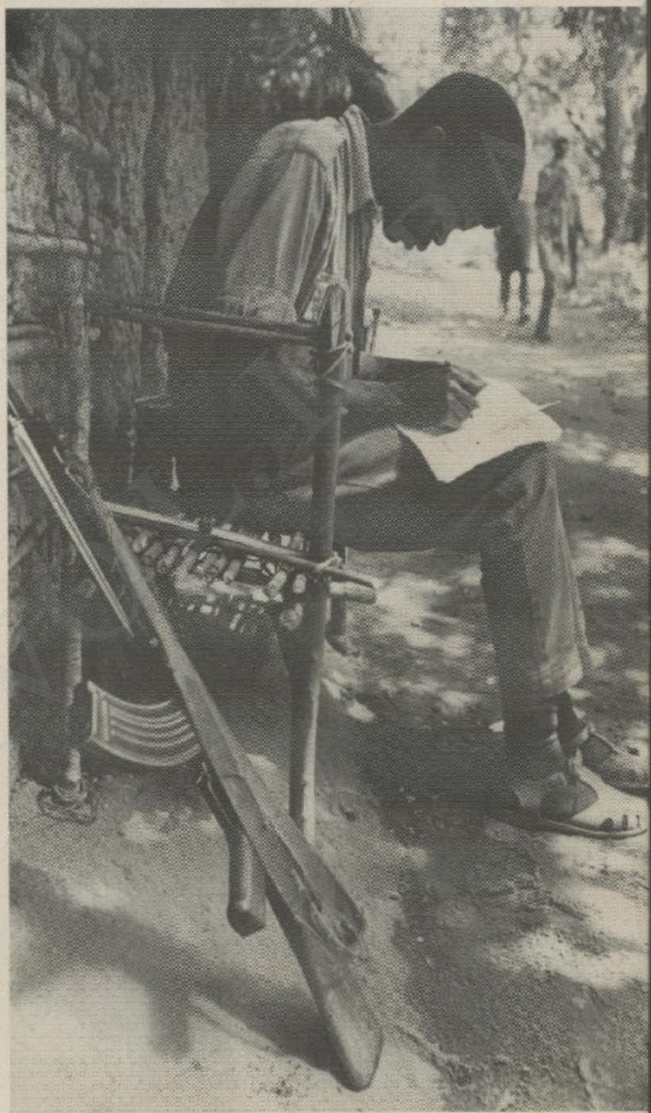


# ANGOLA

## a long road to peace

Marga  
Holness



**From Basil Davidson, President, Mozambique Angola Committee.  
To all members and supporters of MAC, on the occasion of their  
conference to mark the 20th anniversary of Angolan Independence,  
11 November 1995**

### *A Message of Commemoration and Companionship*

*Let us remember on this day the nature and the meaning of the Angolan Independence Movement twenty years ago!*

*That great victory still had to be defended against its enemies through months and, as we well know, even through years of bitter warfare and self-sacrifice: but the success, then, was already beyond doubt. It was a success that changed history: changed the history of the whole of southern Africa, and not least of South Africa, but also of regions still further afield.*

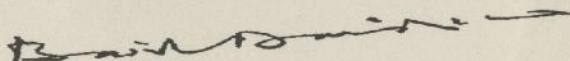
*With the West-East Cold War still raging, the Angolan Republic proclaimed in Luanda on 11 November, twenty years ago, was able to win political and diplomatic recognition from centres of power and influence both in West and East. Even its most determined enemies had to swallow their defeat, while still not ready to disarm and demobilise their forces of subversion.*

*Following that victory, the army and the people of the MPLA, of Angola's liberation forces and movement, were able - at any rate at that time - to evict all that mercenary and murderous array of invaders and adventurers, as well as racist South Africa's professional troops, who had been trying to reproduce in Angola their grim version of misery and chaos.*

*Those invaders and adventurers, even though they had powerful governments on their side, all failed. Let us remember this with pride and thanks. In spite of all the efforts made, since then, to reverse the meaning and effect of that great victory of twenty years ago, the victory has been defended. Let us celebrate this with a renewed determination to stand in line with those defenders.*

*History was on our side twenty years ago. History today remains on our side.*

*Long live the cause of Freedom and Independence!*





LUCIO LARA

# Angola: a long road to peace

by Marga Holness

for the Mozambique Angola Committee

*de Nange*

*Jan. Feb 97*

## **Foreword**

The Mozambique Angola Committee is publishing this pamphlet to mark the 20th Anniversary of Angolan Independence on 11 November 1995.

The 1975 victory was a historic achievement after 14 years of liberation war. But it did not usher in the period of hope and development that had been fought for. It was rapidly followed by a further 20 years' struggle against subversion and destabilization.

