisbon have also expressed public hostility to the MPLA in recent months.

As part of its land-reform program, the MPLA nationalized a number of plantations, again mostly Portuguese-owned. Those that had been abandoned were confiscated outright. According to an April 29 radio broadcast by the Yugoslav news agency, Tanjug, "The handful of private plantation owners who did not flee the country when Angola was liberated will [be] indemnified for their property and allowed to remain and work on plantations as experts."

So far, the MPLA has been careful not to touch any non-Portuguese interests.<sup>6</sup> London *Financial Times* correspondent Jane Bergerol reported in a

6. The one exception is Tanganyika Concessions, a South African and British firm that owns the Benguela Railway. It is scheduled to be nationalized after it pays off its \$40 million debt. In the meantime, the Luanda regime is reportedly subsidizing the salaries of the railway employees at more than \$1 million a month.

May 6 dispatch from Luanda that in the recent nationalizations, "Shares owned by foreign non-Portuguese private interests are exempt from State control or confiscation, as exemplified in the case of one of the textile companies confiscated whose Dutch shareholders are specifically stated to be outside the scope of the Government's action."

While the MPLA regime has reserved for itself a role in Angola's economy, it has also made it clear that there will be ample room for private investments, both domestic and foreign. In fact, the same law that gave the regime the power to nationalize enterprises also stipulated that the private sector "must be encouraged and supported by the State as long as it respects the general economic and labour policies defined by MPLA."

According to the July-August issue of the New York bimonthly *Africa Report*, "Angolan officials acknowledge that great sums of financial aid and investment are needed to continue developing major foreign exchange earners—oil, coffee, and diamonds."

### A 'model socialist state'?

In his closing speech at the Luanda International Trade Fair in May, Prime Minister Nascimento said that the Luanda regime would launch a three-year development plan next year, to be followed by a five-year plan in 1980. He claimed that the MPLA was totally committed to "socialism" and aimed to build "a model socialist state on the African continent."

In light of the MPLA's actual policies, particularly during the past several months, the "socialism" espoused by officials like Nascimento is nothing more than a demagogic dressing for the Luanda regime's efforts to construct a formally independent Angola that will continue to be based on capitalist property relations and subordination to world imperialism.

In this respect, the MPLA's neocolonial regime displays features similar to those of other "African socialist" states, as in Tanzania, the Congo Republic, and Guinea, where the labor movements are also directly tied to the

state and the masses are controlled through bureaucratic "people's" bodies of one variety or another. Each of these three "socialist" countries has been free of direct colonial rule for fifteen years or longer, yet is today still subject to imperialist economic domination.

Although there is now no Angolan bourgeoisie to speak of, there are petty-bourgeois layers who are scrambling to take over the positions previously occupied by the Portuguese and who aspire to transform themselves over time into fledgling capitalists. A similar process has already taken place in many other African countries, where feeble national bourgeoisies were able to arise in the sectors of the neocolonial economy not directly controlled by imperialism.

There are already some signs that this process is beginning in Angola. In a report in the February 28 *Le Monde*, correspondent René Lefort summarized a description by an MPLA commander of the formation of "a new group of merchants, transporters, and functionaries who have always thought that their MPLA membership cards gave them the right to take the places left vacant by the departing Portuguese."

In the March 12 issue, Lefort noted that "the birth of a caste of *nouveaux riches* is quite evident. . . ."

"Within several months, tens of thousands of Angolans who were clerks or minor officials have become merchants with houses of their own or heads of departments."

As part of the MPLA's general "socialist" rhetoric, it has proclaimed that it is opposed to "the transformation of the Angolan colonial petty-bourgeoisie into a national bourgeoisie." But at the same time, the MPLA leadership has kept its arms open to the "patriotic bourgeoisie," which it warmly proclaims as "part of our Angolan nation."

The overriding danger to the Angolan masses, however, continues to come from the imperialist powers. Under the Portuguese empire, Angola was subjected to direct colonial rule; during the civil war, its freedom was threatened by the military intervention by Pretoria, Washington, and the other imperialist powers. But today, the danger of imperialist domination takes on a new, more indirect, form.

In a country as wealthy as Angola, the capitalists of the United States, Europe, and South Africa will use every available opening to continue and expand their plundering of its wealth. As long as capitalism survives in Angola, the political and economic strength of the foreign investors and the crippling pressures of the world capitalist market will ensure that the country remains underdeveloped or develops only in those sectors that serve the needs of imperialism.

No matter how many three- or five-year plans the MPLA institutes, it will not be able to appreciably ease the poverty of the Angolan masses under such conditions. Moreover, the danger also exists that the large foothold the imperialists now have will later give them an opportunity to roll back even those partial economic measures taken against them by the Luanda regime.

Only the mobilization of the masses of Angolan workers and peasants under a revolutionary-socialist leadership can overthrow capitalism, attain real national independence, and begin the construction of a socialist future. The MPLA stands in full opposition to such a course.