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Angola: A Quarter Century of War

by John A. Marcum

"The principal element in the deterioration of [U.S.] relations with the Soviet Union," Secretary of State Henry Kissinger told a Washington news conference in April 1976, "is Soviet actions in Angola." In retrospect, the unanticipated and massive Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola's civil war did represent an important watershed. The dramatic projection of Soviet military power and political influence into southern Africa, followed by the military interventions in Ethiopia and Afghanistan, marked the beginning of the end of superpower détente. However, the general assumption that Soviet-Cuban military support had definitively secured the rule over all of Angola of its beneficiary, the *Movimento Popular de Libertacâo de Angola* (MPLA), proved premature.

Today, nearly a quarter of a century after the outbreak of anticolonial insurgency and a decade after the military coup in Lisbon that resulted in the hurried liquidation of the Portuguese empire, Angola continues to be ravaged by war. A host of external powers, large and small, continues to be involved in the protracted competition for control over a country whose natural resources could provide the basis for a prosperous future were it ever to enjoy a period of social peace. For most Angolans, political independence has meant until now only increased deprivation and insecurity.

The MPLA: Yesterday and Today

Any movement or coalition of movements that attained power in Angola in 1975 would have faced horrendous difficulties. The legacy of Portuguese colonial rule was political inexperience, 85 to 90 percent illiteracy, and communal division. Civil war and the abrupt departure of nearly 350,000 resident Portuguese (with their trucks as well as their skills) had laid waste to a belatedly developing economy. Angola entered independence in a destructive whirlwind of fratricidal violence.

The MPLA did have the advantage of setting out to construct and govern the new polity of Angola from the heart of its own ethno-regional stronghold. The new regime was a product of Luanda-Mbundu society, that 25 percent of the Angolan population most influenced by centuries of Portuguese rule. It was in this "central society" and other urban centers integrated within the colonial economy, as distinguished from the more remote but majoritarian "tributary societies" of peasants and herders, that economic and cultural protest first developed into organized anticolonialism in the 1950s and 1960s.

The MPLA derived from a galaxy of small urban groups, centered around the person and family of Dr, Agostinho Neto, which united in 1956. Some of these factions were founded or influenced by Portuguese and Brazilian Marxists (teachers, civil servants, commercial employees); one of the groups was reportedly a tiny (just over a dozen members) *Partido Comunista de Angola* (PCA).

During the period of anticolonial insurgency, the MPLA carefully maintained its formal status as an eclectic front. Its leaders rejected proposals to convert it into a "revolutionary party" until such time as a solid nucleus of ideologically trained cadres could be prepared. MPLA ideology did, however, manifest traces of Marxism, with a consistent emphasis on egalitarian (class), multiracial, and anti-imperialist themes; and over time political and military cadres were trained in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Cuba. Soviet spokesmen openly expressed optimism that assisting the MPLA would spread "the idea of socialism and revolutionary anticolonialist ideology."

As Portuguese authority crumbled in the 19 months following the 1974 Lisbon coup, the MPLA simultaneously (1) attracted new cadres of educated blacks and *mestiços* into its ranks and (2) organized among dislocated, ex-peasant slum dwellers who had migrated

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into the towns during the war-related economic growth of the 1960s and early 1970s. The gulf between these social strata constituted—and still constitutes—an inherent obstacle to MPLA cohesion. Before the first government of the People's Republic of Angola (PRA) could even secure its authority over the "central society" of the Luanda-Mbundu region, Nito Alves, an ambitious organizer of MPLA (*poder popular*) action groups in Luanda, tried to parlay racial cleavage into personal political power. Moving swiftly to exploit popular discontent over food shortages, Alves and his black-oriented *fraccionistas* blamed economic distress on the mismanagement and ideological laxity of an administration that they said had accorded an unduly prominent, elite class role to whites and *mestiços*.

Thwarted within the MPLA organization, Alves and his supporters attempted a coup in May 1977. Although they failed, several prominent party leaders were killed and the episode revealed the MPLA's vulnerability to racial demagoguery and economic distress. It also demonstrated the qualified nature of the MPLA's external support, for Alves was a voluble champion of closer ties with the Soviet Union. The official inquiry into the aborted coup acknowledged that he and his followers had managed to undermine confidence in the MPLA government among diplomats from "friendly countries," apparently including officials of the Soviet embassy, where Alves was a frequent visitor. The Soviets failed to provide the government of President Agostinho Neto with advance warning of Alves' intentions.

