

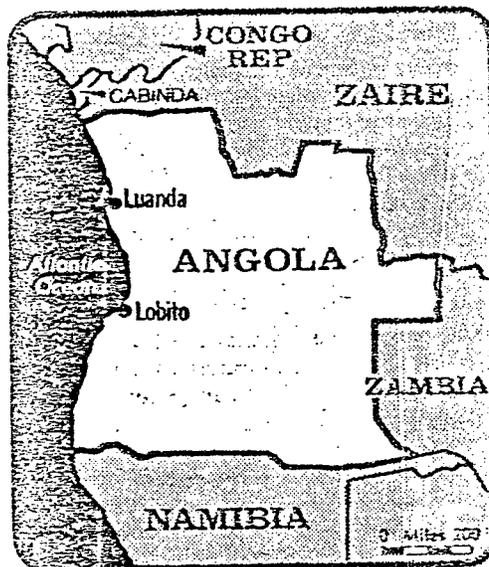
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OPINION AND COMMENTARY

Why America should intervene in Angola

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By William H. Burgess III



leader, Dr. Jonas Savimbi, among the Ovimbundu (45 percent of the Angolan population). Dr. Savimbi is the son of a prominent Baptist preacher in southern Angola, and is a charismatic, spellbinding orator in four major Angolan dialects and five European languages. Although educated abroad, Dr. Savimbi, like virtually all UNITA leaders, has lived most of his life in Angola.

UNITA is unique among African political groups — and worthy of U.S. aid — because it is a self-contained popular movement fighting for a constitution that calls for a multiracial society, multiparty democracy, and free elections every five years. UNITA is also fighting, with moderate success, the elitist, totalitarian MPLA and the 20,000 Cuban and 1,500 Russian soldiers who would transform all of Angola into a repressive police state.

The United States must act soon if democracy is to have a chance in Africa. We must realize that "intervention" is not per se a dirty word, and that the outcome of the Angolan conflict and the history of African politics in this century will be shaped by the American posture toward the Angolan insurgency.

Mr. Burgess, former U.S. intelligence analyst, writes after a year's research on the Angolan civil war.

are misconceptions.

Ideologically, ethnically, culturally, and morally, the MPLA government represents only a fraction of the Angolan people, and has scant claim to legitimacy. A radical Marxist party brought to power in Angola by Cuban troops and Russian weaponry, the MPLA was founded in 1956 by members of the Portuguese and Angolan Communist parties. In 1959, the MPLA was expelled from Luanda, capital of Angola, by the Portuguese colonial authorities. With the 1962 election of Dr. Neto, poet and medical doctor, to the MPLA presidency, the party assumed its strongly pro-Moscow stance and began a guerrilla war against the Portuguese.

The leadership of the MPLA, and most of its support, is predominantly from mulattos (5 percent of the Angolan population) and city dwellers mostly from in and around Luanda and Lobito. Dr. Neto is, for example, a member of the Mbundu tribe (25 percent of the population), but is also of mixed Portuguese-African descent and an "assimilado" — a member of an elite (3 percent of all Angolans) class allowed Portuguese citizenship and participation in mainstream Portuguese society. As with many in the MPLA hierarchy, he has spent most of his life outside the country.

UNITA was established in 1965 by its current

The Russians are playing "hard ball" in Africa. By their actions, it is clear the Soviet concept of détente does not preclude the use of armed struggle as a means to obtain foreign policy ends. To paraphrase a recent editorial in a Zambia newspaper, the Soviets are "pursuing their ideology on the corpses of Africans" by attempting to install, against the will of indigenous democratic forces, pro-Moscow minority governments in many African states.

As a political and moral leader of the Western democracies, President Carter must take a firm stand against the red star rising over Africa. Specifically he must pursue a course of action that will destabilize the Soviet-Cuban presence in Africa; secure moderate pro-West governments; and reverse Soviet-Cuban expansion. His starting point should be the Achilles heel of Soviet penetration of Africa — Angola. With Senate approval, the United States should seek accord with other nations of compatible interests and develop a joint program of aid to pro-West guerrillas battling the Russian client regime of Dr. Antonio Agostinho Neto's Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola (MPLA).

Many would disagree, and urge not only closer relations between the U.S. and the MPLA government but also full recognition of President Neto as legitimate leader of Angola. Some attempt to portray the MPLA as the "true" representative of all Angolans, Dr. Neto as a "respectable" leader, and the MPLA's archenemy, the Uniao para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA), as a diabolical CIA/South African front tirelessly attempting to undermine Angolan democracy. These

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