

*“The Father of the Revolution”: History, Memory, and the FNLA*

*Veterans of Pomfret*

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By

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**Declaration**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people, has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The “official” narrative of the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (National Front for the Liberation of Angola, or FNLA) as presented by FNLA documents and scholars such as Christine Messiant and Inge Brinkman, paints a picture of a liberation movement that fragmented and lost its credibility over time, from its inception in 1962 to its demise in 1978. In part, this was due to the actions, or rather inaction of its authoritarian and highly paranoid leader Holden Roberto. In contrast, however, former FNLA fighters I have interviewed remember the FNLA and Holden Roberto as having been the righteous and just vanguard of the Angolan struggle against Portuguese colonialism, and later against the MPLA Soviet “puppet” regime. For the ex-FNLA fighters, the FNLA stood for progress, inclusivity, and justice, to the extent that many of these former fighters have proclaimed their continued loyalty to the FNLA to this day. By making use of concepts such as memory, myth, as well as senses of place, belonging and identity, this thesis will examine these two divergent narratives, and will posit that the respondents’ reflections on the FNLA are ultimately tied to their present identities as forgotten and betrayed war veterans.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Christian Claassen

Cape Town

May 2016

## MAP OF ANGOLA



\* Department of Foreign Affairs of the Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile, G.R.A.E. Actualities Nr. 2, 1970, Arquivo Mario Pinto de Andrade, 04308.004.019, Casa Comum, Fundação Mario Soares.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

FNLA – National Front for the Liberation of Angola

UPA – Union of the Peoples of Angola

PDA – Democratic Party of Angola

UPNA – Union of the Peoples of the North of Angola

GRAE – Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile

MPLA – Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola

UNITA – National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

PIDE – International and State Defence Police

SWAPO – South West Africa People's Organisation

ANC – African National Congress

IFP – Inkatha Freedom Party

SADF – South African Defence Force

SANDEF – South African National Defence Force

USA – United States of America

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## INTRODUCTION

In 1962, an independence movement calling itself the *National Front for the Liberation of Angola*, or FNLA, was formed in what was then Léopoldville, now Kinshasa. The FNLA purported to be fighting for the liberation of Angola from Portuguese colonial rule, and was one of three independence movements, the others being the *Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola*, MPLA, and the *Union for the Total Independence of Angola*, UNITA, who engaged the Portuguese colonial regime in a war of independence that would last until 1974. Throughout the Angolan war for independence, the FNLA was regarded as being the strongest independence movement in terms of troop and weapon numbers and enjoyed widespread international recognition. However, by late 1975, it was clear that the MPLA, assisted by Cuba and the Soviet Union, had turned the tables on the FNLA, and was able to assert itself as the government of an independent Angola. This was challenged by the FNLA and UNITA, and the three parties engaged each other in a brutal and long civil war that was to last until 2002. However, due to various reasons, the FNLA collapsed in 1978 and became insignificant for the remainder of the conflict. Also in 1975, several FNLA fighters who had been stationed in the south of Angola and formed part of an abortive FNLA - South African coalition that aimed to wrest the capital, Luanda, away from the MPLA, found themselves abandoned by their commander, and cut off from other FNLA forces in the north of Angola. Facing attacks by MPLA, Cuban and UNITA troops, many of these FNLA fighters fled to refugee camps on the border with what was then South West Africa. From there, some joined the South African Defence Force to be deployed as 32 Battalion, a counter-insurgency force that operated in the border region until the unit was relocated to the South African town of Pomfret in 1989 in preparation for Namibia's independence in 1990.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bothma, L. "Buffalo Soldiers: South Africa's 32 Battalion", L. J. Bothma, Bloemfontein.; Nortje, P. *The Terrible Ones: A Complete History of 32 Battalion, Volume 1*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2012.

Given the significant role that the FNLA has played in Angolan history during the mid-twentieth century, it is surprising that it has been accorded so little scholarly attention. Although it is often mentioned as part of the broader literature on the Angolan war for independence and civil war, see for instance the body of scholarly work by John Marcum, René Pélissier, Douglass Wheeler, David Birmingham, Linda Heywood and Christine Messiant, to name but a few, the overall history of the FNLA has not been dealt with in any particular detail. The MPLA and UNITA, on the other hand, have enjoyed a great deal more academic attention. Scholars such as Inge Brinkman and Justin Pearce have explored to what extent factors such as ideology, identity, ethnicity and regionalism have influenced the MPLA and UNITA's political, social and military behaviour during the independence and civil wars.<sup>3</sup> Even in studies where the FNLA is accorded a more central focus, such as Jean Martial Arsénne Mbah's account which looks at the political rivalries between the FNLA and MPLA, the FNLA is dealt with in relation to another movement rather than in its own right.<sup>4</sup> It must be noted, however, that given its limited scope, this thesis will not endeavour to provide a complete and detailed history and analysis of the FNLA.

Rather, I will focus on oral history interviews that I have conducted with a group of former FNLA fighters now living in Pomfret, specifically looking at how this group speak of and relate to the FNLA in the present. One former FNLA fighter, Pedro Manuel, whom I interviewed for this thesis, had the following to say about the FNLA and its leader:

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance: Brinkman, I. *A War for People: Civilians, Mobility and Legitimacy in South-East Angola during the MPLA's War for Independence*, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, Köln, 2005.; Pearce, J. *Control, ideology and identity in civil war: The Angolan Central Highlands 1965-2002*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Mbah, J. *As rivalidades políticas entre a Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) e o Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) : 1961-1975*, Mayamba Editora, Luanda, 2010.

Holden Roberto of the FNLA [...] [was] fighting for freedom. FNLA is the father of the revolution for freedom. [...] We wanted a united government, all together for the same objectives. [...] Holden Roberto wanted to unite all the groups and people.<sup>5</sup>

The above statement portrays the FNLA and its leader Holden Roberto as having been just and virtuous, striving to unite all Angolans in the fight for freedom. This narrative reflects the general mood of other FNLA veterans that I have interviewed. In contrast, scholarly accounts of the FNLA, as well as official FNLA documents, provide a different narrative, namely that of the rise and fall of a movement that slowly disintegrated and lost its credibility from its inception in 1962, until its demise in 1978. According to this view, the FNLA lacked organisational capacity and was being led by a leader who was paranoid, autocratic, and accused of widespread misappropriation of FNLA equipment and funds. As such, the key question that this thesis will explore is: *How and why was the myth and memory of an unblemished FNLA produced and sustained by the FNLA veterans of Pomfret?*

To address this question, I will focus on the respondents, their particular experiences, and how they have come to grapple with these. I will argue that the respondents have experienced several stages of dislocation and processes of displacement: having experienced internal displacement during the Angolan war for independence; having fled to refugee camps after their military defeat in 1975; and having been relocated to South Africa from Namibia in 1989. The veterans of Pomfret were further subjected to forced removal attempts in 2008, and continue to live a life in limbo, with the prospect of losing their current homes being ever present. From the interviews, it is clear that feelings of despair, and unresolved loss and fear, have come to dominate their everyday lives. It is within this context that I argue their romanticisation of the

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<sup>5</sup>Comment by former FNLA combatant Pedro Manuel, who had joined the FNLA in 1967 at the age of 19. Interview between Pedro Manuel and Christian Claassen, 10 September 2014, Pomfret.

FNLA has taken shape, and I explore this by making use of notions of militarised masculinity, as well as gendered loss and dislocation. Furthermore, I will draw on notions of power throughout this thesis, relating not only to the power relations in my fieldwork and my subsequent interpretation and analysis but also how respondents have struggled with a loss of social potency as they attempt to cling to fragments of power which has eroded over time. Moreover, I will look at the relationship between public and private remembering and forgetting, and will posit that the myth of an unblemished FNLA promoted by the Pomfret veterans can be seen as a response to counter the MPLA and ANC governments' master narratives which actively exclude the FNLA and 32 Battalion. So too, understanding how respondents have wrestled with limited and constrained choices throughout their lives is a central theme.

It is also worth noting that the topic of this thesis underwent several major changes during my studies. I had initially aimed to use the FNLA and the respondents I had interviewed as a case study with which to problematise the greed versus grievance debate as presented by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, with the latter scholars positing that participation in civil war stemmed from one's greed to profit from the conflict.<sup>6</sup> However, after some time and several discussions with my supervisors, I came to realise that the greed versus grievance dichotomy was beginning to constrain my research. I also came to realise that the scope of the project that I was determined to continue with, namely ascertaining why the veterans interviewed for this thesis chose to join the FNLA, was far too broad. I could only hope to arrive at very thin and questionable conclusions based on my limited research, and drawing mostly on research conducted by other scholars, which contained biases and problems as well. It is through this

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<sup>6</sup> Collier, P., and Hoeffler, A. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War", *Oxford Economic Papers*, vol. 56, no. 4, 2004.

process, with the assistance of my supervisors, that I came to settle on the present topic. I had become aware of the two distinct FNLA narratives that were beginning to reveal themselves, and it became clear that the research that I had conducted lent itself to an oral history approach, in order to explore how these two narratives relate to each other. It is with this in mind that the next section of this introduction will look at oral history methodology in more detail, in preparation for later chapters of this thesis.

## **Methodology**

Oral history interviews form the basis of this thesis. More specifically, I conducted semi-structured thematic interviews with the aim of asking specific questions regarding the interviewees' experiences of the FNLA. This was done within a wider framework of a life history interview, with the intent of tracking the respondents' experiences with the FNLA over space and time. According to Robert Atkinson, "the life story interview does not necessarily seek historical truth, [but rather] the storyteller's version of or perspective on what he or she remembers happened, [...] what the respondents want to tell." For Atkinson, this in itself "tells us a good deal about what we really want to know."<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, respondents were asked to recall their early childhood, their adolescent years, as well as their early adult years. Thus, respondents were asked to recall "life phases" in a chronological way.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, while respondents were asked when they first encountered the FNLA, when they had joined, and how they experienced the FNLA, they were also asked how their closest relatives perceived the FNLA, as well as how the FNLA interacted with their immediate communities. As such, interviews did not attempt to establish an "objective series of events", but much rather sought

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<sup>7</sup> Atkinson, R. "The Life Story Interview", in Gubrium, J., and Holstein J. *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*, Sage Publications, 2001, pp. 135-136.

<sup>8</sup> Plummer, K. "Getting and Doing Life Stories", in Plummer, K. (ed.) *Documents of Life 2: An Invitation to a Critical Humanism*, Sage Publishers, London, 2000, pp. 128-133.

to understand how respondents made sense of the world in which they lived.<sup>9</sup> The above can thus be understood to be an *interactionist* approach, which Silverman describes as seeking to “generate data which gives an authentic insight into people’s experiences”.<sup>10</sup>

Respondents were requested to sign a consent form, allowing me to use their interviews for this thesis, as well as permitting the storage of their interviews at the University of Cape Town Libraries. Before signing, I explained what exactly the interviews would be used for, as well as who could access the interviews once stored at UCT Libraries. Respondents were given the opportunity to make amendments to the consent form before signing. The bulk of the interviews were conducted in Portuguese, with the aid of a translator. Interviews conducted in English were transcribed by myself while I made use of the services of a translator to have the Portuguese interviews transcribed. The next sections will take a closer look at oral history, by discussing methodological issues that often accompany an oral history approach, while also looking at concepts such as memory, myth, and senses of self, place and belonging in more detail.

### What is Oral History?

Although borrowed from memory and refugee studies, concepts such as memory, myth, as well as senses of place, belonging and identity have come to feature strongly in oral history. These ideas will form a key part of later chapters, which will endeavour to analyse and make sense of why the FNLA veterans interviewed for this thesis speak about the FNLA in the way they do. As such, below, I will briefly outline and discuss them in more detail. Broadly speaking,

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<sup>9</sup> Plummer, “Getting and Doing Life Stories”, p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> Silverman, D. *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, Sage Publications, London, 1993, p. 25.

oral history can be seen as being a process, a knowledge transaction (mostly in the form of an interview) between a researcher, and a respondent. Alessandro Portelli, for instance, notes that oral history is a “[...] sequence of verbal processes and constructs generated by cultural and personal encounters in the context of fieldwork between the narrator(s) and the historian [...].”<sup>11</sup> As such, the relationship between the two (or more) parties participating in the interview process will invariably shape how the interviewer and interviewee interact with each other, and various factors may influence the outcome of the interview.

For instance, Minkley and Rassool point out the “[...] difficulties of the changing ‘knowledge transactions’ between interviewer and interviewee over time, the differences of age, colour, class, and gender, the issues of language and translation and those of subjectivity, memory and reliability”.<sup>12</sup> However, as Valerie Yow argues, these factors, which include culture, ethnicity, language and gender, influence not only how the interviewees interact with the interviewer and vice versa, but also impact on how the researcher shapes his or her research agenda, in the ways the researcher “[...] ask[s] questions and respond[s] to narrators and interpret[s] and evaluate[s] what they say”.<sup>13</sup> The above is particularly relevant for this thesis, and I will explore this matter in more detail in chapter three.

Other key points to take into consideration are the aspects of interpretation and analysis. Historians need to be aware of the risk of collapsing interviews “[...] into historical realist

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<sup>11</sup> Portelli, A., *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1997, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Minkley, G., and Rassool, C. “Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa”, in Nuttall, S., and Coetzee, C. (eds.) *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1998, p. 96.

<sup>13</sup> Yow, V. “‘Do I Like Them Too Much?’: Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa”, in Perks, R., and Thomson, A. (eds.), *The Oral History Reader (2nd Edition)*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 57.

narrative[s]”.<sup>14</sup> This applies especially to the writing of transcripts as well as the final analysis of the interviews, where “oral transcripts, their construction, and their re-presentation in history typically reflect a process of selection, editing, embellishing, and deleting the material of individual memory [...]”.<sup>15</sup> Kum-Kum Bhavnani argues that “knowledge is socially constructed”, and hence, is subject to certain power relations.<sup>16</sup> The very act of recording interviews, transcribing, and later interpreting, analysing and writing, is a form of knowledge construction and production. Historians exercise their power over the interviewee as they edit, shape, cut out and splice together the interviews to suit their research agenda. These power relations extend to interviewee-interviewer dynamics within the settings of the interviews. As Portelli states: “The life story as a full, coherent oral narrative does not exist in nature; it’s a synthetic product of social science [...]. [...] oral history begins in the orality of the narrator but is directed towards (and concluded by) the written text of the historian.”<sup>17</sup>

## Memory

The notion of memory has become a major dialogical feature in the work of oral historians. As Tim Keegan notes, “[...] human memory is given to error, misconception, elision, distortion, elaboration and downright fabrication.”<sup>18</sup> As such, oral narratives need to be located within and in relation to “[...] memory and tradition, myth, and legend, in the making of [...] identities”.<sup>19</sup> It is equally important to note that memory is by no means a static repository of facts or a final product, but rather, an active and continuous construction in the present, that

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<sup>14</sup> Minkley and Rassool, “Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa”, p. 98-99.

<sup>15</sup> Minkley and Rassool, “Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa”, p. 99.

<sup>16</sup> Bhavnani, K. “‘What’s Power Got To Do With It?’: Empowerment and Social Research”, in Parker, I., and Shottel, J. (eds.), *Deconstructing Social Psychology*, Routledge, London and New York, 1990, p. 142.

<sup>17</sup> Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Minkley and Rassool, “Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa”, p. 91.

<sup>19</sup> Minkley and Rassool, “Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa”, p. 96.

draws on the past, present, and conceptions of the future. As such, memory, as well as identity, is constantly negotiated and renegotiated.

As Sean Field notes, “[...] visual traces and emotions are framed as memories through people’s imagination and movements within physical, social, and cultural landscapes.”<sup>20</sup> According to Field, the interview process involves the “co-creation of oral histories”.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, the oral history interview is much more of an inter-view, or an exchange of views, where the respondent gives meaning to visual memories through narration in an oral form, and the researcher receives these words, imbued with emotions and feelings, and reconstructs and imagines the world the respondent has described. Similarly, Henry Greenspan notes that the retelling of someone’s story is an active process of construction while Abrams refers to memory as being an active process involving the creation of meanings.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, as Abrams notes, a researcher’s questions act as cues, “resulting in the respondent’s retrieval of a series of memories which are then remembered and narrated.”<sup>23</sup> In this sense, memories are constructed in the present, as an interviewee draws on past experiences, links them together, interprets them, and chooses how to ascribe meaning to these memories through language. Memory is therefore by no means fixed, but fluid. Invariably, the physical context of the interview setting, as well as the researcher-respondent dynamics influences how the respondent chooses to narrate his/her memories. This does not mean that

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<sup>20</sup> Field, S. *Oral History, Community, and Displacement: Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Field, *Oral History, Community, and Displacement*, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Greenspan, H. “Collaborative Interpretation of Survivor’s Accounts: A Radical Challenge to Conventional Practice”, in *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2011, p. 87.; Abrams, L. *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, London, 2010, p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 84.

“truths” are not conveyed, but rather, it is important to note how these “truths” are shaped by various factors, such as power relations, culture and memory.

## Myth

Tied to the concept of memory, is the concept of myth. However, rather than seeing myth as a fallible byproduct of memory, Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson point out that myth is, in fact, a fundamental component of human thought. Samuel and Thompson argue that rather than seeing myths as “blurred experience [and] as disorderly masses of fragments”, myths must be seen as accounts molded “[...] through a process of narrative shaping in which both conscious and unconscious, myth and reality, played significant parts.”<sup>24</sup> As such, these myths are “[...] embedded in real experience: both growing from it, and helping to shape its perception.”<sup>25</sup> Samuel and Thompson further note that myths act as tools to anchor one’s sense of identity and place in the past, a world that has been lost, “and that it is the omissions and shaping which make these stories also myth.”<sup>26</sup> However, rather than myth only aiding one to negotiate senses of self and place in relation to the past, myths also act as tools that enable one to negotiate the present. As Michael Roper points out, reconstructing the past can act as a means to mediate death and loss, and that it can aid in restoring the connection between past and present.<sup>27</sup> Hence, “[...] myths are a way not only of structuring memory, but also of exploring experience”, and that one must consider myths “[...] not only as special clues to the past, but equally as windows on the making and remaking of individual and collective consciousness, in which both fact and fantasy, past and present, each has its part.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Samuel, R., and Thompson, P. (eds.), *The Myths We Live By*, Routledge, London and New York, 1990, pp. 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> Samuel and Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Samuel and Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> Roper, M. “The Unconscious Work of History”, in *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2014, p. 181.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel and Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, pp. 13, 21.

In his influential study concerning the violent clashes between factory workers and police in the Italian town of Terni in 1949, it struck Alessandro Portelli that some of the accounts by respondents he had interviewed concerning the death of one of the factory workers at the hands of the police were so varied, and did not match up to the official report on the worker's death. However, rather than dismissing these accounts entirely based on their lack of reliability, Portelli argues that these myths are significant in that they "[...] became the ground upon which collective memory and imagination built a cluster of tales, symbols, legends, and imaginary reconstructions."<sup>29</sup> Like Samuel and Thompson, Portelli argues that myths are valuable in that they "[...] lead us through, and beyond facts to their meanings."<sup>30</sup> Portelli goes on to point out that the narratives respondents convey are never entirely consistent: "Most narrators seek to confer coherence to their stories by adhering to a (relatively) consistent principle or 'mode' of selection: the sphere of politics; the life of the community; and personal experiences." However, "[...] a given event can be placed in more than one mode."<sup>31</sup> As Cathrine Brun notes, "[...] fantasy becomes a social practice, and imagination becomes part of the construction of people's biographies which in turn become partly imagined lives [...]"<sup>32</sup> Another point Portelli makes is that there is much information to be extracted from seemingly "false" testimonies, as "[t]he importance of oral testimony may not lie in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no 'false' oral sources."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Portelli, A. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other Stories: Form and Weaving in Oral History*, State University of Washington Press, New York, 1991, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other Stories*, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other Stories*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Brun, C. "Reterritorializing the Relationship between People and Place in Refugee Studies", *Geografiska Annaler*, vol 83, no. 1, 2001, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> Portelli, A. "What Makes Oral History Different", in Perks, R., and Thomson, A. (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 68.

## Senses of Place, Belonging and Identity

Memory and myth are particularly relevant when conducting interviews with migrants and refugees. While the participants in this study are not refugees as such, they have been displaced from their homeland. Two related concepts that form a key part of the vast literature on refugee and migrant studies are senses of place and senses of belonging, both of which contribute to one's sense of self and identity. As Meritt Buyer points out, one's sense of identity is "actively and strategically constructed in relation to multiple spaces for multiple purposes".<sup>34</sup> More so, forced displacement and migration constantly pushes one to renegotiate one's sense of identity, drawing from past experiences and the life left behind, and the new and often hostile and unfamiliar environment one is faced with. For Buyer, migrants and refugees must "find a way to incorporate their histories and often painful memories into the present."<sup>35</sup>

In her study of the Lithuanian refugee community in Los Angeles, Liucija Baškauskas notes how a sense of community becomes important for refugees and migrants to maintain a sense of belonging and place. Baškauskas further observes that asserting one's ethnic identity through cultural and community rituals becomes important to reasserting one's connection and sense of belonging to an ethnically homogenous refugee and migrant community.<sup>36</sup> Thus, she notes that events such as church services on Sundays not only offer an opportunity for community members to interact but also fulfil the important role of reconstructing and maintaining a sense of belonging that attempts to re-establish bonds to a life left behind.<sup>37</sup> In this sense, one's sense

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<sup>34</sup> Buyer, M. "Negotiating Identity and Displacement among the Somali Refugees of Cape Town", in *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 60, no. 2, 2008, p. 226.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Baškauskas, L. "Multiple Identities: Adjusted Lithuanian Refugees in Los Angeles", *Urban Anthropology*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1977, p. 142.

<sup>37</sup> Baškauskas, "Multiple Identities", pp. 149-150.

of place draws both on the life left behind, as well as the ethnic community that has been constructed in the host country. Importantly, however, senses of place cannot be seen as being static and refugees are not in a passive pathological state of being.<sup>38</sup> Cathrine Brun reminds us that even those that have experienced forced migration are able to reconstruct senses of place and belonging, drawing on the life that was lost.<sup>39</sup> As such, rather than arguing that refugees need to be either integrated or repatriated, one must realise that people's relationships to identity, culture and place are fluid and that through active rituals of remembrance and imagining, refugees and migrants attempt to gain control over place and territory.<sup>40</sup>

As such, one is constantly in the process of re-negotiating one's present sense of self with reference to one's past. As Knudsen states: "To secure a positive feeling of self (who I am) through identity management, the individual often tries to negotiate on the basis of past, now lost, positions (who I was) rather than present conditions (who I have become)."<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Merrit Buyer states that by holding on to a refugee identity, as someone who is not settled, "[...] they retain [...] the possibility of a better future [...]". Moreso, Buyer argues that "Remembrance, in essence, points to the incompleteness of the present, of the unfilled desires that the individual has lived within his struggle to survive."<sup>42</sup> In conclusion, as Cathrine Brun notes, senses of place and belonging are not static, but are continuously negotiated and renegotiated, and constructed and reconstructed.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Brun, "Reterritorializing the Relationship between People and Place in Refugee Studies", p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Brun, "Reterritorializing the Relationship between People and Place in Refugee Studies", p. 22.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Emdon, L. *"Being a refugee, that means....you are done being a housewife or a mother": Oral Histories of Zimbabwean refugee women living in Cape Town*, Honours Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2010, p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> Buyer, "Negotiating Identity and Displacement among the Somali Refugees of Cape Town", p. 233.

<sup>43</sup> Brun, "Reterritorializing the Relationship between People and Place in Refugee Studies", p. 18.

From the above, it is clear that concepts such as memory and myth are invaluable tools that can be used to analyse and interpret a person's sense of place and belonging to reveal clues as to how interviewees relate to them over space and time. As Sean Field argues, "People do not face the present as an isolated and empty space, sandwiched between the past and future." Rather, "the present" is "[...] a complex series of interlocking histories whose interactions have to be re-constructed [...]."44 By drawing on concepts such as memory and myth, it becomes clear that one's sense of self and belonging is influenced not only by one's past but also by one's present, as well as one's sense of future. As such, "consciously and unconsciously, identities allow people to deploy strategies for dealing with the conflicted demands of daily life."<sup>45</sup> Chapter three will draw on the above themes in more detail, and will note how they have shaped my research for this thesis

### **Thesis Structure**

The aim of this thesis is twofold: for one, it will seek to locate the history of the FNLA within the wider context of Angolan history up until the second half of the twentieth century. This will enable me to locate the origins of the FNLA within the context of Angolan history and the history of the region, and will also allow me to track the FNLA's rise and decline over time. Secondly, I will analyse the interviews which I have conducted for this thesis with reference to concepts such as memory, myth and senses of self, place and belonging, as well as masculinity, nationalism and militarism. This will allow me to contrast the two opposing narratives of the FNLA: the first consisting of the scholarly narrative that presents the rise and decline of the

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<sup>44</sup> Field, *Oral History, Community, and Displacement*, p. 53.

<sup>45</sup> Field, *Oral History, Community, and Displacement*, p. 62.

FNLA while the second consists of recollections by former FNLA soldiers whom I have interviewed for this thesis.

Chapter one will provide a brief history of Angola, from its pre-colonial origins, up until the mid-twentieth century. This is followed by chapter two, which will provide an overview of the history of the FNLA within the broader context of Angolan colonial history, ranging from the formation of early political organisations in the 1940s and 1950s, up until the FNLA's demise during the late 1970s. Chapter two will also present the first of the two FNLA narratives, namely that of a movement in steady decline, plagued by infighting, as well as a lack of leadership and organisational planning, among other aspects. More specifically, chapter two will aim to track how the FNLA came to disintegrate and lose its credibility. This will be done by drawing on official FNLA documents, as well as secondary scholarly literature on the FNLA. In chapter three, the Pomfret community, where the interviews for this thesis were conducted, will be looked at more closely. Not only will this chapter provide a brief historical overview of the community, but it will also include a research report, where I will present and discuss issues of particular interest that I have encountered during my research. Chapter four will then move on to the second of the FNLA narratives, namely the recollections of the former FNLA soldiers, which present the FNLA as having been a just organisation that was at the vanguard of the fight for Angolan liberation. Chapter four will also provide selected interview vignettes, and will then analyse sections of the interviews in more detail by drawing on concepts such as memory, myth, and senses of self, place and belonging, in an attempt to make better sense of why the FNLA veterans chose to talk about the FNLA in the way they did.

## CHAPTER 1: A BRIEF HISTORY OF ANGOLA

As will be discussed in chapter two, the FNLA had its origins within the Bakongo nationalist movement in northern Angola during the early twentieth century. Ethnicity and tradition played an important role in shaping its nationalist discourse, which initially revolved around the idea of re-establishing the old Kongo Kingdom. Given this focus on Angola's pre-twentieth century history, this chapter will provide a brief history of Angola, with reference to the history of the region as well as the context of Portuguese colonialism up until the early twentieth century. This will allow us to trace a few key developments which would later lead up to the Angolan war for independence. Specifically, I will explore how regional as well as international events impacted on Angolan society and created the conditions that allowed for the outbreak of violence that will be looked at more closely in chapter two.

### **Ethnicity and Tribalism**

Before continuing, it is worth mentioning a few conceptual problems relating to the terms ethnicity and tribe. Terrence Ranger argues that Europeans misunderstood the realities of pre-colonial Africa. In contrast to the notion that African societies were living in an unchanging, ancient context, within a framework of hierarchical status, Ranger contends that customs were flexible, and provided a means not only to maintain a sense of community but were also able to adapt to changing contexts.<sup>46</sup> So too, identities were by no means fixed, and individuals were able to move in and out of multiple identities. According to Ranger, "the boundaries of the 'tribal' polity and the hierarchies of authority within them did *not* define conceptual horizons of Africans."<sup>47</sup> Communities underwent constant changes, which included multiple processes of assimilation, disassociation, within a shifting and fluid environment. As such, present day

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<sup>46</sup> Ranger, T. "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa", in Hobsbawm, E., and Ranger, T. (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p. 247.

<sup>47</sup> Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa", p. 248.

African 'tribes' need to be seen as colonial constructs, the result of a desire to fix and immobilise communities to facilitate control and extraction. Ranger notes that there had been a "conscious determination on the part of the colonial authorities to 're-establish' order and security and a sense of community by means of defining and enforcing 'tradition'."<sup>48</sup> Customary laws and land rights were thus the results of beliefs that tribes were cultural units that possessed common languages, social systems and laws, based on kinship ties. According to Ranger, this process led to the creation of a "new and unchanging body of tradition".<sup>49</sup> Moreover, Africans began to appropriate these invented traditions to cope within the colonial context, to the extent that tradition was used to defend and maintain the authority of leaders.<sup>50</sup>

Like Ranger, Susama Mohanty points out that the term tribalism has generally been understood "as an aggregate of surviving archaic institutions and organisations associated with the tribal system, i.e. with a system of kinship, forms of inheritance, traditional ceremonies and customs, the strength of blood relationships, a sense of ethnic solidarity and so on."<sup>51</sup> Mohanty goes on to state that through various sets of relationships between these communities, or tribes, ethnic groups are formed, with these relationships founded on territorially based political unity. However, Mohanty is quick to add that tribes cannot be seen as "permanent crystalline structures", and that tribes are rather complex unions of various sub-groups, be they families, age groups, kinship bodies, clans or villages, which all come together, and form components of the ethnic group.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, one must realise that these groups are not static, while rather, "there has been a constant merging, penetration, assimilation and hiving off over the centuries, whilst many of them have moved their location under the pressure of land, hunger,

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<sup>48</sup>Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa", p. 249.

<sup>49</sup> Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa", pp. 250-151.

<sup>50</sup> Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa", pp. 252-255.

<sup>51</sup> Mohanty, S. *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa: A Study of Angola since 1960*, Sangam Books, London, 1992, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, pp. 1, 5-7.

shifting cultivation or external danger.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, according to Mohanty, tribes derive their strength from a sense of belonging which provides all its members with a sense of security and that this sense of belonging is derived from common religious and social activities as well as common interests and values. <sup>54</sup> As we will see in chapter two, this becomes particularly relevant during the early to mid-twentieth century, when forms of ethnic nationalism evolved that drew on tradition and tribal affiliation to create a sense of legitimacy and authority.

### **Pre-Colonial West Central Africa**

The Angola that we know today is in part a product of the Berlin conference of 1884-85, with the territorial borders that Angola has inherited being a product of this conference. However, this colonial construct is just that, an arbitrary amalgamation of various ethnic groups, dividing pre-colonial ethnic territories, leaving parts of ethnic groups in Angola while parts were incorporated into other newly established colonial constructs, divided by arbitrarily drawn borders. To an extent, the Angolan colonial construct has obscured the pre-colonial history of the region, and it is for this reason that the following section will look at this history in more detail.

The first inhabitants of the region were the San hunter-gatherers, who were gradually displaced by the arrival of Bantu-speaking groups sometime between 1000 CE and the thirteenth century CE. These groups brought with them technologies and knowledge such as iron work, animal husbandry and agriculture, with these Bantu groups soon coming to dominate the region and beginning to form distinct ethnolinguistic groups. <sup>55</sup> As Christopher Ehret notes, by 1100 CE,

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<sup>53</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Henderson, L. *Angola: Five Centuries of Conflict*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1979, pp. 37-40.

the first states began to be formed around the lower Congo River in South-Central Africa.<sup>56</sup> To the north of the region, just south of the Congo River, the Kongo people established their kingdom. Also in the north, closer to the coast below the Dande River, the Kimbundu established their territory. The Umbundu established themselves on the west coast and the Benguela highlands, while the Lunda-Chokwe and Nganguela groups established themselves to the east on the central highlands, or planalto, west of the Zambezi River. In the south, the Nhaneca-Humbe, Ambo, San and Herero established their territories, straddling the Kunene River.<sup>57</sup> Importantly, as Ehret points out, there existed a constant movement of people, knowledge, ideas and technologies in the area, encouraged by widespread trade relations which saw the trading of copper, raffia cloth, and iron goods. For the kings and chiefs of the time, controlling and drawing tribute from the movement of people and goods formed a vital part of creating wealth and political power. Furthermore, legitimacy was gained from being able to act as arbiters to settle disputes, and their ability to create allegiances with neighbouring communities.<sup>58</sup> The following paragraphs will look at the largest of these groups in more detail, being the Kongo, Kimbundu, Ovimbundu, Lunda-Chokwe and Nganguela. It is important to note that these groups cannot be seen as primordial, fixed remnants of the past, but are much rather constructs of the colonial era.