The experience left the MPLA shaken, wary, and distrustful even of external allies. The Alves affair helps to explain why in 1984 an externally dependent and militarily beleaguered MPLA government may approach negotiations with those who are not even nominally "friends," notably Americans or South Africans, with a keen sense of suspicion and insecurity.

Underlying MPLA distrust of American intentions is a long history of negative experience. It includes the rebuff of MPLA overtures for U.S. assistance (in contrast to supportive U.S./NATO ties to Portugal) during the anticolonial struggle. At the time of the civil war in 1975, the United States provided substantial though ineffective assistance to the "anticommunist" movements competing with the MPLA for power in Angola. According to senior MPLA officials, it was bitter reaction to this intervention, coupled with that of South Africa and Zaire, that generated irresistible internal pressure for a more rapid and radical embrace of Eastern-style socialism than otherwise would have occurred.

The MPLA convened its first post-independence national congress in December 1977. At this gathering, the decision was made to become officially a Marxist-Leninist party. Under the name of MPLA-*Partido do Trabalho*, the party dedicated its relatively small and indoctrinated membership (25,000 members, plus aspirants, as of 1982) to work toward the construction of a new society based on "scientific socialism."

Under both Agostinho Neto and his successor, José Eduardo dos Santos, the MPLA was to manifest a considerable measure of economic pragmatism. According to one sympathetic Western account, the MPLA sought to avoid a transitional "capitalist phase" of development for fear that it would "result in the kind of anarchy and corruption typical of Zaire, Ivory Coast or Zambia" where "international monopoly capitalism creamed off the important profits" and "small-scale national operatives" manipulated the rest into their pockets. (Michael Wolfers and Jane Bergerol, *Angola in the Front Line* [London: Zed Press, 1983], p. 190.) But the MPLA was also quick to form a partnership with the Gulf Oil Corporation, whose Cabinda operation keeps the economy afloat. And the United States, despite the fact that it has never recognized the MPLA regime, imports some $600 million worth of Angolan oil annually, rendering Angola its third-ranking trade partner in sub-Saharan Africa.

In general, the PRA's economic record has been abysmal. Agricultural production collapsed when Portuguese traders crucial to its marketing fled in 1975. Some 80 percent of the commercial food supply must be imported. Coffee harvests are still less than half of pre-independence levels. Diamond mining and trade have been plagued with corruption born of economic desperation and low civil morale. Oil exports provide 75 percent of the state income, but probably over half of the oil revenue is spent on military and security items instead of being plowed back into basic economic development. A significant part of the outlay for security is the payment for the maintenance of some 20,000 to 25,000 Cuban troops and another 10,000 Cuban, Soviet, and East European technicians who protect the government and keep it functioning. According to Minister of Planning Lopo do Nascimento, Angolan payments cover food and housing but, contrary to Western intelligence sources, do not include salaries for Cuban soldiers.

The Soviet Union has shown no inclination to provide the sort of massive economic assistance that might enable Angola to break out of its economic morass, although it has helped with some specific projects. For example, it agreed in 1982 to participate in the design and construction of the Kapande hydroelectric station on the Cuanza River. (In at least one economic sector, coastal fishing, Soviet activities have been essentially exploitative and profoundly resented.)

In sum, the hope and promise of independence have given way to frustration as security needs devour the resources and creative energies of the country. How and why has this happened?

What the MPLA Faced

As the inadequately trained, ill-disciplined soldiers of the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) retreated into the vast emptiness of southeastern Angola in February 1976, it seemed unlikely that they would be an important factor in the future of Angola. The bitterness of their retreat was matched only by its futile savagery. As they withdrew, UNITA forces slaughtered known MPLA officials and

supporters—235 in Huambo alone.

By mid-year, however, UNITA's resilient leader, Jonas Savimbi, had regrouped his disheveled army in the southeastern savannah. Joined by a flow of young educated Ovimbundu from the populous central plateau, Savimbi and his still intact, multi-ethnic roster of political-military lieutenants returned to their pre-1974 roles as against-the-odds bush guerrillas. Crucial to their resilience was the military training at Namibian camps provided to UNITA's remnant forces by the South African Defense Force (SADF).

