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# America's War in Angola, 1961-1976

Alexander Joseph Marino  
*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

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America's War in Angola, 1961-1976

America's War in Angola, 1961-1976

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in History

by

Alexander J. Marino  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
Bachelor of Arts in History, 2008

May 2015  
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council

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Dr. Randall B. Woods  
Thesis Director

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Dr. Andrea Arrington  
Committee Member

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Dr. Alessandro Brogi  
Committee Member

## ABSTRACT

A study of the role played by the United States in Angola's War of Independence and the Angolan Civil War up to 1976.

## DEDICATION

To Lisa.

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## Introduction

“That until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned... And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes that hold our brothers in Angola, in Mozambique and in South Africa in subhuman bondage have been toppled and destroyed... Until that day, the African continent will not know peace. We Africans will fight, if necessary, and we know that we shall win, as we are confident in the victory of good over evil.”

-Haile Selassie<sup>1</sup>

“I think we’ve mishandled Mobutu and the whole area. I have not given too much attention to it, so it’s partly my fault. Mobutu looks at the Congo in 1960 and that [*then*] what we’re doing in Angola now where the Communist influence is greater than it was in the Congo in 1960 and he must conclude that we have written off the area. If we’re letting Angola go, then in essence we’re letting him go. At least I think if he’s rational, that’s what he’s thinking.”

-Henry Kissinger<sup>2</sup>

“I know America. I know the heart of America is good.”

-Richard Nixon<sup>3</sup>

Angola, a Portuguese speaking country in southern Africa, was one of the principal battlegrounds of the Cold War. Although Angola did possess incredible amounts of oil, diamonds, and fertile land, it was not highly contested due to its vast mineral riches. Rather, in their pursuit of African adherents to their competing ideologies, the superpowers sought to champion Angolan independence as a powerful symbol of their support for African independence, and racial justice. Furthermore, after the failed communist insurgency in

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<sup>1</sup> Haile Selassie, “Address to the United Nations, October 6, 1963,” in *Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty, 1918 to 1967* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: The Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Information, Foreign Language Department, 1967), 374.

<sup>2</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation - Document 111,” June 20, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>3</sup> “Richard Nixon: Inaugural Address,” January 20, 1969, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1941>.

neighboring Zaire (Congo) in the mid-1960s, both the United States and the Soviet Union (and its allies) viewed Angola as the critical battlefield of the Cold War in Africa.

However, it was Angolans themselves, not agent provocateurs from the East and West, which brought the Cold War to central Africa. Angola's nationalists, divided by ethnic, class, and social differences, adopted competing ideologies in their pursuit of independence from Portugal and one another. This internal rivalry within the Angolan revolution led Angolans to seek external support from the superpowers. The 1975-1976 civil war, for which Angola is now infamous, was the culmination of a twenty-year struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union in southern Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Both the Soviet Union and the United States aligned with competing Angolan nationalists for ideological reasons, rather than security concerns. For the superpowers, Angola was an arena "to prove the universal applicability of their ideologies," both of which claimed, "to expand the domains of freedom" and "social justice."<sup>5</sup> Once committed to the conflict, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was willing to see their chosen rebels lose.

This is the story of America's war in Angola. How the United States, through its ascendancy to superpower status in World War II, came to facilitate the last colonial struggle in Africa. Successive presidents, displeased with America's role in Africa, worked with Holden Roberto of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) to win Angola's freedom. America's relationship with Roberto began in the 1950s, when the American consulate in the

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<sup>4</sup> Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). Gleijeses and Westad brought Angola to the forefront of the Cold War in Africa with their award-winning books in the 2000s. Both focus on the American involvement in the Angolan Civil War as a direct response to Portuguese decolonization, rather than as a continuation of American policy in the region.

<sup>5</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 4.



Belgian Congo hired Roberto with funds from the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) as an informant. The Leopoldville consulate chose Roberto, an Angolan, not only for his knowledge of events in the Belgian Congo, but because he was an African revolutionary that actively sought out American support. The consulate wanted to “destroy the myth that the Soviet is the champion of democracy and freedom.”<sup>6</sup> Holden Roberto became America’s Angolan, and from 1955-1975, he represented America’s plan for post-colonial Angola, and for the southern Africa region.

For the United States, Angola represented how race relations at home and America’s alliance with Europe complicated U.S. Africa policies.<sup>7</sup> Portugal, Angola’s colonial master, was both a fascist country and a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Even while America sought to be the symbol of emancipation in Angola, American support for NATO empowered the ultra-right wing, white supremacist government of Portugal.<sup>8</sup> Thus, despite American support for Angolan nationalists and strong words against Portuguese colonialism, Angola reinforced the image of the United States as a racist nation that supported white supremacy in Africa and the American South. Indeed, “a group of U.S. ambassadors in Africa warned their superiors in Washington in 1961 that ‘the most highly-charged issues in sub-

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<sup>6</sup> “Memorandum by the Consul General at Leopoldville (McGregor) - Document 9,” December 28, 1955, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Africa, Volume XVIII, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v18/d9>.; In Portuguese: Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA). In French: Front di Libération Nationale de l’Angola (FNLA). This paper uses the name in use at the period of mentioning for the present day Democratic Republic of the Congo. All Congolese place names follow this rule, such as the Belgian Congo, Republic of Congo, and Zaire; when mentioning cities, such as Leopoldville or Kinshasa, other names may appear in parenthesis to avoid confusion.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Harvard University Press, 2003), 11. Thomas Borstelmann notes the enduring nature of America’s racial foreign policy, which dates back to when “Slavery and westward expansion wove together issues of race relations and foreign relations from the very beginning of American history.”

<sup>8</sup> “New State’ Portugal is often regarded as a fascist government. However, contemporary admirers of the regime labeled it a ‘corporatist state.’ A good example of this viewpoint is Michael Derrick, *The Portugal of Salazar*, First Edition (Campion Books, Ltd., 1939).

Saharan Africa today are the war in Angola and racial discrimination in the U.S.”<sup>9</sup> Angola was the international symbol of American race relations; from 1961-1976, the United States struggled to save the soul of America in Angola.<sup>10</sup>

The durability of Washington’s interest in the region was a function of the centrality of the Congo (Zaire) to America’s Cold War strategy and to Roberto’s revolution. After Belgium departed suddenly during the summer of 1960, the United States poured resources into the Congo to prevent communist infiltration into the region. The fulcrum of this policy was the close personal relationship forged between members of the CIA and the Leopoldville (Kinshasa) embassy staff and a powerful group of Congolese elites known as the Binza group, led by Joseph Mobutu.<sup>11</sup> Mobutu and the Binza group were close associates of Holden Roberto, whose ethnic group, the Bakongo, straddled both sides of the Angola-Congo (Zaire) border. Roberto founded the FNLA as an organization of Bakongo refugees and exiles in the Congo, and according to Angola expert John Marcum, it was “patterned on Congolese (Belgian) models, was caught up in the fortunes and intrigues of Congolese politics, and had less firsthand experiential knowledge of conditions prevailing in Angola.”<sup>12</sup> Roberto became a client of Mobutu as well as Washington; this meant that Roberto’s fortunes were hitched to Mobutu’s. As long as America remained committed to Mobutu, Roberto would not fade far from Washington’s view.

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<sup>9</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 145.

<sup>10</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*, 1st edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 3. This is a play on George H. W. Bush’s description of the Cold War as “a struggle for the very soul of mankind.”

<sup>11</sup> For more on American involvement in the Congo, see: Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone*, First Edition (PublicAffairs, 2007); Madeleine Kalb, *Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--From Eisenhower to Kennedy*, 1st Edition edition (New York: Macmillan Pub Co, 1982); Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu’s Congo* (Harper Perennial, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> John A. Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2: Exile Politics and Guerilla Warfare, 1962-1976* (The MIT Press, 1978), 52. John Marcum’s two volume *Angolan Revolution* remains the best source for information regarding Angola’s political movements and their guerrilla wars.

The FNLA was not alone in its quest to liberate Angola from the yoke of Portuguese imperialism. While Roberto politicked among his countrymen in the Congo, Agostinho Neto, the future first President of Angola and leader of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), had joined the communist party as a medical student in Portugal.<sup>13</sup> Shortly thereafter, other future MPLA leaders, such as Mario de Andrade and Lucio Lara, visited the Soviet Union and affiliated with international communist organizations.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the anti-colonial struggle, the two rebel groups competed against each other for the support of the Angolan people, a competition that frequently turned into armed conflict. According to Marcum, the FNLA traditionally held a military edge over the MPLA, “in administrative-organizational terms, the MPLA was the more impressive with its educated cadres and developing structure and political programs.”<sup>15</sup> The MPLA’s main support came from the ethnic Mbundu people of Luanda and its surrounding provinces, as well as the creole population of the capital. In 1975, The MPLA leveraged its support in Luanda, along with the help of Soviet arms and a Cuban military mission to take over the country.

A third group, led by Jonas Savimbi, formed as an offshoot from Roberto’s National Front, known as the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).<sup>16</sup> Savimbi focused his movement on his own Ovimbundu people, who traditionally lived in Angola’s central highlands. He competed with Daniel Chipenda, a fellow Ovimbundu, and member of the MPLA, for ethnic dominance. Like Roberto, Savimbi’s forces regularly fought with MPLA

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<sup>13</sup> Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa*, 1st Ed.(U.S.) (Paragon House, 1987), 38; António Agostinho Neto, *Sacred Hope* (Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania: Tanzania Publishing House, 1974), xxv–xxvi.; In Portuguese: Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA).

<sup>14</sup> Vladimir Gennadyevich Shubin, *The Hot “Cold War”: The USSR in Southern Africa* (Pluto Press, 2008), 7–8.

<sup>15</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 61.

<sup>16</sup> União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA)

rebels; in turn, the MPLA accused Savimbi of collaborating with the Portuguese.<sup>17</sup> Savimbi grew in importance as the war dragged on, and along with Chipenda, became a crucial factor in South Africa's decision to invade Angola in 1975.

Superimposed over these competing Angolan factions was a desperate Portuguese regime with powerful allies. Portugal, a poor and under educated nation, had managed to cling to an empire that in 1960 still spanned four continents. Controlled by an oligarchy of business and military interests, the government of Prime Minister Antonio Salazar maintained control only through liberal use of the Secret Police, the International Police for Defense of the State (PIDE).<sup>18</sup> Salazar called his reign the "Estado Novo," or New State; he intended to indicate a clean break from the debt and debacle of liberal democratic rule in the early twentieth century. An odd partner for the United States, Salazar commanded Washington's good graces primarily because of the Azores islands, a strategically located strand of volcanoes in the mid-Atlantic, and home to an American airbase. The Azores base alone led the United States to tolerate Salazar's Portugal, whose politics and colonial policies were outside acceptable practices for most Americans.

A central tenet of New State thinking was the idea of Lusotropicalism, which held that "because of the historically unique absence of racism among the Portuguese people, their colonization of tropical, non-European territories was characterized by racially egalitarian legislation and human interaction."<sup>19</sup> Lusotropicalism led Portugal to believe it could hold on to Angola forever, since the Africans dominated there would eventually become Portuguese. The

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<sup>17</sup> William Minter, *Operation Timber: Pages from the Savimbi Dossier* (Africa World Press, 1988), 11–13.

<sup>18</sup> John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961-1974* (Praeger, 1997), 19–20. In Portuguese: Polícia Internacional de Defesa do Estado.

<sup>19</sup> Gerald J. Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese* (University of California Press, 1978), 3.

hope was that in Angola, Portugal would create an African Brazil. Americans and Portuguese alike bought into the theory of Lusotropicalism, and it was this construct that the United States used to back Portugal internationally.

By 1961, however, it was apparent that Portugal had no future in Angola, other than perhaps as the leader of a sort of commonwealth. After France failed in Vietnam and Algeria, and the British in Kenya, the expectations of independence in the third world accelerated. It became clear to President Kennedy that the third world was where the superpowers would confront one another, and that the United States needed a plan to meet the challenge. When Angolan nationalists rose in open rebellion, (led by Roberto, Neto, and Savimbi) it became clear that Angola was the next flashpoint. This is the story of how Americans came to realize this fact, ignored it, and then managed that predictable crisis.

At the same time, the republican administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford tried to unburden themselves from Angola's independence struggle. These administrations chose to align the United States with Portugal and its fellow reactionary states, apartheid South Africa and Ian Smith's Rhodesia.<sup>20</sup> This shift corresponded with their views of domestic racial-relations, and rapprochement with the white supremacist powers left the United States unprepared for the crisis that unfolded in 1974-1976 after Portugal granted independence to its empire. After a coup in Lisbon in 1974, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger initially ignored Angola and instead focused on Portugal.

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<sup>20</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 241. Borstelmann termed this an extension of "Nixon's Southern strategy...incorporating whites in southern Africa as well as the American South."

Only after Kissinger understood the complex regional nature of the conflict and saw it as a direct challenge to American credibility, did Washington act.<sup>21</sup> After intense lobbying from African allies, Kissinger and Ford slowly formulated the idea of a covert operation to aid Holden Roberto's FNLA. The plan, codenamed IAFEATURE, was a product of Henry Kissinger's anti-communism, not the desire to be on the champion of racial justice and self-determination in Angola. As such, the secret mission to aid Roberto involved the worst aspects of white interference in Africa: mercenaries, ethnic strife, and a military alliance with the apartheid regime in Pretoria. IAFEATURE's failure was a direct response to the implementation of these questionable means. Nevertheless, despite years of neglect for Roberto and Africa under Nixon and Ford, the strong preexisting bond between the United States and the principal black actors in southern Africa nearly led to the success of the secret war. Only after losing in Angola did Kissinger understand the centrality of the white-black struggle in southern Africa to the affairs of the whole continent.

The story begins with Franklin Roosevelt's quest to control the Azores islands, and ends with the defeat of Roberto's forces at the hands of a combined MPLA-Cuban-Soviet army. Chapter 1 focuses on Africa's role in America's rise to superpower status during WWII and its aftermath. During this period, Holden Roberto joined the CIA payroll, decolonization began in earnest throughout Africa, and the white regimes of southern Africa began to show their determination to remain in control. Chapter 1 also contains the detailed history of the FNLA's early development. Chapter 2 launches Roberto's war against Portugal, and how Presidents John

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<sup>21</sup> Jussi M. Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*, 1st Edition (Oxford University Press, USA, 2004), 426, 400. Jussi Hanhimaki blamed Kissinger for making Angola "unnecessarily into a test case" of American credibility. He uses Angola as an "example of how Kissinger's overall foreign policy outlook, when applied to complex regional crises, not only contributed to the havoc in those regions but...contributed to the demise of his entire foreign policy architecture."

Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson sought ways to help Roberto against Portugal. However, Roberto suffered a series of setbacks, the most important of which was Jonas Savimbi's exit from the FNLA and the creation of UNITA. Important to all of these developments was the increasingly racial nature of the conflict, and the Congo Crisis. Chapter 3 concerns Nixon and Kissinger's change of policies in southern Africa, the MPLA's growth in the early 1970s, and the events that led to Angolan independence on November 11, 1975 and the end of America's war in Angola.

## Chapter 1: The Azores, America, and Angola

The American alliance with Portugal, born out of the Second World War, was the crux of America's involvement in Southern Africa during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This odd pairing of an autocratic European regime and the American republic forced both nations to compromise their political beliefs. However, Portugal possessed islands of rare strategic value, which Washington grew to covet. The Azores, a small island chain located in the mid-Atlantic, provided an ideal position from which to defend the sea-lanes to and from the Americas, as well as serving as a refueling hub for air traffic to and from North America and Europe, Africa and the Middle East. American generals and admirals had coveted the islands as early as the Spanish-American War.<sup>22</sup> These strategic islands would eventually become the center of Portuguese-American relations.

It was not until the second war with Germany that securing an American base in the Azores became a reality. Desperate to defeat Adolf Hitler, the United States and the Allies turned to African powers for crucial war aid: the Union of South Africa fought in nearly every theater of the war, the Manhattan Project used uranium from the Belgian Congo, and the allies had hoped that the Portuguese Azores would become a key transit hub.<sup>23</sup> Portugal, a neutral power, sat out the fighting in World War II and made a fortune selling war materiel to both the Axis and the Allied powers. Portuguese neutrality encourage Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill to contemplate taking the islands by force, but instead entered an unlikely alliance with Antonio Salazar's fascist government to obtain access rights to the islands.

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<sup>22</sup> A.H. De Oliveira Marques, *History of Portugal: From Empire to Corporate State (Vol. II)*, 1st ed. (Columbia University Press, 1972), 74.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 1993).



The price for what Dean Acheson called “perhaps the single most important (set of bases) we have anywhere” was an American promise to secretly support and allow Portuguese imperialism.<sup>24</sup> After the war, Salazar leveraged the Azores to obtain American aid, including NATO membership, economic development, and military modernization, all of which propped up Portugal’s colonial adventures. Quite simply, the only reason for the inclusion of Portugal in NATO and the close Portuguese-American relationship after World War II was the Lajes air base in the Azores islands. Without this American support, neither Antonio Salazar’s ‘Estado Novo’ nor the Portuguese empire could have survived until the 1970s.

The empire, or ‘Ultramar’ in Portuguese, was the centerpiece of Salazar’s regime. The Estado Novo tapped into the deep resentment within Portuguese society as it struggled to reconcile a history of imperial greatness with abject poverty, high illiteracy, and general decline throughout the twentieth century. Salazar’s regime, like the fascist governments of Italy and Germany, promised Portugal renewed imperial greatness. This mission allegedly warranted great abuses of his power, the least of which was the absolute authority of the PIDE. The esteemed Portuguese historian A. H. de Oliveira Marques called the PIDE’s record “good enough to make us think of the Inquisition in its golden age,” and only slightly less violent and organized “than the German Gestapo or the Soviet Secret Police.”<sup>25</sup> Angola was an essential theme of Salazar’s regime; it justified the abuses of his power by connecting the dreary present to the hope of returning to the glory days of the 1500’s. A deeper study of Portuguese colonialism is useful to understand how the American Azores base propped up the Estado Novo regime in Lisbon and dictated America’s relations with Angola.

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<sup>24</sup> Witney Wright Schneidman, *Engaging Africa: Washington and the Fall of Portugal’s Colonial Empire* (University Press of America, 2004), 5.; William Minter, *Portuguese Africa and the West* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 88.

<sup>25</sup> Marques, *History of Portugal*, 188.

## THE ULTRAMAR

Portugal colonized Angola and the Azores islands during the Age of Discovery. Safe from Spain due to Britain's guarantee of protection provided by the 1386 Treaty of Windsor, the fifteenth century was a period of rapid Portuguese expansion. The Portuguese originally discovered the Azores and Angola during expeditions organized by Prince Henry Infante. 'Henry the Navigator' brought naval experts from the Mediterranean and Northern Europe to Lisbon and encouraged Portuguese expansion overseas. One of Henry's chartered voyages discovered the Azores in 1427 but "effective colonization" began "only after 1445."<sup>26</sup> Portugal began settling Africa during the same period, first with a fort at Cape Verde, which became "the first European settlement on the west coast of Africa," and "quickly became an important trading post, supplying gold and slaves to the homeland."<sup>27</sup> The Portuguese established relations with the Kingdom of the Kongo in 1485, who according to John Marcum had an empire "that covered what is (sic) present-day northern Angola and the Bakongo regions of the Congo republics of Kinshasa (Leopoldville) and Brazzaville."<sup>28</sup> However, Portuguese exploration was not limited to the African coast. In the New World, Spain and Portugal created a "line of demarcation from the north to the south pole, a hundred leagues west of the Azores" in the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas that ultimately granted Portugal Brazil.<sup>29</sup> While Columbus was in the Caribbean to make good on the Spanish's treaty claims, Vasco de Gama "completed the long-hoped-for journey" around the world heading east under Africa in 1497-1499, paving the way for settling the future

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Cornell University Press, 1983), 557.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.

<sup>28</sup> John A. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution: The Anatomy of an Explosion (1950-1962)* (M.I.T. Press, 1969), 1; Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage, *A Short History of Africa: Sixth Edition*, Revised (Penguin (Non-Classics), 1990), 125.

<sup>29</sup> James H Guill, *A History of the Azores Islands* (Tulare, Calif.: Golden Shield Publications, Golden Shield International, 1900), 63; O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain*, 674.

Portuguese possessions of Mozambique, Macao, Timor and Goa.<sup>30</sup> By 1500, the Portuguese had built an empire spanning Europe, Asia, South America, and Africa. These voyages and settlements not only built the 'Ultramar,' but they also ushered in 500 years of European involvement in Africa. This was the golden era of Portuguese history, a time that Portugal would never again match in prestige, splendor, or power.

The Portuguese imperial project focused on building and maintaining commercial connections throughout the globe. These outposts required only a minimal permanent presence to allow for infrequent visits by traders from Lisbon. The majority of Portugal's imperial holdings fit this description, including Goa in India, Macau in China and Guinea-Bissau in Africa. The Portuguese undertook larger colonial projects in the Azores and Brazil. The Azores islands were uninhabited at discovery, and Portugal quickly dispatched settlers to colonize them.<sup>31</sup> Other Portuguese settlers went to Brazil and built large plantations to grow cash crops to sell in the Old World. These plantations required slave labor, which Portugal hoped to procure in Luanda, the capital of Angola. Settlement in Luanda centered on its natural harbor, which became a principal base for the procurement of slaves for the plantations in Brazil. Angola was indispensable to the Brazilian economy and more than 2.7 million slaves left the ports of Angola for the New World in the 18th century alone. Angola provided more slaves to the Western Hemisphere than any other region of Africa, making it, in the words of Marcus Rediker, "the most important region of the slave trade."<sup>32</sup> Each part of the empire provided an integral part of the Portuguese economy. However, the sum of the empire's parts barely provided the funds necessary to maintain global commitments.

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<sup>30</sup> O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain*, 674.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 557.

<sup>32</sup> Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, Reprint (Penguin Books, 2008), 97.

Portuguese power and prestige receded almost immediately from the high water mark of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1581, Spain exploited a succession crisis in Lisbon to annex Portugal and its empire. Other European powers also took advantage of the nation's misfortune. The French, Dutch, Danes, and English expanded their presence in Africa, Asia, and the New World at Portugal's expense. The 60 years of Spanish rule wiped out Portugal's dominant position in the world. Lisbon lost the commercial successes it had previously enjoyed, and the maintaining the empire became a burden on the debt, rather than an economic engine. The Doms in Lisbon began overseeing large trade imbalances and the accrual of debts abroad. In this period, Portugal grew increasingly dependent of the British navy to defend the empire, and by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain insisted on concessions in return. In 1808, London forced Portugal to open Brazilian trade to the world economy, and in 1810, the two nations signed a treaty that according to Marques "ruined the foundations of the Portuguese economy."<sup>33</sup> The situation worsened when Portugal lost Brazil in 1825.

After losing Brazil, Portugal turned seriously toward Africa for imperial conquest. Although the Portuguese had maintained a trading presence on the West Africa coast since the fifteenth century, Africa was a secondary imperial project whose sole importance was to provide slaves to Brazil. Without Brazil, Angola lost its role in the slave trade. Nearly a hundred years before the Estado Novo, Lisbon embarked on a mission to formally colonize Angola to create a Brazil-style settler society in hope of restoring the greatness of the state. Losing the wealth of Brazil had gutted the Portuguese economy, and the government in Lisbon hoped that Africa could replace the lost profits.<sup>34</sup> The campaigns to subjugate Angola in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early

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<sup>33</sup> Marques, *History of Portugal*, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

20th centuries, however, further bankrupted Portugal, setting the stage for Salazar's eventual rise to power.

By the 20th century, Portugal was not a 'great power' by any sense of the term. Lisbon lacked the resources and work force traditionally required for conquest, and had to look to outside sources for influence in world affairs. Indeed, the Treaty of Windsor remained the foundation of Portuguese foreign policy until the Second World War, when the United States formed an unlikely alliance with Portugal to obtain the rights to an airbase in the strategically located Azores islands.

## WORLD WAR II

World War II highlighted the strategic importance of the Azores to Washington, and the island chain was the impetus for American involvement with the Portuguese Overseas Empire. FDR redefined the goals of the military immediately after Germany invaded Poland. Although Roosevelt maintained a policy of American neutrality in the European war, FDR began to prepare for an eventual American involvement. For the first time "the United States committed itself to defend the entire land area of the Western Hemisphere against military attack from the Old World."<sup>35</sup> This bold mission was "a new departure in the military policy of the United States, although it was a natural outgrowth of American policy and practice under the Monroe Doctrine."<sup>36</sup> This static defense of the western hemisphere included joint naval patrols of the Atlantic with the British, and the Azores served as the dividing line between the American and British zones of responsibility. The lend-lease act signed in 1940 between the United States and Great Britain was essential in providing the bases the American Navy needed for such an ambitious strategy.

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<sup>35</sup> Stetson Conn, *The Western Hemisphere, Guarding the United States and Its Outposts (Clothbound)* (Dept. of the Army, 1989), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

America received “sovereign rights for 99 years over sites for naval, military and air bases in the Bahamas, Jamaica, Antigua, St. Lucia, Trinidad and British Guiana, in exchange for” 50 World War I era destroyers. Bases in Newfoundland and Bermuda came to the United States free of charge.<sup>37</sup> This strategy of ‘Hemisphere Defense’ slowly became a hot war in the Atlantic between U.S. patrols and the German *U*-boats. The Joint Chiefs viewed ‘Hemisphere Defense’ as the maximum extension of the American military.

As early as the summer of 1940, Hitler had begun planning an Azores campaign to disrupt Anglo-American control of the Atlantic. Samuel Morison claims that the Germans had hoped to use the Azores as “a jumping-off point for the Luftwaffe against the United States.”<sup>38</sup> A more likely use would have been as a forward base for German submarine warfare. With the German occupation of France and Hitler’s access to French ports in the Atlantic, such an attack became a real possibility. In early 1941, all the telltale signs of a German invasion of Spain and Portugal began appearing in German propaganda radio programs, including frequent German radio broadcasts that attacked the Portuguese government and accused Washington of coveting the Azores themselves.<sup>39</sup> Roosevelt believed that such an attack was imminent. On May 22, FDR “directed the Army and Navy to be ready within thirty days to forestall a German attack on the Azores by getting there first.”<sup>40</sup>

The military was wholly unprepared for the mission. The Joint Chiefs estimated the operation would require 25,000 men, would use up all available ammunition and would tied up

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<sup>37</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *Battle of the Atlantic, September 1939 - May 1943*, Reprint (Naval Institute Press, 2010), 34.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 34.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>40</sup> Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *United States Army in World War 2 : War Department, Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940 1943*, First Edition (US) First Printing (Dept. of the Army, 1955), 68–70.

most of the Pacific and Atlantic transport fleets. Not only would the operation, titled Task Force Gray, tax the army, navy, and air force to the max, it would probably launch the United States into the war.<sup>41</sup> But FDR was determined. Military planners struggled to mobilize the men and materiel needed for the mission, and Roosevelt extended the deadline into June.

