

INTERVIEW WITH SOARES DA SILVA, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE'S
MOVEMENT FOR THE LIBERATION OF ANGOLA (MPLA), ALGIERS, ALGERIA

Connie: The struggle in Angola has been a long and arduous one. What type of tactics are the Portuguese applying and have they resorted to biological or chemical warfare against the people of Angola?

Soares: The war in Angola led by MPLA is a guerilla war of long duration and has as its objectives the liquidation of exploitation, the total and complete independence of Angola and the institution of a secular (non-religious) democratic regime. Naturally, in this type of war the Portuguese use a variety of tactics, from assassinations to the use of anti-guerilla war, from napalm to herbicides, from bombings to concentration camps. This means that the Portuguese are carrying out a type of American war in Angola. Its objective is the total destruction of the liberation forces in Angola.

In 1968 the Portuguese began bombing our agricultural products and they destroyed about two-thirds of the total production in our liberated zones. In these liberated zones our people live essentially from what they can produce as we cannot bring in supplies from outside. This means that their survival was threatened. But not only that. It was a very demoralizing blow. You have to understand that most of our people in the villages had never even seen a plane before and one day it flies overhead and sprays a substance on their crops and a few days later the crops have all died - You can imagine the psychological effects.

Connie: With the tenacity, fighting spirit and determination of the Angolan people as great as it is, it is obvious that if you were fighting only the Portuguese, victory would have been yours a long time ago. Which countries are aiding Portugal and what type of assistance is being given?

Soares: Naturally, the colonialists in Angola are the Portuguese, but we should bear in mind that behind the Portuguese colonial system is the imperialist world, that not only owns the monopolies in Angola but also controls the Portuguese economy inside Portugal itself. So we see that Portugal is in a situation of exploiter and exploited, and is really an intermediary between its colonies and the imperialist world. For example, the Diamantes Co. in Angola is controlled by the de Beers of South Africa, Morgan Bank of the USA has a lot of interests in Angola, so has Societe General la Belgique. Our iron is controlled by Krupps of West Germany as well as the Japanese. Our coffee is completely controlled by the USA and the Netherlands.

Our petrol is controlled by Gulf Oil and Mobil Oil of the USA, and Petrofin of Belgium. Our cotton is controlled by the Belgians and so on.

66% of the capital investments in Portugal are tied to international capital monopolies. So this illustrates that Portugal itself is also colonized by the big international monopolies.

The arms that the Portuguese are using in Angola are all of imperialist origin, e.g. the bomber planes are made by Fiat of Italy, the tanks are French made, the automatic weapons are American, the machine-guns are from Israel and the sub-machine guns German. So this all shows the financial interests of the capitalist world powers and how they go about safeguarding these interests. Only in this way can we understand how Portugal, which is an underdeveloped country, is able to fight on three different fronts, in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. Without the complicity of the imperialist world we would have kicked out the Portuguese a long time ago.

Connie: There are very strong ties between the Portuguese and the South African fascists. How far do these ties go? Is there actual physical interference in each others territories and do the South Africans send in troops to help Portugal in Angola?

Soares: As you know there are South African air bases in Angola. The main ones are Quito Canaval and Lumenge. From these bases supplies and assistance are flown by helicopters to Portuguese troops who are isolated because of the strategic circle created by the guerillas. Incidentally, these helicopters are of French origin.

We have had several encounters with South African forces and there are also South African instructors in Angola. The whole world knows of the alliance between Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa. In fact the leaders of South Africa state that the borders to South Africa start in the north of Angola.

Connie: Would you tell us something about the type of programs and government you are implementing within your liberated zones.

Soares: The most important liberated zones that we have are situated in the east of the country. There we are trying to build a structure which in the future will give birth to the new Angolan nation. We are fighting to establish in Angola a system of people's power, that means representation of the people through a mass organization that will lead the country. The following is a brief resume of the activities that we are developing in our liberated zones.

We have the Action Committee, which is formed by comrades who are in the interior of Angola. This Action Committee has a President

who can be either a man or a woman, freely elected by the people and they can be replaced by the people at any time. The Action Committee organizes the defense of the masses in the liberated zones and mobilizes the population in the zone where it is located. It has legislative and judiciary power.

The Action Committee is sub-divided into Action Committee for a Zone, Action Committee for a Cell, Action Committee for a Region. The Action Committee is the embryo of the power of the people and we expect and are working toward Angola being led tomorrow by a large Action Committee.