If the MPLA was to insure that neither UNITA nor the shattered forces of Holden Roberto's northern, Bakongo-based *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA) would ever reemerge as serious contenders for political power, the regime had to reach out beyond its own Luanda-Mbundu constituency and attract active participation from all sectors of the country within the life and structures of the PRA. The efforts toward this end were more successful among the Bakongo, who compose roughly 20 percent of Angola's population, than within UNITA's power base.

The FNLA

Like UNITA, the FNLA managed to reestablish a small-scale guerrilla operation in areas where it had been active before independence, in this instance the rolling forest country of the north. But the MPLA moved expeditiously to integrate Kikongo-speakers into the political and economic life of the PRA. Illustrative of this policy of co-option was the ethnic evolution of the MPLA's powerful 11-member Political Bureau. In October 1976, it consisted of six Mbundu, three *mestiços*, one Bakongo, and one Cabindan. Three years later, this had changed to four Mbundu, two *mestiços*, three Bakongo, and two Cabindans. Co-option extended to bringing a few former FNLA leaders, such as onetime FNLA Vice-President Emanuel Kunzika, into responsible administrative positions within the government.

So long as FNLA remnants could operate freely from their traditional training and supply bases in Zaire, however, they could be troublesome. After two incursions into Zaire's Shaba province by Katangan exiles in Angola had threatened to provoke a general disintegration of Zairian central authority, Angola's Agostinho Neto reached an understanding with Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko in July 1978. In return for curbing the Katangans and encouraging their repatriation, Neto eventually persuaded Mobutu to close down FNLA bases and expel Holden Roberto. In 1979, Roberto, already discredited by his incompetent leadership during the latter stages of the civil war (against military advice, he had marched his FNLA army headlong into the withering rocket and artillery fire of MPLA and Cuban forces in a desperate effort to capture Luanda before independence), flew off to exile in Paris.

Beginning in August 1980, an anti-Roberto FNLA-*Comite Militar de Resistênçia de Angola* (COMIRA) undertook to recreate an exile political structure in Zaire and to organize anti-MPLA politico-military operations in northeastern Angola (Uige-Malange). As a consequence of the Neto-Mobutu rapprochement, however, FNLA-COMIRA's top leadership was also forced to leave Zaire.

In September 1983, when it seemed that at least the FNLA had ceased to be a player in Angola's internal conflict, Holden Roberto resurfaced—in the United States. Stating that he was sponsored by a little-known organization called the Jefferson Foundation, Roberto began a speaking and lobbying tour that reached from California to Washington. Asserting that 5,000 to 7,000 armed FNLA guerrillas loyal to him were fighting in northern Angola, he appealed for financial support, warned against U.S. recognition of the PRA, and denounced what he termed an MPLA-Cuban plot to perpetuate Cuban domination even in the eventuality of a withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. In his view, this "conspiracy" is reflected in 1984 legislation that authorizes the Angolan People's Assembly to confer citizenship on selected foreigners. (The reference is to Article 6 of [Nationality] Law 2/84 [February 7, 1984], which reads: "The People's Assembly is authorized to confer Angolan nationality on foreign citizens who have contributed relevant service to the country.")

Despite Roberto's efforts to garner support, his pretensions to leadership were dismissed as an exile's fantasy by most observers as his visit to the United States lingered on into its second year and news came that two of his former top lieutenants had defected to the MPLA in Luanda. All told, the MPLA has managed to co-opt or see exiled much of its old northern opposition—including fractious groups seeking independence for the oil-rich Cabinda enclave.

UNITA: A Different Story

The MPLA has not enjoyed comparable success with regard to UNITA and the central-southern "tributary societies" (Ovimbundu, Chokwe, Ganguela, Ambo) that constitute UNITA's political support base. Although the Ovimbundu alone amount to something over a third of the population, their representation in the MPLA Political Bureau remains nil and in the Central Committee less than 10 percent.

According to party officials, the uneven MPLA presence in the provinces is mainly attributable to uneven development of local social forces and political awareness. These officials acknowledge, however, that excessive centralization of "the state apparatus" delayed the implantation of the MPLA outside of "detribalized" (urban) areas. And as a partial explanation of UNITA's regional following, MPLA information secretary Roberto de Almeida has cited UNITA efforts to stir up old prejudices against the north where Ovimbundu and others were previously sent by the Portuguese to work as conscript labor on coffee plantations and in factories. Although "Angolans had nothing to do with these practices," he laments, it is still possible to exploit the resultant prejudice and distrust existing among Angola's different ethnic groups.