Events in Europe derailed the plan before it could be executed. On May 27, the British sunk the Bismarck and effectively neutered the German navy.<sup>42</sup> More importantly, on June 22, Roosevelt's deadline to take the Azores, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. With the German *Wehrmacht* busy in the east, it became clear that the Azores were safe from German aggression. The troops earmarked for the Azores rerouted to Iceland, and the US remained out of the war until that December.

After Pearl Harbor, and America's entry into the European conflict, the Joint Chiefs slowly came to covet the Azores. American supplies went to Britain in ever-greater amounts, and in turn, the Germans used submarines based in western France to challenge allied shipping. In response to German submarine warfare, the Allies organized all trans-Atlantic commerce into convoys. American ships protected convoys to the mid-Atlantic, where the British took over. In addition, air bases in Newfoundland, Iceland and Great Britain provided limited air cover while a system of mid-sea refueling allowed escort ships to protect convoys the whole way across the ocean. The system had a large flaw. According to Winston Churchill, the Germans were able to inflict heavy losses on shipping in the "large mid-ocean area north of the Azores" situated beyond the range of Allied air power. This 'Azores gap' was the scene of some of the worst allied losses in the Atlantic war. The Allies needed an airfield in range of the gap. Churchill,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Conn, *The Western Hemisphere, Guarding the United States and Its Outposts (Clothbound)*, 464.

however, wanted not only to defend shipping lanes, but also to “attack U-boats not only going to and from the Biscay bases, but also while they were resting, refueling, recharging their batteries in mid-ocean.”<sup>43</sup> Churchill came to see securing rights to an airbase in the Azores as a strategic imperative.

Churchill was unwilling to allow the Americans to invade, as they had planned to in 1941. The British, Portugal’s historic ally, insisted on receiving Portugal’s approval for the Azores base, which delayed its construction. The negotiations dragged on through 1942 well into 1943, at which point the Allies had already decided the Battle of the Atlantic.<sup>44</sup> The delay was costly. Churchill wrote in his memoirs that “it was estimated by the experts that a million tons of shipping and many thousands of lives might be saved” if the allies had built bases in the mid-Atlantic islands at the onset of America’s entry into the war.<sup>45</sup> It became clear to Churchill and FDR that the mid-Atlantic location of the Azores made them strategically important, no matter the circumstances. They pushed forward with negotiations for base rights.

The 1373 Treaty of Windsor served as the basis of London’s negotiations. Churchill, in an address to parliament, described the treaty as committing Britain and Portugal to “be friends to friends and enemies to enemies, and (that they) shall assist, maintain, and uphold each other mutually, by sea and by land, against all men that may live or die.”<sup>46</sup> Despite invoking the ancient foundation of Anglo-Portuguese relations, Portugal only agreed to give the British temporary rights to a base on Terceira Island in exchange for British military and economic aid

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<sup>43</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986), 789, 802.

<sup>44</sup> Morison, *Battle of the Atlantic, September 1939 - May 1943*, 320–321, 358.

<sup>45</sup> Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, 789, 802.

<sup>46</sup> Winston S. Churchill and John Keegan, *The Second World War, Volume 5: Closing the Ring* (Mariner Books, 1951), 165–166.



to the Salazar government.<sup>47</sup> London had negotiated the deal with Lisbon under the tacit understanding that American troops would help construct and operate the base. It seemed that the allies and Portugal had come to a settlement to allow British and American forces to occupy the Azores.

The Portuguese recoiled at the thought of friendship with the Americans.<sup>48</sup> Office of Strategic Services agents in London noted that Salazar viewed the United States as the shining example of political liberty that he had “tried so hard to rid” from “Portugal.”<sup>49</sup> In 1943, negotiations between the U.S. and Portugal began in an ad hoc manner following the death of the American ambassador in Lisbon who was replaced by the George F. Kennan, the American chargé d'affaires in London.<sup>50</sup> Kennan wrote back to Washington emphasizing the importance of the Azores base and Portugal in general, and also noted “Salazar...fears association with us only slightly less than with the Russians.”<sup>51</sup> Republican Portugal had glorified American style democracy, and Salazar's dictatorship depended on strict control of the state. An American presence in Portugal could only lead to calls to return to democracy. Worse, Roosevelt was a vocal opponent of colonialism. Salazar believed that an alliance with America would lead to international pressure for Portugal to relinquish its empire. That was something the old dictator could not stand, more so because the colonies, especially Angola, were turning huge profits providing raw materials to both sides in the war.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>48</sup> Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, 789,802.

<sup>49</sup> José Freire Antunes, “Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961,” in *John F. Kennedy and Europe*, ed. Douglas Brinkley and Richard T. Griffiths (Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 149.

<sup>50</sup> Minter, *Portuguese Africa and the West*, 39.

<sup>51</sup> Antunes, “Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961,” 149; Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 47.

Fortunately for Salazar, American policy makers were far more pragmatic and much less intent on spreading democracy than he feared. To assuage the dictator's apprehensions FDR assured Lisbon that the "United States had no designs on the territory of Portugal and its *possessions*."<sup>52</sup> That included 'designs' to impose an end to empire in the post-war settlement. With that, Roosevelt committed the United States to tacit support for Portuguese control over Angola and public cooperation with Portuguese imperialism. The Azores, a chain of volcanic rocks in the mid-Atlantic, forged an unholy alliance between the world's largest democracy and one of its oldest Fascist governments. A catholic priest blessed the first perforated steel runway of what was to become Lajes Air Field, and United States and Portugal celebrated by holding a joint banquet to commemorate the new relationship.<sup>53</sup>

#### PORTUGAL IN THE POST WAR ESTABLISHMENT

Following the end of the war, the United States quickly utilized the Azores in the building of its defense system. The troops that flew home from the European theater and those that transferred to the Pacific used Lajes airfield to refuel.<sup>54</sup> In 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff "ranked the Azores as one of only seven military bases worldwide that were 'required' for the national security of the United States," while the National Security Council called Lajes field "the most vital single spot in the world" in terms of any future war in Europe.<sup>55</sup> Over 3,000 aircraft passed through Lajes during the Berlin Airlift, and in 1949 the airfield began hosting

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<sup>52</sup> Antunes, "Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961," 149; Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 47.

<sup>53</sup> Norman Herz, *Operation Alacrity: The Azores and the War in the Atlantic*, 1st Edition (US Naval Institute Press, 2003), 221.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 325–328.

<sup>55</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 99.

tankers for mid-air refueling of strategic bombers.<sup>56</sup> Secretary of State Dean Acheson made it clear to the Senate that the U.S. wanted Portugal as a founding member of NATO “because of the Azores.”<sup>57</sup> NATO military planners easily overlooked Portugal’s fascist government and incorporated the airfield into plans for the defense of Europe, control of the North Atlantic, and strategic command. It became an essential cog in the American war machine, a nexus for troops and air power between the homeland and far off crises.

U.S. policy through the Eisenhower administration continued to mirror the conundrum of the Cold War- U.S. support for an autocratic, non-communist regime in Lisbon in the name of preserving liberty. Whereas Truman and Eisenhower pressured France and Holland to grant their colonies independence after the war, they remained silent on Portugal’s possessions. The Portuguese received Marshall Plan aid and the U.S. waived Portugal’s NATO dues. The United States also paid the full price of Portugal’s NATO participation, which included the total modernization of the Portuguese army, navy, and air force. Aside from the cost in materiel and coin, Portugal was also a political liability at the United Nations. Although Portugal was a founding member of NATO, it did not become a member of the UN until 1955. The world organization denied Portugal’s application because of its overseas colonies, which were illegal according to the UN Charter. Nevertheless, the United States under presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower backed Portugal in the international arena and rebuffed all demands that Portugal release her colonies, including Angola. Portugal finally joined the UN in 1955 by reclassifying the colonies as ‘overseas provinces,’ not unlike France’s classification of Algeria,

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<sup>56</sup> 65th Air Base Wing History Office, “A Short History of Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal” (History Office 65th Air Base Wing Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal United States Air Forces in Europe Command), 7–10, accessed April 30, 2012, <http://www.lajes.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-110621-022.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Antunes, “Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961,” 149–150.

and theoretically extending the privileges of citizenship to the peoples of the *Ultramar*.

Portugal's entry into the UN was supposed to end the political cost of the Azores, and present a kinder, gentler image of Portuguese colonialism to a skeptical world.

Most important to the Salazar government's campaign was the myth of Lusotropicalism, or the theory that "because of the historically unique absence of racism among the Portuguese people, their colonization of tropical, non-European territories was characterized by racially egalitarian legislation and human interaction."<sup>58</sup> Western audiences, more familiar with the multiethnic culture of Brazil, largely bought the argument for Portugal's African and Asian possessions. Salazar's government encouraged immigration to the colonies, and Angola experienced a huge influx of Portuguese settlers in the 1940's and 1950's. Following the settlers came investment from the state. The economic boom created by the war provided the capital for investments in Angola, including new roads, railways, drainage and irrigation works, and hydroelectric schemes.<sup>59</sup> Portugal boasted of token improvements in education, health and housing as signs of progress.<sup>60</sup> These new investments, paired with the increased population of white settlers, appeared to be evidence that Lusotropicalism was real and that an economic miracle of sorts was taking place in Angola. Salazar presented to the world an Angola that was peaceful, progressive, and profitable. Indeed, Angola was not a colony, but a harmonious province of the Portuguese state.

### COTTON, COFFEE, AND SETTLERS

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<sup>58</sup> Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Linda Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present* (University of Rochester Press, 2000), 66.

<sup>60</sup> James Duffy, *Portuguese Africa* (Harvard University press, 1961), 317.

The truth was that Angola's economic miracle was the result of the worst colonial practices in Africa. Unlike other European colonial powers, Portugal was neither an economic powerhouse, nor a democratic society. That combination meant that capital-poor Portugal relied solely on coercion to develop its African colonies, and Angola was no exception. The exploitive policies of the regime extended to all aspects of life in Angola: land, labor, and settlers. According to Douglas Wheeler, the "modest profits" of the colony "would have been endangered" if not for the immigration of poor uneducated Portuguese, free land, and "cheap, poorly-paid labor."<sup>61</sup>

Portuguese businesses expected labor costs in Angola to be nonexistent. Before the influx of white settlers in the 1940's, Portugal's main income in Angola came from taxing households and indigenous production. However, most Angolans lacked the currency required to pay their tax bill. The need for currency meant that during "a given period of each year," Africans worked for wages, and "if they refused to volunteer to work they could be contracted by the State."<sup>62</sup> State contracted work was for "the public interest," which included "providing *colonos*' supply of cheap labor...on private white farms."<sup>63</sup> In this way taxes served "two purposes: to raise revenue for governmental expenses and to force the African into the money economy."<sup>64</sup> These policies in Angola created "a legal obligation stated as a moral premise" for Angolans to work for Portuguese businesses.<sup>65</sup>

The connection between taxation and forced labor put the Angolan colonial government in the never-ending business of providing modern-day slaves to the powerful business interests

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<sup>61</sup> Douglas L. Wheeler and René Pélissier, *Angola* (Greenwood Press, 1971), 139.

<sup>62</sup> Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 141.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Lawrence W. Henderson, *Angola: Five Centuries of Conflict*, First Edition (Cornell University Press, 1979), 119.

<sup>65</sup> Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present*, 39.

of the colony. Employers only had to “notify the government of their needs” to receive more workers.<sup>66</sup> Government officials often gave the work of finding contract laborers to black Angolans, who moved men across Angola “tied neck to neck with rope,” placed adds in local papers with current prices for labor, and resorted to “nightly kidnapping forays” to meet their quotas.<sup>67</sup> Gerald Bender went so far as to say that white plantation owners “often treated (contract laborers) worse than their forefathers had treated their animals or slaves.”<sup>68</sup> If one died or fell sick, they simply had to ask for a replacement from the government. This meant that despite the end of de jure slavery, a new modern form of slavery persisted in Angola clothed in the premise of ‘free’ or ‘contract’ labor. According to the regime in Lisbon “slaves were no longer bought and sold; the laborer has come of his own free will to contract for his services under the terms and according to the forms required by the law.”<sup>69</sup> Slavery in Angola, disguised as a *corvée*, or contract labor system, was “the flywheel of the... whole economy.”<sup>70</sup>

To exploit the *corvée* system, Salazar’s regime provided choice land to members of the oligarchy and their business interests, and on that land, they built large plantations based on the old Roman *latifundia* system. Portugal did not recognize native land rights, and the colonial government simply seized land requested by the regime in Lisbon. The “corresponding eviction of Africans from favorable land” allowed new settlers from Europe to move in, and in turn, use labor from those evicted to build their farms.<sup>71</sup> These massive estates required a small number of European overseers, and because of the favorable cost of labor, a large number of native

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<sup>66</sup> Basil Davidson, *The African Awakening*, First Edition (Jonathan Cape, 1955), 203.

<sup>67</sup> Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present*, 76–77.

<sup>68</sup> Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 143–144.

<sup>69</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, 1979, 114.

<sup>70</sup> Davidson, *The African Awakening*, 197.

<sup>71</sup> Basil Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm: Angola’s People*, 1st Edition (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1972), 292.

Angolans. The most profitable plantations grew cotton and *Robusta* coffee beans for the international market, and given the low startup and labor costs, generated considerable profits for their operators. The state in turn taxed those profits, which helped close the budget deficit and reduce Portugal's trade imbalance. This system was a classic model of fascist economic policy: the state enabled the business interests aligned with the regime to use the coercive power of government for personal profit. Men got rich from the colonies, and the dream of free land and free labor encouraged Portuguese families to move to Angola.

For the masses of Portuguese settlers that moved to Angola between the 1940's and 1974, that dream was unattainable. Free land was only available to members of the ruling elite; Portuguese law specifically forbade the kind of 'homesteading' that in the United States had been crucial to economic growth and westward expansion. Such a system required a liberal state that encouraged equality and economic opportunity. Not surprisingly, Salazar did "not believe in universal suffrage," nor in "equality."<sup>72</sup> Basil Davidson observed during his travels through colonial Angola that the New State treated "the bulk of Portuguese...at least in essence, (to) that of colonized Africans."<sup>73</sup> Due to the lack of jobs and opportunity in Portugal, Portuguese settlers willingly worked for the low wages paid by the colonial government and its business allies. Most of the immigrants from Portugal were poor, uneducated urbanites who came to Angola to escape the abysmal job market of the metropolis. Expecting the chance to farm the land, they instead found jobs as low-level clerks, and as menial laborers in Luanda, jobs that traditionally held by creoles. These new Portuguese immigrants pushed Angolans out of the higher paying jobs in the capital Luanda and into the contract labor market. The combined effect of the entrance of poor

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 121–122.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

Europeans and the expulsion of Angolans from good jobs helped reinforce an economy based on “cheap White labor as well as...very cheap African labor.”<sup>74</sup>

Angola’s economic gains during the Second World War veiled the massive divide between rich and poor and the growing unrest amongst Angolans. Cotton was one of the biggest moneymakers of the colony, and international investors saw the Angolan cotton crop as an important sign of economic progress. However, the cotton industry was one of the main offenders of the *corvée* system. Marcum described “cotton growing” in Angola, as “organized on the basis of a manpower raiding system.” Africans “were hauled out of their villages” and forced to grow cotton under the careful watch of conscript African soldiers. When the fields went fallow, the laborers moved to new land.<sup>75</sup> This profitable business model destroyed civil society by removing men from their families, villages from their ancestral land, and enlisted village chiefs as labor recruiters.

However, it was coffee, not cotton, which embodied Angola’s rising economy and Portugal’s brutality. American troops drank *Robusta* coffee grown in Angola during the war and the variety remained popular postbellum. Americans purchased roughly half of Angola’s coffee crop, which comprised seven percent of American coffee consumption, and nearly a quarter of all of Angola’s exports between 1945 and 1974. Indeed, after the war, America surpassed Portugal as Angola’s largest export market.<sup>76</sup> The “post-war coffee boom” in Angola created a frenzied land rush amongst Portuguese and German investors in the northern part of the colony. The coastal plain stretching north from Luanda to the border with the Belgian Congo filled with coffee plantations, all of which turned to “forced labor and other abuses” in order to increase

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>75</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 47.

<sup>76</sup> Minter, *Portuguese Africa and the West*, 123.



production.<sup>77</sup> Corporal punishment was pervasive, and the housing and provisions for coffee workers was abysmal. The situation was so bad that the Belgian Congo became an attractive alternative to Angola. Despite the Congo's reputation of depravity and abuse, Angolans moved in droves during the supposed boom years in search of better jobs and living conditions. By 1954, the UN estimated 500,000 Angolans of six million had fled to live abroad.<sup>78</sup>

These Angolan refugees were predominantly members of the Bakongo ethnic group of the coffee country. The Belgians Congolese had lightly defended the border, and its close proximity to the coffee fields offered an escape for Angolan laborers. But more importantly, members of the Bakongo ethno-linguistic group had already populated both sides of the Belgian/Portuguese frontier. The European powers had arbitrarily divided the Kongo Empire in 1885, scattering the Bakongo people between the French Congo, The Belgian Congo, and Portuguese Angola. John Marcum observed that the Bakongo people “have always flowed back and forth across the superimposed colonial border with the Congo, continuing to constitute a single ethnic community with fellow Bakongo ruled by either the French or Belgians.” Kinshasa, or Leopoldville, was almost half Bakongo, as was Brazzaville across the Congo River. In Marcum's research he found that in the 1950's, “thousands of Angolan Bakongo emigrated to the Belgian Congo, drawn by the latter's comparatively attractive educational and economic opportunities.” Because of this migration of peoples, a “significant portion of Kikongo-speaking people of the Lower Congo living” between Leopoldville and the Atlantic were “in fact, émigrés,

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<sup>77</sup> Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, 138.

<sup>78</sup> Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 142.

or children and grandchildren of émigrés, coming from the Congo district of Angola.<sup>79</sup> One such émigré was Holden Roberto, the eventual leader of the FNLA.<sup>80</sup>

### HOLDEN ROBERTO

Roberto's upbringing was typical of an Angolan émigré living in Leopoldville during the final years of Belgian rule in the Congo. Roberto was born in Angola in São Salvador, the capital of the ancient Kongo Kingdom, and a thriving center of Protestantism in traditionally Catholic Angola.<sup>81</sup> The English name 'Holden' came from a Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) pastor named Robert Holden Carson Graham, who baptized him at birth.<sup>82</sup> At age two, he moved to Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo with an aunt and was educated in a BMS school there. Many Bakongo on both sides of the border received education in English from BMS schools, which provided better instruction than the Portuguese or Belgian parish schools. On the Angolan side of the border, Portuguese authorities harassed protestant missionaries. Not only did such action galvanize Protestant Angolans, but also Marcum noted that it also drew the attention of "American Protestants known for their concern with race relations in Africa," which visited Leopoldville and made contacts with "the political leaders of the local émigré Angolan

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<sup>79</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 50.

<sup>80</sup> The first invasion, in 1961, was by Roberto's organization named the UPA, or the Union of Angola's People. The GRAE (Angolan Revolutionary Government in Exile) replaced the UPA after Roberto formed an alliance with several nationalist groups in exile in the Belgian Congo. The FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) was the military wing of the GRAE. Sources use GRAE and FNLA interchangeably. This paper uses the term used at the time by American policy makers. Thus, in chapter two, it is the UPA, in chapter three, it is the GRAE, and in chapter four, it is the FNLA. Nearly all monographs, debate and discourse about the 1975 War of Independence refer to it as the FNLA, which is why it is as such in the Introduction, Conclusion, and here.

<sup>81</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 55.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 64–65.

community.”<sup>83</sup> These church leaders took their experiences from Africa back to the U.S. and began a movement within American churches to denounce Portuguese imperialism and call for Angolan independence. Roberto, like many of his compatriots, learned from the actions of missionaries to view Americans as anti-colonial, anti-Portuguese stalwarts. A consequence of his upbringing in the Belgian Congo and his early instruction in English was that his Portuguese was not good. This was an unsurprising fact for an Angolan émigré, but for young Holden’s politically connected family, his poor Portuguese skills limited his potential to serve the Kongo king. In 1940, his family sent him back to Angola to study for two years at a BMS school in São Salvador to improve his Portuguese and learn about his roots.<sup>84</sup> After completing his studies in 1941, he returned to the Belgian Congo. Roberto, like most Protestant Angolans of the time, found that their superior primary education made them excellent candidates for clerical positions in the Belgian colonial administration. Holden found a job in the colonial government, and worked in throughout the Congo in Leopoldville, Bukavu, and Stanleyville. While working for the Belgians, Roberto met Patrice Lumumba, Congo’s first prime minister.<sup>85</sup> His friendship with Lumumba was only one of many politically useful connections he made while working for the Belgian authorities.

Roberto’s clerical job also gave him opportunities to interact with the growing American business and military presence in the Belgian Congo during World War II. Business interests, led by the Union Minière Du Haut Katanga (UMHK), kept the colony out of German hands and redirected the trade lost with Europe to the United States. American trade with the colony

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 55. Marcum lists their denominations as Unitarian and Methodist in his footnotes. He also notes that the Angolan émigrés were Bakongo.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 64–65.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 65.

became so large that it sparked rumors that America would colonize the Congo after the war.<sup>86</sup> In the post Hiroshima world, no single resource was more important than the uranium from the Shinkolobwe mine in Katanga. Shinkolobwe uranium was more pure than the ores available at the time in the United States and Canada, and provided the fissile material used in the first atomic weapons.<sup>87</sup> Shinkolobwe uranium made the stability of the Belgian Congo a priority for the U.S., which in turn stationed intelligence officers in Leopoldville to monitor the political situation.<sup>88</sup>

In 1949, Roberto quit his position in the Belgian bureaucracy at the behest of his uncle, Barros Necaca, and moved to Leopoldville. There he took a job with the international trading company where his uncle worked. Necaca also worked as an aid to the Kongo monarch Dom Pedro in São Salvador, Angola.<sup>89</sup> The Portuguese maintained the Kongo monarchy as a symbol of their legitimacy in Angola; Portugal had used a treaty signed by an illiterate Kongo king as its legal argument to keep Angola at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885.<sup>90</sup> According to John Marcum, Roberto's political career began in 1949, when Necaca and his nephew "systematically canvassed and palavered among their compatriots in Leopoldville" to raise funds to support the king.<sup>91</sup> This was Roberto's first real taste of politics, and he made important contacts within the Bakongo community in Leopoldville. In 1951, Roberto visited Angola for three weeks while campaigning with his uncle, where he witnessed Portuguese brutality firsthand. He wrote a letter to the United Nations about what he saw, and in return received a sympathetic reply that denied

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<sup>86</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 43.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 45–46.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 44. During the war, the OSS monitored the situation. Later it was the CIA's duty.

<sup>89</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 60–61.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

direct assistance.<sup>92</sup> In 1952, Roberto and other Bakongo leaders reached out to the American consulate in Leopoldville, who granted them a hearing with the Chief of Station. The Bakongo leaders asked the Americans for guidance on how to combat the cruel treatment of the Bakongo tribes in Angola.<sup>93</sup> These early political activities, and the connections he made in Leopoldville, helped to identify Roberto as a notable leader of the Angolans living in the Belgian Congo.

Almost more important to his early political career was Roberto's second job as a professional soccer player. When Holden moved to Leopoldville in 1949, he started playing on a local soccer team with his uncle. Roberto left his uncle's team to join the Daring Club, the top soccer team in the Congo. Roberto became a national icon in the Congo by playing for Daring, but more importantly, it made him one of the greatest celebrities of the Bakongo tribe on either side of the border. Another member of the Daring Club at the same time was Cyrille Adoula, who would later be installed as prime minister of the Congo with CIA help in 1961.<sup>94</sup> More of his political contacts came from his professional soccer days than through work or politics. The Belgian authorities made organized soccer a "compulsory requirement in the training of native soldiers."<sup>95</sup> Joseph Mobutu played on several club teams after the Belgians conscripted him into the Force Publique for being a "troublesome, stubborn boy" in 1949.<sup>96</sup> Roberto's soccer career, although a secondary focus, brought him fame, recognition and powerful friends in the Belgian Congo.

#### ROBERTO, THE CIA, AND THE UPA

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>95</sup> Paul Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA: Politics, Colonialism and Resistance* (Routledge, 2002), 16.

<sup>96</sup> Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, 74.

Notwithstanding his popularity and networking in the Belgian Congo, Roberto made the pivotal political and international connections of his career during a 1955 scandal in Bakongo politics along the Belgian Congo-Angolan frontier. When the Kongo king died without an heir, Angolan Bakongo leaders living in the Belgian Congo's principal port, Matadi, led by Eduardo Pinock, demanded a modern, protestant king. Portuguese authorities refused, and instead a Catholic was crowned. Pinock organized a protest across the border in Angola. Roberto and his uncle were against the plan from the start. Nevertheless, the 'Matadi Group' travelled to São Salvador and demanded the king abdicate in favor of a Protestant. The Portuguese humored the protesters and allowed them their demonstration. The king remained in the throne, and the Matadi Group returned to the Belgian Congo defeated. Once the protesters had left the colony, the Portuguese government officially sealed the border.<sup>97</sup> The embarrassment over the closure of the frontier led Necaca, Pinock, and Roberto to begin to talk about building international support for Bakongo nationalism.<sup>98</sup> Roberto wrote his second letter to the United Nations, and asked for "the people of the Kongo Kingdom" to become "a Trusteeship of the United States of America."<sup>99</sup> Ignored by the UN, Roberto turned to the American consulate in Leopoldville to further press the issue.

