

Late last year the second ordinary congress of the MPLA workers party met in Luanda

"WE DON'T WANT our elders just to stay in their offices in Luanda. We want them to get out into the provinces where the people produce," said a message read by an Angolan children's organisation at an MPLA congress late last year.

The Agostinho Neto Pioneers read its message at the second ordinary congress of the MPLA-Workers' Party, held in Luanda in December.

The message reflected the climate of criticism and debate surrounding the congress, which had been canvassed countrywide.

"We held the real congress throughout 1985," said one delegate.

"We only came here to ratify the decisions."

Like other congresses, this one also took place in the midst of war.

But this has been a good training ground for those cadres who have had to struggle to maintain and defend the country's territorial independence, while at the same time providing basic social services and infrastructures in these war zones.

The war is not going to stop MPLA's progress

This accounts for the respect given to the delegates from the southern regions at the congress.

Over the years the Angolan army has learnt to deal with this situation of indefinite war, and has responded by modernising.

The young army commanders, trained in struggles of 1975 against Unita, against the MPLA's second rival movement, the FNLA, and against the South African invaders, came close to capturing the Unita headquarters at Jamba, in the far south-east near the border with Namibia.

They were only prevented from doing so by the massive South African intervention at Mavinga in September. Despite heavy losses, the Angolan army showed its growing strength and increasing ability to stand up to South Africa's military might.

Thus Angola need not be forced to capitulate to Unita, but can continue to defend itself successfully while at the same time conducting diplomatic initiatives.

The young army leaders made a substantial contribution to the con-

gress debate, especially the decision not to negotiate with Unita.

Because of the important part the army plays in maintaining stability in Angola's everyday life the new Central Committee contains 33 members who are drawn from the army.

The Congress Hall also reverberated to declarations of solidarity most notably from the MPLA's comrades in Mozambique and the Congo, who sent delegations headed by Presidents Samora Machel and Dennis Sassou-Nguessou.

President Machel stressed the close historic ties between MPLA and Frelimo. The two revolutions ran on parallel paths, and shared the common denominator of South African-sponsored destabilisation.

Angolan president Jose' Eduardo dos Santos said imperialism in Southern Africa was attempting to reverse Mozambique and Angola's chosen paths of socialist development.

The Soviet Union and Cuba also sent top-level delegations to the congress to show their continued

support for the Angolan revolution.

The Congress examined problems within the party. It looked at the failure to circulate information within and between party structures, and at the neglect of the rural areas, where the majority of the population still live.

This problem was reflected in the class breakdown of the congress delegates. There were 682 delegates, amongst whom: 1,7 percent were peasants; 24,9 percent industrial workers; and 49,9 percent white-collar workers. The congress stressed the need to establish peasants' associations, and to give assistance to the peasant farming sector.

When discussing the economy delegates attacked those who wanted to 're-establish capitalist relations of production'.

Many technicians complained contracts of work were given to foreign countries when there was no shortage of Angolan technicians with similar qualifications.

The report of the outgoing central committee called for a reduction in the amount of foreigners employed.

The congress also stressed the need for the Angolan economy to break free from its dependence on oil exports. About 90 percent of its export income comes from oil. A call was made to rebuild the coffee, timber and diamond industries.

But the situation cannot change overnight, and for the time being Angolan oil must provide the necessary money for Angola to continue defending itself and to buy the goods it cannot produce itself.

The most emotional moments of the Congress came with the election of the new Central Committee consisting of 90 people. The newly-elected members include young cadres who distinguished themselves in military and economic tasks in the country's most difficult provinces.

The new Party leadership forms a cohesive and disciplined group around the figure of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos. It is this core of people who are now at the helm of the MPLA.

"We held the real congress throughout 1985," said one delegate. "We only came here to ratify the decisions."

Like other congresses this one also took place in the midst of war. It meant that the defence of Angola's independence was one of the most important themes.