Perhaps influenced by the longstanding MPLA disdain for racial and ethnic loyalties, MPLA military

commanders flush with victory in the civil war of 1975-76 assured President Neto that remaining "pockets" of UNITA resistance "would be cleaned out in no time." In the estimation of seasoned Angola specialist Gerald J. Bender, the inability of the Luanda government to revive agricultural production and to provide essential goods and services to the vast outreaches of central and southern Angola was the most decisive factor in the "maintenance and growth" of support for UNITA. The overconfident MPLA also underestimated Jonas Savimbi's political skills—rhetorical, aggregative, manipulative (see "The Politics of Survival: UNITA in Angola" by John A. Marcum in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 8, February 18, 1983). And it suffered from a failure to foresee the nature and magnitude of the South African response to an MPLA decision to permit the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) to establish training camps, supply routes, and logistical support bases on Angolan soil.

A less noted factor in the survival of UNITA is the doctrinal rigidity with which the MPLA initially approached religious affairs. Ignoring the close historical relationship between the development of Angolan nationalism and the educational activities of colonially repressed Protestant missions, MPLA ideologues mounted a hard-line, Marxist-Leninist attack on Angolan churches, Protestant and Catholic alike. The result was to convert churches into an organizational focal point of opposition. A partial exception was the Methodist Church, centered in the Mbundu region and having historical ties (Agostinho Neto's father was a Methodist pastor) to the MPLA.

In December 1982, the MPLA fired the principal orchestrator of the anti-religion campaign, the party secretary for ideological affairs, Ambrosio Lukoki (a Bakongo), and relaxed its negative policies on religion. But the damage had been done. And although President dos Santos stated in a 1984 interview that the MPLA is open to all Angolans "without distinction of race, tribe, or religious belief," the fact is that MPLA party membership is denied to church members ("believers"). Savimbi, a product of Protestant upbringing (United Church of Christ and United Church of Canada), and UNITA have thus been assured of sympathy among urban congregations and the active support of the Church of Christ in the Bush. There are also supportive links to North American Protestants.

Firm evidence of UNITA's survival gradually emerged in reports of ambushes and sabotage, especially along the Benguela railroad, and in increasingly frequent visits to UNITA camps and "must" interviews with Savimbi by Western journalists. Before independence, UNITA had been the least effective of the Angolan nationalist movements in the area of public relations, but this was reversed through Savimbi's growing flair for dealing with the media and through the help of Florence Tate and Associates of Washington, D.C.

Beginning in August 1981, devastating annual incursions by the SADF deep into Angola served more than the stated purpose of wiping out SWAPO raiders and bases. The South Africans mauled FAPLA (*Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola*), the MPLA's Soviet- and Cuban-trained army of some 35,000 (backed up by perhaps 50,000 local militia). They destroyed communications, economic infrastructure, entire towns; provided large hauls of Soviet weapons to UNITA; and demoralized FAPLA soldiers, thereby facilitating UNITA initiatives to expand the range of its operations. For the PRA, the costs were enormous. By itself, UNITA's closure of the Benguela railroad to Zambian and Zairian copper ore represents a loss of up to $100 million a year in transit fees. MPLA officials bitterly complain that UNITA activities have hampered efforts to reconstruct the country's economy.

FAPLA has countered with intensified defense tactics, e.g., forced resettlement and mining the approaches to exposed towns. The Soviets have provided the PRA with increasingly sophisticated weapons, most recently mobile radar installations, antiaircraft guns, MiG-23s, and Mi-24 helicopter gunships. The PRA pays in hard currency for most of these arms, although during the past year, given the extremity of its circumstances in the wake of devastating South African and UNITA military activity, the Soviet Union has reportedly eased and lengthened the terms of payment. FAPLA's dominance of the air is what deters UNITA from holding the towns that it captures, but the government's resort to motorized patrols (using Soviet tanks and armored cars) seems a questionable choice of response to UNITA's attack-at-dawn, blow-it-up, pillage, and melt away tactics. The rebels have infiltrated north from their Cuando Cubango and Moxico bases, spreading along the Zambia and Zaire borders. UNITA strikes in places as far-flung as Sumbe (Novo Redondo) on the coast, which it held for some 36 hours; Luanda harbor, where it claims to have planted the mines that damaged two ships; and the Lomaum dam (near Alto Catumbelo), where it damaged Huambo's principal source of electricity.

