

# The Battle Against Portuguese Neocolonialism

By Ernest Harsch

[Second of three articles]

Before the April 25, 1974, coup in Lisbon, the independence forces in Guinea-Bissau had scored major military and political gains, and in Mozambique they were rapidly escalating their activities. But in Angola, the direct pressure against Portuguese imperialist rule was limited to occasional ambushes and sporadic clashes in the countryside. There were very few strike actions or other visible signs of unrest in the cities.

However, the low-level warfare in the rural areas did put a political burden on Lisbon and the economic and human drain of maintaining an estimated 60,000 troops in Angola and thousands more in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique added to the unrest within Portugal itself that finally led to the downfall of the Salazarist dictatorship.

The Lisbon coup, in turn, affected the course of the Angolan liberation struggle. It brought the prospects of formal independence closer, raised the conflict to a more clearly political level, heightened the anticolonial sentiment throughout the country, and drew broader sections of the Angolan population into active opposition to the Portuguese imperialists. Above all, it shifted the focus of the independence movement away from the rural areas. The struggle for control of the cities began.

In contending for political influence among urban Angolans, the MPLA appears to have had a head start over its two main rivals. According to Pélissier, the MPLA, in the late 1960s when it was increasing its guerrilla actions in several parts of the countryside, also began to rebuild its clandestine cells in some cities. "Undoubtedly MPLA networks have reappeared here and there in Luanda, in Lobito and its industrial zone, but towns as important as Nova Lisboa and Malange apparently have, for various reasons, only insignificant clandestine activity," he wrote.

*Le Monde* correspondent Gilbert Comte, in a series of reports from Angola published in the May 14 to 17, 1975, issues of the Paris daily, estimated that the MPLA's main strength (after the expulsion of Daniel Chipenda, who had commanded MPLA troops in eastern Angola) was in the cities, where it had been carrying out clandestine propaganda for years. He also estimated that the MPLA was the dominant national-

ist force in Luanda's muceques until autumn 1974.

The first indication that the FNLA had begun to recruit, or send members into Luanda's slum areas, was in July 1974, following attacks on the African population by white settlers. Portuguese military and government officials, according to the July 27, 1974, *New York Times*, "said agitators of the 'racist' National Front [FNLA] were hiding out in the shantytowns, secure in the knowledge that it would be virtually impossible for the armed forces to find them there.

"A military spokesman said that large numbers of National Front agents had infiltrated Angola from their bases in neighboring Zaire. . . .

"... some of the National Front's men have apparently slipped through the lines to Luanda and have begun a campaign to win Angolans away from the People's Movement [MPLA], which enjoys wide support here among blacks and whites."

The first public sign of the FNLA's presence was when its flags and banners, along with those of the MPLA, appeared at a funeral for several Africans who had been killed in the clashes with the whites.

The UNITA, despite its strategy of surrounding the towns through rural warfare, also took advantage of the new opportunities. The October 6, 1974, *New York Times* noted that the UNITA "has moved its key men into urban areas to build support among the Angolan Africans."

### Spinola's 'Decolonization' Plan

The disunity and rivalry of the Angolan nationalist forces gave the Portuguese imperialists more of an opportunity to maneuver in Angola than they were able to obtain in either Mozambique or Guinea-Bissau.

In his book *Portugal e o Futuro*, Gen. António de Spínola proposed that a federation of four "equal states" be set up, with Lisbon in the dominant position. He repeated his proposal after coming to power. This was rejected by all the rebel groups in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique. The Spínola regime then stated in May that within a year it would organize "referendums" in all the African colonies so that the populations could exercise "their right to self-determination."

After being forced to backtrack some

more, Spínola and the MFA released a "timetable" on August 9 for Angola's independence. A proposal was included for a coalition regime composed of representatives of the three liberation movements and of the "most representative ethnic groups in Angola, including the white population."

A number of small "third force" groupings, which openly favored a neocolonial solution in Angola, had emerged. The most important of these was the Frente de Unidade Angolana (FUA—Angolan Unity Front),<sup>13</sup> led by Fernando Falção, a white businessman from Lobito who was brought into the colonial administration in September.

Another force that entered into Spínola's neocolonialist schemes for the future of Angola was the white settler population, estimated at about 500,000, twice the size of that in Mozambique.