The Kongo Kingdom, one of the most powerful in the region, has its roots in the fourteenth century when several smaller kingdoms came together under one king.<sup>59</sup> The Kongo kingdom is, therefore, a geopolitical construct, having been established in what is now present-day south-western Democratic Republic of Congo and parts of the Republic of Congo, and the northernmost parts of present day Angola. Their capital, Mbanza Kongo, was situated south of

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<sup>56</sup> Ehret, C. *The Civilizations of Africa*, James Currey, Oxford, 2002, p. 262.

<sup>57</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 37-40.

<sup>58</sup> Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa*, pp. 265, 269.

<sup>59</sup> Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa*, p. 270.

the Congo River in present day Angola.<sup>60</sup> The power of the Kongo Kingdom and its king was derived from controlling the local trade networks, with copper and raffia cloth being some of the key commodities to be produced by the kingdom. Straddling the lower Congo River, the kingdom was well positioned to control this vital trade artery, controlling the movement of goods and people between the Atlantic coast and the Central African interior. Its control of the coastal areas also meant that it had a monopoly on the access to cowry shells, which were used as the main form of currency at the time. As such, the Kongo kingdoms influence extended far beyond its borders. This wealth and regional influence allowed the Kongo king to bring smaller neighbouring communities to the north and south under the kingdom's hegemony, enabling it to extract tributes and compliance. However, rather than seeing the Kongo as being a homogenous society, Ehret points out that it was much more an entity based on allegiances between distinctly different communities, tied together by mutually beneficial alliances.<sup>61</sup>

The Kimbundu to the south of the Kongo were almost twice the size of the Kongo kingdom, counting some twenty distinct communities as members and occupying a large swathe of the western coastline. Like the Kongo, the Kimbundu relied mainly on an agricultural economy and traded with neighbouring groups.<sup>62</sup> In contrast, the Umbundu group established themselves on the central highlands or *planalto*. Henderson argues that the Umbundu are more homogenous than other groups, and also occupy the largest area of any other group.<sup>63</sup> The Umbundu economy was primarily based on agriculture, and also depended on trade with neighbouring groups. While the smallest political unit was formed by the village, counting between 100-1000 villagers, villages fell under the jurisdiction of numerous sub-kingdoms, and these, in turn, were ruled by various kingdoms. Henderson notes for instance that the largest

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<sup>60</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 41-44.

<sup>61</sup> Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa*, pp. 271-272.

<sup>62</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>63</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, p. 51.

kingdom, Bailundu, ruled over some 200 sub-kingdoms, with these ruling over some 300 villages each.<sup>64</sup> As such, although ethnolinguistically homogenous, the Umbundu were politically fractured. Due to their central location and size, the Umbundu came to dominate the central African trade routes, and Umbundu became an important trade language. Also, the Umbundu were very adaptable and learnt to adjust to various cultures that they encountered on their trade routes.<sup>65</sup>

The above three groups make up about 70% of present day Angola's population. A further notable ethnolinguistic group is the Lunda-Chokwe group. The group is made up of seven constituent groups, with the Lunda and Chokwe groups being the most dominant. They have come to dominate the north-east of present-day Angola. The Lunda were late arrivals to the area, having been sent by the Lunda Empire to expand their sphere of influence in the seventeenth century. These Lunda emissaries encountered the Chokwe, who were a group consisting of twelve clans ruled by chiefs. The Lunda imposed themselves on the Chokwe and founded kingdoms along the lines of the Lunda Empire. This period was also marked by Chokwe resistance, with Chokwe chiefs refusing to pay tributes to the Lunda Empire.<sup>66</sup>

The last ethnolinguistic group I will mention are the Nganguela. The Nganguela are a western construct, clumping together some 20 distinct groups, which others have also incorporated into the Lunda-Chokwe group. The Nganguela occupy present day south-east Angola west of the Zambezi, and their economy consisted of agriculture, hunting and fishing. Henderson notes that the Nganguela are the most heterogeneous of all groups in Angola, and argues that as its constituent tribes were so isolated, they did not feature strongly in Angola's history.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, p. 51.

<sup>65</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 48-52.

<sup>66</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 58-60.

<sup>67</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 61-63.

What becomes apparent from the Nganguela group, in particular, is how Western linguists and ethnologists have lumped together different tribes and have created western ethnolinguistic constructs. Importantly, however, these constructs, taught over decades in colonial schools, have been adopted by the post-colonial Angolan regime, and have so become part of Angolan identity and history. Basil Davidson notes that European misunderstanding has led to the distortion of the histories of Angolan ethnic groups. For instance, he argues that an emphasis on the differences between the groups has led Europeans to see these groups as distinct and separate socio-political entities, rather than acknowledging the linkages and similarities between them.<sup>68</sup>

As such, Davidson states that apart from the San hunter-gatherers, all other ethnolinguistic groups in present-day Angola share a common Bantu heritage originating from the Bantu migrations into the area. Each group adapted to the particular environment where they settled, which in turn resulted in further distinct developments among the groups. However, Davidson asserts that similarities in language, political and religious practices, as well as social structures, can be traced back to a single Bantu origin, and in fact, Davidson argues that these similarities can be found among Bantu groups across Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the histories of Angola's ethnolinguistic groups are by no means static or separate, but rather, have developed in a highly mobile environment of constant exchange of ideas, knowledge and people. To illustrate this point further, Wheeler and Pélissier point out that trade among the peoples of the area was widespread, and that trade routes extended to as far afield as the East African coast, providing access to the Indian Ocean trade network. Waterways such as the Congo and Zambezi

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<sup>68</sup> Davidson, B. *In the Eye of the Storm: Angola's People*, Longman, London, 1972, pp. 50-51.

<sup>69</sup> Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 65-66.

rivers acted as important highways for trade, information, knowledge and migration within the area, and aided the promotion of interconnectivity between the peoples of Central Africa.<sup>70</sup> As such, it must be said that Angola's pre-colonial history is very much connected to the early history of Central Africa as a whole.

### **The Arrival of European Explorers**

By the mid to late 15th century, successive Portuguese explorers had made their way down the west coast of Africa and had started trading commodities such as ivory, hides, pepper and amber with local communities. Later, the most important commodities to be traded were slaves, as well as sugar from Portuguese plantations in colonies such as the Canary and Cape Verde islands as well as Brazil.<sup>71</sup> When the Portuguese explorer Diogo Cão landed on the banks of the Congo River in 1482, he encountered the Kongo kingdom, a socio-political entity not much different to Portugal in the late 15th century. Apart from significant differences in naval and military technologies, there existed similarities such as the manufacturing of cloth and other crafts, as well as the Kongo's socio-political structure, like Portugal, being a kingdom. A significant early development of this meeting of the two cultures was the spread of Christianity by Portuguese missionaries, with the Kongo King Nzinga a Nkuwu being baptised in 1491, and taking on the Portuguese name of Dom João I. To a large extent, the Portuguese explorers' relations with the Kongo kingdom and its people during this time was mostly peaceful and amicable, with a few Kongo people being taken back to Portugal in order to learn Portuguese, so as to improve the relations between the two kingdoms.<sup>72</sup> Kongo traders were also able to benefit from the introduction of Portuguese goods while the presence of Portuguese ships allowed the Kongo access to trading partners that were until now beyond their reach. For

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<sup>70</sup> Wheeler, D., and Pélissier, R. *Angola*, Pall Mall Press, London, 1971, p. 26.

<sup>71</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>72</sup> Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, p. 28.

instance, access to the Atlantic Ocean trade network allowed for the arrival of new food crops such as maize and cassava. This increase in regional and trans-Atlantic trade also benefitted Portuguese ship owners, who could now act as middlemen between the different markets. Trade in the regions became so profitable that the Dutch even attempted to seize control of the port of Luanda in 1641. However, with the aid of a Brazilian expedition force, Luanda was retaken in 1648 and returned to Portuguese control. Luanda had been established to avoid taxation at the official port of Mpinda at the mouth of the Congo and was regarded as an illegal port by Portuguese officials for much of its early existence.<sup>73</sup>

However, the relations between the two kingdoms also brought forth some significant tensions within Kongo society. On the one hand, successive Kongo kings and elites adopted many European practices, such as dress and literacy, converted to Christianity and took on European names. The Kongo's capital, Mbanza Kongo, was even renamed São Salvador. On the other hand, Kongo kings and their subjects continued to practice African beliefs and customs, such as polygamy, which was frowned upon by the Christian Portuguese elite. As such, the Kongo elite increasingly traversed two starkly different ways of life, adopting multiple and often conflicting identities, an aspect which impacted Angolan societies for decades if not centuries to come. For instance, the Kongo kings made use of Christianity to support their authority. The king was able to control the appointment of parish priests throughout the Kongo and used them to exert his authority throughout his territory. As such, the Portuguese trading elite and missionaries were used to buttress the king's power and influence.<sup>74</sup>

Also, the Portuguese that were now living in the Kongo, primarily missionaries and traders,

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<sup>73</sup> Newitt, M. "Angola in Historical Context", in Chabal, P., and Vidal, N. (eds.), *Angola: The Weight of History*, Hurst & Company, London, 2007, pp. 23-24, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Newitt, "Angola in Historical Context", pp. 23-24.

began to engage in profiteering activities such as the trading in slaves and other commodities, which often caused disturbances in Kongo society.<sup>75</sup> In a letter dated 1526 addressed to the Portuguese king, King Afonso lamented that his authority was being eroded by Portuguese traders supplying his vassals with abundant goods, which he had previously used to control them. As such, his vassals would no longer obey. He went on to state that his kingdom was being slowly depopulated by the greed of slave traders who were seizing his subjects.<sup>76</sup> These tensions eventually led to a series of wars between the Kongo kingdom and the Portuguese between 1622 and 1665, with king Afonso being defeated and killed in battle in 1665. Successive Kongo kings were not able to re-establish the Kongo's regional authority, and the Kongo kingdom began entering a period of decline. By the early 17th century, Portuguese influence in the Kongo began to diminish and shift southward.<sup>77</sup>

By this time, an Afro-Portuguese community had established itself at the trading port of Luanda as an independent entity, apart from neighbouring African kingdoms, although very much connected with them through trade and other social engagements. Soon, this Afro-Portuguese elite enjoyed a privileged relationship with Portugal and began to dominate the trade between the interior and the coast. Frequent intermarriage between Portuguese and locals led to the rise of a vibrant creole culture, with the dividing lines between Portuguese and African culture, traditions and identities becoming increasingly blurred. As Newitt notes, historians have traced the current Angolan creole elite's political, social and economic power to this era.<sup>78</sup>

From the outset, Portuguese interaction with other kingdoms and peoples neighbouring its fledgling colony was not as initially amicable as with the Kongo. The Ndongo kingdom of the

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<sup>75</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 78-81.

<sup>76</sup> Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm*, p. 84.

<sup>77</sup> Newitt, "Angola in Historical Context", p. 27.

<sup>78</sup> Newitt, "Angola in Historical Context", pp. 25, 28.

Mbundu people, just south of the Kongo kingdom to which it owed its allegiance, was ruled by the Ngola (said to be the namesake of Angola), a title given to the Ndongo's king. Seeing the benefits that the Kongo elite gained from the presence of Portuguese traders and missionaries, the Ndongo king conveyed his request for the establishment of a Portuguese embassy in his territory through the Kongo king Afonso. The Ngola however, was not satisfied with the offerings made by the Portuguese, and even took a Portuguese emissary hostage for six years. In addition, tensions between the Kongo and Ngola kingdoms increased due to the competition to gain profits from the slave trade. This tension even led to a battle between the two kingdoms, both sides being supported by Portuguese soldiers, in which the Kongo army was defeated. However, the fact that Portuguese emissaries had been held captive by the Ndongo kingdom led the Portuguese to give up on diplomatic relations in favour of military conquest instead.<sup>79</sup>

This decision was supported by the fact that other European nations such as the Dutch produced better quality goods than the Portuguese and, therefore, threatened to undermine Portuguese traders in the region. Additionally, hostile African kingdoms had attacked kingdoms that Portugal had established trade links with, and consequently threatened to destroy these trade links. Lastly, however, the decision to engage in military conquest was spurred on by the rumoured existence of vast mineral reserves in the interior. An expedition to explore the interior would, however, require a military force. All of these considerations and motivations eventually led to the military conquest of the Ndongo kingdom which continued in various stages from the late 16th century until the late 17th century, while this conquest continued in other parts of the region for decades.<sup>80</sup> Subjugated communities and those that allied

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<sup>79</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 81-84.

<sup>80</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 81-84.

themselves to the Portuguese were brought into a “paternalistic relation of subservience“, referred to in Portuguese as *vassalagem*, or vassalage. In what can be described as indirect rule, the traditional authority of *sobas*, chiefs, was kept intact, and the Portuguese exerted their authority through them. Sobas, on the other hand, were required to pledge allegiance to the Portuguese, provide them with military support, and were required to pay taxes, often in the form of slaves.<sup>81</sup>

### **The Slave Trade of West Central Africa**

Slavery had been practised in the region even before the arrival of the Portuguese. However, according to Davidson, for many kingdoms in the region, slavery was not so much motivated by the exploitation of free labour or commercial gain, but rather a practice of bolstering their populations and armies, and increasing their influence, authority and wealth.<sup>82</sup> By the mid-16th century, though, there was an ever greater demand for cheap labour by Portuguese plantations across the Portuguese empire, and slaves began to be very profitable commodities. The slave trade in the interior came to be dominated by the creole elite, with traders acting as middlemen between the African chiefs and kings from whom they sourced the slaves, and the European merchants to whom they sold the slaves at Portuguese trading ports such as Luanda and Benguela.<sup>83</sup>

It must be added that captured slaves were not only bound for the slave markets on the coast, but slaves were also utilised as soldiers to wage war, and as porters by traders, carrying goods from the interior to the coast and vice-versa. More so, however, the slave trade aided the spread of European diseases such as smallpox, which decimated local populations, and caused

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<sup>81</sup> Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>82</sup> Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm*, p. 81.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

widespread famines as marauding armies destroyed or plundered food crops. The slave trade slowly began to erode the established patronage system of paying allegiance between kings, chiefs and subjects and locked these communities into a European controlled system of economic commodity dependency. To secure their power and authority, African communities were forced to comply.<sup>84</sup>

Some African communities hired small groups of Portuguese musketeers to give them the upper hand against rival communities. Combined with the rise of the slave trade, and the profitability thereof for all involved, the introduction of European weapons increased the scale and intensity of violence in the region. Christopher Cramer notes that violence began to form part of the economy of the slave trade, and that “Violence and war were integrated into the appropriation and production process [...]”<sup>85</sup>

Although the Portuguese authorities were against the trading of guns for African goods, slaves included, Dutch and British and even Portuguese traders had no such qualms. The British for instance began dominating the trade in cheaply manufactured, often technologically inferior guns in West Africa from the late 17th century onward. The gun of choice to be traded by British merchants was known as the ‘Angola gun’ and was a simple long barrelled flintlock of questionable quality. Commentators of the time noted that these guns were not proofed, nor bored and that they “[...] are sure to burst in the first hands that fires them.”<sup>86</sup> British merchants sold these guns directly at Angolan ports, but also exported them to Lisbon, from where they would be shipped to Angola by Portuguese traders. These guns became very sought after

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<sup>84</sup> Cramer, C. *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries*, Hurst and Company, London, 2006, p. 16-17.

<sup>85</sup> Cramer, *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing*, pp. 15, 17.

<sup>86</sup> Cramer, *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing*, pp. 17-19

trading goods and were very popular with African armies.<sup>87</sup>

The Portuguese slave trade continued well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and even during the 20<sup>th</sup> century forced labour in Angola continued to be commonplace. Even after the trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished and Portugal outlawed slavery in all its territories in 1869, Angolans were still being shipped to the Cape Verde islands as forced labourers to work on the plantations there. Wheeler and Pélissier estimate the total number of Angolans forced into slavery between the 16th and 19th century to have reached well over four million.<sup>88</sup>

### **Portuguese Colonialism and the Berlin Conference**

With the subjugation of the Kongo and Ndongo Kingdoms, the Portuguese continued their conquest of Angola's coastal regions. It was not until the mid-18th century that the Portuguese decided to move their conquest inland, to the central plateau, marching against the Ovimbundu kingdoms. Again, as in the coastal areas, the military conquest of the interior was accompanied by an increase in the slave trade and the subjugation of African communities.<sup>89</sup> As the Portuguese waged their war of conquest, they began to build a number of small forts as they moved inland from the coast. This network of forts was intended to enable the Portuguese to better control the territory that they had conquered. To achieve the conquest of Angola, the Portuguese needed to establish a permanent and official presence in areas such as Benguela and Luanda. To this end, about 100 Portuguese families were initially sent to Angola and were provided with seeds and implements. However, in contrast to Brazil, where sugar plantations had become the main source of economic activity, for many centuries, slavery and trade remained Angola's most profitable economic outputs, with other economic activities,

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<sup>87</sup> Cramer, *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing*, pp. 18.

<sup>88</sup> Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>89</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, p. 91.

particularly the growing of crops, remaining marginal. With the creation of the Empire of Brazil in 1822, Portugal lost its most prized possession, with the title soon being passed on to Angola. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese Empire was in decline, with its European and international political and economic power waning.<sup>90</sup>

The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 aimed to set the legal parameters for Africa's colonisation, which included the defining of colonial borders, stemming from an increase in colonial activity in Africa by Britain, France and Germany, among others. As such, it was agreed that only an effective presence in a territory would allow for a colonial power to lay claim to it. This presented Portugal with a dilemma, as it had hitherto limited its official presence to the coastal areas, with much of its colonial activity up until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century having centred on its trading ports of Luanda and Benguela. To secure its claim to the region, Lisbon had to extend its administrative reach to the farthest corners of Angola so as to establish effective occupation and control. Although being financially constrained, successive Portuguese expeditions nevertheless set out to 'pacify' these far-flung areas, with 'pacification' calling for the establishment of an effective colonial administrative apparatus. Up until this time, Portuguese activities in Angola had been spurred on by commercial interests. Its presence and authority was secured by a large Portuguese merchant population in coastal cities such as Luanda and Benguela, with Portuguese presence in central Angola being minimal, and almost if not entirely absent in the easternmost parts of the territory. While Portugal's commercial interests in Angola had been very much informal, commerce now became the central focus of its colonial administrative and control framework. Although Portugal had been present in the region for centuries, it only started to establish a colonial state in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this, in turn, being brought about by pressures from other colonial powers whose dominance threatened

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<sup>90</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, pp. 81-84.

Lisbon's commercial interests.<sup>91</sup>

Even in the late 19th century, Portuguese elites had called for a more effective colonisation of Angola. However, political and economic constraints stood in the way of a large-scale colonial project. This changed when the monarchy was overthrown in 1910, and the new Republican regime set out to implement the reform of its colonial policy. With commercial gain standing at the centre of any reforms, the new regime in Lisbon set out to implement the following: the taxation of its colonies, the cultivation of cash crops, the implementation of legislation defining colonial populations which included the legal separation of “[...] ‘civilized’ Europeans from African ‘natives’”, and the legalisation of forced labour which occurred two decades before in 1891.<sup>92</sup> Mohanty points out that all Africans were deemed to be uncivilised. According to the Portuguese colonial administration, Africans, in the first instance, belonged to a specific ethnic group, or tribe, ruled over by a chief, and were subject to customary law. By doing so, the Portuguese aimed at maintaining the structure of “traditional” African society, which further enabled them to extract an income for the colonial state in the form of a native tax, as well as extracting a ready supply of labour. Africans were required to perform various services for the colonial administration, which included labouring on plantations or in public works, as well as serving with the police.<sup>93</sup> The Portuguese administration introduced legislation which stated that all Africans had a “moral and legal obligation to work”, having to work in a recognised trade or profession, or having to cultivate land of “a specific extent”. Failure to observe this meant having to contract oneself to an employer, and failure to do this meant risking being forcibly contracted to the colonial administration.<sup>94</sup> Mohanty also points out that some 250 000

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<sup>91</sup> Andresen Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*, Macmillan Press, London, 2001, pp. 3-4.

<sup>92</sup> Andresen Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>93</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 44.

<sup>94</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 51-52.

Africans were contracted out by the colonial administration to agricultural, mining and construction companies on a yearly basis, and that this forced labour brought in a significant profit for the colonial regime.<sup>95</sup>

Fernando Andresen Guimarães notes that successive political and economic crises prevented Lisbon from putting its plans for its colonies into action, and it was decided to hand over more power to colonial governments by giving them a high degree of political and economic autonomy to govern and administer their territories. This also went for Angola, where governor-general José Norton de Matos started an ambitious project to build up Angola's infrastructure, this, in turn, being an effort to attract larger numbers of settlers from Portugal. This included the construction of rail networks, and an increased effort to promote cash crop production, with forced labour to provide cheap and plentiful labourers. Although the colonies held the promise of wealth and an end to Portugal's economic woes, political unrest in Portugal brought on by financial hardship soon led to violence between the incumbent Republicans and the dissatisfied Monarchists. This eventually led to the ousting of the Republican regime in 1926 by way of a military coup. The new military regime was overwhelmed by Portugal's financial problems, and asked a popular right-wing academic António de Oliveira Salazar to take over the financial reins, and he was subsequently given full control over Lisbon's public spending. This included clearing the deficits Angola had accrued under Norton de Matos. Salazar ushered in a period that became known as the *Estado Novo*, or New State, which sought to marry the bureaucracy and the military, with the one relying on and propping up the other. Salazar, a devout Catholic, also relied on the church for support, which had helped the opposition topple the Republican regime. The New State era was also defined by its authoritarian nature, with the Salazar regime aiming to control every aspect of political, social

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<sup>95</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 53.

and economic life, both in Lisbon, and the colonies. As such, being able to repress and eliminate dissent was of utmost importance, with propaganda playing an important role in enforcing ultimate control.<sup>96</sup>

The rapid infrastructure development and arrival of large numbers of Portuguese settlers in Angola was accompanied by an increasingly ruthless and repressive style of governance that primarily affected the African majority. Over many decades, a racialised caste system had begun to develop, with the highest ranking caste being made up of Portuguese *brancos* (whites), followed by *mestiços* (mixed race or creole), and lastly, the *pretos* (black Africans). Although social interaction between these groups occurred frequently, these race-based labels came to define social stratification. While this racial caste system was accompanied by racial prejudices as in many other African colonies, these prejudices were also tied to legal and economic status, which in turn was tied to citizenship. It also meant that Portuguese settlers and traders who would have otherwise been seen as socially inferior in Europe could take on roles of dominance, authority, and social superiority in Angola.<sup>97</sup> The single biggest flood of Portuguese settlers to Angola occurred in the wake of World War Two, and by the 1950s, immigrants were arriving at a rate of a thousand a month. However, these immigrants were mostly poor peasants, illiterate and with few skills, and they now competed directly with African labourers for unskilled work. In addition, those that took up farming began to displace indigenous farmers, as Portuguese farmers enjoyed government support and subsidies, and were granted large swathes of land.<sup>98</sup> According to Mohanty, 98 square miles of land had been set aside for native reserves between 1912 and 1932, while, during the same period, some 1563 square miles had been allocated to settlers. While settlers were given large swathes of the most

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<sup>96</sup> Andresen Guimarães, F. *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, pp. 5-7.; Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 56-58.

<sup>97</sup> Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>98</sup> Van der Waals, W. *Portugal's War in Angola: 1961-1974*, Rivonia, Ashanti, 1993, pp. 58-59.

fertile land, Africans were systematically driven off their land to make way for Portuguese plantations. Mohanty notes that by 1971, 60 percent of Angola's most arable land was owned by Portuguese settlers and farming corporations.<sup>99</sup>

In 1932, Salazar had been appointed to the post of Prime Minister and made it clear that the Portuguese colonies were an extension of Portugal itself. The argument went that without its colonies, Portugal would be an insignificant, small country and that its colonies provided it with authority and wealth. Hence, Portugal and its colonies were indivisible. Salazar's regime even went as far as to evoke the myth of an ancient Lusitanian Empire, drawing on Portugal's early seafaring expeditions, and depicting Portugal as a harbinger of civilisation and progress, with this myth aimed at creating a nationalist ideology. Salazar also made it clear that the colonies and Portugal itself should be administered as one unit, and that unitary political and economic policies should be applied to all of the Portuguese territories.<sup>100</sup> To cement this, the status of Portuguese colonies was elevated to that of overseas provinces in 1951, which meant that these new provinces were drawn even tighter into Lisbon's centralised power structure. In fact, Salazar had started to create an elaborate civil service apparatus, which facilitated direct rule by creating a structure of authority where even the lowest of colonial officials were under the direct control of Salazar himself. The 1950s were viewed as being Portugal's golden years, with infrastructure development growing at a fast pace. Angola and other African Portuguese territories such as Mozambique were seen as oases of stability and development while other parts of Africa faced increased instability brought on by anti-colonial struggles. Increased agricultural output, especially coffee, saw Lisbon reaping economic rewards, and Angola had become economically indispensable to Lisbon, now more than ever. Not only did Lisbon

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<sup>99</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, pp. 48-51.

<sup>100</sup> Andresen Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, pp. 9-10.

benefit immensely from the extraction of Angola's primary commodities, which included coffee, cacao, cotton, oil, diamonds and other minerals, Angola and other Portuguese territories also acted as markets for Portuguese manufactured goods.<sup>101</sup>

However, the 50s also brought with them a growing mood of discontent among Angola's indigenous population. Policies such as forced labour were extremely unpopular, which saw certain members of the population who were deemed to be unemployed, even those practising small-scale subsistence agriculture, being legally obliged to work for the government for six months of the year, working on infrastructure projects or as plantation workers. The responsibility of filling forced labour quotas fell to the local chiefs, and when they refused to cooperate, police would round up people at random. To evade forced labour and as a result of being displaced by Portuguese commercial farmers, many Africans chose to move to urban areas in order to look for work and other opportunities such as education. However, they had to compete with low skilled Portuguese immigrants that also flocked to urban areas. Portuguese labourers were given preferential treatment and even earned three times the amount of wages that their Angolan counterparts did for the same work. Factors such as forced labour, native tax, land expropriation, and racialized laws, contributed to the widespread resentment of colonialism among ordinary Angolan's and furthermore heightened tensions between the Angolans and Portuguese.<sup>102</sup> It is within this context that Angolan nationalist groups began to emerge. The next chapter will track the emergence of one of these groups, namely the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, or FNLA.

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<sup>101</sup> Van der Waals, *Portugal's War in Angola*, p. 55.

<sup>102</sup> Van der Waals, *Portugal's War in Angola*, pp. 57-60

## **CHAPTER 2: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE FNLA – 1950s TO 1978**

The history of the FNLA forms an important part of the history of the Angolan war for independence against the Portuguese colonial regime which had commenced in 1961, and the initial stages of Angola's civil war which had erupted even before independence was gained on 11 November 1975. The FNLA finally became obsolete as a military fighting force in 1978 when it was crippled due to infighting and significant geopolitical developments, and had little to no impact on the war's remaining years. In the wake of its exit from the civil war, the FNLA had begun to reinvent itself as a political party during the 1992 elections, and currently holds two seats in the Angolan legislature.<sup>103</sup>

The following chapter will provide a brief historical overview of the FNLA, ranging from its origins among the Bakongo nationalist movements of the 1950s, its formation in 1962 during the Angolan war for independence until its eventual military demise in the immediate wake of Angolan independence during the initial stages of the civil war. The chapter will also locate the history of the FNLA within the history of Angola and Central-West Africa as a whole, and will further show that the history of the FNLA is closely linked to geopolitical developments in the region, which in turn can be related to the wider Cold War dynamics of the time. Furthermore, this chapter will track the FNLA's rise and fall in order to understand how and why the FNLA came to unravel in 1978. As such, this chapter will provide the first of the two narratives, namely of an FNLA in steady decline, suffering from infighting, a lack of communication, as well as an absence of strong leadership and vision. This will be done by drawing on both secondary scholarly literature, as well as primary sources in the form of

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<sup>103</sup> National Assembly of Angola, [http://www.parlamento.ao/web/guest/deputados-e-grupos-parlamentares/grupos-parlamentares?menuOption=deputados\\_grupos#http://www.parlamento.ao/glue/AN\\_Navigation.jsp?](http://www.parlamento.ao/web/guest/deputados-e-grupos-parlamentares/grupos-parlamentares?menuOption=deputados_grupos#http://www.parlamento.ao/glue/AN_Navigation.jsp?), accessed on 28 June 2015.

official FNLA documents. It will be shown that although the FNLA, in the form of its predecessor the UPA, seemed to be at the forefront of the rebellion against the Portuguese, several developments began to erode its legitimacy and unity, to the extent that by the mid-60s, a lack of effective leadership caused significant fractures within the FNLA. This is in direct contrast to the narratives of the former FNLA fighters that paint the movement in an overly positive light that I will present in chapter four.

### **1950s: Bakongo Nationalism and Early Anti-Colonial Politics**

The history of Angolan political groups goes back to the 1920s. Although there had not been a call for outright self-determination, the African intelligentsia of the urban centres started to advocate for political representation, and for a greater say in decision making. Groups were also formed along ethnic lines, with these specifically advocating regional autonomy, but not apart from the colonial state.<sup>104</sup> One of the earliest groups to be formed at this time was the National African League (LNA), which was founded in 1929, with the more radical Regional Association of Native Angolans (ARAN) being founded some time afterwards.<sup>105</sup> It is only later, during the 1950s and 60s, at a time when anti-colonial African nationalist groups agitating for independence were formed across Africa, that groups emerged specifically advocating an end to Portuguese colonial rule in Angola. This is the context in which the forebears of the FNLA were formed.

Susama Mohanty traces the origins of Bakongo nationalism to December 1913 when a Bakongo chief led a revolt against the incumbent Bakongo king after the king had refused to

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<sup>104</sup> Heimer, F. "Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola: Machtkampf und ideologische Konfrontation", in *Africa Spectrum*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1975, p. 210.

<sup>105</sup> Nortje, P. *The Terrible Ones*, p. 16.

oppose new Portuguese labour demands. Indeed, the Portuguese continued to preserve the Kongo kingdom as a useful political control mechanism, making use of the king and his chiefs to extract the native tax, as well as round up forced labour. Even though the revolt against the Kongo king was finally put down in 1915, Mohanty notes that this event was the first of others to follow, where Bakongo resistance to Portuguese colonial rule focused on the Kongo kingship.<sup>106</sup>

When Kongo King Dom Pedro VII died in April 1955, a Bakongo royalist residing in the Belgian Congo, Eduardo Pinock, advocated for the choice of a stronger successor who would use his position to advocate for Bakongo interests. While Pinock and his supporters threw their support behind a well-respected Protestant community leader, Portuguese authorities, on the insistence of an alarmed Catholic clergy, chose to back a lesser-known Catholic candidate, who was eventually elected by an assembly of royal elders, and crowned as Dom Antonio III. Pinock and his reformist supporters first attempted to block the coronation by means of popular protest, but soon opted to focus their efforts on having reformist candidates appointed to the posts of royal counsellors. Pinock himself was eventually appointed to the post of first counsellor, after the king and the Catholic missions gave in to popular pressure. However, the reformist counsellors were being seemingly outmanoeuvred by the king, under the guidance of Portuguese officials, to the extent that Pinock and his supporters finally chose to oust the king. Managing to gather popular support, Pinock orchestrated widespread protests, resulting in Pinock proclaiming the king unfit to rule on 27 December 1955. This was followed by swift action by the Portuguese, who indiscriminately arrested high-ranking leaders. However, the

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<sup>106</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, pp. 81-82.

king suddenly died on 11 July 1957, and the Portuguese decided to leave the throne vacant for the time being, in order to prevent a repeat occurrence of the 1955 succession battle.<sup>107</sup>

Not deterred by the actions of the Portuguese, the reformist royalists, under the leadership of Pinock, began to form a political movement in Léopoldville in the Belgian Congo, as a means to continue their efforts for political reform.<sup>108</sup> Pinock's move to Léopoldville was mainly motivated by an attempt to escape increased Portuguese oppression, with the Portuguese colonial regime beginning to thwart any form of political and social activity ruthlessly. Any form of dissent was dealt with harshly by the Portuguese secret police, named the International and State Defence Police (PIDE), which was set up in the 1940s. It was tasked with infiltrating these new political movements in an effort to prevent any form of political dissent within Angola.<sup>109</sup>

As such, it is significant that many Angolan independence movements have their origins in neighbouring Belgian Congo, with many Angolan intellectuals having fled to its capital, Léopoldville, to escape persecution by the PIDE. Pinock and his allies eventually decided to establish a formal political organisation, which was named the Union of the Peoples of the North of Angola (UPNA). Although many scholars cite the UPNA as having been established on 7 July 1954<sup>110</sup>, Mohanty argues that July 1957 is a more likely date, based on interviews

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<sup>107</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>108</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 84.