Intent upon convincing the international community that no settlement is possible without its participation, UNITA has recently adopted a strategy of dramatic, sometimes brutal psychological warfare. It captures foreign advisers and technicians (Soviet, Czechoslovak, Portuguese, British, even U.S.), marches them hundreds of miles through desolate terrain to its "provisional capital" of Jamba in the southeastern corner of Angola, and there releases them at theatrical ceremonies attended obligatorily by official representatives, and often press, from the hostages' states. Although the Western media has not labeled this hostage-gathering as "terrorism," the term seems unavoidable when reporting UNITA ferocity in urban centers. How does one differentiate between the truck-bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and the April 1984 UNITA operation in which a jeep loaded with explosives was driven to a seven-story building in Huambo, killing some 100 to 200 persons?

Savimbi has succeeded in assuring that he cannot be ignored. UNITA's hardy resourcefulness—combined

with Moroccan military training, Saudi and other Middle Eastern oil money, Zambian and Zairian willingness to ignore border crossings, possibly some Israeli expertise, and, above all, South African nurturing (crucial food and diesel supplies)—have all contributed to UNITA's development into a complex, self-propelled organization which might well survive a South African-PRA accommodation that sharply reduced South African assistance.

UNITA's "regular" forces number some 15,000 (Savimbi claims 20,000 "regular army troops" plus 20,000 "guerrillas," and says that he receives funding of as much as $60 to $70 million annually "from many Arab friends"). Soviet observers, among others, view the role of Zaire as increasingly significant. The Luanda government has given President Mobutu fair warning, however, that he would risk retaliation in the form of a possible third Katangan incursion into Shaba, were Zaire to become a major arms channnel and logistical support base for UNITA.

An MPLA-UNITA Coalition?

Jonas Savimbi manifested considerable nervousness following South Africa's February 1984 agreement with the PRA to pull its troops out of southern Angola in return for a PRA ban on SWAPO activity in the area. His public response was to speak confidently of U.S., Portuguese, and French understanding of the "motives of UNITA's struggle," and to warn that UNITA is the "best ally South Africa can have in these parts." Above all, Savimbi pressed the proposition that the South African and U.S. policy goal of a Cuban withdrawal from Angola cannot take place unless and until the MPLA brings itself to accept a political accord (presumably a coalition) with UNITA. "The key," he insists, "is to bring the MPLA and UNITA together so that the Cubans can leave."

The MPLA—embittered by years of bloodshed, unsure of its own rural support (especially the loyalty of traditional chiefs and uneducated peasants who have been cultivated by UNITA), and distrustful of Savimbi's political ambition, daring, drive, and close ties with South Africa—has rebuffed UNITA's overtures. President dos Santos has been consistent and categorical: the MPLA will not talk with those who "steal, pillage, and carry out the wishes of their South African masters. With such enemies, no dialogue is possible. We can only fight them." For the MPLA, Jonas Savimbi's dramatic appearance at President P.W. Botha's inauguration in September constituted a puzzling public confirmation of his alliance with South Africa and further justification for their "no talk" stance.

Does this unwillingness to consider negotiations with Savimbi or his top lieutenants necessarily preclude any international agreement that would encompass a major pullback and reduction of the number of Cuban troops now in Angola? Does the wide range and increasing scope of UNITA military action not require the continued presence of the Cubans? Possibly not. Because they perceive UNITA as essentially a creature of South African logistical, material, and technical (specialists in sabotage) assistance, MPLA leaders appear to believe that a limited agreement with South Africa entailing a mutual withdrawal of South African and Cuban forces and an end to South African assistance to UNITA would enable them over a period of a few years to push back and marginalize UNITA insurgency. Savimbi's November 9, 1984 convocation of over 40 journalists at his Jamba headquarters to warn that UNITA must be factored into any settlement suggests that he may share this apparent MPLA perception and fear future abandonment by South Africa.

MPLA reasoning seems to be based upon a higher estimate of its army's morale and skills and a lower estimate of those of its adversary than some observers in Luanda and elsewhere believe justified. Central to this reasoning is the assumption that an Angolan-South African accord along the lines currently being discussed, if coupled with U.S. diplomatic recognition and an increased inflow of Western development capital, would enable the MPLA government within reasonable time to deliver the goods and services needed to win the loyalty of war-weary peasants and, eventually, the civilian and military followers of Jonas Savimbi.