Roberto met with the staff of the American consulate in Leopoldville in late 1955 which led to a twenty-year relationship between the U.S. and the Angolan nationalist. Holden made such an impression on the consulate staff that the Consul General wrote a critical memorandum to his superiors questioning U.S. policy in Africa. The Consul General pointed out that American policy makers were more than willing to "tolerate or overlook conditions" in Angola, while

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<sup>97</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 56–60. The Belgians and Portuguese had previously allowed freedom of movement across the border for cultural purposes.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

chastising the Soviets for similar behavior in the Eastern Bloc. He noted, “the United States, being tied to the Metropolitan powers, will in ten years be devoid of a policy that will appeal to an emerging and awakened indigenous population in Africa.”<sup>100</sup> While pointing out the “medieval practices” of Portugal in Angola, he also called Roberto “naïve” to think that the U.S. would do something to change those practices and risk relations with a NATO ally. Although official policy in Washington was in full support of the colonial powers, this diplomat who had “to deal with these people on the spot” and was “sympathetic and attentive” to nationalists, hoped for a policy that would not drive “well-meaning and sincere Africans toward the Communists.”<sup>101</sup> Perhaps in a classic case of diplomats in the field driving foreign policy, Roberto left the U.S. Consulate with cash provided by the CIA station and the promise of more payments from the American Committee on Africa, a group founded in 1953 by Americans to support liberation movements.<sup>102</sup> This included, and was not limited to, direct monthly payments

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<sup>100</sup> “Memorandum by the Consul General at Leopoldville (McGregor) - Document 9,” 9.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> “Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) - Document 350,” June 18, 1961, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v21/d350>; “Letter From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) - Document 349,” May 23, 1961, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v21/d349>; “Country Summary Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research - Document 442,” March 6, 1967, 442, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v24/d442>; “Memorandum From the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) - Document 352,” July 17, 1961, 352, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v21/d352>. This is years earlier than is frequently cited as the beginning of the CIA’s support for Roberto; it is unclear if Secretary of State Kissinger was perjuring himself or as confused as everyone else when he testified before Congress that “some financial, non-military assistance” began in 1961. *Angola Hearings Before the Subcommittee on African Affairs* (Washington DC, 1976).

amounting to \$6,000 a year in 1955 dollars.<sup>103</sup> The money probably came from the consulate's budget for paying African informants to track potential sources of instability in the Belgian Congo.<sup>104</sup>

Following this breakthrough in 1955, Roberto's political activities accelerated. In 1956, he secretly visited northern Angola for ten to network with local Bakongo leaders and establish relations with non-Bakongo tribesmen in the area that would become the main combat zone of the War of Independence. He also quit his job to take a low-profile position with an insurance company.<sup>105</sup> Under the leadership of Roberto, Necaca, and Pinock, the Matadi and Leopold communities formed an official organization, the *União das Populações de Norte Angola (UPNA)*, whose stated purpose was the independence of the old Kongo Kingdom from Portuguese rule. In the summer of 1956, the UPNA's leaders wrote letters directly to State Department officials to seek advice in identifying and contacting international supporters. The troika also corresponded extensively with the executive director of the American Committee on Africa, George Houser, who in turn connected them with officials from Ghana, Africa's newest independent state. George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah's pan-African advisor, invited the UPNA to participate in the Conference of All African Peoples in Ghana set for 1958. The UPNA elected Roberto as its official representative, and the group fundraised from sympathetic donors for the trip.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> "Memorandum From the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) - Document 352," 352; Victoria Brittain, "Holden Roberto," *The Guardian*, August 8, 2007, sec. From the Guardian, 1, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2007/aug/08/guardianobituaries.obituaries>.

<sup>104</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 182.

<sup>105</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 66.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 62–64.



The convening of the All African People's Conference was one of the pivotal moments in the history of decolonization in Africa. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, understood the significance of his own nation's independence: "The break-through came in 1957. Ghana achieved her independence and declared to the whole world that the independence of Ghana was meaningless unless it was linked up with the total liberation of the African continent."<sup>107</sup> In that vein, he planned two major conferences in 1958, the first for the eight independent nations of Africa: "Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Liberia and Ghana."<sup>108</sup> The second conference was for the independence movements; this was the meeting to which Roberto was invited. The list of attendees read like a list of the first presidents of the nations that emerged in Africa in the 1960's. Roberto was able to form relationships with many of those leaders, notably Patrice Lumumba, already an acquaintance from his days of working in the Belgian Administration in Stanleyville; and Kenneth Kaunda, first president of Zambia. Also present was Frantz Fanon, Tom Mboya, and, future presidents Taieb Slim of Tunisia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Hastings Banda of Malawi. Most of the continent sent representatives. The connections Roberto made in Accra established his standing in the world community. In a few short years, many of his peers became the leaders of new nations, and it gave him an aura of inevitability- that by right of attending the conference in Accra he was entitled to be president of Angola.<sup>109</sup>

Roberto's Accra odyssey was itself something out of a spy novel. The Belgian administration of the Congo did not allow any Africans, even Angolans, to participate in politics or hold a passport. The route was treacherous; the trip required a great deal of subterfuge. In

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<sup>107</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo*, n.e. (Panaf, 1969), xiv.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>109</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 66-68; Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo*, xiv-xvi; Brittain, "Holden Roberto," 1.

August 1958, Roberto started complaining about an unknown sickness and left Leopoldville to get a checkup from a doctor out of town. When he returned, Roberto produced a doctor's note to the Belgian authorities that he required surgery across the Congo River in Brazzaville, then under French control. Roberto took a ferry anonymously across the river with only his doctor's note and his vaccination records as his only form of identification en route to a soccer friend in Cameroon. Locals helped to guide him through a French counter-insurgency zone, then took busses and hitchhiked his way to Lagos, Nigeria. After three weeks holed up in a hotel in Nigeria, Ghana allowed him to enter.<sup>110</sup>

Roberto's harrowing experience also produced a clever, fateful change for the future of Angola and the United States. Under the fake name 'Haldane Roberto' he made contacts with early arrivals to Accra and found that his peers found the tribal nature of the UPNA off-putting, and that he would find little support for such a cause. Roberto decided to drop the 'Norte' from his organization and quickly produced literature and pamphlets for the *União das Populações de Angola (UPA)* which was focused on democracy and national unity within an independent Angola.<sup>111</sup> The UPNA represented the past. Roberto's newly minted UPA was forward thinking, and proved to be the proper vehicle for the Bakongo refugees scattered along the lower Congo River to challenge the Portuguese on the world stage.

While in Ghana, Roberto applied for and received a Guinean passport, which allowed him to use the little funds he had from his backers at home and in the U.S. to continue raising

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<sup>110</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 66–67.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. The UPA was a precursor to the FNLA that Roberto lead into Angola in 1975. Several non-communist groups in Leopoldville combined to form the FNLA as the army of the independence movement, with the GRAE serving as the Angolan Government in Exile. The acronyms are infuriating, as almost every Angolan group went through several alliances, schisms and aborted starts. See Marcum, *Angolan Revolution* for more on the politics of the nationalist groups.

support abroad.<sup>112</sup> He left Accra for New York to address the United Nations on behalf of the UPA. Roberto referred to his speech as the “first time the Angolan issue was debated and lobbyists for the nationalist cause were heard in New York.”<sup>113</sup> He met face to face with the American Committee on Africa, and he established many American acquaintances, including a certain Senator John F. Kennedy.<sup>114</sup> By the time Roberto returned to Africa in 1960 for the Second All-African Peoples’ Conference in Tunis, his friend Patrice Lumumba had become prime minister-elect of an independent Congo. Lumumba had left Accra in 1958 and returned to the Belgian Congo a national hero. His homecoming speech inspired the riots that eventually forced the Belgians to acquiesce and grant formal independence.<sup>115</sup> Lumumba pledged to support the UPA in any way.<sup>116</sup> Lumumba’s rise and fall from power brought the Cold War to sub-Saharan Africa for the first time in spectacular fashion. Roberto’s trip to the United States and the independence crisis in the Belgian Congo cleared the way for his efforts to remove the Portuguese from Angola and take power for himself.

### THE CONGO CRISIS

Shortly after the formation of the Republic of Congo, the new state descended into chaos. The resulting ‘Congo Crisis’ led to a U.N. intervention and ultimately the deaths of U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, the defeat of a Soviet and eventually a Cuban attempt to overthrow the government in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), and the installation of Joseph Desiree Mobutu as a pro-American premier. The specifics of the

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<sup>112</sup> Brittain, “Holden Roberto.”

<sup>113</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 69; Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 11.

<sup>114</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 70; Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 25.

<sup>115</sup> Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo*, 14.

<sup>116</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 70.

‘Congo Crisis’ as they unfolded in 1960-1961 are critical to understand Holden Roberto’s eventual Angolan invasion, and America’s involvement in that war.

The unraveling of the Belgian Congo was the result of Belgian greed and heavy international speculation.<sup>117</sup> The huge territory that is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo was once the personal possession of King Leopold II and not recognized as a part of the Belgian nation until 1908.<sup>118</sup> King Leopold’s original revenue maker was the rubber trade, but “the principal reason for the Congo’s prosperity was it’s the mineral wealth.” The Katanga province alone possessed reserves of copper, gold, uranium, tin, manganese, zinc, wolfram, tantalum, coal and iron as well as cobalt. The southern province of Kasai was produced more industrial stones than anywhere else in the world, and also the second most diamonds.<sup>119</sup> To exploit the vast mineral wealth of the Congo, Belgium turned to outside investors. Cecil Rhodes, the British explorer and Rhodesia’s namesake, was a chief financier in 1899 of the newly established Union Minière Du Haut Katanga (UMHK).<sup>120</sup> South Africans eventually became the majority of the UMHK’s investors, who invested profits from South Africa’s own gold and diamond mines in Katangan mines. To further maximize profits, Rhodes and his English friends created the Benguela Railway Company in Angola to provide an Atlantic outlet for Katanga’s mines.<sup>121</sup> The Benguela railway in Angola connected Katanga to the Atlantic ocean at Lobito in Angola by 1931, whose port became second only to Matadi on the Congo River as far as the Katangan trade

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<sup>117</sup> Michela Wrong summarized the enduring lessons of Belgian rule: to “keep your head down, think small, look after yourself... The spirit, once comprehensively crushed, does not recover easily. For seventy-five years, from 1885 to 1960, Congo’s population had marinated in humiliation.” Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, 60.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 45, 48.

<sup>119</sup> Alan P. Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict* (Northwestern University Press, 1961), 11.

<sup>120</sup> Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo*, 10.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

was concerned.<sup>122</sup> By the 1940's, the economy of Portuguese Africa was benefitting from a lucrative transportation trade that accommodated 40 percent of Katanga's copper on the Benguela railway and another 30 percent through Rhodesia to the Portuguese port of Lourenço Marques (Maputo) in Mozambique.<sup>123</sup>

To protect international investments in the Congo and maintain order, Belgium relied on a national army called the Force Publique, as well as local police known as Gendarmes. Unlike European armies, the Force Publique lived off the land, pillaging local villages for food and pay. It recruited by taking "orphaned children" and sending them "to Catholic missions to be trained as soldiers."<sup>124</sup> According to one anecdote concerning the Force Publique was that "soldiers in the Congo were told to account for every cartridge fired, so they hacked off and smoked the hands, feet and private parts of their victims. Body parts were presented to commanders in baskets as proof the soldiers had done their work well."<sup>125</sup> The Congolese National Army at the time of independence was essentially a rebranded Force Publique.<sup>126</sup> The Gendarmes supplemented the national army. Like the Force Publique, they had Belgian officers and relied on forced conscription. Whereas the national army pillaged to survive, the gendarmes relied on patronage, and were committed to avoiding disruptions to civil society and commerce. The Gendarmes were loyal to the local chiefs, or in the case of Katanga, to the Belgian mining magnate the Union Minière. At the time of independence, there were almost as many local

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<sup>122</sup> William Adams Hance, *The Geography of Modern Africa* (Columbia University Press, 1975), 497.

<sup>123</sup> Kenneth W. Grundy, *Confrontation and Accommodation in Southern Africa: The Limits of Independence* (University of California Press, 1973), 50.

<sup>124</sup> Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, 46.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>126</sup> "General Emile Janssens, the army's Belgian commander...reportedly told his troops that "for the army, independence equals zero." Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 8.

militia as there were soldiers.<sup>127</sup> This system of many local armies suited European investors well, allowing them to run provinces like Katanga and Kasai as personal kingdoms much in the way Leopold had owned the Congo.

Despite the heavy-handed tactics of the Belgians, independence came swiftly after a series of events in the late 1950's. A.A.J. Van Bilsen, a Belgian professor, wrote "A Thirty-Year Plan for the Political Emancipation of Belgian Africa" in December 1955 and it sent shock waves through Belgian society.<sup>128</sup> Van Bilsen argued that, "almost nothing had been done...to prepare the Congolese for the responsibilities of independence."<sup>129</sup> After a series of riots that crippled the colony, the Belgians announced a hasty retreat from Africa, and elections were held for an independent, majority-ruled Congo. Free and fair elections produced a president, Joseph Kasavubu, from the Bakongo region, and a Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, from a province upriver from the capital; it was a truly national ticket. The Katangan candidate, Moises Tshombe, led his delegation in a boycott of the government after failing to win either of the top positions. Within five days of independence, three of the provinces seceded, including Katanga and Kasai, and the army mutinied. Belgians left the country en masse.

It was not long before the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. sprang into action. Lumumba requested urgent aid from the United Nations and the Soviet Union, and both obliged. Throughout the summer of 1960, hundreds of Soviet personnel entered the Congo, and the U.S. became increasingly worried about the security of the uranium mines.<sup>130</sup> In response, the United States provided the logistical support for the U.N. army of peacekeepers, including an immediate airlift

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<sup>127</sup> Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 270–271.

<sup>128</sup> Merriam, *Congo, Background of Conflict*, 68.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>130</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 23.

via the Azores base.<sup>131</sup> The airlift itself was a marvel of American military power that brought the first peacekeepers, mostly Tunisians, to Leopoldville within forty-eight hours of the passage of the UN resolution, and only four days after Katanga seceded.<sup>132</sup> Behind the scenes, the CIA station in Leopoldville provided key backing for Joseph Mobutu, the army Chief of Staff. Mobutu, with the approval of CIA Station Chief Larry Devlin, overthrew Lumumba in a coup d'état and installed a pro-western government. In turn, the new government declared “the Soviet and Czech embassies and the Chinese communist delegation *persona non grata*.”<sup>133</sup> Lumumba was arrested. Devline would later say, “At that moment, he (Mobutu) was the government and the success of our African policy depended upon him.”<sup>134</sup> Mobutu handed the reigns of power over to an oligarchy known as the ‘Binza Group.’ He kept Kasavubu as President, but the Binza group effectively ran the country.<sup>135</sup> The immediate crisis had abated; in the words of Michaela Wrong, “the huge African domino had not fallen: Congo was safely out of Soviet hands.”<sup>136</sup> However, Lumumba remained a potent figure in prison, and Tshombe’s rebellion continued.

For Roberto, the anarchy and regime change in the Congo was a tumultuous period that ultimately provided him a secure base to build his movement and plan for war in Angola. Before Congolese independence, Roberto had secured promises of support from the Prime Minister, his good friend Patrice Lumumba. Lumumba allowed Roberto to open offices in the capital and to broadcast UPA programs on Radio Leopoldville. This was fortuitous, for Roberto was not the only political leader organizing the Bakongo of the lower Congo River. Joseph Kasavubu, the

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<sup>131</sup> 65th Air Base Wing History Office, “A Short History of Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal,” 11.

<sup>132</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 37.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 98–99.

<sup>136</sup> Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, 70.

Congolese President, was also Bakongo, and Roberto's UPA had to compete for support and affiliation. When Mobutu arrested Lumumba, Roberto hid in foreign embassies in the capital, worried he would be targeted as a friend of the deposed Prime Minister. It would not have been surprising had Mobutu and Kasavubu cracked down on Angolans during the coup, due to the importance of Portugal to the economy, the large refugee population along the border, and the ongoing secession movements. However, Roberto's salvation was his close personal connections to several members of the Binza Group, most importantly Cyrille Adoula, a young senator and former teammate of Holden's from his days playing for Club Daring. With Adoula, the UPA had a stalwart supporter and a friendly voice in Mobutu's camp. Congolese independence, despite the difficulties surrounding it, gave Roberto's a head start over rival Angolan nationalists, especially the communist MPLA, who established a headquarters in Conakry, Guinea. The MPLA failed to move into Leopoldville until October 1961.<sup>137</sup>

## THE WHITE POWERS

The loss of Belgium whittled down the white powers of Southern Africa to three: the United Kingdom, the Union of South Africa, and Portugal. All three backed the secessionist regime of Moises Tshombe in Katanga, but in their own spheres of influence, they had yet to coordinate their efforts. Britain reluctantly stayed in Southern Africa; only the copper industry and a desire to manage decolonization and ensure the emergence of majority-ruled states kept them in the region. The whites of South Africa, led by the Afrikaner proto-fascist National Party, worked toward creating 'Bantustans,' or 'homelands' to remove blacks from residential white cities, while at the same time exploiting black labor in manufacturing and in the ubiquitous

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<sup>137</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 86, 72, 96, 65, 200.



mines of Johannesburg. Portugal too sought to remain in Africa for perpetuity, not only in Angola but also in the colonies of Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, and Cape Verde. Despite the integrated nature of the Southern African economy, the relatively peaceful years of the 1950's discouraged security cooperation between Portugal, the settlers of Rhodesia, and South Africa; instead, each attempted to maintain racial dominance independently.

Although they had moved toward jettisoning colonies elsewhere, the British still held on to the settler colony of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1960. The Federation was a time bomb for the British: tensions grew between English-speaking white settlers that dominated Southern Rhodesia, the political and financial center of the colony, and the black political elites of Northern Rhodesia, home to part of Katanga's vast Copperbelt. African leaders, led by Kenneth Kaunda, clamored for Britain to dissolve the Federation and grant Northern Rhodesia independence. At the same time, whites in Salisbury grew impatient with British demands that they acquiesce in majority-rule. The situation was headed toward crisis by mid-decade.

In South Africa, the relative calm of repressive National Party rule in the 1950's gave way to increased violence and international condemnation. British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan journeyed to South Africa in 1960 to proclaim that the "winds of change" were sweeping through Africa, which implied that the world would no longer support Apartheid. Just a month later, South African police massacred black civilians at Sharpeville, which proved to be a prelude to the banning of all black political parties. Even President Eisenhower, an ardent friend of the National Party and a supporter of increased trade between the U.S. and South Africa, condemned the Sharpeville massacre. Pretoria officially threw off the last semblances of British rule and declared the birth of a republic. Apartheid intensified.

Portugal entered the 1960's confident that its hold on Angola remained secure. The colonial economy continued to expand, and through increased reliance on the Azores base, the alliance with America seemed solid. In 1958, US Marines deployed to Lebanon via the Azores, and in 1960, the UN peacekeeping mission to Congo-Leopoldville also stopped at Lajes.<sup>138</sup> By “1960, 70 percent of all American military air traffic to Europe and the Middle East was flowing through the Lajes base.”<sup>139</sup> As a sign of the close friendship between nations, Eisenhower visited Portugal in 1960 and proclaimed, “There are no great problems between the United State and Portugal.”<sup>140</sup> However, Salazar remained cautious. After Congo achieved its independence, Salazar sent reinforcements to Angola, increasing to 3,000 the number of Europeans in an expanded colonial army of 8,000 soldiers.<sup>141</sup> John Marcum summed up the situation in his landmark history of the Angolan people: despite the intelligence efforts of the PIDE, Lisbon did not understand how “the disintegration of traditional society and the injustice of colonial society had led to widespread disorientation, despair, and repression, and to preparations for violent protest.” Salazar was unaware that Angola had become a “black powder keg.”<sup>142</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The United States, through economic and strategic necessities, became a major player in Southern Africa during and after the Second World War. Primarily, it was strategic concerns, such as securing an Azores airbase, procuring fissile material for the atomic bomb, and fighting

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<sup>138</sup> 65th Air Base Wing History Office, “A Short History of Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal,” 11.

<sup>139</sup> Antunes, “Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961,” 151.

<sup>140</sup> Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Univ of Missouri Pr, 1985), 58.

<sup>141</sup> Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 26.

<sup>142</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 120–123.

common enemies, which brought America into alliances with the white powers of Southern Africa. Once established, these military partnerships blossomed. Although the economic impact for the U.S. was minimal, in Africa commercial ties to the west made colonies profitable, destroyed African social structures, and encouraged African elites to organize against their imperial masters. It was the importance of the Shinkolobwe uranium, not a desire to work with black nationalists, which brought Holden Roberto on the CIA payroll in 1955. Nevertheless, the U.S. funded the earliest activities of Roberto's Union of the Peoples of Angola, with Roberto even making personal connections with high-ranking members of Congress. Finally, the implosion of the Belgian Congo forced a reevaluation of America's partnerships with white regimes; for the first time the strategic imperative of the United States required an alliance with a free black state, and out of that need came the American alliance with Joseph Desire Mobutu, a young Congolese General, the one-day dictator of Zaire. The U.S. no longer had the choice to ignore revolutionary nationalism in the region, and events already in motion demanded a deeper American involvement.

Nineteen-sixty was the turning point for Africa, the closing of the book on the post-war period and the beginning of a new era. Seventeen new nations emerged from imperial domination, including the chaotic Republic of the Congo. Amidst the crisis surrounding independence in the Congo and the bitter escalation of racial oppression in South Africa, the American people elected a new President. JFK had campaigned on the issues of economic growth, an intensified Cold War, and racial equality at home and abroad. It was a sign of things to come. The policies of ignoring the racial conflicts in Africa under Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower ended. President John F. Kennedy planned to confront white rule in Africa head on, particularly by backing the fledgling independence of the Congo and Roberto's forces in Angola.

By 1960, the stakes had changed. America's interests could no longer be served by acting as an accomplice to the white powers and a nascent partner to black nationalists. The Soviet Union, America's Cold War rival, viewed the turmoil in Angola, the Congo, and South Africa and saw a continent ripe for revolution. Unbeknownst to the Americans, Cuba and Che Guevara also had "African dreams."<sup>143</sup> Southern Africa was no longer a problem 'in the back yard' of America's allies. Africa had become a battlefield of the Cold War.

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<sup>143</sup> Che Guevara and Ernesto Guevara, *The African Dream: The Diaries of the Revolutionary War in the Congo* (Grove Press, 2000).

## Chapter 2: Kennedy, Johnson, and Southern Africa

John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson committed the United States to the cause of racial justice in southern Africa more than any other American presidents before them did. Even before taking office, Kennedy had met Holden Roberto and incorporated Africa into his presidential campaign, as both a Civil Rights and a Cold War issue. As president, JFK attempted to boldly side the United States with black nationalists, including Holden Roberto, who by 1961 was at war with Portugal. Roberto's successes in that year led to the creation of the Angolan Revolutionary Government in Exile (GRAE), the political wing of the FNLA, in Leopoldville (Kinshasa).<sup>144</sup> However, security concerns, chiefly the Portuguese controlled Azores in the Atlantic, and South Africa's control of the Cape sea routes, forced Kennedy to reconsider such lofty aspirations for the GRAE. Johnson continued the strategies of his fallen predecessor and took them further, including the decision to provide training and covert aid for Roberto, and a massive paramilitary operation in the Congo to preserve its pro-U.S. government. Although Roberto benefitted from his relationship with Joseph Mobutu, the rise of Moises Tshombe to Prime Minister in the Congo and Jonas Savimbi's flight from the GRAE prevented serious gains. Meanwhile, South Africa and the Universal Declaration of Independence (U.D.I.) of Rhodesia escalated the racial struggle in the region. Johnson, encumbered by the Vietnam War, struggled to maintain a proactive policy in southern Africa that balanced global security concerns with his aspirations for freedom and liberty for all. However, LBJ's gains in the region proved durable enough to survive the neglectful Nixon years, and served as the foundation of the climactic intervention in 1975.

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<sup>144</sup> In Portuguese: *Governo Revolucionário de Angola no Exílio (GRAE)*.

## THE ELECTION OF 1960

Kennedy used Africa to advance his popularity throughout his political career. In 1957, he had spoken on the floor of the Senate about the war in Algeria. He called for an end to imperialism, in Eastern Europe *and* in Africa. The historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. claimed the speech made him an international icon and “signaled his new prominence in foreign affairs.”<sup>145</sup> Kennedy pushed for the creation of the African subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and he became its first chair. He used the new position to call for “sympathy with the independence movement,” and promoted “programs of economic and educational assistance” as part of a policy focused on strengthening Africa.<sup>146</sup> As a Senator, he made a point to meet with African nationalists travelling in the U.S., including Roberto and his Mozambican counterpart Eduardo Mondlane. Kennedy’s visibility on African issues bolstered his credentials as both a Cold Warrior and a progressive on civil rights. In January 1960, despite his youth, Kennedy announced his intention to run for President of the United States to counter “Soviet gains” in the arms race, and “to maintain freedom and order in the newly emerging nations.”<sup>147</sup> That thinly veiled statement regarding Africa foreshadowed the role it would play in the election.

Making Africa a component of the presidential campaign stemmed from a number of factors. First, the throng of newly independent black nations in Africa synergized with

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<sup>145</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 119.

<sup>146</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 1st ed. (Mariner Books, 2002), 554.

<sup>147</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Announcement as Candidate for President, January 2, 1960,” *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum*, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/JFK-Fast-Facts/Announcement-of-Candidacy.aspx>.

Kennedy's projection of youth and vitality. Second, the international crisis in the Congo brought the Cold War in Africa to the public, which vindicated Kennedy's progressive statements on Algeria and served to underscore his qualifications on foreign policy. Finally, as Whitney Schneidman cogently pointed out, Kennedy could make a "pitch for civil rights overseas" to appeal to "the liberal wing" of his party.<sup>148</sup>

Kennedy played the Africa card early and often. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. called it "the first time in American history" that "Africa figured prominently in a presidential election."<sup>149</sup> Schneidman counted that throughout the campaign, "Kennedy mentioned Africa an unprecedented 479 times."<sup>150</sup> He attacked Nixon on the campaign trail for his refusal to accept the inevitability of independence in Africa.<sup>151</sup> On the topic of the Congo, he expressed a willingness to work with Lumumba, a clear repudiation of Eisenhower's policies. JFK promised, "to post more black diplomats in Africa" and personally paid the tab for a group of Kenyan students to travel to American universities.<sup>152</sup> Richard Mahoney called Kennedy's Africa rhetoric "a minor classic in political exploitation of foreign policy."<sup>153</sup> Kennedy knew that Africa was not important to the general public; but civil rights were. He used Africa to paint Nixon as a racist and to elevate his own profile as a champion in the struggle against racial inequality. Presidential authority over foreign policy provided a means to secure civil rights abroad that Kennedy could not promise at home.

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<sup>148</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 12.

<sup>149</sup> Jr, *A Thousand Days*, 554.

<sup>150</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 12.

<sup>151</sup> Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 59.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 58–59; Jr, *A Thousand Days*, 554–555. One of which was President Barack Obama's father.

<sup>153</sup> Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 29; Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 12.

Politics aside, JFK used Africa within his overall focus on foreign policy and the need for a more robust Cold War strategy. On the campaign trail in 1960, Kennedy spoke of Africa and the “missile gap” between the Soviet Union and the U.S. as part of the same dire threat to American security. The candidate tied nearly all aspects of the ‘missile gap’ argument to Africa, including “the Polaris submarine, the minuteman missile,” and “airlift capacity.” Of Eisenhower’s airlift on behalf of the U.N. Congo mission, Kennedy questioned, “How many of them were jets?” America needed a new leader to modernize the armed forces in order to “stop the conquest of the sixties” by the Soviet Union.<sup>154</sup> These attacks on Eisenhower was the real focus of Kennedy’s campaign, and Africa, along with Laos and Latin America, were employed to further prove his point.

