

The Coming Winds of Democracy in Angola

By Jonas Savimbi

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. When we come to The Heritage Foundation, it is like coming back home. We know that our success here in Washington in repealing the Clark Amendment and obtaining American assistance for our cause is very much associated with your efforts. This foundation has been a source of great support. The UNITA leadership knows this, and it is also known in Angola.

I come here this afternoon to tell you that, despite all the difficulties and sometimes the misrepresentations about our struggle, UNITA is now stronger than ever militarily, politically, and diplomatically. We have spent the past fourteen years struggling for freedom. And we shall achieve it.

Allow me to offer some analysis of recent developments in our struggle. I will start with the Gbadolite agreement, reached last June.

On June 22nd, there was a meeting in Gbadolite, Zaire, called by President Mobutu Sese Seko. Eighteen African heads of state attended that meeting, and twenty African countries were represented. They started to work on that conference in earlier meetings in Brazzaville and Luanda. In Luanda, on May 16th, the Angolan government (MPLA) developed what was called the five points, which were to serve as a prerequisite for peace. These points called for my exile from Angola, the integration of UNITA into Angola's communist system, and the elimination of American support for UNITA.

If this plan had been presented to us, we would have rejected it, because we did not fight for fourteen years against the Soviets, Cubans, and the communist system in order to join them. We have resisted for fourteen years in order to achieve freedom and have elections and democracy in our country. We have not fought all this time to give in to a failed system.

Peaceful Proposals. When we went to Gbadolite on June 22nd, President Mobutu assured us that the MPLA's document would not be discussed, that we would discuss only peaceful proposals that called for national reconciliation, a cease-fire, and a commission to monitor a cease-fire. Such a plan was presented in Gbadolite, and we accepted it.

On June 23rd, the MPLA broadcast its support for this declaration, which was the official declaration. But later the MPLA changed its mind. They said there was a secret agenda, or secret meetings, associated with these talks. According to them, the secret meeting called for my exile from Angola and for the integration of UNITA into the MPLA military and political structure.

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He spoke at The Heritage Foundation on October 5, 1989, following his meeting with George Bush.

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Negative Image. But if there were secret negotiations or secret documents at Gbadolite, they were secret even to me. We never participated in discussions such as these, and I am not bound to respect what is contained in any so-called secret document. We stand by the agreement we accepted, and which the world community witnessed, in Gbadolite.

Since June, the press has carried a truly negative image of UNITA, saying that UNITA does not want to negotiate and does not want peace. I would like to remind you that since 1986 we have put out a peace plan every year. In the plan we announced in March 1987, I tried to give the MPLA confidence to participate in a peace plan, because they had been so fearful of doing so. I did this by announcing that I would not participate in the transition coalition government. Instead, I announced that I would merely remain head of my party in order to preserve the party for elections.

Despite this concession, the MPLA tried to twist what I said, and they never provided a real reply to our plan. And after the promising gains we made at Gbadolite, at the August 22nd meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe, the MPLA withdrew many of the promises they previously had agreed to. This has caused a lot of confusion. Many have asked whether or not the MPLA still supports the promises they made at Gbadolite. As for President Mobutu, we have expected him to clear the air and say, "It is Gbadolite, it is not Harare." We expect him to do exactly this.

Many Mediators. Another difficulty we are experiencing is that, when you have one mediator, it is good and it is easy to talk to the mediator. But when you have nine or ten mediators, as we had in the August meeting in Harare, it becomes very difficult. The Front Line States (Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) were formed to deal with the question of Namibia and South Africa, not to deal with Angola. We will not accept mediation by the Front Line States because it would not be a real mediation process.

The MPLA has said they are interested in a cease-fire. And we have said the same. But a cease-fire cannot be merely proclaimed. It has to be negotiated. You have to define the content of a cease-fire. You have to negotiate the mechanism of monitoring the cease-fire. At Gbadolite, there was only a proclamation of a cease-fire, and we were surprised to see that many people said the cease-fire was guaranteed, because we were being attacked by the Cubans and the MPLA during this time. From August 17th to September 30th, the MPLA sent 23,000 troops to invade our areas and to capture our positions. They sent tanks and they sent planes.

However, because of your support, the support we received from the U.S., our forces have prevailed. The communist MiGs were destroyed. And we think, from now on, they will not have further reason to start the fighting again. Now, they should come to the negotiating table with reasonable proposals.

