ANGOLA, NATIONAL LIBERATION, AND THE SOVIET UNION

by

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On 25 April 1974, the Portuguese Armed Forces staged a coup d'etat in Lisbon, overthrowing Marcello Caetano, the successor to long-time dictator Antonio Salazar. Almost immediately, demonstrations and mass rallies broke out across Portugal as political movements loosely defined as Communists, Socialists, and Popular Democrats struggled for political control of the country. This struggle brought new strains to NATO and the Western alliance. Perhaps just as important as the events in Portugal and the strains in NATO was the fact that the new government in Lisbon intended to free the remaining Portuguese colonies.

The Portuguese empire was generally recognized as "the last colonial empire" throughout the world.[1] The decision of the new government in Lisbon to decolonize the empire was universally applauded despite the fact that the Salazar government had done woefully little to prepare its colonial holdings for independence. The Portuguese Armed Forces Council, itself brought into power—in the eyes of some—because of "the struggle of the Portuguese democratic forces and by the successes of the national liberation movement in the Portuguese colonies in Africa,"[2] proceeded with its plans to dissolve the empire.

Of all Portugal's colonies, the South African territory of Angola was probably the area least prepared for independence. It was also the richest, with considerable wealth in oil, diamonds, and coffee. In the words of one American observer during early 1975, "Angola at this point is an open and inviting area for outside influence."[3]

Even at that time, outside influence other than Portuguese had long existed in Angola. Soviet, American, and Chinese aid to the three political movements fighting for predominance in Angola had been going on for a decade, though on a limited scale. Angola, despite peaceful coexistence and detente, was inevitably drawn into the vortex of superpower rivalry.

The Angolan Civil War—with the United States and the People's Republic of China supplying aid to the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), and with the Soviet Union and Cuba supplying aid to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)—provides an excellent backdrop to examine the boundaries and limits of detente and peaceful coexistence as defined by the Soviet Union and to study policy toward one national liberation movement during detente. This article will undertake those tasks. Before the Angolan situation itself may be examined, however, it is necessary to understand the general Soviet attitude toward national liberation movements during detente.

AN OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

National liberation is not a new concept to Marxism-Leninism or the Soviet Union. Lenin apparently made his first reference to national liberation wars during 1915 when he described them as attempts of colonies to break away from the mother nations.[4] Lenin identified these wars with the ongoing world revolutionary process led by the Communist Party,[5] and declared that the Soviet state would help those movements when and if possible. According to Lenin, Soviet aid was

to adopt a form which was "commensurate with its own strength."[6]

Since Lenin's day, the Soviet Union has followed Lenin's desire, sometimes extending moral or ideological support to national liberation movements and sometimes extending varying quantities of material and military aid. At the same time, Soviet leaders have on occasion stressed and defined different aspects of national liberation in different ways so that, to a considerable degree, the concepts surrounding national liberation have been obscured.

During the current era of detente, this has been particularly true. However, upon closer examination, the Soviet view of national liberation during detente is exceedingly and surprisingly clear.[7]

To Soviet ideologues, there are two major types of wars of national liberation. The first, as reflected by the struggles in Algeria, Kenya, and Angola, revolve around "armed struggles of the oppressed peoples" for their states' independence. The second, as reflected by the US interventions in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, revolve around "the wars of newly independent states" against "imperialist aggression's" attempts to restore the colonial regime.[8] Both types are considered "just wars" in the mainstream of the world revolutionary process.

The various national liberation movements themselves are one of the three streams of the world revolution, the other two being the socialist commonwealth and the world Communist movement. The national liberation movements are in a sense the least significant of the three streams, since they are composed of different classes and interests within the country struggling for its independence. Nonetheless, even during detente, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries promise to "support peoples who are fighting for their freedom," in the words of General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev.[9]

Within the national liberation movement, the struggle against imperialism is being conducted "by different social forces, radical, moderate, and even conservative" in nature, according to Moscow.[10] The diversity within the national liberation movement has two major effects, it is argued. First, progress towards the elimination of exploitation is rendered more difficult. Second, newly independent nations governed by national liberation movements will follow different paths of development, some capitalist, some noncapitalist. This, combined with the fact that those nations find themselves on "different levels of economic, social, and political development"[11] already, leads to tremendous diversity within the developing world, Moscow reasons, which necessitates great flexibility in Soviet foreign policy.[12]

Even while the national liberation movements strive to obtain independence for their respective countries, yet another transformation is taking place, according to the Soviet leaders. This is the transition of the struggle for "national liberation" to one of "social liberation" as the former national movements move increasingly to eliminate "all forms of exploitation" within their countries.[13] This movement toward "social liberation," Moscow believes, strengthens the unity between the three streams of the revolutionary process.

Detente, meanwhile, benefits the national liberation movements, since it prevents imperialism "from openly using force against the emergent states."[14] Since peaceful coexistence specifically excludes the struggle against imperialism, Soviet support to national liberation movements is ideologically legitimate and necessary. According to Leonid Brezhnev, speaking to the Twenty-Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: "No one should expect that in conditions of detente the Communists will become reconciled to capitalist exploitation or that monopolists will become supporters of revolution."[15]

With this brief background to the Soviet view of national liberation during detente, we may now turn to an examination of Soviet attitudes and policies toward Angola. While it would be an overstatement to argue that ideological tenets determined Soviet policy toward Angola, it is probably legitimate to maintain that Soviet policy did, in fact, conform to ideology.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE ANGOLA CRISIS

The national liberation movement in Angola may be traced back to February 1961, when rioting broke out in the Angolan capital, Luanda. Even from that early date, the Angolan liberation movement was beset by internal strife and disagreement. The earliest two movements were the Marxist-oriented MPLA under Agostinho Neto and the FNLA under Holden Roberto. The MPLA's power bases were in the urban centers of Angola and in the Kimbundu tribe. The FNLA, meanwhile, based its strength in the Bakongo tribe, which lived in Northern Angola and, to a great extent, in neighboring Zaire. During the 1960's, the US Central Intelligence Agency supported Roberto with $10,000 to $20,000 a year. President Nixon apparently stopped this aid in 1970 after a National Security Memorandum concluded that the Angolan insurgent movements were "not realistic or supportable alternatives" to continued colonial rule.[16] The MPLA, meanwhile, received comparable assistance from the Soviet Union.[17] According to one Soviet source, the Kremlin had been extending aid to the "Angolan patriots" from "the very beginning of the national liberation struggle," which "started with the uprising of February 4, 1961."[18] Although it is probably safe to assume that this Soviet claim is somewhat self-serving, it is evident that the seeds for potential Soviet-American confrontation were already being sown.

