



man and  
his word

# Study Beneath the Bombs

Lara Lucio

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"The Africans have no civil nor political right and the administrative authorities will make justice and will be the police for the black populations, which in addition are also obligated to forced labor."

Thus states the Statute of the Indigenous, promulgated in 1933 by the government of Salazar for the natives of the Portuguese colonies.

Under this slogan of repression, the first clandestine political groups or movements that, on February 4, 1961, initiated the armed struggle led by the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), were born and extended themselves to the principal cities and regions in the north of Angola.

Many victories and reverses have strengthened the MPLA which currently controls more than a third of the country and successfully confronts a colonialist army of some 70 000 men trained and equipped with modern arms supplied by NATO and South Africa.

Lara Lucio, member of the Military Political Coordinating Committee (CCPM) and leader of the Centers of Revolutionary Instruction (CIR) and of health, tells us about the efforts and experiences of the MPLA in the establishment of a truly national teaching system that permits access to education which, up until now, has been denied by colonial domination.

**What is the Political-Military Coordinating Committee (CCPM)?  
What are your responsibilities as a member of it?**

The CCPM is really a provisional organization, at least as it is presently constituted. I think it will grow to the extent that we are able to concentrate in some other region. The CCPM is a coordinating organ, our struggle is carried out over an enormously dispersed area due to the great size of the country which, for example, forces us to divide the third region into north and south subregions. The CCPM tries to coordinate all the leadership work in a practical way. It is the coordinating element, but it is naturally also an organization of execution. It is just that it isn't the only organization of execution since the directive committee is subdivided into directive commissions for each region: each commission is an executive organization of the directive committee. As its name indicates, the CCPM is a political-military organization and each of its members has responsibilities on both levels, political and military. There are five members, among whom is the president of the movement and general coordinator of the CCPM. My military tasks on this committee have to do with the political commissariat and the body of political activists, the administration of the population and the installation of the structure of people's power from the political, educational and cultural point of view, the Centers of Revolutionary Instruction (CIR) and health.

**What exactly are the CIR? How and why did you create them?**

The Center for Revolutionary Instruction appeared in 1965. But we had already thought concretely about the problem of the formation of cadres as early as 1963. This problem was urgently put forward at that time because we lacked cadres — especially political cadres — to develop the struggle, and we felt there had been a certain lack in political formation among the militants we had in the movement, which required an extra effort to raise the level of consciousness in each of us so that we would know concretely how to conduct ourselves within our movement in the tasks assigned by it. At the time of Leopoldville — it was Leopoldville then and later became Kinshasa [and now Zaire] — we had started a school that we called the school for cadres. The results and the experiences of this school led us, after the first crisis we went through in 1965 as a consequence of our expulsion from the Congo and the recognition of the Holden "government" by the Congo, to undertake political education again, particularly at this moment. The idea of the CIR therefore appeared almost naturally. Of course there was at that time an automatic regrouping of the comrades whose militancy had proven their correct formation. They were the "builders" of this first CIR which operated at that time on the Cabinda border. The experience of the CIR was positive politically because at that moment, and even though the instruction was political-military, the lack of means forced us to insist on the political aspect and military instruction was no more than a complement. Our situation at that time prevented the development of the military formation provided by friendly countries such as Algeria, for example, which trained

