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Ministerial appointments

Mr Jorge Henriques Varela de Melo Dias, the Minister of Construction and Housing, was replaced on Nov. 19, 1986, by Mr Joao Henriques Garcia, a member of the central committee of the *Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola-Partido do Trabalho* (MPLA-PT)—the sole legal party. The Deputy Minister of Construction and Housing was among a number of Deputy Ministers who were also dismissed. [For composition of the Council of Ministers, as of February 1986, and party appointments, see 34280 A.] At the same time, President José Eduardo dos Santos relieved the Minister of Finance, Mr Augusto Teixeira de Matos, of the post of governor of the National Bank of Angola (the central bank), in what was described as an attempt to reduce the number of posts allocated to the Minister of Finance. The deputy governor, Mr António Inácio, was appointed to the governorship ad interim.

The Minister of Transport and Communications, Mr Manuel Bernardo de Sousa, was relieved of his post on March 22, 1987, and was replaced by Mr Carlos Antonio Fernandes, hitherto Secretary of State for Co-operation.

Mr Cristovao Domingos Francisco da Cunha was sworn in on March 24, 1987, as Provincial Commissar for Luanda Province, replacing Mr Mariano Garcia Puku.

In other changes, (i) Mr José Teixeira Pereira Teixeira was appointed director of the defence and security department of the central committee on Aug. 26, 1986; (ii) Lt. -Col. Alberto Correia Neto was on Sept. 4 presented as commander of the Air Force; and (iii) the rank of general was created for the armed forces and was on Dec. 10, 1986, conferred upon President dos Santos “in recognition of his leadership of the armed forces” (of which President dos Santos was C-in-C).

Mr Ismael Gaspar Martins, the Minister of Foreign Trade, and Mr Adriano Perreira dos Santos Junior, the Minister of Internal Trade, were dismissed from their posts on May 8, 1987, along with a number of officials of the Trade and Planning ministries. The ministers were accused of “negligence” and “lack of zeal” in the exercise of their duties.

The announcement was seen in the context of a campaign to “root out corruption”, announced in a speech made by President dos Santos on April 30, in which he declared that the “anticipated import plan” had not been fulfilled, and that “those... responsible for the actual decline in the supply of workers” basic commodities” were to be demoted or reprimanded.

Elections to National People's Assembly

Elections to the National People's Assembly, postponed since 1983, were held during the latter part of 1986; the first national elections had been held in August-November 1980 [see 30549 A; 30832 A]. The Permanent Commission of the People's Assembly was responsible for drawing up a list of candidates, all of whom were members of the MPLA-PT. The lists of candidates to both the Provincial and the National Assemblies were voted on at provincial delegates’ election meetings.

The National People's Assembly mandate was extended from three to five years, and the number of deputies was increased to 289 (from with 29 alternate deputies also elected. There were 42 women in the Assembly, representing 14.5 per cent of the total. The representative base of the Assembly was broadened to include deputies from a wider range of classes and social groups, although deputies from the working and peasant classes constituted over 50 per cent of the total.

At the same time, elections were held to the 18 Provincial People's Assemblies, also enlarged to up to 100 deputies (from between 55 and 85). Deputies to the Provincial Assemblies were elected from a list of

candidates put forward by Provincial Electoral Commissions, at meetings of people's delegates, who were themselves elected at localities, workplaces or barracks.

According to Mr Lucio Lara, First Secretary of the National People's Assembly, the conditions prevailing in Angola, notably the war and a lack of adequate census information, precluded the introduction of a system of universal suffrage at the present time.

President dos Santos opened the first session of the new legislature on Jan. 30, 1987.

Foreign relations

In a strengthening of Angola's links with Latin American countries, Angola opened an embassy in the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, in early August and established diplomatic relations with Venezuela on Dec. 9, 1986.

It was announced in mid-January 1986 that Angola and Iran were to establish diplomatic relations.

President dos Santos paid an official visit to the Soviet Union in May 1986 [for his visit to Moscow in February to attend the 27th congress of the CPSU see 34367 A].