We have for example UNTA (National Union of Angolan Workers) which is a Trade Union organization, working within the popular masses, organizing production, acquiring and distributing the products that we have either acquired or produced ourselves in the liberated zones, establishing the relations of production and the value of the merchandize. They are responsible for the administration of the People's Shops and teach more modern methods of agriculture. They organize the various crafts and trades and help them to develop.

There is OMA (Organization of Angolan Women). Our comrades within this organization work in the same way as our comrades who are actually fighting. They fight on our side. They participate in production. They are found within several sections of MPLA and they are also represented in our Director's Committee. Our comrades develop education so that our women can have a higher level of instruction and so that they can in reality participate in the destiny of our people.

We have the Pioneers (Youth Group). The Pioneers are the future of Angola. They are those who have been brought up with a different mentality, without the petty-bourgeois pre-concepts acquired in capitalist countries. The Pioneers see Angola as a whole, as a nation. They are from the revolution and are educated in the revolution.

We have the CIR (Center of Revolutionary Instruction) where we give to all comrades political-military education. Here we instill a mentality whereby the Angolan is conscious of his responsibility within the historical process of the Angolan revolution, where we show him or her, where and what should be his or her role within the context of the world proletarian revolution.

We have as a support to this structure that we are trying to build our armed forces, with political-military training which has its origins in the masses, because it is the people in their majority

participating in the struggle, it is the people trying to build a new independent Angola, it is the people who will hold and have the power in Angola, the new Angola where there will be no room, no place, for exploitation of man by man.

We spoke about the mass organizations we are trying to build to take and hold power in Angola. Now we are going to speak about Special Departments that work within the framework of the mass organizations e.g. DEC (Department of Education and Culture). Angola is almost 99% illiterate. DEC is responsible for alleviating and eventually obviating this illiteracy. It makes the education of the people more relevant to their needs and tries to instil a socio-political consciousness so that our people can live in a classless society and help in the formation and creation of the new man. DEC prepares all textbooks, manuals and syllabus used for teaching. Teachers from the various cadres go to DEC to learn. Our President says that each Angolan has the moral responsibility to show at the end of each year at least one Angolan he has taught. Not only the teachers will teach, but all the Comrades have to teach. We have to fight, we have to struggle to end illiteracy in Angola.

We also have SAM (Service of Medical Assistance) which is composed of doctors, nurses, midwives, etc. Teaching and medical assistance in the liberated zones are free and even people from neighboring countries come across the border to our clinics for treatment. This is also free to them and after Angola is independent we will make sure that all medical services and training are free so that everyone can benefit from it, particularly our disabled veterans.

I would like to point out that for all these things to work out right we must have our leadership inside the country.

Connie: Have your liberated zones, especially your schools and hospitals been under constant attack by the Portuguese?

Soares: The enemy usually attacks with forces transported by helicopters. These forces sometimes happen to destroy these things. Naturally, the Pioneers are organized in self-defense, but they are incapable of carrying out a battle against troops that are specially trained. The Portuguese say that this is our weak point, because we have children studying inside these areas. They bomb our schools to demoralize the masses. There is for example the case of Augusto N'Gamgula, a heroic Pioneer of MPLA. The Portuguese captured him and threatened to behead him unless he gave them information concerning the location of guerilla bases. He was beheaded and did not divulge this information. We have women whose

breasts have been cut off and who have been raped and tortured by the Portuguese while trying to get these women to tell where the Pioneers study and where our kindergartens are situated so that they can attack and terrorize our people.

Connie: Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the Afro-American people struggling in the very insides of the imperialist monster?

Soares: Naturally, I would not finish the interview without saying a few words to our brothers and sisters in the USA. The African people who have been lucky enough not to be exported to the USA, but who keep on being slaves inside our home continent, have been paying a great deal of attention and note the evolution of the struggle of our brothers and sisters who were sent to the USA.

Our solidarity with the African people born in America is not a solidarity in relation to a foreign people, it is something that touches ourselves, because you are our own families that find themselves there. We cannot accept as an assumed fact the separation of each other by capitalist interests imposed in another period by colonialist Europe. When we speak of the Afro-American people we speak of Africans who are fighting for their rights, for freedom in another part of the world. We speak of ourselves who lost our families centuries ago, who feel cut off themselves in the sense that we are one soul and one people. The African people born in America can rely on the help and co-operation of a militant Africa and this help will probably materialize in the very near future.

We feel the massacre of Afro-Americans in the American prisons, we feel the racial segregation of the people. We Africans were taken to America as cattle, we did not go of our own free will, we were forced to go and leave our motherland.

The militants of MPLA salute you fraternally, and wholeheartedly support the heroic and difficult struggle of the Afro-American people.

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