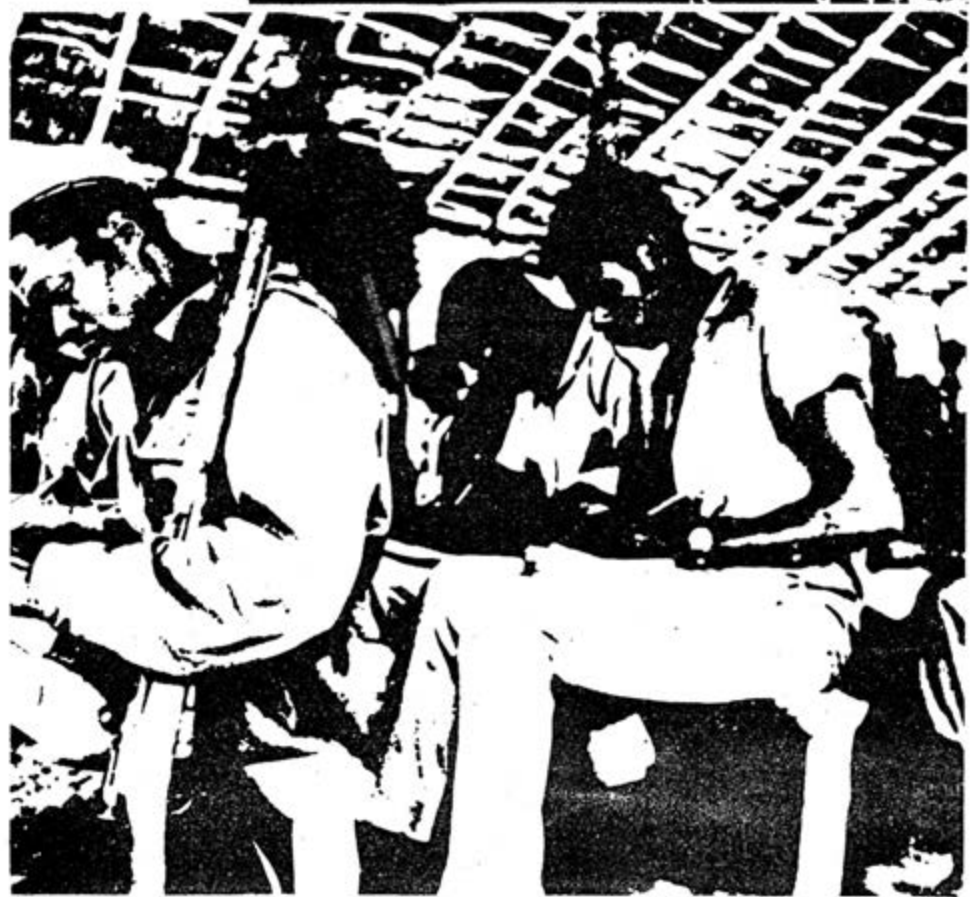
many of our military cadres. It was only after the opening of the Eastern front in 1966, that we immediately felt it was necessary to give the CIR another tendency, always political-military but this time with a certain military emphasis. In 1967 the first CIR was established on the Eastern front in the interior of the country in what we call A zone of the third region, under the direction of comrade Diloloi. It wasn't only in this region that the CIR made itself necessary; it also answered the needs of the whole country. The population itself realized the importance of the CIR. Clearly this CIR, or what we called the CIR at that moment, was in charge of all instruction at every level. Even the primary schools were tied into the CIR. Little by little, the idea of separating primary schooling from secondary schooling led us to create instruction services. The instruction services include on the one hand the CIR and the primary schools and, on the other hand, wherever possible, secondary schools such as the Cabinda Center for Rapid Advancement. The Center for Rapid Advancement, as a consequence of the dispersal of its students, the majority of whom left for the Eastern front, and because its structure was not solidly established, was dissolved or rather its activities were suspended.

#### **What does the program for revolutionary instruction include?**

In a general way our revolutionary formation tries to give each of our militants consciousness of the phenomena of our struggle: its cause, its rationale, its process and its basic objectives. To do this our programs are continuously being altered and improved as a result of our experience, our contact with national realities, and are also more incisive all the time, much better directed to the masses and the militants. They include the history, geography, economics and politics of Angola, philosophical concepts and, for example, the phenomenon of the liberation struggle, political economy in which ideas are developed for certain cadres and less developed for others, and political training. There is also a general program for all militants, whatever their responsibilities.