In the course of the visit the Soviet leader Mr Mikhail Gorbachev on May 6 reiterated his country's support for the Marxist government of Angola, and it was believed that President dos Santos obtained assurances of the supply of military equipment from the Soviet leadership with which to counter an expected escalation in the guerrilla war currently being waged against the Angolan government by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (*Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola*—UNITA; see below for US provision of covert aid to the rebel movement).

The governments of Cuba and the Soviet Union had in a joint communiqué issued on Jan. 27, 1986, in the course of a meeting in Moscow (one of a series of tripartite meetings), reaffirmed their commitments to the Angolan government; under the terms of existing agreements, this included the maintenance in Angola of a number of Cuban troops. Western observers had estimated the Cuban presence to number between 25,000 and 30,000 troops; in the course of a visit to Angola in September 1986, President Castro of Cuba stated that 30,000 Cuban troops were deployed, and that a total of 40,000 Cubans were in Angola.

President dos Santos visited India on April 1–4, 1987, and Vietnam on April 4–5. In India he had talks with the Indian Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi, President Zail Singh and other senior officials, on topics which included the Africa Fund, established by members of the Non-aligned Movement in January 1987 to assist liberation movements in southern Africa [see pages 34970–71].

Other international contacts at this time included a visit to Angola by the Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, on Dec. 15–19, 1986. President Ceausescu of Romania led a high-level delegation of Romanian officials to Angola on March 28–30, 1987.

Relations with United States

Relations with the USA had deteriorated after July 1985, when the US Congress repealed the so-called “Clark amendment” which had imposed legal restrictions on US assistance to UNITA [see 34026 A for repeal, and also for Angolan government's decision to break off contacts with the USA in response]. The two states did not have diplomatic relations but had held bilateral discussions in November 1985 and January 1986.

The Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Dr Chester Crocker, met the Angolan Interior Minister, Lt. -Col. Manuel Alexandre Rodrigues, and other senior officials in Lusaka (Zambia), on Nov. 27 and 29, 1985. The talks covered the future of Namibia [see 35106 A for recent developments], US insistence on the departure of the Cuban troops, and possible establishment of diplomatic relations. Dr Crocker reportedly described potential US aid to UNITA as “an intention of some Congressmen and not a government decision”, although on Nov. 22 President Reagan had stated in an interview that he favoured covert aid to UNITA in preference to the overt economic and military assistance which was currently being advocated by some members of Congress. Congressional approval was not needed for this covert aid, but the administration was required to report its intentions to the two Congressional intelligence committees. Further talks took place in Luanda, the Angolan capital, on Jan. 8–9, 1986, between Dr Crocker and President dos Santos. Later that same month, however, US support for UNITA was emphasized when Mr Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA leader, was accorded a warm welcome during a 10-day visit to the USA starting on Jan. 29, which included talks with President Reagan.

The administration's decision to proceed with the supply of covert military assistance to UNITA was for the first time publicly acknowledged by Dr Crocker on Feb. 18, 1986, when he confirmed indirectly in testimony before the Senate foreign relations committee that the provisions would include anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons which Mr Savimbi had specifically requested during his visit to Washington in

January. The announcement was described on the following day by Angolan radio as amounting to a US “declaration of war”.

On March 30 the *Washington Post* reported that the military hardware being supplied both to UNITA and to Afghan guerrillas [see 34864 A] included US “Stinger” surface-to-air missiles. This indicated a policy change by the administration, which normally supplied those anti-government insurgents which it supported with less sophisticated refurbished Soviet or Chinese-built weapons bought on the international arms market. Mr Savimbi reported in late April that “non-lethal” aid, also provided for in the covert aid package, had begun to reach the UNITA forces, and it was also believed that military equipment was being delivered.

President dos Santos, in a letter to the UN Secretary-General Sr Javier Perez de Cuellar on March 18, 1986, stated that Angola was “deeply outraged” by the US administration's increasing military support for UNITA, and asked him to assume the role of negotiator in southern Africa, since the US action had “jeopardized its credibility as a mediator” [see also 35106 A with reference to Namibia].

