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Dear Friends,

[Sorry that this year's spring national lecture tour was so intense and long-lasting—it didn't end 'til May 7—that I couldn't find a free moment to write Political-Philosophic Letter No. 3. I hope that by making this a special double issue that I will catch up with international events, especially Western Europe and Portugal during April and May. By June I will resume these Letters on a monthly basis.—Raya]

WESTERN EUROPE AND ITS COMMUNIST PARTIES; PORTUGAL  
AND ITS SOCIALIST PARTY; ELW STAGE OF STATE-CAPITALIST  
CRISES

I.

April 6 was the day the State Department decided to release a summary of Henry Kissinger's studied remarks to a meeting of U.S. Ambassadors in Europe that had been delivered last December. Before and after April 6, Kissinger's gall had been gaining the headlines in the European press because of its imperialistic, crude "warnings" to the Italian electorate, that if they give the Communist Party a majority, the U.S. will "not tolerate" Italy's membership in NATO. One British editor said Kissinger's "warnings" were "reminiscent" of that Cold War warrior, John Foster Dulles. Helmut Schmidt advised NATO to be "elastic." After all, NATO had survived Communists in government in Iceland and Portugal. And d'Estaing, in his most characteristic aristocratic abstraction, asked the U.S. to trust Western Europe to know how to handle "freedom."

Italians from all walks of life and political tendencies naturally hit out against U.S. blatant interference in their country's affairs,

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impinging on West Europe's sovereignty, pointing to the pronouncement of the Chief of NATO, Gen. Alexander Haig, on Portugal: "As regards other nations in Western Europe, I will not accept any Communist participation in their government."

In the U.S., too, there were criticisms, and not only from the Left. Now that the "in thing" for aspirants to the post of Secretary of State is continuing criticism of Henry Kissinger, Arthur Schlesinger chose the Wall Street Journal (4-2-70) to strike out against the Ford Administration's "extraordinary campaign of public and private exhortation." It took this self-declared "liberal," however, to disclose that the real reason for the opposition to Henry Kissinger was not so much concern for Italy's sovereignty, as appreciation of how the Italian Communist Party could save capitalism:

"Today some Italian leaders are prepared to involve the Communists in the responsibilities of the national government. They see no alternative to a tough anti-inflation, anti-strike, anti-absenteeism policy. Only the Communists, they believe, can get the workers to accept retrenchment and discipline. Communist collaboration, in short, appears the price of social peace." [Emphasis added]

This is no fundamental criticism of Kissinger; both liberals and conservatives are talking the same capitalistic language. Kissinger is not unappreciative of the class-collaborationist role of the Communists, nor unaware of the total crisis to which corrupt, authoritarian Christian Democratic Party rule led. What is more galling to Kissinger, however, is the internal crisis that leads to revolution.

Thus, in giving instructions to the U.S. Ambassadors regarding Portugal, he went all out to make sure that the November 25th counter-revolution there would hold through the April elections. In a word, both in Portugal and Italy, what U.S. imperialism fears most is the reality of the class struggle which Kissinger called "domestic evolution":

"A great deal of what has gone wrong is not the result of

detente or of Soviet policy...Examples are Portugal and Italy...What is most worrisome is not the foreign policy of nations in Western Europe, but their domestic evolution. The growth of left-wing policies threatens to undermine the security relationship and defense policies on which the alliance has been constructed."

As for the Italian Communist Party, it is trying hard to convince the U.S. and all other Western capitalists about the "historic compromise" devised by its Chairman, Enrico Berlinguer. This latest euphemism for class collaborationism is compounded by an abysmal totalitarianism. According to Berlinguer, the experience of Chile has shown that even when Socialists win a majority, neither they nor the Communists can rule "alone"; they also must have a "broad base." Suddenly, it is not a majority that comprises a "broad base"; what does is the presence in that government of the exploiters themselves. Only the "historic compromise" of capitalists and Communists can achieve "stability."

There is nothing new in this "historic compromise." The Italian Communists have been practicing collaborationism since the end of World War II. Like the Communist Party in France, Italian Communists were part of the government until the end of 1947, when, with a great deal of push from U.S. capitalism, the Pope in Italy and de Gaulle in France "excommunicated" them from the government. The disintegration of post-war European capitalism did put the fear of revolution into all of them. Only they attributed it all to Russia, and the popular saying was, "All Stalin has to do is pick up the phone and give the order."