Some Soviet analysts have expressed the compatible view that, after many years in the bush, the more "responsible" elements within UNITA may be becoming disenchanted with what can never be a winning strategy, while Savimbi may be wedded to the romanticism of a dead-end guerrilla struggle. These Soviet analysts speculate that there may well be a split in UNITA ranks as it becomes clear that (1) any escalation of UNITA military activity will be met by a firm resolve on the part of the MPLA and its external allies to defend the integrity of the PRA, and that (2) Savimbi's continued presence as leader represents a serious obstacle to an otherwise feasible accommodation. In this connection, it is noteworthy that Savimbi is accused by detractors of authoritarian tendencies; they point to his dismissal of previously important lieutenants, such as former foreign secretary Jorge Sangumba, as indicative of an inability to tolerate independent spirits. Journalists who make the journey to Jamba seldom report the words or names of anyone other than Savimbi.

Should Savimbi make good on his public predictions that UNITA will carry the war to the heart of Luanda, it is not unlikely that, in the words of a Western diplomat in Kinshasa, "the Cubans and Russians [would] just up the stake." One thing seems indisputable. As of late 1984, Savimbi's UNITA had become a crucial factor, though a nonparticipant, in the diplomatic negotiations aimed at withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and independence for Namibia. MPLA insistence on a cessation of South African assistance to UNITA as a part of any such agreement posed a major test of South African intentions (see "Destabilization and Dialogue: South Africa's Emergence as a Regional Superpower" by John de St. Jorre in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 26, April 17, 1984).

Soviet Stakes

If, despite whatever Angola's 7 to 8 million people might hope, there seems to be little likelihood that the MPLA will negotiate with UNITA, it is also unlikely that the Soviet Union and Cuba would stand by idly should UNITA forces threaten to engulf Luanda. It does not necessarily follow, however, that Soviet strategic interests in Angola are more than modest. Although Soviet aircraft perform routine surveillance flights over the South Atlantic from Angolan airfields and Soviet naval vessels utilize Angolan ports, the Soviet presence is limited and has been kept clear of any direct confrontation with South African forces.

The USSR has engaged its prestige in Angola, however, and a sharp loss of influence or a Cuban troop withdrawal as a result of military action by South African-backed rebels would involve a serious loss of face. (See "New Trends in Soviet Policy Toward Africa" by David E. Albright in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 27, April 29, 1984.) Moscow's political and ideological investment in the MPLA covers nearly three decades. Sour Soviet experiences with earlier "African socialist" regimes (notably Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Somalia) have not yet been repeated with those professing Marxism which came to power via armed insurgency in former Portuguese colonies. When President dos Santos visited Moscow in May 1983, Soviet Communist Party head and President Yuri Andropov specifically welcomed the steadfastness ("invariable course") of the MPLA in "defending revolutionary gains and creating the foundations of a socialist society." The Soviet Union, he affirmed, "will be firmly on the side of the People's Republic of Angola in the defense of its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity."

Indeed, the Soviet Union obligated itself to do so by signing a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Angola in 1976. The military clause of that treaty pledges that the two governments will strengthen their mutual defense capabilities by developing "cooperation in the military sphere" as circumstances make appropriate. This did not, however, preclude a solid measure of prudence. It is interesting to note that Angolan MiGs and gunships have never attacked Jamba.

Soviet writings portray the PRA as a "socialist-oriented" government currently traversing a preparatory "people's democratic revolution" phase "during which conditions will be created for a transition to the stage of socialist changes." They stress the importance of the MPLA's status as a "Marxist-Leninist party" determined to "embark on the path of socialist construction."

Soviet analysts divide African countries with a "socialist orientation" into two categories. The first is composed of states where "power is wielded by mass revolutionary-democratic parties, which adhere to revolutionary but at the same time petty-bourgeois ideology"; these include states such as Tanzania and Algeria. The second and higher category is composed of states where "vanguard parties of the working people standing on Marxist-Leninist positions" are leading the development of socialist societies. Ideally, these states are expected to achieve a "wider and more profound range of revolutionary transformations embracing all or almost all spheres of social life." The foreign policies of this more advanced subgroup of "socialist-oriented" countries, it is hoped, will be "based on recognition of the principles of proletarian internationalism and on the desire for closer cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist states and with the world Communist and workers' movement."