#### **Who are those formed in the CIR?**

With respect to political activities in the party-movement and among the masses, we made the mistake in the past of having the guerrilla political commissar work with the population because we lacked cadres. This meant that the problems the people presented to the political commissar were numerous and prevented him from giving his serious attention to those of the struggle and its development; because the political commissars had the task of thinking about the political problems of the struggle — that is, of attending to the guerrilla and its problems, such as seizing the opportunity to attack this or that objective. To take a concrete example: frequently a commander thinks of an operation and carries it out; once done it is seen to be prejudicial because it has affected certain aspects of the life of the people. It was then the task of the commissar to know all the people's problems and he had to advise the commander of the opportunity for a certain



action. With the existing dispersal, it was not possible to devote oneself concretely to the problems of the struggle. Experience helped us, we created alongside the body of political commissars, a body of political activists who, like the political commissars, are divided into various levels that do not mix. For example, there is a regional political commissar but there is no political activist at this level; there is a political activist at the group level and there is no political commissar at this level. The work of the political activist is the same as that of the political commissar, to feel the pulse of the people and transmit to his chief the desires or complaints of the people. In a certain way he is the political commissar's adviser, without being an organic part of his team. Although the political activist is to a certain extent the representative of the movement among the population, we always try not to have him be the one who seeks solutions to the problems presented, but rather the one who raises the problems. This still isn't working the way we'd like it to. This is the theory and we're only at the beginning of our experience. We developed these structures at the end of 1969 and they haven't begun to function in more than a few zones. The formation of activists takes place in the CIR whereas before, the activists, or rather the animators, weren't given a uniform education. They said whatever they wanted to or whatever they thought was the movement's line, and when they ended they found there wasn't any way they could work. They themselves told us, "I hold meetings with the people and as soon as I begin to talk there are people who go to sleep. Why?" In the CIR we try to train them so that the people don't "go to sleep" but rather listen to them, because it is their incompetence that puts the people to sleep. We know all that has to be done to make people interested in meetings. You have to talk to them about what interests them most! After the general preparation we give each category of individuals a special preparation. As I said, activist is a new concept, a new organization, or rather a new structure; a priori it isn't a regularized thing. Those in charge of the CIR take inventory; they sometimes meet with the activists of an entire zone. There are some who belong to other zones and they let them speak, they listen to their problems, the problems of the people among whom they live. They report very well — which is normal. They even report the contradictions that exist between themselves and the military chiefs, within the group, within the sector. They report on everything, even the little things. Those in charge of the course can immediately report what is said to the others. In a succinct way, the course acquires reality and finds solutions to the problems raised by any activist. For example, right now we have a very important problem: the fighting front has grown rapidly and there is a problem of production. One of the principal responsibilities of the activists is to get the population to organize people's stores, the production of various generic types, the introduction of new grains where there was once only a monocultivation, etc. It is an enormous job and implies many things. The people don't understand why they are asked to produce more while the commercial route with the Portuguese is cut off, and excess production can't



be sold for escudos. Why then should they produce more than what is required to supply the necessities of their families and the guerrillas, they say. In zone C of the third region, during the period of commercial trade with the Portuguese the base production was millet grain and cassava and along with this and essentially for trade, the people produced a great amount of rice, peanuts, corn, beeswax, honey and white beans. But with the rupture of commercial relations, this production has dropped to almost nothing. Production amounts to just enough to vary the menu. This is due mainly to the rupture in commercial relations but also to the dangers of cultivation. All these agricultural products are grown near the rivers and streams, the points that Portuguese aerial reconnaissance prefers. Fishing, which was flourishing, has fallen almost to zero because the population can no longer fish without being attacked by planes or helicopters. So the rupture of Portuguese commercial relations and fears have lowered production. It is unnecessary to say that it is the activist who has to convince the population to produce more, to explain why and show how.

You see the nature of the problems we have to confront in the CIR, the activist has to be previously convinced to be able to convince the population, since he is usually a peasant and at the same time holds the same opinion as the population. His consciousness has to be raised in order for him to be able then to create consciousness in the people with whom he lives and works. After the first course we gave the activists in zone E and zone C, we felt that things had changed. It's visible in the people's enthusiasm to produce; whatever your job, whether you're a visitor, a leader or a new arrival, and no matter how warmly the population receives you, you'll be able to see the activist's worth. Certain **kimbo** (villages) will receive you with songs and gifts such as flour, honey and even chickens. This means the activist has explained who the comrade is who's coming and why he's coming. In each village we have what we call a **lavra** (a field) for the MPLA. Each family, each group has its own field and there is one that belongs to the movement because in all regions there are two or three difficult months each year due to the lack of reserves.