The alarmist academician who is now Secretary of State is telling Western Europeans that they face, more or less, exactly the same situation now. All he has forgotten is that, just as Stalin had no intention whatever in 1947 "to pick up the phone," much less release revolution, so the national Communist Parties now fear proletarian revolution as much as does private capitalism. Nevertheless, in the present shaky state of NATO, Kissinger projects what "could" happen.

The Communists understand Kissinger very well and are out to convince NATO how genuine is their acceptance of NATO. When one of the Communist Party leaders, Sergio Segre, was in the U.S. last fall, he was busy explaining the Communist Party's acceptance of NATO as "not just a passport to get into the government...We have no great interest in detaching Italy from the Western sphere...our view of NATO is based upon a general analysis of detente. There is a strategic equilibrium in Europe. Underlying the process of detente is a gentlemen's agreement not to break that stability."<sup>(1)</sup>

This May, Chairman Berlinguer further explained the reason the Communists are for Italy's maintaining membership in NATO: "Our aim is essentially to affirm and put into effect a new idea of socialism that would be different both from the experiment underway in Eastern Europe and the kind of Social Democratic practice in other areas of Europe."<sup>(2)</sup>

It is this which Kissinger doesn't buy. Neither, for that matter, does Western Europe. But they do think there is a better way to handle the crisis than Kissinger's stampede into the coming elections in Italy like a bull in a china shop. At the same time, the Christian Democratic Party isn't rushing to relinquish state power, preferring to lean on the neo-fascists and, with them, throw out the Communists regionally, as they did in Naples.

What is most ironic is that the only thing that's truly new is that the Italian Communist Party, though it is publicly asking to share in governmental power, would have preferred<sup>(3)</sup> for a while longer to continue its clandestine advice to the corrupt ruling Christian Democratic Party rather than at once (elections are to be held June 20-21) assume governmental responsibilities. Though the economic crisis is world-wide and is deeper in Western Europe than in the U.S., it is only in Italy where, ever since the oil crisis of 1973, a Middle East potentate could laugh and say, "When I write a check, it's the bank that bounces."

The depth of the economic and political crises in Italy has been continuous. Italy now suffers from an inflation rate of nearly 50% annually and has, officially, an over 7% unemployment rate and, on the other hand, has so restless and active a proletariat as to have continuous, serious strikes, student unrest, and women in mass revolt.

It is fantastic, indeed, that such massive women's revolts as the one on May 10, 1974, when 60% of the Italian electorate voted for divorce, and the April 6, 1976, 100,000-strong women's demonstration for abortion, that even the Left acts as if the important developments are limited to the "Woman Question." In truth, as urgent and serious as these "women's questions" are, what is crucial is the profound political ramifications. It spells out a complete break with the ruling Christian Democratic Party.

Between these two events there was the shocker of the June 15, 1975 regional elections where the Communist Party won whopping majorities. In the April, 1976 massive women's demonstrations, however, the banners the women unfurled were not only against the Christian Democratic Party and the Pope's stand, but also in criticism of the Communist Party which wished to compromise on the question of the right to abortion. Clearly, the women, on whom the Christian Democratic Party had heretofore counted for three long decades, were hewing out a path for themselves in a Catholic country, independent of the Christian Democratic Party and against any of the "politics" playing with the issue that the Communists were indulging in, and were serving notice of the emergence of a new force. This, along with the continuous chain of class struggles and the rebellious student youth, gives an altogether new face to the crisis the ideologues, East and West, are worrying over, as well they should.

For one thing, we must never forget that the Italian revolutionary movement, in its early dating back to the period of the Russian Revolution, has a very different historical and philosophic development than anywhere else. Thus, because the leaders who were thrown into jail by

Mussolini, especially in the case of Gramsci, escaped the degeneration into Stalinism, the Communist development had a most original turn, deeply rooted in Marxian and Hegelian dialectics. (4)

So free of Stalinism, and all-pervasive, was Gramsci's thought, that those Communists who had become total Stalinists, first as exiles in Russia and then as post-war returnees tailending in bourgeois governments in Italy, to this day feel it necessary to purport to be adherents of Gramsci. Moreover, the Togliatti and official Communists were not the only ones to return to Italy following the defeat of fascism. There were Marxist revolutionaries, both those with long traditions of struggle and independent thought, like Bordiga and Damen, and new young revolutionaries who had been active in the Resistance and there became Marxists. (5) The 1946-47 talk in West Europe that all that was needed to win state power was for Stalin to pick up the phone was no joke to those young Partisans. They surely aspired to the perspective that national liberation, fighting fascism with arms in hand, would not end up as just one more betrayed, aborted, missed revolution. On the contrary, with the end of fascism, they had fully expected that Italy would become a workers' state through proletarian revolution.