Many of the settlers were unskilled or semiskilled workers who had emigrated from Portugal to Angola to escape unemployment. They were thus less willing to leave the colony than the settlers in Mozambique, many of whom were highly skilled workers, technicians, and managers. The Portuguese imperialists may have also calculated that the Angolan settlers would be more intransigent in their opposition to the nationalists, since their jobs would be more immediately threatened by African workers after formal independence took effect.

In July 1974, armed white groups attacked Africans in Luanda's muceques. In the clashes that followed, hundreds of Africans were killed and thousands fled to the countryside. Two of the white extremist groups thought to have been involved in the clashes were the Resistência Unida de Angola (RUA—United Resistance of Angola) and the Frente de Resistência Angolana (FRA—Angolan Resistance Front), which openly compared itself to the terrorist OAS (Organisation de l'Armée Secrète—Secret Army Organization) settler group that operated in Algeria during the Algerian independence struggle.

Spínola also tried to pit the guerrilla groups against each other. In June, Lisbon officials said they would begin negotiations

13. According to a Salazarist account, FUA was actually formed in the early 1960s in southern Angola.

with those liberation movements "present within the country," a definition that from Lisbon's viewpoint included only the UNITA. They noted that "all other armed groups of African liberation movements have their headquarters in Kinshasa, Brazzaville, and Lusaka," an obvious reference to the MPLA and FNLA.

Furthermore, in his secret meeting with Zaïre President Mobutu Sese Seko on September 14, Spínola may have solicited help in pressuring the FNLA into accepting Lisbon's schemes.

### 'We Will Fight Another 13 Years'

But Spínola's plans backfired. The "third force" groupings remained too weak, relative to the main nationalist forces, to serve as effective political counterweights.

The rightist attacks against the African population met with a response in the muceques that signaled the potential power of Angola's urban masses. In some muceques the Africans took control, forming self-defense groups and blocking entrance to gangs of armed settlers. On July 15, after the initial attacks, Luanda was virtually paralyzed by a general strike of Black civil servants against continued Portuguese rule. The next day a crowd of Africans marched to the governor's palace.

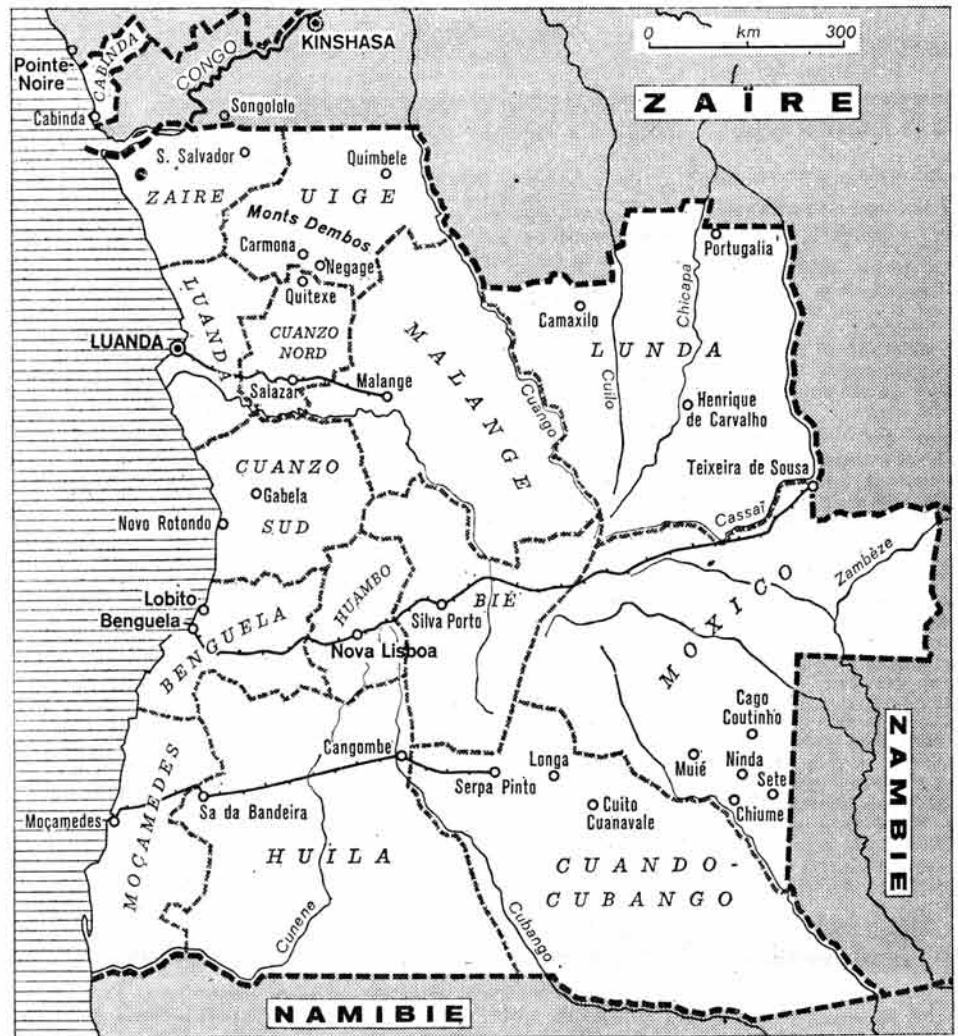
The rebel groups also continued their pressure on Lisbon.

