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Africa, Soviet Imperialism & the Retreat of American Power

by
Bayard Rustin
and
Carl Gershman

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Africa, Soviet Imperialism & the Retreat of American Power

Bayard Rustin and Carl Gershman

AFTER years of being regarded by the United States as a continent of little political, strategic, or economic significance, Africa has quite suddenly become the object of considerable attention in Washington. Vice President Walter Mondale has been charged with the task of overseeing U.S. African policy. Our highest officials, including especially UN Ambassador Andrew Young, have visited Africa during the past year and a half, after former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger devoted his last effort in shuttle diplomacy to finding a solution to the Rhodesian crisis. At each of the two recent conventions of the NAACP, the American Secretary of State has delivered a major address on U.S. policy in Africa.

One is tempted to attribute the current interest in Africa to the election of a new administration with close ties to the civil-rights movement. But this does not explain the very high priority which the Ford administration, too, gave to U.S. policy in Africa, at least during its last year. In fact, the emergence of Africa as a major concern of U.S. foreign policy is the result of historic developments in southern Africa which began with the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in 1974 and 1975. Of these developments, the most significant was the victory in the Angolan civil war of the faction supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba.

Americans find it very easy to forget what happened in Angola. There is a pronounced tendency—quite evident even among those now shaping U.S. policy—to minimize the significance of the victory achieved there by Soviet arms and Cuban troops. This is a mistake. The victory of the pro-Soviet forces in Angola not only increased Africa's vulnerability to a fate considerably worse than colonialism, but, to a degree not yet fully appreciated, it also weakened the security of the West.

The Angolan war showed up the failure of the United States to develop a sound African policy, or any African policy at all, and it exposed the

total disorientation of American liberals, still reeling from the effects of Vietnam. It may be too late to undo the damage wrought in Angola itself, but what happened there stands as a warning signal that needs to be understood if we are to avoid similar and possibly more damaging setbacks in the future.

I

THE coup in Portugal which ended half a century of fascist rule there also spelled the end of Portugal's African empire—in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, and the Cape Verde Islands. As independence became inevitable, the only question was the manner in which the decolonization process would take place and the nature of the political forces that would inherit Portuguese rule. The American administration was preoccupied with the radicalization going on in Portugal itself, particularly with the growing influence of the hard-line pro-Soviet Portuguese Communist party of Alvaro Cunhal. And in any event the U.S. was not in a position to affect matters in Portuguese Africa since it had been caught completely off-guard.

Until that moment, American policy had been based upon a National Security Council Memorandum on Africa drafted in 1969 and presented to President Nixon in January 1970. The memo recommended a hands-off policy toward Portuguese colonialism and a loosening of the arms embargo and other restrictions that the Kennedy administration had imposed on the white minority regimes of southern Africa. It must be embarrassing for Kissinger to remember that the memo judged the staying power of Portuguese colonialism to be greater than "the depth and permanence of black resolve," and thus "rule[d] out a black victory at any stage." At the time of the transfer of power the United States was tied to the bankrupt policies of the past and unprepared to affect the future. Not so the Communists.

Angola was no doubt a prize of considerable importance to Moscow, possibly more so than Portugal itself. It was valuable economically, with its rich supplies of oil, diamonds, iron ore, copper, and other mineral resources; strategically, with its location along the southern Atlantic coast and its

BAYARD RUSTIN is president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute and national chairman of Social Democrats, USA. A long-time civil-rights leader in the United States, he was also a founder, in 1951, of the Committee to Support South African Resistance and worked in Africa in support of the independence movements of Ghana, Nigeria, Tanganyika, and Zambia. CARL GERSHMAN is executive director of Social Democrats, USA. Both Mr. Rustin and Mr. Gershman are frequent contributors to COMMENTARY.

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proximity to future points of conflict in southern Africa; and politically, because of the Soviet Union's sharp competition with China in Africa and with the United States all over the world.

The Soviet Union and the Portuguese Communist party (PCP) were able to pursue a dual strategy, the former providing military aid to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), one of three guerrilla groups, the PCP using its influence in Portugal to speed the process of decolonization and to strengthen the position of the MPLA relative to that of the competing movements. During the second half of 1974, Moscow shipped some \$6 million in arms to the MPLA via Dar es Salaam, while a second route was opened through Congo-Brazzaville.

On January 15, 1975, a political formula for the peaceful transfer of power was agreed to by the MPLA and the two other competing groups, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA). Independence day was set for November 11, and a transitional government including the three groups was to be established which would prepare for an election two weeks before independence. It is inconceivable, however, that the MPLA ever seriously intended to go into elections it would undoubtedly have lost to Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, which was supported by the country's largest ethnic group. Certainly, the military effort the Russians were making indicated *they* had no intention of settling for anything less than victory on the field of battle.

During 1975, the Soviet Union shipped \$200 million of arms to the MPLA, "an amount equal to total military assistance to all of sub-Saharan Africa from all sources in 1974," according to a recent study by Walter F. Hahn and Alvin J. Cottrell.* In February 1976, the month the MPLA achieved its ultimate victory, U.S. officials estimated that the Russians had poured in \$300 million during the preceding eleven months.

The weapons shipped by the Russians in 1975 included 600 tanks, 500 trucks, 12 MIG-21 fighters, anti-tank wire-guided missiles, and light artillery. Also included were over a hundred 122 mm. rocket launchers, the weapon that was later to prove decisive in the vast territorial gains made by the MPLA in the three months following Angolan independence. Soviet military advisers accompanied these weapons, and in May the first contingent of Cuban advisers arrived on the scene. According to the admission of Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Rafael Rodriguez on January 10, 1976, 250 Cuban military instructors were in Angola in the spring of 1975. By August, Cubans were engaged in actual fighting; by late September, they began to arrive in large numbers, with the cost of transporting and equipping them picked up entirely by the Soviet Union. At the peak of the fighting,

there were anywhere from 12,000 to 18,000 of these "Russian mercenaries" (as the Chinese called them) in Angola. This was the first time that foreign Communist forces had openly intervened in Africa.