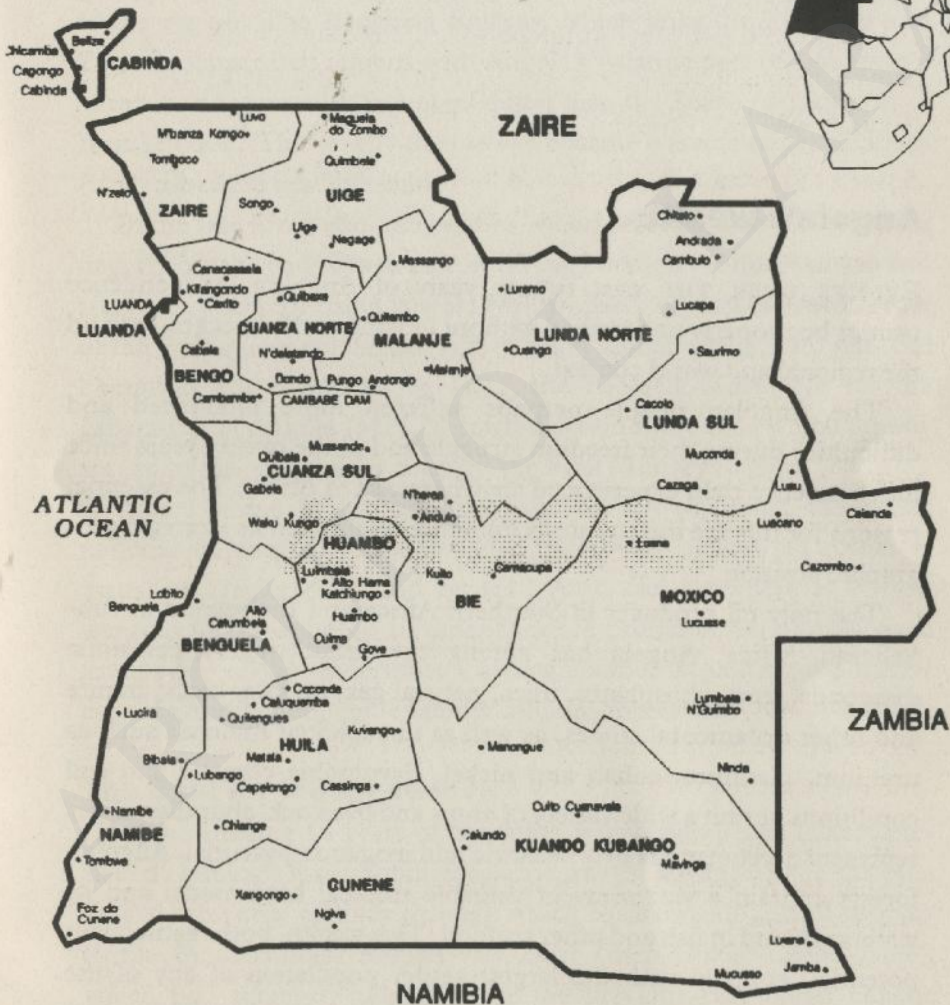
As we go to press, a fragile peace is holding in Angola. All friends of the Angolan people hope that it will continue. But, given the history of broken agreements recorded in this pamphlet, we cannot yet be certain that peace and national reconciliation will be permanent.

Since the 1960s there has been almost continuous solidarity activity in Britain. Individuals, the Anti-Apartheid Movement (now ACTSA), trades unions, churches, political parties and MPs, local government bodies, business people and many others have responded magnificently whenever the call went out to support the liberation of Angola and subsequently to defend its independence. Lobbies of parliament, newspaper advertisements, aid to projects in Angola, conferences, demonstrations; all have contributed to raising awareness of Angola's struggle.

That solidarity is still vital. It may yet be needed once again to defend the peace. We hope it can now be focused on support for the economic and social reconstruction of Angola.

Peter Brayshaw and Siân Long  
Co-Chairs, Mozambique Angola Committee  
October 1995





Map from: Sustainable Peace - Angola's Recovery Compiled by David Sogge SARDC 1992

## Angola's wealth

EVENTS OVER THE past twenty years of Angola's independence cannot be properly understood without looking at the background and the regional and world context.

The Angolan people perhaps suffered more bloodshed and difficulties during their freedom struggle and in the twenty years since independence than experienced anywhere else in Africa. The essential reasons for this are the country's immense wealth and its strategic geographic position.

The only oil producer in Southern Africa and the second in sub-Saharan Africa, Angola has among the finest quality gemstone diamonds, iron, phosphates, mica, natural gas, marble, black granite and other ornamental stones, as well as unexploited minerals such as uranium, platinum, cobalt and nickel. Favourable climatic and soil conditions permit a wide variety of crops and livestock, abundant rivers represent an enormous hydroelectric and irrigation potential, Angola's forests contain a vast array of valuable tropical hardwoods, and its waters abound in fish and other seafood. This wealth, both realised and potential, coupled with the largest settler population of any of the former Portuguese colonies, meant that there were powerful vested



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interests opposed to the Angolan people gaining control of their own resources.

Far from being dependent on or interlinked with the South African economy or transport system – as most of Southern Africa was – Angola's independent resources and facilities were seen by the apartheid regime as a potential threat to its own economic domination of the region. The Benguela Railway, which links the Zambian and Zairean copper belt regions with Angola's Atlantic port of Lobito, is a cheaper and more direct mineral outlet than the South African port of East London. This is why the railway became a major target of South African-backed destabilisation.

In the late fifties and early sixties, when other colonial powers were negotiating the end of their rule in Africa, Portugal refused to do so and stepped up its repression against African patriots. Angola was the first of the Portuguese colonies in Africa where armed struggle for national liberation was launched. In 1961, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) started action in Luanda which rapidly spread to the north of the country, the First Military Region.

Like Frelimo in Mozambique, the MPLA was from the outset national in scope and campaigned vigorously against all forms of 'tribalism, regionalism and racism'. And, like elsewhere in Africa, external forces opposed to independence promoted ethnically-based groups to seek to undermine a struggle aimed at uniting the largest possible number of people against colonial oppression.

### **The fight for independence**

Over the ensuing 14 years of liberation war, geographical factors presented seemingly insurmountable barriers to the advance of the struggle. In 1961 the only country through which to channel logistical support to the First Military Region was Zaire (then Congo-Léopoldville), which had achieved independence the previous year under chaotic conditions, amid CIA intervention, leading to the country becoming a

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US client state. Based in Zaire was the Union of the Peoples of Northern Angola (UPA), later renamed the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). This was an ethnically-based organisation which had originally sought the restoration of the old Kongo Kingdom. The FNLA, early supplied with US funds and military advisors, killed many MPLA combatants taking supplies into the First Military Region.