Although the UNITA signed a cease-fire agreement with the Portuguese in June, months before the MPLA or FNLA did, it nevertheless rejected the "referendum" proposal. A UNITA representative said at a news conference in Brussels August 29, "We cannot negotiate independence and this is why we refuse Gen. Antonio de Spínola's proposal to organize a referendum. It is out of the question. We have been fighting during 14 years for the principle of independence."

MPLA President Agostinho Neto, in an interview published in the May 27 issue of the Algerian daily *El Moudjahid*, stated: "For our people, the referendum solution is not acceptable. We reject a referendum organized by the Portuguese and carried out in Angola by the administration, the army, and the police. Because of that, it would not guarantee a serious result. We demand that Portugal purely and simply put an end to its domination of our country. The referendum would be no more than a means used by the Portuguese to prolong their presence in our country."

Holden Roberto, the head of the FNLA, stated in July: "We will step up our operations. This is the only alternative for our group. We will fight for another 13 years if necessary."

According to reports, the FNLA increased its recruitment and training of Angolan exiles in Zaïre and began to move steadily



into the coffee-producing areas in northern Angola. In June, 250 Chinese military instructors arrived in Kinshasa to train FNLA troops. In August, the Libyan regime began to send aid to the FNLA.

The Lisbon daily *A Capital* reported August 14 that ten FNLA guerrillas had been killed and in the August 20 issue noted that thirteen Portuguese troops had died since the beginning of the month. The August 16 *O Século* reported that search and destroy missions had been launched against the FNLA in the north.

Paul Touba, the FNLA's permanent observer at the United Nations, said October 1 that the FNLA had stepped up its offensive in the north. He claimed that a number of important villages had come under FNLA control, including Uíge and Carmone.

The incapacity of the MFA to bypass the three nationalist movements or to get them to agree to its plans forced the military rulers in Lisbon to deal directly with the guerrillas. This failure undoubtedly played a role in Spínola's downfall after the defeat of his September 28 attempted coup.

The new Lisbon regime pressed for direct negotiations with the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA. On October 1 the MPLA signed a formal cease-fire agreement and the FNLA signed one on October 8.

All three groups opened offices in Luanda. When the FNLA delegation arrived at Luanda airport October 30, it was greeted by a crowd estimated at between 4,000 and 5,000 persons. The MPLA was met on November 8, according to varying reports, by between 30,000 and 50,000 persons, and UNITA on November 10 by about 20,000 supporters.

The October 19, 1974, *Zambia Daily Mail* reported that the Organization of African Unity had extended de facto recognition to the UNITA by giving it 23,000 kwacha (about US\$14,800) in aid.

The internal differences within the MPLA, however, delayed the negotiations with the Portuguese and further complicated the rivalries within the nationalist movement. By mid-1974, at least two factions opposed to the leadership of Agostinho Neto had appeared within the MPLA.

One, called the "Eastern Revolt," was led

by Daniel Chipenda, the military commander of the MPLA for eastern Angola, who was based in Zambia. In an interview published in the August 22, 1974, *O Provincia de Angola*, Chipenda denounced the "presidentialism" of Neto and called for the unity of the MPLA and FNLA. He also said he favored a "multiracial" Angola in which whites would have full citizenship rights if they obeyed the law.

