

For a Unified, Neutralized Angola

NYTimes

FEB 13 1976

By Richard W. Hull

Recent Congressional votes on Angola reflect America's resolve to avoid another "Vietnam." They should not signal a further retreat into isolationism. We must not hesitate to offer diplomatic recognition and cooperation to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola in its efforts at national reconciliation.

It would be naive to dismiss Angola as a remote, insignificant country unworthy of our attention and of little consequence to global peace and economic development. The facts speak otherwise. We are the world's principal importer of Angolan goods. Cabinda's oil fields, black Africa's second largest, send us half their output. Gulf Oil, Cabinda's sole concessionaire, invested more than \$200 million in exploration and equipment.

Angola's Diamang diamond fields are the world's fifth largest. The United States holds substantial interests in them. The enormous Cassinga mines contain rich deposits of high-grade iron.

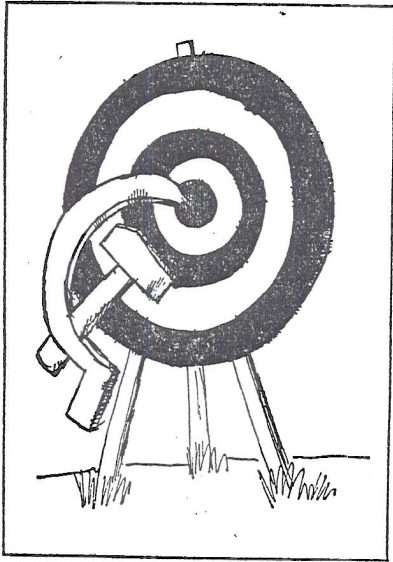
Angola, nearly twice as large as Texas, with a population of less than six million, is already the world's fourth largest coffee producer. Most of it goes to us. Its agriculture, maize particularly, could support all of Africa.

Angola's economy depends on Western capital. First National City Bank and Chase Manhattan are linked with Angolan banks. Moreover, vehicles run on tires produced by a subsidiary of General Tire and Rubber.

Neighboring Zaire and Zambia are directly affected by conditions in Angola. The British-owned Benguela Railway, traversing central Angola, carries copper from Zaire and landlocked Zambia. Copper earns approximately 68 percent of Zaire's foreign exchange and 90 percent of Zambia's.

Zaire, nearly as large as the United States east of the Mississippi, holds the world's richest deposit of rare columbium. It also boasts enormous deposits of diamonds, cadmium, zinc, tungsten, uranium and cobalt.

We depend on Zaire and Zambia for 47 percent of our cobalt, so vital in



Milo Hess

Is Central Africa to become the battleground of another world war?

cancer treatment. And from Zaire flowed uranium used to manufacture America's first atomic bomb.

Most of these minerals lie southward in Zaire's Shaba province and must be exported through Angola's port of Lobito via the Benguela Railway. Long-term closure of that railway could be disastrous for Zaire, and for the United States, which has invested nearly \$1 billion in that country. It could also force Zambia into heavier reliance on the Chinese-built Tanzam Railway which runs from Zambia's copper belt to the Indian Ocean port of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

Zairian copper will soon be refined with electricity generated at the Inga hydroelectric facility. When completed, Inga will be the largest such complex in the world. Its electricity will flow through the world's longest transmission network for more than a thousand miles, from the Congo River southward to the Shaba mines. Both Inga and the transmission line are heavily financed by Western capital, much of it American.

Zaire's sole outlet to the sea, the Congo estuary, runs through Angolan waters. Only Zairian territory sepa-

rates Angola from its oil-rich Cabinda enclave. The route could easily be severed, rendering Zaire virtually dependent on Angola for its Atlantic trade.

Angola's southern border with Namibia follows the Cunene River, where South Africa has invested some \$600 million in a huge hydroelectric project. In Namibia, the Tsumeb Corporation, affiliated with American interests, mines copper and lead. Nearby lies the Rossing uranium mine, expected to be the world's largest uranium producer by 1980.

No foreign power should determine Angola's destiny. Zambia and Zaire depend on Angola, and together these three nations' resources are crucial to global peace and economic development. The West covets Angola's natural resources, the Russians view Angola as a balancing element between Western-dominated Zaire in the center and Maoist-leaning Mozambique to the east along the Indian Ocean.

Great-power rivalry in Central Africa between 1876-85 preceded the European conquest of tropical Africa. The Berlin West African Conference of 1884-85, for all its imperialistic faults, insured that no great power would be sovereign over west-central Africa. The Congo River and basin were declared free-trade zones, open to all nations, and under the sovereignty of Belgium's King. Angola remained a preserve of weak Portugal, which was unable to fully consolidate its rule until 1922.

A new chapter in the scramble for Africa is opening. The major actors are no longer French, German and English, with essentially similar economic systems. Today they are Russians and Americans, Marxian socialists and capitalists. In this age of the superpowers, will Central Africa become the battleground of a third world war and the Achilles' heel in the pan-African dream? If Angola is not unified, stabilized and neutralized, Africa may emerge as the new theater for East-West rivalries.

Richard W. Hull is associate professor of African civilization at New York University.