In late 1962, the MPLA was expelled from Zaire. After a change of regime in neighbouring Congo Brazzaville, the MPLA was able to move its logistical base to that country, from where only Angola's Cabinda enclave, the Second Military Region, was accessible. In Cabinda, a separatist group, the Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave (Flec), many of whose soldiers came from the Portuguese special forces, played a role similar to the FNLA.

Angola's other neighbours were Namibia, a South African colony in the south, and Northern Rhodesia in the east. When Northern Rhodesia became independent Zambia in 1964, the MPLA made preparations to open the Third Military Region in eastern Angola, setting up an office in Lusaka in 1965. In 1966, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita) was founded and appeared in the area bordering on Zambia. It was led by Jonas Savimbi and based on his ethnic group, the Umbundu of central Angola. Savimbi's collaboration with Portuguese military intelligence to counter the MPLA's struggle has been well documented.

### **Portugal in 1974**

Despite these and other impediments and difficulties, the national liberation struggle had a devastating effect on the Portuguese expeditionary army. Suffering fascism at home, young Portuguese were not prepared to die for colonialism abroad. On 25 April 1974, the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement overthrew the fascist Lisbon regime.



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The ensuing period was turbulent. There was a struggle in Portugal between those who wanted to grant independence to the colonies and those opposed. White settler groups sprang up in Angola and massacred people in the urban shanty towns. Others advocated the killing of whites and people from different ethnic groups. External forces sought to dilute Angola's independence, carve up the country or even exclude the MPLA from the process.

To avoid further bloodshed and foreign intervention in Angola's affairs, the MPLA agreed to cooperate with the FNLA and Unita and start negotiations with Portugal. At a meeting in Alvor, Portugal, in January 1975, an agreement was signed under which a quadripartite transitional government – comprising the MPLA, the FNLA, Unita and Portugal – would run the country until elections in October that year and independence on 11 November.

That same month, despite the efforts to achieve unity and avoid bloodshed, the CIA decided to give \$300,000 in military assistance to its FNLA protégés. The Alvor Agreement broke down when the FNLA, backed by the CIA and direct intervention by Zairean military forces, tried to seize power by military means. It launched a major onslaught in Luanda in March, starting with the murder of 50 young MPLA recruits, shelling of the shanty towns, torturing and killing. The MPLA instructed its army not to respond to provocations. In July, however, it launched a counter-offensive, massively supported by the population of Luanda. The FNLA was driven out of the capital. Soon after, Unita, then a minor force, openly allied itself with the FNLA and left the capital.

Only the MPLA and Portugal were left in Luanda to govern the country in the few months before independence. In July, the CIA approved a further \$14 million in support of anti-MPLA forces, later boosted to a total of \$24.7 million in arms, ammunition and advisors to prevent the MPLA from declaring independence. A contingent of South African forces entered the country in August, the prelude to a

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massive South African invasion that started in October. The entire operation – a CIA airlift from the north and South African invasion from the south – was coordinated between Washington and Pretoria. As John Stockwell, then CIA chief of operations in Angola, wrote in his book *In Search of Enemies*: ‘The deadline was November 11, 1975, when the Portuguese would relinquish proprietorship of the colony to whichever movement controlled the capital at that time.’ The South African forces were halted about 200 kilometres from Luanda. MPLA President Agostinho Neto proclaimed independence on 11 November to the boom of artillery battles north of the capital. Yet it was a proud and festive occasion. That same day, the FNLA and Unita proclaimed the ‘Democratic People’s Republic of Angola’ in Huambo, then occupied by the South African armed forces. Hundreds of MPLA supporters were arrested there.

In response to the MPLA’s appeal for help during the critical period before independence, Cuba, Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry offered to send troops. Immediately after independence - it could not be before the Portuguese left - contingents of Cuban volunteer combat troops arrived in the country, and the push to drive out the invaders started. It was completed in March 1976. The FNLA, which put its forces under the command of a motley crew of foreign mercenaries in a last-ditch attempt to stave off rout, was defeated in the north. The FNLA and Unita forces in the centre and south went with the South African army into Namibia. When the Angolan and Cuban forces arrived in central Angola, they found mass graves in Lobito, Benguela, Huambo and Kuito, where MPLA members and supporters had been massacred, including leading figures of Umbundu origin.

In February members of the US Congress, angered by revelations of clandestine operations in Angola and by the lying of CIA officials, had introduced what was called the Clark Amendment banning all covert aid to anti-government forces in Angola.



## South African aggression

THE VICTORY OVER the invading forces ushered in heady times. Free health and education were introduced and working people enrolled massively in adult education courses and literacy classes in workplaces or after hours in schools. The works of Angolan authors banned under colonial rule were published, and there was a general flowering of culture and the arts, both traditional and modern.

During the run-up to independence there had been a massive exodus of settlers, a flight of skilled manpower, traders, factory owners and managers, many of whom destroyed and sabotaged machinery, vehicles and other crucial equipment as they left. The settler-run rural marketing system collapsed. The state was obliged to take over the administration and management of abandoned companies and farms. The only economic sectors that continued to prosper were diamond mining and the oil industry, in partnership with foreign companies. Oil extraction steadily increased over the years and provided the major source of foreign exchange earnings.

Efforts to keep the economy going and promote development took place against a background of continuing South African aggression against both Angolan targets and refugees from Southern African

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countries still under minority rule: Independent Angola supported the African National Congress (ANC), South West African People's Organisation (Swapo) and Zimbabwe's Patriotic Front, which all had camps in Angola. A report presented to the United Nations by the Angolan government in July 1979 gave a detailed account of South African aggression during the period from March 1976 to June 1979. Estimated losses during the period were at least 570 Angolans killed and 594 wounded, 612 Namibians killed and 611 wounded (in the infamous massacre at Kassinga in May 1978), 198 Zimbabweans killed and 600 wounded, and three South Africans killed and eight wounded. Material damage amounted to an estimated \$300 million, broken down under agriculture and livestock, construction, transport, machinery and equipment, fisheries, commerce, administration and public services.

