

African resistance on the chopping bloc

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The anti-Communist resistance movements in Angola and Mozambique appear to be the latest sacrificial lambs in President George Bush's condominium arrangement with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov. After years of waging a valiant battlefield effort to overthrow repressive Marxist regimes propped up by heavy Soviet, Cuban, and East German military and secret police presence, the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) now find themselves being coughed up as "bargaining chips" in a global power-sharing arrangement.

In mid-June, an American and Soviet-initiated meeting was held between UNITA leader Dr. Jonas Savimbi and Angola's nominal President Jose Eduardo dos Santos. As the result of that first face-to-face negotiation, a two-year "internal solution" to the Angola civil war is now reportedly in the offing. The key elements are: an immediate ceasefire, elections two years from now, and Dr. Savimbi's interim "exile" from Angola under the pretext of his assuming a government diplomatic post in New York City. If these reports are proven accurate, Savimbi's departure would lay the basis for a betrayal of the anti-Communist resistance struggle in Angola. Dr. Savimbi knows this. What, then, is really going on?

Chemical warfare

The full answer to that question is not known at this time. However, key pieces of information have been received from sources in South West Africa/Namibia that shed considerable light on the Angola component of the southern African "peace process." According to generally reliable sources in the Namibia capital of Windhoek, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), over the past month, since the beginning of the dry season, has been using chemical warfare against both UNITA troops and civilian populations in the southeastern Angola. Whereas in the past, South Africa was able to maintain solid on-the-ground intelligence on the state of the civil war in Angola, the Brazzaville Accords have shut that window almost completely; and the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) overseeing the Namibia-Angola treaty has been involved in a massive coverup of the Angolan chemical attacks.

News of the chemical warfare came out at a point when

over 1,000 Angolan refugees were streaming across the border into northern Namibia seeking asylum. Chemical warfare experts reportedly have established that the Angolans were using mustard gas similar to that used by the Soviets in Afghanistan.

The UNTAG-administered press blackout has been reportedly complemented by the United Nations Refugee Commission's refusal to grant refugee status to the Angolans entering Namibia.

While these events were unfolding inside Angola, the international news media were heralding the "breakthrough" in the Savimbi-dos Santos talks, while the Bush White House was quietly briefing reporters "on background" that it was Washington and Moscow that put the muscle behind the meeting and the pending internal solution.

Ceasefire in Mozambique

One day after the Savimbi-dos Santos meeting, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) regime in Mozambique was publicly issuing a draft proposal for a ceasefire and settlement of the civil war in that southeast African nation. RENAMO, the anti-Communist liberation movement, which controls and governs major sections of the country, has been recently cut off—as part of the Washington-Moscow regional "peace process"—from all military and other assistance from South Africa. The United States has always refused to recognize even the existence of RENAMO, while the British have gone one step further by providing military and counterinsurgency training and equipment to FRELIMO.

According to one U.S. defense industry source, in the past month, military delegations from Mozambique (FRELIMO), Tanzania, and Uganda have been parading around the United States with lists of military hardware they wish to begin purchasing from U.S. manufacturers. All their heavy military equipment is currently provided by the Soviet bloc. In each case, the delegations have told the same story: The Soviets are cutting off all future military supplies and are urging their "ex"-clients to "buy American."

Failure of the 'Reagan Doctrine'

It was the Reagan Doctrine which opened up the floodgates for the current round of strategic betrayals, by overthrowing pro-American regimes in the non-Communist world, while backing contaminated "sure loser" projects like the Nicaraguan Contras. But, in fact, Western backing of legitimate and well-established anti-Communist liberation movements in the developing world—like UNITA and RENAMO—is of vital importance. The reports coming out of southern Africa, particularly the discrepancies between the glowing international reports of pending "political settlements" and the on-the-ground reports of genocide and betrayals, would indicate that the months of July and August are crucial ones for the future of Africa.