The tremendous delusion that came with the Communist Party's participation in a capitalistic government produced a whole series of splits and disgust with the Left intellectuals who had found a safe refuge in the Communist Party. There was never a period, however, not even during the Truman-ordered exclusion of the Communists from the government, the creation of NATO, and the corruption of the Christian Democratic Party, not even during the euphoria of industrial growth in the 1950s, that the Italian workers were totally quiescent. Nor were those intellectuals, though a minority, who were with the workers, limiting themselves intellectually to anything as superficial as the pluralism the Italian Communist Party was "challenging" the Russian Communists with.

All the sadder is it that it isn't only the capitalist ideologues on either side of the Atlantic who are arguing on the ground that

Kissinger had laid. No, of the Left that look with much euphoria on the developments of the Communist Parties in Western Europe, away from Russian Communism, are some East Europeans who themselves have fought Stalinism, whether it was as far back as 1948 when Yugoslavia fought free of Stalin's Russia, or as relatively near to our times as the Czechoslovak revolt in 1968 and the Polish general strike in 1970.

The nationalist separations, a la Romania, from Russian monolithism are no more fundamental breaks from Stalinism than is Albania's. The fact that there is so much satisfaction in hearing Russian totalitarianism referred to as "the new Tsar," as Mao does, that class divisions are made subordinate to this anti-Russian stance even when it's modeled on American "democracy," is only further proof of the great distance between intellectuals and the developing class and racial struggles in each of these countries. While these dissidents do not go so far as to consider Western European moves away from Moscow's domination the equivalents of new forms of "socialism with a human face," they are under many illusions as to "pluralism."

As for the proof of the "revolutionary nature" of Maoism, they have yet seriously to confront the narrow nationalism of Mao's China. They definitely do not see the present development as mere narrow nationalism, where China on the one hand, and on the other hand, each Western European country's Communist Party is opting for state power. Instead they hold to the view that it's all part of the process of "undermining" Stalinist monolithism. One would think that "pluralism" can only mean diversity and vitality of ideas, instead of disintegration that was inherent in every non-revolutionary event since the destruction of the German Revolution of 1919-23.

Furthest from their minds in the present debates on "the" significance of developments in the Communist Parties of West Europe, especially those of France and Italy, is that "pluralism," at best, was the type that characterized the Weimar Republic which, once the world De-

pression broke out, could hardly withstand the rise of Nazism. So total is the separation of these theoreticians from the proletariat that they now talk as if fundamental social relations stem, not from economic base but from ideological debates.

OK, let's take a second look at the 25th Russian Communist Party Congress, to see just how far removed from Russian state-capitalism calling itself Communism are the Italian and French Communist Parties. The 25th Congress was supposed to have been that "proof," since it was right in Moscow that the West European Communist Parties openly showed their "independence." They agreed with the Communist Parties of Yugoslavia and Romania, insisting on the questions of "sovereignty" of each nation, "equality" of all Communist Parties, "autonomy" of each Communist Party, and most important of all, as Romanian President Ceausescu put it, "the right of each Communist Party to define its own political line and strategy." If such phraseology is taken seriously, then the least important and most pusillanimous of the Communist Parties—Great Britain's—spoke most audaciously, be it only for the press.<sup>(6)</sup> The General Secretary, Gordon McLellan, said: "Our aim is the construction of socialism in a form which would guarantee personal freedoms, the plurality of political parties, the independence of the trade unions, religious freedom, freedom of research, cultural, artistic, and scientific activities."

Now it is true that the Communist Party in Great Britain has no such mass base as the Italians, and McLellan's words hardly will have the force of Berlinguer's. But that, exactly, is it. The mass base is what shows that he has the same state-capitalist mentality as the Russians; Stalinism is, after all, just the Russian name for the world stage of capitalism's development ever since the Great Depression brought an end to "private" capitalism.