These movement fields act as reserves. In each **kimbo** there are action committees and on each action committee there is a treasurer in charge of the movement's reserves. It is surprising what honesty, what loyalty there is generally toward the saving of small sacks of millet flour, corn and manioc flour. The accounts are exact even when the treasurer has difficulties, and not because there is a policy of control but because it belongs to the movement and is a sacred thing. This has only been possible with the introduction of activists into the structure of the movement. If we succeed in generalizing these structures everywhere, then we will be certain to have begun the creation of the people's consciousness for future tasks.

The people's stores: because the Portuguese trade circuit has been cut off, it has been necessary to replace it if not in value at least in form. We have therefore created the people's stores

which permit us to increase production and when possible to place at the disposal of the people a little cloth, salt, oil, etc. In short, the products that are lacking in the liberated zones and have to be imported.

In the CIR we also form the "defenders of the people" (militia) always with the same base program plus certain elements of self-defense for the people, such as air raid protection, precautionary measures so that the **kimbo** won't be discovered from the air, etc. There are also certain heads of sectors, commanders of the zone who come to the CIR to receive special military training in a certain area.

The women activists are a little different from the others and since they are just as good as the men they are also more valuable because they are more particularly able to stimulate other women. As you know, the woman's position is always a bad one with respect to her dependency on the man. The woman in our society has been a work tool, for wealth, and unfortunately she has continued to be this to a certain extent. But you will find our women extremely enthusiastic about the struggle. It could be said that they are so valuable that we don't know how best to take advantage of this to bring out everything they have to offer. I had this experience when we organized the first women as general activists. I wanted to tell them about a specific problem concerning women, and since women hadn't yet been trained to do it, I had to do it myself, and I must say, without enthusiasm at the beginning. You can't imagine how enthusiastic they were when they began to learn, because of their feelings of rebellion against a certain state of dependency the woman has on the man. They were very glad the movement stood for equality between men and women. When the statutes of the Organization of Angolan Women were explained to them and they saw that the organization was not only interested in the liberation of the country but also in the liberation of women, they responded enthusiastically and recognized that slavery to the man was a Portuguese heritage. It isn't necessary to tell you that I was forced to throw water on the fire and had to explain that it isn't possible for us to destroy immediately what exists, and above all it was necessary to explain that by taking part effectively in the struggle woman will be able to liberate herself. The men weren't at all happy to learn that we proposed emancipation of the woman and the equality of men and women. They weren't happy when the possibility of women taking up arms was discussed, because in the CIR they also learned how to handle arms and they are just as capable as men in this area. First the men laughed and said it wasn't possible; then they became furious when they saw that the women handled the arms just as well as they did. A little while before I left the zone, I received a communication from the fourth region concerning three women who had taken part in an attack. They assembled the people and read them the communiqué. The women were pleased, and the men, on the other hand, began to understand that this might stick.

We maintain schools at the CIR level although they aren't completely related, because the director of the CIR is at the same

time the director of instruction service in the zone or region, etc. It is within this framework that the schools are joined to the CIR. In the CIR of zone C there is a children's boarding school. It isn't for all children, just for the best students because we are terribly short of teachers. We have also concentrated the most advanced primary school classes in the CIR, the third and fourth grades for example, but there are very few professors that can teach fourth grade since they themselves have only gone that far. Therefore, the primary schools we have spread everywhere through all the zones generally constitute what we call preparatory schools. It is more to establish contact with the Portuguese language, since all our manuals are in Portuguese and it is a delicate problem. When our children reach school age they must already be familiar with Portuguese words in order to use the texts. So they have to know at least a few words of Portuguese, and in our villages Portuguese isn't spoken. The preparatory school is more to learn vocabulary. It is so the teacher can tell them and show them that this is a box, that is a shoe, etc., so that the children have a certain vocabulary. At the end of preparatory school when they enter the first grade, they can learn with the texts we have. Clearly this isn't a problem for the city people, who generally speak Portuguese. Here, for example, in this little school, there is no preparatory class. The children begin to learn directly, in the first grade, even those who can't speak Portuguese, since they are with children who do and they catch on fairly easily. Where we are, nobody speaks Portuguese. They have to spend at least a year in preparatory. We are aware of the dangers this procedure causes and of the fact that we cannot free ourselves easily but we are beginning to do something. We are also training guerrillas.

