

General

Angola has been in a state of civil war since 1975-76 and had to confront, in addition, invasion of its territory up to the end of 1988 by South African forces. This has resulted in a dramatic deterioration of social conditions and standards of living.

Political and Economic Situation

Following the January 1975 Alvor Conference, which created a transitional Angolan government, four Angolan movements fought a fratricidal war for control of the country. The Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola (MPLA), backed by the Cubans and the U.S.S.R., emerged as the victor. This victory was inconclusive in that the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), one of the movements defeated by the MPLA, supported by the U.S. and aided by South African direct military interventions, was able to expand guerilla operations over a major portion of Angolan territory.

Only in the recent past have negotiations, concluded in December 1988, led successfully to the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola and the progressive withdrawal of Cuban forces.

Efforts to reconcile the MPLA and the UNITA have failed to date and fighting continues throughout the country. However, recent developments in the political situation have been promising. The two sides, encouraged by Portugal, the U.S. and U.S.S.R., engaged in negotiations in Lisbon in April, and have agreed to meet again in the near future to commence peace negotiations. War weariness on both sides and the destructive effect of the conflict on the people and economy of Angola have produced a strong will to achieve peace and reconciliation.

Angola's current president has been in office since President Agostinho Neto's death in 1979. Presidential powers have progressively increased over time; the president is head of the MPLA and chairman of the Defence and Security Council, the most powerful organ of government, as well as of the Permanent Commission of the People's Assembly, which effectively controls the legislative activities of the country.