Although effective, Kennedy’s attacks on Nixon were unfair to the Eisenhower administration. The desegregation of Little Rock’s Central High School, the Suez crisis, and the Congo Crisis were gutsy uses of presidential power for racial justice. Eisenhower strongly sided with progressive forces during these critical moments, first by using troops to force desegregation in 1954 in Arkansas, and then by sharply condemning the intervention of Britain, France, and Israel in 1956 during their attempt to stop Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez Canal.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, it was pressure from the President, and not Congress, that led to the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960, no matter how watered down and ineffective they were. Moreover, although ‘Ike’ supported Portugal and its colonial interests, he understood that his administration needed to show support for the newly freed African countries. Despite Kwame

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<sup>154</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Speech of Senator John F. Kennedy, American Legion Convention, Miami Beach, FL, October 18, 1960,” *The American Presidency Project*, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=74096>.

<sup>155</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 133. Despite an overwhelmingly negative tone, Thomas Borstelmann concedes “these three incidents marked the high points of the administration’s efforts to contain racial hostilities and co-opt demands for racial equality.”



Nkrumah's flirtations with the eastern bloc, the Eisenhower administration established relations immediately with Ghana after its independence. Ike sent Richard Nixon, his Vice President, to the ceremonies. After he visited Ghana in 1957, Nixon pushed for the creation of the Bureau of African Affairs within the State Department.<sup>156</sup> Vice President Nixon had joined a growing chorus of American policy experts that foresaw "a very difficult and probably long period of uncertainty" for the independent states of Africa that presented "plenty of troubled waters for Communist fishing."<sup>157</sup> The sudden independence and descent into chaos in the former Belgian Congo became the first great 'fishing hole' for communism in Africa, and the 'Congo Crisis' dominated Eisenhower's foreign policy agenda during his final year in office. In September, less than two months from the election, Eisenhower proposed an ambitious assistance package for Africa before the U.N. General Assembly, and followed up with an unscheduled payment to the Secretary General for the Congo operation.<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, Kennedy's attacks worked with the public, and he won the election by a razor thin margin. However, Kennedy soon found it necessary to transform his rhetoric into reality.

## KENNEDY

Events outside of the young president's control accelerated his need to develop a plan for Africa. Fearing that Kennedy was a less astute Cold Warrior than Eisenhower, Mobutu arrested Lumumba and sent him to the rebels in Katanga, who murdered the Congo's first Prime Minister

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>157</sup> "Memorandum From the Secretary of State's Special Assistant (Holmes) to Secretary of State Dulles - Document 1," February 6, 1958, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960 Volume XIV, Africa, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v14/d1>.

<sup>158</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 2.

three days before Kennedy's inauguration.<sup>159</sup> Two days after the inauguration, on January 22, 1961, Portuguese political dissidents hijacked the *Santa Maria*, the second largest ship in the Portuguese merchant marine.<sup>160</sup> Led by General Humberto Delgado and Henrique Galvão, the rebels hoped to start a revolution in Portugal and force Kennedy to confront the cruelty of the regime in Lisbon.<sup>161</sup> Antonio Salazar requested that the American government find the ship and take it by force. Kennedy refused, which infuriated Salazar. In response, Portugal for the first time threatened to deny American access to the Lajes base.<sup>162</sup> After his eventual capture in Brazil, Delgado claimed that his goal was to reach Luanda and proclaim a rival government against Lisbon. The reaction to this news in Angola was immediate. On February 4, Angolans attacked the radio station, a prison, and police stations in Luanda with knives and clubs and demanded the release of all political prisoners. Portuguese colonial authorities repulsed the attackers and counterattacked, killing arbitrarily in the city's slums.<sup>163</sup> Dismayed at the events of the previous weeks and eager to end Salazar's 35 year-old New State regime, Portuguese General Botelho Moniz approached the US ambassador, C. Burke Elbrick, and the CIA chief of station in Lisbon, Fred Hubbard, to feel out the American position a possible on regime change in Portugal. The CIA agents in Lisbon were receptive to the offer and immediately began contingency plans in preparation for a coup d'état.<sup>164</sup> The United Nations, which had already

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<sup>159</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 130–131.

<sup>160</sup> "Portuguese Ship, 900 Aboard, Seized by Armed Salazar Foes New York Times (1923-Current File),p. 1. Re," *New York Times*, January 24, 1961, ProQuest Historical Newspapers New York Times (1851-2008) w/ Index (1851-1993).

<sup>161</sup> Tad Szulc, "DELGADO DEFIANT: Enemy of Salazar, Now in Brazil, Ordered Ship Captured," *New York Times*, January 25, 1961, ProQuest Historical Newspapers New York Times (1851-2008) w/ Index (1851-1993; Antunes, "Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961," 153.

<sup>162</sup> Antunes, "Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961," 154.

<sup>163</sup> Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 27.

<sup>164</sup> Antunes, "Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961," 154.

passed a resolution denouncing Portuguese colonialism in December 1960, scheduled a Security Council meeting to discuss the matter in March.<sup>165</sup> It appeared that the Portuguese Empire could collapse at any moment.

Kennedy anticipated the fall of the ‘Ultramar,’ and viewed support for Holden Roberto as part of his overall Cold War strategy. For all of the uncertainty regarding Angola, it was obvious to Kennedy that eventually the country would become independent. The United States needed a plan for that eventuality. From both his personal relationship with Roberto and from his most trusted advisers, Kennedy knew of Angola’s contested rebellion first hand. During the presidential campaign of 1960, JFK had sent W. Averell Harriman on a fact-finding mission to Africa.<sup>166</sup> While in Leopoldville, several members of the MPLA attempted to meet him to seek American support. Aware of their communist sympathies, Harriman avoided contact.<sup>167</sup> The message was clear: America wanted a pro-western, capitalist Angola after independence. Kennedy sought to win the ‘cold war’ brewing between Angola’s independence movements as a part of his overall strategy for post-colonialist Africa.

Within a few months of taking office, the Kennedy administration began moving towards a pro-independence policy on Angola. On March 7, ambassador Elbrick informed the Portuguese to “not expect US support in Security Council or General Assembly debates on Angola.”<sup>168</sup> Elbrick went on to chastise Salazar for the cruel treatment of Africans in Angola, warning him that without progress toward self-determination, a “Congo type” disaster could happen. “Under Rusk’s instruction,” Elbrick delivered the same message to Moniz.<sup>169</sup> The first week of March,

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<sup>165</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 123–130.

<sup>166</sup> Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 59.

<sup>167</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 94.

<sup>168</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 15.

<sup>169</sup> Antunes, “Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961,” 155.

Roberto visited Washington again, and this time he met with Bobby Kennedy before addressing the UN.<sup>170</sup> Roberto spoke about the crimes committed by Portugal in Angola, and ominously referred to the rising calls for violent overthrow of the Portuguese colonial government. The UN Security Council scheduled a vote on March 15 to condemn Portuguese policy in Angola. In the past, the U.S. had abstained from actions against its NATO ally in Lisbon, including in the December 1960 vote. This time Kennedy instructed his UN Ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, to vote against Portugal. Roberto prolonged his stay in New York to comment on the Security Council's actions. America voted in support of the resolution, and Roberto proudly claimed that Angola had "helped solidify the sharp change in American policy concerning Africa and decolonization."<sup>171</sup>

On March 15, 1961, Roberto's UPA forces invaded Angola from the Congo. Angolans in the countryside joined the UPA fighters, and over in the first days of the rebellion over 250 Portuguese civilians were murdered.<sup>172</sup> The offensive turned into a general revolt in Northern Angola, and rebel bands roamed the countryside attacking every Portuguese in sight.<sup>173</sup> UPA fighters also directed their wanton violence against the Ovimbundu laborers who had replaced their brethren in the coffee fields, marking the first mass violence committed by Angolans against fellow Angolans during the Civil War.<sup>174</sup> Settlers fled as anarchy prevailed. With their leader abroad and little organizational direction, the UPA found itself in "unexpected control of

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>171</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 182.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 52.

deserted towns, roads,” and “airfields.”<sup>175</sup> The haphazard offensive came to a halt a mere 30 miles from Luanda.<sup>176</sup> Roberto never imagined the invasion would be so successful.

The Portuguese responded to the uprising with maximum violence. Settler militias fought back savagely, not only against the rebels but the African population in general. They burned villages, fired indiscriminately at Angolans, and “spared prisoners only until they had talked.”<sup>177</sup> Lisbon, fully aware the severity of the situation and the UPA’s proximity to Luanda, mobilized for war. First came the Portuguese Air Force, which complemented the indiscriminate violence of the vigilantes. With their American planes, the Portuguese hit targets, real and perceived, within rebel held areas, and included the use of napalm.<sup>178</sup> Despite the mayhem caused by both the rebels and the government, widespread news coverage and condemnation of the fighting only surfaced when the real war began in the summer, when the Portuguese army arrived from Europe. Throughout March and April, the world’s focus remained on Kennedy’s maneuvers at the UN and the coup attempt in Lisbon.

Kennedy’s Angola gamble failed along with Roberto’s invasion. The UN resolution failed to pass, even with the U.S. voting in favor.<sup>179</sup> Salazar caught wind of the plot against him in April and fired the ringleaders before they gave the order to revolt. He went to the press and portrayed “the United States as the agent provocateur” of the coup, which led to protests in front of the American embassy.<sup>180</sup> Moniz’s plot failed, and the national mood turned against America and its interference in Lisbon and Angola.<sup>181</sup> The American attempt to promote progressivism in

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<sup>175</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 145.

<sup>176</sup> Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 27.

<sup>177</sup> Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, 179.

<sup>178</sup> Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 158.

<sup>179</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 144; Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 71.

<sup>180</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 19.

<sup>181</sup> Antunes, “Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961,” 157.

Lisbon and to liberate Angola backfired; instead, Portugal rallied and united behind the effort to subdue the jewel of their African empire.

The war in Angola was Portugal's first since World War I. Salazar sent twenty-five thousand troops by sea from Lisbon to Luanda, which represented two-thirds of Portugal's NATO divisions.<sup>182</sup> The army regained the initiative in the coffee fields in the north. The UPA's untrained, poorly equipped forces were no match for Portugal's NATO trained and equipped army. Throughout the long dry season of 1961, American supplied planes bombed rebel strongholds, while the army pushed forward in trucks, half-tracks, and armored cars. For the first time in Angola's history, the Bakongo north became a militarized zone, and small towns and plantations grew into sprawling military bases, including "a network of airstrips" to supply towns once the rainy season washed out the dirt roads. By September, Salazar was able to declare victory over the rebels. However, despite the capture of all towns, the re-establishment of control over the border, and the destruction of "some rebel centers," the CIA believed that Portugal "failed to regain control of the areas outside of towns, and their control of many roads" was "tenuous at best." Portugal hunkered down for the rainy season, which overtook Angola in October, a time when the rivers swell, dirt roads wash out, and long-distance travel becomes almost impossible.<sup>183</sup> Neither side had achieved a decisive victory. Both Roberto's UPA and the Portuguese settled in for a prolonged fight.

With two allies locked in battle, Kennedy's foreign policy team wrestled with finding an appropriate balance between the competing strategic imperatives: how to fight the Cold War in Africa and to maintain the western alliance. The CIA increased payments to Roberto from

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<sup>182</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 26; Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 6.

<sup>183</sup> "Central Intelligence Bulletin," September 30, 1961, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP79T00975A006000030001-1.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP79T00975A006000030001-1.pdf).

\$6,000 to \$10,000 a year, with the understanding that this figure was not enough to make a substantial military impact.<sup>184</sup> To address the issue, Kennedy created the Presidential Task Force on Portuguese Territories in Africa, chaired by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen ‘Soapy’ Williams, and included officials from the White House, the Departments of State and the Treasury, the Bureau of the Budget, the CIA, the ICA, and the USIA.<sup>185</sup> The State Department, led by Williams, favored an aggressive Angola policy, even if it led to a Portuguese “withdraw from NATO” and an American evacuation of the Azores base. The Department of Defense disagreed rigorously, and claimed that any “courses of action which would gravely jeopardize retention of the Azores bases in Spain would be unacceptable from a military point of view for the foreseeable future.”<sup>186</sup> After the failure of the Bay of Pigs operation in April, and with a new crisis brewing in Berlin, Defense’s position won out, and the debate continued without consideration of military support for the Angolan rebels.

The taskforce agreed to work to create a broad front to pressure Portugal into granting independence for its African possessions. Such a policy of forced moderation required that any support for Holden Roberto, including his ongoing CIA stipend, needed deeper cover. Secretary of State Dean Rusk decided to end direct payments to Roberto, which led Roger Hilsman to initiate efforts to “locate an individual or institution willing to assume on a strictly private basis

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<sup>184</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 25; “Letter From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) - Document 349.”

<sup>185</sup> “Memorandum From Samuel H. Belk of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) - Document 351,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa*, accessed June 29, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v21/d351>.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

the current payments.”<sup>187</sup> With the funds under deep cover, the President and the Secretary of State could deny their existence. In July, the taskforce produced National Security Action Memorandum No. 60 on “U.S. Actions in Relation to Portuguese Territories in Africa.”<sup>188</sup>

NSAM 60 became the blueprint for both Kennedy and Johnson’s Angola policy. Above all, the pressure tactics to be used against the Salazar regime needed to “minimize the possibility of losing the Azores,” which would have “grave military consequences.” The plan was simple: coordinate international pressure against Portugal, prevent American weapons from entering the conflict, and “expand U.S. assistance to refugees” and make available “educational programs for Africans from the Portuguese areas” to study in the United States.<sup>189</sup> American support for self-determination nonetheless left Roberto without aid in his war against Portugal. Kennedy and his administration believed that pressure tactics, rather than winning battles, presented the best chance at Angolan independence.

Rather than weakening the Portuguese dictatorship, Kennedy’s moves strengthened Salazar’s hand. Salazar purged the military of all opposition, and the people, aroused by his anti-American rhetoric, rallied behind him. He lambasted the United States for meddling in the internal affairs of Portugal that considered Angola not a colony, but an overseas province. Events elsewhere fueled Portuguese nationalism. In December, Salazar doubled his resolve when India invaded the Portuguese Overseas Province of Goa. On December 19, after little resistance, the

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<sup>187</sup> “Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) - Document 350”; “Memorandum From the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) - Document 352.”

<sup>188</sup> “National Security Action Memorandum No. 60, ‘U.S. Actions in Relation to Portuguese Territories in Africa’ - Document 327,” July 18, 1961, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XIII, Western Europe and Canada, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v13/d327>.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.



Portuguese garrison capitulated, ending the 400-year history of Portuguese India.<sup>190</sup> The Indian invasion raised the prospects of a similar Chinese offensive against Macao. Beset with threats throughout the world, Salazar cast himself as the sole defender of the *Ultramar*, the source of Portugal's once and future greatness. By the end of Kennedy's first year in office, Salazar was stronger than ever.

The failure of Kennedy's Angola 'gambit' produced repercussions that became clear in 1962. After the fall of Goa, Salazar instructed the PIDE to "obtain the names and addresses and control the movements of all American nationals living off the limits of the Lajes Base in the Azores."<sup>191</sup> Franco Nogueira, the Portuguese Foreign Minister, refused to see his American counterpart, Ambassador Elbrick, during the spring and early summer. Adriano Moreira, the Portuguese Overseas Minister, bashed American policy in early June in a statement to the press. He said American policy engendered "neutrality toward enemies, hostility toward friends and friendship toward neutrals."<sup>192</sup> Portugal's anti-American posturing and diplomatic cold shoulders were problematic because the American lease for the Azores base was set to expire in December of 1962. The situation was so dire that in U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk went to Lisbon to attempt a breakthrough with Salazar. Nothing came of the meeting, except an official list of Portuguese demands and "a rumor in Lisbon that Portugal would ask the United States for eighty million dollars to renew the Azores agreement."<sup>193</sup> Rusk decided to wait until October to address the new Portuguese requirements for the base extension.

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<sup>190</sup> Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 30–31. Portugal classified all of their colonies as 'Overseas Provinces' in 1955 when it entered the United Nations.

<sup>191</sup> Antunes, "Kennedy, Portugal, and the Azores Base, 1961," 163.

<sup>192</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 34.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

October 1962 proved to be the worst moment for the United States to set the terms of a new Luso-American agreement on the Azores. The Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world to the brink of World War III. American and NATO war planning relied on the Azores, as western strategists had yet to create contingency plans for losing access to that important base. On October 24, the State department notified most allies via diplomatic cable of the blockade of Cuba. However, Kennedy wanted to give Nogueira the news in person.<sup>194</sup> He had hoped to “emphasize the value that the US attached to Portugal as an ally and a member of NATO” with such special treatment.<sup>195</sup> Rusk pressed Nogueira before his meeting with Kennedy to agree that if war with the Soviets broke out the United States and NATO would have access to the Azores after the agreement expired at year’s end. Nogueira’s response was crushing: “It is more than two years that we, the Portuguese, are living in (a) permanent (state of) emergency, and it does not seem to me that any of our allies are much disturbed by this fact.” After shooting down Rusk, Nogueira went to Kennedy. With the fate of the world in the balance, Kennedy used the weight of the situation to challenge the Foreign Minister on Angola: he asked Nogueira if Portugal “could not see its way to proclaiming publicly its acceptance of the principle of self-determination.” Nogueira told the President that such liberalizations “would be impossible.” The Azores agreement expired on December 31, 1962, which meant that American access to the strategic airbase thereafter relied on the whim of the Salazar government.<sup>196</sup>

While Kennedy’s African policy floundered, Roberto made several significant political and diplomatic advances. Recruitment for the UPA soared after the March 15 invasion. Angolans living in the Congo flocked to the UPA headquarters in Leopoldville to join the movement.

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<sup>194</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 200–203; Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 35.

<sup>195</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 35.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

Roberto received promises of aid and invitations from nearly every African capital, as well as from international aid organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, Lutheran World Relief, and the African Service Institute.<sup>197</sup> More importantly, the UPA used the fighting in Angola to persuade smaller Angolan nationalist organizations in the Congo to merge and form the Angolan Revolutionary Government in Exile (GRAE).<sup>198</sup> The GRAE created a military wing, known as the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). To train and quarter this new army, the Congolese government gave Roberto land to base his operations at Kinkuzu that Marcum would later describe from one of his visits as an “empty, isolated hills place.”<sup>199</sup> The base in Kinkuzu became the center of all FNLA operations.

The formation of the GRAE was a great propaganda success. It legitimized Roberto’s leadership beyond his own ethnic group precisely while military activity in Angola decreased and fighting against the MPLA rose. Furthermore, in 1963 the Organization of African Unity recognized the GRAE/FNLA as the one true Angolan liberation movement. Not only did the OAU recognize Roberto as the leader of the Angolan resistance, it made the colony the top priority of its “liberation agenda.”<sup>200</sup> Not only did this open the door for international funding, but also it marginalized his main rival the MPLA.

The creation of the GRAE was possible because of a young, enigmatic leader from the central highlands named Jonas Savimbi. Roberto had convinced Savimbi to drop out of school in Switzerland and join him on his yearly trip to New York in 1961, where he “took the plunge” to

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<sup>197</sup> Thomas Patrick Melady and Margaret Badum Melady, *Ten African Heroes: The Sweep of Independence in Black Africa* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011), 100–102.

<sup>198</sup> Fernando Andresen Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict* (Macmillan, 2001), 62–63.

<sup>199</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 259.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

join the UPA as Roberto's head of Foreign Affairs.<sup>201</sup> Savimbi proved to be critical in recruiting Angolan students in Europe to join Roberto. Along with the addition of Rosário Neto, a Luanda-Mbundu, to the UPA leadership, Savimbi's participation helped Roberto avoid the 'Bakongo image' of the movement.<sup>202</sup> Savimbi was described by his biographer Fred Bridgland as a master political strategist, who sought to build "intensive political recruitment and indoctrination; efficient health, welfare and educational provisions for civilians; and a highly organized and sustained guerrilla warfare campaign, less dramatic than the original attacks but more enduring." He started student and youth movements, and helped negotiate mergers amongst Angolan groups as well as treaties with foreign powers.<sup>203</sup> However, as an Ovimbundu, the largest ethnic group in Angola, Savimbi's greatest worth was as spokesman to his people. After Savimbi's appointment as Foreign Minister, Ovimbundu joined the UPA in droves.<sup>204</sup>

Once wealthy slave traders, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Ovimbundu themselves became slaves in the Portuguese colonial state. Concentrated in Angola's fertile central highlands, the Ovimbundu represented the bulk of the forced labor workforce. The Portuguese utilized hundreds of thousands of Ovimbundu contract laborers for infrastructure projects and field labor during the post-war economic boom, which depopulated their homeland and opened land to the settlers of the 1950s.<sup>205</sup> As with the Bakongo along the Angola-Congo border, Protestant missionaries had been active among the Ovimbundu areas of Angola's central highlands since

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>202</sup> Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 55.

<sup>203</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 55–56.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 45–52.

<sup>205</sup> Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present*, 67.

the 1880s. The missionaries focused on education, health, and social services, and with aid from the church, a small and influential protestant middle class dominated social life.<sup>206</sup>

Jonas Malheiro Savimbi came from this small class of Protestant elites and was a natural fit to lead the Ovimbundu in resistance against Portugal. He was born into an influential Ovimbundu family from Bié.<sup>207</sup> His father, Loth Malheiro Savimbi, was a traditional chief who had been stripped of his powers and lands by the Portuguese after an uprising in 1902 and became the first black stationmaster on the Benguela railway.<sup>208</sup> Loth had also built a church and a school in the small village where he worked as stationmaster, an undertaking that he replicated each time the Portuguese transferred him to another station. Due to frequent transfers, all along the Benguela railway, there were churches and schools built by Loth Savimbi.<sup>209</sup>

Spared only a strong family emphasis on education, Jonas completed his basic studies at a mix of Protestant and Catholic missions. He was one of the first Angolan students to receive funding for college abroad from the United Church of Christ. After starting medical school in Portugal, he left during a school recess in 1960, and received permission from his sponsors to continue his studies in Switzerland. It was in Switzerland, after a change of major to political science, that both the MPLA and Roberto courted Savimbi to join their movements. Roberto received a major assist from Kenyan leader Tom Mboya, who eventually convinced Savimbi.<sup>210</sup>

With Savimbi on board, Roberto's GRAE/FNLA appeared to be on the path to victory. Roberto shed his image as a Bakongo tribalist, and gained recognition as the leader all of his people. The GRAE had acted as a "government-in-exile for the Angolan people, and had, for a

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 52–53.

<sup>207</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 245.

<sup>208</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 23–26. John Marcum spells 'Loth,' 'Lot.'

<sup>209</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 244–245.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

year, been locked in guerrilla warfare with the Portuguese colonial regime.” Not only was it the chosen Angolan movement of the Congolese government, but also the GRAE enjoyed extensive international contacts.<sup>211</sup> This image of progress belied the fact that Roberto still lacked the weapons, training, and funds to effectively fight the Portuguese. In fact, Roberto’s organizational gains in 1962 and 1963 quickly gave way under pressure from the stagnated progress of the war and the complications of living in the Congo.

### THE CONGO CRISIS UNDER KENNEDY

Kennedy served a caretaker role in the ongoing Congo Crisis. The local actors had already set the stage: Lumumba was dead, Mobutu’s Binza Group controlled Leopoldville (Kinshasa), secessionists in Katanga and Stanleyville remained entrenched, and United Nations forces enforced a shaky peace. Kennedy embraced Mobutu and privately searched for a way for the United States to influence events in the Congo. However, the United States played no roll in the major turning points during Kennedy’s tenure, namely, the death of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld and the eventual UN victory over separatists in Katanga. Despite this lack of substance, however, the style of Kennedy’s Congo policies made America’s relationship with Mobutu durable enough to outlive the Cold War.

Kennedy nurtured America’s relationship with Mobutu and his Binza Group through personal diplomacy. He brought Mobutu to the White House in 1963, where the president exclaimed, “Nobody in the world had done more than the General to maintain freedom against the Communists.”<sup>212</sup> Mobutu’s visit represented a continuation of Kennedy’s Africa rhetoric from the 1960 election, as both a symbol of American friendliness with the newly independent

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<sup>211</sup> Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 57.

<sup>212</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 141.

states and a determination to confront the Soviets anywhere.<sup>213</sup> Most important, Kennedy kept Devlin in Leopoldville, who more than anyone influenced American policy there.

Larry Devlin forged deep contacts within Mobutu's inner circle that cemented the American-Congolese alliance. He cultivated close friendships with "Mobutu, (Justin) Bomboko, and Victor Nendaka," who "formed an informal troika" that controlled the Binza group, and therefore, the Congo. Between them, these three men controlled "the military (Mobutu), the security police (Nendaka), and foreign affairs (Bomboko)."<sup>214</sup> Devlin and his wife frequently hosted the troika for dinner, and once even served Angolan lobster.<sup>215</sup> According to Devlin, along with others, including Holden Roberto's friend and former teammate Cyrille Adoula, "the Binza group advised Kasavubu, but unofficially it was the power behind the presidency."<sup>216</sup> Through the personage of Larry Devlin, the United States was the oligarchy's closest friend.

The Cuban Missile Crisis proved the strength of that friendship. After Kennedy made his decision to impose a blockade on Cuba and to take the crisis to the public, Devlin had the task of reporting to the Congolese government. He delivered the news personally to Prime Minister Cyril Adoula, whose "first words were, "this could mean war."'" Prepared for the full ramifications of such an outcome, Adoula immediately pledged his country's support to the United States. Adoula stood by the United States throughout the crisis, all the way up to the

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<sup>213</sup> For more on Kennedy's outreach to Black Africa and its context in the Civil Rights movement, see: Philip E Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>214</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, "United States Policy toward Zaire," in *African Crisis Areas and U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. Gerald J. Bender, James S. Coleman, and Richard L. Sklar (University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>215</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 142–144, 257–258. At the end of Larry Devlin's second tour in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), Mobutu gave his wife and daughter ivory bracelets, and gave the station chief himself a signed photograph that stated "To my old and excellent friend, L. Devlin, to whom the Congo and its chief owe so much."

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 97–99.

removal of the Soviet nuclear weapons from Cuba. Devlin credited Kennedy's "successful handling" of the crisis "raised our stock with the Congolese." Adoula, Mobutu, and the rest of the Binza group felt personally engaged in the main theater of the Cold War, which further strengthened their unwavering support of the United States.<sup>217</sup>

Shortly after the removal of Soviet nuclear weapons from Cuba, the Katanga secession crisis reached a climax. In a surprise move, it was the Katangans, and not the government, the Americans or the UN troops, that instigated the final conflict. On Christmas Eve 1962, Katangan gendarmes attacked a UN barracks. Despite orders to remain at base, the besieged peacekeepers went on a counter-offensive. UN troops quickly took Elisabethville (Lubumbashi), and by January 2, 1963, they had secured the copper mines. The gendarmes steadily retreated; by the time Kolwezi fell on the border with Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Tshombe's troops had escaped to the bush or crossed the border into Angola. The gendarmes took with them aircraft and cash, and the Portuguese accepted them with open arms.<sup>218</sup> Moïse Tshombe fled to Madrid. For the first time since independence, the Congo was whole.