While it is an official "given" that the vanguard MPLA will be guided by Marxist-Leninist principles, the details (country-specific qualities) of Angolan socialism are, according to veteran MPLA party leader Lúcio Lara, yet to be determined. They are to be worked out pragmatically. Luandan leadership acknowledges the crucial contributions of its Communist "allies" in military and security affairs. But it insists that the People's Republic of Angola is no one's satellite. It adamantly denies allegations by critics that Soviet, East German, and Cuban advisors really run key government ministries. President José Eduardo dos Santos speaks warmly of "low cost," multifaceted assistance by Cuban teachers, doctors, civil engineers, and agronomists who "understand" the "sort of society we wish to build." When asked earlier this year about Angolan-Soviet relations, dos Santos noted suggestively that "relations between parties and peoples do not always develop without a hitch" but then concluded that recent visits to the Soviet Union and other socialist states had given him "the impression that our present problems are [now] better understood."

In the economic sphere, it is Western, not Eastern, expertise and capital that is becoming increasingly prominent. In addition to the revenue-generating role of Western oil companies such as Gulf and Texaco, West European involvement is expanding in many sectors. French aid is helping to revive coffee production and marketing; an Austrian firm (Austro-Mineral) has restarted iron ore production at Kassinga; Spanish assistance is helping to resuscitate the fishing industry of Namibe (Moçâmedes); and Swedish bankers are advising the National Bank of Angola on the rescheduling of its debt structure (international, largely short-term indebtedness was officially estimated at the outset of 1984 to be $2.2 billion and rapidly rising). The desire for increased Western ties extends from capital and technology to education. The rector of the formative University of Angola, along with other educators, evidences eagerness for diplomatic negotiations to open the door to scholarly exchanges with the United States.

The Soviets nonetheless continue to have important stakes in Angola. Faced with a sudden decline or total reversal of their role, they would have to consider whether to respond with a massive infusion of weapons and surrogate troops (Cuban or other). Their decision might depend upon whether they were presented with the possibility of an "honorable" resolution. Assuming that the drain of war on Soviet, as well as Cuban, South African, and, most important, MPLA human and

material resources provides an incentive to find a way out, attentiveness to face, sensitivities, *amour-propre* becomes critical. Above all, the Soviets seem determined in Africa as elsewhere to be seen and treated as a major power, whose interest in and relations with the continent have the same legitimacy as those of the United States.

The Future

The PRA's evident dual desire to break out of past isolation (more Western journalists are to be allowed in) and to establish its authority throughout the country does not suggest a willingness to pursue these goals in the manner of Mozambique. It is not prepared to negotiate a comprehensive Nkomati Accord of "nonaggression and good neighborliness" with South Africa. Unlike Mozambique, Angola has no common border with South Africa or related need to enter into close economic association. For the same reason—no common border—the PRA rejects the notion of following Mozambique's example of breaking off longstanding ties with the African National Congress (ANC). (The sporting of *Libertar Mandela* T-shirts in Luanda is accompanied by rumors of an ANC military camp somewhere in the interior.) And by insisting on implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 on Namibia as part of any international troop disengagement agreement, the PRA hopes to assure that SWAPO will have clear access to a political victory at the Namibian polls. Of late, mobile conventional units of SWAPO have been increasing that movement's stock with the MPLA by engaging in what is reported to be the most effective fighting being conducted against UNITA guerrillas in central Angola.

In sum, the PRA is as determined to resist the "humiliation" of a sweeping Nkomati-style accord as it is to resist negotiating with Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. Accordingly, even if U.S. diplomatic efforts to broker an Angolan-South African agreement should lead to Cuban-South African troop disengagements and independence for Namibia (a big if), Angolan-South African relations are likely to remain minimal and wary and the MPLA-UNITA contest will likely continue its sanguinary course. Tragically for all its people, the peace that foreign diplomats, economists, businessmen, and scholars see as essential for the reconstruction and development of Angola is not yet in sight.

John A. Marcum is the author of *The Angolan Revolution*, Volumes I (*The Anatomy of an Explosion, 1950-1962*) and II (*Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1976*), MIT Press, 1969 and 1978. His most recent book is *Education, Race, and Social Change in South Africa*, University of California Press, 1982. Dr. Marcum, a former president of the African Studies Association, served as Academic Vice Chancellor of the University of California at Santa Cruz from 1979 to 1984. He is devoting his current sabbatical year to intensive examination of the southern African scene, and recently returned from visits to the Soviet Union, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, and Angola.

Other Recommended Reading

VOLUME VI ◆ NUMBER 6

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES ◆ SERIES

The United States and South Africa:
Realities and Red Herrings

by
Helen Kitchen
and
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Contents