

LNS NEWS SERVICE, INC.

160 Claremont Ave., New York, NY 10027 212 · 749-2200

1650 words

Copyright LNS

Report From Luanda

ANGOLANS TO TRY 13 WESTERN MERCENARIES

by Mike Shuster

LUANDA, Angola, May 28 (LNS)--"It will be more dangerous to hunt lions than to hunt the blacks," the Scotsman assured Colyn Clifford Evans. The Scotsman had fought against the Mau-Mau's in Kenya in the 1950s, and he made Evans feel certain that the war in Angola would be easy, a sort of safari.

Colyn Clifford Evans never saw the Scotsman again. He did go to Angola, but it was no safari. More than 100 white mercenaries died in the northern front of Angola alone -- where Evans was captured by MPLA troops. And more are believed to have died in Angola than in all the African wars in which mercenaries have fought in the past 15 years.

Now Evans is in an Angolan prison, one of thirteen British and American mercenaries to go on trial here, perhaps for their lives, June 10.

Of the thirteen, nine are British, one is Irish, and three hold American citizenship. One of the Americans was born in Argentina.

Angolan Minister of Justice Diogenes Boavida announced May 26 that the cases against the men had been completed and have been sent to the court, the newly-established People's Revolutionary Tribunal. The case papers fill seven volumes.

"After examining the case papers," the Justice Minister explained, "the court will give each defendant a charge, in which are noted the acts each defendant is accused of, and the penalty sought by the prosecution." The accused will then be given eight days to prepare their defense.

When asked whether the death penalty would be permitted under Angolan law, the Justice Minister replied, "The Angolan Constitution does not exclude this possibility."

All thirteen have been given the right to call defense lawyers. But only three have done so, the Justice Minister revealed, and several British lawyers declined the request. The People's Tribunal will appoint Angolan lawyers to

-more-

represent the rest.

The MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) government has said it holds more prisoners, and intends to try them all. But these thirteen will be tried together because they were captured under similar conditions -- near the northern Angolan town of Sao Salvador close to the Zaire border in early February.

An International Commission of Inquiry on Mercenaries has also been established by the Angolan government. According to the Justice Minister, the Commission will "investigate in depth the phenomenon of mercenaries, seeking its causes and effects, methods of recruitment and activity, with a view toward making proposals to the international community of concrete measures to eradicate this real threat to freedom and independence."

Countries from which the Commission members will come include Belgium, Switzerland, the USSR, Holland, Great Britain, Cuba, Brazil, the United States, Canada, Vietnam, Australia, Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, Congo, and Cape Verde. In addition, representatives from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), and the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa will take part.

Mercenary From The U.S.

Bits and pieces of Colyn Clifford Evans' story and the stories of several other mercenaries on trial have recently been revealed by Cuban writer Raul Valdes Vivo. His book, Angola: End of the Mercenary Myth, was published in May in Cuba. It contains the first published accounts of interviews with the captured mercenaries, including Tony Callan, the Greek Cypriot who is alleged to have killed fourteen white mercenaries who refused to go into battle.

The author is a writer, and a member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. Valdes states repeatedly that he has made every effort to set down the details of the prisoners' testimony precisely as they were told to him and to Angolan officials.

One of the three American mercenaries on trial is Gustavo Marcelo Grillo, who was born in Argentina of Italian parents in 1949. When he was still young, he moved to the U.S. During the 1960s he spent 4 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. He was given jungle guerrilla training at Camp Pendleton, California in 1967, and from there he was sent to Danang, South Vietnam.

-more-

After seeing intense action in the front as commander of an anti-guerrilla combat unit, Grillo returned to the U.S. "I returned home in 1970 with letters of commendation and medals," Grillo told Valdes, "but with no training for normal civilian life. It was very hard to find work."

Grillo subsequently spent a year and a half in prison for armed robbery. After his release it was more of the same. He washed dishes in California restaurants. Later he became a cook, always working in restaurants associated with organized crime activities. More and more he became involved with racketeers, primarily gamblers.

Through his underworld connections, he was contacted in 1975 by David Bufkin, a mercenary recruiter working out of Sacramento, California, who, Grillo said, was also involved in the drug trade between the U.S. and Mexico. Bufkin suggested that Grillo could make good money fighting in Angola. Grillo was interested.

After several months of negotiation, Grillo was flown to New York where he met Bufkin once more. According to the Cuban account, Bufkin said he had been to Kinshasa, Zaire, where he had spoken with Holden Roberto, head of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). Bufkin paid Grillo \$2000 and told him that Holden needed "men of [Grillo's] calibre."