The collapse of Tshombe's regime hid the fact that the Congo remained in a state of crisis. Soapy Williams wrote to Dean Rusk expressing his concern that "the events of December-January seem to have led to a public and Congressional impression that the Congo problem is now solved... This misunderstanding is very likely to cause difficulties" for continued American

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 200–202.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 203–204; "Memorandum from the Ambassador to the Congo (Gullion) to President Kennedy - Document 419," April 6, 1963, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XX, Congo Crisis; "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams) to Secretary of State Rusk - Document 416," March 7, 1963, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XX, Congo Crisis.



assistance.<sup>219</sup> Despite the Congolese government's firm grasp on the capital and the ability via Holden Roberto to project power into Angola, the national army remained a major liability.

During a trip to Washington, Mobutu outlined the army's shortcomings. A holdover of the Force Publique, the new black officer corps remained poorly trained, and the enlisted troops often went without pay. Discipline was nonexistent. Coordinating movement across the country proved next to impossible, due to the vast distances and rough terrain, as well as the army's penchant for looting and pillaging. Mobutu asked Kennedy for American weapons, training, and assistance, including personal "parachute training for four weeks at Fort Benning" followed by "two weeks at the Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg" for himself. However, despite agreeing that the Congolese army was a grave problem for American policy in the region, Kennedy "was noncommittal" on expanding aid beyond Mobutu's personal training in the United States.<sup>220</sup> Washington continued to insist that retraining and equipping the army was a job for Europeans.<sup>221</sup> Without such external aid, the prospects for stability beyond the UN military's expected mid-1964 withdrawal were slim.

The crucial developments during the Kennedy years were the establishment of personal relationships that brought American Congo and Angolan policies together. Roberto and the Binza group, led by Mobutu, shared common friends and enemies. President Joseph Kasavubu, a successful Bakongo politician in his own right, competed with both Roberto and his Congolese masters for power and support. For the Binza group, Roberto served as a counterweight to Kasavubu's personal political power; for their part, the Binza group checked Kasavubu's ability

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<sup>219</sup> "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams) to Secretary of State Rusk - Document 416."

<sup>220</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation - Document 423," May 31, 1963, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XX, Congo Crisis.

<sup>221</sup> "Memorandum from the Ambassador to the Congo (Gullion) to President Kennedy - Document 419," 419.

to interfere with the UPA's activities along the border. Furthermore, with Tshombe's forces safely ensconced in Angola, the Binza group thought of the GRAE as a counter to cross border raids by the former Katangan gendarmes. Roberto was an asset to the regime in Leopoldville (Kinshasa); as long as Mobutu's men controlled the government, Roberto had a safe haven for his movement and a staunch ally against the Portuguese.

In 1963, Mobutu and Adoula stepped up their support for Roberto's government in exile. Despite worries regarding Katangan retaliation, the Prime Minister granted Roberto "permission to send a personal representative to Katanga to begin building a political apparatus there among Angolan refugees and émigrés."<sup>222</sup> Roberto's hope was to expand his insurgency into eastern Angola, far from traditional centers of Portuguese power. In the main theater of operations, the FNLA engaged in pitched battles with the MPLA within the Congo. These battles, essentially the first of the Angolan Civil War, intensified the hatred between the two groups.<sup>223</sup> The Congolese government joined in, and frequently intercepted MPLA attempts to cross into Angola.<sup>224</sup> Finally, after the OAU recognized the GRAE/FNLA as the one true Angolan liberation movement, the Kinshasa government expelled the MPLA from the Congo. The MPLA members who stayed behind in Kinshasa found it impossible to continue work amidst incessant harassment from the authorities.<sup>225</sup> Dejected, Angola's communists moved across the Congo River to Brazzaville, the capital of the Congo Republic. By year's end, Roberto and his GRAE/FNLA held the monopoly on the Angolan revolution in the Congo.

## KENNEDY AND THE WHITE POWERS

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<sup>222</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 68.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>225</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 57; Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 121–122.

Whereas Kennedy took a proactive stance on racial justice in Angola, he took a conservative position against Apartheid. Rather than disrupt relations with such an important business partner and ally, JFK moderated his moral opposition to Apartheid. In 1960 alone, South Africa was home to about \$286 million in US investments. Furthermore, American strategic planners were well aware of South Africa's ability to control the sea-lanes between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.<sup>226</sup> A proposed UN 1963 general embargo to cripple the Afrikaner government appeared to threaten the national interest and required an American response. Kennedy favored some form of limited action against South Africa, but was unwilling to go to the extreme length of supporting a general embargo.<sup>227</sup> Unable to decide between the moral choice and the military-economic one, Kennedy sought a compromise. The administration decided to pre-empt the UN by calling for a voluntary arms-embargo to start in 1964, which would exempt weapons used for 'international security,' the euphemism used by the Kennedy administration to describe military hardware which could be used against the Soviet Union in the event of a war.<sup>228</sup> The administration designed the embargo to stop sales of equipment like helicopters and armored cars used by internal security forces; the exemption for national security left the door open for American Naval and Air Force sales. Furthermore, the delayed start date allowed Kennedy to squeeze in more arms sales to South Africa before the embargo went into affect.<sup>229</sup> Nevertheless, "Kennedy and some of his advisers saw it as a dramatic new step"

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<sup>226</sup> Richard E. Bissell, *South Africa and the United States: The Erosion of an Influence Relationship* (Praeger, 1982), 52; Jennifer S. Whitaker, ed., *Africa and the United States: Vital Interests* (New York University Press, 1978), 25–27, 124–131.

<sup>227</sup> Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 141–149.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 151.

against Apartheid.<sup>230</sup> In reality, the embargo compromise was a sign of the president's shifting attitude toward the white regimes of southern Africa.

At the same time as the effort to mitigate the South African embargo was underway, Kennedy and his foreign policy team decided to change course and take a conciliatory tone with Salazar and the Portuguese. Kennedy recalled ambassador Elbrick in the spring of 1963, and Admiral George W. Anderson replaced him in the summer. Nogueira and Salazar never liked Elbrick, and the bad blood from 1961 and the Azores negotiations in 1962 led to his undoing. Adlai Stevenson abstained from UN votes on Angola, rather than vote against the Portuguese.<sup>231</sup> Despite the tenuousness of America's access to the Azores, Kennedy continued to utilize the base and to support Portugal as a member of NATO. From 1960-1963, Alliance-wide military maneuvers, including operations Spearhead, Long Thrust, and Big Lift, practiced deploying troops to Europe in moments of crisis via the Azores.<sup>232</sup> The goal was to show Portugal the benefits of closer relations with the United States, and move Lisbon toward granting independence to Angola.

Kennedy sent George Ball, Undersecretary of State, to meet with Salazar and do what Elbrick and Rusk were unable to do: convince the Portuguese to allow self-determination in Africa and unfettered American access to the Azores. Ball came away from his meeting convinced that "Salazar was absorbed by a time dimension quite different from ours; it seemed as though he and his whole country were living in more than one century, and the heroes of the past were still shaping Portuguese policy." Portugal seemed to be "ruled by a triumvirate

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>232</sup> 65th Air Base Wing History Office, "A Short History of Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal," 11-12.

consisting of Vasco da Gama, Prince Henry the Navigator, and Salazar.”<sup>233</sup> Salazar, a throwback to Portugal’s past, would not relinquish control of his ancient empire. Ball left the meeting convinced that Lisbon would remain intransigent on Angola and their colonies. He decided that American policy should not be about miracles; it should be about results. Ball and ambassador Anderson were convinced of the need for major changes in U.S. Angola policy.

Kennedy did not live to work out a new course in Angola. The day JFK died in Dallas, Holden Roberto was in New York, himself convalescing from an assassination attempt in Tunis. He had expected to meet with the President to discuss an increase in funding and a new aid package. Instead, Roberto watched Kennedy’s funeral on TV from a New York apartment.<sup>234</sup> Angola’s American champion was dead; Roberto returned to Leopoldville (Kinshasa) without meeting the new president, unclear as to whether the Texan would abandon or emancipate Angola.

## JOHNSON

President Lyndon Johnson inherited an ambiguous Angola and Portuguese policy from his predecessor. Kennedy had failed to secure either the Azores base or Angola’s independence. Johnson executed his own Africa strategy that kept the United States aligned with African nationalism, and also preserved the Azores and the NATO alliance. Johnson received little credit for his accomplishments.<sup>235</sup> His foreign policy team would invest a great deal of time and political capital in Africa, especially in 1964 and 1965 during the ongoing Congo Crisis, racial

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<sup>233</sup> George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1983), 277.

<sup>234</sup> Melady and Melady, *Ten African Heroes*, 90–91.

<sup>235</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 59. Schneidman went so far as to name a chapter, “Lyndon Johnson and Africa: The Right Policy for the Wrong Reasons.”

incidents in South Africa, Zambia's independence, and Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence. Most important, in 1964 LBJ authorized an expansive aid package to Roberto to improve his leadership and political operations. Despite such a bold move, events in the Congo prevented American aid to Roberto from coming to fruition. Nevertheless, Under LBJ the U.S. created durable relationships that existed, albeit under distress, until the Angolan Civil War in 1975-76.

Roberto forced Angola onto LBJ's agenda when *The New York Times* ran the column "Angolan Rebels to Take Red Aid" on January 4, 1964. He bluntly summed up his needs: "We are now at a point where a radical change of policy is imperative for us to make headway in our struggle." Roberto concluded, "that the Western countries are hypocritical...while paying lip service to self-determination, the United States supplies its North Atlantic treaty ally, Portugal, with arms that are used to kill us."<sup>236</sup> Members of the UPA, christened the FNLA in 1962, met with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai during his African tour that winter.<sup>237</sup> The Chinese promised the FNLA that they could "have whatever (they) need in arms and money," an offer Roberto was eager to accept.<sup>238</sup> The American embassy in Leopoldville contacted the Congolese government immediately. Marcel Lengema, an assistant to Adoula, guaranteed the U.S. that "all material assistance must be channeled through the Congolese Government. The Angolan government cannot accept aid directly from abroad."<sup>239</sup> The Department of State sent out a flurry of

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<sup>236</sup> Special to the New York Times, "Angolan Rebels to Take Red Aid: Africans Expected to Delegation to Peking," *The New York Times*, January 4, 1964, 1923-Current file edition, ProQuest Historical Newspapers New York Times (1851-2009) w/ Index (1851-1993).

<sup>237</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 59.

<sup>238</sup> Special to the New York Times, "Angolan Rebels to Take Red Aid."

<sup>239</sup> Special to the New York Times, "Congo to Rule Aid to Angola Rebels: Help From Reds Must Go Via Government Channels," *The New York Times*, January 8, 1964, 1923-Current file edition; "Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State - Document 413,"

telegrams to the embassies in Leopoldville and Lisbon to discern if Roberto was defecting or merely trying to send a message to the new American administration.

What was immediately clear was that Roberto's FNLA needed help. The war stagnated and regular engagement between opposing forces was replaced with cross-border strikes to destroy bridges and mine roads while the Portuguese responded by strafing villages and bombing the countryside with napalm.<sup>240</sup> Portugal's counterinsurgency tactics cut off the people from the rebels, which limited political organization and recruitment within Angola. The situation in the Congo was no better. After a visit to Kinkuzu, Marcum claimed that Roberto's forces ate irregularly, mainly because they relied on "a combination of handouts from international relief agencies and food purchases made with scarce funds that might better have been used for military supplies."<sup>241</sup> FNLA troops rioted sporadically, often with the leadership requiring help from Mobutu to suppress insurrection. Aid from the OAU had still not materialized; indeed, nearly "a year after the OAU recognition of the GRAE, then, the dual promise of escalated insurgency and massive pan-African support remained unfulfilled."<sup>242</sup> Without direct American assistance, it appeared Roberto would in fact accept aid from China.

The National Security Council organized a series of meetings in the winter and spring of 1964 to determine how to respond. The consensus was that this was a cry for help, rather than a genuine turn to communism and a rejection of American support. Johnson personally avoided the NSC's Roberto meetings in 1964, and instead entrusted the issue to his foreign policy team.

The NSC meeting on February 18, 1964 outlined the potential courses of action. The

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January 14, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v24/d413>.

<sup>240</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 116.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

State Department, represented by Undersecretary W. Averell Harriman, pushed for continued diplomacy with Portugal to seek peace with Roberto. To bolster their argument against direct support for the Angolan nationalists, the State Department sent a circular airgram to every African embassy asking for “any information...regarding current reports of internal dissension within (FNLA) or host government’s views on Holden Roberto’s leadership.”<sup>243</sup> The CIA, USAID and the Africa Bureau of the State Department argued for a comprehensive package of support to Roberto, “particularly refugee relief, secondary education, educational programs specifically tailored to potential political leaders, administrative professional governmental cadres and other such specialized requirements; and other forms of assistance by appropriate means.”<sup>244</sup> Such aid would supplement the relief work already provided by Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Relief, Church World Service, and other religious organizations.<sup>245</sup> The NSC appointed a ‘Special Group’ to determine the best course of action, and ordered a full report on Angola, Portugal, and Roberto.

The first meeting of the NSC’s Angola Special Group convened on March 16. The CIA, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy presented the case for an expanded aid package; the State Department argued against.<sup>246</sup> George Ball led the State Department’s opposition, which focused on working with Portugal to seek a negotiated settlement and a managed transition to majority rule.

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<sup>243</sup> “Office of the Historian - Historical Documents - Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa - Document 416 Circular Airgram From the Department of State to Certain African Posts,” March 16, 1964.

<sup>244</sup> “Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XII, Western Europe, Document 149 Record of Actions,” February 18, 1964.

<sup>245</sup> Melady and Melady, *Ten African Heroes*, 100.

<sup>246</sup> “Office of the Historian - Historical Documents - Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa - Document 415 Memorandum From the Deputy Director for Coordination, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Scott) to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams),” March 16, 1964.



Ball hoped that Ambassador Anderson could convince the Portuguese to take a moderate stance on Africa, and he had some reason for optimism. Anderson was less confrontational than Elbrick, and his military background impressed Salazar and Nogueira. Anderson went so far as to travel to Angola and Mozambique with Portuguese guides, and came back very impressed by the reforms put in place after hostilities began. Ball commended Anderson for his good rapport with the Portuguese.<sup>247</sup> Anderson's plan was simple; he attempted to convince Portugal to move toward self-determination for Angola out of Portugal's own self-interest. This was his way of complying with the State Department's orders to push African issues onto the agenda. One State Department official likened the task to being "continually charged with the disagreeable task of trying to get some forward political movement out of the Portuguese Government, while still being responsible for maintaining good relations."<sup>248</sup> Notwithstanding Anderson's hard-won civility with Salazar, his diplomacy produced no breakthroughs for George Ball to use in the policy debate back in Washington.<sup>249</sup>

Ball remained adamant that the United States should not back Angolan rebels, and wrote to Secretary of State Rusk "an emphatic dissent" to the military option. His greatest concern was that "sympathy for the underdog" and "abstract libertarian principles" guided Angola policy, not the national interest. He was upset that he had personally assured Salazar that the U.S. was not involved with Roberto, when in fact the CIA had been since 1955. Ball argued that American

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<sup>247</sup> "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968 Volume XII, Western Europe, Document 148 Letter From the Under Secretary of State (Ball) to the Ambassador to Portugal (Anderson)," February 6, 1964.

<sup>248</sup> "Information Memorandum from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Fredericks) to the Under Secretary of State (Ball) - Document 420," May 19, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV, Africa.

<sup>249</sup> Ball ended a letter to Anderson, "Now, if you'll just get him to pull those F-86s out of Guinea, as he promised to do, we shall be impressed indeed!" "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968 Volume XII, Western Europe, Document 148 Letter From the Under Secretary of State (Ball) to the Ambassador to Portugal (Anderson)," 148.

credibility as an ally and honest broker was at stake. Furthermore, the plan the CIA and the African Bureau promoted constituted “a joint venture with the Communists to undermine a Western ally.” The core of his argument, however, questioned the underlying assumptions of the foreign policy inherited by Johnson: “that we must give covert financial aid to the Angolan Nationalists if they are to be friendly with us after independence.” Ball insisted that the United States could wait until after independence to engage with Angola. In the Congo, Americans had been able to thwart a communist advance despite being uninvolved with black politics before independence and American aid to Belgian colonialism. Ball supported overt aid to refugees and students, but would not throw his weight behind covert activities.<sup>250</sup>

G. Mennen ‘Soapy’ Williams was the counterweight to Ball. He wrote Rusk stressing that support provided to Roberto moderated the Angolan revolution. His stated end goal was for an independent Angola to be a part of a Portuguese commonwealth including Brazil. His fear was that Angola could develop into “another Congo-like situation” with chaos and rebellion. Williams believed that aid to Roberto was the only way to prevent that outcome. Additionally, Angola’s “wide African appeal” gave African leaders “no choice but to back the Angolan and Mozambique nationalist movements if they are to survive politically themselves.” U.S. engagement with the region demanded that American policy align with the free African states on the issue. He prophetically argued that the colonial wars were creating social strains in Portugal, and that the Portuguese military had become so despondent that it might rebel against Salazar.

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<sup>250</sup> “Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State (Ball) to Secretary of State Rusk - Document 417,” March 17, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa.

Williams worried that without American pressure to moderate its colonial rule, Portugal had no future in post-independence Angola.<sup>251</sup>

Roberto made it difficult for Williams and the Angola hawks. With the war in Angola stagnated, he worked to make exile living in Kinshasa as comfortable as possible. According to Marcum, Roberto's reputation as a rebel fighter took a hit when he "accepted the gift of a black Mercedes from an anonymous benefactor...(and) took to driving about the Congolese capital in his shiny new status symbol."<sup>252</sup> Marcum, a big UPA supporter, lamented that "Holden himself became increasingly a Kinshasa businessman," and he eventually purchased "four or five buildings in Kinshasa bought partly with money that the Angolan liberation committee had placed at his disposal, and partly thanks to American aid and Mobutu's aid."<sup>253</sup> Roberto lived less and less like a revolutionary and increasingly like the famous soccer player of his youth. Angered by the lack of progress in the war and the Bakongo monopoly over leadership positions, Jonas Savimbi quit the movement. Ovimbundu membership plummeted. A CIA report at the time expressed doubt as to "Roberto's long-term stayability (sic) as a leader," even though the agency continued to support an expanded Angola program.<sup>254</sup> The evidence against Roberto prevented the Special Group from agreeing to a military course of action.

Bundy, Robert Kennedy and McNamara stressed that Roberto's problems were political, and that covert aid was needed to shore up his leadership deficiencies. Bundy highlighted "the folly of a stubborn adherence to an antique Portuguese policy." Kennedy "felt strongly that we

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<sup>251</sup> "Action Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams) to Secretary of State Rusk - Document 418," April 29, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV, Africa.

<sup>252</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 119.

<sup>253</sup> Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 212.

<sup>254</sup> "Memorandum for the Record - Document 419," May 4, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV, Africa.

(the United States) could not abandon the movement.” McNamara even went so far as to say that it was possible the Defense Department could live without the Azores base, and that the Azores “should not dictate our foreign policy...keeping the USSR out of Africa was more important than” the airfield.<sup>255</sup> On May 21, 1964, the 303 Committee denied military funds, but unanimously approved covert political funding for the FNLA.<sup>256</sup> Soapy Williams met with Congolese Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula in New York to discuss the terms of Roberto’s increased aid. It seemed that the United States was prepared to help Roberto where he needed it the most, with his leadership and political organization. Although American aid stopped short of a military equipment, the proposed package had the power to help Roberto recover from his recent setbacks, and to address the longstanding weaknesses of his movement.

#### JOHNSON SAVES THE CONGO, LOSES ANGOLA

Unfortunately, Roberto’s American aid never arrived. After the twin shocks of the pullout of the United Nations peacekeepers and the Congo’s second parliamentary elections, events in the Congo took an unexpected turn; by July, Adoula was out of power, and rebels led by Che Guevara captured had Stanleyville, the historic home of Lumumba and a center of the opposition. Moïse Tshombe, the one-time secessionist leader, came to power, and out of loyalty to his European business partners, rejected the aid to Roberto. The Congo crisis had flared up again, and once again, the country appeared on the verge of dissolution or communist takeover.

Mobutu’s oligarchy in Leopoldville quickly lost control of the provinces as the United Nations troops left the country in stages. As early as the end of 1963, a small rebellion in the east

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 419.

<sup>256</sup> “Memorandum for the Record - Document 421,” May 21, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v24/d421>.

expanded into wide swaths of the country.<sup>257</sup> Kivu province fell first to rebels led by Laurent Kabila called 'The Simbas,' and as the June 30, 1964 UN withdrawal approached, rebel control spread. The Simbas were Congolese frustrated by the inefficient and corrupt government in Leopoldville (Kinshasa). Their political beliefs included Marxist-Leninism, but their main stay was their belief in the slain Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. Once the UN completed their departure, rebels allied to the Simbas took control of Stanleyville and announced their secession from the Congo ruled from Leopoldville.<sup>258</sup>

Amidst the chaos, Parliament sacked Adoula. The army was inept and the government remained paralyzed as the country fragmented. In a panic, Congo's parliament turned to Moïse Tshombe, the former Katangan secessionist leader, to bring order to the situation. Tshombe recalled his gendarmes back from Angola and brought his mercenary army with him from exile.<sup>259</sup> He was the only Congolese politician with a personal army, and his connections to Katanga and its international businesses meant that the hemorrhaging would not extend into the copperbelt. In a stunning reversal, Roberto's good friend Adoula was out, Portugal's ally Tshombe was in.

With the Congo on the brink of dissolution, Tshombe first turned to his former white allies. South Africa again provided funding for an army of French and Rhodesian mercenaries. The new government in Leopoldville attempted to reengage with Portugal, whose ports of Lobito in Angola and Beira in Mozambique exported the majority of Katanga's copper. Tshombe blocked the delivery of aid to the FNLA and disrupted its recruiting efforts, including the newly

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<sup>257</sup> Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 47.

<sup>258</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 57–124. Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu in 1997 and served as president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo until 2001. His son Joseph Kabila succeeded him as president in 2001 and serves in that office to this day.

<sup>259</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 225.

approved American support.<sup>260</sup> Reversing the policies of Roberto's good friend Adoula, Tshombe cleared the way for President Kasavubu, Roberto's Bakongo political rival, to openly challenge the FNLA. It was the first time since immediately after Lumumba's death that Roberto found his position in the Congo threatened. Mobutu, whose army was unable to control the chaos, could only watch on the sidelines.

In a bid to assert total control over the situation, Tshombe met with G. Mennen Williams and asked him to recall the U.S. ambassador and to stop all support for Roberto. When informed of the request, President Johnson acquiesced; he told Williams that he was worried that the Congo was disintegrating. LBJ decided that "time was running out and the Congo must be saved."<sup>261</sup> The 303 Committee, an oversight panel composed of members from the NSA and CIA, tabled Roberto's aid package in response.<sup>262</sup> With Tshombe in power, saving the Congo meant sacrificing Roberto.

In the summer of 1964, with his presidential election campaign underway, Johnson ordered a covert military campaign in the Congo. The operation would include an "instant air force" of ground attack planes, a vast mercenary army, foreign paratroopers, and paramilitary operations.<sup>263</sup> The CIA reassigned Larry Devlin to his old post at the CIA Station in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), where he oversaw Johnson's secret war and the expansion of the CIA's mission in

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<sup>260</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 126–127.

<sup>261</sup> Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy, 1963-1968* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 257.

<sup>262</sup> "Memorandum for the Record - Document 425," August 6, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v24/d425>.

<sup>263</sup> "How C.I.A. Put 'Instant Air Force' Into Congo: Intervention or Spying All in a Day's Work In Dark and Light," *New York Times*, April 26, 1966, 1923-Current file edition, <http://0-www.proquest.com.library.uark.edu/>.

the Congo.<sup>264</sup> Devlin, a close confidant of the Congolese leadership, wrote in his memoirs that he had allowed “the Binza group and Tshombe” to determine “the form, extent and auspices of the U.S. intervention.”<sup>265</sup> The massive program grew into a full-fledged war.

Devlin’s secret army was a conglomeration of distinct, compartmentalized factions. Tshombe brought his former secessionist gendarmes into the Congolese army, which undermined Mobutu’s control of the institution. Fighting ahead of the army was a force of hundreds of foreign mercenaries, including the infamous “Mad Mike” Mike Hoare and Bob Denard.<sup>266</sup> The CIA recruited Cuban exiles from Florida, “veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion,” to pilot Zaire’s new air force.<sup>267</sup> They flew an assortment of obsolete aircraft, many modified for a ground attack role: thirteen T-28 fighter-bombers, five long-range B-26 attack bombers, three C-46 transport aircraft, and two small twin-engine liaison planes.<sup>268</sup> To maintain and support the small air armada, the CIA created a front organization, run by Europeans, known as the “Western International Ground Maintenance Organization,” or WIGMO.<sup>269</sup> It was a perfect mixture of secrecy, deniability, and effectiveness. On paper, these were nothing more than the Congolese armed forces. In actuality, they were separate groups that operated independently. The CIA dictated strategy and managed the logistics.

The war reached its climax shortly after LBJ’s victory over Goldwater. Just a week after the U.S. election, the mercenary army reached the outskirts of Stanleyville. Inside the city, the

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<sup>264</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 227.

<sup>265</sup> Stephen R. Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964*, 1st ed. (Cornell University Press, 1974).

<sup>266</sup> Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 49; Mike Hoare, *Congo Mercenary* (Boulder, Colo: Paladin Press, 2008).

<sup>267</sup> “How C.I.A. Put ‘Instant Air Force’ Into Congo: Intervention or Spying All in a Day’s Work In Dark and Light.”

<sup>268</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 225.

<sup>269</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, “United States Policy toward Zaire”; “How C.I.A. Put ‘Instant Air Force’ Into Congo: Intervention or Spying All in a Day’s Work In Dark and Light.”

Simbas held “30 Americans and 800 other foreigners, mostly Belgians” hostage.<sup>270</sup> Fearing for the safety of the hostages, the Belgians and the Johnson administration concocted a joint plan to rescue them. Known as ‘Operation Dragon Rouge,’ the scheme called for a Belgian paratrooper attack supported by the U.S. Air Force. On November 24, 1964, with the CIA providing air support, Belgian troops made a combat jump from American C-130s into the besieged city.<sup>271</sup> Later that morning the mercenaries began their assault. The combined mercenary and Belgian force massacred the rebels; the beatings, robbery, rape, torture, and murder committed in the name of securing the city damaged the standing of the Congo and the United States within the capitals of Africa.<sup>272</sup> Nevertheless, Johnson’s secret war broke the rebellion, and the Congo remained loyal to the U.S.

