

Africa Report by Mary Lalevée

Maneuvering over strategic resources

Neocolonialist interests of East and West are drooling over the gains to be derived from a settlement in Angola.

What was omitted from the 14-point agreement reached among Angola, South Africa, and Cuba in mid-July, is perhaps more revealing than the agreement itself, which mediated by Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker, with strong Soviet input. The most significant omission is the failure to mention the UNITA rebel movement led by Jonas Savimbi, who has been fighting the Marxist-MPLA regime in Luanda for the past 13 years, and which controls approximately one-third of the country.

UNITA has received strong backing from South Africa, and several thousand South African troops moved into southern Angola in January in an attempt to help UNITA guerrillas take the strategic town of Cuito Cuanavale from the MPLA. The failure of this move, the massive reinforcement of Cuban positions and equipment in southern Angola—bringing with it the loss of South African superiority in the air—and the subsequent deaths of several white South African soldiers, may have played a role in the South African decision to drop its commitment to Savimbi.

The Luanda government has repeatedly refused offers of mediation made by other African heads of state, including the most recent by Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko, who offered to organize a meeting of Angola's neighbors to guarantee the conditions for peace. Mobutu is reported to believe, like Ivory Coast President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, that a reconciliation between Angolans would be possible if the various external influ-

ences were removed. Angolan President José Eduardo Dos Santos categorically rejected this proposal, calling it "a serious interference in Angola's internal affairs, an unfriendly act, and a dangerous precedent."

Such a violent reaction means that the Angolan regime considers that UNITA has no role to play and can be safely ignored.

The 14-point agreement specifies that "there will be no interference in the internal affairs of other states," implying that the South Africans will abandon UNITA and that the Angolans, Cubans, and Soviets will abandon the African National Congress. The ANC has 8,000 guerrillas in training in Angola, the only country in southern Africa which still maintains such training camps. Zambia and Zimbabwe have—in theory, anyway—agreed to South African demands to forbid military activity by the ANC on their soil.

Taking the pressure off South Africa by dumping the ANC might be the price the Soviets are prepared to pay for a future strategic alliance with South Africa itself.

The Soviet role in the agreement was crucial. Chief of the General Staff Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev spent a week in the United States in early July, followed by a week in Cuba, holding talks which were sufficiently important for him to miss the Warsaw Pact summit meeting on July 16. Fidel Castro was no doubt told in no uncertain terms to submit to Soviet plans for a regional deal with the United States.

In South Africa, strategists may well be thinking of contingency plans:

Should the West, led by a President Dukakis in the United States, be ready to impose sanctions on South Africa, what about South Africa imposing its own sanctions on the West, and stopping the export of the strategic raw materials which are vital to the West's defense industries? A de facto alliance between Moscow and Johannesburg cannot be ruled out. South Africa and the Soviet Union together produce over 95% of the world's platinum.

What really concerns those maneuvering behind the scenes is not "peace," but strategic raw materials. AIDS is threatening to wipe out more than half of the population in southern Africa, and an article by the South African correspondent of the Swiss magazine *International Defense Review* in April reported that "the new African challenge" of the next decade will be what to do with Africa's resources if countries like Zambia and Zaire become "deserts empty of people."

In an example of the cynical maneuvering over Africa's resources now taking place, a France-Angola Association was set up on June 23, anticipating the future settlement of the conflict there. The association is headed by Guy Penne, French President François Mitterrand's former adviser on African affairs, and Luis de Almeida, the Angolan ambassador to France. The list of the vice presidents "reads like a who's who of French interests in Angola," commented the French daily *Libération*. It includes Francis Bouygues of the Bouygues construction company; Michel Doumeng of Interagra, son of the late "red billionaire" Jean Doumeng; Louis Deny of CFP-Total; André Tarallo of Elf-Aquitaine. They are obviously rubbing their hands at the thought of being able to fully exploit Angola's massive oil, iron, and diamond resources.