**Do you want to talk about adult schooling?**

Yes. We have a rule. Every man, every woman who comes to the CIR is obliged to learn to read. They spend three months, at the end of which they must learn to read. Here we also have difficulties because of the language. And that is why we are currently making manuals in local languages. We have the means to do this now. We are thinking of doing it in Algeria because of the presence of the Brazilians who are there. I discussed this with the UNESCO people to find out what possibilities exist for aid with this project. Naturally UNESCO refused, saying that if other international organizations like the United Nations were giving aid, then perhaps UNESCO could lend us an expert to help this group of Brazilians prepare the manuals and the first teachers. These teachers will not be teachers like those trained in independent countries since they will have only primary schooling and only six months of preparation; after that they themselves have to train teachers in the interior for the struggle.

As far as the guerrillas are concerned, they have basic training like everyone else. I forgot to say a moment ago that the program included political training. There are also military subjects. We show them what has to be done to prepare an ambush, an attack



or whatever other aspect of action has to be prepared. They are interested in these problems since they have them in their heads almost empirically and compare what they know with what we give them. They also make judgements and draw lessons about what takes place in the light of what they have just learned.

#### **Are the guerrillas given a new kind of military instruction?**

No, it's not exactly that. In general all or almost all the guerrillas have participated in a battle and when they haven't participated personally they have been aware of all the operational aspects of that battle; that is why they lead a life in common with other guerrillas. Naturally, we give new military instructions but not to everyone. They are taught to assemble and dismount, to shoot with the arms we have. After all, I say all but it isn't always all because the CIR often lacks arms that we know exist in a certain zone. The CIR doesn't have them because they are the only ones we have and they are on the battlefield.

On this aspect of education and formation, we haven't succeeded in creating sergeants, at least as far as I know. Perhaps that's a good thing. But we lack sergeants (I mean in training, not in combat) to toughen the recruits because this harsh sergeant type brings with it a certain security.

I have observed that everywhere we have trained militants, in all countries, the instructors are hard — even in Algeria.

#### **Ex-combatants from the French army?**

I don't know. I don't think so. In any case, the militants have to be toughened up; we don't always have at hand instructors who are both hard and politically formed, comprehensive and good educators. There are people who are hard but in no way competent to form comrades. Generally they are the worst in the group.

Life in the guerrilla is always hard, everywhere there are guerrillas, all over the world. But our guerrilla (and I don't want to make comparisons) is perhaps most difficult because of the distances which are enormous, and the scarcity of population. These factors condition our guerrillas to a certain extent. The problem of all guerrillas is evident; but for ours it is aggravated by the size of the country. The conditions under which we live are those of very great distances. When we have to consider problems of logistics, of food supplies and of operational supplies, coordination becomes ten times as complicated, a hundred times more difficult for any attack and operation. If you want to coordinate groups that are four days' march away from each other — and they have to be coordinated because they have to work in unity — you can see that the problems become major. If a commander — and this is often the case with us — of the fifth region thinks about a major operation he weighs his material, his men, his specialists required for certain weapons and if at this moment he discovers he's lacking something, some type of arm, some ammunition or even — and this sometimes happens — a certain specialist, saboteur, sapper or what have you, then there's

no choice but to consider the operation for six months before carrying it out. Today — I say today but it is since the fifth region has existed — that's how things happen; men have to be sent to look for the material that's lacking. When they arrive there's a very good chance that the material isn't there at that moment and then they have to wait. The six months are already up when the material reaches the fifth region.

**In order to solve this aspect of the difficulties and in order to shorten the waiting time and the communication time, have you installed schools of transmission?**

Not yet, and for one very simple reason: the instruments we have aren't even enough to maintain the linkups we have to have. They don't cover all the regions we have. Despite this, we have trained in the movement, not in the CIR, almost 30 men and women (a dozen women) operators. It's the equipment that's lacking.