Shortly thereafter, Grillo arrived in Kinshasa. Taken immediately to FNLA's headquarters, he met his commander, the Greek Cypriot Tony Callen. Grillo says Callan was the one who killed the fourteen British mercenaries.

Grillo finally reached Angola, the northern city of Sao Salvador, then in FNLA hands. He found everything in disarray. "There were no doctors, or medicine. If they had arms, they didn't have the right ammunition. If they had ammunition, they didn't have the right arms. Half of the trucks and jeeps didn't work."

He was made commander of the American troops there, and was given responsibility to organize, equip and train a group of 360 Angolans in guerrilla tactics. He says he and Bufkin also had made plans to steal diamonds, but Grillo was captured in early February.

"I knew from the start, it was logical that the CIA was behind all of this," Grillo is reported to have said. He said he received payment in new \$100 bills and was sure the equipment in Sao Salvador came from the CIA as well.

Costes Georgiou, Alias Tony Callan

The most notorious of the thirteen to be tried in June is Costes Georgiou, alias Tony Callan. In the west his notoriety comes from the killing of other white mercenaries, not the killing of black Angolans.

Valdes questioned him about the incident, and reports that Callan said the fourteen refused to go into battle. Callan was planning an attack on an MPLA tank column, and he says the fourteen apparently felt they were underequipped for the battle. He says that they were planning a mutiny, and had attempted to steal a truck to escape. Callan discovered the plot and confronted the men.

"At his point I had hoped that they would have understood the seriousness of the situation they were in and its grave consequences," Callan told Valdes. "So I asked them if they had come to fight. Five of them stepped forward, the rest remained in their places."

"I explained that in the British Army the sentence for desertion and mutiny was death, on the spot, and that they risked being shot. To them, this was a joke, I could see by their faces, as if everything were a joke.

"I killed the instigator of the group, and the rest were shot by the men of my company."

Callan's story is contradicted, however, by several of the thirteen, including Keven John Marchant, one of the five who stepped forward. He says Callan killed the men himself.

There's no question that Callan did kill a lot more people than the fourteen dead British mercenaries. According to Peter MacAleese, a British mercenary who returned safely to London, Callan led the massacre of 160 Angolans near the northern town of Maquela do Zomba. MacAleese said Callan arrived in the village, told everyone to line up, and then gave the order to the mercenaries to open fire.

This story has been corroborated by two photographers from Luanda newspapers who were present at this and other massacres. One said he was present, although hidden, at the village of Barra de Dande where he saw a group of approximately twenty foreigners give orders to FNLA troops to destroy the village systematically, the people of the village still in their homes. The photographers took hundreds of pictures of cadavers -- many with their hearts and sexual organs missing -- from these destroyed northern villages.

Soon after Callan's capture on February 5, 1976, Valdes was able to question him at length about his past, and his activities as a mercenary. Callan told him that he became a mercenary because he "was without work. There are 1.4 million people unemployed in England. The pound has fallen so much it's not worth anything." Although he denied it, Callan is reported to have served in the British Army in his native Cyprus, Borneo, Malaya, and Northern Ireland.

"In Angola, they paid me \$300 a week," Callan said.

"If the MPLA would have paid double, what would you have done?" Valdes asked.

"Gone over to the MPLA."

"Then you don't have any political views?"

"The least possible. I'm 100% apolitical."

"Only money matters to you?"

"Well no. That makes me sound like an animal."

"But if money isn't the only thing that motivates you, it must be your convictions."

"No, I'm apolitical," Callan maintained firmly.

"Then?" Valdes pressed him.

"I don't fight for money or ideas. I fight because I'm a soldier. I don't have any other job."

Mercenary recruiter John Banks, the man who recruited most of the ten British on trial, said that Callan was a "cruel and sadistic, but capable, military leader." Despite the MPLA victory, and the world outcry against the use of mercenaries in southern Africa, Banks remains proud of his work. "We in Angola killed more people than all the South Africans together," Banks is reported to have said, referring to the South African invasion of Angola.

In his conversations with Valdes, Callan himself testified to the weakness of FNLA, on whose side he fought, and the strength of MPLA. "To win a guerrilla war," he said, "you must have the people of the country where you are fighting on your side. In my little experience with MPLA, they did have a sense of unity and support from the people, which I never saw on the part of the FNLA. Their leaders were only interested in themselves and their purses, not the people."