It is interesting to note, however, that Soviet reference to the Angolan liberation struggle throughout the 1960's and early 1970's apparently did not differentiate between the three major movements in Angola. In many instances, Soviet leaders and publications referred to the "national liberation movement" in Angola without castigating any of the factions as being "false movements" or "agents of imperialism."[19] Thus, while Soviet preference for the MPLA manifested itself through Soviet aid to that faction, there was no evidence to suggest that the Soviet Union regarded either the FNLA or UNITA as anything other than segments of the national liberation movement during this period. All three of the groups were opposed to Portuguese imperialism, and, at least for the time being, that was sufficient for the Soviets to regard them all equals, although the MPLA was clearly the preferred leader.[20]

While the MPLA and FNLA were receiving Soviet and American aid throughout the 1960's, the third liberation movement, Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, was not as fortunate. Receiving his main support from the Ovimbundu tribe of central and Southern Angola, Savimbi was forced to fight in the bush and relied on the Maoist rhetoric of "self-sufficiency." The Chinese did in fact extend some aid to Savimbi during the 1960's, but it was of a quite limited amount. By the time the Portuguese Revolution of April 1974 occurred, the situation in Angola was, to say the least, fraught with potential conflict and obvious confusion.

After the Portuguese Armed Forces Council made known its intention to grant Angola its freedom, the long-simmering interest of the three major concerned powers in the African nation escalated considerably. During late 1974 and early 1975, all three sides, apparently fearing the implication and results of a lack of action as much as anything else, increased their support for their respective factions. The situation was additionally complicated by the fact that the Chinese had begun supporting the FNLA during 1973. Chinese aid was now going to

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two of the movements. When the US Government resumed aid to the FNLA in January 1975, the US and China were, in essence, allies against the Soviet Union.

The exact action-reaction phenomenon of great power support to the various factions in Angola is still unknown in the open literature. However, it is known that on 15 January 1975, the 40 Committee of the United States National Security Council met and decided to resume aid to Holden Roberto's FNLA to the amount of $300,000, considerably more than it had previously been receiving.[21] Whether this money was extended in response to actual, projected, or imagined Soviet aid increases is unknown. Undoubtedly, though, Soviet intelligence became aware of Roberto's new wealth as his forces became better equipped. Perhaps surprisingly, there was no response from the Soviet Union to the 40 Committee's action, except for an increase in Soviet material support to the MPLA, which was probably to be expected. Both the FNLA and UNITA continued to be regarded as national liberation movements despite the renewed and strengthened ties with the United States and China.

Soviet broadcasts and publications throughout critical December, January, and February referred to all three factions as "national liberation movements" as plans were made to transfer sovereignty to a transitional government comprised of MPLA, UNITA, FNLA, and Portuguese representatives.[22] Often, this arrangement was praised. Always, the first three groups were identified as "national liberation movements." To be sure, the MPLA continued to be praised as the leading representative of the three,[23] but as yet there was no Soviet criticism of the FNLA or UNITA. This stood in marked contrast to the Soviet attitude toward the so-called Federation for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), which was condemned for "working in the interests of the Western oil monopolies."[24]

Soviet willingness to accept all three liberation movements as legitimate during this period may have been the product of several factors. First, and perhaps most importantly, Soviet relations with the MPLA in January and February were, to say the least, rather uncertain. During 1973, the MPLA had split into two factions, one under Neto and the other under Daniel Chipenda. At the time, the Soviet Union favored the Chipenda faction. Within a year, though, the Soviets attempted to change their position by warning Neto of a Chipenda-backed assassination attempt against him. This was not the end of Soviet difficulties. The Kremlin cut off weapons shipments to the MPLA just before the April 1974 coup in Portugal and did not resume them until October or November 1974.[25] Thus, even with clear Soviet preference for the MPLA and obvious MPLA dependence on the Soviet Union, relations between the two were undoubtedly somewhat uncertain.

Second, with both the FNLA and UNITA issuing racist rhetoric and opposing outside resource concessions, both groups remained potential centers of anti-Western sentiment following independence despite their willingness to accept American and Chinese support. Given the uncertainty of both Soviet-MPLA relations and future events in Angola, the Soviet Union was undoubtedly hesitant to reduce its potential options in Angola and consequently continued to view all groups as national liberation movements.

Finally, with the flexible Soviet criteria for identifying national liberation movements, it may be argued that the limited US and Chinese support for the FNLA and UNITA had not yet superceded the limit beyond which "taking advantage of imperialism" became "subservience to imperialism," and that the two factions were, therefore, still "legitimate" national liberation movements.

The Soviet stance may have been based on one or all of these explanations. However, regardless of which explanation is in fact correct, the Soviet willingness to accept all three groups as national liberation movements was not destined to last.

ESCALATION: THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT BREAKS DOWN

On 15 January 1975, representatives of the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA met with

Portuguese representatives and created a transitional government which would rule Angola until Independence Day on November 11. The transitional government was to arrange for elections to be held not later than October and to oversee the integration of the armed forces of the various movements. The three movements would "never again allow minor divergences" to lead to hostility among themselves, according to Neto.

Neto's hope was short-lived. By March, fighting had broken out between MPLA and FNLA forces in and around Luanda. Sporadic battles lasted through June, when the three movements again came to an agreement, this time under the guiding hand of Kenyan President Kenyatta. Under the so-called "Nakuru Agreement," all three Angolan parties pledged to "increase support for the Transitional Government," "avoid substituting themselves for the government," and "demand that the various ministries carry out the decisions already taken."[26] This time, the agreement lasted three weeks before fighting broke out. By August, the FNLA withdrew from the government and within a month had been driven from Luanda.

