

AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL

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Angola: Two elephants fight

The presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 29 and 30 September are likely further to polarise the country between the *Movimento Popular para la Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) and *União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), given the failure of a viable third political force to develop. On one hand, the MPLA, is seen as corrupt, bureaucratic, incompetent and largely played out. On the other, UNITA is regarded as brutal, uncouth, tribalist - and, perversely, more totalitarian than the *soi-disant* socialist MPLA ever managed to be. Their pre-electoral campaigns have shunned the peace accord ideal of 'national reconciliation' in favour of blatant intimidation of their opponents. For the potential electorate, estimated at some four million people, the prospect of elections is more bewildering than liberating.

All informed political analysts confirm that the presidential election will be a two-horse race between **José Eduardo dos Santos** of the ruling MPLA and **Jonas Malheiro Savimbi** of UNITA. For the remaining 30 groups seeking to register, their best hope is to win enough seats in the parliamentary election to deny an absolute majority to either of the big two.

Hopes of a new force emerging to compete on equal terms with the MPLA and UNITA have fizzled out. One of the better-organised of the new parties, the *Partido Renovador Democrático* (PRD) was the best placed but suffered a damaging split at its national convention in April, when its hitherto honorary president, **Joaquim Pinto de Andrade** (formerly the leader of the *Associação Cívica Angolana*) resigned, alleging 'political betrayal'. The PRD's new president, **Luis dos Passos**, and other executive members are tarnished by their connection with the abortive coup attempt in May 1977 by MPLA dissidents (AC Vol 32 No 17).

The 'emergents' are still hamstrung by minimal voter identification, copycat political programmes, a lack of financial resources and alleged intimidation and harassment from the well-established MPLA and UNITA. Many are operating out of spare rooms, dependent on voluntary contributions: most parties can only obtain a state subsidy after successful registration. To get that far, each party must first submit proof of more than 1,000 members (with at least 150 in each of ten of Angola's 18 provinces) to the Supreme Court.

It is anybody's guess as to how many of the emergent parties will be registered and organised enough to fight the September election. What evidence is available, from the policy statements and public attitudes of many of them, shows they tend to emulate or support either the MPLA or UNITA, giving little hope of genuine political alternatives for the electorate. Some are unlikely to find enough supporters to satisfy registration requirements and others are so little-known that it seems inconceivable that they will win a single seat in the new national assembly.

Rumours abound of pay-offs from one or other of the 'big two' parties to secure the loyalty of supposedly independent groups. UNITA says the MPLA has paid out thousands of dollars to parties such as the *Forum Democrático Angolano* (launched by young UNITA dissidents); the MPLA counters that UNITA has 'bought' the *Partido Social Democrático de Angola* (PSDA - a Bakongo-rooted party). Questioned about the propriety of cash subsidies from the ruling party, the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA)'s veteran president **Holden Roberto** has said that he sees nothing wrong with the practice: 'In the one-party state the MPLA holds the purse and therefore has the obligation to fund opposition parties if it wants to ensure democratic pluralism'.

Roberto adds that he was told by United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, **Herman Cohen**, that

National reconciliation has been shunned in favour of blatant intimidation

if he wanted US financial help he would have to join Savimbi in an anti-MPLA alliance. Roberto, who recruited Savimbi into politics and made him FNLA's shadow foreign minister, regarded such a proposal as insulting. He also seemed disappointed with Cohen under whom he had worked (alongside the then **Joseph Mobutu**) at the Central Intelligence Agency's station in Kinshasa in the late 1950s.

However, Roberto, a much-mellowed man, is attempting to forge a new role for himself and his party as the 'moderate alternative' - a role first seen in this February's mul forum. He will stand as State President on behalf FNLA although he is hoping to represent a broader pl.

PROSPECTS OF VENGEANCE AND VICTORY FOR UNITA

Showing great resilience in the face of continuing allegations of his personal involvement in grave human rights violations, *União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) leader **Jonas Savimbi** can still persuade politically astute Angolans and outside observers that he is the front-runner in the Presidential elections. Savimbi's greatest assets are his support base amongst the Ovimbundu people, the biggest ethnic group in the country, and the near collapse of the economy.