As far as those who come to the CIR — up to now we've talked only about the educational plan — if the guerrillas and group and sector heads receive advanced military training, all others including the Pioneers receive a less-advanced military training. Of course we have a special category of Pioneers. They are the Pioneer combatants who participate in some battles. They are a little older than the others and we authorize them to participate in a battle if they want to. I don't know whether we're going a little too far in this respect, but I believe it gives these Pioneers excellent training. In the CIR where I lived for the longest period, there were approximately 70 persons. Almost a kimbo. When the helicopters flew over us, at first you would see panic. The noise of the plane itself is enough to startle the peasants who make up the majority of the CIR. "Fly, fly," is the cry that resounds across the plains from the moment a plane or helicopter is heard. "Fly" and panic reigns; I was stunned to see that there was nothing but panic and that it was uncontrollable. Then, through the children, the Pioneers, it was explained what had to be done when an airplane or helicopter flew over us. The older people, observing that the Pioneers didn't run but instead took their positions so they wouldn't be seen and noting that, despite their noise, planes and helicopters are no more than blind machines, were able to control their panic.

**What programs do you teach in the CIR?**

History of Angola, although the evaluation of our history is still not complete, and won't be until independence. Geography is taught for its economic value: the most fertile regions, the mineral subsoil, the rivers, ports; to give the comrades the chance to evaluate the importance of a region or a particular zone.

Certain philosophical concepts. We obviously live in a world which debates philosophical doctrines and we try to explain them, to compare them so that our militants understand them, so they aren't anti-this or anti-that without really knowing the content of a doctrine. Portuguese propaganda makes a big noise against certain ideologies, against certain theories, and even against cer-

tain religions. We try to present things objectively in order to permit an understanding of MPLA's political line which has very precise objectives but whose methods have not been well defined because we are only now developing them. Because of the contact we have with our people, the difficulties we encounter, we feel much more certain of some of the principles we defend, and at times we correct one or another formula we've learned intellectually without relationship to realities.

We teach economy to the least prepared Angolan cadres and we teach general political economy in depth to those best trained.

**Are the political economy courses you teach viewed from a Marxist or from a "free market" point of view?**

From what can be called a Marxist point of view. Yes, one can see things better from that side. We consider this perspective to be very useful because the character of our struggle is fundamentally tied to the wealth of our country. The comrades raise their level of consciousness very rapidly with this type of education. They become aware of the exploitation of which they are victims.

We also present a certain political formation. At the beginning we fell into some traps. For example, we looked too much to classical terminology and concepts to explain to the militants what we wanted to present to them while with the CIR we have understood that it's not words, not definitions, not stereotypes — and many "revolutionaries" abuse certain formulas, certain of the most important words. We have fought against this excess of formulas, this verbalism that really doesn't mean anything and that people absolutely don't understand and, above all, that doesn't touch on the real problems they raise. We have enormous problems, small and big problems of strategy, of tactics, of construction, etc. This verbosity makes us lose time in meetings. We only put the people to sleep or give them a headache.

In the courses of political formation, we try to give very simple courses on what's going on in the world. We speak of imperialism, of colonialism, of neocolonialism, of the solidarity of the peoples. We speak of our friends, of our allies, of the reasons for these alliances, of our reasons, their reasons, of international organizations and their objectives, of the capacity for achieving these objectives which have been established, or of their limits. The UN is discussed, the OAU, which are existing organizations. The people hear them spoken about on the radio, for example, when the OAU makes a declaration about Angola or the UN does or doesn't condemn Portugal, etc. We explain the worth or lack of worth of a specific organization, a resolution, and with half a dozen concepts, ideas or examples taken from reality, we succeed in giving our militants an overall view and a political preformation.

But we insist on a knowledge of our country, our movement, our struggle. We explain the history of our movement, how it was born, why it was born and what it does, the difficulties encountered, the errors that have been committed rather than its positive aspects, the different stages through which the struggle has passed, and the positions of our movement at these stages; we speak of counterrevolution and its objectives, how it is supported and

by whom. It is important for people to understand the structure in which they work or are going to work. For example, it is through an understanding of the structures of the movement that we have been able to explain the structure of people's power, as for example embryonic people's power in the installation of action committees.

We also talk about Portuguese colonialism, what it represents, what it seeks to do, its methods, the exploitation it imposes and continues imposing, how it tries to promote reforms that come to nothing and tend to perpetuate domination over our country. We speak of our brothers of Mozambique, Guinea, St. Thomas.

