UPROOTED ANGOLA
A Call for Peace

I visited Angola from May 26 to June 7, at the request of the Council of Evangelical Churches in Angola (CAIE). The Council is comprised of thirteen large Protestant groups. A few recent applications for membership are pending. I was the only American member of an ecumenical team representing church agencies in Great Britain, Netherlands, Federal Republic of Germany, and Switzerland.

As a group of ecumenical guests, we visited five different provinces, including the war-torn provinces of Huambo and Bie. We engaged in numerous discussions with church leaders, administrators of church agencies, government personnel, community people, and non-governmental organizations. The need for PEACE was the common cry of everyone we met.

I left Angola with the following specific observations:

1. The one common agenda in Angola is war. Every citizen and resident is affected. The emerging generation of people in Angola has not yet known a day of peace.

2. Angola has in recent years become a battlefield not only among Angolan factions, but also including USSR, Cuba, South Africa and USA. Highly sophisticated weaponry and war-related communications and security systems, together with many military and security personnel are visibly present. It seems that the internal conflict in Angola is exacerbated and heavily fueled by the superpowers.

3. This war has caused incredible suffering. People of all walks of life are killed and permanently injured on a regular basis. Fear of injury, death and loss of family and friends is eroding the spirits of many. Villagers are not able to farm their land. The numbers of displaced people increase daily. Hunger is evident in many areas. Health services have been destroyed in some areas. Transportation and communication systems are cut. The economy has collapsed. With the exception of Mozambique, the people of Angola suffer more than anywhere in the world, according to the Population Crisis Committee. Although I have traveled widely, I have never been in a more depressing situation.

4. The churches of Angola are very concerned. They too suffer. These churches have invited fellow Christians from other parts of the world to help in "binding up the wounds" of the injured and grieving. They have also invited the world Christian community to join them in praying for peace in their land. The local church is already involved in emergency food assistance, health care, agriculture programs, and is hopeful that there can be reconciliation between Savimbi and MPLA.
5. Angola is a victim of the "destabilization efforts" of South Africa directed towards neighboring countries. I, together with the other ecumenical visitors from Europe and Great Britain, am very concerned about the apartheid policy of South Africa which results in war, violence, and militarism on the subcontinent of Africa. We see this as a destructive evil which must discontinue. We pray and plead that supporting governments will discontinue their overt and covert involvement in this destructive and destabilizing action. Further, we pledge increased commitment to the relief, reconciling and peacemaking efforts of partner churches in the area.

I wish to express my profound appreciation for this opportunity to discuss this matter with you. The people of Angola have little hope at the moment. They fear that the superpowers will go on escalating the feelings of hatred and destructive involvement. I sincerely plead that the U.S. government discontinue its involvement (direct or indirect) in this human catastrophe. I pray that in contrast we can help make it possible for Angolans to live in peace, return to their land, and produce their own food.

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