II

WHAT was the response of the United States? In January 1975, the U.S. had authorized a token \$300,000 in aid to the FNLA, the less effective of the two groups opposed to the MPLA. In July—by which time, according to Kissinger, "the military situation radically favored the MPLA"—an additional \$30 million in covert aid was authorized for both the FNLA and UNITA. But the military situation was deteriorating rapidly, and the growing opposition in the U.S. Congress to any American involvement led to a mood of desperation among the MPLA's opponents. At this point the FNLA and UNITA, along with the leaders of Zambia and Zaire (who were terrified at the prospect of having a Soviet satellite implanted on their border), turned to South Africa for help.

The first South African column crossed the Angolan border on October 14, a full two months after the Cubans entered the fighting and several weeks after the major build-up of Cuban troops. From a military point of view, the intervention was a success. But the intervention proved politically insupportable following the capture and public display of four South African prisoners in December, the cut-off by the U.S. Senate of American military support later that month, and the stalemate at the meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa in January. On January 22, the South Africans pulled back, leaving the field to UNITA, which a *Time* correspondent described as "short of everything but spirit and dedication." It took the Cubans two months to occupy the territory left by the retreating South Africans, and they have not been able to crush the UNITA resistance since.

When the U.S. Senate voted on December 19, 1975 to cut off all covert assistance to UNITA and the FNLA, the administration was left with only one card to play—*détente*. The administration admitted on December 24, a week after the Senate vote, that it had made no formal protest against the Soviet arms build-up until the end of October. A "top-ranking administration official," undoubtedly Kissinger himself, blamed this inexcusable delay on an (unlikely) intelligence lapse. It would have been better to have protested in the spring, he said, but "we didn't realize until later that the Soviets were going in so heavily." This account is almost certainly false, since President

* *Soviet Shadow Over Africa*, Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami, p. 61.

Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia had been in Washington in April, privately sounding the alarm about the deterioration of the situation in Angola. Even if it were true, however, the administration still waited over three months before issuing a private protest to the Kremlin—and over four months before making the protest public.

THE administration's détente diplomacy, when finally initiated, proved totally ineffectual. At the end of November, Kissinger warned that "Time is running out; continuation of an interventionist policy must inevitably threaten other relationships." The Soviet response was immediate. The Soviet press agency, Tass, accused the U.S. of sending military personnel and weapons to Angola "for the reinforcement of the forces of the foreign interventionists." An editorial in *Izvestia* the same day sharply rebuked Kissinger: "Some would like to convince us that the process of détente in the world and support of the national-liberation struggle are incompatible things. Similar things have been maintained before, but in vain. The process of détente does not mean and never meant the freezing of the social-political status quo in the world. . . ."

None of this seemed to shake the administration's faith in détente. On January 3, President Ford noted that the large-scale Soviet military involvement in Angola was "inconsistent with the aims and objectives of détente," yet when asked whether he was any less enthusiastic about the prospects for détente, he replied, "I am not at all"; and two days later, in St. Louis, he reassured the American Farm Bureau Federation that the U.S. had no intention of cutting off grain shipments to Russia as a retaliation against that country's actions in Angola.

The administration did express "dismay" later, when a Soviet guided-missile destroyer and an amphibious landing ship were seen heading toward Angola. Kissinger went so far as to say that he might postpone his visit to Moscow later that month to continue arms-control talks. But he did not postpone his visit, nor did he make any progress on Angola when he met with Brezhnev during his three days in Moscow. On the contrary, at precisely the same time that Kissinger was in Moscow, the MPLA Foreign Minister José Eduardo dos Santos was also there, getting pledges of additional Soviet support. Santos, whose departure coincided with Kissinger's, told reporters at the airport that "the Soviet Union is in the forefront of helping the Angolan people to repel the aggression of racist and imperialist forces."

Obviously making no headway with Moscow, Kissinger decided to address his warnings to Havana. By early February he was taking the line that the Cubans were "exporting revolution" at their own initiative, not at the behest of the Russians. On March 4 he warned Cuba to "act with

great circumspection" in southern Africa, adding that "our actions cannot always be deduced by what we did in Angola." Later that month he stated with apparent firmness that "The United States will not accept further Cuban military interventions abroad." But as the London *Economist* observed, his use of the word "accept" instead of "permit," and his observation that action "cannot be rammed down the throats of an unwilling Congress or public," indicated the extent to which his hands were tied.

The weakness of the administration's policy was typified by its precipitous and unwarranted generosity toward the Luanda regime following the MPLA's victory. The *Economist* had made the very sensible proposal that the U.S. condition American economic cooperation with the new regime on the withdrawal of the Cubans. But before the month of February was over, the State Department had given the green light to the Boeing Company and Gulf Oil—both of which had broken off commercial ties with the MPLA during the war—to resume relations. At the very moment the Cubans were trying to crush UNITA's resistance in the south, Boeing technicians arrived in Luanda to work on air traffic-control facilities, while Gulf turned over to the MPLA regime \$100 million in back royalties from oil production in Cabinda. Gulf continues to produce Cabinda oil, the revenues from which finance the costly and undiminished Cuban occupation.

