

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

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Dear Friend:

I write urgently to you about the Angolan situation and American involvement in it. Since early December we have been giving major time to the Angola crisis as the conflict has escalated from an internal struggle to one of major international dimensions. I should like to give our analysis of the problem, describe what ACOA has been doing, and make action suggestions for all of us.

The issue now is not just the struggle between three political movements for control of Angola. For the first time since the Congo crisis of 1960-64, the big powers are confronting one another in Africa. I have been intimately acquainted with Angola for many years and visited there last March when things were just beginning to heat up. I have long had contact with MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA. I am convinced that U.S. government spokesmen are putting the situation in a very false perspective.

ACOA has been vigorously opposing U.S. intervention in Angola. We have supported the position taken by Senate leaders such as John Tunney and Dick Clark who have sponsored amendments to end covert U.S. military assistance in Angola. We have called for immediate U.S. withdrawal, a position also adopted by Senator Hubert Humphrey who according to the New York Times of January 15, 1976 called for "an end to U.S. involvement in Angola regardless of whether the Soviet Union reciprocates."

This position is diametrically opposed to that of the Ford administration. Secretary of State Kissinger, in his press conference of December 23, said: "If the Soviet Union continues action such as Angola we will without question resist."

Why has the administration intervened in Angola?

Does the U.S. position flow from a desire to protect the freedom and self-determination of the Angolan people? This is not believable. Such a claim comes too late. All during the liberation struggle - from 1961 onwards - the U.S. remained in solid alliance with the Portuguese colonial government. Now the U.S. has in effect transferred its alliance to South Africa in its attempt to defeat the MPLA. South Africa is

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widely seen as the most reactionary and dangerous power on the continent by the independent nations of Africa. Its invasion of Angola has caused many African states, (including several, such as Nigeria and Ghana, which the U.S. has regarded as allies) to recognize the MPLA government.

Is it because the MPLA government (supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba, but also recognized by 23 African states) is "Communist"? The MPLA denies this. Dana Adams Schmidt of the Christian Science Monitor wrote from Angola in December that Dr. Neto (President of MPLA) is "more an African nationalist than Marxist."

Is the U.S. position based on a real threat of a Soviet take-over in Angola? There is no precedent in Africa to support this fear. No African countries are throwing away their independence now to foreign powers. Soviet personnel were expelled from Egypt in 1972 after giving overwhelming support there for years. But as Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere pointed out recently, continued escalation of U.S. assistance to the UNITA-FNLA alliance is likely to have the effect of forcing MPLA to rely more heavily on the Soviet Union.

U.S. involvement in Angola can best be understood within the framework of the whole Southern African liberation struggle. U.S. administration and corporate commitments to the white minority regimes of that region have grown alarmingly in the last few years. As direct U.S. investment climbed from \$529 million to over \$1 billion in 10 years in South Africa and as Gulf Oil alone has invested \$300 million in Angola, the U.S. government has shown itself increasingly sympathetic to the "problems" of the white minority regimes.

ACOA has long warned Americans of this danger. We have pointed out that continually growing American private investment in South Africa, far from being a force for change, bolsters the regime and gives the U.S. a vested interest in the status quo there.

Further, cold-war strategic arguments have played an important role in shaping recent U.S. policy in the region. Thus, South Africa is increasingly portrayed as a "stable" friendly power in the Southern Hemisphere, guardian of the entrance to the Indian Ocean, protector of important oil routes, and a dependable ally with a strong military capability of its own. Such policy parameters lead step by logical step to the point where the administration sees U.S. interests as linked to the protection of South Africa.

The white minority regime in South Africa sees the Angolan struggle as critical. They recognize that the outcome, particularly following the establishment of an independent Mozambique, sympathetic to the on-going struggle for liberation in South Africa, Rhodesia and Namibia, will have a real effect on the security of their present apartheid system.

The last few years have seen growing resistance to South African rule in Namibia. SWAPO, the liberation movement in Namibia, will be greatly strengthened by the development of a strong independent government in Angola. Hence, the South African commitment of large numbers of its soldiers to an intensive effort to prevent this development.

The aim of South Africa is to stimulate increasing American involvement and then include itself in an alliance to set up African states "safe" for South Africa. Kissinger, who has never been to Africa and sees Angola primarily in U.S.-Soviet cold war terms, seems to be embracing this policy. It is revealing that U.S. administration statements have almost entirely overlooked South Africa's troops in Angola.