The other group, led by the Reverend Joaquim Pintó de Andrade and called the "Active Revolt," was composed of seventy well-known intellectuals and past and present leaders of the MPLA, including Mário de Andrade, a founder of the MPLA and brother of Pintó de Andrade; the Reverend Domingos da Silva, a vice-president of the MPLA; Eduardo Santos and Hugo Menezes, both founding members of the MPLA; and Floribert Monimamba, the chief of operations for the northern front.

In a document drawn up by the group on May 11, 1974, the Active Revolt also attacked the "presidentialism" of the Neto leadership, raised charges of "tribalism and regionalism" in the MPLA's functioning, and criticized the formation of the Supreme Liberation Council with the FNLA in December 1972. In June, Pintó de Andrade rejected the idea of negotiations between the MPLA and FNLA.

Neto denounced the dissidents within the MPLA, calling them "racists" and "tribalists."

At an MPLA congress in Lusaka in August the Neto faction walked out and Chipenda was elected president. The heads of state of Zambia, the Republic of the Congo, Zaïre, and Tanzania intervened in an effort to get the factions to unify. At a meeting in Brazzaville on September 13, Neto was named president with Chipenda and Pintó de Andrade as vice-presidents.

But the "unity" did not last long. Chipenda moved his headquarters to Kinshasa, Zaïre, and on October 29 denounced the cease-fire agreements that had been signed between the three groups and the Portuguese. He claimed that he would continue to fight against Portuguese rule. On November 9, the FNLA and the Chipenda faction threatened to renew the war if Lisbon recognized the Neto faction, which had set up office in Luanda the day before.

The Lisbon authorities intervened in the MPLA's internal dispute, backing Neto's faction against Chipenda's and Pintó de Andrade's. According to a report in the December 6, 1974, *Portuguese Africa*, published in Angola, Adm. Rosa Coutinho, a key leader of the MFA, said at a news conference that the MPLA was represented only by the Neto leadership.

Shortly after, the MPLA announced Chipenda's expulsion, charging him with

having been involved in "assassination plots" against Neto in 1972 and 1973 and denouncing his faction's opening an office in Luanda.

While it is not entirely clear, it appears that Chipenda took most of his estimated 2,000 supporters with him. However, the January 7 *República* reported that sixty members of the Eastern Revolt in the southeastern city of Serpa Pinto had dissociated themselves from Chipenda and had decided to rejoin the MPLA. Another report stated that 131 former Chipenda supporters in Ninda had either rejoined the MPLA or joined the UNITA.

The February 14, 1975, *O Século* reported that Neto said he was trying to "reintegrate" the members of the Active Revolt.

### 'Transitional' Regime

With the resolving of the MPLA's internal differences, at least for the time being, it became possible for the three liberation movements to sit down together and formulate a joint negotiating position to present to the Portuguese.

In December, Neto and Savimbi signed an accord in Luso, Angola, which provided for an end to hostilities and for collaboration between the MPLA and UNITA. One point stated that the MPLA and UNITA pledged to "defend constantly together the interests of the masses and peasants and the struggle for the extinction of the remnants of colonialism."

This was a switch from the MPLA's previous policy toward the UNITA. For instance, in an open letter released by the MPLA department of information and propaganda and published in the June 13, 1974, *Times of Zambia*, the MPLA stated: "Until the time of the coup that brought General Spínola to power, UNITA collaborated actively with the colonial Portuguese army. It is for this reason that MPLA, vanguard of the Angolan people in arms since 1961, cannot accept unity with an agent of the enemy."

Under pressure from the Organization of African Unity, which for years had called for the "unification" of the Angolan rivals, a formal unity agreement was signed by all three groups in Mombasa, Kenya, on January 5.

The agreement included a "declaration of principles," which stated that Cabinda would remain an integral part of Angola. The three organizations pledged to build a "just and democratic society, rejecting ethnic, racial, and religious discrimination, as well as all other forms of discrimination."

A few days later Holden Roberto noted that the three groups had only agreed to "a common platform for negotiations with Portugal." Each group would maintain its own identity, he said, and during elections

"the Angolan people will choose which of them will lead the country."

