

Leaders of Attempted Coup Arrested

Two months after the attempted coup d'etat in Angola, life is gradually returning to normal. *Southern Africa* learned that Nito Alves, the central figure in the coup attempt, has been arrested by the MPLA in Angola. No additional information about his arrest could be obtained, but the Angolan ambassador to the UN indicated that in all several hundred had been arrested.

Angolan President Agostinho Neto said in a speech before a large crowd in Luanda in mid-June, that the conspirators—called 'factionalists' in Angola—were spread through MPLA organizations and agencies of the government, in Luanda and other provinces. Among those arrested were members of the general headquarters of the army, the state security police, the provincial commissions, the military and civil police, the MPLA Central Committee itself, of schools, unions, and nationalized and private enterprises.

A first hand inquiry by *Afrique Asie*, Paris, has substantially supplemented recently released information from Luanda. The report indicates that the coup leaders—Alves, Jose Van Dunem and several others—began to plan the coup in late October 1976, but their expulsion from MPLA forced them to act earlier. The report also reveals that the MPLA had already thwarted one coup plot before the actual May 27 attempt.

Alves, Van Dunem, and a white Angolan woman born in Cabinda, Cita Vales, had begun the systematic recruiting of militants and cadres in opposition to Neto, and the Political Bureau of MPLA. Joining with them were some foreigners, primarily Portuguese who had come to Luanda after the April 25, 1974 revolution in Portugal. They infiltrated diverse structures of the MPLA, the government and the army, in Luanda and in other provinces.

Cita Vales was an important figure in the MPLA's Department for the Organization of the Masses (DOM) which had the responsibility for overseeing the political mobilization of Angolans,

through the Angolan Women's Organization, MPLA Youth, and its Action committees. Vales used her previous experience as a clandestine member of the Young Portuguese Communists to create a structure—a sort of secretariat—to challenge the state and spread distrust of the decisions of the MPLA leadership.

Alves Removed from Office

At a Central Committee meeting in late October these activities were denounced and the problem of factionalism heatedly debated. Nito Alves was removed from his position as Minister of Internal Administration, although he remained a member of the Central Committee, and Vales was expelled from her office.

Deviations within the political commissariat of the army were rebuked, the Central Committee completely reorganized DOM and restricted to Angolan citizens exclusively the right to ideological debate within MPLA, thus automatically eliminating a number of important Portuguese citizens who had been active in Angolan politics before that.

In addition, the Committee decided to shut down the afternoon daily paper, *Diario de Luanda*, which had become a forum for Alves' speeches and declarations. This left a single morning paper in Luanda, the *Journal de Angola*, whose white editor, but long-time MPLA militant Fernando de Costa Andrade, would later become a prime target of criticism by the factionalists.

After these serious blows to their prestige and power, the conspirators began an intensive campaign to sabotage all the sectors of life in Angola and to reinforce their own clandestine organization. According to the *Afrique-Asie* report, they organized a veritable parallel movement next to MPLA, a sort of anti-party, counter government which aimed at seizing power. They sought the destabilization of the country and the total discredit of the government and the leadership of MPLA. MPLA's Political Bureau indicated that the conspirators

had contacts with some foreign embassies, while not identifying them.

Recruitment was also heavy among the military. Some commanders were encouraged to travel regularly to Luanda for meetings and debate, leaving certain areas of the country more susceptible to infiltration from the outside. Sympathizing officers withheld pay from their soldiers to promote discontent. The bank account of a commander of the Military Police was found to contain the salaries of at least forty soldiers.

Sabotage within the Ministry of Commerce was undertaken by the Minister himself, David Aires Machado, who exacerbated congestion in the crowded ports by refusing to off-load ships which were carrying important food products—claiming that local markets couldn't absorb them, while food shortages in Luanda and other towns increased. Edmond Vales, head of the commission for restructuring of heavy industry and brother of Cita Vales, opposed the purchase of spare parts from western markets—despite the western origin of the machinery—under the pretext that it would be trading with the imperialists.

In some neighborhoods, Alves had ordered the local committees or state stores which stocked immense quantities of food of all sorts to refuse to distribute them. "Take your complaints to the mulattos and whites who rule this government," the people were then told.

Central Committee Expels Factionalists

The Central Committee met on May 20, amid this explosive atmosphere, and most of its members demanded immediate disciplinary measures against the factionalists. Fifteen minutes before the meeting was due to convene, Neto changed the site from downtown Luanda's Museum of the Revolution to a location 15 miles south of Luanda closer to his home.

Apparently the Political Bureau had learned that a demonstration against the government had been organized to take place outside the Museum. Mem-

bers of the 9th armored division and military police who were "Nitoists" were to surround the Museum to "protect" the demonstrators; the majority of the Central Committee loyal to Neto were to be taken hostage, cut off from contact with the outside; and Nito Alves was to have delivered an ultimatum—the immediate dissolution of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau, and in case of refusal or resistance, their arrest.

The Central Committee demanded the expulsion of Alves and his supporters, but Neto made one last attempt to reconcile differences. Suspending the meetings until the afternoon, he met with Alves and Van Dunen arguing once again for the necessity of maintaining MPLA on a sound base of national unity against serious threats to Angola from the outside.

The factionalists wouldn't budge and Neto supported their expulsion.

The tentative date for the coup set after the meeting in October for a year hence—to coincide with the eve of the

next MPLA Congress—was hastily changed. No longer members of the Central Committee, the freedom of movement Alves and Van Dunen needed in order to organize was curtailed. Their plans were further aggravated when MPLA discovered arms caches in the Luanda neighborhood of Sambizanga. They then opted for the May 27 date.

MPLA Shaken

The coup attempt has clearly shaken MPLA. In the face of monumental tasks of reconstruction following the war and severe threats on both the northern and southern borders, MPLA leaders have had to confront a severe division within their own ranks.

What of the future?

Speaking in a large meeting in mid-June, President Neto again called on the Angolan people to press on with the primary tasks of national reconstruction and defense. Citing recent attacks across the Zaire border, violations of Angola air space, and bombardment of villages, Neto said that

without the reorganization of MPLA itself, "we cannot progress very far."

Thus the major result of May's coup attempt will be a further consolidation of the power of the Political Bureau of MPLA.

"All the organizations of the masses must be subordinated at all levels to the organisms of MPLA," the President declared. "The Neighborhood Commissions which must be elected, must be subordinated to the orientation of MPLA, so that we don't have parallel organizations within the country.

"In the government, its members must submit themselves to the orientation outlined by the Political Bureau. There cannot be governmental decisions that aren't controlled by the Political Bureau. All the Ministers must know that they can do only that which is authorized by the Political Bureau, and when the Political Bureau decides, they must execute those decisions as urgently as possible.

"Who leads here in Angola is the MPLA." □