Kissinger was understandably angry with the Congress and the liberals for failing to appreciate the dangerous consequences of the triumph of Soviet adventurism in Angola. Yet clearly he himself was in large part responsible for his failure. Having led the American people to believe that Communism was no longer a threat—that something called détente had replaced "the cold war"—he could hardly blame them for being unprepared to respond adequately when the threat appeared. Either many Americans simply did not recognize the threat, or they allowed themselves the delusion that the web of mutually beneficial relationships that Kissinger had supposedly woven with Brezhnev would ultimately restrain the Kremlin. But when détente was invoked—belatedly, as if to show that Kissinger feared putting it to the test—it proved to be what some had always suspected it was: not a name for eased tensions, let alone for peace, but a cover for the tactical retreat by one deeply troubled power in the face of the growing might and brazenness of the other.

III

NO OTHER single series of events in the four decades since Munich demonstrates more clearly than this the impotence of the democratic world in the face of totalitarian aggression. Although the conservative Ford adminis-

tration will bear the historic responsibility for failing to act, its failure was strongly abetted (and more) by liberal opinion, both in Congress and in the country at large.

During the debate over Angola, the constantly recurring theme of liberals opposed to U.S. involvement was, in the words of Senator Edward M. Kennedy, that America must "heed the lessons of Vietnam." "If we learned anything from our experience in Vietnam," Senator Birch Bayh said, it is "the folly of permitting a cold-war mentality to lead us to choose sides in an internal conflict in a remote corner of Africa which presents no real threat to our national security or to our vital national interests." The *New York Times*, warning of "an African quagmire," wondered whether the administration had "yet learned anything from the Indochina disaster about the limits of effective American assistance and intervention in remote and extremely complicated conflicts touching only indirectly on American interests."

LIKE Vietnam, the Angola experience also appears to have had its "lessons" for American liberals. The central "lesson" is that Soviet policies do not threaten the basic interests or security of the United States, and that in the final analysis, the U.S. offers the greater threat to world peace. Both Tom Wicker and Graham Hovey of the *New York Times*, for example, dismissed as "apocalyptic" Daniel P. Moynihan's warning that if the Communists won in Angola, they would "considerably control the oil shipping lanes from the Persian Gulf to Europe" and "the world will be different in the aftermath." Senator Alan Cranston observed that all the Russians were doing was supporting "anti-colonialism" in Angola. John A. Marcum, writing on the "lessons of Angola" in *Foreign Affairs*, described the Soviet build-up not as an aggression but as a response, in stages, to Chinese rivalry (in late 1974), to FNLA provocations (in the spring of 1975), and to the shipment of U.S. aid (after July), the last of which "seemed almost designed to provoke the Russians into seeking maximum advantage."

A number of commentators went further. Tom Wicker actually endorsed the MPLA (claiming "it has more popular support among Angolans") and opposed both the proposal for elections in Angola and the formation of a national-unity government made up of the MPLA, the FNLA, and UNITA. Walter Cronkite of CBS, fearing that we were on the brink of another Vietnam, ran a special "news" series on Angola "to try to play our small part in preventing that mistake this time." Probably more effective than anything else was an "exposé" by Seymour M. Hersh which appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* the very day of the Senate vote. It purported to show that the Soviet build-up was undertaken in response to a previously undisclosed

CIA authorization for Angola, and not, as the administration claimed, out of expansionist Soviet designs. The opening paragraph claimed that the authorization "came in January 1975, more than two months before the first significant Soviet build-up." This "disclosure," according to the Hersh article, raised "new questions about which nation—the United States or the Soviet Union—initiated what in Angola." Senator Cranston, delighted with the article, placed it in the *Congressional Record* immediately following the Senate vote to cut off aid.

Many liberals raised the issue of the "immorality" of American policy in Angola. It was Vietnam all over again, only this time we were not supporting the "reactionary Thieu dictatorship" but were involved, in the words of Senator John Tunney, "side by side with the repressive white-supremacist regime in South Africa." Senator Charles Percy deplored "getting in bed with South Africa," while Senator Bayh found it "incredible and distressing" that we were "drifting . . . into support of a faction whose most active supporter is South Africa, a nation which is the very embodiment of racial repression."

Finally, many Senators who opposed U.S. involvement in Angola minimized the consequences of an MPLA victory out of the belief that nationalism, not Communism, would be the ultimate victor. The MPLA, according to Senator John Tunney, was not pro-Soviet but "basically pro-Angolan, socialist, and highly nationalistic." Senator Claiborne Pell was confident that the Russians would gain nothing "for all their intrigues and efforts" since "any Soviet 'victory' will be short-lived. The most powerful force in the non-aligned world is nationalism—an ideology that rejects external control regardless of whether the ideology comes from the East or West." Iowa's Dick Clark, who as chairman of the African Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee is the Senate "expert" on Africa, saw Angola as merely "a tribal civil war in central Africa" in which all the factions shared similar goals. "If the MPLA wins," he said, "the Soviets will be lucky if they can hang on a year or two."

Perhaps the first thing to be noted about the liberal debate over Angola is that the "lesson" which the United States was being urged to draw from its experience in Vietnam was precisely the same lesson the Soviet Union had learned, and on the basis of which it was acting. Thus, commenting on the U.S. Senate's refusal to appropriate funds for Angola, *Izvestia* editorialized (January 10, 1976): "In response to the administration's request Congress has said no, and support from the public has not been forthcoming. The lessons of the Vietnam adventure . . . are still too fresh in the memories of Americans." The Soviet leaders' awareness of the post-Vietnam paralysis in the United States unquestionably affected their calcu-

lations on Angola. This explains both the contempt with which they treated Kissinger's helpless protestations and the boldness of their thrust for total military victory.