In its military operations against Angola, the South African Defence Force (SADF) increasingly used Unita forces it trained and equipped in military camps in Namibia, transporting men and equipment into Angola and providing air cover. The FNLA troops that had fled to Namibia were regrouped in an SADF unit, the notorious Buffalo or 32 Battalion, which operated solely inside Angola. It was officered by mercenaries from various countries under the top command of the SADF.

In 1977 the then five Western members of the UN Security Council – Britain, Canada, France, Germany and the USA – set themselves up as a 'contact group' to negotiate Namibia's independence. Through shuttle diplomacy involving Swapo, South Africa and the Frontline States of Southern Africa, a Namibian independence plan was agreed by all the parties and its implementation demanded in UN Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978.

South Africa agreed in principle to the UN plan on several occasions, yet consistently raised fresh objections to its implementation. Meanwhile, it stepped up armed aggression against Angola in order to negotiate from a 'position of strength'. Its violations of Angolan air-



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space, ground attacks, bombing raids and shelling incidents resulted in hundreds of Angolans killed, the destruction of factories, segments of highways and railway lines and other damage to civilian targets and, increasingly, direct clashes with FAPLA, the Angolan armed forces. These actions were routinely described by the South African authorities as 'hot pursuit operations against Swapo'.

In November 1979, Angola suffered a cruel blow when President Agostinho Neto died of an illness. José Eduardo dos Santos was elected by the MPLA Central Committee to replace him.

### **The US steps up pressure**

In January 1981, a conference on Namibia was held in Geneva, the first attended by both South Africa and Swapo. UN sources expressed optimism that the independence process might start by March. South Africa stalled again. Elections in the United States had brought the Republicans to power and, as one US newspaper put it, Pretoria 'might well believe that a hardline Reagan administration will relax pressures for the ceasefire and elections' in Namibia.

Until then South Africa's objections to the UN plan for Namibian independence had centred on what it saw as the partiality of the UN, the composition of a UN monitoring force in the territory and the voting system to be used. This was all to be changed when Reagan's Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Crocker, after talks with South Africa's Foreign Minister Pik Botha and Defence Minister Magnus Malan, dreamt up the concept of 'linkage', whereby Namibia's independence was made dependent on the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. Pretoria had never before raised this as a problem, aware that its occupation of Namibia had long been condemned by the UN as illegal, while the Cubans were in Angola legally under Article 51 of the UN Charter. France withdrew from the contact group in protest over 'linkage', the group ceased to function and the US became sole mediator.

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As a result of 'linkage', achieving Namibian independence became a matter of exerting pressure on Angola instead of South Africa. Militarily, it was aimed at weakening the Angolan government so that, with South African support, Washington's new candidates for power in Angola, Unita, might take power.

Full pressure was exerted on Angola, both diplomatic and military. South African aggression against Angola was stepped up sharply after Reagan came to power. This culminated, on 23 August 1981, in the massive invasion and occupation of a large part of southern Angola by the SADF. So-called Operation Protea involved about 11,000 men, 36 Centurion M-41 tanks, 70 AML-90 armoured cars, 200 armoured personnel carriers, artillery that included the G-5 155mm Howitzer, 127mm Kentron surface-to-surface missiles and about 90 planes and helicopters. After massive bombing raids on major urban centres in Cunene Province and north into Huila, three SADF armoured columns moved on urban centres, where there was fierce fighting with FAPLA. The US vetoed a UN Security Council resolution condemning the aggression. Up to then, the US (and Britain) had routinely abstained on the many such resolutions passed.

The invasion resulted in the occupation for more than three years of about 50,000 sq km of Cunene Province. It facilitated the infiltration of Unita forces further north while concentrating the attention of the Angolan armed forces on the permanent threat from the SADF. A huge propaganda campaign was mounted in support of Unita, presented as controlling vast swathes of Angola. In November, Jonas Savimbi was received in Washington with considerable pomp at the very moment when South African commandos – carrying Unita propaganda – were sabotaging the Luanda oil refinery. More and more Western journalists visited Savimbi at his Jamba base near the Namibian border, writing rapturous articles describing him as the ultimate 'freedom fighter' whose seizure of power by military means was imminent. Reports of Unita massacres of defenceless peasants – particularly in the Central





South African plane shot down in Cunene Province

Highlands, reported to be its ethnic base – were largely ignored.

Continual aggression was taking its toll on the economy. In 1983, President dos Santos cited \$10 billion as estimated total losses caused by South Africa's undeclared war. Repeated UN Security Council resolutions called for 'payment by South Africa of full and adequate compensation . . . for the damage to life and property resulting from these acts of aggression'. The calls went unheeded.

However, FAPLA, reorganised and re-equipped, started to drive Unita out of many vantage points gained as a result of the South African occupation. As has become customary when Unita suffers

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military setbacks, a number of top Unita officials disappeared and there were repeated reports of killings within its ranks.

An SADF attempt to expand the occupied area – so-called Operation Askari – failed, coming up against strong resistance. As a result of South Africa's military reversals and its economic crisis – to which the war in Angola was adding an estimated \$4 million a day – in February 1984 South Africa agreed to go to Lusaka to negotiate the withdrawal of its troops from Angola. Angola said the withdrawal should be followed by South Africa's implementation of Security Council Resolution 435 and Namibian independence. At the Lusaka meeting, mediated by the US, it was agreed to set up a Joint Monitoring Commission composed of Angolan and South African forces to supervise South Africa's withdrawal, to be completed within four weeks.

