

Huambo Gloomy

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—The streets are nearly deserted, except for a few cars racing recklessly, their tires squealing. Most shops are closed; those that occasionally open have little to sell.

The banks are locked; the post office does not function. The city water supply stopped running a month ago. Prime Minister José N'dele said he was surprised to hear this, there is water in his villa.

This was the city that the Portuguese proudly called Nova Lisboa—New Lisbon—while they were masters of Angola. Huambo now, named after this province of the central highlands, the city has become the capital of the pro-Western half of this warring country.

But this half, virtually cut off from the world, producing almost nothing and consuming the fruits of its past labor, appears to be heading

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from crisis toward catastrophe.

Its economy has broken down, except for small-scale individual farming. The plantation agriculture, mineral extraction and light manufacturing plants of the former Portuguese colony have been paralyzed by the exodus of the settlers who owned or operated them.

What little gasoline and other petroleum products wedged in stock have been depleted, and the minute quantities that arrive are used by the National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola in the war that it is fighting, with South African support, against the Soviet-supplied Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, which is strengthened by Cuban troops.

Whatever foreign exchange Angola possessed at independence last Nov. 11 was in the hands of the Popular Movement, based in Luanda, the colonial capital and center of banking.

Communications are equally centered in Luanda, which means that southern Angola has no telephone, telegraph or fax links with anywhere, inside or outside Angola. [This dispatch was phoned to New York from Kinshasa,



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Luanda-based troops reportedly captured Cella in drive on Huambo.

Zaire.] Telephones in this city, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Angola, formed by the National Union and National Front for the Liberation of Angola, are connected only with other telephones in Huambo.

Nova Lisboa was a boom town toward which Portuguese administrators proudly steered foreign visitors who wondered whether in four centuries of colonization Portugal had accomplished much in Angola. From an ordinary small town on the Benguela Railroad, it had risen since the 1960's to become the colony's second city.

Now postal service is dead, because there is hardly any internal transport except among the towns served by the railroad. That now runs only three days a week instead of daily and can no longer travel its full length across the country from the Atlantic to the eastern border with Zaire.

Southern Angola's contact with the outside world is maintained by a short-range passenger plane of the former Angolan Airline belonging to the National Union, a medium-range plane owned by a German under contract and an executive jet at the permanent disposal of Jonas M. Savimbi, the National Union's leader.

They fly constantly, with-

out schedule, over hostile territory, unprotected, and unguided by control towers or navigational aids, between Kinshasa, Zaire, and Lusaka, Zambia. They stop according to the requirements of the situation here, in Silva Porto, Mr. Savimbi's military headquarters, and at the coastal town of Benguela.

The planes transport National Union people, a rare businessman or two prospecting peacetime possibilities, journalists admitted by the National Union and hardship cases like, on today's flight from here to Kinshasa, a Portuguese settler dying of cancer and another joining his family, which had fled to Lisbon.

Today's flight also carried a load of frozen fish to Kinshasa, to be sold there to buy food for the troops. "Another two planes and we will have no fish left," a businessman in Benguela commented.

The subject of who pays to run the planes is avoided, as is the entire subject of who finances the National Union. Guesses range from South Africa to Western powers such as the United States and France and Western mining concerns operating in central and southern Africa.

But whoever finances the military effort seems to have little interest in anything else. The region under pro-Western control, which contains perhaps half of Angola's six million people, lives from day to day while its supplies dwindle.

Very Little to Eat

Last Sunday morning a Roman Catholic priest, a missionary from France who has been in Angola for 46 years, stepped out of a tuberculosis sanitarium saying that he had celebrated mass very quickly. "If I hadn't they would have missed their cup of milk," he added as if in apology. "They get very little to eat."

In colonial days Nova Lisboa, the center of a fertile agricultural region, had acquired many factories and much commerce. Neat and modern apartment houses rose, hotels sprang up for settler-tourists escaping the humid heat of the coast and good shops lined the broad streets.

But those who owned the commerce, those who held the responsible jobs, were the dominant white Portuguese. They fled last year, fearing that independence would bring civil war and that former colonialists might be its first victims. Of the 18,000 whites who made up about one-third of this city, only 200 or so are left.

