WHO TRIED TO OUST WHOM, SECRETARY KISSINGER?

Historical truth is often the first casualty in war. On January 29, Secretary Kissinger testified that the Soviet Union and the Portuguese Communists sabotaged the Alvor Agreement in January, 1975: "This was the moment, when Portugal was trying to organize a peaceful transition to independence, for the exercise of restraint by all outside parties. But the USSR and Portuguese Communists decided to put the MPLA in power through stepped-up shipments of arms."

Is this true?

In January, 1975, at the time of Alvor, the CIA had "re-activated" its commitment to FNLA with a grant of $300,000. Zaire, which had been armed and trained and carefully nurtured as a U.S. client, was clearly backing Holden's plans. Backed by the CIA and Zaire, FNLA was cocky and determined to take advantage. On March 23, the FNLA massacred 66 MPLA recruits and civilians in cold blood, initiating a period of escalating violence between FNLA and MPLA which eroded the basis of co-operation on which the transitional government was based.

An examination of reports by the western press demonstrate that FNLA and Zaire, supported by the CIA, were in fact the parties responsible for the first major escalation of violence in attempt to seize power. The Soviet Union and Cuba responded to a call by MPLA to meet this threat.

"So far the attacks have been by FNLA on MPLA troops and civilians, who have responded in defense ... FNLA commandos last week staged an assassination attempt on the top MPLA leader in Angola's transitional government, Lopo Nascimento... Eyewitness reports of the massacre by FNLA soldiers of civilians and others suggest beyond a reasonable doubt that what has occurred is a first terrifying attempt by FNLA to kill substantial numbers of MPLA soldiers and supporters and instill a climate of fear in the country such as it did in 1961 on the Zaire border." Jane Bergerol in the Financial Times (London), March 29, 1975.

"While the Americans deny any involvement, there is no doubt about Zaire's. President Mobutu is committed to ensuring the MPLA's defeat ... The FNLA has brought almost 10,000 armed men into Angola from its bases in neighboring Zaire ... One reliable source in Luanda puts the number of Zairean soldiers in Angola at 1,200." Colin Legum in the Observer (London), May 18, 1975.

"There is evidence that some Portuguese officers and former members of the political police, who are still at large in Angola, are working with the FNLA. The movement is receiving an unrestricted flow of arms from Zaire and is militarily far stronger than the MPLA, which is now weakened by the closure of the Zambia-Angola border." The Economist (London), April 5, 1975.

The Administration makes much of the Cuban "invasion" of Angola and alleges that Castro is "exporting revolution." But the fact is that a major commitment of Cuban troops to the battle was a response to a lightning thrust by a South Africa/mercenary column of armored cars and light tanks which in three weeks time completely reversed the trend of the war. When the South Africans - who had first crossed into Angolan territory in late August - began their thrust on October 23rd, there were no more than 400 Cubans in Angola itself with another 800-1300 in Congo-Brazzaville or Cabinda. The South Africans and mercenaries, followed by UNITA-FNLA ground troops, routed the lightly armed MPLA troops from
the coastal cities, plunged 650 miles toward Luanda and, at the acme of the drive, cut off light and water to the capital city for four days. And this was at the very moment of independence. What turned the tide was the airlift of Cuban troops able to handle sophisticated equipment such as tanks and multi-rocket launchers. But these came after and as a response to a major U.S.-orchestrated escalation which almost overwhelmed the MPLA.

According to the Administration, UNITA, which it now alleges represents the majority of Angolans, invited minority-ruled South Africa to intervene "in desperation" in early September. Actually, after the CIA chose UNITA as an addition and alternate to FNLA in July, Savimbi felt strong enough to withdraw from the transitional government, set up his headquarters in the south, declare war on MPLA and reject a late-August truce his negotiators had worked out with MPLA. According to Senator Tunney's aides, the South Africans were invited in, not to create a stalemate, but to spearhead a co-ordinated drive by the U.S./Zaire/Zambia - backed forces to knock MPLA out. They nearly succeeded. Savimbi told a Tunney aide that, when the South Africans left Silva Porto on January 23, he told them: "We will never support SWAPO against you."

CHRONOLOGY