The accord signed between the FNLA, MPLA, UNITA, and the Lisbon regime in Alvor, Portugal, January 15, set up a coalition government. At the head of the coalition is a presidential council of three members: Johnny Eduardo for the FNLA, Lopo do Nascimento for the MPLA, and Jose N'Dele for the UNITA. Lisbon appointed a high commissioner, Brig. Gen. Silva Cardoso of the MFA, to "arbitrate" any differences among the three council members and to take control of defense and security. The FNLA, MPLA, UNITA, and the Portuguese regime were each granted three posts in the cabinet.

The accord also provided for the formation of an "Angolan national army," in which each liberation movement was to have 8,000 troops, while the Portuguese maintained 24,000 troops. A ten-member National Defense Council, headed by General Cardoso, was established with representatives of the three groups and of the Portuguese army, navy, and air force.

The nationalist troops were to be integrated into the new army gradually, depending on the "climate of confidence." In an attempt to temporarily freeze the military positions of the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA, those rebel troops not absorbed into the army were to remain in the areas they already controlled.

The Portuguese troops were allowed to stay until the proclamation of formal independence, which is scheduled for November 11. They are then to begin withdrawing. The last of the Portuguese troops are scheduled to be out of Angola by February 29, 1976.

Although during the negotiations the nationalists had pressed for elections following the departure of the Portuguese troops, the Alvor accords provide for the election of a constituent assembly before Angola gains its independence and while the Portuguese troops are still in the country.

Point 54 of the accords states, "The FNLA, MPLA and UNITA undertake to respect the property and legitimate interests of Portuguese domiciled in Angola." And while Point 55 does not specifically mention the Portuguese imperialist interests in Angola, it does state: "The Portuguese Government on the one hand, and the Liberation Movements on the other, agree to establish between Angola and Portugal constructive and lasting ties of co-operation in all fields, namely technical, cultural, scientific, economic, commercial, monetary, financial and military, on a basis of independence, equality, freedom, mutual respect and reciprocity of interests."

The agreement on the coalition regime, by legitimizing the presence of the colonial army, gave the Portuguese imperialists a

strong hand in influencing the eventual transition to formal independence. It gave the MFA the opportunity to use the participation of the major nationalist forces in the regime to help control and dampen any mass struggles that might arise, to test the strengths and weaknesses of the three groups, and to determine their relative reliability in administering an "independent" Angola within the capitalist system. It also gave the MFA the chance to try to heighten the existing rivalries between the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA in order to weaken all three.

#### Preparing for the Showdown

The MFA's position that the FNLA, UNITA, and MPLA (under Neto) were the only groups that could participate in the talks and the coalition regime was a defeat for the right-wing and openly neocolonialist forces in Angola.

But it was also an undemocratic measure that sought to block the development of any political currents outside of the three main groups. Point 41 of the accords states that the only candidates to be allowed to run in the projected elections to the constituent assembly are those of the FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA.

Although Lisbon has not abandoned the Portuguese settlers in Angola, its rejection of their demand for a role in the coalition regime served as a warning to the settlers not to try any adventurist bids to seize control, as the whites in Mozambique had attempted in September.

In the April 1975 *Foreign Affairs*, Kenneth Adelman reported: "The whites remaining are mostly waiting and hoping that the transition to independence is rapid and peaceful. Some are joining the liberation movements. . . ."

The extremist settler groups, while they may still exist, have virtually dropped from view. There was an attempt to regroup some of the right-wing Angolan parties in October, when five organizations merged with the Partido Cristão Democrático de Angola (PCDA—Angola Christian Democratic party). But after the accords were signed, the PCDA was dissolved and its leader, who had been implicated in Spínola's September 28 coup attempt, went into hiding.

The accords were also a reverse to FLEC, the Cabindan separatist organization, as well as to the Chipenda grouping, which had demanded inclusion in the coalition regime.

The three liberation movements all continued to strengthen their positions.

In December 1974, the Aliança das Populações de Angola (APA—Angolan Peoples' Alliance) merged with the FNLA.

On April 17, 1975, Roberto also accepted the membership of Chipenda and his estimated 2,000 troops into the FNLA. Chi-

penda was placed on the FNLA's National Council of the Revolution and on its Political Bureau. He was also named assistant secretary-general.