THE liberal "case" against involvement in Angola was based on a tissue of misconceptions and wishful thinking. Senator Cranston's notion, for example, that the Soviet Union was merely supporting "anti-colonialism" in Angola combined ignorance with naiveté. In the first place, as Zambia's President Kaunda pointed out, colonialism was not the issue after the Portuguese left and the MPLA was no longer a liberation movement but one of three competing political parties; in the second place, Soviet policy in Angola was, if anything, *neo-colonialist*.

The idea that the Soviet Union was merely reacting in Angola to prior Western moves (as argued by John A. Marcum in *Foreign Affairs*) is of a piece with the "revisionist" view of the cold war which sees the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe after World War II as a defensive reaction to provocations from the West, and it is just as wrong. President Kaunda called "U.S. arms help . . . an effect of the situation, not the cause. . . . The Soviet Union has supplied arms to MPLA all along. If the United States is asked by others to help them accordingly, who am I to stand in their way?"

The part played by the *New York Times* in reinforcing the liberals' desire not to see what was really happening in Angola was substantial. In order to endorse the MPLA it was probably necessary for Tom Wicker to state that they enjoyed a majority of popular support among Angolans (similar claims were made for the Vietcong at the time), but in fact this was a patent falsehood. Similarly, Seymour Hersh's critical "disclosure" of an authorization of funds for Angola in January 1975 carefully neglected to reveal until deep into the story on an inside page that the size of the appropriation which was supposed to have provoked the Soviets was only \$300,000, and that it was "not meant for direct military support"; no mention at all was made by Hersh of the extent of the Soviet arms build-up before January, only that "substantial" Soviet arms—"at least two shiploads and two planeloads"—were sent in March and April 1975. The evidence presented in Hersh's article may have seemed to him to raise "new questions about which nation . . . initiated what in Angola," but that evidence was both partial and erroneous.

Then there is the issue of the morality of American involvement in Angola, "side by side with the repressive white-supremacist regime in South Africa" (as Senator Tunney said). The one thing the Senators who expressed such concern failed to note was that South Africa would not have been in Angola at all had the United States provided

the FNLA and UNITA the wherewithal to fight. And if a South African force did intervene at the urging of black leaders and on the side of the forces that clearly represented the black majority in Angola, to counter a non-African army of Cubans ten times its size, by what standard of political judgment is this immoral?

Equally spurious was the cocky prediction expressed in the Congress that even if the MPLA were to win in Angola, "the Soviets will be lucky if they can hang on a year or two." It is now two years since Senator Clark spoke these words, and neither the Russians nor the Cubans show any signs of letting go. On the contrary, they run the country at every level, giving an imposed "stability" (to borrow Andrew Young's unconscionable word) to the despotic rule of the mixed-blood Dr. Agostinho Neto and his narrowly based MPLA over an ethnically diverse black African state. In July of last year Angola became the first African country to participate in the Soviet-led Council for Economic Mutual Assistance (COMECON) and in October, during Neto's visit to Moscow, a twenty-year agreement was signed to broaden party-to-party contacts at all levels. The MPLA is being transformed from a tribal-based guerrilla organization into an orthodox Communist party capable of running a totalitarian state which it already calls a "Marxist-Leninist republic." Since this process has not yet been completed, the Cubans are on hand (as many as 20,000 to 25,000, according to a congressional study released in May) to supervise the running of civil administration and education systems, train "trade-union" leaders, manage a system of forced labor, and control the armed forces and secret police.

It is not that there is no internal opposition. The Neto regime still faces resistance from both the FNLA and UNITA, and the Cubans put down a coup attempt in May. There have also been periodic reports of military purges. But this is a far cry from "Russia's Vietnam," a phrase by which liberals rationalized non-involvement in Angola on the false assumption that the Soviet Union was merely sinking into a "quagmire" of African tribalism. ("If the Russians want to have their own Vietnam in Africa," wrote Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in the *Wall Street Journal*, paraphrasing approvingly the position of Senator Clark, "why should we deny them that pleasure?") The Russians, fully aware of this danger, have developed a strategy of working through "revolutionary democratic parties" in Africa—specifically, through those activists "who are inspired by the ideas of scientific socialism and who are fighters against imperialism and any form of capitalist oppression"—to transform them into pro-Soviet Leninist parties. In any event, Russia would not really have the equivalent of a Vietnam on its hands unless outside powers were willing to furnish UNITA and the FNLA with the kind of mil-

itary support that the Soviet Union and China gave the Vietcong, and unless a neighboring state backed up the guerrilla war with a massive armed invasion. These possibilities are, to say the least, exceedingly remote.

Angola is Russia's Vietnam, however, in the sense that it, like Vietnam, represents a triumph for Moscow, a defeat for the United States, and a catastrophe for a great number of people who are being subjected to a totalitarian nightmare. Moreover, the domino effect may turn out to be no less applicable to southern Africa than it has turned out to be to Indochina. Neto has not only committed himself to the course of armed struggle in Rhodesia, Namibia, and ultimately South Africa itself, but he has also served notice on Zambia and Tanzania that the Angolan model of "socialism" is the wave of the future in Africa.

Kenneth Kaunda chillingly described the intervention of the Soviet Union and its client-state Cubans in Angola as "a plundering tiger with its deadly cubs now coming in through the back door." By applying to Angola their opposition to the American policy in Vietnam, liberals helped open this door. Now black Africa and the West must face the consequences.