Continuing U.S. Support. I would like to talk a little bit about my meeting this morning with President Bush. The meeting went well because the President has reassured us that the U.S. will continue to give effective support to our struggle. Also, the President has stated very clearly that the Administration stands for free and fair elections in Angola. This has pleased us very much.

We are taking this message back home: The United States stands for free and fair elections in Angola. And when people say that you cannot talk about democracy in Africa, we should remember that these are the same people who said that elections cannot work in Poland. What about today? What is going on in East Germany? In Hungary? In Algeria, which was the first African state to pick up arms to fight for freedom, they now have four political parties.

I do not think that those African countries that are refusing democracy have hands wide or strong enough to stop the winds of democracy. It will reach Africa anyway. To the totalitarian government in Luanda and its supporters in Moscow and Havana, let me say this: It will be better for you to accept this change now than to try to stop it. You cannot stop democracy anymore.

Wrong Message. What we face, however, is the difficulty of convincing the MPLA to be reasonable. This morning, I read in the paper that the MPLA Minister of Foreign Affairs has said that he will come here in order to destroy my work. He said, we have given Jonas Savimbi a lot of time to try to control opinion in the U.S. He said he was coming here to destroy everything we have done. At the same time, he said that he was not prepared to talk to us — at least, not prepared to talk about elections.

I think, I hope, that none of my friends here will be an advocate of the MPLA, because the question is not the messenger. The question is the message. And the MPLA's message is a one party state, no direct talks, no elections, integration, and so forth. This message is wrong.

We need also to take note of what is happening to all of our friends, freedom fighters in Nicaragua, in Afghanistan, in Cambodia, and with our struggle in Angola. It is correct to help people to gain freedom. It will continue to be correct, because it is correct. Even if we meet problems, difficulties, we should not say that support for freedom fighters is not the correct choice. It was correct. It remains correct. And it will always be correct.

Clinging to Empire. Of course, we appreciate the new relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. In some areas, we are talking, and tension has diminished. This is good. But the Soviets have decided not to give up their empire. In Angola, what we are seeing is that they are still sending the same level of support — arms, guns, and helicopters — as before. More than that, in the battle that ended September 30th, the Soviets were involved at the tactical level. They are not involved from their headquarters. They are involved at the tactical level.

Now, we agreed, and we applauded, the tripartite agreement between Angola, Cuba, and South Africa last December. But that agreement dealt only with Namibia, South Africa, and the Cubans. The Soviets were not involved in that agreement, and their military involvement in Angola has continued.

On the one hand, we need to hope that these new relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union will help us to try to solve the internal problems in Angola. But at the same time, we need to be vigilant. The Soviets are not going to do our job for us.

Fighting For Something. Many have asked whether we are fighting against something or fighting for something. Let me say that we are fighting for something. We are fighting for a change of the system at home. We are fighting for democracy, for a free market. We are fighting so our people can participate in the public life of their country.

This is important because I have read that some people are criticizing Africa. Some of them say that Africa is dying. Others say Africa has no direction. I tend to agree. But we cannot solve this crisis, even if we pump more money into Africa, unless we start by realizing that our brothers first must have a democratic system that will support a free market economy. Unless we have this, we will not succeed. The one-party system has failed.

Let me give you an example. The Swedish have sold the MPLA forty buses. The buses were state owned, and the drivers and mechanics were state employees. A friend of mine came from Luanda a week ago, and now none of the buses is running. They were all grounded. The drivers and mechanics have been given their salaries whether the buses drive or not. The government has lost money, and the public has lost the transportation.

When Angola wants to really, really change, it changes. Some people, they ask, "But can you trust the communists in a coalition?" If you are weak, don't try it. But if you are strong, go for it.

Example of Freedom and Democracy. My last word for The Heritage Foundation is that you have been for us a source of great support. No Angolan will forget your efforts. You have come to Jamba, and you have taken our message to Congress and the Administration. You have taken the case for freedom in Angola to the public.

I am here now because we do not want war. We have covered the major distance on our common goals for freedom and democracy. What is left is short. We must continue our enthusiasm and rededicate ourselves to the cause of freedom. And I hope that my friends in Afghanistan will not lose heart. One of us has to succeed, and one of us will. If Angola succeeds first, we will set the example. We are not here to promise you that we will be the first, but my heart tells me that we will be that example of freedom and democracy. This will be good for our own people, and it will also be good for you.