Nothing has been able to excuse the ruling *Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola* (MPLA)'s record of economic mismanagement, which has recently been compounded by evidence of gross corruption in diamond and oil trading. Afraid to pursue a politically difficult economic reform programme, the government has delayed tough policy decisions in the run up to the elections. Despite this, the World Bank has approved more than US\$100 million of loans for transport rehabilitation, urban development and policy management in the past years, and there are another \$170 mn. of loans in the pipeline. There have also been a series of trade missions from the **United States, France, Portugal and South Africa** which have been assured of the born again MPLA's free market credentials despite the chaotic bureaucracy in Luanda.

Domestically, Savimbi has been able to maximise his criticisms of MPLA's management record, but internationally, UNITA has been fighting a rearguard action against swathes of allegations of its involvement in human rights abuses.

To counter these, UNITA has launched a propaganda counter offensive against what it considers an MPLA dirty tricks campaign. A recent ploy was a story fed to foreign newspapers alleging that Western intelligence sources had warned UNITA this April that senior MPLA officials were planning the assassination of Savimbi before the elections. Sources in the three principal Western intelligence agencies active in Angola told *Africa Confidential* said that no such warning had been given to UNITA. One intelligence source suggested it could be a sophisticated disinformation exercise, and that the UNITA-inspired press reports might be followed by the discovery of 'two bullet-ridden bodies outside UNITA offices in Luanda, whose trouser pockets contained, on closer inspection, MPLA membership cards'.

UNITA has considerable resources including aircraft registered in South Africa, hundreds of four wheel drive vehicles, a newspaper and a radio station. Savimbi's well-attended meetings feature a musical group whose members include the singer **Sam Mangwana** and guitarist **Michelino Mavatik** who have an enthusiastic following in Angola, Zaire and across central Africa. Savimbi opens his meetings with a speech in Portuguese, then, depending on the location, switches to Ovimbundu. When he shouts 'We are going to avenge the dead', he is not just talking about the people killed during 16 years of civil war, but also those killed in the colonial war. The Ovimbundu supplied the bulk of labour employed under appalling conditions in the vast coffee plantations.

Savimbi is adept at playing on the ambiguity of the concept of 'avenging the deaths'; to a western audience he says he is speaking metaphorically and galvanising his people for a new and fairer political order, but to the Ovimbundu the call has a more blood-curdling character.

The MPLA will be hard-pressed to win the election unless it makes inroads into Savimbi's Ovimbundu constituency. At the MPLA's congress this April, the party's conservative wing refused to allow former party dissident **Daniel Chipenda** to be made vice president for fear that he might develop an alternative power base. However **Chipenda**, an urbane and charismatic politician who comes from Savimbi's home area of Bie, has been appointed director of the MPLA's election campaign. Vested interests and personality conflicts are still weakening the MPLA's ability to organise a more co-ordinated campaign.

Chipenda should be able to win some Ovimbundu votes, but is distrusted by some of the MPLA stalwarts almost as much as he is disliked by the UNITA hierarchy.

Savimbi is already conducting himself like a head of state. He is escorted everywhere by UNITA troops and is accorded a presidential welcome by his supporters whenever he arrives at Luanda airport. He also provides military guards for his friends and guests, including **Manda Mobutu**, son of Zaire's President **Mobutu Sese Seko**. Manda frequently visits Angola on business; Savimbi also remains on excellent terms with President Mobutu who supported UNITA throughout the 16 year civil war. There are reports of at least 5,000 UNITA soldiers in training camps in Zaire who are understood to have been used in domestic operations there. But Moroccan officials strenuously deny reports that there are some 2,000 UNITA troops receiving military training near Rabat.