If, though a socialist, the ground one looks at in defining freedom from Russian totalitarianism is not that of workers' control of production, but nationalism, Eastern European and Western European,



then Georges Marchais could indeed appear as the most independent of all. As against Berlinguer's assurance that, though he was demanding pluralism he had no intention of becoming a "fifth column" in the Soviet camp, Marchais chose not to attend the 25th Russian Party Congress. Not only that. As against any talk of "historic compromise," the French Communist Party (despite the fact that it is in a coalition with the Socialist Party) tried sharply to differentiate itself from the Socialist Party by stressing the different "social composition," as if the Communist Party and not the Socialist Party was "proletarian."

Moreover, Marchais lashed out against the "continuing" tendency of Socialist Parties to collaborate with the Right. Indeed, when it comes to nationalism, Marchais was so far to the right of even d'Estaing that he sounded positively chauvinistic as he lashed out against d'Estaing's Franco-German "alliance" by saying he was opposed to any new "holy Roman Empire," even if this is with a "German with Atlantic connections," though he be a Social Democrat, i.e., Helmut Schmidt.<sup>(7)</sup>

What Marchais failed to take issue with was the fact that the proletariat in an ongoing Portuguese revolution was so disgusted with the Communist Party's strike-breaking activity, that they had to turn to the Socialist Party, short-lived as that, too, will no doubt be.

## II.

Revolutionary dissidents need to counterpose Western European Communist Party verbiage to the actual revolutions that occurred in the past two decades, both those that had taken place in East Europe--in the 1950s, be it in East Germany in 1953 and in Hungary in 1956, that initiated a new age of revolutions that in 1968 burst into the open in Czechoslovakia, and in Poland in 1970--as well as the ongoing one in Portugal. Even the whip of the counter-revolutionary coup on Nov. 25, 1975, could not destroy the Portuguese revolution, so elemental was

that outburst. Because it was spontaneous and not under the "leadership" of the Communist Party which, in fact, had acted as outright strike-breakers after Caetano was overthrown, and because the wildcats and general strikes and occupations of the land seemed endless, the Portuguese masses turned in disgust away from the Communist Party and voted Socialist Party.

In no time at all, however, it was very nearly totally frittered away because that "democracy" was, and is, very clearly tied to "the West." During the very brief period when U.S. imperialism and NATO were out of the picture, in came the Socialist Parties of Western Europe, West Germany most prominently and with the most finances, to save Portugal for NATO. No wonder Helmut Schmidt now asks that NATO be more "elastic." He is under the delusion that he can do in Italy what he had accomplished in Portugal via Soares' Socialist Party. At this moment, Soares is supporting no less a conservative militarist than the Army Chief of Staff, Antonio Ramalho Eanes, for the Presidency. A month from the June 27th presidential elections, Soares is busy white-washing this militarization of the head-of-state on the excuse that the Army chieftan "promised to defend the new Constitution...[as] a progressive way to socialism." The pay-off he expects for this is to be named Premier.

What they all forget is that, with all its setbacks, including the counter-revolutionary coup of Nov. 25th, the proletariat has not yet been totally defeated, the revolution is still ongoing. (8) It goes without saying that ever since the Nov. 25th coup, which NATO and U.S. imperialism helped engineer, "the West" is getting new confidence. It feels so sure that the Portuguese Army is now in the hands of professional military men, that they're busy upgrading Portugal's role in NATO. (9) What they call "the return to normalcy" seems from their vantage point to have only one shadow over it, and that deals not with Portugal but with Angola. It appears that the exchange of ambassadors that was supposed to have taken effect has been broken off. The latest rumor is that there is a new development in Angola, a Nibutu-type of "authentic

nationalism," a faction that is supposed to be functioning underground and that is not only opposed to whites, but to mixed Blacks, not excluding President Agostinho Neto himself.<sup>(10)</sup>

The pivotal point is not the extent to which the hints of the latest rumors on injection of outright racism in any factional disputes within the MPLA is true, but the fact that such a racist development, far from being out of the question as flowing from the Sino-Soviet conflict, is actually in a par with the debates within the Sino-Soviet conflict as they have relation to the Afro-Asian-Latin American and Middle East worlds. Specifically in Angola, Mao's China, which has gone so far in arming and training FRELIMO and UNITA as not even to stop at being on the side of South Africa, has worked through Mobutu and has put down but one condition—that they act on the "principle" that Russia is Enemy No. 1, and Cuba its "mercenaries."