IV

THE Soviet Union's objectives in southern Africa must be viewed in relation to broader Soviet foreign-policy goals, in accordance with the global nature of its strategy. Its African policy is directed toward the fundamental aim of subjecting the industrialized West and Japan to the hegemony of Soviet power. As David Rees points out in a study published by the London-based Institute for the Study of Conflict, the Soviet Union is pursuing "a strategy of denial" in Africa. Its goal, essentially a negative one, is to be able to deny the industrialized democracies access to the vital raw materials of southern Africa and to the strategic sea lanes which pass around it.

The OPEC oil boycott of 1973-74 was acclaimed by Moscow as confirming its long-held belief in the acute dependence of the "imperialist" world on the raw-material resources of the Third World. At the time, Soviet commentators noted both the economic and political ramifications of the boycott, especially the "crisis of capitalism" that it helped precipitate. "The energy and raw-material crisis," *Pravda* said in April 1975, "which has affected the capitalist world in the first half of the 70's has sharply intensified the role of materials in the world economy and given the problem of raw materials an unprecedentedly acute international political character." The oil boycott, commented another official Soviet publication, "serves as a good example for other developing countries producing mineral raw materials and agricultural export crops." Particular attention was paid to Af-

rica, which "is becoming increasingly important in the world capitalist production of the most vital raw materials."

This assessment is quite accurate. The United States is dependent on the countries of southern Africa for many of the non-fuel raw materials which the U.S. Council on International Economic Policy, in a special report submitted to the White House in December 1974, deemed vital to the national security and to industry. These include chromium, the platinum group of metals, cobalt, vanadium, and manganese. With the development of nuclear power, the U.S. is also increasingly dependent on the uranium reserves of South Africa and Namibia. The dependence of Western Europe and Japan on these resources is even greater than our own.

Even a temporary denial or partial withholding of these mineral resources would produce severe dislocations in the economies of the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. Moreover, in the case of some key minerals—platinum and chromium, among others—the only major alternative supplier in the event of a politically inspired boycott would be the Soviet Union itself.

No doubt there is an economic motivation in the USSR's drive to control the supply of southern Africa's minerals: indebtedness to the West (which now approaches \$50 billion) and the growing cost of its far-flung military adventures. But its basic motivation is political, for by controlling the minerals essential to Western industry, the USSR could undermine the strength of the West by sharpening the "crisis of capitalism," and drastically reduce the West's political independence by subjecting it to the constant fear of economic blackmail.

THE other aspect of the Soviet Union's strategy of denial is its drive to gain command of the vital sea route around the Cape of Good Hope. The significance to the West of this route, considered the busiest in the world, is contained in two simple statistics: 70 per cent of the strategic raw materials needed by the European members of NATO, and 80 per cent of their oil supplies, now reach them by way of it. The Cape is the only available sea route for oil which is now shipped in supertankers too large to pass through the Suez Canal.

That the Soviet Union appreciates the importance of the sea lanes around Africa is indicated by the countries where it has chosen to concentrate its efforts. With the exception of Uganda, these countries—Somalia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau—are situated along the eastern and western coastline of Africa. Each of these countries now plays host to "the Gurkhas of the Russian empire" (to use Daniel P. Moynihan's apt description of the

ubiquitous Cubans). Even the considerable Soviet interest in Uganda is tied to Moscow's coastal designs, in that Amin's brutal dictatorship poses a potential threat to neighboring Kenya, the only country along the eastern littoral of Africa where American vessels are still welcome. (American ships have by-passed South Africa since a boycott was imposed fourteen years ago.) The Soviet Union's extraordinary involvement on both sides of the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia could (if it does not backfire) strengthen Moscow's position in the Indian Ocean and give it command of the entrance to the Red Sea.

It is of course true that Russia's African drive is also motivated by its competition with China for influence in the Third World. But this in no way diminishes its designs toward the West, and in any event the conflict with China over Africa met with success in Angola. Mozambique's President Samora Machel decided to change sides and marched his country from the losing Chinese camp to the victorious camp of "proletarian internationalism." Tanzania, once firmly committed to China, has now moved closer to Russia. The result is a profoundly altered strategic and political situation throughout southern Africa. Zambia and Zaire, both dependent on routes through Angola and Mozambique to get their copper to port, are now under intense pressure to bend to the new political balance. Angola and Mozambique are also being used as staging points for armed struggle against Namibia and Rhodesia, a course which Moscow considers an absolute precondition both for the defeat of Western attempts to negotiate political settlements for majority rule and for the establishment in these states of pro-Soviet regimes. These changes have for the first time brought within realistic reach of Moscow the chief prize of all, South Africa, the richest and strategically the best located country on the continent.

"The West," Hahn and Cottrell have written, "has operated for a long time in a strategic-political environment which favored it all over the world, including Africa. The dramatic degree to which the strategic situation has been transformed has not really been fathomed in the United States." The inevitable result of the loss of the recognized strategic superiority which the United States had two decades ago has been a far bolder use of Soviet air and naval power—and client-state troops—in the pursuit of Russia's global objectives. In this sense Angola is not a cold-war aberration in a period of détente, but a model for future Soviet interventions on the side of the "forces of liberation."

V

DESCRIBING the qualities of the Soviet leadership, Henry Kissinger wrote over two decades ago that "one is struck by the

emphasis on the relationship between political, military, psychological, and economic factors, the insistence on finding a conceptual basis for political action and on the need for dominating a situation by flexible tactics and inflexible purpose." If this is true, and the Soviet Union's African policy would certainly make it appear so, one is at a loss to understand the basis for the U.S. strategy of détente, described by Kissinger as "penalties for adventurism and incentives for restraint." Penalties were nowhere to be seen. And what conceivable incentives could induce genuine restraint by the Soviet Union in the pursuit of its objectives? These objectives, as Kissinger himself recognized, are neither lightly held nor worked out on a day-to-day basis, but are deeply rooted in the history and political culture of Russian Communism. To think that the Soviet leaders can be "bought off" is not to take them seriously, an error that was hardly understandable in the wake of Vietnam but is simply inexcusable in the wake of Angola.