The President's letter referred to a hitherto secret agreement called the “Mindelo Act” of January 1984, which provided for the cessation of acts of aggression against Angola and an end to US support for UNITA. This document, which a US official described as a “memorandum of understanding”, had been signed by the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Mr Frank Wisner, and the Angolan Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Venancio de Moura, at Mindelo in Cape Verde.

President dos Santos declared on Aug. 18 that he would welcome a meeting with President Reagan, and invited him to “come to see the Angolan people and the problems we are facing”; at the same time he expressed the wish that the two countries might establish diplomatic relations, in what was seen as an attempt by the Angolan government to ease current tensions.

The US administration's policy on covert aid was endorsed by a vote in the House of Representatives on Sept. 17, 1986, which rejected by 229 votes to 186 a proposal by the House intelligence committee to subject aid for UNITA to a congressional vote; the majority of representatives favoured the argument that the aid to UNITA was a major factor in the administration's policy of helping anti-communist insurgents. The two governments agreed to resume official talks on southern African issues at the end of an informal meeting on April 6, 1987, between Dr Crocker and Mr Rodrigues in Brazzaville (Congo), which had been arranged by President Sassou-Nguesso of Congo, currently chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) [see also 35106 A]. Reports suggested that a project to rehabilitate Angola's Benguela railway was included in the discussions [see below].

A US national flying a single-engined aircraft was shot down by the Angolan armed forces over Otchindjau, in Cunene province, on April 21, 1987, on suspicion of spying for South Africa. The pilot, who was unharmed, was reportedly delivering the aircraft to an aircraft dealer in South Africa. The US State Department issued a statement describing Mr Joseph Longo as a private citizen, not a government employee.

Relations with Zaire

Angola's relations with Zaire were strained during 1986 and the early part of 1987 by reports and allegations that US military equipment was being supplied to UNITA via Zaire.

Observers believed that UNITA was establishing bases in Zaire in order to show that it was not wholly dependent on South Africa for maintaining its positions in southern Angola. A number of foreign hostages taken by UNITA during a raid on a mining town [see below] were released in March 1986 into Zaire, and journalists travelling with UNITA reported entering Angola via Zaire. In February 1987 Zaire denied press reports that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was making use of a hitherto abandoned airfield at Kamina in Zaire to fly military supplies to UNITA, using aircraft of the privately owned St Lucia Airways [see also 35187 A].

President Mobutu of Zaire paid a one-day visit to Angola on July 10, 1986, in the course of which the two countries reaffirmed existing bilateral agreements, including those covering border security and the cross-border movement of people and goods.

Border security talks between delegations from the two countries took place in mid-October 1986. In the same month Zambian security forces uncovered and reportedly closed down a UNITA supply route used to carry equipment northwards from South Africa via Namibia's Caprivi Strip and through Zambia, finally entering Angola's north-eastern provinces via Zaire's Shaba province.

Developments in guerrilla war

The guerrilla war with UNITA also directly involved South African forces, whose presence in Angolan territory was ostensibly part of their campaign against guerrillas belonging to the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). The most widely reported incidents in the war are described below for the period December 1985 to February 1987.

South African troops carried out anti-SWAPO operations within Angolan territory in late 1985, and were reportedly occupying the villages of Namacunde and Dirico, near the border with Namibia, in defiance of the March 1984 Lusaka agreement whereby all South African troops were to withdraw from southern Angola [see 33197 A]. An armed clash was reported between Angolan and South African forces at Ruacana, near Angola's border with Namibia, on Dec. 14, although on Dec. 5 a meeting had been held at the request of South Africa with Angolan commanders. According to the Angolan news agency Angop, units of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) carried out "hot pursuit" operations against SWAPO guerrillas in mid-December, in the course of which atrocities were reportedly carried out against civilians.

UNITA forces raided a diamond mining and processing complex at Andrada, in north-east Angola, on March 1, 1986, holding the centre, which was reportedly poorly guarded at the time of the raid, for 24 hours, capturing over 170 foreign workers and stealing a large quantity of diamonds. The hostages were released unharmed on March 17 in Zaire, contrary to earlier UNITA statements which affirmed that the hostages would make the journey on foot to the organization's headquarters at Jamba in south-eastern Angola. UNITA stated that the hostages had been released on humanitarian grounds because of the onset of heavy rains, but also referred to an unsuccessful attempt by government forces to rescue the hostages. There was an escalation in fighting in mid-May, as South African troops using helicopters and armoured cars penetrated into Cunene and Namibe provinces apparently in support of UNITA. This operation was seen as one of a series of actions which appeared to be a reassertion of South African military power throughout southern Africa [see 34658 A for raids into other neighbouring states at this time].