Since no holds seem to be barred on either side of the Sino-Soviet conflict, it becomes imperative, not to look at words, but the actual objective situation, nationally and internationally.<sup>(11)</sup> What is a historic fact beyond any shadow of doubt, objectively and subjectively, is that ever since the mid-1950s, when the state-capitalist world calling itself Communist found itself confronted with elemental revolutions from the Left which sounded the beginning of the end of Russian totalitarianism, and then opposition from the Left appeared also within China itself, the Sino-Soviet orbit turned into Sino-Soviet conflict, not alone because of developments from the "outside," but internally.

That is to say, once there was a demand for freedom from Communism, not to return to capitalism, but to have a "Paris Commune" form of social organization as Sheng Wu Lien was to express it during the Cultural Revolution, then, be it Russia or China, the rulers could no longer speak "for" the proletariat, no matter how often they repeated words about "proletarian dictatorship" or "socialism." Let's take a look at what is happening within China itself and see.

A recent issue of Peking Review<sup>(12)</sup> celebrates the "great victory" of removing Teng Hsiao-ping from all posts and appointing Kuo-feng both First Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee and Premier of the State Council, "unanimously" and "on the proposal of our great leader Chairman Mao." This issue then proceeds not only to report all the mass meetings in support of this "great victory" followed by 7 pages of greetings to the new Premier, but what is a great deal more important, proceeds 1) "philosophically" to analyze all the errors of Teng; 2) on the foreign front (the usual way of pronouncing a new line), cites a report from Japan on "Illusory 'Detente,' Harsh Facts" which they editorially summarize as "The new tsars' gunboats have dispersed the mirage of 'detente'...With the continuous exposure of the Soviet crimes in Angola and Egypt, more and more Japanese people have seen through the true features of the Brezhnev clique"<sup>(13)</sup>; and 3) a report on the "socialist industry" and its "system of ownership."

As they did when the whole Communist world first was confronted with an opposition from the Left back in 1956-57--the Hungarian Revolution in East Europe and the Hundred Flowers Campaign in China--this official publication of China proceeds to analyze Teng with many quotations from Mao in that Hundred Flowers Campaign--"On The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among The People"--and from Mao's speech to the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work. It stresses over and over again that ever since Yenan days, all the way through the Cultural Revolution, Mao the Chairman has laid down the line of "great victories." The very latest twist is this: though Teng did not deal with philosophy, says Peking Review, his whole attitude is "nothing but a new version of the notorious bourgeois philosophy of pragmatism which preaches that 'anything useful is a truth' and vaunts that it is a philosophy above classes."<sup>(14)</sup>

The truth, however, is that it is not Teng who is the author of the latest commands on "socialist industry," but the ruling "radical" leaders. The article on "socialist industry" explains that "Profits

made under the precondition that state plans are fulfilled, come from enforcing the utmost frugality and lowering the cost of production. This kind of profit is socialist accumulation..."(15)

If it weren't so tragic and accurate a description of what is going on in production in China, it could be funny. But what does connect the editorial "A Great Victory" and the report from Japan and the internal situation, is the underlying preoccupation with the shift in the global balance of power following the Angola situation. In place of plain talk on that, what the Chinese masses get is a great abstraction of the poet-Chairman: "We can clasp the moon in the Ninth Heaven and seize turtles deep down in the Five Seas."(16)

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It is no accident, unfortunately, that the discussions even among some of the Left (who look at Western Europe's Communist Parties because they expect that dissidence to create ferment also in East Europe, as witness the Polish Communist Party's great interest in Italian developments), revolve around the ground laid by imperialists, not because the debaters are in any way a state power or aspiring to it, but because of the totality of the world crisis, the absence of successful revolutions and the inability to hear, in what comes from below, really new theoretic departures, though these questions have been posed from practice.