In the wake of the upheaval in the Congo, President Johnson ordered a reevaluation of U.S. Angola policy in December 1964. By that point, Tshombe’s anti-FNLA efforts had taken full effect. The Congolese government, once an ally, no longer allowed the FNLA to import weapons. The CIA found the FNLA to be “increasingly ineffective, and has been racked by mutinies...it is chronically short of food and ammunition, and largely cut off from its own forces inside Angola where nationalist activity has virtually ceased.” The overall opinion of Roberto amongst the embassy staff in Leopoldville plummeted. Even his best supporters began to doubt his leadership after his failings in 1964. John Marcum, author of *The Angolan Revolution*, added a special comment to the departmental review; for the first time, he questioned “Roberto’s

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<sup>270</sup> “Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Johnson - Document 322,” November 16, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960–1968.

<sup>271</sup> “Memorandum From Arthur McCafferty of the National Security Council Staff to Bromley Smith of the National Security Council Staff - Document 321,” November 16, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960–1968.

<sup>272</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 184.



leadership ability and potential.” Marcum’s opinion was particularly damning, given that the CIA viewed him as “the closest American to Roberto.”<sup>273</sup>

With Roberto no longer a credible option in the eyes of his closest supporters in Washington, Johnson decided to switch tracks and try the policy of cautious engagement with Portugal proposed by George Ball and Admiral Anderson. The first step was to normalize relations with Portugal. In 1965, the CIA secretly sold Portugal seven B-26 bombers in an attempt to convince the Portuguese to negotiate a long-term lease for the Azores base.<sup>274</sup> By the summer of 1965, Anderson had created a comprehensive proposal for normalizing Portuguese-American relations. The so-called Anderson Plan required Portugal to allow “free political activity in the territories with full amnesty for refugees” in exchange for “a suspension by African nationalists of anti-Portuguese activities in the UN.” Anderson promised to resume all military sales to Portugal if the African nationalists failed to hold up their end of the bargain.<sup>275</sup> The Anderson plan offered Portugal an opportunity to escape its status as an international a pariah *and* to procure sorely needed American weapons.

By then, however, Portugal had partially insulated itself from American pressure by securing income and military hardware from other NATO allies. Since the start of the war in Angola, Portugal had concluded military agreements with France and West Germany, which lessened their need for American aid. Portugal traded France the rights to a missile tracking station in the Azores and Germany land for an airfield in Beja in exchange for jet aircraft,

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<sup>273</sup> “Information Memorandum From the Director of the Office of Central African Affairs (O’Sullivan) to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams) - Document 427,” November 2, 1964, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa.

<sup>274</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 69.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–72.

helicopters, frigates, and submarines.<sup>276</sup> After Charles De Gaulle reduced France's commitment to NATO in 1966, Portugal assumed greater importance within the alliance system. NATO had reorganized the alliance's naval forces losing access to French ports, which led to the creation of the Iberian Atlantic Command, or IBERLANT, based near Lisbon. IBERLANT forced the relocation of American Navy resources from Norfolk Virginia, further bolstering the American military presence in Portugal.<sup>277</sup> In addition the lucrative base deals and arms purchases, Portugal benefitted from full participation within NATO training, standardization, and equipment purchasing programs. The result was that Salazar and Nogueira rebuffed Anderson's new approach. America simply did not have enough leverage to moderate Portuguese colonial policies. Johnson's efforts to reach out to Portugal produced even less benefit than his attempt the previous year to finance and train Roberto.

LBJ had had enough of ineffective Angola/Portugal policies. Rather than pick one side or the other, Johnson proposed a curse on both houses- Roberto and Salazar. He ordered the Joint Chiefs in 1965 to minimize the Azores base and all other Portuguese NATO installations in American military planning. Salazar sensed that his bargaining position had weakened, and in turn, Portuguese-American relations marginally improved. In December 1965, Johnson placed George Ball, who was adamantly against arming Roberto, in charge of African policy.<sup>278</sup> It was a clear sign to Salazar that the United States would no longer pursue an activist foreign policy in regards to Angola.

Roberto's fortunes improved when Mobutu took power in a coup at the end of 1965. A new constitution written the previous year switched the roles of the prime minister and the

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>277</sup> Minter, *Portuguese Africa and the West*, 108.

<sup>278</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 90.

president, and both Tshombe and Kasavubu wanted the newly empowered presidency.<sup>279</sup> The National Security Council wanted the “two Congolese prima donnas” to retain their own offices, which Mobutu cynically characterized as, “a Johnson-Goldwater ticket” for the Congo, even though neither was a member of the Binza group.<sup>280</sup> In a repeat of the 1960 coup that led to Lumumba’s death, Kasavubu extra-constitutionally fired Tshombe. Amidst the madness, and a potential return to chaos, Mobutu, with approval from Devlin, launched his second coup in five years.<sup>281</sup> With the support of the army high command, he declared the end of the Congolese Republic and sacked the government. Mobutu declared Tshombe the “chief enemy of the regime,” and on December 23, the one-time president of Katanga and Prime Minister of the Congo left for exile in Europe.<sup>282</sup> Mobutu had emerged from his powerful position behind the scenes to take the reins. For the United States and Roberto, it meant that their main ally now directly controlled the Congo’s destiny.

President Johnson remained staunchly committed to Mobutu following the coup. When mercenaries loyal to Tshombe mutinied against Mobutu in 1967, LBJ sent him three C-130 cargo planes, despite the disapproval of Congress.<sup>283</sup> For Mobutu, the gesture reinforced his understanding of the Congo-U.S. relationship; that the United States understood the Cold War was ‘hot’ in Africa, and in times of need, Mobutu could count on America to provide swift support.

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<sup>279</sup> Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 49.

<sup>280</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 233; “Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to President Johnson - Document 424,” August 18, 1965, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960–1968.

<sup>281</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 233–234.

<sup>282</sup> Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 52–57.

<sup>283</sup> Jeff Woods, *Richard B. Russell: Southern Nationalism and American Foreign Policy*, annotated edition (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 105.

Mobutu secured Roberto's place in the Congo. Although his fortunes had waned, the war against Portugal stagnated, and his movement splintered, Roberto no longer worried whether his host government might evict him. As a fixture in the courtier life of the capital, Roberto continued to meet discreetly with personnel in Kinshasa (Leopoldville) under a policy of "maintaining unobtrusive but useful contacts with Portuguese African nationalist leaders" as outlined in a National Policy Paper on Portugal.<sup>284</sup> Throughout the final years of the Johnson presidency, Roberto continued to update the embassy on the GRAE, his relations the Congolese government, and his disagreements with other Angolan nationalists.<sup>285</sup> However, Roberto's moment had passed. By 1969, the momentum from his 1961 invasion was gone. The MPLA, and a new rival, UNITA, slowly replaced Roberto on the international stage as symbols of Angolan nationalism. More than ever, Roberto focused on survival rather than the fight against the Portuguese. Even under Mobutu's care, Roberto would struggle to control the GRAE/FNLA in its struggles against its rivals.

#### THE PROBLEM OF ZAMBIA, RHODESIA, & SOUTH AFRICA

The Johnson years saw the rise of a new crisis in Africa that hardened the animosities between the whites and blacks of southern Africa. Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence (U.D.I.) in 1965 created a new white pariah state, whose existence imperiled Zambia, which had only been independent from Britain since 1964. Rhodesia quickly became a

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<sup>284</sup> "Letter from the Country Director for Central Africa, Malagasy Republic, and Mauritius (Brown) to the Ambassador to the Congo (McBride) - Document 445," June 1, 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v24/d445>.

<sup>285</sup> "Airgram from the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State - Document 448," October 26, 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV, Africa.

close ally to Portugal and South Africa, and the United States increasingly viewed the racial conflicts in southern Africa as one issue.

Shortly after the 1964 election, Johnson and his foreign policy team engaged with the British to mitigate the push by Rhodesia for independence and to support the fledgling nation of Zambia. The fear was that Rhodesia would retaliate against Zambia's support for black rebels by strangling the Zambian economy. Landlocked Zambia, whose mineral riches rivaled the Katanga province across the border in the Congo, relied on completely the white regimes of colonial Southern Rhodesia, Portugal, and South Africa to export its raw materials. Furthermore, mining operations in Zambia required electrical power from the Kariba Dam, and the industry's smelting and transport needs required coal from Rhodesia's mines at Wankie. Of immense strategic importance for the United States and Great Britain was the region's copper, which the American ambassador to Zambia described as "25 percent of free-world copper production."<sup>286</sup> Rhodesia also contained precious ores, most important of which was chrome. Rhodesia was the West's most reliable source of chrome, and many in the United States, including Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia, favored good relations with Rhodesia to maintain access to that strategic resource. Copper and chrome helped to make Rhodesia the center of white-black confrontation in Africa; it remained so until the South African invasion of Angola in 1975.

Rhodesia declared independence from Britain on Veterans Day, 1965, which began a prolonged and bloody war to maintain white supremacy. Both the United States and Great Britain sought to overthrow the Rhodesian regime and set the British colony on the course to majority-rule. Johnson deferred leadership on the issue to the British, which still claimed control of the erstwhile colony. British Prime Minister Harold Wilson explored several options to end

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<sup>286</sup> Robert C Good, *U.D.I.: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), 88–89.

the crisis, of which all required massive American support. Britain initially proposed that the United States airlift Zambia's copper to world markets in order to choke the lucrative transportation business operated by Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa. The American ambassador to Zambia, Robert Good, estimated that the airlift would have required 94,500 flying hours and cost \$85 million.<sup>287</sup> The United States preferred a British invasion, which Wilson rejected for fear that it would become a repeat of the Boer Wars. The military option was deemed unfeasible due to British difficulties moving troops abroad and American military commitments in NATO, Korea, Southeast Asia, and the Dominican Republic.<sup>288</sup> Without a credible military option, Britain struggled to find a solution.

Reflecting their weak economy and diminished power in the world, the British took a non-confrontational approach. In 1966, The UN passed a comprehensive embargo against Rhodesia, and the United States and Britain fully complied. Rather than bringing Rhodesia to heel, the embargo helped bring the white regimes of Rhodesia, South Africa and Portugal together for mutual defense and increased trade.<sup>289</sup> Portugal and South Africa ignored the embargo and allowed landlocked Rhodesia, already dependent on the two countries for access to the world economy, to avoid the crippling sanctions. The only country to feel real suffering was Zambia, whose President Kenneth Kaunda straddled a fine line between confrontation with white dominated minority regimes on one hand, and active participation in the economy of the region on the other.<sup>290</sup> Robert Komer of the National Security Council wrote to the President that “the longer the Rhodesian boil goes unbalanced, the sharper the confrontation over the Southern third

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 89–90.

<sup>288</sup> “Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara - Document 511,” December 16, 1965, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa.

<sup>289</sup> Good, *U.D.I.*, 126.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 109–112.

of Africa will become.”<sup>291</sup> Britain’s decision to take a strong rhetorical stand without real action was the opposite of what Washington had hoped for.

South Africa’s support for Rhodesia was the crux of the problem. However, with its vibrant economy a sound investment choice for American and British businesses, South Africa remained an unlikely foe. Both Washington and London acknowledged that meaningful change in southern Africa required a direct confrontation with the Apartheid state, yet neither was willing to assume the cost. British companies had over three billion dollars invested in South Africa, and together America and Britain enjoyed a one billion dollar favorable balance of payments with Pretoria. South Africa produced 70 percent of the West’s annual output of gold, which also helped insulate it from sanctions. In 1967, the U.S. Defense Department estimated “that a blockade against South Africa alone would require four carrier task forces (4 carriers, 24 destroyers and 3 submarines),” and that a deployment over six months would require additional forces due to “rotational and repair requirements.” A blockade of Portuguese Angola and Mozambique would require an even larger force, and could result “in a possible military confrontation” between NATO allies.<sup>292</sup> The only American naval operation of comparable size occurred in the Pacific Theater of WWII. With the cost of direct confrontation so high, Johnson’s options for dealing with South Africa were limited.

Despite few good options, LBJ did his best to apply pressure against the Apartheid state. In 1964, he reinterpreted his predecessor’s military embargo against South Africa to deny all

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<sup>291</sup> “Memorandum from the President’s Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Komer) to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) - Document 502,” December 6, 1965, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa, [http://nasser.bibalex.org/Data/USDocWeb/HTML/XXIV,%20Africa%201964-68/www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_xxiv/zy.html](http://nasser.bibalex.org/Data/USDocWeb/HTML/XXIV,%20Africa%201964-68/www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_xxiv/zy.html).

<sup>292</sup> “Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (McNaughton) to Secretary of Defense McNamara - Document 406,” January 18, 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa.

weapons sales to the Apartheid government, even those that Kennedy had previously exempted.<sup>293</sup> This decision upset defense contractors and their supporters in Congress, a cost LBJ was willing to absorb. After a controversy caused by the South African denial of shore leave for black sailors from the USS *Independence* in 1965, the United States Navy boycotted South African ports. The boycott became untenable as the war in Vietnam escalated and the Navy's Atlantic Fleet traveled to and from Southeast Asia via the Cape. Meanwhile, South African authorities insisted that all American sailors on shore leave participate in segregated activities. This led to a minor international incident when the USS *FDR* stopped at Cape Town to refuel. Johnson cancelled shore leave for the *FDR*, and he ruled out all future use of South African ports until "no racial conditions were imposed" on American sailors.<sup>294</sup> These small symbols of defiance angered Pretoria and made South African officials pine for a friendly government in Washington that left race out of international relations.

In 1966, Johnson spoke to the issue of the racist regimes in southern Africa in an address to the Organization of African Unity, which the White House billed as "the first address by an American President devoted wholly to Africa."<sup>295</sup> Bill Moyers encouraged Johnson to give the speech "for foreign policy reasons" and as "a cheap way to keep the civil rights people quiet."<sup>296</sup> He also wanted the president to pre-empt Bobby Kennedy's 1966 trip to South Africa in his preparation for a presidential run in 1968. Moyers wanted a strong speech, so that Johnson would not "simply offer economic assistance and material aid while Kennedy trots off making hay on

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<sup>293</sup> Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 163–165.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 179–180.

<sup>295</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969*, 1st ed. (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 353. The Johnson White House ignored Eisenhower's 1960 UN General Assembly speech.

<sup>296</sup> Cohen and Tucker, *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World*, 263.



the intangible issue of the rights of man.”<sup>297</sup> With these political objectives in mind, Johnson delivered his speech to the OAU.

LBJ spoke in broad terms on natural rights and freedoms, including the “inalienable right of all people to control their destiny” and the basic rights “to secure the right of self-government, to build strong democratic institutions, and to improve the level of every citizen’s being.”<sup>298</sup> He deplored “the more repugnant (and) narrow-minded, outmoded policy which in some parts of Africa permits the few to rule at the expense of the many,” Angola, Rhodesia and South Africa, for example.<sup>299</sup> The OAU speech helped heal the wounds of Stanleyville and the Anderson plan, which had hurt America’s standing in independent Africa. It showed that the United States viewed the region holistically, which increased the sense of isolation and despair amongst the white powers of southern Africa. The United States, once a segregationist nation that openly allied with colonial and white supremacist powers, now seemed firmly on the side of black Africa. At least, such was the case under Johnson.

#### UNITA & THE EASTERN FRONT

In 1964, when Jonas Savimbi left the GRAE/FNLA, he took with him a cadre of non-Bakongo members. Even before Savimbi’s falling out with the organization, these Ovimbundu, Chokwe, Nganguela, and Sele Angolans had formed an ‘Opposition Group’ that challenged Roberto’s leadership within the GRAE.<sup>300</sup> It was this group that had rioted at Kinkuzu and incurred the wrath of Mobutu’s soldiers. Savimbi had also built his own “independent political

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<sup>297</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 94–95.

<sup>298</sup> Lyndon Johnson, “Remarks at a Reception Marking the Third Anniversary of the Organization of African Unity,” May 26, 1966 in *Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon Johnson 1966* vol. 1/243 (US Government Printing Office, 1967) 556.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 556-557.

<sup>300</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 58.

base in Katanga,” amongst the non-Bakongo refugee community there.<sup>301</sup> It was because of this local support that Savimbi had expected to lead guerrilla activities based in Katanga. Due to Savimbi’s growing personal power, including budding relationships with various African leaders, Roberto had already taken moves to oust him even before Savimbi quit. The final straw came in 1964 in Cairo.

Savimbi was supposed to be in Switzerland attending classes when the OAU convened the Cairo Conference of Heads of State and Government in July 1964. Savimbi surprised the attendees when he arrived and discovered his seat taken by one of Roberto’s close friends. Angry that Roberto replaced him, Savimbi sought out Roberto to no avail. Dejected, Savimbi called a press conference and announced his resignation in an accusation-filled tirade.<sup>302</sup> Savimbi stayed in Cairo a few days to make further contacts with conference attendees, including Malcolm X.<sup>303</sup> Despite his fallout with Roberto, Savimbi remained committed to the Angolan revolution, by any means necessary.

Devoid of a powerbase, Savimbi turned to his contacts in the socialist camp. Throughout the end of 1964 and early 1965, he visited the MPLA leadership in Brazzaville, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Soviet Union, and North Korea, as well as making three significant stops in Algeria, North Vietnam, and China.<sup>304</sup> In Algeria, Savimbi met with Che Guevara, who he had previously met in January 1964. The highlight of his North Vietnamese tour was a chance to talk strategy with General Vo Nguyen Giap. None of the trips, however, was more important to

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<sup>301</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 68.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 160–161; Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 64–69. Marcum and Bridgland disagree on Savimbi’s itinerary. Both authors agree on the visits, but not their order. Marcum relies on interviews conducted with Savimbi close to the events themselves, whereas Bridgland interviewed Savimbi in 1980. Rather than tease out the correct order of events, their presentation here is non-chronological.

Savimbi than China. After an initial rebuff from Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, the elder Chinese revolutionaries agreed “to train some of his men and to give them support.” After completing his degree in Switzerland in July 1965, Savimbi spent the rest of the year in China attending guerrilla warfare classes at the Nanking Military Academy. Throughout that fall and winter, other Savimbi followers joined him for training.<sup>305</sup> With his vanguard ready, Savimbi went back to Africa to start his own movement.

In 1966, Savimbi trekked into Angola from Zambia and declared himself the leader of the Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). UNITA’s manifesto was neither pro-communist nor pro-western. Marcum described Savimbi’s political program as “purposively inclusive,” with a focus on fighting a war of “Angolans within Angola.”<sup>306</sup> Savimbi’s forces split up into small groups in Angola’s southeast, where they focused on grass roots organizing.<sup>307</sup> Savimbi combined Protestant methods of evangelism and social justice with political theory learned in Switzerland and China.<sup>308</sup> In addition to training in political and guerrilla warfare, Savimbi planned a series of spectacular attacks to punctuate the expansion of the war into Angola’s vast eastern provinces.

UNITA began offensive operations in December. First was a full frontal assault on a logging camp at Cassamba protected by two hundred Portuguese soldiers, which resulted in no Portuguese killed and several UNITA casualties.<sup>309</sup> However, it was a Christmas day attack on Teixeira de Sousa, a railroad town near the border with the Congo, which captured international attention and elicited a major Portuguese response. At the cost of over 300 UNITA dead,

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<sup>305</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 59–62, 66–67; Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 160–161.

<sup>306</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 165–166.

<sup>307</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 71.

<sup>308</sup> Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present*, 157.

<sup>309</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 71–72.

Savimbi and his men damaged aircraft, freed prisoners, killed Portuguese, and most important, cut the Benguela railroad, which disrupted Zambian and Katangan copper shipments for a week.<sup>310</sup> Portugal responded with the same kind of indiscriminate attacks and troop buildup that they employed in the North in 1961. In early 1967, UNITA cut the rail line and derailed trains, attacks that both the MPLA and FNLA quickly distanced themselves from, allegedly out of respect for Zambia and Zaire. In response, Kenneth Kaunda closed the border of Zambia to Savimbi, sealing the movement in Angola.<sup>311</sup>

After his initial assaults on Portuguese targets in Angola's sparsely populated eastern provinces, Savimbi's movement settled into community organizing, small-scale guerrilla operations, and sporadic firefights with the MPLA. By 1967, the MPLA had also started operations in eastern Angola, but with free access to the Zambian border, its leadership remained safely out of Angola. The MPLA questioned UNITA's military effectiveness; allegations that UNITA avoided Portuguese patrols and frequently fought against other Angolans dogged Savimbi.<sup>312</sup> It was important to Savimbi for his own personal movement to have strong support from the countryside, in direct contrast to Roberto's exile politics. Savimbi operated outside the internationally recognized center of Angolan exile politics and remained an obscure figure until independence in 1975. Without the courtesan politics of a foreign capital, UNITA focused on building grass roots in the bush. In 1971, an Austrian reporter visited Savimbi's camps in Angola and "reported that the area was "well-organized and well-run," the "administrative process

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<sup>310</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 192; Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 73.

<sup>311</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 192-193.

<sup>312</sup> Minter, *Operation Timber*, 11-13.

worked,” and that discipline was the best of the many guerrilla and underground movements he had seen.”<sup>313</sup>

## CONCLUSION

President Lyndon Johnson and his foreign policy team spent a surprising amount of time on African issues. As the crises in Africa piled up, they increasingly required president Johnson’s direct involvement. He tried to create a breakthrough from the stagnant policy he inherited from Kennedy on Angola and Portugal to little avail. However, Johnson’s secret war in the Congo helped Mobutu crush the rebels who would pose the greatest challenge to his rule until a rebellion swept him from power in 1997. Despite the uneven nature of American support during this period, Roberto remained loyal to the United States.

By the end of the Kennedy and Johnson years, the war in Angola developed into the stalemate it would maintain until the civil war. America maintained an arms-length relationship with Roberto, while at the same time the United States embracing patron, Mobutu. The GRAE/FNLA remained weak, yet relevant, after the departure of Savimbi, whose own forces heralded the start of the “tripartite phase” of the war, and its expansion into the east. Rebellions in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique in 1963 and 1964 further taxed the Portuguese regime. Nevertheless, even the 1968 death of Salazar did not change the status quo, and to the dismay of the White House, the Estado Novo continued for another seven years under Marcelo Caetano.<sup>314</sup> Worse still, American control of the Azores remained tenuous, the whites of southern Africa clung to Apartheid, and the United States appeared powerless to change either situation.

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<sup>313</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 196.

<sup>314</sup> Marques, *History of Portugal*, 224.

### **Chapter 3: Operation IAFEATURE and the Failure of American Policy**

Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford evidenced little interest in Africa, with devastating consequences for U.S. foreign policy in the region. Nixon and his foreign policy guru, Henry Kissinger, concluded that “the whites are here to stay” in southern Africa, and with that mindset, dropped the Angola program specifically and American support for black regimes in the region in general.<sup>315</sup> Meanwhile, the war in Angola simmered, Mobutu’s army decayed, and South Africa sought to protect itself through regional diplomacy. Portugal seemingly benefitted from the new administration in Washington, but with wars continuing across Africa and tensions building at home, the fate of Angola remained uncertain. The new American policy relied on Portugal’s ability to maintain control of its colonies, as well as the stability of the Lisbon government. These underpinnings proved to be the undoing of America’s war in Angola.

Kissinger, at the helm of American foreign policy after Nixon’s resignation, failed to recognize the severity of the situation in Angola. By the time Kissinger realized the importance of the revolution and latent civil war there, it was almost too late to implement a strategy to help Holden Roberto wrest control of Angola. Once he did pick a course of action, Kissinger chose a flawed strategy, codenamed IAFEATURE. Before Congress ended the covert operation, it had already failed militarily, diplomatically, and politically. Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the MPLA had in effect defeated the United States in a direct confrontation, little more than six months after the Fall of Saigon. In the process, Washington embraced an alliance with South Africa. Angola became the center of the Cold War in Africa, and the United States became mired in a strategic partnership the ultra-nationalist, racist regime in Pretoria.

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<sup>315</sup> Henry Kissinger, “National Security Study Memorandum 39,” April 10, 1969, Richard Nixon Library, [http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nssm/nssm\\_039.pdf](http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nssm/nssm_039.pdf).

The disastrous chain of events that played out during Angola's independence in 1975 was not preordained. In fact, the unraveling of twenty years of American relations with Holden Roberto and the plight of Angola was the result of conscious decisions by the Nixon and Ford administrations. Although Kennedy and Johnson were unable to liberate Angola or build a strong Congolese (Zairian) military, they had adopted a policy that committed the U.S. to black Africa in its struggle against white oppression. It was only after the loss of Angola and the diplomatic fallout from the entente with South Africa that Kissinger realized the importance of aligning America against the white regimes in Africa. It was a complete turnaround for the man who as National Security Advisor had disregarded the importance of the conflict five years before. The price of Kissinger's miscalculation and ignorance regarding Africa was the national embarrassment of the United States, and an escalation of the Cold War.

### CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Richard Nixon's bold vision for reinventing the international system and preserving America's dominance required a reevaluation of American foreign policy. Nixon "intended to be a foreign policy president," committed to demonstrating a greater understanding of the forces at work in the world than his predecessor.<sup>316</sup> He spoke of taking "the long view," in international affairs, in order "to realize our destiny of preserving peace and freedom in the world."<sup>317</sup> On the campaign trail he promised to "end the war and win the peace" in Vietnam.<sup>318</sup> It was a message designed to save a flagging superpower from decline. Part of Nixon's proposed grand strategy

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<sup>316</sup> Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 19.

<sup>317</sup> "Address by Richard M. Nixon to the Bohemian Club - Document 2," July 29, 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d2>.

<sup>318</sup> Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, 1st ed. (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 251.

for the United States was a reevaluation of American policy in Africa, and ultimately, a tragic new course.

Nixon and Kissinger understood all too well the power of decolonization to create superpower confrontation. The Vietnam quagmire illustrated this point clearly. Kissinger understood the emerging nation's role in global affairs, especially how "new nations" that "weigh little in the physical balance of power" have the power to change "the moral balance of the world."<sup>319</sup> Nixon directly addressed the developing world in his first inaugural address when he described an ideal peace as one that includes "compassion for those who have suffered; with understanding for those who have opposed us; with the opportunity for all the peoples of this earth to choose their own destiny."<sup>320</sup> Nixon foresaw that with "the decentralization of communist control has come an appropriately tailored shift in communist tactics... in some ways more dangerous" than those pursued during the first two decades of the Cold War.<sup>321</sup> Nevertheless, Nixon and Kissinger both underestimated the latent superpower conflict in southern Africa.

