

SAVIMBI, President of UNITA, interviewed by
THE ROLE OF THE ARMY IN ANGOLA transcribed

(Interview by Mike MARSIMENT)

Question : Mr. President, I have been travelling now in Angola for 22 days and one of my first impressions is the discipline and the drill of your army. This surprises me greatly. I never heard a guerrilla army behaving and acting like this before. I found, at first, it was rather strange that these rugged and tattered men should be so smart in their drill and discipline, I expected a band of adventures almost. But this is not the case. I know you are the commander-in-chief of the army. I would like to hear your views on this. You must have decided to turn your army into a sort of a professional army.

Answer : I think that we started this when we entered Angola in June 1968. The reason is that we found our own forces dispersed and scattered in a vast area. They did not have the same standards of training, and the same discipline, although all of them have the same strength. They are very busy organizing and mobilizing the people. I think this represented a danger to our guerrilla army and liberation war, because the guerrillas were going to be divided into regional groupings which could not represent any effective force against the Portuguese colonialists. Then, we decided to unite the army under one discipline, training and drill. Another thing, is that we believe that in the liberation struggle the army will play an important role.

We use the army to mobilize the people, to fight and sometimes even to work in the fields with the people. If the army is not disciplined it cannot meet all those challenges. The army would feel that it was just good in one thing and not good for other things.

Also we knew that our guerrilla army had many tasks to perform, so they had to know exactly their responsibilities. Today, 1969, we have under our control over a million people, at once, so we have to start somewhere. The army has to be the first group, in fact the starting point. Then the smaller group can go on carrying out the tasks that the party asks them to perform. The army has to show a sense of responsibility understanding and maturity. This is why we are demanding so much from our army in terms of discipline, organization and work. Otherwise, the army will represent a danger to the people. The army would not be working for the people, but rather the people would be working for them. Since the man who has the gun thinks he is stronger if he does not understand why he has the gun in his hand he is going to abuse the power of the gun against the people.

Also, the soldiers of our army come from different parts of this country, from different areas and different tribes. Today, we in each case, after each attack the military and political leaders get together to sum up experiences and with each attack, we are ready to learn and to correct mistakes. How could I describe just one attack? Which shall I choose? And why? The success and victory we have had up till now are the result of many individual victories.

are making an experiment which is proving to be effective in trying to bring together all these soldiers from different parts of Angola under one leadership, under one policy, and under one aim; the total liberation of Angola and serving the people. I think that I have no reason to say that this attempt will fail, because until now, all of them have been working harmoniously. Then, I think it will be one of the starting points for uniting the whole country, because if in the army they can work together, if they can understand the various problems of this country and this struggle, such as the function of the army as a combative and organizing force, in the future we shall use the army to reconstruct the country.

This is why it is essential that the army understands the differences between tribes without arousing antagonism. If they can say that one comes from this or that part of Angola, but all of us are Angolans working for the same goal, then, this will be the ideal army, the army that will serve the people, and not the people having to serve the army. In Angola we would not like our people to be frightened by the army. On the contrary, the army must understand the complex problems that we are facing today and that we shall face tomorrow.

&

Also we knew that our guerrilla army had many tasks to perform, so they had to know exactly their responsibilities. Today, 1963, we have under our control over a million people, therefore, we have to start somewhere. The army has to be the first group in fact the starting point. Then the smaller group can go on carrying out the tasks that the party asks them to perform. The army has to show a sense of responsibility understanding and maturity. This is why we are demanding so much from our army in terms of discipline, organization and work. Otherwise, the army will represent a danger to the people. The army would not be working for the people, but rather the people would be working for them. Since the man who has the gun thinks he is stronger, if he does not understand why he has the gun in his hand he is going to abuse the power of the gun against the people. Also, the soldiers of our army come from different parts of this country, from different areas and different tribes. Today, we