Africans have moved into their villas. The few cars racing about the streets, wasting precious gasoline, are driven by the new elite, many of whom have never driven before.

They drive recklessly because of their inexperience and because they know that a broken car can be quickly replaced from the same source. Smashed up and cannibalized cars line the roads.

Little Help From People

But no Africans have been found yet to do the jobs the departed Portuguese did. In fact, few people in Huambo seem to do any work at all. The capital mirrors its country, where only subsistence farmers still seem to be going about their work.

Here in Huambo, the people appear to indulge themselves in the outward aspects of independence and the revolutionary spirit of the National Union, the dominant liberation movement in southern Angola, without really helping it.

Slogans in praise of Mr. Savimbi are scrawled on the walls of all buildings. The trees lining the principal streets have been painted red and green, the movement's colors. Armed youths strut about the city, many miles from the fighting, while Mr. Savimbi says he has more soldiers than arms.

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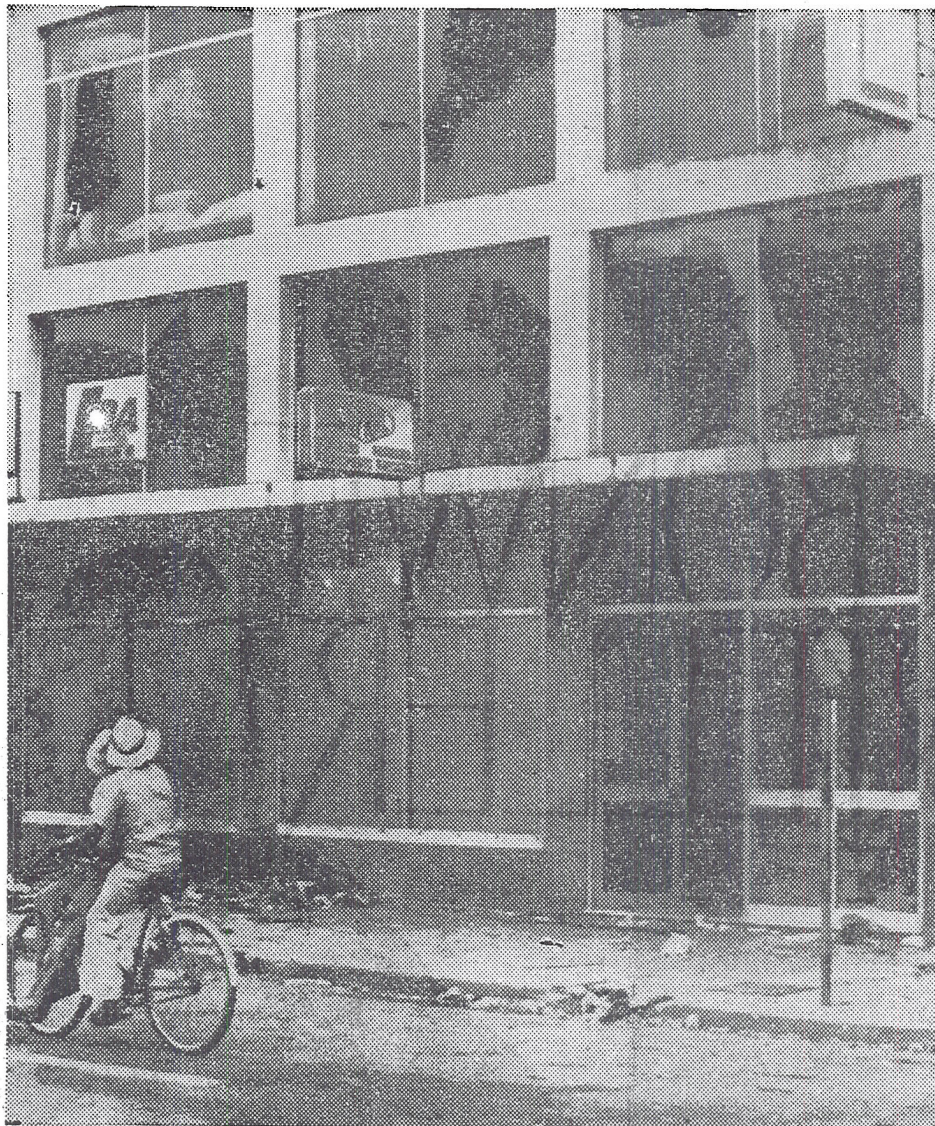
Despite the fact that there is virtually no production, vast quantities of shirts and women's wraps have turned up, extolling the National Union and its leader in bright colors and pictures. Posters of Mr. Savimbi are everywhere, and the Information Ministry has just produced a calendar bearing his likeness. But bread is baked only occasionally, and food stocks keep dwindling. There is no gasoline except for the use of officials and their friends. Only two hotels are open, for officials and their guests. They smell like houses with many toilets that have not been flushed for a month.