Angola's southern port of Namibe was attacked early on June 5, the Angolan authorities accusing South Africa of launching missiles against three oil tankers and using frogmen to place limpet mines on three other ships. South Africa on June 10 denied having carried out the attack.

The USA and the UK on June 18 vetoed a draft resolution in the UN security Council condemning South Africa for its attack on Namibe and for its continued occupation of parts of southern Angola. A total of 12 members of the Council voted for the resolution, while France abstained.

Meanwhile Angolan government troops pursued an offensive against UNITA positions in the south, regaining control of the town of Cangumbe in Moxico province, and reporting that they had repulsed two South African-led attacks on Aug. 10–11 on the town of Cuito Cuanavale, a strategic military base for government forces. UNITA claimed at about this time that Angolan government troops were using chemical weapons.

Reports indicated that UNITA had by November 1986 succeeded in opening up a northern front in the guerrilla war, hitherto confined largely to the east and south of the country. It was widely believed that UNITA rebels now operating in Angola's northern provinces of Zaire and Uige obtained supplies via Zaire see above, and also that US military equipment, including Stinger missiles, was flowing to the rebels. The province of Malanje was also severely affected by guerrilla activities, while the enclave of Cabinda, where a number of multinational oil companies operated, remained heavily guarded by Cuban troops. In early 1987 there were reports of large numbers of Angolan refugees fleeing from the war zones into north-western Zambia.

Further incursions into Angola occurred in mid-November 1986, when South Africa launched a "pre-emptive raid" on alleged SWAPO bases [see 35106 A]. Another South African-led offensive started on Jan. 24, 1987, when Angolan forces suffered considerable losses in clashes with the SWATF in the area of Mongua, about 60 km from the border with Namibia. This offensive continued into February, by which time South African regular troops were reportedly occupying five small municipalities around Mongua.

Death of UNITA chief of staff - Mr Savimbi's visit to Europe

UNITA reported the death on Oct. 10, 1986, of its chief of staff, Brig. Joaquim Vinama Chendovava [for whose appointment in January 1985 see page 34026]. According to a UNITA spokesman, Brig. Chendovava died in a road accident near Mavinga in Cuando Cubango province. He was replaced by Brig. Demostenes Chilingutilla, UNITA's chief of special operations.

Mr Savimbi visited Europe in late October 1986, and on Oct. 22, during an eight-day private visit to France, he addressed 95 right-wing members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg; he also met Dr Crocker and M. Francois Leotard, the French Minister of Culture and Communication.

Proposed rehabilitation of Benguela railway

Mr Savimbi on March 26, 1987, made it known that UNITA would not prevent the use by the Angolan government of the strategically important Benguela railway, which ran for some 2,000 km, half of this distance being in Angola, and linked the port of Lobito on the Angolan coast with mineral-rich areas in Zaire and Zambia. The line had effectively been closed by guerrilla action since 1976 [see 28072 A], seriously hindering Angola's economic development, and increasing the dependence of Zaire and Zambia on South African ports.

The UNITA offer was made on condition that the railway was not used to transport military personnel or equipment, and that UNITA could inspect railway carriages; the latter condition, however, was rejected by President dos Santos.

At a meeting on April 16 in Luanda, the heads of state of Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and Zaire agreed in principle to the project of rehabilitating the railway, expected to cost some US\$ 280,000,000, and a formal declaration of intent was signed by President dos Santos, President Kaunda of Zambia and President Mobutu at a summit meeting in Lusaka on April 30.—(Guardian Independent - Observer - Le Monde - International Herald Tribune - New York Times - BBC Summary of World Broadcasts Africa Research Bulletin - Angop, London - Embassy of Angola, London) (*Previous report 34280 A*)

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