CIA INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA

The people of Angola successfully terminated 500 years of Portuguese rule on November 11th, but a major war is still waging. The presence of three movements divided on political, geographic, and ethnic lines has prevented a simple transition from colony to independence. These divisions, together with Angola's wealth in natural resources, have invited intervention in the decolonization process by external powers. The United States has been prominent among these outside forces.

The CIA has been buying arms for two liberation movements, FNLA and UNITA, in an effort to offset the military and political success of the third movement, MPLA. The CIA operations have been approved by President Ford and are being carried out with the knowledge of several Congressional committees, including the Senate and House Armed Forces and Appropriations Committees, and the Senate Foreign Relations and House International Relations Committees.

CIA support for FNLA has a long history: in 1962, the Agency and President Kennedy "activated" FNLA leader Holden Roberto as the "future leader in Angola", since Portugal could not be expected to retain Angola indefinitely. The CIA interest in UNITA is more recent. Jonas Savimbi, who heads UNITA, is avowedly "anti-communist" and anti-MPLA -- two reasons for the CIA's interest in him.

U.S. aid to the two movements is being disbursed largely through President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire. Indeed, it is impossible to discuss U.S. intervention in Angola without examining Zaire's relationship with both Angola and the United States. Zaire shares a long border with Angola; the BaKongo people, who comprise the bulk of FNLA's supporters, straddle this border. Holden Roberto of FNLA is Mobutu's brother-in-law (he has spent only four years of his life in Angola).

During the recent hearings on the CIA alleged assassinations, Senate Intelligence Committee members received pressure from the Ford Administration to stop their investigation of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. During the Congo (Zaire) crisis of the early 1960's, Lumumba was a popular nationalist leader. Mobutu came to power a few years after Lumumba's assassination and investigations of the past events in the Congo
were considered by the Ford Administration to be too sensitive for current events in Angola. The Senate Intelligence Committee report on the CIA and Patrice Lumumba states:

"The chain of events revealed by the documents and testimony is strong enough to permit a reasonable inference that the plot to assassinate Lumumba was authorized by President Eisenhower. Nevertheless, there is enough countervailing testimony by Eisenhower Administration officials and enough ambiguity and lack of clarity in the records of high-level policy meetings to preclude the Committee from making a finding that the President intended an assassination effort against Lumumba."

Since General Mobutu seized power in 1965, maintaining the stability of his staunchly pro-western rule in Zaire has been a cornerstone of U.S. policy in Africa. The CIA has had a principal Africa station in Zaire during his regime.

The rationale for the more recent CIA support of FNLA and UNITA is that MPLA is receiving arms from the Soviet Union. It could be argued that a "Soviet-engineered takeover" of the Angolan government is no more desirable than a similar CIA effort. However, as events in Indochina and Chile revealed, any Soviet presence in a particular country is often exaggerated and used as justification for significant American subversion of the internal political process.

Furthermore, warnings of dangerous Soviet intervention from American officials should hardly be taken at face value, when accompanied by pious denials of U.S. interference. In a major Africa policy statement on September 23, Secretary Kissinger stated: "We are most alarmed at the interference of extracontinental powers who do not wish Angola well, and whose involvement is inconsistent with the promise of true independence."

The evidence that MPLA is completely under the Soviet thumb is unconvincing. Leaders of MPLA deny that they would exchange 500 years of Portuguese rule for Soviet domination. Senator Dick Clark, Chairperson of the Africa Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who visited Angola and met with the presidents of all three movements in August, came away firmly convinced that nothing in the situation justified U.S. intervention.
Yet in recent weeks, a column of CIA-supported FNLA and UNITA forces, led by white South African troops and Portuguese mercenaries, advanced 250 miles north to capture Novo Redondo...using American C-130 planes and French armored cars from a South African army-air force base in Grootfontein, Namibia. Strange that on the occasion of a triple-veto in the UN by Britain, France, and USA last June, the three stated that there was "no threat to international peace and security" in the continuing South African occupation of Namibia.

U.S. intervention in Angola may prove as tragic and costly as in Indochina. It will add thousands more to the killed and wounded, and entangle the U.S. in an escalating conflict in southern Africa for years to come. By making common cause with South African and mercenary forces, the U.S. is alienating the developing world and deepening its complicity with South Africa's racists. Any Angolan government which comes to power beholden to South Africa for support will discourage the fight for freedom in Namibia and South Africa.

Further, an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 stipulated that no funds could be spent by or on behalf of the CIA for covert operations "unless and until the President finds that each such operation is important to the national security of the United States."

The Ford Administration is trying to aid FNLA and UNITA further by siphoning a $82 million aid package to Mobutu's Zaire, of which $23 million is for "security supporting assistance" and $19 million in military credit sales (up from $3.5 million last year). The items slated to be sold on credit include 12 armored cars and 400 jeeps and trucks -- precisely the kind of 'Zairean' army equipment now being used in Angola. The magnitude of this aid package is many times the level of previous years.

The Administration has conceded that the Angolan strife is among the reasons for the quantum leap in aid to Zaire. Secretary Kissinger said on November 6th that the railways through Angola are important outlets for Zaire and Zambia, and in this situation, "we do believe it is important to make clear to Zaire that we are prepared to be of assistance." He neglected to mention that the railways are heavily used by U.S.
corporations extracting Zaire's rich mineral resources.

At least two amendments are soon to be offered to the International Security Assistance bill, presently before Congress, as follows: (1) that no assistance authorized by this act and no covert assistance may be furnished directly or indirectly to any political group in Angola, (2) that no defense materiel included in the Foreign Military Sales Act shall be sold to Zaire until the President reports that it has halted all military assistance to political groups in Angola and Congress has approved this report by concurrent resolution. Persons supporting African self-determination and those disturbed by recent revelations about the CIA might well express themselves in support of such amendments. For more information, consult the Southern Africa Liberation Committee at the Peace Education Center, 1118 S. Harrison Road.

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