<sup>109</sup> Leão, A., and Rupiya, M. "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces from the 1960s onwards – as told by former combatants", in Rupiya, M. (ed.) *Evolutions and Revolutions: A Contemporary History of Militaries in Southern Africa*, Institute for Security Studies, Johannesburg, 2005, pp. 8, 11.; <sup>109</sup> Heimer, "Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola", p. 210.

<sup>110</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 8-9, Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 17.; Sadiqali, S. "Angola: Hopes and Fears", in *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1976, p. 25.; Anonymous, "The Struggle in Angola", in *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 5, 1976, p. 81.

with Pinock and his allies.<sup>111</sup> While scholars such as Sadiqali note that the UPNA originally agitated for the independence of northern Angola, with the specific aim of re-establishing the old Kongo kingdom<sup>112</sup>, Mohanty notes that the UPNA chose to no longer involve itself in the Kongo succession struggle, and rather, aimed to lead a nationalist independence struggle. According to Mohanty, this is evident in the fact that the UPNA dropped the N from its name, and subsequently became the Union of the Peoples of Angola (UPA) on 9 November 1958. It was also at this time that Holden Roberto, the son of Angolan exiles and the nephew of the movement's former leader, Barros Nekaka, took over as president of the UPA.<sup>113</sup>

Soon after, the UPA merged with several other Angolan nationalist movements, each with its own political agendas and from various ethnic and regional backgrounds, in order to broaden the UPA's appeal. However, even after this merger, the UPA largely failed to mobilise supporters beyond the Bakongo communities, and, as such, was often criticised as being a tribalist group advocating only the Bakongo cause. For this reason, as Heimer points out, the UPA continued to find it difficult to rally support among non-Bakongo communities, to the extent that it would become almost exclusively dependent on Bakongo support.<sup>114</sup> In part, their move away from narrow Bakongo politics stemmed from the competition of groups such as Joseph Kasavubu's Abako Party, which was advocating the resurrection of the Kongo kingdom. In the competition to attract the loyalties of some 500 000 Angolan immigrants living in the Belgian Congo, the UPA saw itself distinctly disadvantaged, being seen as a foreign movement, not enjoying the same standing as the indigenous Abako party. As an exile

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<sup>111</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 84.

<sup>112</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 8-9, Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 17.; Sadiqali, "Angola", p. 25.; Anonymous, "The Struggle in Angola", in *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 5, 1976, p. 81.

<sup>113</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, pp. 84-85.; Heimer, "Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola", p. 210.

<sup>114</sup> Heimer, "Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola", p. 210.

organisation, Mohanty argues, the UPA was forced to compete with the Abako party within the latter's own backyard.<sup>115</sup> Significantly the UPA leadership, specifically Roberto, was criticised for living in permanent exile, while doing little to lead the anti-colonial struggle from the front, inside Angola, which had the effect of further alienating the UPA from potential non-Bakongo support.<sup>116</sup>

Phyllis Martin points out, that rather than seeing this focus on ethnicity as being an effort to revive a seemingly primordial identity, it must be noted that at the time, ethnicity became a popular political tool used by leaders to rally support. As such, the Kongo nationalism of the UPNA/UPA and Kasavubu's Abako party was very much a product of its time, merging various identities such as class, gender and age, to express and mobilise a particular interest. Furthermore, the notion of the tribe at the time must be seen as a colonial construct, which sought to group together otherwise very fluid communities to facilitate control, administration and taxation. It must also be acknowledged that other loyalties, often more localised, played much more important roles in shaping one's identity at the time.<sup>117</sup> Martin's view is supported by Inge Brinkman, who argues that in contrast to the modernist view that regards the "tribe" as being a homogenous whole, ethnicity forms part of an imagined community.<sup>118</sup> Brinkman goes on to contend that ethnicity had been most pronounced among the nationalist movements of the Bakongo, and rather than seeing ethnicity as a divisive factor in this case, a pan-Kongo discourse evolved, which Brinkman refers to as *Kongolanité*, which provided a means to mitigate political, class and clan cleavages.<sup>119</sup> So too, Linda Heywood points out that ethnicity

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<sup>115</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 85.

<sup>116</sup> Anonymous, "The Struggle in Angola", p. 81.

<sup>117</sup> Martin, P. "Beyond Independence", in Birmingham, D., and Martin, P. *History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years since 1960*, Longman, London and New York, 1998, pp. 12-13.

<sup>118</sup> Brinkman, I. "War and Identity in Angola: Two Case-Studies", in *Lusotopie*, 2003, p. 197.

<sup>119</sup> Brinkman, "War and Identity in Angola", pp. 197, 201.

had become a useful tool for nationalist groups to appeal to a particular constituency.<sup>120</sup> As can be seen in the early attempts by reformists such as Pinock, an attempt had been made to make use of the legitimacy of the Bakongo kingship to rally support among the Bakongo masses.

What is significant in the case of the UPA, however, is that it was formed and led by a Bakongo elite, and although urban and educated, it set itself apart from the assimilated elites in Angola.<sup>121</sup> Messiant goes on to point out that many Bakongo elite were, in fact, exiles who had established themselves in Léopoldville to escape the growing repression at the hands of the Portuguese regime during the early to mid-twentieth century. What is more, this elite residing in the Belgian Congo was socialised in a very different way to their Angolan counterparts, many being non-Portuguese speaking, and having strong ethnic affiliations. For them, positions of authority derived from the hierarchical structure of the old Kongo kingdom were very important. Significantly, this meant that the UPA leadership in Léopoldville had very little in common with the Bakongo masses in Angola, which they claimed to represent.<sup>122</sup> This also meant that the UPA's form of nationalism, being characterised by its conservatism and traditionalism opposed to white Portuguese colonialism, was very different from the other types of nationalist organisations that were being formed in Angola at the time.<sup>123</sup>

In 1956, another Angolan independence movement had been formed, calling itself the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The MPLA had itself been a result of the merger of various smaller organisations. One of these was the Party for the United Struggle for

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<sup>120</sup> Heywood, L. "Towards an Understanding of Modern Political Ideology in Africa: The Case of the Ovimbundu of Angola", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1998, pp. 143-144.

<sup>121</sup> Messiant, C. "Angola: The Challenge of Statehood", in Birmingham, D., and Martin, P. *History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years since 1960*, Longman, London and New York, 1998, p. 134.

<sup>122</sup> Messiant, "Angola: The Challenge of Statehood", p. 136.

<sup>123</sup> Messiant, "Angola: The Challenge of Statehood", p. 138.

Africans (PLUA) which was founded in 1953, and would go on to merge with the Angolan Communist Party (PCA), which was founded in 1955, and had strong links to the Portuguese Communist Party. The PLUA and PCA's merger in December 1956 resulted in the creation of the MPLA.<sup>124</sup> Significantly, as opposed to the UPA, which had its roots within Pan-Africanism and African Nationalism, its PCA origins meant that the MPLA was influenced by Marxist doctrine, and found support from the Portuguese Communist Party, which in turn was highly organised and received support from the Soviet Union. Although both the UPA and MPLA were based in the Belgian Congo, stark ideological differences and frequent disagreements and competition finally led to the MPLA relocating to neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville.<sup>125</sup>

The tensions in the Belgian Congo between the colonial regime and nationalists calling for independence finally led to riots erupting in the capital in January 1959 in what has become known as the Congo Crisis. Fearing a possible spill over to Angola, the PIDE began to crack down on suspected nationalist activists in Luanda, with 59 people suspected of having been involved in anti-colonial activities being arrested in December 1959. When the Belgian Congo gained independence on 30 June 1960, the new government allowed Angolan independence movements to operate from its territory more freely.<sup>126</sup> By late 1960, the UPA had emerged as the strongest of the Angolan independence movements, having been able to establish more widespread organisational structures which allowed it to dominate the anti-colonial political scene in Luanda from its headquarters in Léopoldville.<sup>127</sup> However, as Mohanty points out, despite this apparent strength, the UPA had been plagued by internal conflicts at this time. A more moderate Bazombo faction within the UPA that had been behind the widespread protests

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<sup>124</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 17.

<sup>125</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 9, 11.

<sup>126</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 18.

<sup>127</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 19.

was finally expelled in December 1960, with this faction going on to form its own independence movement. Under the heading “Split within the UPA”, the Bazombo faction listed four main grievances explaining its split from the UPA: “*i*) the dictatorial attitude of the so-called responsible founders of the party; *ii*) their refusal to negotiate with Portugal; *iii*) the monopolization of international travel by one party member (meaning Holden Roberto); and *iv*) the absence of a proper accounting system for the party funds.”<sup>128</sup>

### **1961: A Year of Revolt**

By early 1961, the economic prosperity of the Portuguese empire took a turn for the worse. Triggered by the collapse of coffee prices on the international market, and compounded by problems in the fishing and cotton growing sectors, the Portuguese economy found itself entering a recession. This resulted in widespread labour layoffs and wage cuts, which in turn led to rising unemployment and growing discontent and frustration. Given the slump in cotton prices, plantation owners in northern Angola were no longer able to pay their workers’ salaries, with the situation finally resulting in violent riots by plantation workers in January 1961. Widespread hatred of the Portuguese policy of forced labour added to the discontent. The ensuing retaliation by the colonial police, taking the form of beatings and widespread arrests, fuelled the already volatile situation, and finally led to a general revolt against Portuguese authorities in the cotton growing areas in the northern Cassanje area.<sup>129</sup>

The initial stages of the revolt took place over the period of 4 to 24 January and was led by an obscure religious sect named “Maria”. The violence, in what has become known as Maria’s

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<sup>128</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 98.

<sup>129</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 19.

War, also involved the participation of underground UPA members and resulted in the destruction of plantation equipment such as seeds and implements, as well as the targeting and looting of Portuguese-owned stores and missions and the killing of livestock. According to Piet Nortje, rioters praised Patrice Lumumba, who had led the Belgian Congo to independence months before, and that they called for the independence of Angola.<sup>130</sup> Significantly, the colonial regime's presence in northern Angola was minimal, which meant that the region was vulnerable to a spillover effect from the political developments in the Belgian Congo.<sup>131</sup>

The revolt finally spread to Luanda on 4 February, when Africans marched on the São Paulo prison housing many of the arrested political dissidents, in what was ultimately an unsuccessful attempt to free these prisoners. Although the MPLA claimed responsibility for these actions, the attempted prison break was in fact carried out by a group organised by the UPA. Days earlier, the UPA leadership found out that the PIDE had infiltrated the Luanda UPA group, and attempted to delay the assault on the prison. The messenger who was to deliver this message, however, arrived too late. The MPLA claiming responsibility meant that it now became the main focus of the PIDE's attention while the UPA itself could continue with its operations.<sup>132</sup>

The result of the revolts in northern Angola, as well as the attempted prison break in Luanda, saw large-scale retaliation by the Portuguese settler community, with the Portuguese authorities even arming and organising vigilante groups that would target the slums around Luanda in regular nightly raids. What followed were the extrajudicial executions of any African suspected

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<sup>130</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 18.

<sup>131</sup> Cann, J. "The Artful Use of National Power: Portuguese Angola (1961-1974)", in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 22, no. 11, 2011, p. 203.

<sup>132</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 19.

of being involved in or being sympathetic to the anti-colonial movements. As these movements were often founded and supported by the African intelligentsia, any African that wore Western dress or was found in possession of books became a legitimate target. More generally, the colonial regime had deployed the military and police to suppress and gain control over the uprisings in the north, and by March, it seemed as though the Portuguese army had gained the upper hand.<sup>133</sup>

For Portugal, the revolts in the north of Angola and Luanda exposed the racial tensions that emanated from decades of oppressive rule and harsh colonial policies and legislation, and the international community was beginning to take notice.<sup>134</sup> The United Nations sub-committee on Angola, set up to investigate the increasingly volatile situation in Angola reported: “The disturbances and conflicts in Angola are mainly the consequences of genuine grievances of the indigenous population against the administration of the territory, including dissatisfaction with economic conditions, the impact of African-nationalism, the rise of political groups seeking redress of grievances and the right to self-determination, and the severe repression to which these groups have been subjected.”<sup>135</sup>

By mid-March, violence was again beginning to flare up, primarily led by UPA members of Bakongo ethnic origin in northern Angola, with about 4 000 to 5 000 UPA rebels participating in the conflict, with Cann noting that many of these had been forcibly recruited.<sup>136</sup> Believing themselves to be immune to the effects of bullets as they had gone through rituals believed to

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<sup>133</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 20.; Brinkman, I. “Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola (1961-1974)”, in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2006, p. 224.

<sup>134</sup> Sadiqali, “Angola”, p. 24.; Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 21.

<sup>135</sup> Report of the Sub-Committee on Angola, Security Council, United Nations, 22 November 1961.

<sup>136</sup> Cann, “The Artful Use of National Power”, p. 201.

protect them from harm, the UPA fighters orchestrated a series of coordinated raids on isolated Portuguese farmsteads and towns, specifically targeting the Portuguese population.<sup>137</sup> Men, women and children were all considered legitimate targets, and victims were often killed by makeshift weapons such as knives and machetes. This targeted violence eventually spread to the northern Angolan provinces of Uíge, Zaire, and Cuanza Norte. Over two days from 15 March, some 7200 people were killed, which also included African plantation workers who refused to join or support the UPA rebels.<sup>138</sup> Significantly, as Thomas Henrikson notes, the UPA did not seem to understand the principles of guerrilla warfare, and its violent behaviour towards civilians, which as noted included the killing of plantation workers and forced recruitment, consequently alienated many civilians.<sup>139</sup>

During his trip to UPA held areas in northern Angola in early 1961, George Houser recalls that the UPA set up a number of checkpoints and that one could not move between UPA held areas without presenting an official UPA passport.<sup>140</sup> This served the purpose of not only preventing the infiltration of UPA held areas by enemies such as the rival MPLA and Portuguese spies but also to control the movement of civilians in the area. As Inge Brinkman notes, those civilians who did not possess UPA documents were arrested, tried by UPA supervised village councils, and punished, often in the form of beatings. Many transgressors were also used as forced labour to clear new paths through the dense forests. Brinkman notes that given the UPA's use of checkpoints to control the civilian populations in areas held by them, it became necessary for

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<sup>137</sup> Anonymous, "The Struggle in Angola", p. 81.

<sup>138</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 22.

<sup>139</sup> Henrikson, T. "People's War in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1976, p. 381.

<sup>140</sup> Houser, G. "Journey to Rebel Angola", in *Africa Today*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1962, p. 5.

civilians to identify as being UPA supporters to escape harsh penalties such as forced labour. In other cases, civilians were being press-ganged into joining the UPA as combatants.<sup>141</sup>

Controlling the population was, however, not limited to UPA held areas within Angola, but extended to controlling the movement of Angolan refugees between Angola and Congo/Léopoldville. As Brinkman points out, this was done with the assistance of the Congolese authorities, and she refers to the situation among these civilians as amounting to “forced immobility”. Measures to confine and control populations included not only checkpoints but also barbed wire fences, watch towers, secret passwords and fear. One could not move unless one had written permission from UPA officials. Travelling without a pass could lead to harsh penalties if captured, which included arrest and execution.<sup>142</sup>

Brinkman goes on to note how many civilians were forced to act as porters to carry essential military equipment, as well as food and medical supplies. Given the harsh terrain in the forests of northern Angola, another method of transportation was not possible. Many civilians began to resent the UPA for forcing people to work for the movement, but this sentiment at times also extended to UPA fighters themselves. As Brinkman states, UPA fighters resented the fact that they were sent into the forests to fight and live in inhospitable conditions, while the UPA leadership remained in Léopoldville, directing the fight for independence in relative security and comfort. As one UPA soldier at the time noted: “You do not have pity on us who are staying in crazy Angola in improper places.”<sup>143</sup> These examples highlight how the behaviour of the UPA, specifically civilian victimisation in the form of arbitrary violence, forced

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<sup>141</sup> Brinkman, “Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola”, p. 214.

<sup>142</sup> Brinkman, “Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola”, pp. 222-223.

<sup>143</sup> Brinkman, “Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola”, p. 218.

immobility, as well as forced recruitment, had the effect of alienating communities in which the UPA was operating. In effect, the UPA imposed compliance by making use of force and fear. Again, this behaviour may explain why the UPA struggled to attract more widespread support.

Portuguese responses to the rebellion were devastating. Using shock tactics, the colonial army mutilated the corpses of killed rebels, sticking their severed heads onto stakes to discourage others from joining the rebels, as well as to show the supremacy of the colonial regime. The colonial air force also made use of napalm for the first time, in order to flush the rebels out of their hideouts in the heavily forested areas of northern Angola. What is more, Portuguese vigilante groups, not subject to any colonial authorities, began arming themselves and carried out retaliatory attacks against African civilians.<sup>144</sup> These vigilante attacks, as well as the actions by the military, led to an estimated death toll of 50 000 Africans, many of whom also perished as a result of food shortages and starvation brought about by mass displacement.<sup>145</sup>

The colonial army finally managed to push the rebels northward towards the border with Congo-Léopoldville. This meant that the rebellion took place primarily if not exclusively in Bakongo territory, which led to the fact that most of the new rebel recruits were Bakongo. However, even though the UPA was the most prominent independence movement at this time, it was not particularly well equipped, nor did it have the necessary military structures in place to organise the rebellion more effectively, and hence, it struggled to maintain the gains it had made. A case in point is the UPA's self-proclaimed Socialist Republic. By April, the UPA had

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<sup>144</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>145</sup> Sadiqali, "Angola", p. 24.

gained control of an area known as Nambuangongo and subsequently declared it as being the Socialist Republic of Nambuangongo.<sup>146</sup> By May 1961, the Portuguese authorities brought reinforcements from Portugal, with its military strategy now focused on regaining control of rebel-held areas, as well as taking control of northern Angola in its entirety. In the meantime, the UPA used its Republic as a base from which to plan and carry out attacks on surrounding cities and even managed to orchestrate several attacks in Luanda. However, the Socialist Republic of Nambuangongo was short lived, and on 9 August, the Portuguese managed to retake the area. By this time, the colonial army had regained control of most of the urban settlements in northern Angola.<sup>147</sup>

Significantly, the 1961 revolt also saw clashes between the various rebel movements. As the UPA controlled much of northern Angola, the MPLA, which had also taken up arms against the Portuguese, had to pass through UPA territory from its bases across the border to get to the more populous areas of northern Angola. One incident occurred in October 1961 when UPA forces captured 21 MPLA guerrillas and subsequently executed them. Incidents such as these led to heightened tensions between the two groups, with exchanges of gunfire not being uncommon. By the close of 1961, the UPA had implemented a guerrilla warfare strategy, with Bakongo communities forming a key support base from which to source new recruits, as well as provisions in the form of food, and information regarding the movements of Portuguese troops. Although the UPA could not claim to be in permanent control of a certain area, the mountainous, forested terrain straddling the borders of Congo-Léopoldville and Angola offered the perfect terrain in which to hide and carry out sporadic attacks against surrounding

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<sup>146</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>147</sup> Brinkman, "Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola", p. 206.; Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 27.

Portuguese targets.<sup>148</sup> However, this also meant that the UPA guerrillas were constantly on the move to avoid detection, and civilians had difficulties in living alongside them as constant moving made farming and building homes impossible.<sup>149</sup>

This section has shown that although the UPA played a central role in the 1961 uprisings, and although it had established itself as the most prominent of the Angolan independence movements, it had failed to attract widespread support beyond the areas where it was operating. Moreover, its behaviour towards civilians in areas under its control, where it attempted to establish a regime of total compliance, was imposed by making use of forced immobility, violence and fear. As noted, UPA fighters had resorted to civilian victimisation, particularly the killing of individuals who refused to join their ranks. This had the effect of alienating the communities in areas it controlled, with this alienation being further compounded by the forced recruitment of civilians as porters and soldiers. It was also noted that UPA fighters were beginning to resent their commanders, who were accused of living comfortably in Léopoldville while they faced harsh and inhospitable conditions in the dense forests of northern Angola.

### **1962-1964: A Bumpy Start for the FNLA**

By 1962, the UPA rebellion had failed to expel the Portuguese from Angola, and rather, increased pressure from the colonial army forced the independence movements back across the borders to their respective bases. According to Mohanty, the UPA had struggled to coordinate a seemingly “chaotic, and free-wheeling rebellion”.<sup>150</sup> In addition, John Cann argues that the

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<sup>148</sup> Brinkman, “Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola”, p. 211.; Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>149</sup> Brinkman, “Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola”, p. 215.

<sup>150</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 101.

UPA had avoided direct confrontations with the colonial army as far as possible.<sup>151</sup> The scorched earth policy of the colonial army meant that some 150 000 civilians fled northern Angola, primarily to southern Congo-Léopoldville.<sup>152</sup> It is important to note that there had existed regular cross-border movement between the two countries for decades, with many Bakongo having relatives in either country. In fact, for many Bakongo, Léopoldville was the closest urban centre, and trade routes were well established and allowed for easy cross-border movement.<sup>153</sup> For the UPA, refugee camps offered another chance at recruiting new fighters, as well as to rally supporters for their cause. According to John Marcum, these refugees effectively comprised “a transplanted political constituency”.<sup>154</sup> However, as Cann points out, the UPA never managed to make use of a well-developed propaganda campaign, and therefore, it was never very effective in winning over the refugee population.<sup>155</sup> On the military front, the UPA was dealt a blow when one of its top commanders, Joao Batista, was killed in battle in February 1962. This was followed by the UPA army’s chief of staff, Marcos Kassanda, leaving the party in early March, accusing Roberto of tribalism, while also accusing him of being responsible for Batista’s death. Mohanty proposes that Roberto’s personality, as well as his questionable tactics during the 1961 rebellion, caused serious conflicts within the UPA’s leadership.<sup>156</sup>

On 27 March 1962, the UPA merged with a smaller group, the Democratic Party of Angola (PDA), to form the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA).<sup>157</sup> Political

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<sup>151</sup> Cann, “The Artful Use of National Power”, p. 204.

<sup>152</sup> Houser, “Journey to Rebel Angola”, p. 7. Cann, “The Artful Use of National Power”, p. 201.

<sup>153</sup> Brinkman, “Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola”, pp. 206, 207.

<sup>154</sup> Marcum, J. “Lessons of Angola”, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 54, no. 3, 1976, p. 410.

<sup>155</sup> Cann, “The Artful Use of National Power”, p. 204.

<sup>156</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 101.

<sup>157</sup>Memorandum of the National liberation Front of Angola (F.N.L.A.) to the Conference of Heads of State of Independent Africa, 23-25 May 1963, African Studies Library, BAP 967.3 FREN, University of Cape Town, p. 1.; Leão and Rupiya, “A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces”, p. 9.

developments across Africa also presented new opportunities, and when Algeria gained independence in July 1962, the FNLA despatched troops to be trained as officers. The FNLA's close relationship with the new Algerian regime also meant that it received welcome aid in the form of military equipment.<sup>158</sup> This support allowed the FNLA to create its own military wing, the National Liberation Army of Angola (ELNA) on 26 August 1962, with an estimated force strength of 5000 troops, although these were mostly poorly trained, and ill-equipped. The FNLA's main base was located at Kinkuzu, some 16 km south of Léopoldville. The above developments helped to increase the FNLA's credibility across the continent as well as internationally, and by this time, the FNLA enjoyed significant international recognition.<sup>159</sup> The FNLA portrayed itself as the leading Angolan independence movement, and Roberto focused much of his efforts on promoting the FNLA cause internationally. According to the FNLA leadership, the FNLA was not a "closed club", and that the "National Liberation Front of Angola, the revolutionary directory, and the Angolan National Liberation Army, constitute a united and fully representative front".<sup>160</sup>

Shortly after the PDA-UPA merger, the FNLA went on to form the Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile (GRAE) on 5 April 1962, with its base in Léopoldville. Although it had extended an invitation to the MPLA to become part of the GRAE, the MPLA rejected the offer. On 29 June 1963, the GRAE was recognised by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as the provisional government of Angola, which further increased its international credibility. The FNLA continued to exist as an independent entity, although its leader, Holden Roberto, simultaneously acted as the GRAE's prime minister. Furthermore, the FNLA was now able to

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<sup>158</sup> Houser, "Journey to Rebel Angola", p. 7.

<sup>159</sup> Houser, "Journey to Rebel Angola", p. 7.; Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 29.

<sup>160</sup> Memorandum of the National liberation Front of Angola, p. 1.

interact with other African independence movements, such as the African National Congress and the Mozambique Liberation Front, who trained together at the FNLA's Kinkuzu base.<sup>161</sup> Holden Roberto envisioned the FNLA/GRAE to become a mass independence movement with the aim of representing all Angolans. Furthermore, the FNLA stressed that it was ready to start negotiating with Portugal in order to achieve a peaceful settlement. In an address to the OAU in 1963, the FNLA proclaimed: "We are making war for our national independence, but we are equally ready to make peace. We consider that a democratic, peaceful, and negotiated solution is possible [...]."<sup>162</sup>

It is also during this time that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began to covertly channel funds towards Roberto. The USA realised that Portuguese colonial rule in Africa could not last forever, and in an attempt to counter the support given to the MPLA by the Soviet Union and Cuba, the US identified the FNLA as its preferred partner.<sup>163</sup> For the US, countering Soviet influence was accompanied by an interest in securing its economic interests in Angola as well. A friendly regime in Luanda would ensure the continued access to Angola's oil fields by US companies.<sup>164</sup> William Minter notes that although US funding was minuscule, it did help strengthen the FNLA's position vi-á-vis its main rival, the MPLA.<sup>165</sup>

However, as Mohanty points out, the GRAE was experiencing significant internal turmoil, which can be traced back to the UPA-PDA merger. According to Mohanty, the PDA was never

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<sup>161</sup> Sadiqali, "Angola", p. 25.; Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", p. 9.; Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>162</sup> Memorandum of the National liberation Front of Angola, p. 2.

<sup>163</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 33.

<sup>164</sup> Adelman, K. "Report from Angola", in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1975, p. 568.

<sup>165</sup> Minter, W. *King Solomon's Mines Revisited: Western Interests and the Burdened History of Southern Africa*, Basic Books, New York, 1986, p. 162.

sufficiently incorporated into the new FNLA/GRAE, with both parties having maintained separate headquarters. In addition, a lack of telecommunication infrastructure made communication between the two difficult, to the extent that the PDA felt that it was being marginalised and excluded from collective decision making within the FNLA/GRAE. In fact, the old UPA structures under the leadership of Roberto were in firm control of all key decisions and actions and Mohanty asserts that Roberto was personally in control of all decision making.<sup>166</sup>

In an attempt to alleviate the situation in Angola and to win back the Angolan population onto its side, the Portuguese regime implemented a large-scale infrastructure project. This project was intended not only to provide jobs for the Angolan masses but was also intended to make Angola more attractive to Portuguese settlers, who had been scared off by the uprisings of the early 60s. More so, the practice of legislated forced labour was abolished, and an effort was made to provide Africans with more opportunities for education, as well as increased access to healthcare. However, the violence of the last few years had already left its mark, with the ruthless behaviour of the colonial authorities, in particular, having alienated many Africans. On the military fronts, the rebellion against the Portuguese army had reached a stalemate, with the rebel groups not being able to muster the number of troops needed to make any gains against a well-equipped and trained colonial force. However, the colonial army failed to take full control of areas where rebels were still operating, and the Portuguese controlled little more than the immediate areas surrounding urban centres. Neither side was able to make decisive gains against the other.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 103.

<sup>167</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, pp. 29, 34.

The above situation allowed the FNLA to operate in the forests of northern Angola. To escape attacks and aerial bombings by the Portuguese army, many civilians fled to the dense forests, away from the established towns found along Portuguese controlled roads. Civilians who fled to the forests, with this often entailing the relocation of entire villages, now found themselves in FNLA controlled areas. As noted in the previous section, the FNLA attempted to establish a quasi-state like presence, complete with passport controls to control the movement of people, customs posts, a communication and information network, as well as village councils overseen by FNLA officials. In addition, the establishment of youth organisations and even a trade union meant that the FNLA was able to infiltrate all aspects of every-day life. This extended to the gathering and distribution of food, as well as the provision of medical treatment and education. In terms of military training, the civilian populations of these forest hideouts participated in drills and marching practice, with this including children from as young as seven, as well as women.<sup>168</sup> In effect, the FNLA was beginning to politicise and militarise the populations under its control, with the majority of this population consisting of Bakongo living in northern Angola as well as refugee camps in southern Congo-Léopoldville.

Although the above paragraphs seem to portray an FNLA that was making strides in attracting international support and organising itself more effectively, this view seems to be misleading when one takes account of the following report written by the leader of the National Union of Students of Angola (NUSA) Jorge Valentim on 23 May 1964, which provides a telling account of the challenges facing the FNLA at the time. The NUSA had been a strong ally of the FNLA, and Valentim had travelled to Léopoldville in early 1964 to see for himself the situation at the

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<sup>168</sup> Houser, "Journey to Rebel Angola", p. 5.; Brinkman, "Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola", pp. 223-224.

FNLA headquarters. In his report, Valentim notes that there existed a lack of communication between the FNLA leadership and its lower structures and that the leadership failed to issue concrete instructions to its followers. Calling for a solution to this particular problem, he noted: “The Angolan masses at once want the realisation of a Congress by all means in a short time without any delay, to permit the establishment of a dialogue between the leaders and the masses and the real participation of all Angolan patriots.”<sup>169</sup>

Valentim goes on to note with concern the arbitrary arrest and detention of FNLA soldiers of non-Bakongo origin deemed as having been subversive. What is more, Valentim points out that these arrests were conducted with the aid of Congolese officials, and that those arrested were subsequently held in Congolese prisons, without being charged or tried. He states:

Very recently 155 soldiers originally from the Central, Eastern and Southern Angola, ‘Chokwes, Luhenas, Umbundus, Ganguelas and Cuanhamas’ left the military base at Kinkuzu with the consent of the Major to go to Léopoldville to present their case legally to the Front on their military strategies which were imperatively necessary for the betterment of the Army struggle. Mr. Holden Roberto made an appeal to the Congolese soldiers and the Congolese Security to get them arrested. The heroic resistance of our soldiers to the unqualified arrests caused three deaths.<sup>170</sup>

Valentim concluded that he had been able to see a confidential note authored by the GRAE Charge of Interior Affairs and addressed to the Congolese National Security, specifically asking for the Congolese authorities to intervene by arresting those soldiers who were seen as agitators.<sup>171</sup>

The views presented in the NUSA account are supported by Brinkman, who notes that Holden Roberto’s relationship to Congolese politicians and officials stemmed from an attempt to

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<sup>169</sup> National Union of Students of Angola, Information on the Evolution of Struggle of Angola, 23 May 1964, Arquivo Mario Pinto de Andrade, 04308.002.007, Casa Comum, Fundação Mario Soares, p. 1.

