

struggle for liberation

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The list of Liberation Movements in all of Southern Africa is long and sometimes confusing. But as time passes, it is clear that some groups are more active and maintain more popular support than others. The six movements emphasized here are those which are recognized by the Organization of African Unity and therefore receive OAU funds: they are groups which are linked together by formal and informal alliances; they are all groups which have active underground networks within their countries; and they are all groups which have begun military struggle.

The six groups are the ANC (African National Congress) of South Africa, ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union), SWAPO (South West Africa Peoples Organization), MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Movement), and PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde).



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The oldest of the six, the ANC, was formed in 1912 in South Africa. Under the leadership of men like Chief Albert Luthuli, the ANC clung to principles of non-violence until the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960. In 1961 Umkonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), a small group whose purpose was sabotage, was formed within the ANC, and the whole party gradually faced up to the inevitability of violent struggle. In the last few years, ANC, its leadership either forced to flee the country or detained in prison (Nelson Mandela is incarcerated on Robben Island; Oliver Tambo, the Acting President-General, has external headquarters in Tanzania), has adopted tactics of slow infiltration of the country by trained exiles in order to establish "reactivable" military bases and communications lines. The movement has also aligned with ZAPU and engaged in guerrilla warfare on Zimbabwean soil.

Although the ANC sees the time as not yet ripe, it is gradually preparing the African population of South Africa for guerrilla warfare through political education and propaganda. For example, last November leaflets describing the nature of and necessity for armed struggle suddenly appeared in the streets of four major South African cities; at the same time taped messages of ANC leaders and revolutionary songs rang out until they were stopped by the police.

Briefly, the other major revolutionary movement in South Africa is the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress). PAC split off from ANC in 1959, claiming that the latter was dominated by non-Africans, especially members of the Communist Party, and doubting the commitment of the non-Africans to the kind of drastic changes which would be necessary in order to destroy the system of apartheid. 1963 marked the emergence of Poqo ("We stand alone"), a small "terrorist" group which was associated with the PAC. Now PAC's leadership is also either in prison (PAC President Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, detained until last year on Robben Island, is now under house arrest in Kimberley, South Africa) or in exile. Little is known of PAC's current military activities, except its belief in the necessity of internal armed action (as opposed to external alliances). In November, 1969, its Secretary General called on the OAU to organize an African peoples liberation army to fight alongside the individual movements in all of Southern Africa.

ZIMBABWE

Allied with ANC in Zimbabwe (temporarily Ian Smith's Rhodesia) is ZAPU, the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union. The tactics of ZAPU and ANC are for the time being similar. ZAPU militants escort their ANC counterparts through Zimbabwe; at the same time they develop bases and arms caches for future use and generate local support. Actual military engagements with the Rhodesian army seem now to be increasing. The New York Times of January 27th reported a clash with the Rhodesian security forces and gives the following assessment of the current situation: "The latest infiltrators are more aggressive than earlier guerrilla groups. Since crossing into Rhodesia from



MPLA people from left to right: Commanders Janginda, Toka, President Agostinho Neto, Commander Monimambu, and Steering Committee member Anibal De Melo - Roy Harvey/LNS

Zambia at the beginning of this month, they have attacked a detachment of South African police and fired on the Victoria Falls Airport." The number of trained ZAPU fighters is about 2000; its interim President with headquarters in Lusaka is James Chikerema. Joshua Nkomo, its founder and President, has already been detained for five years in a remote rural prison camp, never having been tried for any crime.

Less current information is available on the activities of ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union), the other Rhodesian liberation movement. ZANU's emphasis is on sabotage and it claims to have cut the rail lines to Durban three times. It claims also to be currently active in organizing in urban centers. ZANU's founder, Ndabaninghi Sithole, also long detained without trial, was a year ago finally sentenced to six years hard labor for allegedly organizing a plot against the life of Ian Smith. Its leader in exile is Herbert Chitepo.