What is clear is that neither side has allowed all its forces to be disarmed. Only 50,000 out of 70,000 of UNITA's *Forças Armadas de Libertação de Angola* (FALA) and only 130,000 out of 200,000 MPLA *Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola* (FAPLA) troops have been disarmed. There are at least 90,000 armed troops unaccounted for. The integration of the FALA and FAPLA into a new national army, as prescribed in the Portugal peace accord, has hardly begun, although according to the peace accord schedule it should be completed a month before the elections. Neither side appears to trust the process and wants to keep substantial partisan forces in reserve.

Western observers appear equally cynical about both the MPLA's and UNITA's attitude to military integration and their capacity for intimidation of each other's supporters. But they stress that any return to full-scale armed struggle means the country would forfeit any international economic assistance.

Savimbi appears to be the net loser from changing external perceptions of Angola's political competition. US observer mission chief in Angola **Jeffrey Millington**, formerly a UNITA enthusiast, is no longer prepared to give Savimbi the benefit of the doubt; Assistant Under Secretary of State for African Affairs **Jeffrey Davidow** is understood to be unconvinced by UNITA's explanation of how its former foreign representatives **Tito Chingungi** and **Wilson dos Santos** met their deaths. US policy remains divided between the White House's pro-Savimbi lobby and the State Department where there are varying degrees of alarm about UNITA's ruthlessness and anti-democratic traits. These perceptions have been fuelled by those US citizens in the United Nations team who have seen UNITA's behaviour at close quarters in recent months in Angola. While UNITA has received its publicly accounted aid allocation of some US\$60 million from Washington, unease about the Chingungi murder and other allegations of human rights violations could threaten any further covert aid that the US security services had promised to UNITA before the elections.

Neither can South Africa be relied on. Observers at a recent encounter between Savimbi and South Africa's Foreign Minister **Pik Botha**, say the two men emerged 'spitting blood'. Earlier this year in a snub to Savimbi, Pretoria's director of foreign affairs **Neil Van Heerden**, prompted by commercial as well as strategic interests, had requested the formal opening of diplomatic relations with the MPLA government. It has been Luanda, not Pretoria, which has dragged its feet on the issue. Those alliances forged between the South African Defence Force (SADF), particularly its Special Forces, and UNITA may still be resurrected to assist Savimbi. But, at a time when President **FW de Klerk**'s international and national credibility is being tested to its limit, the SADF would be hard pressed to justify any new foreign ventures, and Pretoria may decide to keep South Africa's buffalo soldiers within its borders.

promises (hardly surprising as they are virtually indistinguishable from each other) and the emphasis on denigration of rival parties and politicians. Political analysts say that this is due to a lack of credible programmes and policies, a situation that concerns **Herman Cohen**. During his April visit to Luanda, Cohen met with the emerging parties, giving them qualified support while stressing the need for politicians and electorate alike to exercise tolerance in political competition.

the loose opposition coalition known as the *Conselho Nacional de Opção* (CNO) which includes 13 parties including his own. It seems unlikely that he will be the CNO's sole presidential candidate, however, as several of the other members, notably the PRD and the PSDA have already stated that they will be putting up candidates of their own.

The central feature of the smaller parties' pre-election campaigns so far has been the lack of focus on manifesto

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Time and money are too short for a Western-style liberal democratic culture to be absorbed before the elections. The pious hope among the international observers is that 'they'll muddle through somehow', at least to give the party or parties elected to govern the Second Republic a sufficient mandate to act decisively. However the Angolans and the United Nations team led by **Margaret Anstee** are battling against the odds; voter registration only started at the end of May and the UN monitoring team is hopelessly short-staffed to cope with the levels of pre-election intimidation already building up. While **Namibia**, with a population of 1.8 million, had 6000 UN officials supervising its 1989 elections, Angola, with a population of some twelve million, will have just 600 observers at the election.

The observers have an onerous task. Revelations of UNITA's dirty tricks and human rights abuses are alienating the better-educated urban voters who might have felt tempted to vote for change. The uncommitted are unanimous in admitting that they would be more likely to expect reprisals from a victorious UNITA than from the MPLA. Such liberal niceties mean nothing to the dispossessed, largely-illiterate slum-dwellers and peasants who believe 'Father Savimbi' will give them their place in the sun at the expense of the cadres placed there by the MPLA.