<sup>170</sup> National Union of Students of Angola, Information on the Evolution of Struggle of Angola, p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> National Union of Students of Angola, Information on the Evolution of Struggle of Angola, pp. 1-2.

buttress his position as leader of the FNLA. In fact, Brinkman argues that “The UPA/FNLA was firmly embedded in the Congolese political elite [...]”, with Roberto speaking of Joseph Mobutu as being “the father of the Angolan revolution.”<sup>172</sup> Also, with regard to expelling non-Bakongo from the FNLA, Brinkman notes that even within the Bakongo leadership of the FNLA, differences caused significant internal power struggles. According to Brinkman, this can be traced back to the time of the UPA-PDA merger in 1962. At the time, the Bakongo throne was still involved in a succession dispute, with different factions within the Bakongo community, the Bazombos on the one side and the Basansalas on the other, supporting opposing candidates. While the Bazombos were primarily Catholics, the Basansalas were Protestant. What is more, while the PDA consisted mostly of Bazombos, Holden Roberto’s UPA had been dominated by Basansalas.<sup>173</sup>

Further concerns are underlined in a memorandum to Roberto co-authored by the leadership of the FNLA’s Zambia regional headquarters based in Lusaka. The memorandum, dated 20 September 1964, goes on to highlight various issues of concern. The regional headquarters, which had been established in March 1964, had extended its presence to 70 towns across Zambia and had managed to grow its membership to some 2500 followers. Despite being able to gather this substantial amount of support among the Angolan exile community in Zambia, the memorandum laments the lack of communication between the Zambia branch of the FNLA and the movement’s headquarters in Léopoldville. More precisely, the memorandum notes:

Since the party was started here in March, we never received even a single letter from you the party president to tell us how we could direct our people from this end. [...] Up to now people of this end do not know what plans are being made on the future operation in Angola. Due to this the office has failed to tell our followers and those interested in our struggle what picture an independent Angola will have. Our

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<sup>172</sup> Brinkman, “War and Identity in Angola”, p. 203.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

president [Roberto] has attended conferences but this office has not been informed of the results of such conferences, e.g. the Cairo Conference.<sup>174</sup>

This lack of communication as outlined above is evident in the fact that the Zambia office still went by the name UPA instead of FNLA/GRAE. Specifically, the memorandum also laments the lack of information concerning the agenda of the newly formed GRAE, and its relation to the FNLA. As the memorandum states: “It is now seven months but this office has not been informed of the structure of our government in Exile. This office has no knowledge of the Prime Minister’s cabinet composition. [...] [This] office does not know what relationship the UPA as a party has to the Government in exile. This is because we have not been informed of the people who are running the party now.”<sup>175</sup> As with the NUSA report, it is evident that there seemed to exist a broad-based communication problem between the Léopoldville headquarters and regional structures. As the above example suggests, crucial information regarding the movement’s leadership composition, the outcome of important conferences, and fundamental structural changes to the movement, were not communicated effectively, if at all.

While the memorandum also mentions a lack of funds which negatively affected the Lusaka office’s ability to organise its personnel, as well as its ability to effectively organise recruitment drives, it also mentions that there existed no support in terms of training and deploying the military volunteers it had managed to recruit. As the memorandum to Roberto states: “We have so many young people who want to join the Angolan liberation army but alas! no instruction or plans of what to do with these young freedom fighters have been received. We have written you on this matter for several times [...]. But your people are disappointed in that not even one

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<sup>174</sup> Union of the Peoples of Angola (U.P.A.) Zambia Regional Headquarters, Memorandum to the Honourable President Mr. Holden Roberto, Lusaka, 20 September 1964, Arquivo Mario Pinto de Andrade, 04308.002.005, Casa Comum, Fundação Mario Soares, pp. 1-3.

<sup>175</sup> UPA Zambia, Memorandum to the Honourable President Mr. Holden Roberto, p. 3.

young man has been sent for military training from this wing. We have got about 500 young people waiting for recruitment.”<sup>176</sup>

The above is of particular interest as the FNLA was primarily an independence movement engaged in the armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism. The fact that it was not able to effectively train recruits from regional structures and deploy them in battle again shows the lack of organisational capacity the FNLA military leadership suffered from. As John Cann notes, even though the FNLA had several thousand troops, most of these were very poorly trained and ill-disciplined, often not leaving their bases at all.<sup>177</sup> Holden Roberto even noted with pride that the FNLA had provided training to the first SWAPO fighters at its Kinkuzu base.<sup>178</sup> However, this is in direct contrast to a SWAPO official’s assessment of the FNLA training camps, who noted: “[...] I visited Holden Roberto’s camps near the Angolan border with a view to sending our young men there. But the atmosphere in Roberto’s training camps was very bad, and I could not recommend such a course.”<sup>179</sup>

Also, the memorandum laments the fact that other Angolan liberation movements were able to recruit among the Angolan exiles in Zambia with ease while the FNLA branch struggled to do so due to the lack of capacity and organisational support it was experiencing. Lastly, the memorandum goes on to state that: “[...] political misunderstandings in our GRAE [...] have resulted in our revolutionary army’s standstill for almost six months.”<sup>180</sup> In conclusion, the memorandum lists a set of considerations for the FNLA leadership to consider, which include

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<sup>176</sup> UPA Zambia, Memorandum to the Honourable President Mr. Holden Roberto, p. 3.

<sup>177</sup> Cann, “The Artful Use of National Power”, p. 204.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with Holden Roberto, Luanda, 17 April 1996, *Liberation in Southern Africa – Regional and Swedish Voices*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 2002, p. 33.

<sup>179</sup> Quoted in Cann, “The Artful Use of National Power”, p. 204.

<sup>180</sup> UPA Zambia, Memorandum to the Honourable President Mr. Holden Roberto, p. 4.

the following: “That this administrative weakness and reluctance in attending to our difficulties is the result of the unstable position of the GRAE. [...] That this is because our party constitution is incomplete in that it does not match with our struggle.”<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, the memorandum calls for the organisation of a conference to be attended by all FNLA branches, so that the existing constitution should be amended to show: “[...] a clear and simple political direction, [...] what form of government the Independent Angola will have, [and for] the party to be non-tribal and non-racial.”<sup>182</sup> It seems that the FNLA’s lack of organisational and communication capacity, which can be seen to have stemmed from a lack of leadership on the part of the FNLA’s senior leadership, undermined the FNLA’s ability not only to recruit new supporters but also to train new fighters. More so, it seems that there existed significant difficulties in organising the FNLA’s forces, with these seemingly having been in a dismal state. Ill-disciplined and poorly trained, equipped and cared for, it would seem that vast numbers of soldiers were confined to their bases while the FNLA’s leadership suffered from incapacitating infighting or simply a lack of action.

So too, stark differences between Holden Roberto and Jonas Savimbi, who had been instrumental in the creation of the FNLA and acted as the GRAE’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, led to Savimbi being expelled from the FNLA. Being an ethnic Ovimbundu, Savimbi’s inclusion in the FNLA and appointment as GRAE foreign minister was meant to be a strategic move to attract support beyond the FNLA’s traditional Bakongo base. However, the FNLA, which was still perceived to be a Bakongo group by its critics, continued to struggle to attract support from other ethnic groups.<sup>183</sup> In fact, many other non-Bakongo members left the FNLA

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<sup>181</sup> UPA Zambia, Memorandum to the Honourable President Mr. Holden Roberto, p. 4.

<sup>182</sup> UPA Zambia, Memorandum to the Honourable President Mr. Holden Roberto, p. 5.

<sup>183</sup> Adelman, “Report from Angola”, pp. 561-562.

during the mid-1960s, and Marcum notes that Roberto was purposefully eliminating rivals within the movement, replacing them with fellow Bakongo aides to cement his authority.<sup>184</sup> Savimbi's expulsion primarily stemmed from a difference of opinion with Roberto over whether the FNLA should move its leadership to Angola to supervise the rebellion. While Savimbi, opted for the latter move, this was opposed by Roberto. Savimbi's sentiment had not been unfounded, as Roberto had focused most of his efforts on international diplomatic activity.<sup>185</sup> In fact, John Cann notes that according to the CIA, Roberto had not set foot in Angola since 1956.<sup>186</sup> UPA fighters also viewed the UPA leadership critically, and according to Brinkman, some UPA leaders were unfamiliar with the conditions their fighters faced in the forests, seeing the forests as an exotic, and hostile place. Eventually, Savimbi denounced both the FNLA and MPLA at an OAU meeting in Cairo in 1964, criticising both for not wanting to lead the struggle against colonialism from within Angola.<sup>187</sup> Savimbi's expulsion was followed by the resignation of Jose Joao Liahuca on 24 July 1964, formerly the director of the FNLA's refugee aid service, while another prominent non-Bakongo FNLA leader, Alexandre Taty, resigned as well. More worryingly, Mohanty mentions that the commander of the FNLA's Kinkuzu base pledged allegiance to a rival nationalist group, accusing Roberto of "adventurism and demagogy".<sup>188</sup> In fact, Mohanty points out that the FNLA was facing competition from a plethora of Bakongo micro-parties, some of whom had in fact broken away from the FNLA and its predecessors. Although these parties remained insignificant, they show how volatile the situation had become in northern Angola, with various parties seeking to extract support from the same Bakongo communities.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Marcum, "Lessons of Angola", p. 410.

<sup>185</sup> Sadiqali, "Angola", p. 26.

<sup>186</sup> Cann, "The Artful Use of National Power", p. 205.

<sup>187</sup> Brinkman, "Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola", p. 217.

<sup>188</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 105.

<sup>189</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, pp. 104-105.

In 1964, the FNLA was dealt another blow, when Moïse Tshombe became Prime Minister of Congo-Léopoldville. Formerly the head of the government of Katanga province, Tshombe had had close relations with the Portuguese. When he became Prime Minister, the Portuguese were able to convince Tshombe to harass the FNLA, which effectively paralysed its guerrilla activities in northern Angola. The situation only changed in mid-1965, when Joseph-Desiré Mobutu carried out a coup against the Tshombe government and instated himself as President. As will be noted later, Mobutu had an amicable relationship with Roberto, and the FNLA was able to continue its guerrilla activities.<sup>190</sup>

From the above paragraphs, it seems that the FNLA's rhetoric did not always match its actions on the ground. While Roberto focused much of his efforts on courting the international community, the commentary provided by Brinkman, as well as the examples listed in the NUSA report and the memorandum of the FNLA's Zambia branch, reveal that the FNLA was facing significant internal challenges. While Roberto used his connections to the Congolese authorities to crack down on any form of internal dissent, FNLA fighters lamented the conditions they faced on the front lines while their commanders lived in comfort and security in Léopoldville. So too, it was becoming evident that Roberto relied on Congolese support to remain in power, while his focus on his international diplomatic efforts did little to improve the internal coherence of the FNLA, with the case of the FNLA's Zambia branch being a telling example.

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<sup>190</sup> Henrikson, "People's War in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau", p. 386.; Cann, "The Artful Use of National Power", p. 200.

## 1965-1973: The War for Independence Continues

By the mid-1960s, the colonial regime had some success in establishing control over Angola's rural populations in northern and eastern Angola. Its strategy of forced relocation moved entire villages out of the battle areas, and rehoused them in military garrison towns, surrounded by barbed wire and watchtowers, where their movements could be strictly controlled. Effectively, the Portuguese regime was able to deprive the rebel groups of their popular support bases, and specifically in northern Angola, the FNLA found itself operating in areas that had largely been depopulated.<sup>191</sup> The Portuguese effectively combined terror and violence with a hearts and minds campaign to convince Angolans to move to garrison towns. This also included promising access to goods, social services and peace. According to Brinkman, the north of Angola had effectively been turned into a military zone.<sup>192</sup>

For the FNLA, 1965 not only marked the year of a coup attempt aimed at ousting Roberto as the movement's leader, it also saw more accusations levelled against the FNLA and its leadership.<sup>193</sup> In a letter entitled "Roberto betrays both the revolution and the masses", dated 15 January 1965, Savimbi criticised the way in which the FNLA/GRAE leadership organised the armed rebellion against the Portuguese. He stated: "[...] a revolution is not a mechanical process which depends exclusively on external aid. A revolution depends, among other things, on the total support of the popular masses as well as, on just and firm leadership capable of analysing at each moment, the development of the struggle within the country [...]".<sup>194</sup> Savimbi went on to say that he believed that the support and morale of the Angolan masses in support

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<sup>191</sup> Cann, "The Artful Use of National Power", p. 204.

<sup>192</sup> Brinkman, "Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola", pp. 206, 224.

<sup>193</sup> Cann, "The Artful Use of National Power", p. 205.

<sup>194</sup> Savimbi, J. *Why we quitted (sic) the U.P.A. and the G.R.A.E. of Mr. Holden Roberto: Roberto betrays both the revolution and the masses*, Dar-Es-Salaam, 15 January 1965, Arquivo Mario Pinto de Andrade, 04308.002.013, Casa Comum, Fundação Mario Soares, p. 1

of the armed struggle was very high and that many were prepared to join the FNLA's armed wing. However, Savimbi argued that the FNLA's ability to lead the armed struggle finally failed because of Holden Roberto, due to "The absence of collective leadership [...]", and because "The G.R.A.E. has become the personal instrument of Holden's ambitious intrigues. His personal whims constitute the law."<sup>195</sup>

Furthermore, Savimbi pointed out Roberto's paranoia concerning any possible form of internal dissent or attempts to remove him from his post. Savimbi, like NUSA leader Valentim, noted how Roberto relied on the assistance of the Congolese authorities to harass and arrest those suspected of subversion. Furthermore, Savimbi alleged that millions of US dollars in aid money were appropriated by greedy FNLA officials, including Roberto himself, diverting much-needed funds from buying weapons and other essential equipment for FNLA troops. Also, as noted in the previous chapter, it is alleged that Roberto even sold weapons and medical supplies to use the profits for his personal gain, establishing a vast private commercial empire in Léopoldville. Savimbi also alluded to the fact that Roberto was favouring an inner core of Bakongo supporters while actively trying to get rid of non-Bakongo FNLA members and leaders who he saw as posing a threat to his leadership.<sup>196</sup>

Lastly, Savimbi lamented the lack of political consciousness within the FNLA, specifically among its troops, and that, therefore, the FNLA was incapable of winning over the popular support of the Angolan masses. Savimbi argued that the arbitrary killings of MPLA fighters and civilians, especially those of non-Bakongo origin, alienated many Angolans from the

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<sup>195</sup> Savimbi, *Why we quitted the U.P.A.*, p. 2.

<sup>196</sup> Savimbi, *Why we quitted the U.P.A.*, pp. 2-3.

FNLA. This goes hand in hand with the allegedly poor shape of the FNLA army, and Savimbi alleged that FNLA soldiers were ill-disciplined, using their weapons and ammunitions to hunt animals to sell the meat to locals, rather than using their limited supplies to fight the Portuguese army.<sup>197</sup> After his expulsion, Savimbi gathered some supporters and moved to Lusaka, Zambia, where he contemplated his next move. Significantly, while the FNLA continued to conduct its military operations in northern Angola, the independence of Zambia in 1964 allowed the MPLA to open an Eastern Front, and the MPLA no longer had to pass through FNLA territory to launch its guerrilla operations.<sup>198</sup>

Another high-ranking official to resign was John Chikasa, the former Chief Publicity Secretary of the UPA/FNLA, who resigned from his post in early January 1965. In his resignation letter to Roberto, Chikasa noted that he resigned due to the party's lack of vision, the interference of American imperialism which according to him hindered political progress, the interference of other anti-liberation groups which "[...] slow down the political struggle towards independence and freedom of Angola", as well as his decision to no longer being able to work under conditions of "[...] corruption and a state of indecision".<sup>199</sup>

These examples of grievances listed by Chikasa and Savimbi illustrate the problems that the FNLA faced at the time. While Roberto and his inner circle were enriching themselves and ruthlessly repressing any form of dissent with the aid of the Congolese authorities, the party's ability to lead the armed struggle in Angola suffered. Infighting, ethnic tensions, a lack of clear

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<sup>197</sup> Savimbi, *Why we quitted the U.P.A.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>198</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", p. 10.

<sup>199</sup> Chikasa, J. Resignation, Lusaka, 5 January 1965, Arquivo Mario Pinto de Andrade, 04308.002.002, Casa Comum, Fundação Mario Soares.

leadership and organisational capacity, seemed to have paralysed the FNLA/GRAE during this time.

So too, after the FNLA Zambia branch's letter to Holden Roberto seemingly went unanswered, it resorted to writing a letter to the Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, dated 17 February 1965, in order to plead for assistance in an effort to establish communications between the FNLA headquarters and its Zambia branch. While reiterating many of the grievances that were listed in their previous letter to Roberto, they went on to state that the Angolan revolution was passing through a period of serious crisis. The Zambia FNLA branch lamented that they had written 22 letters to the FNLA leadership in Léopoldville, all of which had remained unanswered. Referring to Roberto, the letter went on to state: "As a result of his bad and weak leadership, some people from U.P.A. have at occasions attempted to break away new parties, in protest."<sup>200</sup> From this example, it is evident that the FNLA leadership's continued inaction and lack of communication were threatening the Zambia branch's ability to function.

The memorandum to the Zambian president went on to state that they were entirely "[ignorant] of what goes on in Léopoldville".<sup>201</sup> The letter also noted with concern the apparent "tribalistic" nature of the Roberto leadership, claiming that Roberto seemed not to want to work together with southern Angolans and that in fact, the reason why their letters have gone unanswered was because Roberto was only interested in fighting for the liberation of northern Angola.<sup>202</sup> Evidently, a lack of communication and assurance from the Léopoldville headquarters meant

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<sup>200</sup> Union of the Peoples of Angola (U.P.A.) Zambia Regional Headquarters, Memorandum to the Government of Zambia, Lusaka, 17 February 1965, Arquivo Mario Pinto de Andrade, 04308.002.014, Casa Comum, Fundação Mario Soares, pp. 1-3.

<sup>201</sup> UPA Zambia, Memorandum to the Government of Zambia, p. 3.

<sup>202</sup> UPA Zambia, Memorandum to the Government of Zambia, pp. 4-5.

that such rumours went unchallenged, and were allowed to spread unhindered. In conclusion, the authors of the memorandum ask the Zambian government to relay some of their concerns and suggestions to Roberto, which include that Roberto be persuaded to move the FNLA headquarters to another country, as it seemed as though the FNLA was not able to operate freely and unhindered in the Congo, given the Congolese authorities' constant meddling in internal FNLA affairs.<sup>203</sup>

On 13 March 1966, Jonas Savimbi went on to form his own liberation movement inside eastern Angola, named the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). UNITA remained quite small for the first few years of its existence, lacking the organisational and military capacity needed to launch significant attacks against the Portuguese. The FNLA at one point invited UNITA to become part of GRAE, but both parties failed to settle on the terms of the proposed merger.<sup>204</sup> This can be assumed not only to have been a result of their starkly different ideological convictions, the MPLA was left leaning, UNITA was influenced by African Nationalist doctrine while the FNLA followed a more conservative centre-right path, there were other differences as well. While the FNLA was seen as a narrow Bakongo movement by its rivals, the MPLA sought support from the creole *mestiço* and urban intellectual elites, while UNITA gained much support from the Ovimbundu communities of Angola's Central Highlands, to which Savimbi belonged. More so, each party received backing from supporters who did not necessarily see eye to eye, and for whom cooperation between the independence movements was not in their best interests. While the MPLA received much support from the Soviet Union, Cuba and Congo-Brazzaville, the FNLA was supported by Congo-Kinshasa and

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<sup>203</sup> UPA Zambia, Memorandum to the Government of Zambia, p. 5.

<sup>204</sup> Houser, G. "African Liberation Movements: Report on a Trip to Africa, Spring 1967", in *Africa Today*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1967, p. 13.

the United States, while UNITA solicited support from China. As can be seen, these allegiances reflect the Cold War rivalries at the time.<sup>205</sup>

The reliance on foreign aid was not only a result of shared ideological convictions, but also stemmed from the inability of other independent African states to fund, equip and support the independence movements, not just in Angola, but across Africa. In order to continue their rebellions, the Angolan rebel groups had to actively solicit aid from international partners, and ideology offered an important tool to establish bonds with potential funders. As Houser argues, ideological rhetoric was used by African independence movements to attract support. According to Houser, within the Cold War setting, this approach necessitated identifying with either the Soviet or Western bloc.<sup>206</sup>

It is also important to note that much of this support, on the part of the USA specifically, which included generous financial aid, was done covertly. Portugal was a NATO member, and the strategic location of the Portuguese Azores Islands, where the USA maintained a military base, meant that western allies could not openly support the Angolan independence movements. In the case of the FNLA, much support was channelled through Congo-Kinshasa under Mobutu, who had come to power in 1965 and was a staunch ally of the West, receiving much support from the USA himself.<sup>207</sup> More so, the FNLA's relation with Zaire was strengthened by family ties between Mobutu and Roberto, and the FNLA thus became a natural ally. Roberto had purposefully divorced his wife in order to marry Mobutu's sister, thus becoming his brother-

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<sup>205</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 11-12.

<sup>206</sup> Houser, "African Liberation Movements", pp. 12-13.

<sup>207</sup> Sadiqali, "Angola", p. 31.

in-law.<sup>208</sup> This bond extended to the FNLA's origins as a Bakongo nationalist movement, with a significant portion of the old Kongo kingdom having been incorporated into the then Belgian Congo when the arbitrarily drawn colonial borders were created between that colony and Angola.<sup>209</sup> However critics were wary of this close relationship, and as the Portuguese newspaper *Expresso* noted, "The FNLA is Holden Roberto and Holden Roberto belongs to Mobutu, to whom he is connected by an umbilical cord".<sup>210</sup> Furthermore, as John Cann notes, the US intelligence regarded Roberto as being subservient to Mobutu, "who protected him from internal challenges to his leadership".<sup>211</sup> Nevertheless, by the mid-1960s, the FNLA had the strongest military of all the three main independence movements in terms of troop numbers and weapons and enjoyed significant diplomatic recognition despite its significant internal divisions. As in earlier stages of the war, the FNLA and MPLA did not get along, and skirmishes between rebel fighters of the two factions were not uncommon and often led to casualties. It was also not uncommon for one group to capture fighters of an opposing group.<sup>212</sup>

The rivalry between the various nationalist groups also extended to producing propaganda to celebrate the victories of their group, while denouncing the other groups as illegitimate and cooperating with the Portuguese. Part of this propaganda included announcing territorial gains. By 1967, the FNLA had announced that it was in control of 250 thousand square kilometres or roughly one-fifth of Angola's total territory and that it planned to open up new fronts in eastern and southern Angola. In contrast, the MPLA claimed that it controlled large parts of eastern Angola while also being engaged in battles in northern Angola and Cabinda while UNITA

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<sup>208</sup> Melady, T., and Melady, M. (eds.) *Ten African Heroes: The Sweep of Independence in Black Africa*, Orbis Books, New York, 2011, p. 99.

<sup>209</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 11-12.

<sup>210</sup> *Expresso*, Lisbon, 17 September 1974, p. 18.

<sup>211</sup> Cann, "The Artful Use of National Power", p. 204.

<sup>212</sup> Houser, "African Liberation Movements", p. 12.

claimed control of large parts of eastern, central and southern Angola.<sup>213</sup> However, the size of the areas under the movements' control, in addition to the extent of their control in these areas, remain questionable.

In 1971, the FNLA was dealt a severe blow as the OAU decided to withdraw its recognition of the GRAE as Angola's provisional government. This was partially brought about by the insistence of the MPLA, who argued that it was in control of a greater area of Angola than the FNLA while other African countries had previously criticised the GRAE for its inaction.<sup>214</sup> More so, personal attacks against Roberto claimed that while he continued to live a lavish lifestyle in Kinshasa, bankrolled by US funding, he did little to lead his fighters at the front.<sup>215</sup> Roberto was said to have used the foreign aid to set up a commercial empire, and critics claimed that the FNLA leadership had become a bunch of profiteers and wage earners. While Roberto was driving around on the streets of Kinshasa in a black Mercedes, his troops were said to have been "underfed, ragged, and villainous".<sup>216</sup> In fact, the OAU's decision to withdraw its support for the FNLA/GRAE was also spurred on by perceptions that the FNLA had become incapacitated, and was no longer able to lead the Angolan struggle for independence. In an interview conducted with Holden Roberto in 1996, he stated that there was an active agenda aimed at excluding the FNLA/GRAE from OAU conferences. Referring to the 1969 Khartoum Conference, Roberto states: "We were not invited, because, obviously, there was an agenda. [...] MPLA was present. At that time, MPLA did not have any strength. It did not fight. It did not have a base and no front in Angola. The only movement that was fighting was FNLA."<sup>217</sup> In spite of Roberto's above of having been the only movement fighting, Mohanty argues that

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<sup>213</sup> Houser, "African Liberation Movements", p. 12.

<sup>214</sup> Sadiqali, "Angola", p. 27.

<sup>215</sup> Anonymous, "The Struggle in Angola", p. 83.

<sup>216</sup> Cann, "The Artful Use of National Power", p. 204.

<sup>217</sup> Interview with Holden Roberto, p. 33.

between 1961 and 1971, the FNLA had only achieved two of its objectives. The one being denying the MPLA access to northern Angola by sealing off the Angola/Congo borders, while secondly, maintaining a military presence in northern Angola, albeit marginal. According to Mohanty, “Given their logistic and other advantages these activities [reveal] little more than dismal failure.”<sup>218</sup>

Another blow was delivered to the FNLA in June 1972 when it experienced an attempted mutiny at its main base Kinkuzu in what was now Zaire. The mutiny attempt sparked tensions between the Bazombo and Basansala factions within the FNLA, with Roberto eventually expelling the most important Bazombo leaders from the movement.<sup>219</sup> Taking note of the 1965 coup attempt, it seems that the FNLA suffered from frequent power struggles and infighting, primarily the result of Holden Roberto’s suspicious and mistrustful character, which stemmed from his desire to secure his power and authority as FNLA’s supreme leader. Given this period of instability, Roberto agreed to form an alliance with the MPLA that would see the formation of the Angolan Supreme Liberation Council (CSLA), with the MPLA in control of organising the insurgency, while the FNLA would focus on the administration of rebel-held areas, as well as the CSLA’s diplomatic affairs. This attempt at cooperation was, however, short-lived, and did not bear any fruit.<sup>220</sup> An attempt at unifying the three main rebel groups during a 1973 Lusaka meeting failed to produce any results as well, and as such, the Angolan war for independence was effectively fought out by three distinct and separate independence movements.<sup>221</sup> In fact, there had been several attempts at unifying the groups going back to 1961, with Zaire’s Mobutu being particularly active in trying to bring together the FNLA and

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<sup>218</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 106.

<sup>219</sup> Brinkman, “War and Identity in Angola”, p. 206.

<sup>220</sup> Sadiqali, “Angola”, p. 29.

<sup>221</sup> Leão and Rupiya, “A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces”, p. 13.

MPLA.<sup>222</sup> In part, this lack of cooperation was brought about by mutual distrust and suspicion.<sup>223</sup> It was also in 1973 that China provided the FNLA with significant material assistance, and provided 120 trainers to train FNLA troops. For China, its assistance to a non-socialist FNLA was motivated not only to counter Soviet assistance to the MPLA but also in order to increase its influence in Central Africa.<sup>224</sup>

Again, although the FNLA did have more troops on the ground, enjoyed significant international support, and had large weapons stockpiles, its apparent advantages over the MPLA and UNITA did not translate into significant military successes against the Portuguese regime. Although the FNLA was purporting to lead the struggle against colonialism, it had very little results to show for it. The legitimacy derived from its assertion of being the leader of the Angolan revolution was therefore dealt a heavy blow by the OAU's 1971 decision to withdraw its recognition of the FNLA's status as being Angola's provisional government. The 1972 coup attempt again highlighted the FNLA's precarious internal situation, and the failed attempt at cooperating with the MPLA in 1973 in the form of the CSLA highlights that the FNLA desperately attempted to regain its former standing. Mohanty proposes that the early 1970s were marked by the FNLA's gradual decline. She states: "Beginning as a traditionalist organisation, devoted to local ends and sometimes merely personal ends, it remained what it had been in the beginning, a movement led by traditional elites. The movement lost much of its active and promising leadership as Roberto eliminated all potential rivals and asserted his own conservative direction. [...] Roberto's main aim had been 'to keep himself in being', somehow, and to destroy the rival MPLA [...]."<sup>225</sup> Thus, according to this assessment, rather

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<sup>222</sup> Adelman, "Report from Angola", p. 563.

<sup>223</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", p. 14.

<sup>224</sup> Marcum, "Lessons of Angola", pp. 410, 413.

<sup>225</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, pp. 106-107.

than focusing his efforts on winning the war for independence, Roberto was preoccupied with eliminating the FNLA's main rival, while simultaneously trying to keep himself in power at all costs.

### **1974-1975: The Lisbon Coup and Increased Tensions**

By 1974, the conflict between the Portuguese and the three independence movements had reached a stalemate. The colonial army could do little more than keep the rebels in check while the independence movements did not possess the equipment or troop numbers to engage the colonial regime beyond isolated raids and sabotage acts. An end to the war at this time was not seen as being likely. Moreover, the Portuguese colonial war, which by this time was being fought out in all of Portugal's African possessions, grew increasingly unpopular in Portugal. As the war dragged on, there was a need for greater number of troops, with this need being filled by military conscription. As a result, draft evasion in Portugal had become commonplace. Also, the colonial war demanded vast amounts of resources and was becoming a financial burden.<sup>226</sup> For instance, Mohanty notes that by 1967, the colonial war had cost Portugal some \$300 000 a day, and an estimated \$120 million a year. By 1968, half of Portugal's regular budget was allocated to the military.<sup>227</sup> Given this context, a group of Portuguese officers staged a military coup on 25 April 1974, in what has become known as the Carnation Revolution. According to Minter, this group of officers, known as the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), had already started meeting in 1973, no longer convinced that the Portuguese colonial wars were worth fighting for.<sup>228</sup> However, the coup primarily intended to bring an end to the colonial war, and a coherent political and organisational plan never existed. What is more, the

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<sup>226</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 13-14.

<sup>227</sup> Mohanty, *Political Development and Ethnic Identity in Africa*, p. 68.

<sup>228</sup> Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, p. 262.

coup, and the eventual decision to grant independence to all Portuguese possession in Africa, came at a time of significant political turmoil in Portugal. For instance, Portugal had six provisional governments and two presidents between 1974 and 1976. As such, the 1974 coup was followed by not only political instability in Portugal itself but also increased instability within Angola. The colonial authority structures soon began to erode, and it is within this context that the decolonisation process took place.<sup>229</sup>

The cessation of fighting which followed the coup allowed the FNLA, MPLA and UNITA to move freely within Angola for the first time, and each group sought to consolidate its support bases.<sup>230</sup> For all three, establishing a presence for themselves in the capital Luanda became of paramount concern. Interestingly, Roberto purchased Luanda's largest daily newspaper, as well as a television station, to disseminate FNLA propaganda.<sup>231</sup> The FNLA also produced propaganda pamphlets and dropped these over Luanda using aeroplanes. One of these depicted a picture of Roberto with the caption: "God rules in heaven Holden rules on earth."<sup>232</sup> However, increased rivalry, which stemmed from the distrust and suspicion of earlier times, came to lead to increased clashes and military confrontations between the groups. In fact, there had been a concerted effort by the liberation groups to build their militaries, and by 1 January 1975, the FNLA army had grown its strength to some 21 000 troops. Another significant development was that African servicemen that had been conscripted into the colonial army were now free to leave, and in many instances, they went on to join one of the independence movements, taking their weapons with them. Moreover, the Portuguese officers behind the coup were

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<sup>229</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 13-14.

<sup>230</sup> Heimer, "Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola", p. 215.

<sup>231</sup> Marcum, "Lessons of Angola", p. 215.

<sup>232</sup> Quoted in Péclard, D. "Religion and Politics in Angola: The Church, the Colonial State and the Emergence of Angolan Nationalism, 1940-1961", in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1998, p. 160.

communist/socialist inclined, and it seemed as if they were favouring the MPLA. As such, a lot of the colonial army's weaponry found itself on its way to the MPLA.<sup>233</sup>

The Alvor Agreement of 15 January 1975 set out the terms of Angolan independence, which included the setting up of a transitional government made up of Portuguese, FNLA, MPLA and UNITA officials that would see Angola to independence, which was set for 11 November of the same year. Another term of the Alvor Agreement called for elections to be held to establish a constituent assembly that would lead Angola through independence and beyond.<sup>234</sup> These elections were to be held before independence, on 31 October to be exact, and every Angolan of voting age would be eligible to vote. In anticipation of the vote, the FNLA attempted to attract the support of the remaining Portuguese in Angola. Unlike the MPLA, which advocated for widespread social and political reform, the FNLA promised to keep the status quo in place, enabling the Portuguese minority to maintain its privileges. However, Heimer argues that Angola's population was most probably going to vote along ethnic lines, and with the FNLA's support base, the Bakongo, making up only about 20% of the population, the MPLA and UNITA would dominate in the elections. Heimer points out for instance, that UNITA, which had been the weakest of the three movements in military terms at this point, could draw on the support of some two million Ovimbundu voters. As such, the proposed political process would have serious consequences for the FNLA, and threatened to erode its ambitions to lead the country. At this point, the FNLA was still militarily superior to the MPLA and UNITA and decided to seize power instead.<sup>235</sup> However, as Heywood points out, the conflict between the three movements, particularly in the case of the FNLA and UNITA, were dominated by ethnic

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<sup>233</sup>Adelman, "Report from Angola", p. 570.; Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 14-15.