Throughout the January to August period, both the Soviet Union and the United States continued to support their respective preferred sides. Soviet aid included small arms, AK47s, machine guns, bazookas, and rockets. The exact quantity and value of Soviet aid is unknown. American aid to the FNLA included similar weapons. As Soviet aid escalated, the 40 Committee met again on 17 July and extended Roberto an additional $30 million, funnelled to the FNLA primarily through Zaire.[27] Reports of Cuban and Soviet military instructors and technicians in Luanda were verified in August.[28]

How did the Soviet Union view these events? Obviously, Soviet preference for the MPLA existed, but at least through the early months of 1975 both Soviet policy and rhetoric were rather restrained. While Soviet aid to the MPLA increased, large-scale Soviet involvement apparently did not occur until after the original January agreements had broken down, and even then no verified reports of Soviet or Cuban personnel in Angola were obtained until after the transitional government proved unworkable. This does not alter the fact of Soviet involvement, but rather points out Soviet restraint, at least until August.

At the same time, Soviet rhetoric often warned about the danger of "procolonial undercover activity in the hope of splitting the liberation movements."[29] By June, with fighting going on in Luanda, the warned-against split had occurred. "Portuguese colonialists and reactionaries" had succeeded in "splitting the movement," the Kremlin argued. Imperialists were using their "agents in the national liberation movement," since they did "not dare openly to intervene in Angola."[30] While both the FNLA and UNITA were still recognized as liberation movements, their increasingly close ties to the United States and China jeopardized continued Soviet acceptance of them as part of the movement. Nonetheless, in June a Soviet publication presented a rather straightforward assessment of the political bases of the FNLA and UNITA. According to *New Times*:

> The FNLA . . . had its headquarters in neighboring Zaire, where it recruited supporters from among the several hundred thousand Angolan refugees but never actually conducted regular armed operations. The third organization to spring up was UNITA . . . whose leader Jonas Savimbi relied for support chiefly on one of the peoples of Angola living in his native region of Nova Lisboa.[31]

The signing of the Nakuru Agreement was viewed optimistically in Moscow. The agreement "narrowed the scope for the intrigues of neocolonialists," according to *Pravda*, and brought the "possibility of peace" to Angola. The "real initiators" of the fighting in Angola, the same article asserted, "were foreign neocolonial circles . . . and local reaction" which tried to "strike against the MPLA."[32] Neither the

FNLA nor UNITA was specifically mentioned as part of that "local reaction." To the Soviets, the trend toward polarization had been halted. The Kremlin probably recognized that irreconcilable differences could destroy the agreement and reinitiate polarization, but for the present such a possibility had been averted.

The breakdown of the Nakuru Agreement and the accompanying increase in American aid to the FNLA apparently marked a turning point in Angola as far as the Soviets were concerned. In addition to verified reports of Soviet and Cuban personnel in Angola, late July and early August witnessed a significant change in Soviet attitude toward the three national liberation movements. As the FNLA offensive against Luanda geared up in July, both the FNLA and UNITA were increasingly viewed as tools of "imperialist reaction" sponsored by those who were "opponents of democratic changes" and who wished "to preserve the racist and colonial status quo" in the new nation.[33] The MPLA was described increasingly as "the most representative mass party" which had "borne the main burden of the national liberation struggle" and which "stands in defense of true independence."[34] Perhaps most significantly, one Radio Moscow broadcast introduced the class struggle to the Angolan national liberation movement for the first time. The MPLA, Radio Moscow informed its listeners, expressed the interests of "the working people," while the FNLA and UNITA expressed interests of the bourgeoisie and "narrow tribal interests."[35] To the Soviets, polarization had occurred, and the struggle had been joined.

MOVING TOWARD INDEPENDENCE: NATIONAL LIBERATION OR CIVIL WAR?

Until early August, Savimbi's UNITA stayed relatively aloof from the fighting between the MPLA and FNLA. Operating from its base in South and central Angola, UNITA's armed forces remained undertrained and underequipped despite Chinese support. By late September, UNITA and the FNLA had arranged a "marriage of convenience" against the MPLA.

By this time, however, the Angolan situation was even more complicated than it previously had been. South African troops had moved to the Cunene hydroelectric complex on the Angolan-Namibian border during late August. At about the same time, French President Giscard d'Estaing redirected French arms destined for South Africa to the FNLA. American weapons were airlifted from West Germany through Zaire to the FNLA. The Soviet Union continued to supply the MPLA through Luanda and the port of Lobito.

During October, South African columns accompanied by white mercenaries moved north into Angola, supporting Savimbi's forces. At about the same time, the first contingents of Cuban troops arrived in Angola. Eventually, Cuban strength would surpass 12,000 men. The Angolan conflict had been internationalized, and the unfortunate country had not even achieved independence. According to US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, there had not yet been any Soviet-American conversation on Angola.[36]

The changing Soviet attitude toward the Angolan situation had meanwhile become more evident. The FNLA and UNITA were regarded as "splittists," the MPLA as "defenders of the revolution," and the conflict itself as first a war of national liberation, then a civil war, and finally, apparently, as a war of national liberation once again. Perhaps surprisingly, the Kremlin appeared somewhat unsure about how to categorize the "splittist" movements. On the one hand, they were occasionally regarded as genuine national liberation movements. On the other hand, they were sometimes described as "phoney liberation movements."

Izvestiia condemned the "perfidious imperialist tactics of splitting the national liberation movement by planting phoney organizations in its ranks," organizations which were "disguised only superficially as fighters for national liberation." To *Izvestiia*, the FNLA particularly fitted this description, while UNITA was "neither one

thing nor the other."[37] The FNLA was regularly condemned throughout August, September, and October as a "puppet of the international monopoly circles,"[38] and following UNITA's alliance with the FNLA and acceptance of support from South Africa, it received similar treatment.[39] The FNLA in particular was verbally assaulted as "no more than an instrument in the hands of the American intelligence service and the Maoists."[40] Thus, on many occasions, the "splittist groups" were no longer regarded as national liberation movements.