Since independence Angola has been under attack and for most of this time substantial tracts of Southern Angola have been under Unita control.

Unita are the losers in a 20 year war



'Judas' Savimbi, leader of the rebel Angolan movement UNITA.

THE FIRST contact between Jonas Savimbi and the US government was in 1961, while Savimbi was studying in Europe.

After hearing an American spokesperson speaking about US support for self-determination for all peoples of the world, Savimbi arrived at the US Embassy in Bern, Switzerland, and introduced himself as the future president of Angola.

Clearly, the US is now interested in taking Savimbi up on his offer.

Savimbi's politics have swung in many directions since then. It seems Savimbi is a politician whose interest is power, and is not choosy about who or what helps him.

Initially he worked with the Angolan independence movement, FNLA, which the US was backing as an alternative to the Soviet-supported Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

But tensions within the FNLA leadership led to a split, and in

1966, Unita the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola was formed, under Savimbi's leadership.

After two decades of nationalist rebellion and guerrilla warfare, Angola won its independence from Portugal in 1975. The Marxist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA soon proved it had majority support, and in 1976 established the People's Republic of Angola.

But this did not happen without determined US and South African moves to put Unita in power.

Through America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), massive funding was being pumped into Unita. With US backing, SA invaded southern Angola in early-1976 in the hopes of leading Unita to victory. This failed, and when the CIA's involvement was exposed, the US government passed the Clarke Amendment law which banned further aid to the rebels.

Shortly after this SA raid, Cuban forces were brought in to help defend Angola against further raids and destabilisation by Unita and the SADF.

A decade later, the Cuban forces are still there. Ironically, one of their tasks is to protect American oil installations in the northern provinces from Unita attack.

American firms drill over 80 percent of Angola's oil, making it Angola's largest training partner. But, Savimbi has vowed to destroy the most important American oil installation a Gulf Chevron plant in

Cabinda. Support for Savimbi has placed Washington in an awkward position of providing military assistance to an organisation planning to sabotage US property.

Savimbi's explanation that "we don't want to kill Americans, but we have to do something to stop those billions going into the coffers of the Russians and Cubans" disqualifies him as a terrorist in the eyes of the Reagan administration.

Unita's aims are clear: to grind the Angolan economy to a halt; to prevent development; and to destroy agriculture.

All this to stir up discontent with the government.

At present, Savimbi is trying to force the MPLA government to share power with Unita.

He claims control of a third of the country.

But his chances of winning greater power are small seizing power from the MPLA would require resources Savimbi doesn't have, and the MPLA is not prepared to negotiate a compromise.

And although the Angolan economy has been severely damaged by the civil war, the MPLA is supported by the majority of the Angolan people.

An MPLA spokesperson, Gaspar Martins, summarised the MPLA's position saying, "The US is backing the loser. Savimbi is a loser. He cannot win."

"To us he is known as 'Judas' Savimbi because of his treason linking himself to SA."

Welcoming Savimbi with an

JONAS SAVIMBI, leader of the Angolan rebel movement Unita, recently returned from a highly-successful American tour.

He met with US President Ronald Reagan, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defence, and heads of most major American newspapers.

He left with a promise of between \$10 and \$15 million in US military aid, plus further millions for other forms of aid.

The Reagan administration is eager to prove its determination to 'roll back communism' by backing guerillas fighting Soviet-backed states. It depicts Angola as a battleground between the forces of light and darkness, and Savimbi as

the one leader capable of 'restoring democracy'.

One small problem though, is that this support for Unita lands it in an effective military alliance with Pretoria. The SA government has been backing Unita for many years.

But alliances between the Reagan administration and Pretoria are not new.

Previous administrations favoured increasing isolation of the SA regime, but within five months of Reagan's taking office in 1981 Pik Botha had paid an official visit to the US. It was clear that Reagan's constructive engagement policy meant a closer relationship with the SA government, sup-