<sup>234</sup> Adelman, "Report from Angola", pp. 569-570.

<sup>235</sup> Heimer, "Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola", pp. 213-214.; Adelman, "Report from Angola", p. 570.; Marcum, "Lessons of Angola", p. 414.

overtone. The FNLA had been gradually expelling some 60 000 Ovimbundu workers from the coffee plantations of northern Angola while many Ovimbundu also fled MPLA held areas. Many chose to move back to the Ovimbundu dominated Central Highlands. According to Heywood, MPLA and FNLA hostility “pushed the issue of ethnic politics to the fore during 1974-5, [and] more and more Ovimbundu came to identify themselves with UNITA.”<sup>236</sup> It is due to these developments that UNITA came to be seen as an Ovimbundu organisation, and Heywood points out that UNITA represented the first opportunity for the Ovimbundu to become a political force.<sup>237</sup> In part, Heywood’s analysis backs up Heimer’s reasoning that the FNLA feared that it would lose out in an election, as it could not compete with the Ovimbundu support that UNITA enjoyed. This view is also supported by Minter, who argues that “a campaign based on ethnic and regional appeal would have favoured UNITA.”<sup>238</sup> Minter notes that if people voted according to ethnic affiliation, the FNLA risked overwhelming electoral defeat.<sup>239</sup>

Instead of implementing the provisions of the Alvor agreement, which also called for the creation of a unitary military, all three parties were more concerned with taking control of Luanda. They assumed that whoever was in control of the capital at independence, would effectively control the whole of Angola, with this being of particular concern for the FNLA. This rivalry heightened tensions between the three groups. At this time, the MPLA suffered significant infighting, and one breakaway faction led by Daniel Chipenda went on to align itself with the FNLA. In fact, Chipenda had been expelled from the MPLA, being accused of having been involved in several assassination attempts against the MPLA’s president Agostinho

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<sup>236</sup> Heywood, L. “UNITA and Ethnic Nationalism in Angola”, in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1989, p. 55.

<sup>237</sup> Heywood, “UNITA and Ethnic Nationalism in Angola”, p. 56.

<sup>238</sup> Minter, *King Solomon’s Mines Revisited*, p. 265.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

Neto.<sup>240</sup> This move escalated the tensions between the MPLA and the FNLA, to such an extent that they found themselves engaging in sporadic battles on the streets of Luanda. In response, the MPLA called for the establishment of people's defence units and began arming and organising ordinary civilians. Ethnic and regional origin was beginning to be associated with political affiliation, and people were beginning to be targeted merely for speaking a certain language. While the MPLA mobilised the large Mbundu population living in Luanda, the FNLA had a comparatively small support base in the capital.<sup>241</sup> By August 1975 the MPLA managed to largely expel the FNLA from Luanda, with UNITA leaving voluntarily soon afterwards. It is within this context that outside actors entered the fray. November 1975 saw the MPLA receiving significant support from both Cuba and the Soviets which enabled it to turn the tables on the FNLA militarily. While the FNLA consolidated its hold on northern Angola, UNITA set itself up in the Central Highlands city of Huambo.<sup>242</sup> Minter points out that a gradual escalation of violence was increasingly coupled with external intervention, as will be seen below.<sup>243</sup>

In response to Cuban and Soviet support for the MPLA, the FNLA increased its efforts to attract outside assistance. The FNLA presented itself as a centre-right organisation striving for democracy, and solicited the support of western nations by arguing that it aimed to halt the advance of Soviet imperialism in Angola. In this regard, the FNLA received direct support from South Africa and Zaire, with both countries sending troops while the USA provided covert support in the form of funding and weapons. For Zaire, support for a friendly regime in the form of the FNLA would also mean gaining access to significant natural resources, particularly

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<sup>240</sup> Sadiqali, "Angola", p. 29.

<sup>241</sup> Marcum, "Lessons of Angola", p. 415.

<sup>242</sup> Heimer, "Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola", p. 213.; Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", p. 16.

<sup>243</sup> Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, p. 265.

the oil fields of Cabinda. Moreover, the MPLA had been supporting Katangese opposition forces agitating for the independence of Katanga, and as such, Mobutu's support of the FNLA was tied directly to concerns relating to Zairean stability. The FNLA, Zaire, South Africa and later UNITA, agreed to a military alliance that would see South African troops supported by FNLA and UNITA troops march on Luanda from the south while Zairean and FNLA troops were to march on Luanda from the north.<sup>244</sup>

To this end, in late August 1975, South Africa was to train FNLA soldiers under the command of Daniel Chipenda, who had been stationed in the south of Angola. The South African military officials who were to conduct the training of the FNLA soldiers noted that they were a sorry sight, wearing tattered clothes, with many not wearing any shoes, as well as being malnourished and poorly trained. The following is a South African account describing the condition of the FNLA fighters, shortly after having met up with them to commence their training: "[...] the base [was] shockingly filthy and neglected. Roughly 300 hungry and badly clothed troops – many without shoes and sores on their feet – were standing on a dusty parade ground."<sup>245</sup> As the South Africans lamented, these were the troops they had to train to fight the MPLA/Cuban/Soviet coalition. Evidently, the FNLA's lack of organisational capacity at a leadership level had dire consequences for its troops fighting on the ground, as at least in the case presented here, basic provisions such as adequate uniforms, shoes and food, could not be supplied.

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<sup>244</sup> Heimer, "Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola", pp. 214-216.; Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 17-18, 20.; Sadiqali, "Angola", p. 34.; Anonymous, "The Struggle in Angola", p. 85.

<sup>245</sup> Bothma, "Buffalo Soldiers", pp. 54-55.

Another account by Jan Breytenbach, who acted as the commander of the South African training mission, recalls that the FNLA base where the training was to take place was in an abhorrent state:

“The approach was through a several-hundred-metre-wide minefield of human excrement, through which one had to step gingerly [...]. Millions of flies swarmed everywhere and the stench was all-pervading. [...] They were rubbish! Absolutely rubbish ... They were ... I actually felt sorry for them because they hadn't eaten properly for weeks and were starving, and had sores on their legs and so on. They were Chipenda's army. Chipenda was the FNLA commander in the south [...]. I think they were robbing banks to survive.”<sup>246</sup>

After Breytenbach's arrival, the troops were assembled on the parade ground. Breytenbach recalls: “They were, without a doubt, the scruffiest, most underfed, worst armed and most unwarlike body of troops I had ever seen in my life.”<sup>247</sup> Instead of wearing camouflage uniforms, many of the FNLA soldiers were wearing a mismatched array of brightly coloured trousers and t-shirts, as well as baseball caps and sunglasses.<sup>248</sup> Interestingly, as will be discussed later, many of these FNLA soldiers would go on to join the SADF's 32 Battalion.

US and Soviet support brought with it the rapid growth of the FNLA and MPLA weapons stockpiles. The Soviets, for instance, supplied the MPLA with an estimated 27 shiploads of weapons between April and October 1975, while the USA covertly channelled some \$60 million in funds to the FNLA. As such, the conflict that ensued between the three groups rapidly moved from its guerrilla warfare origins, and evolved into a conventional style war, which included thousands of troops and heavy weapons. As pointed out earlier, this had the effect that the FNLA and MPLA specifically, preferred to settle this dispute by military means rather than by political compromise, as each group was convinced that it could succeed militarily. This

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<sup>246</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>247</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 69.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

stance was spurred on even further by the willingness of the Soviets and the USA to supply weapons and funding.<sup>249</sup>

### **1975-1978: Independence, Civil War, and the Demise of the FNLA**

It is within the above context that Portugal handed over power on 11 November 1975, not to a unitary government, not even to a particular group, but to the people of Angola. While the MPLA declared independence in Luanda, this was met by rival declarations of independence by the FNLA in Ambriz, and UNITA in Huambo. Shortly afterwards, the FNLA and UNITA formed a coalition government based in Huambo. In the meantime, the columns of South African-FNLA-UNITA, and FNLA-Zairean troops marching on Luanda from the south and north of Angola respectively encountered heavy opposition by MPLA-Cuban troops, supported by Soviet military advisors. By February 1976, Cuba had sent some 11 000 troops to Angola in support of the MPLA.<sup>250</sup> The northern FNLA-Zairean coalition forces managed to advance within 12 km of Luanda before the South African troops, who were now some 100km south of Luanda, were ordered to stop and retreat to South-West Africa. It turned out that information about the US government's covert support of the FNLA had been leaked to the media in early 1976, and the US ceased its support to the FNLA soon afterwards. An end to US support meant that the South African government was not willing to risk going it alone, and it withdrew its troops in March. The South Africans, did, however, continue to support UNITA in southern Angola up until the late 1980s. Additionally, the South African involvement also had the effect

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<sup>249</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 18-19.

<sup>250</sup> Marcum, "Lessons of Angola", p. 417.

of rallying African support for the MPLA, with the result being that the OAU finally recognised the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola in February 1976.<sup>251</sup>

In effect, the Angolan war for independence flowed almost seamlessly into the Angolan civil war, and for all intents and purposes, the civil war had already started before independence was gained. Left without the support of South African troops, the FNLA and UNITA were quickly expelled from the urban centres they had occupied by MPLA-Cuban troops. This meant that both movements reverted to guerrilla warfare, retreating to the forests of northern and eastern Angola respectively.<sup>252</sup> By December 1975, Roberto was beginning to rethink his strategy. For now, it seemed that holding on to the territory that the FNLA still controlled could perhaps force the MPLA to seek a negotiated settlement.<sup>253</sup>

In the meantime, the MPLA continued its support for the Katangese secessionists operating in northern Angola, who engaged with Zairean forces in what has become known as the first and second Shaba wars in 1977 and 1978 respectively. The uprisings in Katanga were led by the Congo National Liberation Front (FLNC), a group that had previously aided the MPLA in 1975. By the second Shaba war, Mobutu decided to negotiate with the MPLA to resolve the Katanga issue, which threatened the stability and integrity of Zaire. Mobutu finally signed an agreement with the MPLA in 1978, which would see Mobutu cease his assistance to the FNLA while further expelling the movement from Zaire. In return, the MPLA was to cease its support for the Katangese opposition, while furthermore bringing Katangese rebels in northern Angola

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<sup>251</sup> Anonymous, "The Struggle in Angola", pp. 85-86.; Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 20-21.; Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, p. 269.

<sup>252</sup> Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", p. 21.

<sup>253</sup> Sadiqali, "Angola", p. 34.

under its control. The 1978 peace agreement between Zaire and the MPLA delivered the final blow to the FNLA, who had been significantly weakened by the USA withdrawing its support in 1976. The loss of its Zairean bases meant that the FNLA had to try and keep on fighting within the forests of northern Angola, but it simply lacked the means to continue this effort and started to disintegrate. While some FNLA forces decided to join the MPLA, others chose exile in Europe and the USA. Others created the Military Committee for the Resistance in Angola (COMIRA), which turned out to be a short-lived, unsuccessful effort to continue the fight against the MPLA. As such, 1978 marked the end of the FNLA as a credible fighting force, and the group ceased to be of any significance for the remainder of the Angolan civil war.<sup>254</sup>

Even before the FNLA collapsed in 1978, after the aborted 1975-76 march on Luanda to be exact, some FNLA soldiers that had been fighting in the south of Angola were left stranded along the Angolan border with what was then South West Africa. Their leader, Daniel Chipenda, had fled the country, and UNITA, formerly allied to the FNLA, began an assault on the remaining FNLA troops left in southern Angola. Many FNLA fighters eventually fled to refugee camps which were set up in southern Angola along the border with South West Africa. It is from these refugee camps that the SADF eventually recruited many of its Angolan 32 Battalion soldiers.<sup>255</sup> The interviews that will be presented and analysed in chapter four were conducted with some of the above soldiers, and for that reason, it is significant to take note of the descriptions presented by Jan Breytenbach earlier, as these were some of the final experiences these respondents would have had with the FNLA.

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<sup>254</sup> Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, p. 296-297.; Leão and Rupiya, "A Military History of the Angolan Armed Forces", pp. 22-23.

<sup>255</sup> Bothma, "Buffalo Soldiers", pp. 74-75.; Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, pp. 144-149.

## **Conclusion**

As can be seen from the above, the history of the FNLA is as much a history of the Angolan war for independence and civil war, and the one cannot be extracted or isolated from the other. Moreover, the Angolan war for independence and civil war need to be located within the context of the history of the region, as well as the context of international developments such as the anti-colonial movement and the Cold War setting.

The FNLA's Bakongo origins within the Belgian Congo tied it directly to the political developments of that country, and as has been noted, Holden Roberto's relationship with Joseph Mobutu was an important factor that shaped the development of the FNLA as a whole. The Roberto-Mobutu coalition was further shaped by significant geopolitical developments, which were tied to the evolving Cold War dynamics of the time. The FNLA's relation to Mobutu and the USA allowed it to establish itself as a seemingly well organised and structured independence movement, which in turn allowed it to attract significant regional and international recognition.

However, the demise of the FNLA is equally tied to Cold War developments and regional geopolitical events. The political process that was to form part of the independence process threatened to sideline the FNLA, as it lacked the large support bases enjoyed by the MPLA and UNITA. Instead, given the strong support accorded to it by the USA and Mobutu, it saw a military solution to its problems as possible. However, the MPLA was equally able to rely on the support of its backers and soon defeated the FNLA in a military confrontation. As such, the Cold War setting not only influenced the political developments in Angola but also directly shaped the actions of the FNLA.

After the US had ceased its support for the FNLA, it had become reliant on its sole remaining backer, Mobutu's Zaire. Being pushed out of its strongholds in northern Angola, the FNLA was entirely dependent on its bases in southern Zaire and the assistance of the Mobutu regime in order to continue its fight. However, geopolitical developments in the form of the Shaba wars, which threatened the integrity of Zaire, forced Mobutu into a compromise with the MPLA. This compromise finally saw Mobutu expelling the FNLA from Zaire, which led to the rapid disintegration of the movement.

The examples listed in this chapter have shown that the FNLA found itself incapacitated on several occasions, due to infighting between factions within the movement's leadership, as well as a lack of organisational capacity. While several attempted coup attempts from within the FNLA leadership sought to oust Holden Roberto, who was accused of doing little to lead the fight for independence from the frontlines, it is alleged that he preferred to reside in the relative safety and comfort of Léopoldville. There he was able to build up a personal business empire, with many accusing him of having done so by appropriating donations and selling equipment intended for the FNLA war effort. Consequently, FNLA fighters were left ill-equipped, poorly trained, and undisciplined, with many being confined to their bases and not being able to participate in the fight against Portuguese colonial rule. Roberto further isolated himself in an attempt to keep himself in power by surrounding himself with an inner core of supporters originating from his own clan, while seeking the support of the Congolese authorities who assisted him in clamping down on any form of dissent. In turn, this close relationship allowed the Congolese regime to heavily influence the internal business of the FNLA, and for all intents and purposes, Roberto had become reliant on Mobutu's support to keep himself in power. This

seemingly had the consequence of seriously hindering the FNLA's communication and organisational capacity, to the extent that regional FNLA structures, such as its Zambia branch, were left to fend for themselves, with no support or instructions being received from the FNLA headquarters. This led to the fact that the FNLA's ability to recruit new supporters and fighters among Angolan refugees in places like Zambia was being jeopardised, with rival groups finding it easy to undermine what little support the FNLA structures had been able to gather. Lastly, it must also be noted that particularly in northern Angola and among the refugee population in southern Congo, the FNLA implemented a harsh regime based on control, force and fear, with many civilians being pressed into becoming FNLA supporters and fighters in order to escape possible penalties such as forced labour, forced recruitment, and punishments, which included arbitrary arrest and internment, and even execution.

The FNLA's problems started soon after it was founded in 1962. Holden Roberto's focus on international diplomacy and keeping himself in power, rather than focusing his efforts on building sound leadership and organisational structures, ultimately paved the way for the FNLA's gradual demise. His efforts to salvage the movement after the OAU's withdrawal of recognition for the FNLA in 1971 did not address the fundamental flaws in the movement. As such, by the time of the 1974 Lisbon coup, Roberto found himself frantically trying to gain the upper hand by all means possible. Fighting his way to power seemed to be the only viable solution, but his troops were no match for the MPLA that increasingly enjoyed the support of Soviet and Cuban weapons and troops. This chapter has shown that the FNLA suffered a gradual but certain decline since its founding, and as shown, this was in large part due to its lack of organisational capacity, a lack of sound leadership and vision, and a failure to address fundamental internal flaws. The narrative of the FNLA that has emerged in this chapter, that

of a failed independence movement, stands in direct contrast to the narratives of former FNLA fighters that will be presented in chapter four.

### **CHAPTER 3: THE POMFRET COMMUNITY AND FIELDWORK DYNAMICS**

In the previous chapter, I have noted how scholars as well as evidence from official FNLA documents paint a picture of the FNLA as being a movement in disarray, plagued by infighting, and suffering from a lack of leadership. I agree with the notion that the FNLA's legitimacy was slowly eroded over time, leading to its eventual collapse. Before we move on to look at how former FNLA fighters present the FNLA, we will first look at the respondent group in more detail. This will be done by providing a brief historical overview of the Pomfret community, from which all respondents originate, followed by a brief presentation of the details of the field research which was conducted in September 2014. I hope that this will provide the necessary preparation and insight before moving on to chapter four.

In total, I interviewed eight former FNLA fighters in Pomfret. The eight ex-FNLA respondents ranged in ages from their late 50s to mid-70s. While three of the respondents are of Bakongo ethnicity, another three are Kimbundu, while one each are of Nganguela and Chokwe ethnicity. Three were born in Uíge province while one each was born in the provinces of Malanje, Cuanza Sul, Cuanza Norte, Cuando Cubango and Zaire. Also, while four of the respondents had been under the age of 18 when they had joined the FNLA, one had been 18, another 19, with the rest having been 21, 27 and 30 when they had joined. I must also add that all respondents are male and that although I made every effort to include female respondents in my research, only one non-combatant female respondent was interviewed (that interview does not form part of this thesis as it falls out of the thematic scope I have chosen to focus on), while another potential interviewee refused to speak to me.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> The female respondent in question was a former MPLA supporter, and her experiences did not fit the FNLA theme of this thesis.

## **A Brief History of 32 Battalion and the Pomfret Community**

During my search in 2014 for Angolan war veterans living in South Africa, I came across the community of Pomfret. The town of Pomfret is located on the edge of the Kalahari Desert, a few kilometres from the Botswana-South Africa border in South Africa's North West Province. A former asbestos mining town, it was converted to a military base to accommodate the troops of the SADF's 32 Battalion and their families when they had to be moved from the Caprivi in 1989 in preparation for Namibia's independence from South Africa in 1990. The origins of 32 Battalion go back to 1975 when FNLA soldiers were aided by SADF troops in their march on Luanda in order to prevent the MPLA from coming to power. In the late 1970s, the SADF decided to create a secret counter-insurgency unit made up of black Angolan troops, led by white officers, whose role it was to combat SWAPO. To this end, mainly former FNLA troops, many of whom lived in refugee camps on the Namibia/Angola border by this time, were recruited and trained by the SADF. As a counter-insurgency force, 32 Battalion wore camouflage uniforms and used AK-47 rifles, in contrast to the brown uniforms and R4 and R5 rifles used by regular SADF troops, in order to make them less distinguishable from SWAPO, MPLA and UNITA troops when on operations. The white officers of the unit also smeared their exposed skin with a camouflage cream named "black is beautiful", to blend in with their troops when on operations in Angola.<sup>257</sup>

Although not as beautiful as their former base in Namibia, most 32 Battalion members remember Pomfret to have been well maintained, and having good infrastructure, which

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<sup>257</sup> McIntyre, A. "Questions and Concerns about the Planned Relocation of the Citizens of Pomfret, North West Province: Forced Removal?", *32 Battalion*, accessed on 30 April 2015, <http://www.32battalion.net/32%20Battalion%20SOS%202.htm.>; Embleton, N. *The Cost of Military Peace Keeping: An Analysis of the Deployment of 32 Battalion*, Honours Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1995, pp. 34-37.

included services such as electricity, water, sanitation in the form of flushing toilets, as well as a post office, hospital, shop, and a school. The town was divided into two parts, with the more affluent, named Salvador, being reserved for the white officers of the unit, and containing generous family houses on large stands, a separate pre-school for the white children of the town, with tarred roads, street lighting and recreational facilities. Trees were also planted to provide shade. On the other hand, the black troops were accommodated in smaller brick houses on smaller plots in a separate part of the town, named Esperança, some distance away from Salvador. This part of town did not have tarred roads and large trees such as can be found in Salvador, and a separate school was built for the black children of the unit.

When 32 Battalion was relocated to South Africa, the government deployed the unit to the township of Phola Park on the East Rand of Johannesburg in an attempt to quell the violence that erupted in the area during the early 1990s, mostly between rival ANC and IFP groups. However, the De Klerk government failed to understand that a unit trained in counter-insurgency was not equipped or trained to maintain law and order in a civilian environment. As such, the deployment which occurred on the night of 8 April 1992 became highly unpopular and controversial, not only because it led to some civilian deaths and injuries, but also because seemingly foreign (due to their Angolan origin) black troops were being used on black South Africans. The Goldstone *Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation* which was set up to investigate the violence which swept across the country at the time determined that 32 Battalion committed acts of violence against the residents of

Phola Park, and recommended that the unit not be deployed again unless in the most extreme of circumstances.<sup>258</sup>

In the build-up to the 1994 elections, the De Klerk government took the decision to disband 32 Battalion in 1993, even though numerous promises had been made that the unit would not be disbanded. Some unit members argue that the ANC pressured the outgoing government to disband the unit because the unit's Angolan troops were seen as traitors for having fought fellow Africans, including Umkhonto WeSizwe troops, during the Angolan Civil War, but also because they had become extremely unpopular and controversial after their township deployment. Critics of the unit had also argued that due to their Angolan origins, they were foreigners who should not be integrated into the new military.<sup>259</sup>

After 32 Battalion had been disbanded, it became part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> South African Infantry Battalion (2SAI), and Pomfret remained a military base. The late 1990s also saw many old SADF soldiers being offered early retirement packages, which included a lump sum of money above the regular pension pay-outs, which many of the older 32 Battalion members opted to accept. By late 1997 or early 1998, the decision was taken to move the remaining members of 2SAI to Zeerust, some 325 km from Pomfret, where troops and their families were provided with housing. When the SANDF finally closed down the Pomfret base by 1998/99, the town was handed over to the Department of Public Works. Many of the retired black veterans and their families decided to remain in Pomfret, in part because they could not afford to move back

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<sup>258</sup> Report to the Commission of Inquiry regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation from the Committee established to inquire into the involvement of 32 Battalion at Phola Park, Pretoria, 1992.; Embleton, *The Cost of Military Peace Keeping*, pp. 32-34, 37-50.

<sup>259</sup> McIntyre, "Questions and Concerns about the Planned Relocation of the Citizens of Pomfret".

to Angola or relocate somewhere else. It must also be noted that Angola returned to full-scale civil war in 1998 so that returning to Angola was not an attractive option. The former officer's houses were taken over by some of the veterans, and the community was gradually joined by Tswana speaking locals who moved into empty houses. It must be added that by this time and to the present, the most spoken language in Pomfret among the older generation of 32 Battalion veterans and their families is Portuguese, with some not speaking any English or Tswana at all.<sup>260</sup>

The late 1990s and early 2000s also saw many retired 32 Battalion members being recruited by private military companies such as Executive Outcomes, as their counter-insurgency skills were sought after. In 2004, the mercenary activities of some Pomfret residents received much media attention when it was revealed that several mercenaries, including some ex 32 Battalion members, were arrested in Harare, Zimbabwe, on suspicion of being on their way to carry out a coup in Equatorial Guinea. Media visits to Pomfret revealed the dire situation of many Pomfret residents, with poverty and unemployment being rife, and many seeing mercenary jobs as a quick way of earning substantial amounts of money.<sup>261</sup> International and South African journalists, affiliated among others to the *BBC*, *The Telegraph*, *ABC Australia*, and *The Mail and Guardian*, all travelled to Pomfret between 2004 and 2005 to report on the coup attempt and the ensuing trial of arrested mercenaries in Zimbabwe.<sup>262</sup> Even years later, Pomfret still

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<sup>260</sup> McIntyre, "Questions and Concerns about the Planned Relocation of the Citizens of Pomfret".

<sup>261</sup> Taljaard, R. "Implementing South Africa's Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act", in Bryden, A., and Caparini, M. (eds.) *Private Actors and Security Governance*, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Lit Verlag, Berlin, 2006, pp. 171-172, 176-178.

<sup>262</sup> Phillips, B. "South Africa's 'mercenary' village", *BBC*, accessed on 23 December 2015, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3706931.stm>.; Blair, D. "Families of coup plot soldiers curse Mann", *The Telegraph*, accessed on 22 December 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/1472281/Families-of-coup-plot-soldiers-curse-Mann.html>.; Pearce, J. "The Problem of Pomfret", *The Mail and Guardian*, accessed on 23 December 2015, <http://mg.co.za/article/2005-05-19-the-problem-of-pomfret>.; Daniels, Z. "Pomfret, Mercenary Town", *ABC Australia*, accessed on 23 December 2015 <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2005/s1501460.htm>.

received sporadic visits by journalists reporting on the mercenary activities of Pomfret's residents.<sup>263</sup>

As a consequence, the South African government introduced a new law in 2006, making it illegal for South Africans to involve themselves in mercenary activities. In addition, steps were introduced in 2008 to relocate the residents of Pomfret, in part because asbestos from the old mine posed a threat to their health, and also in an attempt to integrate them into South African communities and prevent future mercenary recruitment in the town. Residents were to be relocated to townships as far away as Mafikeng, some 260km from Pomfret. However, a significant portion of Pomfret residents refused to be relocated, fearing persecution and xenophobia, and the government eventually tried to evict them forcibly. Gradually, government services such as the hospital, post office and police station were closed, with these buildings even being torn down. Police and other officials eventually resorted to destroying houses in the town to force residents to move. This was met with heavy opposition by residents, who finally managed to prevent further houses from being destroyed. Also in 2008, a court case had been lodged on behalf of the residents of Pomfret, which challenged the legality of the forced removals and further asked for clarification as to who owns the houses in Pomfret. The court case is ongoing. Pomfret residents argue that the houses were left to the community when the SANDF left and that, as such, they are the rightful owners.<sup>264</sup> A statement by the North West Legislature, dated 6 May 2008, argued that Pomfret residents were occupying houses owned by the state, and noted that the North West government was determined to relocate the residents

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<sup>263</sup> Omar, Y., and Taylor, T. "Forgotten and alone in Pomfret", *Sunday Independent*, accessed on 23 December 2015, <http://sbeta.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/forgotten-and-alone-in-pomfret-1145411>.

<sup>264</sup> McIntyre, "Questions and Concerns about the Planned Relocation of the Citizens of Pomfret"; Taljaard, "Implementing South Africa's Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act", p. 172.; The Mail and Guardian, "Court halts Pomfret relocation", accessed on 23 December 2015, <http://mg.co.za/article/2008-03-26-court-halts-pomfret-relocation>.

of Pomfret in order to integrate them into various communities in the province.<sup>265</sup> Ever since Pomfret became a civilian town, the state of the town's infrastructure has been in decline, with the Department of Public Works having shown little effort nor interest in providing adequate maintenance.

On my visit in September 2014, I was able to establish that certain government services were returned to the town, which includes a visit by a mobile clinic a few times a week, a mobile post office, as well as a visit by a mobile pension and social grant vehicle. The school in Pomfret also continues to provide schooling for the town's children, although it faces a lack of teachers and equipment. Some residents have opened informal shops in order to make a living while others have bought taxis to ferry paying passengers to the nearest towns, as Pomfret remains very isolated and is not situated on any main road. Other residents, mostly Tswanas, have begun keeping goats and chickens in order to consume and sell. Some older residents also receive remittances from family members that have opted to move to larger towns and cities to work. It was also mentioned that the relationship between the Tswana and Angolan population of the town is not always amicable, with some Batswana accusing the Angolans of being foreigners who should not be in South Africa while some Angolans accuse Tswanas of being thieves and criminals. Another source of income in the area is working as farm hands on surrounding cattle farms, while, at the time of my visit, a project had also been initiated by the local government to lay new water pipes in the town. Although some of the town's residents found work with the contractors who were given the contract, residents commented that these contractors sometimes did not show up for days on end, and sometimes failed to pay workers their wages. The general mood among the older veterans is that they have been abandoned and

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<sup>265</sup> North West Legislature, "Legislature rejects motion to stop Pomfret relocation", 6 May 2008.

betrayed by the South African government and that they have not been accorded the same privileges as other South African military veterans. Many veterans lamented that they were facing dire poverty and hardship and that nothing is being done to assist them. As such, the veterans seem to have adopted a victim mentality, arguing that they are being punished for their role in the old SADF. There is no doubt that the Pomfret residents have become victims of political, social and economic processes beyond their control, but as later examples show, some members of the Pomfret community have utilised this victim identity to further their personal, often financial, interests.

I have since found out that Eskom has disconnected Pomfret from the electricity grid in December 2014 due to the amount of illegal and dangerous connections in the town. However, the Department of Public Works and the local municipality have disagreed as to who should be responsible for repairing the electricity infrastructure, which would come to a few million Rand. As a result, the water supply which relies on electric borehole pumps was interrupted for several months, with the town only receiving intermittent water via water trucks. I understand however that the water problem (as of late April 2015) has since been resolved to some extent, with each plot receiving water via an outside tap for a few hours twice a week. As of December 2015, the electricity supply has not been restored, while the North West Education Department has confirmed reports that Pomfret's school, which caters to some 700 students, would be closed down permanently due to a lack of water and electricity.<sup>266</sup> To compound this dire situation even further, groups of thieves and vandals have reportedly begun to target Pomfret in early February 2016, stripping buildings of doors, door frames, windows, window frames, zinc roofs, and other fittings. Residents reported that these groups have come in large numbers

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<sup>266</sup> SABC News, "Parents Resist Pica Pau School Closure", *SABC*, accessed on 5 February 2016, <http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/b5c4be004b19d8ff8f80ef445cadceaa/Parents-resist-Pica-Pau-School-closure>.

from as far afield as Pretoria, Johannesburg and Rustenburg and that residents tried to prevent these acts of theft and vandalism were being intimidated and assaulted.<sup>267</sup> It seems that as the neglect and vandalism of infrastructure in Pomfret increases, the prospective cost of repairing this infrastructure is increasing exponentially, to the extent that the very future of Pomfret and the fate of its residents is becoming increasingly uncertain. At the present, it would appear that Pomfret, along with its inhabitants, is being left to decay. I stand to be corrected on the accuracy of the above information.

At this point, I would also like to clarify my use of the term community in relation to Pomfret and the FNLA veterans living there. From my observations, it seems that Pomfret consists of various levels of community. Pomfret is made up of Angolans and Batswana, who do not always seem to see eye to eye. As such, there exists a clear rift in the town. What is more, as will be discussed in further detail below, hierarchies in terms of military rank and seniority still seem to impact on the relations between the veterans of the town. More specifically, it seems that FNLA veterans have established a distinct network among themselves, alongside the larger network of 32 Battalion veterans in the town. On top of this, there exists a wider network of 32 Battalion veterans who reside outside of Pomfret, and this network includes an online Facebook community. As such, although the Pomfret veterans and their families are united through their common 32 Battalion past and Angolan identity, Pomfret can be seen as a community consisting of various strata, where various networks exist side by side. This is particularly important to take note of when moving on to chapter four. Below I will outline some of the most striking issues that I encountered when I conducted interviews in Pomfret, many of them relating to oral history and the process of conducting interviews.

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<sup>267</sup> Macdonald, C. "Pomfret's latest hardship", *Facebook*, posted on 9 February 2016, accessed on 9 February 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/corlien.macdonald/posts/10153946827968236>.