As for military training, we have adapted it to our needs. In the past we had obligatory physical training. After people go through military training, due to the lack of food supplies and the need for production, we go to the fields and cultivate the crops. In general, we begin our courses at 9; when we are able to eat, we eat at 12 or at 1; if we can't, we rest during this hour. The afternoon is devoted to learning to read.

Every week we have general meetings which are, to a certain extent, evaluation meetings that always lead to criticism, to problems that arise among guerrillas, among the students and heads of courses, problems of organization. These meetings allow us to improve not only the work and the organization but also human relations: for example, comrades who have committed errors, because we also have weaknesses as is true everywhere. Then criticisms are made and answered. Or perhaps they recognize their faults and while there was previously a certain ill temper, a certain pressure in the relationships between different members of the collective, all that disappears when a dialogue is begun between those who have committed errors and those who have suffered from them. When the courses are over, the students go back to their sectors, zones, groups or villages with this way of living and generally introduce it.

In addition to the adult courses there is schooling for the children. We always try to improve the programs so that the children who are with us, who live in the liberated zones, won't be behind in relation to the children who live in the cities and take their courses in Portuguese.

**How many children have been schooled through the CIR?**

MPLA — and I want to be prudent — has schooled something over 3000 children. I am sure there are many more but I want to stick to that figure although there are regions from which I don't yet have information but where I know teaching is going on. I want to tell you about the first region. It's difficult to know the exact number of children since there are also irregularities due to the war. The Portuguese continuously attack the schools. They even have a certain predilection for schools. They bomb them, they surround them, they attack them with troops transported by helicopter. To eliminate this situation, we halt the courses in one sector and transport the school to another sector. In the course of the move it happens that we "lose" children because some parents don't want to let their children go to school,

which is a two- or three-hour walk. Since the Eastern front has almost nothing except plains that must be crossed to get from one point to another, the danger is increased and the parents don't want to risk their children's lives, especially since during these displacements we have no means to protect the children. They don't all live in the same place. There is another factor that makes the number of pupils fluctuate: the seasons. At the time of work in the fields, the parents withdraw their children from school to help them. This problem is not only one faced by Angolans who are fighting. It is a general problem in Africa.

Let's go back to the language problem. In my opinion, this problem is of extraordinary importance now. We believe — and this comes from experience — that literacy programs are much easier and produce much better and more rapid results if the literacy courses are given in the language of the country rather than in Portuguese. We had foreseen literacy programs in Portuguese over a period of three months. We have been unable to achieve literacy in the time predicted. Sometimes we have extended the time to four or even six months in order to achieve the results we had thought we could achieve in three months. This is due to the words in the training manuals which are not immediately comprehended and grasped by the students. The only problem of vernacular languages is that there are so many of them.

**In Angola we have at least seven. But I believe there is one that is spoken by more than a million and a half persons.**

This doesn't mean a thing. The one you mention is Umbundu. Because of the "great numbers" in the tribe that speaks this language, because of its influence on the languages surrounding it, all the languages except those spoken by the Khoisan are of Bantu origin. With certain differences in pronunciation you will find more or less the same words or the same word roots everywhere.

**Beginning with this data, isn't it possible to form a national Angolan language?**

You speak of a very specialized problem. Personally, I am not qualified to answer that question, although I have studied it.

**I should like you to give a political reply to the question, not one viewed from a linguistic point of view.**

It is impossible to give a political answer at the moment. You speak of the tribe. That, in my opinion, is not the appropriate term. This million and some Umbundu belong to various tribes that have dialects since Umbundu itself is divided into various dialects and if I speak of this language, I also speak of Kikongo, of Kimbundu, of Tchokwe, of Bunda, etc., of all those languages we have in our country. To consider the problem on the tribal level, when it is a question of millions, already gives you a political answer. It is my intuition that we cannot consider this problem in a simplistic manner. It is more complex, we have to take this into account in the future.