South Africa neither withdrew its forces nor moved forward on Namibian independence. There were further meetings between Angolan, US and South African delegations at which the 'linkage' issue was made the precondition for progress. Seeking to break the deadlock and to ensure that Namibia became independent, in November President dos Santos wrote to UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar giving a detailed programme for a phased withdrawal of 20,000 Cuban troops over a three-year period, with the remainder staying in northern Angola, where South Africa could not claim they threatened its 'interests', let alone its borders. South Africa's response was to demand that all Cuban troops should be out in 12 weeks, that the Angolans should provide detailed lists of Cuban personnel in the country, and that the withdrawal should be monitored by a commission to include South Africans, who should be free to move anywhere inside Angola. Despite international condemnation of the illegality of South Africa's occupation of Namibia and parts of Angola, the US described this proposed further violation of Angola's sovereignty by South Africa as 'a clash over time limits for the pull out of Cuban troops' and spoke



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of the need to 'bridge the gap' between South Africa and Angola. US policy on Cuba and Angola had been given absolute precedence over the international problem of ending South Africa's illegal colonial rule in Namibia. In November 1984, speaking to a group of 45 journalists flown from Pretoria to Jamba, Savimbi announced that he would take Luanda by Christmas.

In April 1985, more than a year after agreeing to withdraw its troops from Angola, South Africa finally announced that it was doing so, amid fulsome Western praise of its role as a 'peacemaker'. On 21 May, a FAPLA patrol foiled an attempt by a South African commando unit to sabotage the Cabinda Gulf Oil complex in Cabinda Province. The SADF commander, Captain Wynand Du Toit, was captured and stated at a Luanda press conference that 'in all or most of the operations that we do, Unita claims the responsibility'. That, he said, was 'part of the deception'.

The FAPLA offensive against Unita was gaining momentum. Conservative elements in the US Congress secured the repeal of the Clark Amendment banning aid to anti-government forces. The State Department gave assurances that this did not mean the US would assist Unita. At a press conference in Jamba, on 20 September, Savimbi appealed for direct US intervention. In February 1986 Chester Crocker announced that the US had decided to provide military aid to Unita. This included shoulder-fired surface-to-air Stinger missiles.

In a letter to the UN Secretary-General in March, President dos Santos wrote that 'the United States, by openly supporting Unita and South Africa in aggression against Angola, has put in question its credibility as a mediator', and requested that the UN, as the body responsible for doing so, should conduct the negotiations on Namibia's independence and peace and security in the region. FAPLA's growing defence capability was also greatly affecting the SADF. In January 1987 a South African major general complained that the Angolan air

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force now believed it could challenge South African air superiority in southern Angola. There was a 54% increase in budget allocations for South Africa's air force. As a result of the changed military situation, the US and South Africa started to call for negotiations and 'power-sharing', saying this was a 'no-win' war, i.e. Unita and South Africa were not, after all, going to overthrow the government by military means. Savimbi, no longer making apocalyptic announcements about the imminence of Unita's seizure of power, started to plead for talks.

The US did not, however, abandon the military option. The *New York Times* revealed in February that the CIA was using the Kamina base, in Zaire's Shaba Province, to airlift arms to Unita. In June it was announced that the US would provide another \$15 million in aid to Unita, including anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles.

In a further effort to ensure Namibia's independence and peace in the region, about a year and a half after suspending talks with the US, Angola agreed to resume them. It put forward proposals emphasising flexibility on the Cuban troops, setting as preconditions the immediate withdrawal of South African troops from Angola and the ending of its aggression, the ending of US and South African support for Unita and the start of the Namibian independence process. South Africa's response was to launch air and ground attacks in Kuando Kubango and Cunene provinces. On 12 November, more than three months after the start of the invasion, South African Defence Minister Malan said they had intervened to save Savimbi from defeat, because 'Savimbi cherishes the same values as those held by South Africa'.

### **The battle of Cuito Cuanavale**

This last massive invasion of Angola was Pretoria's undoing. There was mounting public and media pressure in South Africa owing to the growing number of white SADF deaths in Angola. South African planes were being shot down, and there were mutinies in the SADF. Using long-range artillery – safer than planes – South Africa bombard-



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ed Cuito Cuanavale, Kuando Kubango Province, for months. FAPLA withstood the siege, and in January 1988 Cuban forces came in support and joined the southward push to drive the SADF back to the Namibian border.

The battle of Cuito Cuanavale – regarded as historic for having paved the way for Namibia's independence and subsequent changes in South Africa itself – was what finally brought South Africa to the negotiating table.

South Africa's war in Angola was estimated to have cost more than 150,000 lives and caused damages amounting to more than \$30 billion. Economic development was seriously undermined by the costly war. More than 40% of the budget was allocated for military expenditure and 50% of export earnings were spent on ensuring national survival in the face of continual aggression. Added to these difficulties was the sharp fall in world oil prices in 1985/86, all of which meant that for the first time Angola ceased to pay its way and started to accumulate an external debt.

In 1985 an Economic and Financial Restructuring Programme had been adopted aimed, among other things, at stabilising the economy, encouraging foreign investment, slimming down and decentralising the state machinery and giving priority to agriculture. The state could no longer bear the burden of subsidising industries that were running at a loss, and private sector participation was encouraged. These efforts to liberalise the economy went hand in hand with efforts to achieve the peace without which no economic and social development was possible.

Following South Africa's defeat at Cuito Cuanavale, a series of talks which started in London in May 1988 culminated in the signing in New York, on 22 December, of two agreements. Under one, signed by Angola, Cuba and South Africa, South Africa agreed to implement Security Council Resolution 435 on Namibia's independence and to withdraw its troops from Angola and Namibia. All foreign interference

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in Angola was to cease. The other agreement, signed by Angola and Cuba, was on a phased withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.

Although Washington had mediated the negotiations, it stated that, not being a signatory, it was not bound by the stipulation on the ending of foreign interference in Angola. The US then replaced South Africa as Unita's major supplier of lethal and logistical equipment, from bases in neighbouring Zaire. South African aggression and backing having failed to put Unita in power, the US was making a last-ditch effort to do so by military means.