The ethnic card is also crucial to UNITA's hopes of electoral victory. Savimbi's Ovimbundu people are the largest single ethnic group in Angola, accounting for some 40 per cent of the population. Next are the Mbundu, making up around 25 per cent, where the MPLA has its support base, followed by the Bakongo, who make up some 14 per cent and provide a support base for FNLA. Political soundings have given contrary indications on the importance of ethnicity in voting intentions in the country's first multi-party elections. The Ovimbundu are clearly the most mobile ethnic group, geographically and economically; having moved to Luanda from the Southern provinces, many of them have worked for

the MPLA government, but they also include lumpen elements in the cities who have suffered most from economic collapse. Savimbi cannot rely on a monopoly of Ovimbundu votes, but his attempts to break out of his ethnic strait-jacket have not been successful. The MPLA has had some success in projecting itself as a multi-ethnic party, having been able to co-opt figureheads from groups outside the Mbundu. There are also a significant number of smaller ethnic groups, such as the Lunda-Chokwe, Nganguela, Nyaneka, Humbe and Ovambo, who make up more than two million people and whose political allegiances remain fluid.

As for the campaign by recent UNITA 'defectors' **Miguel N'Zau Puna** and **Tony da Costa Fernandes** to 'democratise' UNITA: inside mainland Angola their credibility has been shattered by the allegation that they are being financed by the MPLA administration. In their home province of Cabinda, however, the two, and especially Puna, have a large following.

The oil-rich enclave is still the wild card in any election game-plan. It is the only province where an armed rebellion still exists (AC Vol 32 No 20), thanks to at least one of the multifarious factions of the *Frente para Libertação do Enclave do Cabinda* (FLEC) - that led by **Nzita Tiago**; and where the MPLA and UNITA troops have not been rounded up in assembly points for disarmament.

If non-Cabindan parties fear to tread the campaign trail in that province, the path is hardly smoother in many others. Many of the emergents say they are 'obliged to work clandestinely to garner support in provinces where either the MPLA or UNITA is dominant. The presence of armed groups, whether bandits or political partisans, is an effective barrier.

Despite government efforts to convince the public their vote will be secret, too many believe the *feiticeiros* (witches) will know how the ballot was cast and that their personal survival or well-being will depend on voting for the party in whose fiefdom they reside ●

Environment: Africa versus the lobbyists

The self-congratulatory mood among African officials at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June, belies the fact that the region gained little at the largest ever UN gathering. The UN's 'Earth Summit', and the two years of preparations that preceded it, underscored Africa's marginalisation within the world body, its failure to organise effectively at the caucus level and to lobby through the media.

- Africa's scorecard at Rio is as follows:
 - Although the continent secured commitment in getting the General Assembly to establish an international convention to combat drought and desertification by June 1994, this proved a pyrrhic victory. Supported at the last minute by Western countries in an effort to get African backing for a floundering Statement of Forestry Principles, the desertification initiative lacks enthusiastic international support and still could get lost in a bureaucratic morass. Its main advantage would have been to target specific resources to an African priority area.
 - Overall funding for the Agenda 21, an 800 page action plan

based on the Rio declaration for sustainable development, was slashed from the US\$70,000 million that UNCED had called for down to just \$6,000 mn. Little of the Agenda 21 funds will go to Africa; only one per cent of the funds estimated necessary in Agenda 21 are earmarked for drought and desertification, compared to 20 per cent for the predominantly Western concern for protecting the atmosphere.

- Some new resources will come through a prospective \$5,000 mn. earth increment from the World Bank's private sector affiliate, the International Development Agency. But Africa, and other developing countries, failed in their bid to get an independent environment fund established. At the insistence of Western countries, most finance will be channelled through the World Bank, UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)'s Global Environmental Facility. Although this is to be made more democratic and transparent, the control of funds for environmental projects will remain largely in the hands of industrialised countries, who will attach political and economic conditions to disbursements.
- Africans, and other developing countries in the Group failed in their broader aim of getting western countries to agree