ACOA's position against U.S. intervention should not be interpreted as an apology for Soviet or Cuban, or any other involvement there. But we believe it is patently false to raise the issue of a Soviet take-over. Also, it is quite dishonest to equate Soviet involvement in backing the MPLA with South African backing of UNITA and FNLA. The MPLA sought aid from many quarters during the 14-year liberation struggle. They got it from many countries including the Soviet Union, while South Africa and the U.S. were in alliance with the colonizing power.

Recent revelations have made it clear that the U.S. was an active participant in escalating foreign intervention in Angola. Initial CIA covert operations began as far back as January of 1975. Soviet arms shipments increased after this. The invasion by South African troops and mercenaries from Namibia took place in the latter half of October 1975. The Cuban troop build-up took place in November.

We support a non-intervention policy, but our leverage is with our own government. Here is where we can and must act. We can see no rationale justifying U.S. military or economic intervention against the MPLA and on behalf of supposedly "pro-western" movements in Angola.

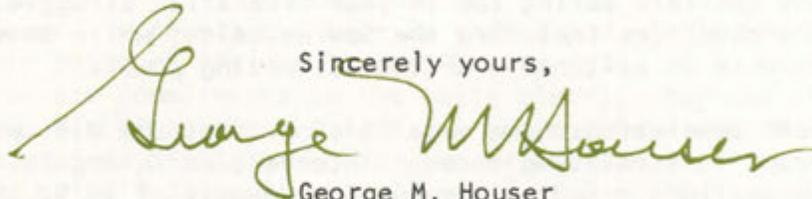
We see it as a critically urgent task to alert Americans to the dangerous implications of growing U.S. intervention in Angola. If the U.S. continues its current policy, it will be forced into an ever closer alliance with South Africa. It will have to commit increased money, supplies and perhaps eventually men. It will be an active party to the destruction of the lives of hundreds of thousands of Angolans in the conflict ahead.

In the last few weeks, we at ACOA have been working hard to end U.S. intervention. We have held press briefings and conferences, organized a coalition of organizations to stop U.S. intervention, supported a rally on the Capitol steps in Washington when Congress reconvened on January 19th. We coordinated work on an ad in the New York Times on January 18th supported by many organizations and individuals. We have written many articles and given many speeches.

We urge you to take action!

- 1) Encourage your representatives to support legislation in the House and the Senate to stop aid going to Angola including that which goes through third countries such as Zaire.
- 2) Call upon us for background material for distribution. We have a packet of material with many items in it on Angola which sells for \$1.50.
- 3) Call upon us for help in setting up meetings, obtaining speakers, ordering literature.
- 4) Make as generous a contribution as you can to ACOA so that we can increase our efforts to avert this tragedy for Angola, for southern Africa, and for America.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "George M. Houser". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

George M. Houser
Executive Director

Upon request a copy of the latest ACOA Annual Report filed with the Board of Social Welfare may be obtained by writing the New York State Board of Social Welfare, 2 World Trade Center, New York, N.Y. 10047.

Communism and the War in Angola

By George M. Houser

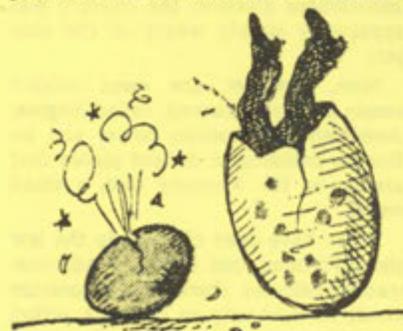


The conflict of opposing political movements for control of an independent Angola is rapidly escalating into an international confrontation reminiscent of Vietnam, and United States spokesmen are grossly distorting the real issues involved.

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger has pointed an accusing finger at the Soviet Union and Cuba for intervening in Angola. Characteristically, United Nations Ambassador Daniel P. Moynihan went further when he said that Soviet involvement in Angola was a first step in the colonizing of the whole continent. But little is said about reported United States military aid sent to Angola.

American spokesmen are simplistically portraying the Angolan conflict as "Communism" versus "anti-Communism." The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (M.P.L.A.), whose government at Luanda has been recognized by sixteen African states (33 countries in all), is constantly described as "Marxist," "Soviet-backed" or just "Communist." The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (F.N.L.A.) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) are called "anti-Communist."

Before any portion of the American people respond to any call for Vietnam veterans to join the fight against Communism in Angola, several important factors should be considered.



What about the Communism of the M.P.L.A.?

