

THE SPLIT IN THE ANGOLAN MOVEMENT

By Livio Maitan

Within recent months a somewhat new situation has been developing in the Angolan national liberation movement. Internal as well as international factors have caused some changes that can shortly lead to others.

The most important fact is the grave split which has occurred in Holden Roberto's GRAE [Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile] and which has already had repercussions in the FLNA [Angolan National Liberation Front] and the Angolan movement as a whole. A spectacular sign of the split was the resignation of Sawimbi, minister of foreign affairs in the Holden Roberto government. Others expressed solidarity with him, including some within the government (among others Taty, the minister of armaments).

Sawimbi's dissidence goes back some months. According to reliable sources, last spring Sawimbi, then in the minority, perhaps quite isolated, opposed sending a GRAE delegation to Peking. (Sawimbi claims that he was opposed to the way in which the trip was projected. Contrary to the allegations of his opponents, he says, he did not oppose the trip as such.) He was also against accepting the request of the group headed by Viriato da Cruz to be admitted into the FLNA. However, it was only later that his differences took such sensational form.

It is difficult to estimate the ultimate consequences of Sawimbi's split. An important fact is the announcement that he has, among other allies, won Kalundugo, chief of the general staff of the FLNA, and Valentin, former representative of the GRAE in Katanga. (Florentin Duarte, former representative of the GRAE in Cairo, who aided Sawimbi for a whole period in preparing his move, has now broken with him.) Another important fact is the projected alliance between Sawimbi and Dr. Agostinho Neto of the MPLA [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola].

How is this reflected inside Angola? Again, it is difficult

to judge because of the conflicting reports. In any case, one factor is deeply involved -- tribalism. Despite everything, this plays a powerful role in Angola. Sawimbi belongs to the Ovimbudus -- his father is one of the main chiefs -- and this could have great effect on the attitude of this tribe, which, with its two million members, is the most important in the country. It is clear that one of the most significant consequences of Sawimbi's split could be to end the influence of Holden Roberto and the FLNA in the regions occupied by the Ovimbudus and lead to the creation of guerrilla forces under the influence of Sawimbi. Thus Holden Roberto would again be reduced in the main to the Bakongo territory occupied by his own tribe.

But Holden Roberto's difficulties do not stop there. For years he has enjoyed support in his Congo base from the Adoula government. No one, of course, can seriously condemn the FLNA from exploiting this opening. But difficulties began above all as the guerrilla forces of Pierre Mulele and Gaston Soumaliot developed. The downfall of Adoula, the formation of the Tshombé government and the dramatic development of the situation in the Congo placed Holden Roberto in a critical and even extremely dangerous position. Thus a cloud was cast over his perspectives. Up to now no information has become available on his plans or intentions.

To complete the picture, since the grave vicissitudes which it experienced in 1962 and 1963, the MPLA has succeeded in recovering somewhat, thanks among other things to the Sawimbi affair and to a measure of more open international support (Neto's trip to Moscow). There is no doubt that whatever Neto's hesitation or real orientation may be, the MPLA which he heads has preserved valuable cadres and has even succeeded in organizing an effective fighting force in the Cabinda enclave.

The consequence of all these developments is that on the one hand certain African governments intend to reopen the Angolan file and perhaps revise their position (in fact, a new commission of inquiry has been set up) and, on the other hand, elements that favored rallying around the FLNA are again taking a more cautious attitude.

In any case the struggle in Angola more than ever appears long and difficult. Recent months have been marked by stagnation. External factors involving both Africans and non-Africans complicate the struggle. Further evolution in the liberation movement is quite possible and crystallization of the present forces is still far from being definitive.

On the basis of the facts at our disposal and the most likely interpretations (it is notorious that even the facts are widely disputed within the Angolan movement), it can be concluded that the FLNA remains the rallying point of the biggest part of the forces struggling in the country. Revolutionists thus are duty bound to assure it their collaboration and aid however critical they may be of its leadership or of some of its leading personalities. Nevertheless, if

other movements -- real, sincerely anti-imperialist movements -- develop independently of the FLNA in certain regions of Angola, they also would have the right to receive aid from the revolutionists.

It is necessary finally not to forget that the problem of coordinating the Angolan national forces has not been resolved and that it is urgent to avoid any repetition of grave conflicts that can only give comfort to the common enemy.

Revolutionists must participate in the actual revolutionary struggles of the Angolan movement. After all, this is the most effective way of aiding the movement, of blocking any neo-colonialist maneuvers and of helping the movement to find its way to a socialist program.