Water Only From Wells

Drinking water now comes from open wells and is foul in appearance and taste. There has been no running water for about a month.

Explanations are varied. Some blame sabotage by departing Portuguese, others destruction during clashes between the National Union and a local contingent of the National Front. Still others blame a lack of technical know-how and spare parts. What is certain is that nothing is being done to repair the supply and that it constitutes a serious health hazard.

Bottled drinks ran out long ago, except for some Portuguese wine at the Hotel Roma



United Press International

In Huambo, the headquarters of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola was destroyed about two weeks ago during internal fighting between members of the front and men of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.

that sells for six times the normal price.

But drinking at the Hotel Roma is an unsettling experience because of the mixture of alcohol and armed men in the full flush of revolutionary militancy. While they drink they fondle the pistols stuck in their belts. Under such circumstances it is difficult for the lucky few who have obtained some cigarettes to refuse one when it is requested.

Visitors were terrified last night when "Jerry," who says he came from Guyana via the Sorbonne and professes to be a major and the security chief of Huambo, discovered after much drinking and heated ideological discussion that he had lost his pistol.

Flinging aside a submachine gun that a frightened waiter procured for him, he cursed Angola's women, whom he suspected of having stolen his weapon, and stormed into the street clamoring in broken Portuguese for "my official pistol."

For a fleeting moment, Jerry appeared to unnerve the coolest and most mysterious man in town, a Briton who used to watch over Winston Churchill's security and said he was here to discuss business prospects with Mr. Savimbi and Prime Minister N'dele.

Bearded and wearing the only gray pin-stripe suit and tie in town, the Briton surveyed the confusion through his monocle before steadying himself—and many others—

by helping himself to a pinch of snuff.

Prime Minister N'dele, whose job it is to run the country while Mr. Savimbi conducts its defense, said in a conversation the other day that the government was working on plans to reanimate economic life. But he could give no details.

Although Huambo is the capital of Mr. Savimbi's government, there is no evidence of a functioning government.

Mr. N'dele says that gasoline and other petroleum products were the basis for a resumption of economic activity. He said existing stocks of sisal, cotton and bananas were the only commodities available to raise foreign exchange with which to buy fuel. But most of the commodities are in the back country with no transport to bring them to port.

Need for Technicians

One Angolan trade expert who came here after 12 years of study and work in the United States hoping to find a place for himself and his American family in the new country left today, dejected over Angola's present and gloomy over its future.

Like others interviewed during this correspondent's five-day stay, the economist found it difficult to assign priorities to southern Angola's needs, so manifold and pressing are they. He said that it was perhaps most important to bring back as many of the Portuguese tech-

nicians as could be persuaded to return as quickly as possible.

He said this with bitterness, because he holds Portugal responsible for the desperate shortage of trained Angolans. At the same time, he was pessimistic about the likelihood that many Portuguese would return as long as no government could provide minimal security.

Doctors and medicines also are short throughout the country. The towns are filled with the jobless and there is no apparent effort to put them to work. Many of those still working have not been paid for long periods.

Surprisingly, there have as yet been no reports of hunger, as there have been from the north. The south is living, meagerly, from its foodstocks. Most of the precious breeding cattle have been slaughtered for meat.

But hunger must come, unless drastic change occurs. If any plans are being made to prevent famine, none of the leaders here are prepared to talk about them.

While National Union appeals to the people are limited to exhorting them against the enemy and promising them victory, the residents of this town appear to be unconcerned about the other grave aspects of Angola's situation. For the time being, they appear pleased to be living in the houses and apartments the Portuguese left behind, even if they lack the old amenities.