At the core of Nixon's misunderstanding was his willingness to accept the Apartheid government, Ian Smith's Rhodesia, and Portugal as legitimate African powers. In 1967, Nixon told a crowd of California conservatives, "the Communist appeal was against colonialism... Now that the colonialists are gone, they must base their case on being for Communism."<sup>322</sup> In his first year in office, he naively told the OAU that his vision was for "the Continent to be free of great

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<sup>319</sup> "Essay by Henry A. Kissinger - Document 4," 1968, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d4>.

<sup>320</sup> "Richard Nixon: Inaugural Address."

<sup>321</sup> "Article by Richard M. Nixon - Document 3," October 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d3>.

<sup>322</sup> "Address by Richard M. Nixon to the Bohemian Club - Document 2."



power rivalry or conflict in any form,” and he defined the “problems in the southern region of the Continent” as racial, rather than post-imperial. Nixon told Africa’s leaders that the United States rejected violence, and that he held both sides equally responsible for the insurgencies in Rhodesia, South Africa, and Portuguese Africa.<sup>323</sup> In private, Nixon told a gathering of American ambassadors “Africa will not govern itself for 200 years.”<sup>324</sup> The new president sought an end to Johnson’s Africa policies, and Kissinger agreed. On April 3 1969, with approval from his boss, Kissinger ordered a complete re-evaluation of America’s Africa strategy.<sup>325</sup>

Before the Africa review began, a chance encounter between Nixon and Marcelo Caetano of Portugal made it clear that the new American president sought fundamental change. In March 1969, shortly after Nixon took office, former President Dwight Eisenhower passed away from a heart condition. Despite the frosty relations between the United States and Portugal under Johnson, or perhaps because of them, Caetano came to Washington “to show Portugal’s esteem for the late President,” and to improve relations with the United States. Nixon agreed to meet with the Portuguese dictator, and together they agreed to end the bitterness between their countries.<sup>326</sup> Foreign Minister Nogueira followed up on Caetano’s trip weeks later and an

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<sup>323</sup> “U. S. Foreign Policy for the 1970’s: A New Strategy for Peace: A Report to the Congress by Richard Nixon, President of the United States, Washington, February 18, 1970 - Document 7,” February 18, 1970, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–5, Part 1, Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969–1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve05p1/d7>.

<sup>324</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation - Document 31,” July 29, 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969–1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d31>.

<sup>325</sup> “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon - Document 5,” April 3, 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XXVIII, Southern Africa, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v28>.

<sup>326</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation - Document 253,” April 1, 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XLI, Western Europe; NATO, 1969–1972, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d253>.

agreement between the heads of state was formalized. Nixon and Kissinger came to an understanding with Portugal that the U.S. would cut off all contact with the FNLA and downplay the racial conflict in Southern Africa. Nixon assured Nogueira that “his was a new administration with a completely open mind.”<sup>327</sup> At an official state dinner during the visit, Nixon went further and told the Portuguese diplomat “I’ll never do to you what Kennedy did.”<sup>328</sup>

The Nixon-Caetano agreement portended the new American approach to African affairs. Portugal, the last of the colonial powers, was viewed negatively by every independent African state. The wars in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau ranked with the Rhodesian war and Apartheid as the greatest foreign policy concerns of the continent. Both the Organization of Africa Unity and the United Nations had condemned Portugal for its colonial abuses, and both had standing committees whose sole purposes were to coordinate and finance the rebel movements against Portugal. That is precisely why Johnson and Kennedy refused to meet directly first with Salazar and later Caetano. The meeting between the heads-of-state and their quickly hashed out agreement showed Nixon’s priorities.

The rapprochement between Nixon and Caetano presaged the outcome of the Africa review. Kissinger’s April 10, 1969, National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 39 “directed a comprehensive review of U.S. policy toward Southern Africa (south of Congo (K) and Tanzania).” NSSM 39 asked the National Security Council to “review...the area as a whole – including Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, the Portuguese territories, and adjacent African states.”<sup>329</sup> It was implicitly a review of the white dominated states, with the unspoken aim of

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<sup>327</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation - Document 254,” April 19, 1969, 254, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XLI, Western Europe; NATO, 1969–1972, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d254>.

<sup>328</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 112.

<sup>329</sup> Henry Kissinger, “National Security Study Memorandum 39.”

improving relations with them. Mobutu's Congo was outside of its scope. This decision to decouple the alliance with Mobutu from the racial conflicts to the south had grave consequences, as would the shift to dealing with the white powers, instead of building better relations with the black states.

The final report, completed in December 1969, surveyed the region and American interests there and put forward five policy options, each a total package intended to guide American Africa policy for the rest of Nixon's term in office. They ranged from "cutting ties with the white regimes" to normalizing "relations with all governments of the area," including the white ones. Kennedy and Johnson's policy was one of the five options, considered the second-most favorable toward black Africans. The review lambasted the status quo as ineffective and costly, and declared that United States had no "vital security interests" in Africa. It also rejected "black violence" as a means to end post-colonial racial conflicts. Given this sharp rebuke to the status quo and its perceived lack of advantages, Nixon chose to pursue closer relations with Rhodesia, South Africa, and Portugal and to end all support for black nationalists. The premise of this option was that "the whites are here to stay," which became the basis of Nixon's Africa policies.<sup>330</sup>

Critics of Nixon labeled his decision "The Tar-Baby Option" for its focus on improving relations with the white powers.<sup>331</sup> The choice was not surprising, given the close relationship between members of the incoming Republican administration and white African business interests, and Nixon's view that Africa was "a peripheral issue." Dean Acheson had lobbied

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<sup>330</sup> "Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa - Document 17," December 9, 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>331</sup> Anthony Lake, *The Tar Baby Option* (Columbia University Press, 1976).

Nixon to make a change, and Secretary of State William Rogers proved a willing instrument.<sup>332</sup>

These men devised the new policy, which asserted American support of African self-determination, but in practice increased aid and commerce with the white regimes. NSSM 39 called for more intelligence sharing with the white regimes, as well as a softening of the various embargoes levied against Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa during the 1960s. Even though the memorandum stated it was “doubtful” that this change could improve relations with the white regimes and disengage with black rebel groups, it represented the closest strategy to Nixon and Kissinger’s preferences.<sup>333</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger faithfully executed ‘tar-baby’ up to 1976. The United States allowed the sale of “non-lethal” or “dual use” materiel to all three white-dominated African governments. On Rhodesia, Nixon supported passage of the Byrd Amendment, which excluded chrome from the Rhodesian embargo. Tim Borstelmann has noted that the amendment made the United States “the only nation in explicit legislative defiance of its UN obligations regarding sanctions.”<sup>334</sup> A corollary of the dismissive attitude towards Africa was the official view that the continent had become a dormant theater of the Cold War. Reports throughout Nixon’s tenure downplayed the ‘soft power’ gains of the Soviet Union and China in Africa, and rejected the seriousness of their ability to make inroads in the region.<sup>335</sup> Despite this optimistic outlook on Africa and the

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<sup>332</sup> “Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting - Document 20,” December 17, 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI. Rogers’ first remarks during Security Council deliberations on the issue was that, “Many of us have worked on this subject for some time, particularly lawyers who have had clients in Southern Africa.”

<sup>333</sup> “Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa - Document 17.”

<sup>334</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 236–237.

<sup>335</sup> “Central Intelligence Agency Special Report, Washington, June 20, 1969- Document 5,” June 20, 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–5, Part 1, Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969–1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969->

prospects for communist gains there, Nixon's team did concede two facts: that limiting South Africa's influence in Angola was in the national interest, and that the relationship with Mobutu was America's greatest regional asset.<sup>336</sup> Whereas Nixon and Kissinger ignored the concern about Angola, they invited Mobutu to the United States in 1970 with the hope of maintaining the strategic partnership.

## MOBUTUISM

After the Congo's penultimate coup of 1965, Joseph Mobutu embarked on a grand project to build the state in his image.<sup>337</sup> His 'New Regime' sought to build "a unified, centralized nation state, the restoration of the economic order and fulfillment of the manifest destiny of rapid development which its rich natural resource base seemed to promise."<sup>338</sup> During his early years in power, the economy experienced substantial gains. Mobutu initially claimed legitimacy as a transitional figure, the one leader able to rid the state of corruption and the influence of Tshombe and his Europeans allies. However, by 1967, he had installed single-party rule with himself as patrimonial leader.<sup>339</sup> Crawford Young identified Mobutu's "array of praise-names daily reiterated in the regime media: Guide of the Zairian revolution, the Helmsman,

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76ve05p1/d5; "Central Intelligence Agency Report, Office of National Estimates Memorandum, Washington, March 13, 1969 - Document 1," March 13, 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-5, Part 1, Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969-1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve05p1/d1>.

<sup>336</sup> "Paper Prepared in the Department of State - Document 93," October 2, 1970, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI; "Airgram 201 From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, Kinshasa, June 19, 1969 - Document 232," June 19, 1969, 201, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-5, Part 1, Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969-1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve05p1/d232>.

<sup>337</sup> The last coup occurred in 1997, which removed Mobutu from power and installed Laurent Kabila.

<sup>338</sup> Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 276.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

Father of the Nation, Founding President.” As part of the official policy of “Mobutuism,” his image appeared everywhere, including on the front page of all newspapers almost every day.<sup>340</sup>

Mobutuism existed despite the fact that the army, the national institution most identified with the regime, was the greatest weakness of the Congolese state. A continuation of the old Force Publique, the military had received training from a variety of nations during the 1960s with mixed results. By far the most effective units were the five airborne battalions, trained by Israel. The CIA relinquished control of the air force, which had been a critical factor in defeating the rebels in 1964-1965, and the air branch languished without American oversight. After the 1967 rebellion the army discharged the last of Tshombe’s mercenaries. Mobutu continued to hope that new training regimens could make the military an effective fighting force.<sup>341</sup> The American embassy in Kinshasa agreed upon the importance of supporting the military, and recommended a continuation of the “MAP, Defense Attaché and USIS language programs,” and to help modernize the Congolese army into a leaner, more effective fighting force.<sup>342</sup> Despite its deficiencies, the army remained an important constituency and source of power for the ‘New Regime.’

To further consolidate his power, Mobutu dismantled the Binza group and stripped its members of power.<sup>343</sup> As dictator, Mobutu could directly influence all matters of state without sharing power and access with the oligarchy. He was no longer America’s man in the shadows, but rather, a strong man in the mold of South Korea’s Yun Bo-seon and Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran.

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 267–270.

<sup>342</sup> “Airgram 201 From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State, Kinshasa, June 19, 1969 - Document 232.”

<sup>343</sup> Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 61.

Holden Roberto survived Mobutu's purge of political elites. Holden went to great lengths to secure his position in Kinshasa, including the controversial decision to divorce his first wife Suzanne; he then married a woman from the same village as Mobutu's first wife, which established a form of familial bond between the two men.<sup>344</sup> Mobutu's dismantling of the Congo's political parties removed Roberto's Bakongo rival, former-President Kasavubu and his ABAKO party from the scene. As a member of Mobutu's inner circle and a businessman in Kinshasa, Roberto benefitted from the concentration of wealth and power of the regime. Free to politic in the Bakongo heartland, Roberto provided a modicum of stability in the critical Bas-Congo district. Support for the Angolan revolution bolstered Mobutu's revolutionary credentials, and temporarily masked his dictatorial intentions. His leadership in the last great anti-colonial struggle also raised his stature as an African statesman.

When President Nixon and Mobutu met in 1970, the Congolese leader stressed the need for modernization of the Congolese army and continued American support for Holden Roberto. His top priorities were C-130 transport aircraft and M-16 rifles, and he pressed for both throughout the Nixon presidency. These were pressing concerns, given the vast size of the Congo, the undependable nature of its roads, and the outdated Belgian weapons of the army. Nixon was amenable to the demands, but warned that finding the funds in Congress was "a problem."<sup>345</sup> Mobutu closed their discussion with an impassioned plea for American support for Roberto, and emphasized how critical Angola was to Zaire's security.<sup>346</sup> Nixon offered to raise

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<sup>344</sup> Melady and Melady, *Ten African Heroes*, 97, 99; Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 376.

<sup>345</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, August 4, 1970 - Document 235," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-5, Part 1, Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969-1972, accessed October 9, 2013, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve05p1/d235>.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

the issue with the Portuguese, but did not reconsider the moratorium on contact with independence movements.

None of Mobutu's entreaties affected American policy. The goal was to make Mobutu feel like an important head of state, and by wining and dining him, placate him enough to allow the U.S. to ignore the Congo entirely. To Nixon and Kissinger, Mobutu was an exotic holdover from an earlier time, a personality who only needed their ego petted to maintain the relationship. Kissinger regarded the rearmament as a ridiculous demand meant to raise Mobutu's prestige at home in the Congo.

On Angola, Kissinger believed that due to the importance of the Benguela railway to copper production, Mobutu would seek a U.S.-brokered rapprochement with Portugal and come to view the FNLA as a nuisance. The President, the NSC, and the State Department all agreed that without such an alliance, the question of Mobutu's relationship with Roberto prevented the sale of weapons to the Congo. The State Department especially worried that Portugal would interpret arming Mobutu as a veiled attempt by the United States to support the FNLA, and would therefore jeopardize negotiations to reach a new Azores agreement.<sup>347</sup> As Mobutu moved his nation forward towards his vision for modernity, a profound divide developed between Washington and its African strongman because of their differing views of the Cold War in Africa and the anti-colonial struggle in Angola.

In 1971, Mobutu announced a new initiative to boost the Congo's self-image; the nation would forsake all European names in favor of 'authentic' African ones. Congo became Zaire.

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<sup>347</sup> "Memorandum From the Director of Central African Affairs (Cohen) to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Easum), Washington, February 22, 1974 - Document 260," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-6, Documents on Africa, 1973-1976, accessed May 26, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d260>.



Joseph Desiré Mobutu became Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga.<sup>348</sup> The name changes were accompanied by a dramatic period of state expansion, economic growth, and the development of a highly sophisticated, dictatorial kleptocracy. In conjunction with making ‘Authenticity’ was “the centerpiece of state ideology,” Mobutu embarked on a vast public work’s program that included:

“The doubling of copper production; completion of the second stage of the Inga dam development; construction of a 1,200 mile, direct current high-tension power line to transport the dam’s energy to the Shaba mines completion of the national rail line from Shaba to Kinshasa, and its extension to a new deep-water port at Banana (with a huge bridge at Matadi), development of coastal and offshore oilwells, (sic) a steel mill near Kinshasa, an aluminum mill and a uranium enrichment plant near the Inga dam; promotion of a third “development pole” at Kisangani, linked by rail to the national network.”<sup>349</sup>

In total, the ‘authenticity’ program led a vast diversification of the Zairian economy, and a bold attempt to achieve economic independence. The Inga-Shaba complex gave Mobutu a ‘kill switch’ over the economy of Shaba (Katanga), and infrastructure improvements had the potential to end Zaire’s dependence on white dominated regimes in the copper trade by replacing the Benguela railway. Mobutu turned to a wide group of international investors, not just his traditional Belgian supporters, to secure the credit required for the buildings program.

Mobutu grew wildly rich during this period. His wealth came from direct ownership of industries, and from a vast system of corruption. According to Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, corruption was not “a lubricant for the state”; “in Zaire corruption became the system.” In Mobutu’s own words, the government was “one vast marketplace,” with all services and transactions subject to an “invisible tax.”<sup>350</sup> As his wealth grew, Mobutu became more eccentric,

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<sup>348</sup> Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, 4. Translated into English, the new name meant “the all-powerful warrior who goes from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake.” (Ibid.)

<sup>349</sup> Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 65.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 43, 245.

and in the early 1970s he developed his iconic costume, which Michaela Wrong described as: the “leopardskin toque, Buddy Holly glasses and the carved cane so imbued with presidential force mere mortals, it was said, could never hope to lift it.”<sup>351</sup> He was rapidly becoming the kind of character no administration in Washington could get behind.

Yet, Sheldon Vance, American Ambassador to Kinshasa, cultivated the relationship with Mobutu with the skill and personality of Larry Devline. Vance quickly grew close to Mobutu, so close that the Zairian strongman told Nixon and Kissinger that the two men shared “morning coffee just about every day.”<sup>352</sup> The American ambassador worked to portray Mobutu’s radical reforms as moderate and pro-American. Vance pointed out to Washington that Zaire hired American firms for large-scale construction projects, including the Inga-Shaba dam and transmission line. He also tempered Kissinger’s expectation that Mobutu planned to drop Roberto because support for the Angolan cause reinforced his “anti-colonial” credentials.<sup>353</sup> Vance did not advocate for Roberto like he did for Mobutu, but he did not lobby against the GRAE president either.

Meanwhile, the FNLA struggled to regain the initiative against Portugal, UNITA, and the MPLA. The war in Angola’s northern coffee region and the wooded Dembos region continued at its slow, monotonous pace. Roberto finally organized an eastern office of the FNLA in Katanga, but cross-border activity remained low. Roberto consolidated the leadership of the GRAE/FNLA

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<sup>351</sup> Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, 4.

<sup>352</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, October 10, 1973, 10:30 A.m - Document 258,” October 10, 1973, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–6, Documents on Africa, 1973–1976, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d258>.

<sup>353</sup> “Telegram 1093 From the Embassy in Zaire to the Department of State, February 9, 1973, 1645Z - Document 257,” February 9, 1973, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–6, Documents on Africa, 1973–1976, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d257>.

and finally focused on party organization and political programming. However, his troops remained restless. Revolts continued at the FNLA's main base at Kinkuzu.<sup>354</sup> American National Intelligence Estimates interpreted this as a major defeat for Roberto and a sign that Mobutu's patience with the Angolan revolution had ended. Kissinger agreed and hoped that Zaire would reject the FNLA and instead embrace Portugal as a regional trading partner.<sup>355</sup> The Nixon administration was reading its own regional assumptions onto Zairian foreign policy. Washington had given up on Roberto and chosen Portugal, which led to assuming the same from America's regional allies. A rapprochement between Mobutu and the Portuguese, however, proved to be elusive.

#### THE MPLA AND THE EASTERN FRONT

While Kissinger and Nixon continued to ignore Angola, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) kicked off a general offensive at the start of the dry season in 1970. Although the MPLA had engaged in the east since 1966, the new operation represented the fruits of four years of organizing. Led by Daniel Chipenda, an Ovimbundu, the 'Eastern Front' component of the MPLA broke the stalemate in the war against Portugal. MPLA fighters had used Zambia as a rear-base since 1966, and slowly infiltrated fighters and political operatives

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<sup>354</sup> "Central Intelligence Bulletin March 21, 1972 CIA-RDP79T00975A021500020001-0," March 21, 1972, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP79T00975A021500020001-0.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP79T00975A021500020001-0.pdf).

<sup>355</sup> "Central Intelligence Bulletin July 22, 1970 CIA-RDP79T00975A016700100002-4," July 22, 1970, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room, [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP79T00975A016700100002-4.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP79T00975A016700100002-4.pdf); "National Intelligence Estimate 65-70, Washington, July 22, 1970- Document 233," July 22, 1970, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-5, Part 1, Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969-1972, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve05p1/d233>.

into Angola. By 1970, this insurgent force in lightly populated Eastern Angola was ready to engage Portuguese bases and population centers.

Unlike Holden Roberto's 1961 offensive, or Jonas Savimbi's first UNITA attacks, the MPLA designed the war in the east as an integrated military and political effort. The strategy called for creating 'liberated zones' in rough terrain, where MPLA cadres could educate, recruit, and train the local population. Made up of mostly ethnic Mbundu from around the capital or creoles, the MPLA political cadre suffered from a lack of language skills and ethnic credentials. The peoples of Angola's far east represented smaller ethnic groups, and few had been in contact with the Portuguese long enough for the colonial language to serve as lingua franca. Led by the poet-physician Agostinho Neto, the MPLA leadership struggled to foment revolution in the countryside.

Agostinho Neto was an inspirational leader hailing from the Mbundu-Creole component of the MPLA. Born in 1922 in Luanda's hinterland, Neto's father was a Methodist preacher. He was famous amongst the Mbundu for being one of few native Angolans to attend one of Angola's two high schools; he later studied medicine on a Methodist scholarship at the University of Lisbon and the University of Coimbra.<sup>356</sup> Before Neto left for medical school in Portugal, he wrote poetry taking his place among the vibrant literary community of Luanda's educated elites studying in Europe. In 1948, this small group of poets and scholars founded a literary journal, the *Mensagem* (Message) that became the handbook of the MPLA leadership in exile.<sup>357</sup> In Portugal as a college student, Neto soon met Portuguese dissidents and communists and joined the anti-Salazar resistance. Neto and Jonas Savimbi worked together for a short

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<sup>356</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 37–38; Lawrence W. Henderson, *Angola : Five Centuries of Conflict*, First Edition (Cornell University Press, 1979), 166.

<sup>357</sup> Neto, *Sacred Hope*, ix, xx.

period before Neto's arrest in 1960.<sup>358</sup> This small group of future MPLA revolutionaries reached out to the Soviet Union in 1958, and by 1960, senior leaders were making regular trips to Moscow. In response to these entreaties, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev announced, "the patriots of Angola can be sure that the sympathies of the peoples of the great Soviet Union are fully on their side." Initial Soviet funding reached the MPLA in 1961.<sup>359</sup> By the time Neto finished his studies in Lisbon, he was a doctor of tropical medicine and had been in and out of Portuguese prisons since 1952.

Neto's fame grew during his time spent in prison. During the 1950s, leading intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre, André Mauriac, Aragon and Simone de Beauvoir, Nicolás Guillén, and Diego Rivera protested his imprisonment.<sup>360</sup> While abroad in Portugal, Neto married a Portuguese woman, Maria Eugénia, and took her and their new son to Angola in 1959. He opened his own general medicine practice in Luanda, but the PIDE arrested him in 1960 during a crackdown in preparation for Congolese independence.<sup>361</sup> On February 4, 1961, Neto was in custody when hundreds of Africans armed with nothing but knives and clubs attacked the main prison in Luanda.<sup>362</sup> In July 1962, he escaped from house arrest in Lisbon and smuggled his family to Morocco, where he assumed the title of MPLA President. By that point in his career, Neto could lay claim to excellent contacts with intellectuals in Europe, leftist guerrillas throughout Africa, and according to Marcum, a reputation as "a political legend."<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 38–43.

<sup>359</sup> Shubin, *The Hot "Cold War,"* 7–9.

<sup>360</sup> Henderson, *Angola*, 1979, 167–168.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>362</sup> Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 128. February 4 is the day the MPLA government recognizes as the start of the Angolan War of Independence.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

Despite Neto's leadership, in the early 1960s, the MPLA struggled to gain ground against Roberto's GRAE. The MPLA finally opened an office in Leopoldville (Kinshasa) in October 1961, too late in the rainy season to begin guerrilla operations.<sup>364</sup> At first, its strategy focused on a merger of all Angolan movements, with the hope that once conglomerated, the MPLA would take the lead.<sup>365</sup> The MPLA struggled to overcome ethnic Mbundu stereotypes of being elitists, a reputation made worse by the fact that many of the MPLA's top leaders were European educated academics. In 1962, the movement appeared on the ropes when the OAU officially recognized the GRAE/FNLA as the one true Angolan movement, and the government in Kinshasa expelled the MPLA from the Congo. The Congolese authorities constantly harassed MPLA members who tried to continue their work in Kinshasa.<sup>366</sup> Dejected, Angola's communists moved across the Congo River to Brazzaville, the capital of the Congo Republic.

Brazzaville presented the MPLA with unexpected avenues of operation and support. Just before the MPLA's move in 1963, a revolution in Brazzaville had pushed the Congolese government towards socialism. This change of fortunes for the MPLA improved further with the arrival of Che Guevara and a Cuban delegation to Brazzaville in 1965. Che was passing through on his way to the Eastern Congo to wage war against Mobutu, and after an "awkward" start to talks with the MPLA, Che agreed to sending Cuban military advisors to Brazzaville to train Angolans.<sup>367</sup> With Cuban training, the MPLA started operations in Cabinda, a small Angola enclave that contained all of Angola's oil reserves.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 205–207.

<sup>366</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 57; Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 121–122.

<sup>367</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 82–84.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 175–178.

In 1966, following in UNITA's lead, the MPLA launched an offensive in Eastern Angola, with Zambia as a rear-base. Rather than relocating their headquarters to Lusaka, MPLA leaders remained in Brazzaville, where they maintained their global contacts and shrewdly leveraged the war in the east to bring significant international attention to their cause. By 1970, the MPLA had forces in Cabinda, northern Angola, and the vast eastern provinces. Combined with the wars in Guinea Bissau and Mozambique, the MPLA expected that their offensive would bring an end to the Portuguese Empire.

### PORTUGAL STRIKES BACK

Years of fighting three far-flung wars prepared Portugal for the latest Angolan onslaught. By 1970, the Portuguese war machine that counterattacked the MPLA in the east was a different beast than had fought off Roberto's invasion in 1961. Whereas the troops in 1961 arrived by boat, 1970 Portuguese soldiers arrived in Luanda by Boeing jumbo jet. Portugal had replaced the WWII-era American trucks and half-tracks used to fight Bakongo militants up Angola's 'Coffee Road' with Panhard armored cars and helicopters. With West German financing, Portugal had built an indigenous arms industry that produced modern, NATO assault rifles. Airfields had sprung up throughout the African countryside, including the Henrique Carvalho base in eastern Angola, whose runways rivaled the capacity in Luanda. Portugal supplemented its outdated aircraft with jet fighters purchased from West Germany.<sup>369</sup> Parachutists landed deep in enemy territory along the Zambian border, and helicopter assaults became the signature maneuver of the

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<sup>369</sup> S. J. Bosgra and Chr. van Krimpen, *Portugal and NATO* (Angola Comité, 1972), 20–33, 52–53.

Portuguese army.<sup>370</sup> By Portugal's collapse in 1974, the war in Angola resembled a European version of Vietnam, a war of advanced weaponry played out in a verdant landscape.

Under the Nixon Doctrine, Vietnam had 'Vietnamization;' for Angola, there was 'Africanization.' As the Portuguese population grew weary of the colonial wars, the army suffered an acute manpower shortage due to desertions, emigration, and draft dodging. Each year of the war, Portugal called up nearly 90% of all able-bodied twenty-year olds for the draft.<sup>371</sup> Portugal augmented its European forces with black auxiliaries, both in the second line of forces as guides, civil militia, and self-defense groups for villages, and as frontline combat-troops.<sup>372</sup> To fill vacancies in the army, the Portuguese conscripted vast numbers of Ovimbundu laborers into the colonial army to fight against Angolan nationalists. Ovimbundu recruits eventually became the majority of the 34,500 African conscripts in the Angolan army by the early 1970s, as well as most of the 60,000 strong militia force.<sup>373</sup> Supplementing these conscripts was the 'Grupos Especiais,' or 'Flechas;' these were bushmen that hunted insurgents for the secret police, renamed the 'General Security Directorate' (DGS) under Prime Minister Caetano.<sup>374</sup> A fixture in the hectic early days of the eastern front, Tshombe's former Katangan gendarmes served the Portuguese as an elite fighting force under their own leadership and officer corps.<sup>375</sup>

The Portuguese implemented an ambitious counterinsurgency operation throughout the country that focused on economic development and the separation of the rebels from the populace. Marcum observed that the army "pulled back into small, armed, island like outposts linked by rutted dirt roads and began resettling the sparse local populations in fixed, armed

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<sup>370</sup> Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 131–134.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 87–94.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>373</sup> Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present*, 136.