## Language and Interpreters

In the introduction to this thesis, it was noted how oral history interviews can be seen as a form of knowledge transaction between an interviewer and respondent, and that the relationship between interviewer and respondent will invariably influence the outcome of the interviews, particularly what is communicated, and how it is communicated. Accordingly, factors that might influence the interview process include “[...] differences of age, colour, class, and gender, the issues of language and translation and those of subjectivity, memory and reliability”.<sup>268</sup> Moreover, these factors also impact on how the researcher shapes his or her research agenda, in the ways the researcher “[...] ask[s] questions and respond[s] to narrators and interpret[s] and evaluate[s] what they say”.<sup>269</sup> During the interview process, I found language to be a major influencing factor, which simultaneously relates to the differences in age and culture. Being of mixed ethnic backgrounds, the former 32 Battalion veterans and their families primarily speak indigenous Angolan languages such as Umbundu, Chokwe and Ngunuela within their family units. Within the community, Portuguese is used as the primary language for communicating with other Angolans. A few can speak Tswana, Afrikaans and English. Therefore, one must note that all of the interviews were conducted in the respondent’s second or even third languages.

I must also note that I am not a native Portuguese speaker and relied on a translator to conduct some of the interviews. As such, a key issue I encountered during my interviews relates to the use of translators. Having used a local translator to help me conduct my interviews in Pomfret had obvious advantages, such as the translator and respondent already being acquainted and having established a degree of trust given their common veteran identity. In fact, my translator

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<sup>268</sup> Minkley and Rassool, “Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa”, p. 96.

<sup>269</sup> Yow, “Do I Like Them Too Much?”, p. 57.

in Pomfret also acted as my guide, and his knowledge of the community was crucial to introducing me to possible respondents, and his accompanying me helped me to establish a degree of trust with the respondents. In fact, it is important to note the role trust plays in the researcher-respondent relationship, specifically concerning the extent of information respondents are willing to reveal about themselves. The issue of trust will be addressed in more detail shortly.

Making use of a translator is, however, also accompanied by several issues of concern. When I visited Pomfret, I had to resort to making use of a translator to conduct six interviews as these respondents were not proficient enough in English, or preferred to speak in Portuguese. However, when I chose to have these particular interviews translated by a professional translator after having left Pomfret in order to establish what exactly was said during the interviews, it turned out that my translator had not done a particularly good job. Of course, I must note that he was not a professional translator, and probably had very little prior experience. Not only were responses not always accurately translated given that my translator was not the most proficient English speaker either, but a lot of the richness, detail and depth of the respondent's answers got "lost in translation". As such, where the respondent had given an answer at some length and in considerable detail, my translator had summarised the respondent's answer to no more than one or two sentences. The professionally translated transcripts also revealed that at times my translator had not translated my questions correctly, or had asked entirely different questions altogether, perhaps because he may have misunderstood my question. Having read the professionally transcribed interviews, it has become clear that if I had been aware of some of the details that got "lost in translation" during the interviews, I could have done more to develop the interviews further by asking targeted follow-up questions.

In light of the above, translators must be seen as being in positions of power in relation to respondents, as they not only interpret and translate what has been said but would also be in a position to control and edit what is being translated. Minkley and Rasool for instance, point out that “oral transcripts, their construction, and their re-presentation in history typically reflect a process of selection, editing, embellishing, and deleting the material of individual memory [...]”<sup>270</sup> Accordingly, it must be acknowledged that historians exercise their power over the interviewee as they edit, shape, cut out and splice together the interviews to suit their research agenda. The issue of power relations is however also closely related to the presence of existing power relations within the community of Pomfret, pertaining to the control over and of the veteran’s life stories and their role/s within 32 Battalion. Below I will outline some issues that emerged during my field research that related specifically to gatekeeping and power relations.

### **The Politics of Gatekeeping and Power Relations**

The issue of gatekeepers controlling access to respondents was a particular concern with the Pomfret community. One of my contacts had initially advised me to contact a person in Pomfret regarded as the official spokesperson of the town’s 32 Battalion veterans. When I first called him by telephone sometime in mid-2014, it was difficult to talk to him as he was seemingly struggling to converse in English. After having passed the phone to his son, I was asked what I would offer the veterans in return for the interviews. After having responded that I was not able to pay for interviews, he told me that he did not know whether I should come to Pomfret. I then decided to make contact with another Pomfret resident recommended to me as a potential translator. After having explained the details of my research to him, I asked him to make contact

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<sup>270</sup> Minkley and Rassool, “Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa”, p. 99.

with the veteran's spokesperson again to explain why I wanted to come to Pomfret and speak to the veterans. At about the same time, another contact of mine warned me of this person, saying that he was only interested in benefiting materially from my visit. In the meantime, I had also asked my potential translator how many former FNLA veterans were left in Pomfret, who I could potentially interview. He responded that there were about three, but that I needed to offer them something in return for the interviews. I eventually found a more reliable contact in Pomfret, who on my arrival introduced me to a veteran who she said she trusted would connect me with the right individuals.

It turned out that there were many more FNLA veterans in Pomfret than what I was made to believe by my first contact, and in hindsight, it would seem that a small group centred around the veteran's spokesperson had intended to limit any material gain from my visit to them by excluding other veterans. As I would come to find out, some 32 Battalion veterans have resorted to selling their stories to make some additional money. In fact, when I started many interviews in Pomfret, respondents often ignored my initial questions and embarked on a seemingly rehearsed and very concise story of how they joined 32 Battalion and how they came to be in Pomfret. This may be the result of numerous journalists having come to Pomfret to ask the same questions during the time of the attempted coup and its aftermath in 2004/2005. Hence, my following questions asking about the details of their early lives before 32 Battalion were at times met with quizzical looks.

Two further examples of apparent gatekeeping also relate to the Pomfret community. In one instance my guide and translator took me to the house of an old man. As the old man slowly made his way to the living room, having difficulty walking, his daughter watched on

suspiciously. After my translator had helped me to explain the reason for my visit and that I would like to interview him, his daughter interjected and said that her father was old and no longer could remember the past correctly, and, that hence, she would not permit him to be interviewed as he would tell me incorrect information. After a short rebuttal by the old man in Portuguese, it seemed like the daughter got her way, and we said our goodbyes. Another example relates to a veteran who said that he first needed to go and consult some of his comrades, in order to ensure that he remembered things correctly so that he would not give us any wrong information. After about two days, he finally said that he did not want to be interviewed. My guide told me that he most probably had spoken to the veteran's spokesperson, and I suspect that he was told not to talk to me, although I cannot verify this. Hierarchy and seniority seem to still dictate the interaction between 32 Battalion veterans, and although I cannot be certain, in this case, it seemed as though a lower ranking veteran had been told by a more senior veteran not to speak to me.

Interestingly, Inge Brinkman notes that during her interviews with Angolan refugees in northern Namibia during the 1990s, the issue of telling a story accurately and telling it well was an important factor for respondents, and those listening in would be quick to note any inaccuracies. In this case, one must also note that the presence of MPLA and/or UNITA informants in refugee camps would have deterred respondents from giving MPLA/UNITA critical responses out of fear of reprisals.<sup>271</sup> So too, various respondents in Pomfret noted that they could only tell me what they knew, and could not tell me any lies. This may relate to the fact that in the past, Pomfret residents, even those without 32 Battalion credentials, sought to profit from the visits of journalists and researchers coming to the town to speak to veterans. As

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<sup>271</sup> Brinkman, *A War for People*, p. 40.

such, being able to distinguish between genuine veterans and those posing as veterans becomes of some concern. In fact, I had some individuals coming up to me in Pomfret and offering to speak to me, only to be told by my guide later that they were not in fact former FNLA soldiers. Hence, the issue of who can legitimately claim to be an FNLA and 32 Battalion veteran and who has the authority to speak of the unit's history has had an impact on shaping the power relations within Pomfret. Although I was not able to fully delineate these power relations, they seemed to have had a significant impact on shaping my interactions with the community. In light of the latter, one must note that memory is by no means a static repository of facts or a final product, but rather, an active and continuous construction in the present. As such, memory, as well as identity, is constantly negotiated and re-negotiated. For instance, Greenspan notes that the retelling of someone's story is an active process of construction while Abrams refers to memory as being an active process involving the creation of meanings.<sup>272</sup> Accordingly, it is important to note how outside factors, in this case, the work of previous researchers, not only influences interviewer-respondent relations but also impacts on how respondents shape their memories. The next section will look at this in more detail, particularly on how the issue of trust and suspicion shaped the relations between myself and the respondents.

## **Suspicion**

During the interview process, there were several instances where issues such as suspicion and trust played important roles. When I first met with Celestino Januario, it was primarily in order to get in touch with other Angolans living in Cape Town. When I arrived for our first meeting, which was more or less an informal discussion about my project plans, he informed me that it

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<sup>272</sup> Greenspan, "Collaborative Interpretation of Survivor's Accounts", p. 79.

was important for him to meet me as he did not want to put someone he did not know into contact with his acquaintances. In fact, Celestino noted that it was important to build a relationship first and to establish trust, before commencing the interviews.<sup>273</sup> This is an issue that comes up quite often in the oral history literature. Radiboko Ntsimane notes for instance, how in southern African cultures, there exists a lot of mistrust about what may be revealed in interviews. For Ntsimane, trust plays a major role in determining what may be revealed by interviewees, and what remains untold.<sup>274</sup> Invariably, the physical context of the interview setting, as well as the researcher-respondent dynamics influences how the respondent chooses to narrate his/her memories, what he/she is willing to disclose, and what is not disclosed.<sup>275</sup>

During my interviews, I came to notice that suspicion was motivated by different factors for certain communities, these being refugees and migrants, those with continuing connections to Angola, and the Pomfret group, whose suspicion was specific to the community itself. Maria is an example of the first group. When I first met Maria and told her about my project, she asked me whether I was a policeman. I assured her that I was not. This is understandable given that in 2009, the United Nations informed its member states to end the refugee status for Angolans given the improving situation in Angola. It is only since 2013 that the South African government has enforced this, and is no longer issuing or renewing the refugee status for Angolans in South Africa, and many Angolans are finding it extremely difficult to get residency or work permits approved. On stating that I would want to record the interview with Maria, she seemed very apprehensive and asked whether the recording would be broadcast on TV. I assured her that I had no such intent. On ending the interview and after making sure that I was

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<sup>273</sup> Interview between Celestino Januario and Christian Claassen, 19 April 2014, Cape Town.

<sup>274</sup> Ntsimane, R. ““Why Should I Tell My Story?”: Culture and Gender in Oral History”, in Denis, P., and Ntsimane, R. (eds.) *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, KwaZulu Natal University Press, Durban, 2008, pp. 110-111, 116.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*

no longer recording, Maria confided that she was having difficulties applying for temporary residency. It is quite clear that Maria's anxieties about my motives influenced how she engaged with the interview, and it took some convincing to gain her trust.<sup>276</sup>

When I visited a Cape Town-based refugee and migrant rights centre in mid-2014 in order to establish contacts with Angolans living in Cape Town, I was told by the staff that Angolan migrants and refugees tend to be extremely suspicious and apprehensive about being interviewed. Similar experiences are reported by scholars who conducted oral history interviews with Angolan refugees as well. An example is given by Brinkman, who notes that during her interviews with Angolan refugees many respondents only agreed to talk to her on condition of anonymity. Brinkman states that this was because many Angolan refugees did not possess any residency papers, and were fearful of being reported to the police. In fact, Brinkman says that she was suspected of being a police informant.<sup>277</sup>

Those that still had strong connections to Angola also noted their concern of who might gain access to the interview recordings. One of these persons was Jose (not his real name). At the beginning of the interview, he had apprehensively asked whether my interviews had anything to do with the Angolan government and whether his name was going to be mentioned. After having reassured him that I am in no way connected to any government and that my interviews are for my studies only, we agreed that I would not mention his real name, and we went on to choose the pseudonym Jose. Jose went on to say that some of his family members back in Angola were government officials, and he did not want to be seen as trying to embarrass his

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<sup>276</sup> Interview between Maria Domingos Pedro and Christian Claassen, 5 May 2014, Cape Town.

<sup>277</sup> Brinkman, *A War for People*, p. 42.

family should they find out about the contents of the interview. He also wanted to avoid any Angolan government officials from finding out his identity, as he would go on to make statements critical of the ruling MPLA government.<sup>278</sup>

I was introduced to Jose by members of a Portuguese church in Cape Town frequented by many Angolans. When I had visited the church in order to make contact with possible respondents, I was quickly informed that Angolan diplomats were part of the congregation, and that I should not present the details of my research to the congregation, but should rather wait until they could find suitable persons that they could put me in contact with. Indeed, the fear of the long reach of the Angolan government somehow finding out about an individual's government critical views seems to be of some concern to at least a portion of Angolan expatriates in Cape Town. I was reminded several times that the Angolan civil war remained a sensitive topic. Another example given by Brinkman is that during her interviews with Angolan refugees in northern Namibia, refugees frequently crossed the border to Angola to tend to their fields and visit family. As such, anonymity became an important condition for refugees agreeing to talk to her, as they feared reprisal attacks by UNITA and MPLA troops across the border should it be revealed what they had talked about.<sup>279</sup>

The Pomfret group was equally apprehensive about my motives and questioned who would get access to their interviews. However, these concerns were not motivated by fears that the Angolan government could somehow find out about the contents of the interviews. In fact, some Pomfret veterans, all of whom were granted South African citizenship by the previous

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<sup>278</sup> Interview between Jose Domingo (Pseudonym) and Christian Claassen, 9 July 2014, Cape Town.

<sup>279</sup> Brinkman, *A War for People*, p. 42.

regime, seem almost defiant, openly criticising the MPLA for its shortcomings, while professing their undying loyalty to the FNLA, some doing so while wearing MPLA caps and T-shirts bearing the face of Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, with others having his portrait hanging in their living rooms. This MPLA paraphernalia was distributed to community members by Angolan consular officials who had travelled to Pomfret to assist with the processing of Angolan documents. Community members later informed me that the apprehensiveness I encountered was related to the events of recent years, especially around the time of the failed Equatorial Guinea coup in which several former 32 Battalion members were implicated, when numerous foreign and local media crews came to interview the remaining veterans. I was told that many of these media crews came to Pomfret having made promises of sums of money and improved living conditions, things that never materialised. In fact, whenever I met with potential respondents for the first time, I started the conversation by introducing myself and explained the details of my research. This was always met with some contemplation, and in many cases, was followed by a response of lamenting past visits by people asking questions, and mentioning the promises that were made that never materialised. I was always quick to add that my research would not bring me any financial gains and that as a student, I was unfortunately not in a position to offer payment for interviews. In at least six cases, the answer eventually came that they were tired of telling their stories without getting anything in return, and mentioned again the empty promises made by past visitors, and hence that they would not want to be interviewed. In other cases, I was able to convince respondents to talk to me by promising that I would only use their interviews for my research, and would not make the interviews available to people who might use them for financial gain.

A further scenario that I have not encountered myself is presented by Justin Pearce, who conducted interviews in Angola in 2008/9. Pearce notes that in a post-conflict Angola, the

MPLA was very much interested in promoting its own agendas, which included the promotion of an officially sanctioned MPLA historical narrative while attempting to diminish and exclude the historical narratives of opposition groups. Pearce argues that this had an impact on how respondents interacted with him, weary of the fact that MPLA officials would not be tolerant of MPLA critical accounts. In addition, Pearce states that in some villages there existed a “control of discourse”, with villagers often referring any questions back to village officials such as the chief, who had been instated by the MPLA. Of particular importance was that 2008 had been an election year, with MPLA officials quick to remind people that they had suffered under UNITA control and that they had been liberated by the MPLA.<sup>280</sup>

Accordingly, it is important to realise how senses of identity are “actively and strategically constructed in relation to multiple spaces for multiple purposes”.<sup>281</sup> More so, forced displacement and migration constantly pushes one to renegotiate one’s sense of identity, drawing from past experiences and the life left behind, and the new and often hostile and unfamiliar environment one is faced with. This is particularly relevant in the case of the Pomfret community, as they have undergone several stages of dislocation. As such, their experiences of dislocation bear a strong similarity to refugees. The latter issue will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. As such, in this case, Buyer’s comment that migrants and refugees must “find a way to incorporate their histories and often painful memories into the present” is particularly relevant.<sup>282</sup> Senses of community become important for refugees and migrants to maintain a sense of belonging and place, and as such, senses of self are constantly in the process of being re-negotiated with reference to one’s past.

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<sup>280</sup> Pearce, *Control, ideology and identity in civil war*, pp. 53-56.

<sup>281</sup> Buyer, M. “Negotiating Identity and Displacement”, 2008, p. 226.

<sup>282</sup> Buyer, M. “Negotiating Identity and Displacement”, 2008, p. 226.

## **Conclusion**

From the above, it is clear that there are various factors that need to be considered when conducting oral history interviews, related not only to the research method but also to specific groups of respondents. From looking at my interviews, I see now that in many instances my research agenda, shaped and constrained the types of questions I put to my respondents. Also, however, it has also become clear how some respondents, particularly those in Pomfret, had their own agenda in answering my questions, with many lamenting their present social and economic situations while also highlighting their continued loyalty towards the FNLA. As such, some Pomfret residents have come to see interviews as an opportunity to voice their concerns, with some even expressly asking that their concerns be shared with a wider audience. Hence, the interviews that I conducted are clearly a product of a more complex set of intents, agendas and motivations, and not merely simple exchanges between an interviewer and respondent. Rather, it must be acknowledged that the motivation, intent and agenda of the interviewer are often met with an opposing and often entirely different set of intents, motivations and agendas on the part of the respondents, all within a context where factors such as age, class, culture, ethnicity, language and gender, to name but a few, all play significant roles.

## **CHAPTER 4: FNLA, THE FATHER OF THE REVOLUTION**

In chapter two, I have looked at how official FNLA documents, as well as secondary scholarly literature, portrays the FNLA as a movement that was continuously plagued by a lack of organisational capacity, and a lack of sound leadership. This had dire consequences for FNLA regional structures as well as its troops on the ground, as they were left in situations where they could not depend on basic support in the form of funds and equipment, as well as crucial leadership concerning planning and direction. I have mentioned that former FNLA fighters have provided a starkly contrasting view of the FNLA, portraying it and its leader Holden Roberto as being the heroic and just vanguard of the struggle for independence, as well as the later war against communist imperialism embodied by the MPLA regime. The following chapter will first provide a selection of interview vignettes of the respondents, followed by interview extracts highlighting how the veterans envision the FNLA. By drawing on the concepts of militarised masculinity, gendered dislocation, myth, memory, senses of self and place, and public remembering and forgetting, I will seek to analyse these interviews in more detail, in order to understand why these particular narratives are so different from the narrative presented earlier, and how they have been constructed and sustained. Also, it must be noted that interviews were transcribed verbatim. As such, interviews conducted in English were not rewritten in perfect English. Interviews that were conducted in Portuguese through a translator were professionally translated and transcribed, and this accounts for the differences in grammar.

## Selected Interview Vignettes

The following constructed interview vignettes are intended to provide the reader with a brief overview of the life stories of some of the respondent's interviewed for this study. They are therefore to be seen as summaries of the interviews, rather than direct quotations.

### Francisco Paulo

Francisco was born in the town of Malanje, in Malanje Province, Angola, in 1958. His father was a labourer on a coffee plantation owned by Portuguese colonialists, and his mother was a housewife. Francisco's family is of the Chokwe ethnic group. At times, he stayed with his father, while at other times he stayed with his grandfather. Francisco remembers being sent to stay with his uncle in Luanda in 1960, where he started going to school, but only for a brief period of time. His uncle was a soldier in the Portuguese colonial army. Francisco returned to Malanje after two or three years, thereby escaping a very brutal period which swept over the north of Angola in 1961 when uprisings against the colonial regime were violently quelled by the Portuguese (Note: this has been added by the interviewer, and Francisco does not mention the uprisings explicitly). When Francisco returned to Malanje, he notes that he left school shortly afterwards, only having attended two or three years of school up until the age of 13. From an early age, Francisco knew about the *terroristas* hiding in the bush and was eventually told that these "terrorists" were UPA rebels fighting for the end of colonialism. He notes that when the Portuguese soldiers came to Malanje in their search for terrorists, the older population, including his father, hid in the bush to escape Portuguese reprisal attacks against the population. The younger population, however, stayed behind in the town. At the age of 17 or 18, Francisco joined the FNLA voluntarily along with a friend, and they were taken to the then Zaire for training. After a few months, they were deployed in Angola. However, independence came a few months afterwards. After independence, Francisco notes that fighting broke out between the former rebel groups, and he states that the MPLA was responsible for starting the civil war. He notes that the FNLA found itself in a difficult situation, having no foreign allies to support them. It is at this time that the FNLA made contact with South Africa, and secured their assistance. Francisco tells of how he and other FNLA fighters were taken to what was then South West Africa for training for a few months, where after the FNLA, led by South African Defence Force (SADF) units, marched on Luanda, with Zaire troops assisting from the north. During this campaign, the FNLA and SADF fought against MPLA troops supported by Russian and Cuban troops, as well as UNITA. Francisco says that the FNLA leader, realising that they were essentially at war with their own people, ordered his troops to fall back, a decision greatly resented by South Africa. Francisco's unit retreated to South West Africa, where they were then incorporated into what was to become 32 Battalion. When South West Africa received independence, the entire unit was moved to Pomfret, in South Africa's North West Province, where Francisco and his family are currently staying.<sup>283</sup>

### Vieira Monte

Vieira was born in 1955 in the town of Kamabatela, situated in the Province of Uíge in northern Angola. Vieira is a native Kimbundu speaker and recalls that his father worked on a coffee plantation while his mother ran the household. The family consisted of seven siblings, of which Vieira was the middle child, and Vieira notes that he spent much of his early childhood playing soccer. When they were old enough, they helped their father on the plantation but did not get paid for their work. Although Vieira had the opportunity to go to school, he discontinued his studies at the age of 16 to train as a tailor. He recalls that the MPLA had on occasion visited his village in order to recruit new supporters, promising to fight the colonialists to liberate Angola. However, Vieira also notes that informers would report those that were overheard to speak about politics to the Portuguese authorities. At this point Vieira's recollection seems a

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<sup>283</sup> Interview between Francisco Paulo and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

bit blurry: he notes that he witnessed increased fighting between rebels and the Portuguese by the early 70s, and that he himself wanted to join the army, and that as such, joined the MPLA at the age of 17. When asked whether people were forced to join the MPLA, he notes that they were not. He mentions that he liked the MPLA, but that he stayed on with them for less than a month. When asked why he left, he recalls that the MPLA caught him along with others from his village and that he was in fact taken by force. Vieira also mentions that he was treated like a prisoner, receiving little food, while also receiving no form of payment. Vieira notes that he was taken for military training and that he was then deployed in Angola. It is at this point that he left the MPLA to join the FNLA, and became part of the group of FNLA soldiers that sought refuge in South West Africa and later joined the South African military's 32 Battalion.<sup>284</sup>

### **Simão Mendes**

Simão was born in 1943 in the Province of Uíge in northern Angola. He notes that he is part of the Bakongo ethnic group and that he was the first born of nine brothers and four sisters. His father had been a subsistence farmer who grew coffee and peanuts. While Simão was a young child, he looked after his siblings and recalled his childhood to be more or less problem free. However, Simão states that he never had the opportunity to attend school. Simão recalls that fighting started in 1961, at which point his family first fled their village to hide in the surrounding forests, and later made their way to the Congo as refugees. At one point, Simão was sent back to Angola to establish whether it was safe to return. He further recalls that life in Congo was good and that he eventually joined the FNLA at the age of 18. Asked about what he knew about the FNLA before he joined, Simão notes that he had encountered people who were mobilising young people to join the FNLA, and were explaining to them why they had to fight the Portuguese. He notes that he joined because he believed that the FNLA could liberate Angola, and states that the FNLA had enjoyed widespread popularity across Angola's ethnic divide. Simão ended up in the FNLA's Kinkuzo base and stayed with the group throughout the war for independence. Asked to describe his life under the FNLA as a young soldier, he notes that life was ok and that they received uniforms and sufficient food. However, they did not receive any payment, as they joined voluntarily to fight for independence so that they could live in peace. Furthermore, Simão notes that the FNLA never forced people to join them and that all those that joined the FNLA did so from the heart because they believed in freedom. In contrast, Simão recalls that the MPLA had forced people to join them. From parts of the interview, it is clear that Simão remains a devoted FNLA supporter. He notes that the FNLA had been like a father to its children and that it had only the best interests of all Angolans at heart.<sup>285</sup>

### **José Francisco**

José was born in 1953 in the town of Gabela in Angola's Cuanza Sul province and notes that he is an ethnic Kimbundu speaker. José recalls that his father passed away when he was seven or eight years old and that he stayed with his mother, who was not employed, along with a younger brother and sister. José notes that he became very protective of his mother and siblings and that he often got into fights in order to protect their honour. Asked how he had first become aware of the conflict in Angola, he recalled that he first heard of the FNLA and the liberation war by listening to a radio station that broadcasted from Congo-Brazzaville. He further recalls that he attended school in Gabela for about four years until he turned 16, at which point he moved to Luanda, where he stayed until he was twenty or twenty-one years old. In Luanda, he started working as a mechanic and later trained as an electrician to support his mother and siblings. While he worked during the day, he continued his studies at night. Around 1974, José returned to Gabela with the intention of joining the colonial army. Asked why he wanted to join the colonial army, he explained that only after having served a two-year term could one hope to access better jobs. However, the 1974 Lisbon coup disrupted his plans, and he eventually joined the FNLA instead, which had come to Gabela to recruit supporters. Asked why he had specifically joined the FNLA and not one of the other liberation groups, José explained that he had admired the FNLA's leader Holden Roberto and because he generally preferred the FNLA to the other groups. After having undergone military training, José was deployed to fight against

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<sup>284</sup> Interview between Vieira Monte and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>285</sup> Interview between Simão Mendes and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

the MPLA, eventually making his way to South West Africa where he joined 32 Battalion after the FNLA had been largely defeated. Asked whether he was paid during his time with the FNLA, he noted that he had not. However, he added that he was always treated well and that he received enough food, clothing and ammunition. He further notes that he never witnessed people being forced to join the FNLA and that those that did join did so out of their own free will. Like other respondents, José noted that he remained a dedicated FNLA supporter, noting that he believed in the capitalist democratic policies of the FNLA while heavily disagreeing with the communist MPLA, who he accuses of repressing free speech and keeping Angola backwards.<sup>286</sup>

### **Pedro Lenge**

Pedro was born in 1948, in the coastal town of Soyo in Angola's Zaire province. Pedro notes that he is of the Bakongo ethnic group, and recalls that his father was a farmer who grew beans, peanuts and maize, but also kept chickens and cattle. Pedro states that his mother died while he was still young. He also recalls that he only attended two years of school, until he was seven, but states that he can read and write. After school, his father sent him to learn skills as an apprentice but adds that he often had to help his father on the farm as well. Growing up, Pedro recalls that he only had aspirations to become a farmer like his father. However, he says that he went to stay with his paternal uncle in the Congolese port town of Matadi when he was seventeen or eighteen and later learned how to drive, becoming a taxi driver who ferried passengers between the Congo and Angola. Pedro notes that he had joined the FNLA when he was 30 while still living in the Congo. After he had been deployed to Angola, he lost contact with his family for some time. Asked why he had joined the FNLA, he notes that his father had wanted him to join the FNLA to fight for the liberation of Angola. Pedro notes that he was treated well while with the FNLA and that although they did not receive payment, they had everything they needed. Pedro further recalls that he had joined the FNLA because he wanted to fight for his country, to fight for freedom and that all those that joined the FNLA did so voluntarily. According to Pedro, people were never forced to join the FNLA. Like other respondents, Pedro remains a fervent FNLA supporter and noted that he would remain FNLA until he died.<sup>287</sup>

### **João Sebastião**

João was born 1940 in the town of Kamabatela in Angola's Cuanza Norte province and is a native Kimbundo speaker. João notes that he was the eldest of three brothers and that his father and mother died when he was very young. He had trained to be a tailor to support himself and his brothers, and as such, he states that he had no time to go to school. João recalls that he was fourteen or fifteen when he left Kamabatela due to increased fighting between the rebels and the colonial army and that he joined the FNLA soon afterwards. He notes that after joining the FNLA, he received training at the FNLA's Kinkuzo base. Asked why he had joined the FNLA, João answered that many young boys at the time had joined as well and that he simply followed their lead as he did not know what else to do. His duties with the FNLA included being a cook, and he recalls that his time spent with the FNLA was generally problem free. Asked whether he had gotten payment, João notes that no one was paid and that instead, people joined the FNLA to fight for the country. João also states that they had received sufficient food and that the FNLA soon became like a family to him. Asked whether people were ever forced to join the FNLA, João answered with a passionate no, and further stated that people joined the FNLA because they wanted peace, and to stop the fighting.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Interview between Jose Francisco and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>287</sup> Interview between Pedro Lenge and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>288</sup> Interview between João Sebastião and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

### **José Dala Lourenço**

José was born in 1948 in what was then the town of Serpa Pinto, in Angola's Cuando Cubango province. José is a native Nganguela speaker and notes that his father was a carpenter while his mother was a housewife. José further recalls that he was the eldest of seven siblings, with him being the only boy. While he cannot recall his early childhood, he notes that he went to school for three years from the age of twelve. He finally left school to escape the frequent beatings of his teacher and went to work on a farm in Tsumeb as a herd boy looking after goats. Not long after, he returned home in order to train as a builder. José recalls that he had not been affected by the independence war, which was restricted to Angola's northernmost provinces, and that he only encountered the different liberation groups at the time of independence around 1975. It was also during this time that his father passed away after the family had moved to the town of Cuangar, and José notes that he had joined the FNLA because of the ensuing chaos caused by the war. Asked why he had specifically chosen to join the FNLA, José noted that he had liked what FNLA recruiters had said, and he notes that a lot of his Nganguela kinsmen were joining the FNLA as well. José continued to recall that although no one ever received any form of payment, they received sufficient food, and he states that the FNLA never forced people to join them. José also alludes to the fact that he joined the FNLA in a time of extreme insecurity, and that joining the FNLA and later the SADF's 32 Battalion was a calculated decision to secure his own survival.<sup>289</sup>

### **Pedro Manuel**

Pedro was born in the town of Songo situated in Angola's Uíge province, in 1942, and belongs to the Bakongo ethnic group. He recalls that his father was a farmer who cultivated coffee, maize and peanuts. Pedro's mother assisted her husband with the farm work. Most of his early childhood was spent assisting his parents with the farming chores, and Pedro notes that as such, he never went to school. Pedro joined the FNLA at the age of 19 and received his training at the FNLA's Kinkuzo base. He recalls that they did not receive guns at first and that they had to make due with sticks and pangas. Asked when he first came to know of the FNLA, he recalls that he was told about the FNLA by his father, who noted that it was a party for northern Angola. However, Pedro notes that the FNLA was open to all ethnicities, and welcomed everyone who wished to join. Although Pedro states that he was not forced to join the FNLA, he alluded to the fact that the elders of his village encouraged FNLA membership. Pedro notes that his military training was tough, but also states that he was treated well. Asked whether he had gotten sufficient clothing and food, he recalled that one only ran out of food and clothes when on patrol for months at a time, but that generally, there had been enough food. He also states that they did not receive any pay because the FNLA was not yet well established. Like other respondents, Pedro notes that he is still a fervent FNLA supporter, and he expressed quite some animosity towards the present MPLA regime, arguing that they did not want anything to do with FNLA supporters, and as such, he cannot return to Angola to see his family.<sup>290</sup>

## **FNLA is the Father of the Revolution for Freedom**

In contrast to the critical narrative of the FNLA which has been presented earlier, what struck me when I listened to the interviews I had conducted with the FNLA veterans, was that they portrayed the FNLA in an almost overly positive light. Alessandro Portelli's notion of myth-making mentioned earlier, is instructive, and the question that therefore arises would be: what

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<sup>289</sup> Interview between Jose Dala Lourenço and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>290</sup> Interview between Pedro Manuel and Christian Claassen, 10 September 2014, Pomfret.

purpose does the myth of an unblemished FNLA serve for these respondents individually, as well as for the group? Before I attempt to answer this question, I will first provide examples of how the FNLA veterans spoke about the FNLA.

