

Southern Angola Found Under Uncertain Control

NYTimes

By HENRY KAMM JAN 22 1976

Special to The New York Times

HUAMBO, Angola, Jan. 21—The southern half of Angola, which forms the bulk of the area under the control of the factions supported by the West, is a country in distress, under uncertain authority, in economic paralysis and 'girding' for an onslaught from the northern forces, supported by the Soviet bloc.

Southern Angola is nominally under joint government of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, which have founded their capital in this city of the central highlands.

But after internecine warfare in this region, and the reverses suffered by the National Front in the far north. The National Union is the only political force in the south.

As a capital, this town, formerly called Nova Lisboa, hardly exists, nor does the government. Its ministries are nearly

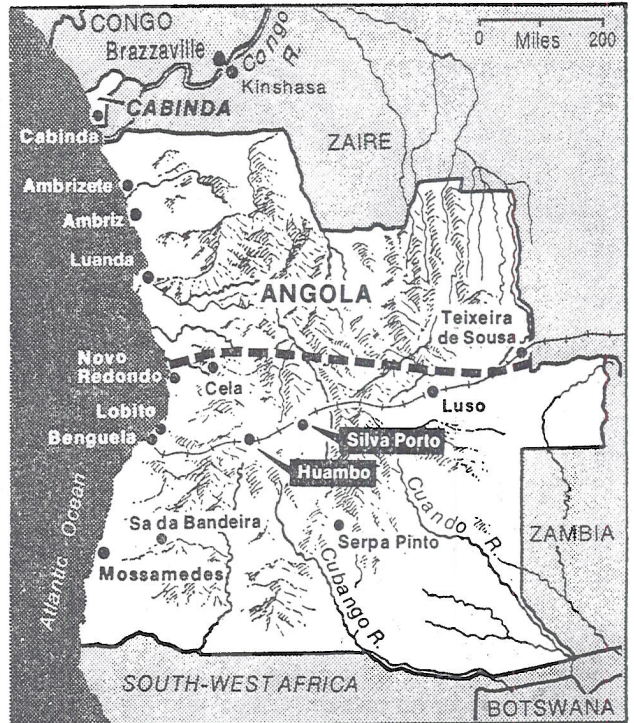
empty offices, its ministers often as much in the dark and out of the world as ordinary Angolans, overwhelmed by problems beyond their means and capacities.

The real capital is nearby Silva Porto, the military headquarters of the National Union's leader, Jonas M. Savimbi. This guerrilla chief, who spent 10 years in the bush fighting against Portugal, is now co-President of the Democratic Republic of Angola with Holden Roberto, the National Front's head.

But Mr. Savimbi's headquarters is not necessarily the decision-making center in the war against the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. This faction, with Cuban military support, has established a government of the People's Republic of Angola with its capital at Luanda.

The basic military decisions in the fighting against the

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The New York Times/Jan. 22, 1976

Western-backed Angolans based at Huambo and Silva Porto are fighting along front indicated by broken line.

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Luanda forces, much of the field-level leadership, most of the heavy weapons and the logistical and communications structure are believed to be supplied by South Africa.

South African troops are believed to be manning positions all along the front, which cuts across this huge country roughly along the 11th parallel, from north of Novo Redondo on the coast to about 10 miles south of Teixeira de Sousa on the border with Zaire.

The extent of the South African involvement is not acknowledged by Mr. Savimbi. But National Union leaders interviewed during a five-day visit said they were receiving the assistance of "foreign technicians."

"There are no Angolans to handle complicated equipment, so we must have whites," Miguel Nzau Puna, the chief of staff and secretary general of the National Union, said in an interview at his farm headquarters outside Huambo. "But not all the blonds you see are South Africans."

3 Americans Helping Out

Mr. Puna, who is the movement's second-ranking leader, said foreigners were needed to operate heavy weapons, drive armored cars, fly helicopters and operate communications equipment.

Mr. Savimbi told a group of journalists who visited him this month that there were three Americans working in Silva Porto. He did not specify their functions, nor whether they were mercenaries or agents of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Because of the National Union's embarrassment over its dependence on a country whose racial policies it despises, its leaders group South Africa's assistance together with that of mercenaries, mainly Portuguese. But conversations here and in the port town of Benguela disclosed an organized South

African presence all along the front.