In several instances, however, both organizations were referred to as "splittists within the national liberation movement."[41] The issue was more than one of mere semantics. If the FNLA and UNITA were no longer national liberation movements, then, if they were victorious in the Angolan conflict, Soviet relations with them following the conflict would necessarily be curtailed. If they remained national liberation movements, however, Soviet relations with them in the event of FNLA-UNITA success would not necessarily have to be curtailed. The apparent Soviet quandary over the categorization of the FNLA and UNITA may have reflected a debate on policy toward Angola in the Kremlin itself: Should Moscow, already committed to the MPLA's cause, increase that commitment?

By early November, Soviet relations with and attitude toward the MPLA were quite excellent. The MPLA had become "the most authoritative political organization in the country,"[42] a "progressive organization"[43] which expressed "the will of the Angolan people"[44] and served as their "revolutionary vanguard."[45] Charges of Soviet interference in Angola and aid to the MPLA were needed to "distract attention" from pro-imperialist efforts in that country, Moscow argued.[46] Significantly, however, those charges were not denied.

As the South African forces and other pro-UNITA and pro-FNLA forces increased their presence in Angola, the Soviet Union more and more adopted the position that the "civil war" in Angola was changing in character. Following the breakdown of the Nakuru Agreement, the Soviet Union had apparently begun to view the struggle as a civil war.

According to *Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army*, civil war is "the armed struggle between the antagonistic classes of a country, a struggle for the state power by means of violence."[47] As noted, the Soviet Union had adopted this viewpoint about the Angolan conflict. Thus, throughout the fall of 1975, the Kremlin's references to "civil war" in Angola were probably to be expected.[48] Even during this period, however, there was some hesitation to typify the war as solely a civil war. According to *New Times*, the conflict could "only by extension . . . be qualified as a civil war."[49] The United States and other imperialists had "lost all faith in the ability of the pro-imperialist groups" (the FNLA and UNITA) and therefore had to "bring fresh forces into the action."[50] "The pretext of 'civil war'" was being used by outside forces, Moscow maintained, to legitimize their own intervention.[51]

The war in Angola, by November, could have been typed as either a "civil war" or a "war of national liberation," according to Soviet standards. This presented no problem since "several types [of war] often intertwine and one type changes into another."[52] Following Angolan independence, the Soviet Union left no doubt about which view it had adopted:

> Imperialist propoganda [*sic*] is attempting to allege that a civil war is going on in Angola. No. The Peoples Republic of Angola is fighting against the forces of imperialist and of domestic reaction, which is in the service of foreign capital.[53]

The MPLA was, to the Soviets, now conducting a war of national liberation by itself. An understanding of this fundamental change in the Soviet position is basic to the understanding of later Soviet policy statements.

Why had the "imperialists" chosen Angola as the location in which to oppose "liberation"? Why had not a similar effort

been made in Guinea or Mozambique? To the Kremlin, there were two major reasons.

Probably the most important was Angola's potentially vast wealth. International monopolies, working through the various bourgeois governments, feared that the MPLA would keep control of Angola's wealth "in Angolan hands" and were therefore trying to prevent the people of Angola "from becoming complete masters of their own land," according to the Soviets.[54] The "strategy of tension" which existed in Angola through the summer was "encouraged, if not plotted," by Western European and US firms, since they were fearful of losing their valuable concessions.[55] Angola, it was argued, was intended to serve as a bridgehead for new imperialist economic and political expansion into Africa and was therefore viewed as an "imperialist counter-offensive" against the advances of the world revolution.[56]

A second reason for "imperialist intervention" in the newly independent nation, the Russians reasoned, was the defense of "racist regimes" in Southern Africa, particularly in the Republic of South Africa, Southwest Africa (Namibia), and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).[57] The Soviets argued that imperialism hoped to reduce the pressures for change in the rest of Southern Africa by opposing the "democratic forces" in Angola.

ANGOLAN INDEPENDENCE OR RUSSIAN EXPANSION?

On 7 November 1975, four days before Angolan independence was to be granted, Arvid Pelshe, Soviet Communist Party Politburo member and Chairman of the Party Control Commission, delivered an address commemorating the 58th anniversary of the Soviet revolution. In his address, Pelshe confirmed continuing Soviet support for "fighters for freedom" and "the patriots in Angola."[58] If there were any lingering doubts about who was included and excluded in the Soviet definition of those terms, Soviet actions in Angola four days after Pelshe's speech should have removed them.

Immediately after Angolan independence, the Soviet Union massively increased its military aid to the MPLA. Some estimates of Soviet aid to the MPLA exceed $300 million.[59] Anti-aircraft guns, 120-millimeter and 144-millimeter artillery, 122-millimeter rockets, armored cars, T-34 and T-54 tanks, and Mig 21 fighters were delivered to MPLA-controlled ports and airports aboard Cuban and Soviet vessels and long-range Soviet Antonov 22s. The Cuban troop buildup also accelerated. Reportedly, Soviet officials asked for control of Luanda airport to better protect the transports, but the MPLA leadership refused.[60]

The MPLA's Peoples' Republic of Angola was not the only proclaimed government in Angola. Portuguese High Commissioner Cardoso had carried out his promise that if he could not hand over power to "two or three" of the Angolan movements, he would "just get on the plane and leave."[61] Neto's government in Luanda was therefore not officially given power. Jonas Savimbi, in Huambo (formerly Nova Lisboa), proclaimed a coalition FNLA-UNITA state, the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Angola. By mid-November, 15 nations had recognized Savimbi's government, and 20 nations recognized Neto's. One of them was the Soviet Union.