NAMIBIA

Now to South West Africa, or Namibia, and SWAPO. Namibia is a country almost unknown to the world; whatever occurs there is virtually unheard of anywhere else. But according to the South African Minister of Interior and Police, about 2000 ANC and SWAPO guerrillas entered Namibia and South Africa in the first few months of 1969. SWAPO launched its armed struggle in August, 1966. Because of the bare vastness of the Namibian terrain, it is impossible for SWAPO to infiltrate gradually and establish bases as ZAPU and ANC do. SWAPO is instead forced to employ hit and run techniques mostly in the area of the Caprivi

Strip and the Okavango area in the northwest. Such attacks were reported last spring and again in August. As with the other groups SWAPO's effectiveness has been harshly reduced by the imprisonment of its leaders. Its exile leadership is based in Tanzania and its President is Sam Nujoma.

The leaders of SWANU (South West Africa National Union), the other Namibian movement, have condemned SWAPO for fighting "prematurely." SWANU's members are said to be inside the country preparing the people for a war of national liberation; little is known of their activities.

ANGOLA

To the north of Namibia is the Portuguese-held territory of Angola. The struggle for national liberation of Angola began in February, 1961 with an attack on the prisons in Luanda by people associated with MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola). Over the nine years since then the situation in Angola has been very confusing; the many nationalist groups have even fought among themselves. Still MPLA, under the leadership of Agostinho Neto, has held together and has in the last couple of years maintained control of roughly 1/3 of the country (mostly in the center and eastern parts as well as parts of Cabinda where Gulf Oil has struck it rich). In the MPLA areas great efforts are being made to set up educational and health facilities and to organize revolutionary work and decision-making structures. Various national delegations and journalists have visited MPLA areas, and all have spoken enthusiastically about what they have found.



Guerrillas of the Popular Movement for the Liberation Of Angola (MPLA) - Roy & Karen Harvey/LNS

There are two other major nationalist liberation movements in Angola, UNITA and GRAE. UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), founded in 1964 by Jonas Savimbi (formerly with GRAE), has a strong emphasis on self-reliance. Since it was banned from Zambia in 1967 after being accused of blowing up the Benguela railroad, UNITA has had no headquarters outside Angola. Little information about its activities is available, although its militants are active in the east and southeast. A Zambian reporter who visited UNITA areas in November, 1969, writes warmly of its progress.

GRAE (Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile) began its armed struggle in 1961. Led by Holden Roberto, it has its headquarters in Kinshasa, the Congo. It was the Angolan party recognized by the OAU until 1968. Rumors of American backing and CIA contacts have persisted over the years. At present GRAE is making little known progress. The area of southern Angola it controls is small, and according to the report of a Swiss journalist who visited last summer, GRAE seems to have little offensive capacity.

The fragmentation and antagonisms among some of the movements in Southern Africa is saddening. However, it must be remembered that, especially in the Portuguese territories, oppression has always been so severe that over generations people have been prevented from any kind of political action or education. The Liberation Movements of the Portuguese territories were of necessity formed in exile away from the people who would eventually have to build the revolution. It is with this perspective in mind that the progress of the MPLA, and also of FRELIMO and PAIGC, must be seen.

MOZAMBIQUE

In the liberated areas of Mozambique (amounting to the northern fifth of the country) FRELIMO "is functioning as a government responsible for (a) the lives and security of the inhabitants, (b) the organization of agriculture and trade, (c) the provision of amenities such as schools and hospitals, and (d) the building of a new concept of a new man and a non-racist culture." (*Mozambique Review*, Oct-Dec, 1969)

Formed in 1961, FRELIMO began its armed struggle on September 25, 1964. It is now fighting with an army of 10 to 12,000 men and women. Especially important now to FRELIMO is Tete province where the Portuguese are intending to build (with South African and Western European capital) the enormous Cabora Bassa Dam. Although there is no large rival liberation movement (relatively little is known of COREMO, Revolutionary Committee of Mozambique, except that it is supposed to have underground networks and some military activities), FRELIMO has had its share of troubles in the last few years. The loss of its President, Eduardo Mondlane, who was assassinated on February 3, 1969, was a serious blow. Since then the party leaders have been going through a period of self-examination and reorganization. But the revolution and armed struggle continue unabated.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Probably the most advanced revolution among those discussed here is the one in Guinea-Bissau, the Portuguese colony in West Africa. Here 3/4 of the country has been liberated by PAIGC which began in 1964. The revolution in Guinea-Bissau, led by Amílcar Cabral is described in an exciting book by Basil Davidson, *The Liberation of Guiné*.