## Direct talks with Unita

HAVING MADE EVERY effort to eliminate the external factors in the war, the Angolan government nevertheless set about seeking to resolve the domestic conflict with Unita by peaceful means. Parliament had approved a clemency policy in 1987, and in 1988 an Amnesty Law was passed. In view of the duplicitous role played by the US, the government sought an African context for negotiations. In May 1989, a meeting in Luanda of eight African heads of state approved a peace plan drawn up by the Angolan government. The main lines of the plan were: the ending of US and South African interference in Angola's internal affairs; the ending of hostilities throughout the country, starting on the Benguela Railway, to be declared a zone of peace; respect for the constitution and other legislation; the integration of Unita personnel in state bodies and other institutions; and Savimbi's voluntary and temporary retirement from the scene. He was seen as a special case in view of his history of collusion with Angola's enemies. The heads of state agreed that the next meeting would be held in September in the Zairean capital, Kinshasa.

President Mobutu Sese Seko then took the initiative of contacting the Unita leader and told President dos Santos that Savimbi had

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agreed to the government peace plan. It was this that led dos Santos to meet Savimbi in Gbadolite, Zaire, on 22 June, in the presence of 18 African heads of state. It was agreed to establish a ceasefire on 24 June. Savimbi endorsed the plan, including his own temporary retirement from the scene, in front of all the heads of state. However, owing to Mobutu's method of conducting the talks, there was no signed agreement. When Savimbi later denied having agreed to the government plan, it was his word against that of the heads of state, and he later called at least two of them liars.

While the government respected the ceasefire, Unita stepped up armed action. Further meetings failed to make Unita abandon its militarist stance and accept the government's peace overtures. On 26 July the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government called on the Bush administration to end all military and financial assistance to Unita and support Africa's efforts to achieve peace and national reconciliation in Angola. A summit of the eight African heads of state, meeting in Harare on 22 August, again endorsed the government's peace plan, and agreed to meet again in Kinshasa on 18 September. During the period between the Gbadolite and Harare summits Unita violations of the ceasefire had resulted in 733 dead, 1,207 wounded, 173 kidnapped and 422 missing. Interviewed by Reuter on 23 August, President dos Santos said the US and South Africa were continuing all-round aid to Unita 'and this does not favour the peace process in Angola'.

On 17 September, the US State Department issued a statement declaring that the United States 'strongly supports Unita and its goal of national reconciliation followed by free and fair elections'. (All talk of Unita seizing power by force forgotten, Savimbi's organisation was now presented as one that had, all along, been fighting for democratic elections.) The State Department added that 'the US does not accept the concepts of exile, amnesty or integration'.

Meanwhile, the Angolan and Cuban governments were complying



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with the New York agreements, with Cuban contingents leaving the country well ahead of schedule.

Economic reforms introduced during this period were aimed, among other things, at increasing private sector activity, both foreign and national, especially in industry, privatising retail trade, decentralising the state machinery, negotiating the foreign debt and encouraging foreign capital, adjusting the kwanza to other currencies and applying a policy of austerity. Priority was to be given to agriculture and the rehabilitation of industry. Despite the measures taken, however, the economy continued to decline. A lack of experience and insufficient controls proved serious liabilities in conditions of uninterrupted war.

The war had destroyed schools, health posts, shops, churches and entire villages, while teachers, health workers, agricultural technicians and foreign aid workers had been killed, kidnapped or maimed. Environmental depredations had included the stripping of vast teak forests in southern Angola and the decimation of herds of elephants and other wildlife, as Unita, in collusion with the SADF, sold timber, ivory and hides in South Africa.

Over the ensuing period negotiations continued, as did the war. South Africa never complied with its commitment to stop aiding Unita, and the US kept up its two-pronged strategy of demanding concessions from the government while stepping up military assistance to Unita, with transport planes daily flying in lethal equipment from the American-controlled Kamina base in Zaire. The CIA provided Unita with \$50 million worth of aid in just the first six months of 1990.

Peace talks started under Portuguese mediation, with the USA and then USSR as observers, proved more fruitful than previous efforts. They finally resulted in the signing of the Angola Peace Accords in Bicesse, Portugal, on 31 May 1991. The parties – the government and Unita – agreed to a ceasefire, the confinement, disarming and demobilisation of their armies, the formation of a single army, the extension of the State administration to the whole country and general elections on

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29 and 30 September 1992. The UN was to monitor the implementation of the Accords.

### **The run-up to elections**

In March the government had undertaken the amendment of the constitution and introduced complementary laws instituting a multiparty system and paving the way for building a democratic State based on the rule of law. The revised constitution greatly strengthened fundamental rights and freedoms, particularly the right to life, through the abolition of the death penalty, and guaranteed the independence of legislative, executive and judicial bodies. New legislation included the Law on Political Parties, the Press Law and Electoral Law, making possible the emergence of about two dozen political parties. The economic corollary of political liberalisation included legislation providing more favourable conditions for foreign investment and on the transformation of state enterprises into corporate bodies. During the sixteen months between the signing of the Accords and the elections there was relative peace. People could for the first time in years drive to places previously reached only by air. More food appeared in the markets and prices correspondingly fell.

However, Unita military activities continued. Unita occupied places the government army had left in compliance with the Accords, established arms caches and failed to hand especially its sophisticated weapons over to the UN, concealed the existence of about 30,000 troops outside the confinement areas which it filled with old men and non-military youngsters, brought arms and men into the country from Zaire, took large quantities of arms and men in civilian clothes into urban areas, evicted State administrators from their areas of jurisdiction, repaired airstrips, recruited youths for its army and gave them crash training courses, maintaining centres for this purpose, and destroyed or seized FAPLA military material held in UN custody. Unita thus fuelled a growing fear that if it lost the elections it would go



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back to war. By March it was estimated that one-fifth of Angola was under Unita occupation.