To the Kremlin, the MPLA remained the "vanguard and leader of the Angolan people."[62] The FNLA and UNITA had shown "their true faces" when they had "sabotaged the work" of the transitional government,[63] and consequently their new Peoples' Democratic Republic of Angola had no legitimacy. The government at Huambo was a "tool of procolonialist circles" which was "relying entirely on the forces of foreign interventions."[64] The previous rivalry between the Western powers had been "left aside for the time being" while UNITA and the FNLA combined forces.[65] Beyond that, the "proimperialist forces" had "united with Maoist provokationists [*sic*]."[66] The Huambo government's reliance on mercenary forces was particularly condemned.[67]

Soviet aid to the MPLA, meanwhile, was praised as being entirely proper, just, and

within the confines of detente. As Soviet aid to the MPLA increased through November, and as Western condemnation of that aid grew stronger, the Soviet press accelerated its efforts to legitimize Soviet aid. The propriety of Soviet aid to the Peoples' Republic of Angola was stressed on almost a daily basis,[68] and it was continually emphasized that detente "does not mean and never has meant" the "freezing of the social-political status quo in the world." Thus, even under detente, it was totally correct for the Soviet Union to extend "sympathy, compassion, and aid" to "fighters for national independence."[69] According to *Izvestiia*:

> Events in Angola confirm that the anti-colonist revolution does not end with the achievement of independence. It must still be defended and developed. Consequently, the continuation of aid to the MPLA national liberation movement, which has become the ruling party in the young independent state, is also quite natural. Many African governments have enjoyed and continue to enjoy comprehensive Soviet aid. Therefore, there is nothing unusual in the Soviet support of the Peoples' Republic of Angola.[70]

While on occasions Moscow warned that the Angolan situation was "fraught with the danger of extending beyond regional boundaries,"[71] more often than not it appeared that the Kremlin was confident the struggle could be limited to the confines of Southern Africa. An important factor in this optimism was the apparently growing opposition within the United States to any large-scale involvement in the struggle. Although the United States did contribute $60 million in aid and equipment to the FNLA and UNITA, the Senate's 54 to 22 defeat of an appropriation bill for Angola during mid-December removed the possibility of more US aid and, in effect, guaranteed the success of the MPLA. To the Soviets, the Senate's vote indicated that Congress "remembered the lessons of Vietnam." The vote was praised as a "realistic position," one which "refused to subsidize the Peoples' Republic of Angola's opponents."[72]

Throughout 1975, the Soviet leaders and press made no reference to Cuban soldiers in Angola. "Soviet and Cuban support" for the MPLA was praised regularly, but the presence of Cuban troops in Africa remained undiscussed in the Soviet media. While the motivation behind the presence of the Caribbean island's forces in Angola is still a subject of debate,[73] there is no debate about their impact. The 12,000 well-trained Cubans clearly swung the tide of battle to the MPLA.

RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT

The United States and the Soviet Union first discussed the Angolan crisis in October 1975. No results were achieved. This opening failure set the course for future Soviet-American discussions on the problem. Secretary of State Kissinger traveled to Moscow in mid-January 1976 and tried to establish a dialogue on Angola with Brezhnev several times during the course of his visit. Brezhnev refused to discuss the crisis. Brezhnev's refusal was understandable. By mid-January, the combined MPLA-Cuban forces were beginning to dominate the military situation in Angola.

The struggle in Angola concerned nations other than those directly involved in the fighting. Other African states, particularly those in the Organization of African Unity (OAU), were also concerned. The OAU met in Addis Ababa in mid-January to discuss the conflict. At the meeting, Nigeria introduced a resolution condemning the armed aggression "against Africa by the troops of the fascist and racist regime of South Africa in collusion with the FNLA and UNITA." A different resolution was introduced by Senegal condemning "all recourse to mercenaries and any supply of arms to the parties of the conflict in Angola" and calling for all non-African states to stop shipping arms to Angola. The two opposed resolutions received 22 votes apiece. Any anxieties which the African states may have had over Soviet or Cuban intervention in Angola were overridden to a great degree by their anxieties over South African intervention in Angola.

The Soviet Union, not surprisingly, strongly supported the Nigerian position. The

Senegalese resolution, to *Pravda*, was an "obvious product of the influence of Western imperialist circles."[74] On the whole, the Russians approved of the "mature realistic approach" which the OAU took to "the evaluation of the actions of genuine friends and real enemies," particularly "the Soviet Union and Cuba."[75]

Despite the obvious and continuing Soviet support for the MPLA and opposition to the FNLA and UNITA, the Soviet position on Angola was occasionally misinterpreted in the United States.[76] A *Pravda* editorial in early January restated the Soviet position on Angola, but its call for an end to "foreign intervention" clearly implied an end to "unjustified" foreign intervention, that is, support for the "phoney" liberation movements. According to *Pravda*:

> At one time—when the question of creating a transitional government in Angola in which representatives of different movements would participate was posed—the Soviet Union favored this development of events. But if internal political affairs in Angola took a different course, the blame rests with the leaders of the splittists, who launched an armed struggle with active outside support. . . . There is every reason to assert that both the conflict in Angola and the general worsening of the situation around it results from flagrant, impudent interference in the affairs of the Angolan people by imperialist forces, racists of the South African regime, and mercenaries. The Maoists are acting in concert with them.[77]

This basic Soviet position was reaffirmed later in January when the Kremlin declared that it would welcome an Angolan peace which included "all patriotic forces standing for genuine independence and free development of their country."[78] *Izvestiia* openly stated that this was the aim of the Peoples' Republic of Angola under the MPLA. The Peoples' Democratic Republic of Angola under UNITA and the FNLA clearly, by Soviet standards, did not meet this criterion. This interpretation was further supported by *New Times*:

> Consolidation of Angola's genuinely patriotic forces would of course be of unquestionable value. But can those be called exponents of the people's interests who are using foreign mercenaries notorious for their outrages in Algeria and Indochina to fight their compatriots and have entered . . . into a criminal compact with the South African racists?[79]

The answer to this rhetorical question was clearly intended to be, "No!" The MPLA was a "genuinely patriotic force." The FNLA and UNITA were not. They had "committed high treason."[80]

Meanwhile, continued Soviet support for the MPLA proceeded from altruistic motives, the Kremlin maintained, not from a desire to seek "economic, military, or other privileges in Angola."[81] Another article stressed that Moscow wanted "neither military bases, nor political privileges, nor priority rights to exploit the country's natural wealth."[82] "Any assertion that the USSR intends to set up military bases in Angola" was a lie, according to *Pravda*, since Soviet support to the MPLA was determined solely by Soviet devotion to "the just struggle of the peoples against colonialism and neocolonialism."[83] The Soviet Union had merely "responded to the request of the legitimate government" of the Peoples' Republic of Angola.[84] The MPLA's success, the Russians argued, would "protect the country's natural resources and its population from exploitation" and would serve as a "mighty stimulus to the development of the liberation struggle of the peoples of Namibia, the Republic of South Africa, and Zimbabwe."[85]