I have been in touch with the leaders of this movement for many years, most recently last March when I was in Angola, where I met with

members of all three political movements. They make no secret of a basically socialist orientation in their design for Angola.

In a continent where there is little private accumulation of capital, socialism of one sort or another is an accepted norm. Capitalism is a reality in most of Africa only through the interests of foreign corporations and enterprises. So organizing a society along socialist lines is to be expected.

Such a form of social organization should not automatically end United States willingness to maintain friendly relations. And indeed the United States has recently agreed to diplomatic relations with Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, countries in which the political parties (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde and the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) have programs very similar to that of the M.P.L.A.

In fact, all three had been joined in an alliance against Portuguese colonialism for more than fifteen years. Why then does the United States treat the M.P.L.A. differently?

The issue is portrayed as Soviet influence and control in Angola. Soviet support of the M.P.L.A. is not new. It goes back to the beginning of the armed conflict in Angola in 1961. Scandinavian countries gave support to the M.P.L.A., too. The M.P.L.A. would have been glad to take help from wherever it was offered—even from the United States.

Where was the United States during the years of struggle? It was firmly welded into an alliance with Portugal and had a policy of avoiding contacts with the liberation movements in Portuguese colonies.

The United States limited its "support" to high-sounding statements on the right to self-determination. The M.P.L.A. has little reason to be grateful to the United States. M.P.L.A. support from the Soviet Union does not mean Soviet control in Angola. It has not meant this in Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, or Cape Verde.

Some Americans may find this difficult to understand in view of our widespread biases against the Soviet Union and Communism. But these political movements, after long years of combat against the Portuguese, will not easily accept domination by a new foreign power. It is a gross and demeaning distortion of reality to present the men and women of the M.P.L.A. as Soviet puppets. And certainly the Cubans are not taking over Angola.

There is a second distortion involved in official United States interpretation of events in Angola. Spokesmen have said virtually nothing about United States involvement in Angola. Covert United States support for the F.N.L.A. and UNITA was admitted in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Nov. 6 by William E. Colby, the Director of Central Intelligence, and Joseph J. Sisco, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

The New York Times reported Friday that, according to a high-ranking Government official, the United States had sent \$25 million in arms and support funds to Angola over the last three months and planned to send \$25 million more in supplies. The official said that the first sum had been distributed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

This aid has gone principally through the Government of Zaire, which since 1962 has been the mainstay of the F.N.L.A., the most conservative of the Angolan parties.

Major publications here and abroad have reported that United States transports have been flying daily from Zaire into F.N.L.A. military centers in northern Angola, such as Ambriz, with guns, ammunition and gas.

For Mr. Kissinger and other United States leaders to point the finger at the Soviet Union and make no mention of United States involvement in the conflict in Angola is hypocritical.

United States spokesmen have made no mention of South Africa's growing intervention in Angola. Presumably the involvement of this white-supremacist state is an embarrassment the United States would prefer to ignore. But this involvement is an important development in the Angolan conflict, with far-reaching repercussions. It was the incursion of South African troops that has led Nigeria's "moderate" Government—even in United States Government eyes—to recognize the M.P.L.A. government in Luanda.

There can be no doubt about the growing South African intervention. When I was in Zambia in early November, I was told by high Zambian officials that at that time South African troops and some dissident Portuguese mercenaries from Angola and Mozambique had already occupied a strip fifty miles deep across southern Angola.

South African columns have penetrated hundreds of miles into the interior, with many casualties reported and at least one reconnaissance plane shot down.

An immediate objective of South Africa is to use the Angolan fighting as a smokescreen behind which it can eliminate the forces of S.W.A.P.O. (Southwest African People's Organization, the main liberation movement of Namibia) from northern Namibia and southern Angola.

Namibia—South Africa calls it South-West Africa—is the territory occupied by South Africa in defiance of United Nations decisions that even the United States has supported.

South Africa sees the Angolan con-

flikt as the real beginning of the war for its own survival as a white-dominated state in southern Africa. For years South Africa has been attempting to build itself into the Western alliance on the back of the anti-Communist cause. Now South Africa is calling for the Western alliance to stop a "take-over" in Angola.

The current United States position, supporting the most conservative internal Angolan elements, is directly abetting South African strategy. It is not helping the Angolans preserve

their independence but making them victims of the most reactionary force in Africa. It would be a tragedy for the United States to repeat the errors of Vietnam because it looks upon the Angolan conflict as an occasion for another anti-Communist crusade.