As far as the selection of an administrative language, with which all Angolans can work or which can be used as a means of communication; since the Angolan child doesn't speak Portuguese to begin with — let's suppose that this child is a Kimbundu or a Tchokwe, anything except an Umbundu — why then wouldn't he learn Umbundu as an administrative language, as a language of communication among Angolans, instead of learning Portuguese which is a Latin language with which he has no contact either in word formation nor in phraseology nor in the concepts it describes? This child would maintain his own language to use in his own community, as is presently the case, while he speaks Portuguese. Why not choose an African language?

I'm afraid I'll seem a little backward when I say this, but our present conditions force us, from a technical point of view, to use Portuguese for a long time still. It is my intuition that the future will enlighten us with respect to the timing or to what is better, the honesty of this method, and whether it really meets the interests of the country. In any case, during the first years of independence, the working language on the technical and administrative levels will be Portuguese. The use of an African language instead of Portuguese requires that this language develop, since due to colonialism the national languages are not developed and haven't followed the same course as other languages. Naturally our first preoccupation after independence will be to train linguists to study this problem within the perspective of our national independence and to predict what might happen, because it won't be easy to make a Tchokwe speak in Umbundu even though that dialect is spoken by the majority. There is and will always be — and this is not a tribal sentiment, it is much more than that — a feeling of cultural belonging.

**I am not speaking about the disappearance of minority cultures or languages; what I want to say, and this took place throughout Africa, is that those who, for example, were colonized by the French, continued studying French in the schools, working in French, instead of taking as their working language any language of a majority, and even arbitrarily the language of another African country, as for example Swahili or Arabic.**

I don't know Swahili except for a few words because I have heard it once in a while and because certain words occur in various Angolan languages. It is possible that Swahili will develop in the future....

**You don't close the door on African languages?**

No, absolutely not, but it is very difficult to foresee. Perhaps we won't select a language of our own country. Perhaps we will select another African language. Swahili is a language that has points in common with those of our country and is a developing language. It is a language that has every possibility and this depends on us, the Africans who can speak it: to develop it and bring it up to date, because we live in a scientific era and Swahili has remained a little outside present development. In my opinion, if the countries that are not independent and already are able to do so, start working on it and taking on the responsibility for devoting a considerable number of experts to the problem of

this language, they will not only be able to concern themselves with the development of Swahili in order to accompany the present development of humanity, but will also be able to study how Swahili could become the common element of the populations of this part of Africa.

**Are you now giving courses in vernacular languages?**

I said literacy courses, literacy does not include courses in any subject since, after literacy has been achieved, we go on to Portuguese. That's right now. Perhaps later we will discover that we can go beyond that in languages, perhaps experience will show us that the present road we are taking is not the best. I said we try not to stay very far behind the courses given in the rest of the world. In Congo-Brazzaville, the children are learning modern math. If the Congolese do it, it's because it's necessary. We have structured our programs so we won't be left too far outside of progress. Clearly, we have not yet introduced modern math, it isn't possible because we don't even have the teachers necessary. We have planned that when our children go into secondary school they will begin to learn the vocabulary of modern math in the first year.

**If I understand correctly, you are already providing an education for an independent country and not an education for a country at war.**

That's not completely true. We always give a war education since we are still at war. But we think that it is our duty, even if the education we give our children is basically an education for war, not to be too far behind when we win independence. In independence we will have the experience necessary to move immediately into action instead of beginning only with the problem of studying teaching methods. We want to find solutions as we go along, since the world has made so much progress and we are so far behind, not only as Africans, but as a people struggling for national independence which, in order to be complete, must necessarily find the majority of solutions to the problems which the country faces in the world.

As far as the perspectives are concerned, they are conditioned by the war and are not ambitious. We have already accomplished something; above all we have had an experience which in my opinion and in a very modest way, is a very rich one for our people and for our movement. From the beginning we tried not to build in the clouds. We make an effort to do our own manuals, however modest they may be, mimeographed or printed, handwritten or only summary titles. As far as the illiterates are concerned, we can't give courses with normal texts but we hold a type of conference or "lecture" using the titles. We already have a certain number of texts, our texts are always revised in the light of the experiences we live through.

As far as the CIR is concerned, the perspectives are easier to outline because we know our necessities very precisely, that of the war and that of the political struggle. We do all that is possible to respond to these necessities.