Cuban aid to the MPLA was similarly altruistic, Moscow maintained, and American attempts to "blackmail" Cuba because of its involvement in Angola were "shameful."[86] According to Georgi Arbatov, the director of the prestigious Soviet Institute for the Study of the United States, Soviet and Cuban aid contributed to the MPLA's success, but it was not the sole contributing factor. The American reaction to Soviet and Cuban aid to the Peoples' Republic of Angola, Arbatov reasoned, indicated that the

United States was "unable to extricate itself from its well-worn anti-Communist rut."[87]

The United States' "well-worn anti-Communist rut" had, however, been altered considerably despite Arbatov's claim. With the termination of US aid, the FNLA and UNITA rapidly lost ground. By the end of February 1976, Holden Roberto and the FNLA had fled into Zaire, and Jonas Savimbi and UNITA had disappeared into the Angolan bush. During the two years since these events transpired, it has become exceedingly clear that the struggle for Angola is far from over; nonetheless, Agostinho Neto and the MPLA remain almost universally recognized as the rulers of the new Peoples' Republic of Angola.

CONCLUSIONS

During the months since the end of the height of the Angolan crisis, Soviet-MPLA relations have remained close. *Pravda* announced the initiation of regular Moscow-Luanda air service in mid-April 1976,[88] and Angolan Prime Minister Lopo de Nascimento journeyed to Moscow in mid-May to conclude agreements on military, scientific, economic, and cultural cooperation as well as agreements on trade, shipping, and fishing. Angola also participated as an observer at the July 1976 meeting of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in East Berlin. In October 1976, Neto met with Brezhnev and other Soviet officials and concluded a 20-year "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" which included increased Soviet military aid.[89]

Even so, indications of strains within the relationship do exist. Although the continuation of fighting in Angola weighed heavily against the inclusion of a stop in Luanda on former Soviet President Podgorny's late March 1977 tour of Africa, Angola nonetheless was conspicuous by its absence. Events surrounding the attempted coup against Neto on 27 May 1977 provide more concrete proof of Soviet-MPLA discord. Neto expelled strongly pro-Soviet Minister of the Interior Nito Alves from the MPLA on 21 May, and when Alves' supporters attempted to displace Neto, the Angolan President ruthlessly suppressed them. Since then, reports from Luanda indicate the Kremlin has reduced its arms shipments to Angola.

Cuban-MPLA relations have apparently suffered no similar setbacks. Castro met with Neto in Conakry in March 1976. In July, Neto visited Havana and reached agreements on increased military aid and technical assistance. More recently, Castro traveled to Angola for a week-long visit during March 1977. Even more importantly, despite Castro's onetime promise to withdraw Cuban forces from Angola, the Caribbean nation's soldiers continue to lead the ongoing antiguerrilla operations in Angola. In fact, Castro has declared that Cuban troops will now stay in Angola until the MPLA's forces can provide Angolan security for themselves. With guerrilla operations expanding in Southern Angola under the direction of Savimbi's UNITA, and with the FNLA and FLEC still operating in Northern Angola and Cabinda, the possibility for the withdrawal of Cuban forces in the immediate future appears remote. The strength of the FNLA, FLEC, and UNITA is still great enough so that even Neto has been forced to admit that his government faces "serious domestic problems." While Neto has declared that he would grant neither economic concessions nor military base rights to outside interests, the mere exigency of staying in power may force him to reconsider his position.

If in fact Neto lives up to his word, then there appears to be little possibility of Angola becoming a "Soviet satellite," a fear which was expressed with considerable emphasis during the height of the crisis. The current Soviet-Angolan disagreement only serves to underline this point. Nonetheless, the implications of the Angolan crisis extend far beyond the future political and diplomatic orientation of Angola. In the aftermath of Angola, it is evident that the Soviet Union sees further victories for national liberation movements in Southern Africa as distinct possibilities in the immediate future. "New victories of the national liberation movement," specifically in Angola,

Mozambique, and Guinea, are pointed to as proof that the "world revolutionary process is going forward on a wider basis."[90] Soviet aid to national liberation movements furthering that process will continue both in "military and political forms," according to former Soviet President Podgorny.[91]

Interestingly enough, none of the Soviet actions in Angola or promised actions through the rest of the "zone of liberation" necessarily contradict the Soviet interpretation of peaceful coexistence or detente. Brezhnev, speaking at the Twenty-Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1976, emphasized that his party has not "in conditions of detente . . . become reconciled to capitalist exploitation" and promised that the Soviet Union "will continue to support peoples who are fighting for their freedom."[92] Yuri Andropov, another member of the Soviet Politburo, was even more explicit. Andropov, delivering an address dedicated to Lenin's 106th birthday in April 1976, declared:

> We do not expect that in detente the monopoly bourgeoisie and the governments that carry out their will will side with the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples. The Soviet Union makes no such demand on the West. But the West may make no demand on the Soviet Union to renounce its solidarity with those who are waging a struggle against exploitation and colonial oppression.[93]

Throughout the Angolan crisis, Soviet actions fit well within the confines of Soviet ideology. It may thus be reasonable to expect that other Soviet efforts to support national liberation movements will be similarly constrained—stressing that constraint implies limitation, not termination. While the Kremlin is clearly interested in maintaining its identity with national liberation movements, even in an era of detente, it is nonetheless evident that the Soviet leaders feel obliged to explain their actions in ideological terms. In such cases, ideology becomes not only a potential motivator, but also a potential constraint.

Soviet policy toward the MPLA may be viewed most accurately not as an aberration of policy, but rather as a selective application of a policy both motivated and constrained by ideological considerations. Thus, even in the context of improved Soviet-American relations, the United States must expect Soviet efforts to aid select national liberation movements to continue. At the same time, the United States must realize that these efforts neither proceed unconstrained nor guarantee Soviet success.

