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## Angola Moves To Mr. Reagan's Front Burner

Welcome home from the summit, Mr. President, and congratulations. You looked like peace personified, and you did not give away the store. Now let's put away the muffler and topcoat—remember, it's warmer back here in Washington—and turn all those nice presents from the Gorbachevs over to the State Department. It's time to get back to the foreign-policy headaches that pre-summit fever swept away. For instance, what are you going to do about the Angola issue, which was at a lively boil when you stepped on the plane to Geneva?

Angola is run by an "avowedly Marxist" government, as some meticulous newspapers put it. Western oil companies, our own Chevron among them, do a fat business extracting Angolan natural resources. For this they pay Angola handsomely. The Angolan government uses the money to pay for Cuban troops—some 35,000—and Soviet materiel, perhaps as much as \$2 billion worth in the past 18 months.

Angolan leaders say they need this foreign army because of a 10-year-old internal rebellion led by Jonas Savimbi. Mr. Savimbi's main base of support is among the Ovimbundu, Angola's largest tribe. He openly says he is pro-Western. He gets a large part of his aid from South Africa. He gets no aid from us. The issue of whether we should start helping him is up for grabs for the first time in a decade.

From 1976 on, the Clark amendment prohibited our aiding Mr. Savimbi's organ-

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by Suzanne Garment

ization; Unita. This summer Congress repealed the measure. Reps. Claude Pepper and Jack Kemp immediately introduced a bill to give Unita \$27 million in humanitarian aid. Rep. Mark Siljander put in a bill for the same amount of military assistance. The aid idea's chances in the House look surprisingly good.

The Reagan administration has responded to the changing climate with massive disorder. The State Department has actively opposed the Pepper bill, saying it would jeopardize current U.S. efforts to negotiate with the Angolan government for withdrawal of the Cuban troops. But re-

cently there have been signs of subsurface movement in the administration.

Secretary of State George Shultz is reported to have said that a covert U.S. operation in Angola, as opposed to an open one, might be OK with him. The State Department put out a new policy statement saying that the U.S. wants to "be supportive" of Mr. Savimbi and that the administration was willing to work out the details with Congress. A cable bearing word of the policy shift went out to our diplomats in the field and gave some of them quite a surprise. At one recent highest-level meeting on the issue, with Mr. Reagan present, it took a passionate speech from Mr. Shultz to buy more time for current negotiations policy.

Angola may be remote, but this issue is not. People opposing aid think that helping Unita would mark us indelibly as allies of South Africa. People advocating aid say that doing nothing would reveal us as frauds who will not put money where our mouths are.

The preliminary skirmishing has shown the outlines of each side's public argument, and each is respectable. The pro-negotiations case says that when we strip away all the hopeful talk about multiparty governing coalitions, Mr. Savimbi cannot win Angola, especially since U.S. aid to him will never match the multibillion-dollar Soviet and Cuban support. The only realistic hope of evicting the Cubans is to deal with the present government in Luanda. Even if our chances of success are small, there is no point in making them even smaller by antagonizing current Angolan leaders with aid to Unita.

The pro-Savimbi case answers that the "realists" are not realistic at all. In light of Angola's ethnic realities, Luanda cannot wipe out Mr. Savimbi's opposition. The Cubans are not going to be dismissed for want of work; we aren't ever likely to see the Luanda citizenry standing at dockside bidding all the brave Cuban lads a lyrical goodbye. So our current negotiations with the Marxist regime buy us nothing and cost us a lot: We miss a chance to exert real pressure on the Soviets, and to the ever-attentive Third World we look like the gutless wonders we are.

The probabilities on this issue are even more than usually uncertain. It may well be that there isn't a prayer for stability in Angola unless the country is partitioned along ethnic lines. A growing crisis in South Africa may make the neighbors' problems look like peanuts. But we can see one thing about the debate: At bottom it is a quarrel about whether we should view our foreign policy as a matter mainly of constraints or of opportunities.

We have been through a decade in which we seemed to be permanently on the

wrong side of history and in which our central foreign-policy task seemed to be that of damage limitation. The Reagan elections of 1980 and 1984 suggested that we were undergoing a fundamental shift to a foreign-policy view that takes its main bearings from its assets rather than its liabilities.

Today it is hard to say how much of a change there has really been. We don't know, for instance, whether Mr. Reagan is returning from Geneva to resume his early role as a cheerful hawk or whether his delight at some small handouts of friendship from Russia will be enough to make him shy away from rocking the boat in places like Angola, either by not aiding Mr. Savimbi or by giving aid so timid that it means nothing.

Even through the haze of imperfect knowledge you can have a hunch on the Angola issue: If Mr. Reagan decides to view Mr. Savimbi as a problem rather than an opening, it is a good bet that people looking back on these years will wonder how he could have let himself miss the opportunity.