The government notified the UN and observers of the violations, but they were dismissed as minor incidents and ignored, as were reports by Unita dissidents that Unita had a secret army of 20,000 men. The rare UN warnings would refer to the 'two parties'. It was widely believed that the West expected Unita to win the elections and did not want to ruffle those it thought would form the future government. Indeed, US pressure for the holding of elections was seen as yet another effort to see Unita in power after the military option had repeatedly failed.

Under the Bicesse Accords, the police force continued to be the responsibility of the government. The government complied with the Accords by disbanding its army. The police was the only force that could face up to the increasingly evident danger of Unita trying to seize power by force. A highly trained emergency police was formed. This force, known as the 'ninjas', made people feel somewhat more assured, especially in urban areas. Armed Unita troops – officially bodyguards for their officials, present in inflated numbers – were intimidating people in towns, setting up roadblocks and showing how utterly unadapted to urban life and democratic procedures they were. Ironically, it was the peace process that first brought armed Unita troops into towns, creating there the same fear and immediate danger that had so long existed in the countryside. Far from allowing the extension of the State administration to the whole country, Unita barred areas it controlled to government officials and did not allow the representatives of other political parties to campaign there.

On 28 September, on the eve of the elections, the government and Unita announced the dissolution of their armies and the formation of the single Angolan Armed Forces, FAA.

## **Election victory for the MPLA and Unita returns to war**

THE ELECTIONS TOOK place in an orderly manner widely described as exemplary. There was a 92% turnout. Multiparty teams, including Unita, together with international observers were at polling stations. Following recounts demanded by Unita – supervised by commissions which included the government, the UN, the observers and Unita itself – the MPLA won a 53.74% majority in the legislative elections. It polled 49.57% of the vote in the presidential elections, which meant there had to be a run-off. Before the recount José Eduardo dos Santos had already surpassed the 50% needed for an outright victory. In some places at least, blank and spoilt votes were being ascribed to Jonas Savimbi in the hope that a presidential run-off would avert a return to war. In a speech broadcast on 3 October, Jonas Savimbi rejected the election results, threatened war and ordered his high-ranking officers to desert the unified army. On 5 October, the Unita generals who had solemnly sworn allegiance a week earlier withdrew from the unified army and rejoined FALA (Unita's army) in its operational areas. On 6 October, Unita troops started taking over municipalities and localities in many provinces, attacking local government buildings and police



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stations, and murdering officials, policemen and purported MPLA voters. It threatened the 'Somali-isation' of the country if the election results were published. Publication was suspended pending detailed verification of the results by the National Electoral Council, Unita officials and the UN. The results were published on 17 October. That same day the UN declared the elections to have been generally free and fair. Meanwhile, Jonas Savimbi had secretly left Luanda for Huambo.

Unita stepped up military activity everywhere, a process that was soon to lead to its controlling an estimated 75% of the country. On 15 October, Unita blew up a huge arms depot near Luanda airport, causing panic in the capital. Arms depots in Kuando Kubango, Moxico, Bié and Huambo were also blown up, although all officially in UN custody.

Unita had 3,000 troops in Luanda, at the lowest estimate, and there were known to be large arms depots in at least three of the buildings it used in the capital. This and its provocations and sabre rattling attitude meant that it came as no surprise when, during the night of 29-30 October, Unita started to attack targets in the capital in a clear attempt to seize power by force. The first attack was on the airport, followed by attacks on numerous police stations and near the Futungo de Belas presidential complex. Massed in a park bordering on a street in which many government and MPLA officials live, Unita troops received orders - captured on radio - to kill everyone, including women and children. The residents, many well known MPLA personalities, came out into the street to fight, and repelled the attack. The government, which had so far offered no resistance to Unita, reacted. Its army had been disbanded, the newly-formed FAA were not called in, and it was the police, Unita's major target, who defended the capital. They were supported by large numbers of civilians, echoing what had happened in 1975 when the FNLA had tried to take the capital by force.

Despite repeated radio appeals to the population not to take

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reprisals, a number of Unita officials were killed as they fled Luanda. However, Unita vice-president Jeremias Chitunda, long said to be trying to defect, was reliably reported to have been killed by Unita itself. Unita officials who remained where they were living or gave themselves up were taken into protective custody. That same weekend Unita occupied Caxito and Ndalatando, capitals of Bengo and Kwanza Norte provinces.

On 24 November, government and Unita delegations, meeting in Namibe under UN auspices, agreed to a ceasefire. On 26 and 27 November Unita occupied Uige and Negage in the north. That same day, the National Assembly was invested, with the MPLA and all opposition parties except Unita taking their seats. Three months later Unita officials who had remained in Luanda took twelve of the 70 seats won by Unita.

Negotiations continued in Addis Ababa, in January 1993, but the Unita delegation said it was not mandated to agree to a ceasefire. It failed to turn up at a meeting scheduled for 10 February. In early January Unita had massed the bulk of its forces in an attempt to take Huambo. After around two months of heavy fighting and more than 10,000 people killed, on 7 March government forces withdrew from Huambo, together with an estimated 100,000 civilians who fled to Benguela Province.

On 9 March, a government of national unity was sworn in. One-fifth of its members were from parties other than the MPLA. Five positions reserved for Unita remained vacant, as did the military posts of deputy chief of general staff and chief of staff of the army.

President dos Santos wrote to the UN Secretary-General on 11 March denouncing nightly flights into Angola by South African planes to supply Unita with food, medicines, weapons and ammunition. There were further talks in April, in Abidjan, but Unita still refused to agree to a ceasefire. The extent of the killing and destruction was unprecedented, for it was the first time that urban areas became



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the main targets. Ever greater numbers of people fled from areas occupied or besieged by Unita to the safety of government-controlled zones, the number of displaced people rising to around three million, about a third of the country's population. The UN described it as the worst war in the world and stated that 1,000 people were dying every day. In addition to those directly killed, famine, compounded by drought in some areas, was taking a fearful toll.