Mao has been encouraging the NATO powers' stranglehold on the Portuguese revolution ever since it broke out. Indeed, in trying to make sure that just-such events do not act as a beacon for the Left either, Mao devised his latest revision of the concept called "the Second World." Just as Mao's concept of contradiction vitiated the class struggle, raising up the superstructure to the primary place, so the concept of "Second World" vitiated proletarian internationalism, reducing it to a question of the world market for the Thought of Mao Tse-tung.

It is strange, indeed, that at this late stage in the crises of world capitalism, private or state or "mixed," that anyone should still be under the illusion that the disarray in the Western European Communist Parties would produce something akin to what the actual revolutions in East Europe had done in shaking up Communist totalitarianism. Isn't it true that those who have such illusions have not yet seriously faced the new stage of capitalism, state-capitalism, other than calling it something as neutral as "late," "advanced," "post," "neo." What becomes imperative is the facing of reality, the global crises, at this new stage of capitalism which allows for no in-between capitalism in any form and its total uprooting.

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(1) Interview with Sergio Segre, by Daniel Yergin, New Republic, 11-1-75.  
(2) New York Times, 5-14-75.

(3) See especially "Italian Communist Party: The Road to Power?" by Edoardo Bartole, Survey, Autumn 1975; also "On The Italian Crisis" by Peter Nichols, Foreign Affairs, April 1976; and the Manchester Guardian, 5-16-76.

(4) In prison itself, Gramsci had continued his philosophic writings as part of the revolutionary struggle itself. He also tried to keep up with the very latest developments in thought among the Russian Bolsheviks. Thus, when Bukharin came to London in 1931 to present a new paper to the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology, Gramsci managed to get a copy of that along with Bukharin's standard text, Historical Materialism. His "Critical Notes on an Attempt at a Popular Presentation of Marxism by Bukharin" focuses on the fact that in Bukharin's work "There is no treatment whatever of the dialectic...which is degraded from being a doctrine of consciousness and the inner substance of history and the science of politics, into being a subspecies of formal logic and elementary scholasticism...he in fact capitulates before common sense and vulgar thought because he has not posed the problem to himself [but] Marxism is precisely the concrete historicisation of philosophy and its identification with history..." The section should be read in full, The Modern Prince and Other Writings by Antonio Gramsci, pp.90-117.

(5) One of the most exciting things that I personally experienced in Italy in 1947 was my meeting with some auto workers from Turin who related to me that during the Resistance in 1943, an American merchant marine seaman had brought them literature which included my study of the Russian economy as state-capitalist. It was immediately translated into Italian

and was used by them in their disputes with Italian Communists. These anti-fascist fighters were still fighting the Communists who presently shared (1947) power with the Christian Democratic Party.

(6) The Manchester Guardian, 3-7-76, "The Great Schism of Moscow," by Hella Pick.

(7) See the articles by Victor Zorza in London and Walter Schwartz in Paris, Manchester Guardian, 3-28-76.

(8) See "Will The Revolution In Portugal Advance?", News & Letters, Jan/Feb 1976. The very fact that the Left held its own in the April elections, in face of all the money, propaganda, and all sorts of other pressures from all sides, including the Socialist Parties of Western Europe, the CIA, NATO, not to mention the neo-fascists let loose by the latter, is proof of the fact that the proletariat has not been defeated. The reorganization in thought as well as in the continuity of the class struggle, both in the factories and in the fields, as well as in the Women's Liberation Movement, will put to the test the whole of the international Left as well.

(9) See Toronto Globe & Mail, 5-13-76: "Lisbon's Socialists Support Army Chief," and Washington Post, 5-9-76: "NATO Aid For Lisbon," by Jim Hoagland.

(10) The following are speculative reports rather than description of events. See C.L. Sulzberger, "Shadow Over NATO," New York Times, 5-23-76 and the special report "What Next In Africa?", Atlas, June 1976. (Actually the reports in the latter are from Feb. and March.) It should be added that this is not as shocking to us here who have followed some American Maoists who have supported UNITA and attacked the MPLA as "mestizo-led." See The Sun (Detroit), 2-5-76, "Angola: An Eyewitness Report," by Herbert Boyd.

(11) See Political-Philosophic Letter No.2, "Mac's Last Hurrah," 2-27-76.

(12) Peking Review, 4-16-76.

(13) p. 26

(14) p. 20

(15) p. 24

(16) p. 20