NOTES

1. See, for example, O. Orestov, "Independent Africa in the Making," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 11 (November 1975), p. 73.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Kenneth L. Adelman, "Report from Angola," *Foreign Affairs*, 53 (April 1975), 566.
4. John Yin, *Sino-Soviet Dialogue on the Problem of War* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 115.
5. V. I. Lenin, *On the Foreign Policy of the Soviet State* (Moscow: Progress, 1973), p. 161.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
7. See Daniel S. Papp, "National Liberation During Detente: The Soviet Outlook," *International Journal*, 32 (Winter 1976-77), 82-94.
8. *Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army* (Moscow: Progress, 1972), pp. 119-22.
9. Leonid Brezhnev, "Report to the CPSU Central Committee and the Party's Immediate Tasks in the Fields of Domestic and Foreign Policy," *Pravda*, 25 February 1976, pp. 2-9.
10. A. Kiva, "Some Features of the Contemporary National Liberation Movement," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 12 (December 1973), p. 30.
11. M. Petrov, *Bor'ba KPSS za razriadku mezhdunarodnoi napriazhennosti* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo, 1975), p. 34.
12. For an excellent Marxist view of this diversity, see R. A. Ul'ianovskii, *Ocherki natzionalno-osvoboditel'noi bor'by* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), *passim*. For a Western analysis of the flexibility of Soviet Third World policy, see Roger E. Kanet, "The Soviet Union and the Developing Countries: Policy or Policies," *The World Today*, 31 (August 1975), 338-46.
13. Sh. Sanakoyev, "Important Stage in International Relations," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 12 (December 1975), p. 22; and E. Bagramov, "Internatzional'noe i natzional'noe v obshchestvennom razvitii," *Kommunist*, No. 9 (June 1975), p. 95.
14. Inozemtsev, "O novom etape v razvitii mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii," *Kommunist*, No. 13 (September 1973), p. 97; D. Volsky, "Behind the Conflict in Angola," *New Times*, No. 38 (September 1975), p. 8; and *Socialism and Capitalism* (Moscow: Progress, 1971), p. 281.
15. Brezhnev, pp. 2-9.
16. John A. Marcum, "Lessons of Angola," *Foreign Affairs*, 54 (April 1976), 408.
17. Roger Morris, "Pathology of a Blunder," *The New Republic*, 31 January 1976, pp. 20-21.
18. B. Pilyatskin, "The Conspiracy Against Angola," *New Times*, No. 52 (December 1975), p. 15.
19. See, for example, *Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army*, p. 119; *Socialism and Capitalism*, p. 273; and Y.

Zhukov, et. al., *The Third World* (Moscow: Progress, 1970), p. 62.

20. A. Khazanov, "The Peoples of Africa in the Struggle Against Colonialists," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 4 (April 1974), p. 28.

21. For an interesting study of the process of decisionmaking on the Angolan question in the United States, see Morris, pp. 19-23.

22. Radio Moscow broadcasts on 13 December 1974, 5 January 1975, 24 January 1975, and 31 January 1975; S. Vydrin, "Angola Greets Its Heroes," *New Times*, No. 10 (March 1975), p. 8.

23. See, for example, Vydrin, p. 8.

24. M. Zenovich, "On the Road to Independence," *Pravda*, 26 February 1975, p. 5.

25. For several brief assessments of Soviet-MPLA relations during 1973 and 1974, see Marcum, pp. 412-16; Morris, p. 19; Colin Legum, "A Letter on Angola to American Liberals," *The New Republic*, 31 January 1976, p. 17; "Moscow and the Angola Civil War," *Soviet Analyst*, 13 November 1975, p. 2; and Colin Legum, "'National Liberation' in Southern Africa," *Problems of Communism*, 24 (January-February 1975), 11-15.

26. For the complete text of the agreement, see "The Nakuru Agreements," *Africa*, No. 48 (August 1975), p. 7.

27. Morris, p. 19.

28. Marcum, p. 416.

29. Radio Moscow broadcasts on 24 January and 14 March 1975.

30. A. Ignatov, "Clouds Over Luanda," *New Times*, No. 23 (June 1975), p. 13.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

32. Fedor Tarasov, "The Key to Success," *Pravda*, 1 July 1975, p. 5.

33. V. Sidenko, "The Intrigues of Angola's Enemies," *New Times*, No. 30 (July 1975), p. 14.

34. S. Kulik, "Threat to Angola's Freedom," *Pravda*, 24 July 1975, p. 5; B. Lesnov, "The Plot Against Angola," *Izvestiia*, 5 August 1975, p. 3.

35. Radio Moscow broadcast on 16 July 1975.

36. Marcum, p. 416.

37. V. Kudryavtsev, "Struggling Africa," *Izvestiia*, 10 October 1975, p. 2.

38. "The Situation in Angola," *Pravda*, 16 August 1975, p. 5.

39. V. Sidenko, "Angola: People Against Reaction," *New Times*, No. 43 (October 1975), p. 14.

40. O. Ignatev, "The True Face of Angola's Enemies," *Pravda*, 9 September 1975, p. 4. Condemning the FNLA and UNITA as agents of the CIA became a favorite ploy of the Soviet media throughout the remainder of 1975 and 1976. See B. Pilyatskin, "Angola: Decisive Days," *Izvestiia*, 1 November 1975, p. 3; and V. Chernyavsky, "CIA Subversion in Angola," *New Times*, No. 3 (January 1976), pp. 10-11.

41. "The Armed Intervention in Angola," *Pravda*, 8 November 1975, p. 5; "Strengthening Sovereignty," *Pravda* 15 November 1975, p. 5; and Orestov, p. 73.

42. Volsky, p. 8.

43. "Uneasy Situation," *Izvestiia*, 27 September 1975, p. 3.

44. "The Armed Intervention in Angola," *Pravda*, p. 5.

45. Yu. Gavrilov and V. Vinogradov, "Angola: At a Time of Test," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 2 November 1975, p. 3.

46. B. Fomichev, "With an Alien Voice," *Izvestiia*, 28 August 1975, p. 3.

47. *Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army*, p. 107.