The Ford administration's response to the debacle in Angola was to begin the process of shaping a new, workable African policy for the United States. In Dallas on March 22, 1976, Kissinger called for a policy based on "two equal principles": "our support for majority rule in Africa and our firm opposition to military intervention." The first principle pointed forward to Kissinger's journey to Africa the following month which would mark the beginning of a major American initiative to bring about majority rule in Rhodesia and Namibia. The second principle pointed back to the Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola and affirmed the administration's determination to oppose firmly any similar intervention in the future. The two principles were integral parts of a single policy, since effective initiatives by Western countries to bring about a negotiated transition to majority rule would resolve a racial conflict the Russians hoped to exploit to their advantage and would also revive Western influence in an area rapidly becoming a Soviet zone; and peaceful transition to majority rule could not possibly be achieved unless Soviet (and Cuban) intervention were deterred.

THE new policy was vintage Kissinger: clearly conceptualized and characteristically dialectical. It was also, unlike the policy of détente, based on sound logic and political realism. Unfortunately, it was a policy drafted at the eleventh hour and only in response to a crisis that had sharply reduced the middle ground on which a black-white settlement could be reached. *Izvestia* declared, accurately, that "Revolutionary events have seized southern Africa . . . and the speed of the spread of the flame attests to the huge supplies of 'explosive materials' accumulating there."

Kissinger's Lusaka address in April 1976 was a turning point in American policy toward southern

Africa. He expressed the unequivocal opposition of the United States to the "illegal Rhodesian regime" and the U.S. support for majority rule, stating firmly that "the Salisbury regime . . . cannot expect United States support either in diplomacy or in material help at any stage in its conflict with African states or African liberation movements." Among other things, he said the administration would seek repeal of the Byrd amendment authorizing the importation of Rhodesian chrome and use its power to insure the strict worldwide observance of United Nations sanctions against Rhodesia. He also called upon South Africa to "announce a definite timetable acceptable to the world community for the achievement of self-determination" in Namibia. He acknowledged that white South Africans are "historically . . . an African people" but called upon them to end rapidly "the institutionalized separation of the races" and to show "a clear evolution toward equality of opportunity and basic human rights for all South Africans."

THE Carter administration has inherited Kissinger's Lusaka policy, and in a sense it has carried it forward. Vice President Mondale, Secretary Vance, and UN Ambassador Young have all had a hand in the diplomacy of southern Africa. Nothing concrete has yet been accomplished, but the administration has cooperated with Britain, West Germany, France, and Canada in convincing South African Prime Minister John Vorster to agree to a new plan for UN-supervised elections in Namibia in which the South-West Africa People's Organization (which South Africa had previously refused to deal with) would participate. The administration has also informed the South African government in the clearest terms that it urgently desires, in the words of Secretary Vance, "an end to racial discrimination and the establishment of a new course toward full participation by all South Africans." So far no concrete action has been taken against South Africa, though there is talk of removing the tax credit for American corporations that do business there. This pressure is undoubtedly one of the factors (less important, to be sure, than the violence in Soweto) that has led a growing group of influential Afrikaansers to advocate the transformation of South Africa into a new confederal order based on the Swiss-type canton system.

These policies of President Carter do not really add up to the "new policy toward Africa" that he claims his administration is evolving. The Carter administration's main achievement has been to break decisively with the old "tar-baby" policy (the phrase has been used by the State Department's Anthony Lake to denote the old hands-off policy toward the white regimes of southern Africa). But it is only fair to point out that Kissinger, though himself a principal archi-

tect of the old policy, also broke with it decisively at Lusaka. The novelty of the Carter policy, therefore, is not in its substance but in its more aggressively pro-black style. As we know from the memo written last December by Carter's pollster Patrick Caddell, political style is not an unimportant consideration with this administration.

But there is a sense in which the Carter policy toward Africa is, or at least seems to be, different from the newly proclaimed Kissinger policy which preceded it. To the degree that one can judge from the sometimes contradictory statements of the President and his advisers, there is some reason to believe that the Carter administration has significantly deemphasized the second principle of the Kissinger policy as defined in his Dallas speech: the determination to deter intervention by the Soviet Union and Cuba in Africa.

Well before he was elected President, Carter gave indication that he sharply differed with the Ford administration's policy in this regard. Carter opposed U.S. help to the anti-Soviet forces fighting in Angola, taking a position on the issue which convinced Andrew Young that he was capable "of getting beyond the cold-war view of the world." Then on June 23, 1976, in his first major foreign-policy address, Carter declared his opposition to the sending of U.S. military aid to Kenya and Zaire. The aid proposal, Kissinger's first concrete step to implement the second principle of his African policy, was intended to reassure African friends exposed to the new Soviet thrust in Africa, and NATO leaders concerned with its global implications, of the U.S. determination to resist it. Carter, however, opposed the aid on the grounds that it was "fueling the East-West arms race in Africa."

The positions taken by Carter during the campaign would mean little were they not being reiterated as policy statements now that he is President. The administration's "point man" for the new policy has been UN Ambassador Young, and Carter has said nothing to indicate he disagrees with Young's comments regarding the problem of Soviet penetration of Africa. Of Young's statement that the Cubans are "a force for stability in Angola," the President commented: "I do agree with it. It obviously stabilized the situation." The President did not take issue with Young's widely quoted comment that the U.S. should not "get paranoid about a few Communists—even a few thousand Communists." On the contrary, in his Notre Dame address in May, the President said much the same thing when he declared that "we are now free of that inordinate fear of Communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in our fear."

