

November 15, 1993

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1. ANGUISH IN ANGOLA: Since 1975, when the civil war began in Angola, the nine million Angolans (including 141,000 Seventh-day Adventists) have suffered enormously. Hopes for peace, which soared at the time of the October '92 elections, were dashed when the outcome was not accepted by all parties and warfare, more vicious than before, resumed. An estimated 1,000 are dying each day, many of starvation. Three million more have been dislocated from their homes.

I received first-hand reports of incredible suffering. In one city alone there are 15,000 orphans. In other cities all the dogs, cats, and rats have been eaten and there are even reports of cannibalism.

Our Union leaders in Huambo, which is controlled by UNITA, have been cut off from Luanda, the capital, and the rest of the world for the last year. Last Tuesday I spoke to Paulo Lopez, acting ADRA country director, in Luanda. He took one of the first flights into Huambo, when UNITA permitted relief flights, to assess the situation. Then, last week, he delivered 10 tons of relief supplies to Huambo (provided by ADRA/Euro-Africa) and arranged for its distribution. This week he expects to sign a World Food Program agreement to distribute enough food to feed 10,000 for the next three months.

2. Layman in action: Januario Da Pena, a layman of Mozambique, was poverty stricken. By his own admission Christ had become of little importance in his life. He felt that he could do better financially in Ethiopia, so he traveled there to make his fortune. On his arrival he was not able to find work and, after some time, came to the conclusion that if he was going to be poor he would rather be poor in his own country. Since he had no money, he decided to walk home...all the way to Mozambique.

When, after several months of walking, he finally arrived in Mozambique, his country was in the middle of a civil war. He was captured by the government troops (who accused him of being a spy), imprisoned, and told that he was going to be shot. His protests, that he wasn't a spy but simply a Christian who had gone astray, were finally believed when he produced his Sabbath School lesson quarterly. Within a few days he was released to a distant part of the country.

He felt God had given him a mission. So, every place he went, he started preaching; and the Lord blessed his labors. He raised up churches in some major towns like: Maramanelo, Gile, Pembane, Molivala, Modeia; and, in the process, he prepared over 2,000 souls for baptisms. Thank God for soul-winning laymen with a vision for souls.

3. UN DECISION AFFECTS RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS In a landmark decision, July 20, 1993, the United Nations Human Rights Committee further defined Article 18 of "The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" (approved by the General Assembly in 1966) in ways vital to Seventh-day Adventists and other religious bodies. Article 4 of this addendum states, "...The concept of worship extends ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to belief, as well as various practices integral to such acts, *including...the observance of holidays and days of rest.*" Article 5 is of particular import due to its acceptance by many Muslim countries. It states, "The Committee observes that the freedom to 'have or to adopt' a religion or belief necessarily entails the freedom to choose a religion or belief, including, *inter alia*, the right to replace one's current religion or belief with another..." As of September 27, 124 countries had signed as parties to this covenant. Let's pray this is an indication that a few of the walls of religions resisting outside influence may be opening.

4. TED—INDIA EARTHQUAKE RELIEF: With the additional US\$10,039 sent to the General Conference for India earthquake relief, the total assistance provided by members in the Trans-European Division is US\$47,039.

5. ON A PERSONAL NOTE: After concluding the Euro-Africa Division year-end meetings, I spent this past weekend attending the Collonges (College in France) board meeting, and speaking three times on Sabbath: 1) to a meeting of Adventist students attending secular universities, 2) the Collonges church family, and 3) a meeting of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking members. This week I meet with the Spanish and the Portuguese Union's year-end meetings and spend next Sabbath in Lisbon.