Initially, my study attempted to ascertain the reasons why these veterans had joined the FNLA, and as such, some of the questions I had asked specifically inquired about how they were treated while they were FNLA soldiers, as well as if they received enough food, clothing, weapons and ammunition while with the FNLA. I also asked whether the FNLA had recruited soldiers forcibly and whether they were free to leave if they chose to. In addition, I asked whether they had received any form of payment. In their responses, all respondents adamantly asserted that they were never forced to join the FNLA, and that they, as well as all other FNLA soldiers, joined of their own free will; that they had been treated well; received sufficient food, arms and uniforms; and that they were free to leave if they chose to. Also, they did not receive payment as they had chosen to fight for their country, for freedom and liberation, and that as such, payment had not been an important issue. In particular, the assertions that they had received enough food, equipment and clothing seems particularly suspect, considering the accounts by former 32 Battalion officers that have been mentioned earlier, stating that they had encountered these FNLA soldiers in dismal states, some soldiers not having had proper or no footwear, having only worn mismatched, ragged t-shirts and shorts, and seemingly having had no proper meals for a while.<sup>291</sup> This is particularly relevant as the Pomfret respondents originated from this group of FNLA soldiers. However, as mentioned, the veterans paint a different picture. As José Dala Lourenço recalls:

CC: Did you get food every day?

JDL: Ja, food, a lot. They was give us. They was give us food. Nicely. Nice.

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<sup>291</sup> Nortje, *The Terrible Ones*, p. 69.

CC: And did you get some sort of money or something? A payment?

JDL: From, from FNLA party not. [...] No one was paid.

CC: Ok. [...] So did uhm, did the FNLA ever force people to stay in the FNLA army?

JDL: No.

CC: So you were free to go when you wanted?

JDL: No one forced the people to stay in the army. Like myself, no one was forcing me, to do, to join the army.<sup>292</sup>

Similarly, João Sebastião noted:

JS: We had food. I myself was a chef to cook for the soldiers.

CC: Can you describe to me what life was like in the FNLA?

JS: The life I had in the FNLA was to have peace, no problems.

CC: Were you given food, money, other things?

JS: Let's tell the truth! We were not there [...] to be paid. It was our country. Was just food and that was enough, there was no money paid to us.

CC: Did you ever want to leave the FNLA?

JS: One was happy to be with FNLA. I was happy because I wanted to be with FNLA.

CC: Would you say it was like a family for you?

JS: Yes.

CC: Did the FNLA ever force people to be part of the movement? Did they force people to be soldiers?

JS: No, that was an organisation that didn't like to force people. If everything was like FNLA we would not be here in South Africa. [...] All of them were FNLA because they didn't want war, they wanted peace, and FNLA also wanted peace, no more fighting.<sup>293</sup>

José Francisco, who had only been an FNLA soldier for one year before joining the SADF, gave the following sparse but precise answers to my questions:

CC: Did you get payment?

JF: No, there was no pay.

CC: No pay?

JF: No, just that thing was only for free. Ja. I was joining for nothing.

CC: And how were you treated? Did you get food...

JF: Ja, there was food enough.

CC: And did you get enough equipment, clothing, stuff like that?

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<sup>292</sup> Interview between Jose Dala Lourenço and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>293</sup> Interview between João Sebastião and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

JF: Ja, everything.

CC: So they never forced people to join them?

JF: No, no, no. FNLA never forced people. You yourself will decide if you want to join. There was no party was forcing, eh, people to join them. <sup>294</sup>

So too, Francisco Paulo recalls that the FNLA had been very popular:

CC: When you joined FNLA, did a lot of other people join as well?

FP: Yes, because FNLA was the one, she was the number one. She's the people. Was not forcing people. Just yourself, you want to go to join FNLA. It was a lot of people. [...] Because, when FNLA came, he was talk with people nicely. Nicely, nicely. It was not a problem, he was not forcing people. Yourself, if you want, you can join. If you don't want, you can stay.

CC: Ok.

FP: But also, [...] he was not promise, to say you are going to get money, because at the time, he was not organised, the people, the soldier to pay money. But food, and eh, clothes, it was fine. <sup>295</sup>

Another account is given by Simão Mendes, who recalled the following:

CC: Did the higher ranking officials treat the soldiers well? Did you have food and clothes?

SM: Yes, we had food and uniforms and all we needed.

CC: Did you also get some money as compensation?

SM: We had no payment as compensation. At that time, we went to war so we could become independent and live in peace.

CC: How did the FNLA recruit young people? [...] Convince them or force them?

SM: No, that was voluntary. They never forced the people to join them. They joined FNLA from the heart. They believed in freedom.

CC: Would you say that the FNLA had lots of support from the communities?

SM: That was right, the people liked the FNLA. [...] They would come talk to the communities, give their ideas about the party to get more and more support from the communities. In the communities, each person had the right to choose the party they wanted to join. Like here you have the ANC, IFP, DA. <sup>296</sup>

In some instances, I did not even ask about forced recruitment, and respondents chose to address the issue, as if in a pre-emptive way. It must be added that when I explained the purpose

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<sup>294</sup> Interview between Jose Francisco and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>295</sup> Interview between Francisco Paulo and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>296</sup> Interview between Simão Mendes and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

of my interviews to the respondents, in order to establish why they had joined the FNLA, it seemed that some were specifically attempting to paint the FNLA in a positive light from the start. For instance, Pedro Lenge remarked the following at the beginning of the interview when I had asked him to recall what he remembered about his parents: “[...] I was in Congo with my father’s brother, I was not in Angola. I learned to drive there in Congo. I was a taxi man. That is what I did when I was in my house in DRC. I later joined the army, but it was voluntary, I was not forced to join the army. While I was training I always went home.”<sup>297</sup> Asked whether he had received sufficient food and had received any form of payment, Pedro replied: “It was good, we had everything, was good. [...] You must remember at that time we did not fight for money, but for the country. Even our parents. [...] There was no promises, just become soldier for the country.”<sup>298</sup>

In addition to noting that they had been well treated and had received adequate food, clothes and equipment, many Pomfret respondents also noted how the FNLA was fighting a just war, striving for peace and prosperity, in order to liberate all Angolan people from Portuguese colonialism. Asked whether the FNLA was a liberation movement exclusively for Bakongos, some noted that the FNLA had been a truly inclusive organisation that did not discriminate against other ethnic groups. Furthermore, some respondents also mentioned the virtuous qualities of the FNLA’s leader Holden Roberto. This is in direct contrast to the accounts portraying the FNLA as a narrow, Bakongo nationalist movement, fighting for the exclusive interests of northern Angola discussed previously. These responses are also quite different to how others have described Roberto, namely, as being a paranoid, autocratic leader, who seemingly benefited personally from misappropriating FNLA funds. For the Pomfret veterans,

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<sup>297</sup> Interview between Pedro Lenge and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>298</sup> Interview between Pedro Lenge and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

as will be shown below, the FNLA and Holden Roberto are still very much held in high esteem, with some going as far as to note that they would remain loyal FNLA members and supporters until the day they died.

In an interview conducted in 2005, Pomfret resident and ex FNLA soldier João Pequeno dos Santos, interviewed by Angela McIntyre, recounts why he had joined the FNLA. Noting that his father had been killed while serving in the Portuguese colonial army, João went on to train as a mechanic at the age of 15 before joining the FNLA. He remembers:

AM: When did you join the FNLA?

JDS: When the brothers moved into the territory...all of us joined that army.

AM: And you had some sense of the independence struggle?

JDS: Yes, we were all fighting for independence, for the liberation of the territory; all of us young people felt that spirit to join our brothers. [...] I was angry, we saw our land was being used by people who didn't belong there, we were inspired, and we joined our brothers who were fighting in the bush. All the youth of 15, 16, 17 years joined the FNLA [...] I joined the FNLA, and that's where I stayed.<sup>299</sup>

It is of particular interest to note that the above respondent refers to FNLA soldiers as having been brothers, which would indicate a sense of camaraderie and familiarity. This emphasis on community is reiterated by João Sebastião, who described the FNLA in the following way: “[...] the FNLA wanted to keep the people together, no war, no fighting, and work together.”<sup>300</sup>

This view is also shared by Pedro Lenge, who noted the following:

CC: When did you hear about the FNLA? What was the party like?

PL: Yes, it was a good party to liberate the country to give freedom.

CC: When did you first meet people from the FNLA?

PL: The people is me! I am the people; we are the people. Let me explain: FNLA was my political party, making alliance. That is why my father decided that we must go to the army to be part of the FNLA to fight for freedom. Our fathers wanted us to go and join the party and organise everything.

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<sup>299</sup> Interview between Angela McIntyre and João Pequeno dos Santos, March 2005, Pomfret.

<sup>300</sup> Interview between João Sebastião and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

CC: What was life like in the FNLA? Was it good?

PL: It was good. I am going to answer like this: FNLA was ok, was good because it was FNLA that won the country back. President Holden Roberto, he was the one that was leading. He was the one that made agreement [...] to cease fire. Holden Roberto went to Portugal to sign agreement with the minister.

CC: So the reason you stayed with the FNLA was to fight for the country's freedom?

PL: That is my party. I grew up in the FNLA and I will die FNLA!<sup>301</sup>

The above sentiment of one's continued loyalty to the FNLA is echoed by Francisco Paulo, who noted: "[...] I can't leave FNLA even now, FNLA staying into my heart. I love him too much. She never make any problem to me or my family. Even my family I leave there behind also was the group of FNLA." Asked whether he ever tried to leave the FNLA while he was a soldier, Francisco Paulo remarked adamantly: "I never leave FNLA, because is the one who start with me, is the one when I'm going to die, also, I'm going to remember why I'm here: the name of FNLA. Yes."<sup>302</sup>

Similarly, when asked whether he ever tried to leave the FNLA, José Francisco replied: "No, I never leave FNLA. I still, I'm still FNLA, until now. Because I don't see anything wrong with FNLA."<sup>303</sup> José explained:

The idea of FNLA is good. Ja. Because MPLA, working with eh, Soviet, Cuban. Look at the Cuban, how they are: they don't have good job there. They don't have good life, in Cuba. This is what MPLA want to follow. How am I going to follow MPLA? [...] No man. FNLA want to follow those, American, French, whatever, the way they living there. Ja, that is, they say capitalism. That is the way that people must live. Not the way the Cuban live. And to have eh, a permanent president. A president come in, power to be there until he die. It is not good. It's not a democracy. Ja, is the same MPLA doing. Jose Eduardo dos Santos is there for a very long time. He don't want to come out. How I'm going to join that party? Just to suffer? You cannot talk about the president you'll be killed. Here in South Africa, you can talk bad about Zuma whatever, never going to, no one who can touch you. Because we are free to say something. But in Angola no, you are not free. If you criticise the president you die. That's why they are maintain on that, those things. Because of the, they are follow Cuban, Russian. No, no way. Ja.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Interview between Pedro Lenge and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>302</sup> Interview between Francisco Paulo and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>303</sup> Interview between Jose Francisco and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>304</sup> Interview between Jose Francisco and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

Another FNLA veteran, Simão Mendes, explains why he joined the FNLA:

CC: When you joined the FNLA, what was the reason?

SM: It was a political party that I believed could liberate Angola, like the South African government under Mandela. FNLA was like that.

CC: So you went to fight for the FNLA because you believed they could fight colonialism?

SM: Yes.

CC: Was that the case for many other young people that joined the FNLA?

SM: The majority of people liked FNLA, like here in SA with the ANC.

CC: Was it only Bakongo people or other ethnic groups as well?

SM: All others too.

CC: What was the FNLA like?

SM: FNLA's objective was to fight for the people's freedom. That is what the party was all about. Freedom for Angola. Then later the war started, MPLA started attacking FNLA and FNLA responded. Because of that lots of people were killed. Then the FNLA leader Holden Roberto said: we can't keep killing our people because of the way MPLA used the Cubans to fight. From that time, we then joined UNITA but later UNITA turned against us. That is the way FNLA lost the war; they were alone.<sup>305</sup>

The last section in the above answer, in particular, shows how Simão Mendes portrays the FNLA as a victim, having been betrayed by enemies such as the MPLA and UNITA. Also, Simão Mendes notes that Holden Roberto made the honourable decision to partner with UNITA to prevent the deaths of further FNLA comrades. Just like Simão Mendes, Pedro Manuel noted that the FNLA was an inclusive movement that was open to all ethnic groups. He explains:

CC: Ok, so eh, how did you, how did you first meet FNLA people?

PM: It was the party from the north, what when I was born my father he tell me we have a party with the name FNLA, but it's a Bakongo party.

CC: Ok, so you're also Bakongo?

PM: Ja.

CC: Ok, so what did your father say about FNLA? Just that it was for Bakongo? Or what else did he say?

PM: No, like ANC and Inkatha, just like ANC and Inkatha, when Mandela was in jail, when he came out, he didn't say that party only for ANC.

CC: Ok, so FNLA was for everyone, not just Bakongo?

PM: Umbundu, Nanguela, Kyoko, etc.

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<sup>305</sup> Interview between Simão Mendes and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

CC: So can you tell me why you joined FNLA? Did someone come to your village and say you must join?

PM: FNLA was for everyone, you want to join FNLA, you just come in.<sup>306</sup>

Pedro Manuel gave one of the most emphatic statements in support of the FNLA and Holden Roberto. He noted:

Holden Roberto of FNLA [was] fighting for freedom. FNLA is the father of the revolution for freedom. The reason was, we wanted a united government, all together for the same objectives. An organ of government is not a person. Holden Roberto wanted to unite all the groups and the people but Agostinho Neto said no! He didn't agree. I don't understand that, he was taking soldier from one group to another. He wanted to separate all of us. I don't know why. [...] Holden Roberto was the first, was like a mother, was like the first to fight with the colony. And when we got independence, Holden Roberto was supposed to put all the three parties, to put together, to build our country. But Agostinho Neto he was not agreeing for that.<sup>307</sup>

Again, the above extract portrays Holden Roberto as the righteous freedom fighter, leading the just FNLA against the unjust MPLA under Agostinho Neto. From the above, it seems that Holden Roberto's leadership came to personify Pedro Manuel's hopes and dreams for his country. More so, it is stressed that the FNLA had been the first liberation movement to engage in the anti-colonial struggle, and, therefore, was more legitimate than other groups. Pedro also likens the FNLA and Holden Roberto to a father and mother figure, with this statement giving clues as to how many veterans felt about their leader and their movement. For many FNLA soldiers, the FNLA under Roberto came to provide a family-like structure in a time when they were separated from their own families and had to deal with a lot of insecurity, death and chaos. In a concluding remark, Pedro Manuel reiterated his continued loyalty to the FNLA: "I won't be leaving FNLA, even now sitting here I am a person of FNLA."<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Interview between Pedro Manuel and Christian Claassen, 10 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>307</sup> Interview between Pedro Manuel and Christian Claassen, 10 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>308</sup> Interview between Pedro Manuel and Christian Claassen, 10 September 2014, Pomfret.

## **Analysis**

As mentioned, the question that arose when I reviewed these interviews was: how and why was the myth and memory of an unblemished FNLA produced and sustained by the FNLA veterans of Pomfret? In answering this question, the following section will explore several themes, including the role of the FNLA and Holden Roberto as parental figures and joining the FNLA as a strategy for survival; the role of masculinity and nationalism; senses of betrayal by the old South African regime and a sense of abandonment in the current context; senses of place and belonging; the image of a just FNLA versus an unjust MPLA; as well as the politics of remembering and forgetting. This will be done by drawing on concepts such as memory and myth, as well as senses of place, belonging and self, as explored in the introduction. The first theme I would like to explore is that of the FNLA and Holden Roberto being portrayed as parental figures, within the context of nationalism and masculinity.

### **Nationalism and Masculinity: The FNLA as the Father of the Revolution**

As seen in the previous section, some veterans likened the FNLA and Holden Roberto to parental figures, referring to them as mother and father. For instance, Pedro Manuel noted: “FNLA is the father of the revolution for freedom. [...] Holden Roberto [...] was like a mother.”<sup>309</sup> Another veteran, João Sebastião, responded affirmatively when asked whether the FNLA had been like a family to him.<sup>310</sup> So too, Simão Mendes stated: “FNLA acted like a father to his children”.<sup>311</sup> In light of the latter comments, it must be noted that many veterans had joined the FNLA at very young ages, with some having joined when they were younger than 18. Having left their families behind during a time of great uncertainty and insecurity, the

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<sup>309</sup> Interview between Pedro Manuel and Christian Claassen, 10 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>310</sup> Interview between João Sebastião and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>311</sup> Interview between Simão Mendes and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

FNLA and their fellow comrades provided a surrogate family that gave them a sense of identity and belonging during the war years. In addition, Holden Roberto took on a parental figure, providing guidance and a sense of purpose. As shown previously, some veterans noted that they had joined the FNLA to fight for freedom, and to liberate Angola, at first from Portuguese colonial rule, and later from MPLA/Soviet/Cuban occupation. Notions of masculinity and nationalism are useful concepts that help to explain the above focus on family and a sense of needing to participate in the independence struggle. Moreover, understanding how masculinity relates to one's sense of potency and purpose becomes integral to understanding how the veterans relate to the FNLA. The term potency used here does not only refer to masculine strength and might but also denotes social, as well as political potency. Below, I will outline how notions of masculinity relate to colonialism, nationalism, as well as militarism, before drawing on interview extracts in order to illustrate these connections in more detail.

Desiree Lwambo notes that gender roles are socially constructed, as children are conditioned for their future roles by means of education and socialisation. Lwambo proposes that in Africa, masculinity is connected to one's ability to head a household by providing for one's family.<sup>312</sup> This view is supported by Richard Waller, who says that "adulthood for men emphasized the achievement of independence as household heads."<sup>313</sup> In his article, *Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa*, Waller explores how conceptions of adulthood were shaped by late colonial processes, causing significant intergenerational tensions, with young men, in particular, attempting to become active agents rather than submissive subjects.<sup>314</sup> Fundamentally disadvantaged by racialized colonial laws, youngsters came to see their impotent elders as

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<sup>312</sup> Lwambo, D. "‘Before the War I was a Man’: Men and Masculinities in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo", in *Gender & Development*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2013, pp. 50-51.

<sup>313</sup> Waller, R. "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa", in *The Journal of African History*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2006, p. 81.

<sup>314</sup> Waller, "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa", p. 77-78.

accomplices to their continued colonial subjugation. According to Waller, this new found consciousness increasingly threatened to undermine the “alliance between colonialism and ‘tradition’”, and while “racial domination undermined the masculinity of men who were no longer [their own] masters, [...] perhaps they could imagine or make another [world] for themselves.”<sup>315</sup> Waller argues that youth were angry at an adult society that could no longer offer them protection or guidance and that increased defiance vis-à-vis adult society stemmed from a deep-seated sense of frustration.<sup>316</sup>

This sense of frustration found impetus within the nationalist movements of the mid-twentieth century, with nationalist organisations, such as the FNLA in this case, offering an opportunity for action. Aaronette White argues that nationalism enabled African men to reclaim the loss of status they experienced through disruptive colonial policies such as imposed taxation and land dispossession.<sup>317</sup> Waller notes that for the youth, in particular, nationalist mobilisation “conveyed a vivid sense that politics could be fun”, but also offered an opportunity to circumvent the betrayal of elders, by taking power and authority by force. As such, nationalist movements held the promise of achieving “self-mastery through independence”.<sup>318</sup>

Moreover, as Joane Nagel points out, there exists a “connection between manhood and nationhood”, with “patriotic manhood and exalted motherhood” being constructed as “icons of nationalist ideology”.<sup>319</sup> Thus, while nationalism often evolves out of “masculinised memory,

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<sup>315</sup> Waller, “Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa”, pp. 79-80.

<sup>316</sup> Waller, “Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa”, p. 89.

<sup>317</sup> White, A. “All the Men are Fighting for Freedom, all the Women are Mourning Their Men, but Some of Us Carried Guns: A Raced-Gendered Analysis of Fanon’s Psychological Perspective on War”, in *Signs*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2007, p. 862.

<sup>318</sup> Waller, “Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa”, p. 89.

<sup>319</sup> Nagel, J. “Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations”, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2010, p. 242.

masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope”, the nation is often perceived in a feminine light, to be defended.<sup>320</sup> It is the men who defend “their freedom, their honour, their homeland and their women”, and as such, “nationalism is constructed to emphasise and to resonate with masculine cultural themes”, with terms like “honour, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty [...] thoroughly tied to the nation and to manliness.”<sup>321</sup> Thus, in this conception where the nation is likened to a family, it is the women who embody the nation and its honour, while men are the defenders of the family and the nation. According to Nagel, “only cowards shirk the call of duty; real men are not cowards. Patriotism is a siren call that few men can resist, particularly in the midst of political ‘crisis’; and if they do, they risk the disdain or worse of their communities and families”.<sup>322</sup> Accordingly, there exists a situation where on the one hand, youngsters would have joined nationalist movements in order to counteract the impotency of their elders and in the process attain a sense of status, social and political potency and purpose themselves, while on the other hand, youngsters would have felt that it was their patriotic duty to fight for independence. Shirking their duty would have meant being potentially ridiculed by their peers.

White proposes that the “patriarchal nature of war, militarism and military training”, was further reinforced during independence struggles, “as nationalist consciousness became militarised”.<sup>323</sup> In fact, Mary Layoun states that “nationalism and militarism seem to go hand in hand”<sup>324</sup> while George Mosse notes that war is an “invitation to manliness”<sup>325</sup>. According

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<sup>320</sup> Enloe, C. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990, p. 45.

<sup>321</sup> Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism”, pp. 244, 251-252.

<sup>322</sup> Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism”, p. 252.

<sup>323</sup> White, “All the Men are Fighting for Freedom”, pp. 251-252.

<sup>324</sup> Layoun, M. “Telling Spaces: Palestinian Women and the Engendering of National Narratives”, in Parker, A., Russo, M., Sommer, D., and Yaeger, P. (eds.) *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, Routledge, New York, 1991, p. 410-411.

<sup>325</sup> Mosse, G. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1985, p. 34.

to White, notions of combat as men's work "promoted hypermasculine views of manhood, [e.g.] manhood as aggressive, competitive, stoic, and the opposite of anything feminine", while combat, associated with exercising power, "is understood to be the ultimate test of masculinity".<sup>326</sup> Diana Gibson notes that notions of masculinity are socially constructed and that the notions of military masculinity, in particular, put an emphasis on "toughness, hardness, male-bonding and self-sufficiency".<sup>327</sup> More specifically, Gibson points out that behavioural attributes such as power, control, competitiveness, forcefulness, gallantry and resilience are particularly espoused. The notion of "warrior masculinity" in an attempt to claim the status of manhood is also significant.<sup>328</sup>

However, Lwambo points out how the impact of war can lead to fractured and dysfunctional families, where young boys grow up without positive male role models. Being denied the opportunity to gain the financial means to establish one's own family in order to attain the status of manhood, Lwambo argues, leads to young men seeking other strategies that enable them to attain recognition and respect.<sup>329</sup> According to Nagel, the military brings with it the allure of adventurism, entailing a sense of "embarking on a great adventure, [and a] desire not to be 'left behind' or 'left out'".<sup>330</sup> Thus, as in the case of nationalism, the military offers youngsters an opportunity to gain a sense of potency, while enabling them to establish a sense of community and belonging. As I will outline below, the case of the FNLA veterans show that for some, the FNLA came to offer a sense of belonging, purpose and political and social potency, at a time when families were either absent, or elders were seen as impotent vis-à-vis

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<sup>326</sup> White, "All the Men are Fighting for Freedom", pp. 865-866.

<sup>327</sup> Gibson, D. "Constructions of Masculinity, Mental Toughness and the Inexpressibility of Distress among a Selected Group of South African Veterans of the 'Bush War' in Namibia", in *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2014, p. 614.

<sup>328</sup> Gibson, "Constructions of Masculinity", p. 615.

<sup>329</sup> Lwambo, "'Before the War I was a Man'", 56-57.

<sup>330</sup> Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism", p. 252.

the brutality and injustice of the Portuguese colonial regime. Therefore, for some veterans, at least, the FNLA offered a chance to attain a sense of manhood and status, by fighting for the independence of their country.

One case this inter-generational struggle is revealed is in the instance in which Francisco Paulo, speaking of the time when he first saw FNLA fighters when he was around 18 years old, recalls:

That time when I see that people, me also I was confused now. Maybe one day me I wanted to be like this. No, maybe one day, but I tell my father, father, one day, me also I'm going to be a soldier. No, he tell me, why? Say no, I want to be soldier also, I want fighting to be freedom. Say hayi (expression of disbelief/disapproval), you never going to be a soldier. I say no, one day I'm going to be. He say ok (inaudible), and then, in 1974, when now the, all the group starting now, all the people now we know, we have terrorism in the bush that is fighting for freedom. And then one come to our village, say no, we came here, to recruit the people to, to go to training, and then after training we are fighting with colonialists. I say ahh, I can be that side? I ask my father, he say no, you are young man, you can't be for that soldier because you are the one, you are the first born, here the others are still so young. You can't go. [...] I say no father I have to go. He say no you can't. I say ok fine, and I went to my friend, because that one we was play together, I tell him, hey my man, is not the time to wasting time. We are leaving the school, we have to go. My friend, also he say ok, fine, let's go. And then we went there, to give a name, he say ok, you want to come to move to us, we say now we are going to. But these people tell us, no you are still young, you can't be that side because it's danger now. I say no, we have to go. Then, in 1974, is the time to prepare. I didn't tell my father, even my sister, brother, or another uncle, I didn't tell her. Just we went to the bush.<sup>331</sup>

Francisco's recollections do not only reveal the inter-generational struggle that existed in order to assert one's potency vis-à-vis the impotency of one's parents, it also reveals the sense of adventurism and camaraderie that accompanied leaving for the bush to join the FNLA. Additionally, the above extract reveals that for Francisco, there existed a sense of attaining manhood by joining the FNLA, as he was constantly told that he was too young to join by his father and others. In this sense, joining the FNLA not only offered Francisco the opportunity to rebel against his father's authority but also offered him the opportunity to attain a sense of masculinity that he would not have been able to assert if he would not have joined.

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<sup>331</sup> Interview between Francisco Paulo and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

It is also interesting to note how Pedro Manuel recalls the time when he joined the FNLA: “I was 19 years when I went to the army. Went to Congo to be trained. After the training, I was promoted. In 1967 is when I started, went to the bush and left my family.”<sup>332</sup> Again, it is significant to note the emphasis on leaving one’s family behind when leaving for the bush to fight with the FNLA. As such, a direct contrast is created between leaving the familiar and structure giving environment of one’s family, and leaving for the unfamiliar, in this case, the bush and all the unfamiliarity, anxiety and even fear this brought with it. So too, the following account by João Sebastião reveals how in his case, having lost his father and mother at an early age, joining the FNLA provided some direction and structure at a time of great uncertainty and violence. He recalls: “[...] my father died and my mother also died a long time ago. When my father died I was a child. There was too much confusion at the time. My father was killed during the war. [...] I didn’t have a father as a child, so that is when I decided to learn to fix clothes, [...] so I could earn an income to support myself, buy food, clothes.”<sup>333</sup> The following interview extract provides further examples of the situation João found himself in when he joined the FNLA:

CC: Why did you leave [your home town]?

JS: Because there was too much fighting and confusion, everyone was running away.

CC: How old were you?

JS: At the time I was 14 or 15 years old. I was big already.

CC: Ok. When you moved, what did you do then?

JS: I did nothing much. I joined the political party FNLA.

CC: [...] you were about 14, 15 years old when you joined the FNLA, am I right?

JS: Yes, it is right.

CC: What was the reason? Do you know why you joined the FNLA?

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<sup>332</sup> Interview between Pedro Manuel and Christian Claassen, 10 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>333</sup> Interview between João Sebastião and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

JS: Can't say I went to the FNLA to become a soldier, but because all the others were running away to FNLA I decided to follow them and join also. [...] The life I had in the FNLA was to have peace, no problems [...].

CC: Would you say it was like a family for you?

JS: Yes.<sup>334</sup>

The above example shows how in João's case, the FNLA provided him with a sense of belonging, direction and purpose, having lost his mother and father early on. As such, he was able to recreate an environment of familiarity within the FNLA, adopting the FNLA and his fellow fighters as a surrogate family after having lost his biological family. In addition, João puts an emphasis on the fact that he considered himself to be big already, and his assertion that he joined the FNLA because his peers were doing so as well might reveal that he not only feared possible ridicule for not joining, but also that he joined in order to attain a sense of status, authority and social potency, which could be seen as an expression of his desire to be seen as an adult. From the other examples given above, it seems that this applied to other FNLA veterans as well. Further veterans, who had only joined the FNLA in their mid to late twenties or early thirties, note how joining the FNLA provided them with an opportunity to escape the violence that engulfed much of Angola immediately after independence. In this case, the FNLA provided security at times of great insecurity. For instance, when asked why he had joined the FNLA, José Dala Lourenço repeatedly noted that he had joined because of the war. José noted that the war had only reached his town in 1975 when he was in his late twenties. The following extract from José's interview supports other accounts which note that the time during and after Angolan independence around 1975 had been very brutal.<sup>335</sup> As José reports: "Why make me to become soldier? Is the war. [...] So when the war come, they, if they found, eh, FNLA, eh, if UNITA and MPLA, they found FNLA, they kill FNLA. If FNLA and eh, MPLA, found

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<sup>334</sup> Interview between João Sebastião and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>335</sup> See for instance: Pearce, *Control, Ideology and Identity in Civil War*.

UNITA, they kill UNITA. If UNITA and FNLA, they find MPLA they kill. So kill each other, if they found, hey, that one, from another party, they kill you.”<sup>336</sup> As such, joining the FNLA, or any of the other independence movements for that matter, became a life or death matter. While joining one of the movements held the promise of security, one could also easily become a target.

Another respondent whom I asked why people had joined the FNLA and later 32 Battalion was Frederico Donqua. Although he never joined the FNLA, he found himself alongside many FNLA soldiers who had fled to refugee camps on the border of then South West Africa and Angola, with some of these FNLA soldiers finally going on to join 32 Battalion. Frederico’s comments reveal how some joined the FNLA and later 32 Battalion in order to survive the chaos of the war at the time:

FD: Ja. Many people want to be soldier. Want to be soldier. It the same way [people] went to Caprivi. Men from Rundu refugee camp, go and joined there. [...] want to survive. Want to survive.

CC: Ok, and then can I ask you, eh, why you joined 32 Battalion?

FD: I joined 32 Battalion because I wanted to survive.

CC: So you wanted to get out of the refugee camp?

FD: After that, no more refugee camp. Anywhere choose, how survive. Therefore, I choose to go to Buffalo (32 Battalion base camp), as nurse. I work there, as nurse. [...] every people, choose where place, good. [...] some from Huambo, go to north, another people east, to look what better place, to survive.<sup>337</sup>

Considering the role that the FNLA had played in the lives of these veterans in times of great uncertainty, violence and personal trauma, one could argue that they continue to feel a sense of great gratitude towards the FNLA, which had provided them with support and security. For some veterans, joining the FNLA also marked the time when they attained the status of adulthood, and the status that this brought with it. Being seen as a brave freedom fighter must

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<sup>336</sup> Interview between Jose Dala Lourenço and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>337</sup> Interview between Frederico Donqua and Christian Claassen, 10 September 2014, Pomfret.

have instilled them with a sense of pride, authority and social and political potency. This may explain why the Pomfret veterans actively portrayed the FNLA in a positive light. It seems that their continued loyalty and gratitude prevents them from dishonouring the FNLA, even though they might have had negative experiences with the group. As Michael Roper points out, reconstructing the past can act as a means to mediate death and loss, and that it can aid in restoring the connection between past and present.<sup>338</sup> In this case, the loss of one's biological family due to war, and the trauma that this loss has caused in the lives of the respondents, may have been stabilised or eased in some or other way by adopting the FNLA as one's surrogate family.

### **A Life in Limbo: Senses of Self, Place and Belonging**

As will be discussed here, it would seem that for these veterans, drawing on the myth of a just FNLA, enabled them to orientate themselves in the misery and hopelessness of the present, which has destabilised their sense of self, belonging and place. As Merrit Buyer points out, "Spatial displacement and the violence and fear that is behind it often leads to disruption of one's sense of home and belonging, the loss of family or family structures, and a change in lifestyle, all of which are central to one's construction of identity."<sup>339</sup> As such, it is important to realise how disruptive the Angolan war for independence and civil war have been for the respondents, to the extent that their senses of self, belonging and place have been disrupted time and time again. What is more, they are seen as having been on the wrong side of history by not only the current MPLA regime but the ANC government as well. As such, the veterans of Pomfret can be seen as the human residue of an unpopular war that many contemporary South Africans would rather forget. As will be explored in more detail later, it becomes

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<sup>338</sup> Roper, "The Unconscious Work of History", p. 181.