This attitude toward Communism was more than evident when Zaire was invaded in March by a Soviet-armed and Cuban-backed Katangan force. The invasion of Zaire's copper-rich Shaba prov-

ince was timed to coincide with the visits to Africa of Castro and Podgorny, during which the guerrilla movements of southern Africa were promised new infusions of Soviet-bloc military aid and a twenty-year treaty was signed between Mozambique and the USSR. When asked about the invasion at his March 24 press conference, Carter said: "We have no hard evidence, or any evidence as far as that goes, that Cubans or Angolan troops have crossed the border into Zaire. We look on Zaire as a friendly nation and we have no obligations to them as far as military aid goes."

IT is interesting to compare Carter's response to that of Morocco's King Hassan, whose dispatch of 1,500 troops to Zaire probably saved the Mobutu regime. Commenting (in *Newsweek*) on the Soviet strategy in Africa, he said:

I agree with those who say it is to encircle, weaken, and neutralize Western Europe by controlling its sources of key minerals in Africa. If the Shaba operation had succeeded and if the Middle East were allowed to continue to drift, not one moderate regime would survive. They would all be radicalized either from within or from without. It wouldn't only be Europe's oil route—but the oil itself. Add to the mix the threat of popular fronts in Italy and France and you don't have to be a geopolitical genius to grasp the consequences for world peace. . . .

Carter's complacency may have constituted an implicit acceptance of the so-called Andrew Young Doctrine that "the sooner the fighting stops and the trading starts, the quicker we win." Though Angola's Neto is pro-Communist, says Young, his "relationship with Gulf Oil is what keeps the revenues coming in that make it possible for the Cubans to run the country." And if we can trade with a pro-Soviet Angola, why not also with a pro-Soviet Zaire and a pro-Soviet Zambia—indeed, a pro-Soviet Africa? "Is that the position of the Carter administration?" asks Zaire's President Mobutu. "If it is, we should be told about it and we will then be in a position to arrange for our own surrender on better terms today than tomorrow."

The concern in Africa over Soviet policies is hardly limited to the leaders of Zaire and Morocco or, for that matter, South Africa and Rhodesia. Kaunda's warnings are well-known. Kenya, exposed to Soviet-armed neighbors, will face a leadership crisis after the aging Kenyatta leaves the scene, and the return of the pro-Soviet Oginga Odinga to Kenyan politics does not augur well. The new president of the OAU, Gabon's President Omar Bongo, has attacked "Soviet imperialism" as "the cause of tension in Africa," an allusion not merely to the Soviet presence in southern Africa but also to the growing conflicts on the Horn of Africa and among the Arab states in North Africa. The Ivory Coast's President Houphouët-Boigny

has accused Russia of taking "advantage of any confusion or chaos in Africa to infiltrate the continent," emphasizing that the Russian goal is not "to 'liberate' the continent, but to sever the vital communications links between the highly industrialized West and the rich raw-material resources of Africa, thereby fatally weakening the Western economy." Senegal's President Leopold Senghor has said that "The Soviet-Cuban expedition in Angola and the placing in power of a minority liberation movement created a grave situation in Africa, threatening the independence of each African state."

Even leaders once friendly to the Soviet Union are now rising up against the new imperialist threat to Africa. Sudan's President Gaafar al-Numeiry has publicly warned all African and Arab states against the Soviet Union, which represents a new, "powerful, and ugly colonialism which will be harder to get rid of" than the old. He denounced the so-called Soviet "camp of the people" as "the camp that has planned *coups d'état* in our country, that has tried to divide our intellectuals. We know what it has done in Yugoslavia yesterday, know what it has done in Europe, what it has done in Czechoslovakia yesterday. . . ."

Sudan's concern is shared by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which are not as convinced as many Western commentators seem to be that the Soviet adventure in the Horn of Africa is a sure fiasco. No doubt it is risky and expensive to arm both sides of a war, as the Russians are now doing in the Ethiopian-Somali conflict. But Moscow is playing for very high stakes and could win if the absence of a Western counter-policy gives it a free hand to impose a *Pax Sovietica* over the exhausted and devastated countries of the region. The risk may be justified by the potential gains: Red Sea ports in Djibouti, Massawa, and Assab to go with the small base at Berbera; and control over a vast and strategic part of North Africa from which pressure could be put on Kenya, Sudan, and Egypt, not to mention Saudi Arabia where the Russians anticipate (and hope to accelerate) the collapse of the monarchy.

African leaders not only resent the Soviet Union's political and military intervention in the affairs of the continent, but also its economic "aid" policies which constitute a travesty that has been insufficiently exposed. While the West contributes about 1 per cent of its GNP to Third World aid, the USSR contributes only 0.05 per cent (0.01 per cent if Vietnam and Cuba are excluded), and less than one-third of this meager amount goes to the poor countries of the Third World. These figures speak for themselves: the discrepancy between Soviet and Western economic aid to the African countries is at least on the order of 1 to 20 as a percentage of GNP. Moreover, while the West provides grant aid, the Soviet aid—much of it industrial goods that cannot be sold in the West

—is bartered for raw materials which the Russians receive at prices well below the going market rate. Thus, Soviet assistance for the development of Guinean bauxite is charged against repayment credits which are redeemed by the shipment of bauxite to Russia, reportedly at \$10 a ton below the world price. Moscow calls this a "new form of foreign economic relations, which are more than conventional trade—cooperation on a compensatory basis." Whatever it is, it can only appeal to Third World satellites which might be temporarily cut off from Western markets. As Houphouet-Boigny has repeatedly said, for African states interested in development "the answer lies in cooperation with Europe and the U.S., not in Russian 'aid' which until now has brought little progress and was never intended for that purpose."