Residents in Benguela said South African convoys carrying armor, weapons and troops were driving through the town every night along the coastal highway. In the town itself, they said, South African officers occasionally come to dine with National Union commanders.

The Benguela observers said it was mainly South African troops and armor that drove the Popular Movement forces out of the town in November. The South Africans that have been seen wore khaki uniforms without insignia.

A Land-Rover painted in the camouflage colors of the South African army was parked near Benguela airport today.

Treated by South Africans

One of the few Portuguese settlers remaining in Lobito was examined for diagnosis to a South African medical unit serving at Cela, on the Huambo-Luanda highway. Cela is reported under heavy pressure from Cuban and Popular Front forces.

In an interview at the airport here on Sunday, Mr. Savimbi declared that he would not allow journalists to visit Silva Porto. No journalists have been permitted to go to frontline

areas, presumably to keep them from seeing South Africans.

News photographers who have taken pictures of South African convoys passing through Huambo and others suspected of having done so had their films seized at gunpoint last week.

Mr. Savimbi and Mr. Puna, in separate conversations, described the situation as relatively stable because most of the pressure of the Luanda forces is deployed against the National Front in the north.

A Disputed Airlift Plan

Mr. Savimbi said 5,000 of his troops were to be airlifted to the north to fight alongside the National Front. He said he would discuss this cooperation with Mr. Roberto and President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire.

"Mobutu will never accept that F.N.L.A. be completely beaten," said the guerrilla leader, who was bearded and wore fatigues, a beret, earrings and two bead bracelets.

Mr. Savimbi did not say who would supply the aircraft for such the airlift, but he mentioned C-130 planes, which the Zairean air force uses as troop carriers.

Mr. Puna, the chief of staff, said the next day that he had not yet discussed this troop transfer, which would involve

a quarter of the forces Mr. Savimbi said were under arms. This suggested that the announcement had perhaps been made for political effect.

Mr. Savimbi also said his troops in the north would be placed under National Front command. Mr. Savimbi and others have acknowledged that the two nominally allied factions have often dashed in the south.

National Front Assailed

"We are fighting alone," Mr. Puna said of the action in the south. "All the F.L.N.A. troops stay in town."

The commander said the National Front had promised to send troops to the Cela sector but had not done so.

"They are completely demoralized," Mr. Puna said. "We are completely disappointed with them."

He disclosed that last month a separate National Front force under the command of Daniel Chipenda, the Popular Movement leader until 1974, had attacked National Union troops in Serpa Pinto, Lobito, Benguele, Sa da Bandeira and Mocamedes, driving them from some of these towns.

By Jan. 10, the chief of staff said, the Chipenda force had

been driven out of southern Angola. Hundreds are reported to be heading for South Africa by land and sea.

Mr. Puna, as well as Mr. Savimbi, accused the chipenda force of being allied with remnants of the former Portuguese secret police and colonial army operating from South Africa with the aim of establishing a white supremacy separatist state in southernmost Angola.

The chief of staff said his troops had advanced to within less than 10 miles from Teixeira de Sousa. If they succeed in capturing this railhead and clear the rest of the rail line as far as Luso, the Benguela Railway would be open again for all its length. It is the principal outlet for copper from Zaire and Zambia.

No U.S. Weapons Seen

While the National Union girded itself for a possible attack after the apparent collapse of the National Front in the north, Mr. Savimbi and Mr. Puna reiterated their request for American arms assistance.

"The Russians are shouldering their responsibility to the socialist bloc," Mr. Savimbi said. "The Americans should not abdicate theirs."

No American equipment was

seen during this reporter's stay. It is believed, in the absence of solid information, that most American assistance has gone to the National Front in the north.

After having shown the visitors captured arms of Soviet and Yugoslav origin and indicating his distress over the South African role, Mr. Puna said:

"We think the United States Government must help us establish a balance so that we can think of a political compromise."

Mr. Savimbi, as well as Mr. Puna, said the National Union

was ready to end the fighting if the Popular Movement wanted to discuss a compromise.

Referring to Agostinho Neto, the leader of the Luanda forces,

Mr. Savimbi said: "Neto is 60 and thinks he should be President. Let him be President. I am 40 and can wait."

Mr. Puna said he recognized that the Popular Front had gained acceptance in Luanda and should remain dominant there. He called for a compromise in which the National Union would be acknowledged as the most popular force in Southern Angola.