<sup>339</sup> Buyer, "Negotiating Identity and Displacement among the Somali Refugees of Cape Town", p. 226.

important to understand the relationship between public forgetting and personal and local remembrance. Buyer states, for instance, that: “Personal identity is a complex sense of being or belonging, not derived from one local structure, but actively and strategically constructed in relation to multiple purposes. Those who have been forcibly displaced must re-negotiate their identity as refugees in a new country; they must deal with the loss of their home and often their families, and find a way to incorporate their histories and often painful memories into the present.”<sup>340</sup> So too, Anna Green reminds us that “Composing a past we can live with, and that gives us a sense of coherent identity, involves actively managing the memories of traumatic or painful experiences”.<sup>341</sup>

Although drawing on refugee literature is useful in this case, as it provides valuable clues to understanding how displaced communities make use of certain mechanisms in order to cope with the trauma of displacement, it must be noted that in the case of the Pomfret community, their experience of displacement was quite particular. One could refer to the Pomfret community as a “transplanted community”, as to a large extent, the Caprivi base was merely “transplanted” to Pomfret, keeping the structures intact. Although they now found themselves living in another country, the people around them, from their extended families to the bases personnel, changed little. For the 32 Battalion soldiers, reporting for duty, military drills and guard duty continued. That is not to say that their experience was any less traumatic, but it allowed the community to keep social and familial ties intact. Furthermore, up until the disbanding of the unit, the Pomfret community lived quite an isolated existence apart from surrounding communities, as Pomfret itself had been a military base with restricted access.

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<sup>340</sup> Buyer, “Negotiating Identity and Displacement among the Somali Refugees of Cape Town”, p. 226.

<sup>341</sup> Green, A. “Individual Remembering and ‘Collective Memory’: Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates”, in *Oral History*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2004, p. 40.

However, it is also important to take note of the fact that the war in Angola during the late 1980s and early 1990s was still continuing, and for the Angolan 32 Battalion members, returning to Angola at this point would not have been an option. As such, the below section, which will explore senses of place and belonging in more detail, must be read with the latter in mind.

Veterans alluded to the fact that they find themselves in a situation of uncertainty, seemingly having no prospect for a better future in South Africa while also seeing no opportunity to return to Angola. This sense of not being able to return relates not only to the perceived hostility of the current MPLA government towards former enemy fighters, but also relates to the fact that they are now ageing, and do not have the energy, nor the resources to establish a new life in Angola. Also, some of their children and grandchildren are working in cities such as Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town, and leaving South Africa would mean giving up the support structures that they currently have. Nevertheless, there exists a sense that Pomfret has not yet become their permanent home, with the prospect of returning to Angola still ever present, however unlikely it may seem. As such, it seems that some veterans find themselves in liminal state of mind, with this state of mind directly impacting on their senses of self, place and belonging. Although this may seem contradictory, it reveals the anguish that these veterans face in their daily lives. However much they desire to return to Angola, if only to visit family, the prospect of returning remains unlikely. Likewise, however much they are tied to Pomfret and South Africa due to their advanced ages and the family support structures that they depend on, current developments such as the lack of water, electricity, and the closure of Pomfret's school, as well as the perceived hostility of the current ANC government, disrupt their senses of place and belonging on a continuous basis. Pedro Manuel reveals that he feels that he was

robbed of a better future in Angola. This sense of loss is amplified even more by his sense of having sacrificed a lot while having fought for the FNLA. Pedro recalls:

1967 is when I starting in the bush. That was when I left my family until now. I would like to see them. I have no chance to go that side. Because of the parties, UNITA and MPLA, MPLA don't like us to go that side. I like for President Eduardo dos Santos, when he leaves communism, I'd like to go back to my country to join my family. He don't think about us. I'd like to know why Agostinho Neto and President Holden Roberto, why when they come back to Angola we start fighting again. I was leave Angola because Holden Roberto was the first, was like a mother, was like the first to fighting with colony. And when we was fighting and then we get independence, Holden Roberto was supposed to put all that three party, to put together, to building our country, but Agostinho Neto he was no agreeing for that. [...] And then the way we have to see, but who was supposed to stay in Angola, was supposed to be us, because we, we were suffering, everything, to fighting with Portuguese, who was starting? Was FNLA.<sup>342</sup>

So too, João Sebastião expressed his sense of loss and uncertainty when he remarked:

“We have lost our country. We don’t know if we are going back. Or our children. Nobody knows. [...] we don’t know tomorrow our children will go there because Angola is no good. [...] Now I am in South Africa and I am a South African citizen. Angola, I was born there. When I want to go there why they ask for me to sign papers, passport? I was born there! All family is there, so now we don’t know who is controlling Angola, we are all here”<sup>343</sup>

Not only does João expressly state that he has lost his country, he also notes that there exists much uncertainty of whether his children will be able to visit or even relocate to Angola. As such, it seems that this sense of loss has become intergenerational. João also alludes to the fact that although he is now a South African citizen, like all the Pomfret veterans and their families, he still feels bound to his birth country, in part because so many of his relatives live there. His sense of loss is therefore amplified by the fact that he has to apply for documents in order to travel to Angola. His sense of self as an Angolan, as well as his sense of place and belonging, have been destabilised and brought into question by the fact that he is treated like a foreigner by the Angolan authorities.

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<sup>342</sup> Interview between Pedro Manuel and Christian Claassen, 10 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>343</sup> Interview between João Sebastião and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

A further example of the anguish that Pomfret veterans experience due to having lost contact with their families is given by José Dala Lourenço. He notes: “I lose my family, my father passed away, I didn't assist to my father die, and a lot of family are dying there, you can't go there and assist your family [...]”<sup>344</sup> José's comment reveals a feeling of helplessness due to not having been able to fulfil his duties to his family by being prevented from assisting with his relative's funerals, as well as being denied the opportunity to pay his respects. Another veteran who expressed his sense of loss at losing contact with his family in Angola is José Francisco. Speaking about the whereabouts of his brother, José notes:

“My brother no, I don't, I, until now I don't know where is my brother, because when I left Angola, I was the first to leave. No, no, my brother was first going to Luanda, and then I follow him to, to look for him, but when I get to Luanda I never saw him. I don't know if he was join the party or whatever. Then that time there was no communication, no phone, no nothing. Ja, until now, I don't know.”<sup>345</sup>

Some veterans also expressed their sense of betrayal by the old South African regime, who had promised to take care of them. It was noted that they felt that the new ANC government had abandoned them, not caring about their wellbeing at all. As Pedro Lenge notes:

When I left Angola in 1974 I lost all contact with my family, until now, no communication, I only had some contact with my brother before he died. He died here but the funeral was in Angola that is when I had some communication with the family that stayed there. Now the other family is asking what we are doing here! And we are here since we were abandoned, but we were promised a bonus or a package, and we are waiting for that, until now nothing, in this community nothing, was given to us from the government, that is the situation.<sup>346</sup>

Not only does the above extract reveal the sense of loss that Pedro Lenge is experiencing due to having lost contact with his family in Angola, it also reveals a sense of uncertainty given the situation many of the families find themselves in. As will be shown below, for some veterans, the prospect of returning to Angola, however unlikely it may seem, remains a possibility. This

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<sup>344</sup> Interview between Jose Dala Lourenço and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>345</sup> Interview between Jose Francisco and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>346</sup> Interview between Pedro Lenge and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

sense of possibly being able to return to their country of origin significantly impacts on their sense of place and belonging.

For instance, José Francisco noted that he continues to support the FNLA, and asked whether he would return to Angola, he replied that the FNLA could perhaps come into power in Angola in future. He stated: “[...] it didn’t win in Angola, but maybe one day, it will win.”<sup>347</sup> This view reflects the sentiment of other veterans, who remain hopeful that the FNLA could still unseat the MPLA from power. As such, a sense that the fight against the communist MPLA regime is not over remains in the Pomfret community. Another example that illustrates the latter is given by Francisco Paulo. He stated: “[...] here in Pomfret, all of us we want Angola to be freedom. To leave the regime of communista. Maybe one of the day, if I going to die. But my children have to go back there where I’m born. Ja. So like other people also, we are crying. When Angola going to be fine, to go back in our country?”<sup>348</sup>

The above two comments illustrate how some veterans aspire to return to Angola, or, at least, hope that their children will have the opportunity to do so in future. This shows that for the community as a whole, their lives in Pomfret are not entirely settled, as the prospect of a future life in Angola is ever present. As such, this sentiment impacts on the senses of self, place and belonging, not only of individual veterans but the entire Angolan community in Pomfret. As noted previously, Pomfret is seen as being a half-way house between the lives that were left behind in Angola, and the possibility of returning to these lives in future. For many, the lives that were left behind were lives that bore the fruit of a better future, lives that promised peace,

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<sup>347</sup> Interview between Jose Francisco and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>348</sup> Interview between Francisco Paulo and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

with these lives ultimately having been disrupted by the Angolan independence and civil wars. Importantly, however, their unsettled situation in Pomfret allows the veterans to invoke an idea of a better life in future. By not committing to life in Pomfret, the possibility of a better life away from the hardships that they presently face is ever present.

At this point, it is useful to take note of Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson's assertion that myths act as tools to anchor one's sense of identity and place in the past, a world that has been lost.<sup>349</sup> In this sense, it is also important to note how the Pomfret community as a whole, with the comradeship and solidarity among the veterans, in particular, has come to act as a social anchor, in order to locate oneself within the present, and the conditions that many veterans face in Pomfret. This reveals the paradoxical tensions that exist in the relationship between the veterans' senses of past and present. By drawing on the familiar, in this case, a common sense of shared belonging and identity based on a common FNLA experience, and indeed, this applies to the entire 32 Battalion community as a whole, the veterans are able to establish a sense of continuity between their war experiences and the present. They are also able to recreate the sense of security and structure that the FNLA had provided them, within the present context of disappointment and frustration they have been experiencing in Pomfret. The seemingly positive experiences with the FNLA that the veterans have mentioned appear to provide them with a source of orientation within the present. As such, not being able to put down any roots in Pomfret is offset by their ability to identify as being part of this group of FNLA veterans, which allows them to locate themselves in the present. The uncertainty and hardship they face in Pomfret is therefore eased somewhat by the veterans' ability to draw on a common identity and sense of belonging within the group, as members of an elite and exclusive group of veterans

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<sup>349</sup> Samuel and Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, Routledge, London and New York, 1990, pp. 8-9.

that has allowed them to set themselves apart from others, and has enabled them to draw on a sense of pride. As such, this affects how they have come to interpret the present, as being a temporary state in a world of hopelessness, always yearning for something better and viewing themselves as being only temporary residents.<sup>350</sup> Moreover, as Shelley Trower points out, “The search after place can be interpreted as an attempt to find rooted security, to establish fixed identities amidst – and in opposition to – the flux, fragmentation, and disruption of a [postcolonial] world.”<sup>351</sup> As such, it could be assumed that a common FNLA identity has given these veterans the opportunity to “anchor” themselves in a world where they face constant challenges which threaten to disrupt their everyday lives. Their FNLA identity allows them to negotiate their present and their past while it seems that the myth of the FNLA that they have created provides a sense of stability.

In this sense, the veterans are constantly negotiating and re-negotiating their present sense of self concerning their past. As Knudsen states: “To secure a positive feeling of self (who I am) through identity management, the individual often tries to negotiate on the basis of past, now lost, positions (who I was) rather than present conditions (who I have become).”<sup>352</sup> Furthermore, as Cathrine Brun notes, “[...] fantasy becomes a social practice, and imagination becomes part of the construction of people’s biographies which in turn become partly imagined lives [...]”.<sup>353</sup> This is echoed by Merrit Buyer who argues that by holding on to a refugee identity, as someone who is not settled, “[...] they retain [...] the possibility of a better future [...]”, and “Remembrance in essence points to the incompleteness of the present, of the unfilled desires that the individual has lived within his struggle to survive.”<sup>354</sup> In this sense, their

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<sup>350</sup> Buyer, “Negotiating Identity and Displacement among the Somali Refugees of Cape Town”, p. 240.

<sup>351</sup> Trower, S. *Place, Writing and Voice in Oral History*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p. 13.

<sup>352</sup> Quoted in Emdon, “*Being a refugee*”, p. 37.

<sup>353</sup> Brun, “Reterritorializing the Relationship between People and Place in Refugee Studies”, p. 19.

<sup>354</sup> Buyer, “Negotiating Identity and Displacement among the Somali Refugees of Cape Town”, p. 233.

common FNLA identity helps the veterans to maintain and develop social networks which allow them to negotiate the instability and uncertainty of their present state of being.

Moreover, it could be argued that by continuing to draw on their FNLA past, veterans are able to negotiate their sense of lost potency relating to their youth, when joining the FNLA meant being able to demonstrate one's masculinity. In the past, joining the FNLA provided a sense of social potency and purpose within the pseudo-family framework of a nationalist movement, which has been challenged and eroded in their current situation. In a culture where masculinity is connected with being able to provide for one's family, the inability to buy food or pay for school fees could be said to have brought about experiences of failure, humiliation and vulnerability. As Lwambo puts it, "Many [...] supposed prerequisites for being a 'real man' do not withstand economic and social stresses, and are easily lost under unfavourable conditions. Their absence can be experienced as weakness and a loss of male identity, resulting in crisis. [...] Male privilege is connected to responsibility."<sup>355</sup> In this sense, one's sense of social potency is directly tied to one's sense of masculinity, and for many FNLA veterans, factors beyond their control, such as Pomfret's lack of water and electricity, the ever looming prospect of being forcibly relocated, as well as the recent closure of Pomfret's school, have led to the fact that their power over their everyday public lives is being continuously challenged and eroded.

For instance, João Sebastião noted the following when he spoke about his current situation: "All this time here I have my children, they don't have work but they finish school. That is the problem I have [...]. Our fight now is this one. We don't see any reason to fight anymore. I

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<sup>355</sup> Lwambo, "Before the War I was a Man", p. 52.

am old, I am 74 years old I have no strength anymore.”<sup>356</sup> Similarly, Pedro Lenge states: “[...] now I am 66 years old. Don’t have nothing else to do or where to work. [...] What I do now? Run after the goats! That is all I can do.”<sup>357</sup> In both these cases, there is a sense that even though they made so many sacrifices in the past and dedicated their youth to fighting for Angolan independence, they have little to show for it. Moreover, the fact that João is not able to provide for his children, and that Pedro now spends his time chasing after goats, reveals how in both cases, there exists a sense of lost potency, in contrast to the potency they had experienced during their youth.

As such, it is interesting to take note of Luisa Passerini’s assertion that myth is integrally connected to senses of potency and purpose. Passerini notes that myth is not only shared by the collective, but also inter-generational, and beyond the limits of space and time.<sup>358</sup> In research based on testimonies of people who belonged to terrorist organisations in Italy during the 1970s and early 1980s, Passerini shows how themes such as “heroic stories of revolutionaries [...]; the legend of the hero or heroine who leaves home to help the oppressed against the oppressor [...]; the ideal of a small community united [...]; fables of the loyalty of mothers who do not abandon their defeated daughters, but are ready to give their lives for them to sustain them against everything”, come to constitute myths that “have contributed to create our own notions of reality.”<sup>359</sup> In reference to the above, Passerini notes: “I have come to believe that these people were able to persist against the principles of reality *because* they could draw on a shared imaginary.”<sup>360</sup> If one were to apply the above to the case of the FNLA veterans, it could be said

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<sup>356</sup> Interview between João Sebastião and Christian Claassen, 8 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>357</sup> Interview between Pedro Lenge and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>358</sup> Passerini, L. “Mythbiography in Oral History”, in Samuel, R., and Thompson, P. (eds.) *The Myths We Live By*, Routledge, London and New York, 1990, p. 50.

<sup>359</sup> Passerini, “Mythbiography in Oral History”, pp. 52, 54.

<sup>360</sup> Passerini, “Mythbiography in Oral History”, p. 54.

that they have made use of a collective myth in order to counteract their current senses of hopelessness, as well as negotiate their fluctuating sense of social potency over time.

In addition, it seems that veterans have come to connect the sense of their lost lives in Angola with the current MPLA regime, which is held responsible for having sabotaged the FNLA's peace efforts. In contrast, the FNLA is still seen as an entity that can defeat the MPLA, and as such, the FNLA still bears the promise of enabling the veterans to return to these lost lives in Angola. In fact, some veterans seem to have developed an almost romanticised notion of their early lives. Asked to describe his childhood, Simão Mendes noted that "there were no problems". Simão went on to state: "Life was good. I joined the army, and then we continue the war against the Portuguese with the FNLA army, fighting against colonialism. That was my job."<sup>361</sup> Similarly, Pedro Lenge, who had grown up in the Congolese port city of Matadi, noted the following when asked to describe his early life: "Yes, life was good. My father's brother lived in Congo, was a tailor, had shops like canteen, taxis. Even the taxi I was driving was my uncle business. I had a good life. So you can see, life was good."<sup>362</sup> These extracts reveal a sense of potency and purpose, which have since been replaced with senses of hopelessness and despair.

There also exists a sense of the FNLA not having completed its struggle in Angola, and that this struggle is ongoing. Some of the previous accounts reveal a deep dissatisfaction and even hatred for the MPLA regime. It has been accused of sabotaging the FNLA's attempt at securing peace, with some respondents having noted that the MPLA is solely to blame for the outbreak

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<sup>361</sup> Interview between Simão Mendes and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

<sup>362</sup> Interview between Pedro Lenge and Christian Claassen, 9 September 2014, Pomfret.

of civil war after independence. Additionally, some respondents have noted that the current MPLA regime is unjust, corrupt, and continues to keep Angola backwards. By painting the MPLA in an overly negative light, the FNLA and Holden Roberto, in contrast, have become almost saint-like. The juxtaposition between the good FNLA and the evil MPLA allows the respondents to justify the myth of a virtuous FNLA. For the respondents, the MPLA embodies everything that has gone wrong in Angola, and for some, the continued rule of the MPLA regime provides the rationale for them being unable to return to their homeland. In contrast, the FNLA provides a sense of continued hope, that if someday, the FNLA should come into power in Angola, they will be able to return and reunite with their families.

Hence, the myth of an overly unjust MPLA sustains the myth of a just and virtuous FNLA. For instance, the recollections of the former FNLA soldiers suggest that they joined the FNLA in order to fight the unjust MPLA, that they blame the MPLA for the outbreak of the civil war due to the latter having derailed the peace process, and that the MPLA is responsible for them having fled to then South West Africa and having joined 32 Battalion, in order to fight the MPLA-communist imperialism that prevented them from returning home. So too, the MPLA was to blame for the fact that they found themselves living in South Africa, unable to return home due to the MPLA's continued rule over Angola. As such, the veterans' hardship, uncertainty and anguish over the years is blamed directly on the MPLA, while, in contrast, the FNLA is seen as having provided, and continues to provide, the hope and possibility for a potential end to their hardships, and a return to their pre-war civilian lives. As Passerini notes, "Foiled in their hopes of making history and creating an ideal future, these [individuals] seized

on a common imaginary world [...]”.<sup>363</sup> As such, myth has become an integral part of how these veterans have attempted to make sense of their present.

### **The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting**

It is clear that the myth of an unblemished FNLA has taken shape within a public-private binary of remembering and forgetting. The present ANC and MPLA regimes have sought to forget and exclude both the FNLA and 32 Battalion from the official master narratives of post-war Angola and post-Apartheid South Africa. In light of the latter, the myth of an unblemished FNLA, which equally seeks to forget and deny the failures of the FNLA, can be seen as an attempt to challenge the public forgetting of the state. Moreover, as products of an unpopular war, they also have no positive public memorial that they are able to draw from, other than their own localised FNLA-32 Battalion veteran networks. The 32 Battalion Tree of Honour, a tree trunk that bears all the names of 32 Battalion members who were killed in action, now stands at the SADF memorial at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. Not only is the Tree of Honour far removed from Pomfret and not easily accessible to many Pomfret veterans, the SADF memorial is also a private initiative, and according to the Voortrekker Monument website, the SANDF has in the past declined to participate in commemorative events.<sup>364</sup> This again reveals the tensions between public and private memory and commemoration, particularly regarding the South African Border War. *Daily Maverick* journalist De Wet Potgieter notes that 32 Battalion, along with equally controversial 31 Battalion and Koevoet,<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Passerini, “Mythbiography in Oral History”, p. 55.

<sup>364</sup> Voortrekker Monument, “Wall of Remembrance”, accessed on 26 January 2016, <http://www.vtm.org.za/wall-of-remembrance/>.

<sup>365</sup> 31 Battalion, also known as Bushman Battalion, was made up of San troops recruited for their tracking skills and were deployed as trackers, guides and reconnaissance troops commanded by white officers during the Border War. Koevoet was a paramilitary police unit, made up of black troops and white officers, deployed to combat SWAPO within then South West Africa. Like 32 Battalion, these units remain controversial and are seen as traitors for having fought for the Apartheid regime against fellow Africans.

have become unpopular relics of the South African border war: “They are living in a country hostile to them for their [past] choices [...], for siding with the ‘Boers’. [They] [...] have today drifted into obscurity.”<sup>366</sup> Thus, the public FNLA myth promoted and sustained by the Pomfret veterans provides a space for them to engage with their private memories and gain public recognition, having been denied this recognition by the MPLA and ANC. Citing Hannah Arendt, Michael Jackson notes that: “[...] the public realm is a space [...] where individual experiences are selectively refashioned in ways that make them real and recognisable in the eyes of others”, while in contrast, “[...] privacy suggests confinement to ‘the subjectivity of [one’s] own singular experience’.”<sup>367</sup>

In this sense, the public and private are inextricably linked, but it must also be realised that this relationship is by no means static. Rather, the FNLA myth has been constantly adjusted and reworked over time in relation to changing contexts. Hence, Jackson states that “[...] storytelling is never simply a matter of creating either personal or social meanings, but an aspect of the ‘subjective-in-between’ in which a multiplicity of private and public interests are always problematically in play.”<sup>368</sup> It is important to note that the social potency that the veterans are able to derive from this myth enable them to bridge this public-private binary. Significantly, however, this social potency, like the relationship between the public and private, ebbs and flows and fluctuates on a continuous basis. As such, one must realise that this social potency cannot be constituted in isolation, but is rather a product of the relationship between the public and private. Additionally, in light of this fluidity and instability over time, the public

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<sup>366</sup> Potgieter, D. “Koevoet veterans: ‘We don’t give a damn for other people’s wars’”, *Daily Maverick*, accessed on 26 January 2016, <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-04-08-koevoet-veterans-we-dont-give-a-damn-for-other-peoples-wars/#.VqdS7Cp97IU>.

<sup>367</sup> Jackson, M. *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity*, Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen, 2002, p. II.

<sup>368</sup> Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*, p. II.

myth of the FNLA promoted by the veterans of Pomfret provides them with a degree of fixity and a sense of security.

It is through the relationship of public and private myth and memory that the connection between oral history and broader historical processes becomes clearer. The myths and memories of the FNLA veterans presented here are a product of their experiences during the Angolan war for independence and civil war, as well as the South African border war and their experiences of displacement, relocation and the attempts to forcibly remove them from Pomfret. It is through these processes of remembering that mythology acts as a toolbox of ideas, enabling one to reimagine and appropriate myths in order to negotiate fluid and changing contexts over time. According to Jackson, “In making and telling stories we rework reality in order to make it bearable. [...] for what matters is that stories enable us to regain some purchase over the events that confound us, humble us, and leave us helpless, salvaging a sense that we have some say in the way our lives unfold. In telling a story we renew our faith that the world is within our grasp.”<sup>369</sup>

Not only does the process of mythmaking enable the FNLA veterans of Pomfret to claim a public space for themselves that they have been denied by others, it also enables them to strengthen and maintain their network/s of “comrades” that they can draw on for support. Being able to build relationships based on their common FNLA past, and investing in a common FNLA myth, allows the veterans to draw on each other for support in the face of the constant changes and uncertainty that they face in their daily lives.

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<sup>369</sup> Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*, pp.16-17.

## Conclusion

By drawing on concepts such as memory and myth, the interview extracts have shown that one's sense of self, place and belonging is influenced not only by one's past but also by one's present, as well as one's sense of future. As such, "consciously and unconsciously, identities allow people to deploy strategies for dealing with the conflicted demands of daily life."<sup>370</sup> Thus, in answering the question how and why the myth and memory of an unblemished FNLA was produced and sustained by the FNLA veterans of Pomfret, it could be argued that the veterans have created this myth in order to provide a mechanism with which to negotiate the contradictions and tensions between the ruptures of the past, as well as the uncertainties of the present and future. As such, it is important to note how myths do not only apply to individual memory but collective memory as well, with this being particularly relevant in the case of the relationship between the politics of public and private remembering and forgetting. As Samuel and Thompson remind us, "[...] myth [is] embedded in real experience: both growing from it, and helping to shape its perception."<sup>371</sup> This is of particular interest considering the veteran's current context, with many arguing that they have been betrayed, abandoned and forgotten. In this sense, the notion of a collective myth that seeks to counter the public forgetting of the MPLA and ANC governments is even more significant. Samuel and Thompson explain this in the following way: "[...] for minorities, for the less powerful, and most of all for the excluded, collective memory and myth are often still more salient: constantly resorted to both in reinforcing a sense of self and also a source of strategies for survival. In this context, it is often persecution and common grievance which define belonging."<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Field, *Oral History, Community, and Displacement*, p. 62.

<sup>371</sup> Samuel and Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, p. 6.

<sup>372</sup> Samuel and Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, p. 19.

It has been noted how during their youth, some of the veterans may have seen their elders as impotent, having become accomplices in buttressing the status quo of colonial Portugal due to their inaction. In this sense, those who joined the FNLA against the wishes of their parents and communities can be seen as having challenged this complicity and impotence. In fact, Portuguese colonial policies such as forced labour, native tax, and the denial of citizenship status, were intended to keep Africans in positions of subservience vis-à-vis their Portuguese ‘masters’. Having joined the struggle against colonialism can, therefore, be seen as an attempt to achieve a sense of masculinity, social potency and purpose.

According to Nagel, war offers “the allure of adventure, the promise of masculine camaraderie, the opportunity to test and prove oneself, the chance to participate in a historic, larger-than-life, generation-defining event. Given this stick and these carrots, for many men the attraction of war becomes as irresistible.”<sup>373</sup> Nagel goes on to note how war provides a powerful sense of group membership, whereby a shared set of symbols comes to define and constitute the individual.<sup>374</sup> In this sense, the veterans came to see themselves as belonging to an FNLA family, which provided them with a sense of self. This is particularly relevant as the veterans’ stories can be seen as products of wider historical and geopolitical processes.

Taking the above into consideration, it is important to note, as Cathrine Brun explains, that senses of place and belonging are not static, but are continuously negotiated and renegotiated, and constructed and reconstructed.<sup>375</sup> Oral history methods are invaluable tools that can be used to analyse and interpret a person’s sense of self, place and belonging, to reveal clues as to how

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<sup>373</sup> Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism”, p. 259.

<sup>374</sup> Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism”, p. 260.

<sup>375</sup> Brun, “Reterritorializing the Relationship between People and Place in Refugee Studies”, p. 18.

interviewees construct memory and myth over space and time. As Sean Field argues, “People do not face the present as an isolated and empty space, sandwiched between the past and future. Rather, “the present” is “[...] a complex series of interlocking histories whose interactions have to be re-constructed [...].”<sup>376</sup> So too, Samuel and Thompson explain that historians need to “[...] consider myth and memory, not only as special clues to the present, but equally as windows on the making and remaking of individual and collective consciousness, in which both fact and fantasy, past and present, each has its part.”<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Field, *Oral History, Community, and Displacement*, p. 53.

<sup>377</sup> Samuel and Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, p. 21.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have explored two divergent FNLA narratives. On the one hand, official FNLA documents and secondary scholarly literature revealed that from its inception in 1962, the FNLA found itself grappling with serious internal cleavages that eroded its legitimacy and effectiveness as a national liberation movement over time, to the extent that it finally collapsed in 1978. I have argued that the movement's leader, Holden Roberto, had been preoccupied with keeping himself in power while enriching himself and his inner circle. His dictatorial and repressive leadership alienated many of the movement's leaders as well as potential supporters. On the other hand, I argued that former FNLA fighters I have interviewed for this thesis continue to idolise and romanticise the FNLA and Roberto, referring to Roberto and the FNLA as being the "father of the revolution for freedom", and having fought for the liberation of all Angolans. More so, respondents highlighted the FNLA's and Roberto's virtuous qualities vis-à-vis the current MPLA regime, which has been labelled as being corrupt and oppressive, and as having sabotaged the FNLA's attempt at bringing peace and prosperity to Angola. The central question that I therefore posed at the beginning of this thesis was the following: *How and why was the myth and memory of an unblemished FNLA produced and sustained by the FNLA veterans of Pomfret?*

In addressing this question, I have focused on the respondents, their individual experiences, and how they have come to grapple with these. I have argued that the respondents have experienced several stages of dislocation and processes of displacement: having experienced internal displacement during the Angolan war for independence; having fled to refugee camps after their military defeat in 1975; having been relocated to South Africa from Namibia in 1989;

while further having been subjected to forced removal attempts in 2008. I have argued that the veterans live a life in limbo, with the prospect of losing their current homes being ever present.

From the interviews, it is clear that feelings of despair, and unresolved loss and fear, have come to dominate their every-day lives. It is within this context that I have contended that their romanticisation of the FNLA has taken shape, and I explored this by making use of notions of militarised masculinity, as well as gendered loss and dislocation. Related to this is the question of choice, and understanding how respondents have wrestled with the issue of limited and constrained choices throughout their lives. Furthermore, I have drawn on notions of power throughout this thesis, relating not only to the power relations in my fieldwork and my subsequent interpretations and analysis, but particularly how respondents have struggled with a sense of lost social potency, how they have attempted to cling to fragments of power which are subject to constant fluctuation over time, as well as the power relations between public and private remembering and forgetting. Thus, the idolisation and romanticisation of their FNLA past, aides the respondents to cling to fragments of power and social potency in the present, in an environment where this social potency and their power over their own lives is being challenged and eroded on a continuous basis.

As such, the myth of an unblemished FNLA allows the veterans to negotiate the tensions and contradictions that exist between their past and present. This extends to the relationship between public and private remembering and forgetting, and I have argued that the myth of an unblemished FNLA constructed by the Pomfret veterans can be seen as a response to counter the MPLA and ANC governments' master narratives which actively exclude the FNLA and 32

Battalion. From this, it is clear that the veterans have constructed and reconstructed their stories over space and time, in order to adjust to varying pressures and situations.

Given the above, it is my opinion that the veterans' stories are inextricably linked to and shaped by wider historical and geopolitical processes. Oral history, therefore, provides opportunities to explore the experiences of respondents, and how they attempt to make sense of these. I have posited that concepts such as myth, memory, as well as senses of self and place, are valuable tools that help us to interpret life stories, particularly, how respondents choose to narrate these, and how this may change over space and time. However, I must also add that the respondents that I have interviewed form quite a small group within the Pomfret community, and more so within the FNLA community. In my opinion, this does not detract from the conclusions that have been arrived at here, as these conclusions are centred on the individual respondents and their distinct experiences within the FNLA and Pomfret. On the other hand, this does prevent me from arriving at broader conclusions about the experiences of the Pomfret community as a whole, as well as the experiences of other FNLA fighters.

Consequently, there remain many more possibilities to conduct research in Pomfret, given the community's distinctive and interesting history. This extends to the experiences of the former 32 Battalion soldiers, but also to their wives and children. Although a few books have been written about 32 Battalion by the former white officers of the unit, none of these explore the collective and individual experiences of the Angolan veterans and their families in much detail. Hence, there are many more stories that remain untold.

As noted in the introduction, the story of the FNLA has in many instances been sidelined by the dominant histories of the MPLA and UNITA, with many scholars who have dealt with the Angolan war for independence and civil war merely mentioning the FNLA in passing. This is not aided by the MPLA regime's exercise of a monopoly over the history of the independence and civil wars, with the MPLA seemingly intent on creating and controlling a master narrative in which it plays the dominant role. Subsequently, much remains to be done to explore to what extent factors such as ideology, identity, ethnicity and regionalism have influenced the FNLA's political, social and military behaviour during Angola's independence and civil wars.

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