The opposition of African leaders to Soviet and Cuban intervention was clearly evident at the Libreville meeting of the OAU held in July. According to an Egyptian delegate at the meeting, "the only issue that really matters here is that of Soviet interference in Africa." A Senegal resolution "inviting" member states of the OAU "not to permit the use of their territory for foreign military bases" was adopted by a majority vote. The OAU's Secretary General, William Eteki Mbouana, said after the vote that "Africa made it clear that it wants to be left alone to solve its problems."

VI

IT WOULD appear, then, that any number of African leaders have a better understanding of the policies of the Soviet Union and their strategic and geopolitical meaning for the West than does the leader of the West's most powerful country. While African leaders are concerned with an ominous threat to their own independence and are pleading for America to see its own stake in opposing it, our own leaders are busy drawing analogies between Africa and the American South. Indeed, nothing illustrates the confusion of the U.S. leadership more than the notion that there is a parallel between the American civil-rights movement and the effort to achieve majority rule in Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa.

Some differences are self-evident: the reversed proportions of blacks and whites in the U.S. and southern Africa, the "survivalist" psychology of the Afrikaners, the suicidal stubbornness of the Rhodesian whites, the unlikelihood (based on the fate of democracy in the rest of Africa) that majority rule will actually produce Western-style rule by the majority, which of course includes protection of the rights of the minority. But there is also a more basic difference, which the Carter administration, in its desire to overcome the "inordinate

fear" of Communism, seems to have overlooked: namely, the massive presence of Soviet-bloc forces arming, aiding, and abetting those elements committed not merely to violent struggle but to the defeat of those other blacks—the African equivalents of Martin Luther King and his followers—who want to achieve justice through peaceful means.

The fact that the civil-rights analogy does not work hardly means that the United States should not continue to press forward for rapid and fundamental change in southern Africa. But the policy must have two sides: *for* majority rule and against elements that seek to exploit the issue to advance Soviet goals. Even if a political settlement were achieved in Rhodesia, the U.S. would still have to face the possibility that the settlement would be rejected by one or both of the guerrilla factions headed by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe. If the Russians and their clients decided to challenge the new government, the situation would not be so different from that which prevailed in Angola: a *black* civil war. Would the United States be prepared to assist a pro-Western, black government in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)—say of Bishop Muzorewa—against forces backed by the Russians and Cubans? One would hope so, but the present policy line of the administration does not inspire confidence.

The Soviet and Cuban penetration of Africa presents the Carter administration with a moral as well as a political challenge. One should not have to point out to an administration which has made human rights the centerpiece of its international posture that the suppression of blacks by whites is not the only human-rights issue in Africa. Virtually all governments in Africa are undemocratic to one degree or another, but nowhere are human rights more brutally suppressed, and nowhere does democracy have less chance of evolving, than in the kind of totalitarian party dictatorships which the Soviet Union is in the process of trying to implant in Africa. Not to resist this development, but to concentrate solely on the black-white problem, undermines the moral credibility of the administration's foreign policy.

Moreover, in an administration presumably committed to the welfare of blacks, the hands-off attitude toward the Cuban actions in Africa is completely hypocritical. To put it bluntly, the Cubans have not "stabilized" Angola but have brutalized black Africans living in that unfortunate country. "In less than two years," President Houphouet-Boigny said recently, "they have killed thousands of Angolans—our African brothers, murdered in cold blood. More victims fell in this short period than in the fifteen years of guerrilla war against Portuguese colonialism. Yet the West rarely notes this gruesome reality."

The war in Angola showed that the East-West conflict is not over but, from the point of view of

the West, has taken a dangerous turn for the worse. Nothing could be more obvious than this, yet the fact that King Hassan, the leader of a small North African state, recognizes it while the President of the country invested with the responsibility of leading and defending the West does not is a sign that something has gone very seriously awry.

IN RETROSPECT it is clear that détente was an illusion which comforted Americans at a time when the power of the U.S. was in retreat. This illusion has now been destroyed. It could not survive the Yom Kippur War, the final aggression in Vietnam, the war in Angola, and the rising concern over the relentless growth in the military and strategic power of the Soviet Union. One cannot avoid the suspicion, however, that what has replaced the illusion of détente is not a realistic assessment of the predicament of the West, but another illusion that is also evasive of the central realities. Whereas détente wrongly addressed the problem of the East-West conflict, the President seems to believe that this conflict can be put out of our minds altogether while we go about the business of doing good deeds in the world. The retreat of American power, once dis-

guised as a victory for peace, is now presented as the triumph of morality—a very one-sided morality, since it is not offended by the expansion of totalitarianism.

For the present, small powers may try to fill the political and military vacuum that exists, as France and Morocco did in helping to repel the Shaba invasion. The Carter administration may see this as confirmation of its policy of "restraint." But putting a finger in a badly leaking dam is not a substitute for repairing and strengthening the dam itself, especially at a time when the waters are rising. In this connection, the recent announcement that the Carter administration is prepared to contribute to the defense needs of the Sudan and several other North African countries appears to be a new departure. But it also conflicts with the dominant line of the administration until now, and once again raises the suspicion that there is no clear and consistent U.S. policy regarding Soviet penetration of Africa.

Sooner or later, the United States will have to decide whether it intends to remain the leader of the West and a world power fulfilling its obligations as the only country capable of deterring Soviet expansion. If the Angolan war and its consequences offer a guide to the future, the day of reckoning may not be far off.

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