In March the UN Security Council adopted a resolution which, instead of appealing to 'both parties', condemned Unita's persistent violations of the Peace Accords and demanded that it accept the results of the elections. In May, Washington recognised the Angolan government for the first time since independence, and in June it lifted its arms embargo against the government. In July, the UN Security Council, condemning Unita for 'continuing military actions' and 'repeated attempts to seize additional territory', decreed an embargo on the sale or supply of arms to Unita, to be implemented only in three months' time if a ceasefire had not been reached. Britain lifted its arms embargo against the Angolan government in August. A Foreign Office spokesman said that the observers to the Peace Accords 'recognised that the Angolan government had a legitimate right to self-defence and viewed sympathetically its efforts to acquire the necessary means to defend itself'.

In September the Security Council finally imposed an arms and fuel embargo on Unita, and threatened further sanctions in ten days unless a ceasefire were established and agreement reached on implementation of the Peace Accords and relevant Security Council resolutions.



Angola's agricultural strength depends on peace and clearance of mines

DIP/MPLA

### **1994 and 1995**

No further sanctions were ever decreed and nothing was ever done to impose the embargo, though it was public knowledge that CIA operatives were monitoring arms supplies to Unita passing through Njili airport in Kinshasa, and UN officials were in the places in Angola where they were landing. The satellite radio and telephone communications provided for Unita by the US remained in place, while government requests for satellite monitoring of South African and Zairean violations of the embargo against Unita met with the response that the government would have to pay for it.



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Meanwhile, FAA were organised and strengthened. Provincial capitals either occupied or besieged by Unita were gradually freed. Western countries pressed the government to stop its 'offensive', on the grounds that it would harm the peace talks. After more rounds of negotiations which came to nothing, it was however the changing military balance that finally brought Unita to accept a ceasefire, resulting in the signing of the Lusaka Protocol in the Zambian capital on 20 November 1994. Even so, Savimbi failed to show up, citing reasons of 'security', and the Protocol had to be signed at a lower level. Under its terms, Unita was to be disarmed, its forces quartered and integrated into FAA. Unita was offered a large number of positions in central and local government as well as ambassadorial posts. The government was making every possible concession to secure peace in the country.

A joint monitoring commission was set up, chaired by the UN representative, and the UN agreed to send a peace-keeping force of 7,000 men to monitor implementation of the Protocol. The force started to arrive in January 1995 and, although it should have been complete by August, it had still not reached the required strength by October. Unprecedented in UN peace-keeping operations, the Angolan government is having to bear the major costs of this one.

Meanwhile, Savimbi predictably repudiated the Protocol, saying he had not signed it. Only after he had been offered one of two vice-presidential posts, requiring further amendment of the constitution, and after a meeting between him and President dos Santos did Savimbi finally accept the terms of the Protocol.

In late 1995 the fighting had abated considerably, although there were continued reports of arms flights from Zaire. A fragile peace had created new optimism and hope that development projects halted by the renewed war could be resumed and the reconstruction of the devastated country could start.

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## Hopes for the future

The twenty years of Angola's independence have thus been years of continual war in which the initial dream of creating a better life for the people through the fair distribution of the country's immense material, cultural and natural wealth has had to be postponed. They have also been years in which Angolans have victoriously faced up to the sustained efforts of the most powerful country in the world – allied with apartheid South Africa – to overthrow their government and put its own clients in power.

The price paid for that victory has been an extraordinarily high one. Yet brief intervals of peace have shown that regeneration can be rapid. Mine clearing, now underway, will make the land safe for Angola's stupendous agricultural potential. The wealth of the country's mines and other resources still remains to be tapped. Peace will end the burden of military spending. There will be scope for the county to achieve its full potential in many fields, like the athletes, who have won international championships and are to take part in the coming Olympics, and the country's young film industry, which has already been awarded international prizes. Massive education programmes will be needed to encompass all the orphaned and abandoned children, victims of war, and enable them to contribute to their country's future. The same is true of the tens of thousands of war disabled and of the demobilised soldiers.

If all work together, supported by their friends and partners abroad, Angola will be able to take its rightful place in the now radically changed Southern African region, and in the world.



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From a land of many poets, Angola's first President and a poet of world standing, Agostinho Neto, wrote the following lines in another context, in a Portuguese prison in 1960.

*We Shall Return*

*To the houses, to our crops  
to the beaches, to our fields  
we shall return*

*To our lands  
red with coffee  
white with cotton  
green with maize fields  
we shall return*

*To our mines of diamonds  
gold, copper, oil  
we shall return*

*To the shade of the mulemba  
to our traditions  
to the rhythms and bonfires  
we shall return*

*To the marimba and the quissange  
to our carnival  
we shall return*

*To our beautiful Angolan homeland  
our land, our mother  
we shall return*

*We shall return  
to liberated Angola  
independent Angola*

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ARQUIVO L. LARA



## **Mozambique Angola Committee**

### **What is MAC?**

- a British support group for the people of Mozambique and Angola in their pursuit of social progress.
- it is recognised by the Governments of both countries and is in regular contact with their embassies.
- MAC is run by volunteers and funded by donations

### **What are MAC's aims?**

- to keep the interests of these two countries in the public view
- to act as a resource for anyone seeking information on Angola or Mozambique
- to support the development and rebuilding programmes of the two governments

### **Why join MAC?**

- for regular news about Angola and Mozambique
- for contacts with other people with a special interest in the region
- to support, work and campaign for peace, progress and social justice in Angola and Mozambique.

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