48. For just a few of these many references, see "The Situation in Angola," *Pravda*, p. 5; "The Armed Intervention in Angola," *Pravda*, p. 5; and B. Pilyatskin, "Angola's Hour of Trial," *New Times*, No. 34 (August 1975), p. 14.

49. Volsky, p. 8.

50. "Angola," *New Times*, No. 44 (October 1975) p. 17.

51. K. Asonov, "Angola," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 1 (January 1976), pp. 156-58.

52. *Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army*, p. 96. In November, one Soviet source clearly implied that the national liberation struggle in Angola was over, declaring that "when the national liberation struggle was still being fought" neither the FNLA nor UNITA was an active participant. See B. Pilyatskin, "Independent Angola: Difficult Start," *New Times*, No. 48 (November 1975), p. 14.

53. O. Ignatev, "The Road to the Front," *Pravda*, 18 December 1975, p. 4.

54. S. Kulik, "Angola: Freedom After Five Centuries of Slavery," *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 12 November 1975, p. 3; O. Orestov, "The Angolan People Fight for Independence," *Pravda*, 5 November 1975, p. 4.

55. Ignatov, p. 13.

56. E. Kapskiy, "Who is the Aggressor in Angola?" *Pravda*, 4 December 1975, p. 4.

57. *Ibid.*; and Sidenko, "The Intrigues of Angola's Enemies," p. 15.

58. "The Armed Intervention in Angola," *Pravda*, p. 5.

59. Marcum, p. 416. By comparison, US aid to the FNLA and UNITA totaled $60 million.

60. "Angola's Unique Independence," *Africa*, No. 52 (December 1975), p. 90.

61. Godwin Matatu, "The Agony of Angola," *Africa*, No. 51 (November 1975), p. 14.

62. "Angola's Just Cause," *Izvestiia*, 7 January 1976, p. 1.

63. Kapskiy, p. 4.

64. Yu. Gavrilov and G. Musayelyan, "Angola—A Conspiracy Against the Republic," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 23 November 1975, p. 3.

65. Kapskiy, p. 4.

66. M. Kobrin and Iu. Oleshchuk, "Tekushchie problemy mirovoi politiki," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnaia otnosheniia*, No. 1 (January 1976), pp. 90-108.

67. See, for example, V. Sidenko, "The Fortitude of Angola," *New Times*, No. 49 (December 1975), p. 16.

68. Numerous articles in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* from 28 November to 8 December 1975.

69. V. Matveev, "International Review," *Izvestiia*, 2 December 1975, p. 4.

70. A. Klimov, "Angola's Friends and Foes," *Izvestiia*, 26 December 1975, p. 2.

71. Pilyatskin, "The Conspiracy Against Angola," p. 14.

72. Klimov, p. 2; Yu. Bespalko and Yu. Ustimenko, "Angola—The Main Issue," *Izvestiia*, 10 January 1976, p. 3; and V. Pustov, "The Battle of Angola," *New Times*, No. 6 (February 1976), p. 8.

73. For three interesting interpretations of Cuban involvement in Angola, covering both sides of the issue, see James Reston, "Cuba and the Caribbean," *The New York Times*, 17 March 1976, p. 41; "Cuba and Africa: The Latin African Connection," *Africa*, No. 57 (May 1976), pp. 79-81; and Leo Friedmann and Steven Philip Kramer, "The Myth of Soviet Aggression," *Commonweal*, 4 June 1976, pp. 359-62.

74. V. Korovikov, "What the Assembly Showed," *Pravda*, 15 January 1976, p. 4; and V. Korionov, "International Week," *Pravda*, 18 January 1976, p. 4.

75. "Angola's Just Cause Will Triumph," *Izvestiia*, 30 January 1976, p. 2.

76. See David K. Shipler, "Soviet Indicates It Favors Angola Political Solution," *The New York Times*, 30 January 1976, p. 1.

77. "On Events In and Around Angola," *Pravda*, 3 January 1976, p. 4.

78. "Angola's Just Cause Will Triumph," *Izvestiia*, p. 2.

79. "The People of Angola Are Not Alone," *New Times*, No. 2 (January 1976), p. 1.

80. Y. Tsaplin, "Angola and Africa," *New Times*, No. 4 (January 1976), p. 11.

81. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

82. M. Lvov, "Detente: Need the Pros and Cons Be Weighed Again?" *New Times*, No. 5 (January 1976), p. 5.

83. "On Events In and Around Angola," *Pravda*, p. 4.

84. "Angola's Just Cause Will Triumph," *Izvestiia*, p. 2.

85. "On the Situation in Angola," *Pravda*, 11 February 1976, p. 4.

86. "Who Needs Blackmail Tactics," *Pravda* 27 March 1976, p. 5; and "Dangerous Campaign," *Pravda*, 14 May 1976, p. 4.

87. G. Arbatov, "On Soviet-American Relations," *Pravda*, 2 April 1976, pp. 4-5.

88. "Moscow-Luanda," *Pravda*, 19 April 1976, p. 4.

89. "US Mediation in Africa Denounced by Brezhnev as 'Ficticious Liberation,'" *The New York Times*, 8 October 1976, p. A3; "Soviet-Angola Agreement Includes Military Aid," *The New York Times*, 9 October 1976, p. 4; and "Angola to Receive More Soviet Aid," *The New York Times*, 15 October 1976, p. A5.

90. M. Suslov, "Nasha epokha-epokha torzhestva markhsizma-leninizma," *Kommunist*, No. 5 (March 1976), p. 16; Brezhnev, pp. 2-9.

91. "Report on Speech by N. V. Podgorny at Dinner for Mozambique President Machel," *Pravda*, 18 May 1976, p. 4.

92. Brezhnev, pp. 2-9. See also P. Auersperg, "Detente Has To Be Fought For," *World Marxist Review*, No. 3 (March 1976), p. 36.

93. "Leninism: Science and Art of Revolutionary Creative Effort: Yuri Andropov's Report at the Celebration Meeting in Moscow Dedicated to the 106th Anniversary of the Birth of Lenin," *Pravda*, 23 April 1976, p. 1.