George M. Houser is executive director of the American Committee on Africa, which describes itself as "actively supporting the African people in their struggle for independence and majority rule."

Another Tunnel?

The National Interest Leads U.S. to Angola

Suddenly and secretly, the United States is once again contesting Communist military power in a remote place. The Ford Administration is doing so apparently to satisfy American national interest defined as it was defined when the United States entered and enlarged the war in Indochina.

It has been disclosed that \$25 million in weapons and support funds have already been sent to Angola, and another \$25 million may soon be sent, for the use of two American-supported factions in that new nation in southern Africa. The weapons were sent by the Central Intelligence Agency through neighboring Zaire.

It has also been reported, and not denied by the Administration, that five American spotter planes, piloted by Americans, are being flown "in and out" of Angola—where the fighting is heavy and continuous and where Cuban troops are fighting on behalf of a third Angolan faction. The possibility of an American casualty is present, though how likely is not known.

Moreover, the United States in Angola is in an ad hoc alliance with South Africa, which is supplying fighting men for the same factions to which Washington is giving weapons. Though the Administration insists it is not even in contact with South Africa on its actions in Angola, the United States is, in effect, fighting by proxy alongside the soldiers of a nation almost universally considered a symbol of racism.

According to Washington reports, the Soviet Union has sent more and better equipment to "its" Angolan faction than the United States—27 shiploads and over 30 plane loads since last spring—and sent "advisers" with them. The number of Cubans fighting in Angola has been estimated variously at 500, 3,000 and 5,000. The size

of the South African force is unknown.

The Vietnam Parallel

Is there a parallel between Indochina and Angola? Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said last week the situations were "not analagous"; William Colby, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, distinguished between them on the degree of American involvement rather than in terms of policy or intention. In fact, there are similarities; whether they add up to an identity will probably be a matter of debate soon.

It may take long, careful analysis to determine, for instance, whether there is significance in the fact that American involvement in both places follows the departure of a European country from its colony—France from Indochina, Portugal from Angola. In Vietnam, the American involvement was at first modest and clandestine; it is the same now in Angola.

More obvious is the relationship between what American leaders are saying now and what they said in explanation of United States policy in Indochina. Last week, Mr. Kissinger, in effect described the following American policy in Angola:

Washington wants an Angolan settlement of Angolan problems, but if the Communists try to provide dominance for one faction by huge arms shipments, the United States "will try to prevent" the Communists from succeeding.

Mr. Kissinger did not say how far the United States would go in maintaining a stalemate between the contending Angolans. However, it was implicit in what he did say that if the Soviet Union upped the ante, Mr. Kissinger would stay in the game.

Nor did he define American intentions except in terms of anti-Communist action. He said it would affect American-Soviet relations "if the Soviet Union engages in a military operation or massively supports a military operation thousands of miles from Soviet territory in an area where there are no Russian interests and where it is, therefore, a new projection of Soviet interest."

It is obviously a changed world as the cold war has been replaced by détente but the recent statements

have familiar echoes.

On March 23, 1961, when relatively few Americans knew where on the map to find Indochina, President John F. Kennedy, at a press conference, read a long, carefully-prepared statement of American policy about a small, new nation called Laos, where several factions were fighting for supremacy. One faction was backed by the Soviet Union. Mr. Kennedy referred to many airlifts, improved weaponry and resulting gains for the Soviet-backed Laotian faction. He said:

"It is this new dimension of externally supported warfare that creates the present grave problem . . . We strongly and unreservedly support the goal of a neutral and independent Laos . . . If these [Communist] attacks do not stop [the United States and others] will have to consider their response . . . No one should doubt our resolution on this point . . . Laos is far away but the world is small . . . The security of all Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its neutral independence . . . Its own safety runs with the safety of us all . . ."

President Eisenhower before him and Presidents Johnson and Nixon after him involved the United States in the Indochinese war for, essentially, the same reasons.

When the United States finally evacuated Saigon in defeat, a national debate on American policy seemed imminent. It never really occurred, at least not specifically in terms of the Indochinese disaster; the country was apparently simply weary of the subject.

Now, however, the same subject seems to have returned, called Angola: American and Russian power and influence colliding in distant places that are in, as Mr. Kennedy said, a small world.

There have been changes in the law since Vietnam, but the Ford Administration believes there is no question about its authority to take the action it is taking in Angola. Mr. Colby noted the War Powers Act does not preclude "paramilitary operations." Apparently, the Administration has informed the appropriate Congressional committees of the covert action, although how fully or how early is not clear.