Revolution in Southern Africa cannot be stopped now. Despite the assassination and incarceration of many of the movements' leaders; despite the support for the white supremacist governments by international capital; despite NATO arms and over 150,000 Portuguese troops in Africa; and despite the enormous South African war machine whose presence is felt in all the territories of Southern Africa, the wars continue and progress.

Sources:

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people's war in africa

Barbara Barnes
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"There is no point to our struggle if our only goal is to drive out the Portuguese. We want to drive them out, but we are also struggling to end the exploitation of our people, both by whites and by blacks." These are the words of Amilcar Cabral, leader of PAIGC (African Independence Party of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands), spoken to a group of peasants in a liberated village of Guinea-Bissau.

Gerard Chaliand, a French writer and revolutionary, traveled with Cabral through the free areas of Guinea-Bissau in the summer of 1966. In Armed Struggle in Africa: with the Guerrillas in "Portuguese" Guinea (Monthly Review Press, 1969, \$5.50), he reports his observations on the nature and extent of the armed struggle in that country and generalizes from the experience of PAIGC to expand the theory of guerrilla warfare. Previously the models have come from Latin America and Asia. Chaliand asserts that Cabral has now added an African model.

PAIGC initiated armed struggle in Guinea-Bissau only after years of preparatory political work undertaken in light of the conditions particular to Guinea. This, Chaliand feels, is extremely important and an essential factor in their success to date. There was psychological mobilization of the peasantry, political agitation and indoctrination to convince tribal chiefs to break ties with the Portuguese, and political reconnaissance to determine which areas and peoples were most conscious of existing oppression and would be most easily organized against it. Middle and high level cadres were given military and political training during this period. The middle level cadres were drawn from the peasantry so they could use their knowledge of the local language and customs to appeal to the needs and desires of their people. Higher ranking cadres often received training outside of the country, but it was always geared to the existing realities of the location in which they would operate.

Weapons were obtained and guerrillas and commandos well trained before the military thrust of the revolution was launched. When the armed insurrection by PAIGC did begin, the attack was swift and successful. It has to be, according to Chaliand, to

assure the peasantry of their safety and thus win their full participation in the struggle.

After gaining control over an area, intensive political work is necessary to draw peasants actively into the revolution. Descriptions of this process and the new kinds of structures and relationships which are being developed are among the most illuminating parts of the book and, to me, the most inspiring aspect of the liberation movement in Guinea-Bissau.

A man called Chico, political commissar for the northern interregion, explained to Chaliand the nature of their political work:

Political work means getting people to learn about the party and explaining why we exist and what we want. We explain what colonialism means. At first, we explain that Guinea isn't Portugal and that we can govern ourselves without heavy taxes, and blows, and fear of the Portuguese. We explain that what's happening here isn't an act of God, and that it's already happened in a lot of other countries. We have to show our people that the world doesn't end at their villages. Our problem is to make them understand the present level of the struggle, the fact that the struggle doesn't concern just their village but all of Guinea, and that it's not simply a national but an international struggle. We have to make them aware that in order to advance, THEY must guarantee the struggle's continuity, THEY must take charge of their own destiny by solving their problems on the village level, developing production, sending their children to school, and holding frequent meetings.... We also have to give the fighters political training. The essential principle is that no difference must be created between the fighters and the people for whom they're fighting.

Chico then repeated an answer he had given to an old man who complained of hardship:

Since the day you were born, how much have you put together to leave your children? You're not going to leave anything, because the Portuguese have taken it all. The only inheritance you can leave your sons is freedom, and that's a great deal, because they can obtain everything else by working.