"Since November," Gilbert Comte reported in the May 15 *Le Monde*, FNLA "emissaries have traveled through the villages [in northern Angola], selecting youths to carry weapons. Each day, trucks filled with recruits leave Carmona for the distant camps of Kinkusu and Kotacoli, in Zaïre." The FNLA also reinforced its military position in Luanda and sent 500 troops to the port city of Lobito in central Angola.

By the end of April, 300,000 refugees had returned to Angola. Many of them were Bakongos who had been living in exile; thus part of the FNLA's base of support shifted back into the country.

In March, the FNLA bought a cable-television company, renaming it FNLA-TV. The FNLA said it would provide "political information," as well as paid advertisements and normal programming.

After the signing of the accords, the executive of the Frente Socialista de Angola (Fresda—Angola Socialist Front) dissolved the organization and called on its members to join the MPLA. The March 11 *República* reported that the Movimento Democrático de Angola (MDA—Angola Democratic Movement) had merged with the MPLA.

According to a report in the March 27 *Tanzanian Daily News*, the Liga Nacional Africana (LNA—African National League)<sup>14</sup> now gives general support to the MPLA. Its leadership had previously been appointed by the Portuguese, but after the overthrow of the Salazarist dictatorship the old leaders were ousted.

The MPLA-affiliated trade union, União Nacional dos Trabalhadores de Angola (UNTA—National Union of Angolan Workers) met with the National Union of Trade and Industry and other unions in December and reportedly passed a joint program of action.

The February 5 *República* reported that hundreds of thousands of persons attended an MPLA rally addressed by Agostinho Neto in Luanda on February 4, which the MPLA terms the anniversary of the beginning of the Angolan liberation struggle.

The MPLA has also been trying to strengthen its support within Luanda's muceques.

Following the clashes in July and August 1974 between Africans and white settlers, most of the settlers in the muceque areas, many of whom were shopkeepers, fled to the center of the city. According to Saydi Mingas, an MPLA observer to the United Nations, the inhabitants formed district

14. The LNA was originally formed in 1930 as a government-sponsored organization, in a Portuguese attempt to directly control some of the nationalist currents in Angola.

committees to organize the distribution of food and provide other services.

The April 8 *República* reported that Neto had called for greater participation of these committees in the "resolution of political problems." Minister of the Interior N'gola Kabanku, a leader of the FNLA, has called for their dissolution.

Comte reported in the May 15 *Le Monde* that the MPLA was also distributing arms to African youths in the muceque areas.

It remains unclear what role these "people's committees" play, how they function, or how independent they are of the MPLA. It is possible that the MPLA may be trying to use them as a base of support in its factional struggle with the FNLA and UNITA.

A major part of the UNITA's support, according to a dispatch from Luso by Charles Mohr published in the April 24 *New York Times*, is estimated to be in the central plateau region, where about 40 percent of the population, mostly Ovimbundu, live.

The March 19 *A Província de Angola* reported that Marcos Kassanga, the UPA's chief of staff before he left the UPA in 1962, had joined the UNITA.

The UNITA seems to have been little-known in Angola's cities before the April 25, 1974, Lisbon coup. But since then, Savimbi has been trying to build a nonfactional image for the organization. He has stressed "unity" between the three main nationalist forces. Before the Mombasa "unity" agreements were reached in January, he served as a moderator between the MPLA and FNLA. In an atmosphere of fratricidal warfare, where the political differences between the MPLA and FNLA are vague or nonexistent, such a posture for unity, or at least for an end to the fighting, could win substantial popular support.

UNITA's policy of pushing for "unity" has also been extended to the white settlers in the country. After the accords with Lisbon were signed in January, UNITA spokesman Jorge Valentim stated, "Everyone in Angola will be Angolan." The settlers' "headaches are finished," he said.

Such assurances to the settlers seem to have won the UNITA some support among the settler population, although whites are reportedly joining all three groups. According to Colin Legum, writing in the January-February 1975 *Problems of Communism*, Fernando Façção, the leader of the neocolonialist FUA, made overtures to the UNITA, but any alliance between the UNITA and FUA was publicly repudiated by Savimbi.

Although the FNLA was reported to have more troops than the MPLA or UNITA, all three groups have been besieged with new recruits. None of them appears to have a clear military or political superiority at this time.

[Next: A Fratricidal Struggle for Power]