<sup>374</sup> Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 161.

<sup>375</sup> Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 98–99.



villages.”<sup>376</sup> In important regions, often where white settlers lived, villagers became cheap labor for the regime, and many of the old abuses of the forced labor system reappeared.

The central highlands, home to both the Ovimbundu population and to a large contingent of Portuguese settlers, became in essence a giant strategic hamlet. The army successfully denied entry to the region by the rebels, which allowed businesses to abuse and exploit the hapless Angolans. Linda Heywood, in her study of the Ovimbundu people, described the situation thusly: “in many strategic villages the Ovimbundu were in effect slaves to the state,” forced to build the defenses, their own huts, and provide labor for local settlers.<sup>377</sup> With their families scattered in the labor market, many women turned to prostitution, generally under the domination of newly arrived European madams. Ovimbundu prostitutes eventually spanned the whole colony, serving both settlers in the cities and the soldiers in the military resettlement camps. The war systematically destroyed every facet of Ovimbundu society.<sup>378</sup>

The Portuguese counterinsurgency campaign demoralized and weakened Angolan resistance in the east. The war became a battle of competing camps: on one side, the MPLA built revolutionary villages in ‘liberated zones,’ on the other the Portuguese forced nearly a million Angolans into strategic hamlets along an expanding system of paved roads and airfields.<sup>379</sup> The MPLA’s leaders increasingly stayed outside of the war zone, leaving local commanders to bare the burden of running the stagnating war. Under the stress of the relentless Portuguese war machine and a growing resentment against the MPLA leadership held by fighters in the field, the MPLA had fractured into three factions by 1974. Daniel Chipenda, the main MPLA commander in theater, led his troops in rebellion against Neto’s leadership in a movement known as the

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<sup>376</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 212.

<sup>377</sup> Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present*, 149.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 149–150.

<sup>379</sup> Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 292.

‘Eastern Revolt,’ and soon after an ‘Active Revolt’ started in Congo-Brazzaville.<sup>380</sup> The MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA increasingly fought each other rather than the Portuguese; the insurgents simply had no answer for Portugal’s helicopters and strike aircraft.<sup>381</sup> Whereas the MPLA looked ascendant at the start of the 1970s, by 1973 it looked as if NSSM 39’s assessment of the resilience of the Portuguese military was correct. Only outside forces could end the war in Angola.

### NIXON’S TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

The final stage of Angola’s war for independence occurred during and was affected by the rise and fall of Richard Nixon. Nixon’s promise to be a foreign policy president finally bore fruit. In time for his re-election in 1972, Nixon validated his détente strategy by signing agreements with both the Soviet Union and Mao Zedong’s China, which was perhaps “one of the most significant moments in postwar American foreign policy.”<sup>382</sup> Finally, after an escalation, the invasion of Cambodia, and a harrowing Christmas bombing of Hanoi, Nixon extracted the United States from the war in Vietnam, albeit on terms similar to those available to him on his first day in office. Then came Watergate.

As Nixon’s administration floundered in the wake of the break-in, and subsequent scandal, responsibility for foreign policy increasingly fell on Henry Kissinger’s shoulders. Not only was he given credit for the opening to China and the Soviet Union, but the media hailed his ‘Shuttle Diplomacy’ after the 1973 Yom Kippur War as reshaping the landscape of the Middle

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<sup>380</sup> Shubin, *The Hot “Cold War,”* 24.

<sup>381</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 211.

<sup>382</sup> Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 153.

East, and paving the way for an Egypt-American alliance. These developments and Kissinger's ascendancy profoundly influenced the actors engaged in the end of Angola's colonial period.

The 1973 October War had an immediate impact on Angola. Anwar Sadat's surprise attack on Israel proved that despite an improvement of relations between the Soviets and the Americans, third world actors still could draw the superpowers into direct confrontation. Furthermore, the arms race and diplomatic offensive that followed the war proved the true nature of détente; both superpowers expected to secure gains in the third world at the other's expense even as bilateral relations improved. Both of these truths fueled the Angolan Civil War. However, it was Portugal's role in the Middle East drama that most affected Angola, Zaire, and Washington's response to the crisis.

At long last, the Azores airbase proved it's worth during the American airlift in support of Israel during the October 1973 Yom Kippur War. All of Europe except Portugal refused America landing rights to refuel planes for the operation. Lajes Airfield laid on a direct line exactly in the middle of Washington and Tel Aviv. All 22,395 tons of cargo that the United States airlifted to Israeli flew on planes that refueled at Lajes airfield or by mid-air refueling stationed there. According to an Air Force history of the airfield, the crucial role the Azores played in helping Israel "confirmed the importance of the Air Force maintaining basing facilities at Lajes."<sup>383</sup>

Portuguese approval of the airlift did not come easily, and it did not immediately improve U.S.-Portuguese relations. When Kissinger requested use of the base, Lisbon responded by demanding advanced American weapons. Lisbon's gall provoked Kissinger's anger, "I must tell you in all frankness Mr. Prime Minister that your failure to help at this critical time will force us

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<sup>383</sup> 65th Air Base Wing History Office, "A Short History of Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal," 11-12.

to adopt measures which cannot but hurt our relationship.”<sup>384</sup> Washington was willing to pay for the use of Lajes but did not want the two overtly linked. Caetano agreed to the airlift without further questions. Both Washington and Lisbon understood that compensation was already under discussion as part of the ongoing Azores negotiations that targeted spring 1974 for completion.

Just before the airlift during the early fighting between Israel and Egypt, Mobutu came to Washington for his second meeting with Nixon. Although they discussed the Middle East, the meeting focused on economic issues and troubles in U.S.-Zaire relations. Mobutu complained about a general lack of access to Nixon and Kissinger, and how American policies regarding copper and grain hurt Zaire. Mobutu did not mention Roberto, but expressed his pleasure with Ambassador Vance. Mobutu asked if Vance could stay in his post “for a long time yet.” Nixon assured him there were no plans to move him.<sup>385</sup>

Sheldon Vance reassured both Mobutu and Washington that their respective partner was well intentioned. After Nixon’s the opening to China, Mobutu Sese Seko, and Holden Roberto made their own forays to Beijing and the east. Vance spun Mobutu’s outreach to China as a plan “to enhance his image as a leader of Africa and a major voice among the non-aligned states.” Just as the United States had not veered towards socialism after Nixon’s visit to China, Vance expected no “basic change in Mobutu’s policy towards the United States.”<sup>386</sup> At the same time, the ambassador lobbied hard in Washington for the M-16 rifles Mobutu had long sought.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> “Telegram 203571 From the Department of State to the Embassy in Portugal - Document 125,” October 13, 1973, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Documents on Western Europe, 1973-1976, Volume E-15, Part 2.

<sup>385</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, October 10, 1973, 10:30 A.m - Document 258.”

<sup>386</sup> “Telegram 1093 From the Embassy in Zaire to the Department of State, February 9, 1973, 1645Z - Document 257.”

<sup>387</sup> “Telegram 1948 From the Embassy in Zaire to the Department of State, March 4, 1974, 1508Z - Document 261,” March 4, 1974, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976,

Mobutu forged ahead after the October crisis and raised his profile as a revolutionary and a statesman. In November 1973, Mobutu expanded the ‘Authenticity’ campaign and announced a new economic policy known as ‘Zairianization.’ Zairianization was a program to seize the “vast swath of the economy from foreign hands” that the government had not already nationalized.<sup>388</sup> Almost immediately, it became clear that friends of the dictator would own the confiscated industries. New Zairian managers, eager to maximize profits, refused to pay taxes and laid off workers, which led to riots; Kinshasa was bedlam, and Mobutu its architect.<sup>389</sup>

With revolution threatening at home, Mobutu toured the Middle East. He secured oil supplies from Shah Reza Pahlavi in Iran, and discussed Israel with the Muammar Gaddafi and Saudi King Faisal. The Zairian leader met with Sadat, who “welcomed him as a younger brother.” Ironically, it was the ‘older brother’ that sought wisdom from his junior. Curious to learn the ramifications of his recent commitment to the west, Sadat peppered Mobutu with questions about his American patron. America’s African ally told its new Arab one that although “the United States and Zaire disagreed on some things,” the “Americans were completely sincere friends and have never interfered in Zaire’s Affairs.”<sup>390</sup> Mobutu sincerely viewed himself as a messenger of America’s policy in the world.

Despite his efforts to serve the United States’ global leadership, Mobutu’s superpower ally failed to return the favor. After years of deliberation, the State Department denied the sale of M-16s to Zaire out of concern for ongoing negotiations with Portugal over use of the Azores

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Volume E-6, Documents on Africa, 1973–1976,

<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d261>.

<sup>388</sup> Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 326–327.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 343, 348.

<sup>390</sup> “Mobutu’s Middle East Trip, March 11, 1974; 1974KINSHA02199,” [*Electronic Record*]; *Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974*, accessed July 9, 2014,

<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=55841&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

airbase.<sup>391</sup> Five weeks later, the government in Portugal fell. The fate of the Azores and Angola remained undecided.

## CARNATIONS

The fall of the Portuguese government in 1974 came as a total surprise to Washington. On April 25, 1974, a group of young Portuguese officers known as the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) removed Marcello Caetano from power in a bloodless coup. As a sign of the peaceful nature of their actions, MFA members placed carnations in their rifle barrels.<sup>392</sup>

The coup shocked the American embassy in Lisbon. Whereas under Kennedy and Johnson ambassadors like Elbrick and Anderson had taken active steps to ingratiate themselves with dissidents and military alike, under Nixon, Lisbon became a retirement post. The United States did not even have an Ambassador in Portugal for all of 1973. Kissinger's appointee, Stuart Scott Nash, only arrived in country three months before the coup. The entire American intelligence community failed to notice the faintest sign of instability. The week of the coup, Nash visited the Azores en route to the annual meeting of the Harvard Law School Association. When he learned that flights to Lisbon were delayed indefinitely, Nash decided to leave Lajes for Harvard rather than a NATO capital in increasing disarray.<sup>393</sup> Kissinger, deeply involved with the Middle East, had a new crisis on his hands.

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<sup>391</sup> "Official-Informal Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Easum) to the Ambassador to Zaire (Vance), Washington, March 6, 1974 - Document 262," 262, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-6, Documents on Africa, 1973-1976, accessed May 26, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d262>.

<sup>392</sup> Alan Riding, "Portuguese Revolution Settles Into Stability," *The New York Times*, April 29, 1990, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/29/world/portuguese-revolution-settles-into-stability.html>.

<sup>393</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 136-142.

The new government in Lisbon quickly announced that Portugal would jettison the Ultramar. Ending the African wars was on top of the agenda for the young officers who took over; after years of stalemate, the Portuguese people had had enough.<sup>394</sup> In Guinea Bissau, PAIGC had already governed and had gained limited international recognition before the revolution. In Mozambique, FRELIMO had failed to achieve similar success, but their status as the only rebel group in that colony had earned them international recognition as the government-in-waiting. In Angola, however, the colony remained fractured, a tripartite state whose actors operated in different regions, amongst different ethnic groups, under competing notions of Angolan nationality. Imperial retreat presented no clear path to Angolan independence.

#### THE SCRAMBLE FOR ANGOLA

The fall of the New State in Portugal ushered in foreign powers to south-central Africa on a scale reminiscent of the ‘scramble’ of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Neither Roberto, Savimbi, nor Neto believed that the Portuguese exit meant the end of their liberation struggle. The long, fruitless war of independence transformed all three men and their movements into dogmatic, ethno-centric organizations that hated one another as much as they hated the Portuguese. The FNLA, UNITA, and the MPLA each fought for their own imagined independent Angola: Roberto for a mirror of Mobutu’s corrupt kleptocracy with himself at the top of a vast patronage system; Savimbi for an Ovimbundu dictatorship neutral to the superpowers; and Neto, for a revolutionary state along communist lines that maintained its commercial ties to the west. Angola’s leaders spent the independence struggle constantly at odds, rebuffed all efforts by the world community to unite, sabotaged each other’s political and military efforts, and at times fought each other

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<sup>394</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 220.

more fiercely than they did Portugal. The war entered a new stage, where their interpersonal competition left the bush and evolved into politicking and conventional warfare.

International support quickly lined up in accordance with the alliance system of the past fourteen years; however, Savimbi's UNITA and Chipenda's MPLA offshoot added a new twist to an otherwise predictable situation. The Organization of African Unity continued to support both the FNLA and the MPLA, and in May 1974 began funding UNITA as well.<sup>395</sup> Zaire remained resolutely behind Roberto. Zambia, which had served as a rear-base for the MPLA's Eastern Front, initially sided with Chipenda and reached out to Savimbi.<sup>396</sup> MPLA members in Cuba, present for July 26 celebrations, asked for money, weapons, and training and the Cubans proved forthcoming.<sup>397</sup> Odd Arne Westad, whose access to Soviet sources remains unmatched, claimed that the Carnation Revolution "sent Moscow's Africa policy into high gear," and the Russian embassies in Zambia and Tanzania played host to several attempts to repair the rift in the MPLA leadership between Neto and Chipenda.<sup>398</sup> In contrast to Moscow's hyper-activity, Henry Kissinger ignored Angola well into the summer of 1974 as the collapse of the Nixon administration and the fall of Saigon kept him busy. When Kissinger did contemplate the implications of the Carnation Revolution, he did so primarily with Portugal and NATO in mind.<sup>399</sup>

Henry Kissinger's first priority after the April 26 coup was the situation in Lisbon, and understandably so. Never before had a NATO government been overthrown by coup d'état.

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<sup>395</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 248, 252.

<sup>396</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 237.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>398</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 222.

<sup>399</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation - Document 99," August 12, 1974, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v28>.



Furthermore, the CIA and the embassy staff in Lisbon had no idea of the imminent collapse of the Caetano regime. Information continued to be a problem as the revolution ran its course. Kissinger appointed Frank Carlucci, an old hand from the Congo program of the 1960s, to be Ambassador to Portugal. Carlucci was a brilliant chose for the post, given his experience not only in the Congo but also as a Foreign Service officer in Chile during the coup in 1972. The embassy in Lisbon slowly improved U.S. intelligence and had come up to speed by the end of 1974. Carlucci understood that in the face of limited options with which to influence the revolution, information gathering was his top priority. But Portugal seemed more an excuse not to turn to focus on Africa, rather than a true burden on Kissinger's time and faculties.<sup>400</sup>

Joseph Mobutu certainly felt neglected after the Carnation Revolution. On March 26, 1974, right on the heels of the final denial of the M-16 purchase, Sheldon Vance left Zaire to assume the position of "Executive Director of the President's Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control."<sup>401</sup> There would not be another U.S. Ambassador in Kinshasa until late August. With the United States focused on the outcome in Lisbon, Mobutu worked with regional partners on a diplomatic solution to Angola's peculiar, tripartite nationalist situation. In May, Mobutu flew to various leadership summits with Roberto in tow.<sup>402</sup> Mobutu's

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<sup>400</sup> For the more on the U.S. response to the Carnation Revolution and the fall of the Portuguese Empire, see: Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*.

<sup>401</sup> "Narcotics Control: Designation of Sheldon B. Vance as Senior Adviser; 1974STATE066122, April 2, 1974; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974," *National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) May 26, 2014]*, accessed May 26, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=77279&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

<sup>402</sup> "President Mobutu Visits Tanzania, May 28, 1974; 1974DARES01694; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975," [Electronic Record]; *Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974*, accessed July 9, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=105734&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

ideal solution involved a merger of all three groups, with Roberto installed as President. The talks produced little results, however, a result in no small part due to the divisions within the MPLA.

Meanwhile, Mobutu remained busy outside of the Angolan crisis. At the beginning of the month, a group of Americans came to Kinshasa to go over the logistics of the upcoming ‘Rumble in the Jungle’ fight between Muhammed Ali and George Foreman. At the head of the entourage was Don King, who was in charge of working with Zairian officials on the details of the fight. It was to be a showcase for Mobutu’s Zaire, a symbol of the progress made since the tumultuous 1960s.<sup>403</sup> However, by May, Zairianization had already created a crisis, as tax payments plummeted and protests overtook the country.<sup>404</sup> With the revolution threatening the nation’s grand spectacle, the unthinkable happened: the price of copper fell drastically. Copper had enjoyed historically elevated prices from 1967-1974, and it hit an all-time high in April, which raised the prospects of success for Mobutu’s development schemes. The crash that began in 1974 sent prices to an all-time low, which not only robbed the state of revenue, but it also endangered development; Mobutu had mortgaged future copper shipments to pay for his grand projects.<sup>405</sup> The copper crash left Zaire in a credit crisis, just as Mobutu began working on an Angola strategy. Now, more than ever, the dictator needed American guidance and finances.

In June, Mobutu began to work on capturing Washington’s attention. On June 3, 1974, Mobutu facilitated an agreement between China, Zaire, and Roberto to train and equip an FNLA

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<sup>403</sup> “Ali-Foreman Fight Preparations, May 8, 1974; 1974KINSHA04038,” [*Electronic Record*]; *Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974*, accessed July 9, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=97478&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

<sup>404</sup> Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 327, 343, 348.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, 306–307.

conventional army.<sup>406</sup> The same day, Zairian officials pressured the American embassy to support the FNLA in response to China's "obvious" effort to "gain a foothold in Angola." The embassy reported to Washington: "This is probably not the last feeler from (the Government of Zaire) on subject of US aid to FNLA."<sup>407</sup> It was an almost exact repeat of Roberto's strategy in 1964; secure support from China to put pressure on the United States. Except this time, Zaire allowed the advisers and weapons in country. Mobutu, mimicking his ally, worked with China to train and arm the FNLA as an anti-Soviet force. Chinese and North Korean advisers and weapons poured in to Kinshasa throughout June.<sup>408</sup> In July, Mobutu again met with American contractors in an attempt to purchase a fleet of transport helicopters and other advanced U.S. equipment.<sup>409</sup> He was successful in securing an order for C-130's, but due to credit issues and a lack of pressure from Washington, Lockheed promised delivery of the planes no sooner than 1977.<sup>410</sup> Despite the growing budget crunch from the copper crash, Mobutu was obsessed with

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<sup>406</sup> "FNLA to Create Regular Army Division with Chinese Help; 1974KINSHA04817, June 4, 1974; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974," *National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at Www.archives.gov May 26, 2014]*, accessed May 27, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=130405&dt=2474&dl=1345>. Roberto likewise used the threat of Chinese aid in 1963/1964 to gain the U.S. attention. Special to the New York Times, "Angolan Revels to Take Red Aid."

<sup>407</sup> "Helping Angolan National Liberation Front (FNLA); 1974KINSHA04860, June 4, 1974; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974," *National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at Www.archives.gov May 26, 2014]*, 4, accessed May 26, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=122488&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

<sup>408</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 245-246. (Check his footnote 41)

<sup>409</sup> "Potential Sale of Boeing-Vertol Chinook Helicopters to Zaire; 1974KINSHA06692, August 2, 1974; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974," *National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at Www.archives.gov May 26, 2014]*, accessed May 26, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=174462&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

<sup>410</sup> "Sale of Three More Lockheed C-130s to Zaire; 1974KINSHA06673, August 2, 1974; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974," *National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from*

Angola and the need to upgrade his military. Without American aid, such an upgrade seemed unlikely.

In August, Mobutu requested an urgent meeting between his Foreign Minister and Kissinger.<sup>411</sup> Washington was at that point in the midst of the death throes of the Nixon administration, and Kissinger took the meeting amidst the turmoil. Zairian Foreign Minister Umba-di-Lutete originally scheduled the meeting for August 9, 1974, but Nixon's resignation that morning forced a delay. Luckily for all parties involved, President Ford retained Kissinger, and the meeting went off as planned three days later. Umba gave Kissinger a full report on the situation in Angola, including a direct request for American support to Roberto. Umba stressed the need for diplomatic, political, and military aid for the FNLA; "the situation in Angola could very well move quite fast." He said, "It is important that events not pass us by." Kissinger thanked Umba for bringing the situation to his attention, and promised to "do something about it."<sup>412</sup> Rather than consider a deeper American involvement, Kissinger simply asked the CIA to increase Roberto's pay "high enough to assure President Mobutu" that Angola was important. The payments were low enough that they did not require approval from an oversight committee.<sup>413</sup> At that point, Kissinger still believed that "the United States was neutral" to the conflict.<sup>414</sup>

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*the Access to Archival Databases at [Www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) May 26, 2014], accessed May 28, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=174464&dt=2474&dl=1345>.*

<sup>411</sup> "Zaire and Future of Angola; 1974KINSHA06601," July 30, 1974, [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) May 26, 2014],

<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=147433&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

<sup>412</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation - Document 99."

<sup>413</sup> "Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Colby to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) - Document 100," September 19, 1974, 1, Foreign

On August 17, Vernon Mwaanga, the Zambian Foreign Minister, also travelled to Washington to meet with Kissinger to discuss the worsening crisis in the region. It was a similar exercise in futility. Mwaanga brought up the whole gauntlet of regional issues: South Africa, Namibia, Rhodesia, the Byrd Amendment, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, and Angola. Kissinger feigned an interest in each topic, and even expressed the American “willingness to play a constructive role in the area,” if only Zambia would write a memorandum “as to how to be helpful.” On Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, Kissinger expressed America’s acceptance of the socialist groups in waiting to take control from the Portuguese. On Angola, Mwaanga stressed the need for “a united front” between “all three groups.” Kissinger mentioned that “another African minister had told him that” only Holden Roberto should be included in the post-independence government. If pressed to choose one side at that moment, which Zambia did not believe was the correct course of action, Mwaanga signaled that it would be the MPLA.<sup>415</sup> The meeting belied Kissinger’s total disinterest in the region, and concealed that fact from Mwaanga.

Nevertheless, Mwaanga later wrote an opinion piece in the Times of Zambia that reflected his true feelings about America’s interest in African affairs. He said that based on his private discussions with Kissinger, it was clear that the United States had “not necessarily formulated what would be really described as a definitive policy for Africa.” Zambia had produced a 25-page memorandum for Kissinger after the August meeting, yet the United States chose to remain on the sidelines. From reading the tealeaves, Mwaanga feared that there was

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Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI,  
<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v28>.

<sup>414</sup> “US-Zambian Relations: Southern Africa, August 17, 1974; 1974STATE181055,”  
*[Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974*, accessed July 9, 2014,  
<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=169704&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

“imminent danger” that Washington would “make a closer commitment to South Africa.” He prophesized that if the United States “failed to confine South Africa to its own territory,” with its “tremendous influence,” then American policy would be denounced by Africans.<sup>416</sup>

The Africa Bureau of State Department agreed with Mwaanga. Kissinger’s Undersecretary for African Affairs, Donald Easum, advocated against U.S. involvement with “any of the Angolan liberation movements.” Easum understood the importance of being on the right side of southern Africa’s race conflicts, and his public stances did not reflect the NSSM 39 ethos that Kissinger preferred- that the United States needed strong relationships with ‘white’ Africa. He represented the post-‘Congo Crisis’ African Bureau, focused on economic aid and non-alignment on the continent. Angola, however, was a secondary interest to Easum; his obsession was for the United States to support the newly independent Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. For these positions, Kissinger took to calling Easum “Mr. Guinea-Bissau” in meetings. In July, Easum vetoed a CIA proposal to ask the 40 Committee to begin a training and armaments program for Roberto, and in October, he took an unauthorized trip to Mozambique. Even though Kissinger had told Mwaanga that the United States would reach out to the new government in Maputo, the Secretary of State fired his undersecretary after less than a year. The State Department reassigned Easum to Ambassador to Nigeria after only nine months in office.<sup>417</sup>

Another diplomat to draw Kissinger’s ire during the crisis was Deane Hinton, the new U.S. ambassador to Zaire. Hard to work with and pretentious, Hinton had little patience for

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<sup>416</sup> “Fonmin Mwaanga Fears US Will Move Closer to South Africa; 1974LUSAKA02054,” October 7, 1974, [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) July 9, 2014], <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=222330&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

<sup>417</sup> Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 193–196; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 281.

Mobutu's style and excess.<sup>418</sup> Hinton had no interest in Angola; rather, he viewed his role as a fiscal conservative meant to reign in Mobutu's spending with the Zairian economy in tatters. When he arrived in country, Hinton was more interested in the upcoming boxing match than establishing a close relationship with Mobutu.

Right from the beginning, the Mobutu-Hinton relationship soured. At their first meeting, Mobutu spoke at length about "the independence of Angola" as "Zaire's most important problem." Hinton intimated to Mobutu that Angola was a top priority in Washington, even though he had received no instructions on the issue.<sup>419</sup> As 1974 dragged on, Mobutu increasingly grew frustrated with the American ambassador and Washington's inaction regarding Angola. Hinton reported to Washington his disbelief over Mobutu's lack of gratitude once the State Department finally approved the sale of M-16's. What the dictator really wanted, Hinton reported, was C-130's, tanks, armored personnel carriers, A-4 fighter-bombers, and air defense systems.<sup>420</sup> Mobutu told Hinton that Zaire needed military aid because "to have peace one had to

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<sup>418</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, June 18, 1975 - Document 275," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-6, Documents on Africa, 1973-1976, accessed April 10, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d275>.

<sup>419</sup> "Conversation with President Mobutu, August 21, 1974; 1974KINSHA07223; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974," *National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) May 26, 2014]*, accessed May 28, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=171970&dt=2474&dl=1345>.

<sup>420</sup> "Sale of M-16's to Zaire and Military Cooperation in General, September 9, 1974; 1974KINSHA07690; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974," *National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) May 26, 2014]*, accessed May 28, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=194356&dt=2474&dl=1345>; "US-Zaire Military Cooperation, September 16, 1974; 1974KINSHA07863; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974," *[Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974*, accessed May 28, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=198037&dt=2474&dl=1345>.



prepare for war.”<sup>421</sup> Still completely unaware of the situation in Angola and Zaire’s role in that conflict, Hinton turned the discussion over the arms package into major row in U.S.-Zairian relations.

Upset with Washington’s emissary and still unconvinced of the American commitment to Angola, Mobutu requested American military advisors to come to Zaire and begin a full-scale modernization effort. Hinton and Kissinger obliged, but deliberately limited the scope of the advisor team to “avoid implication that U.S. is assuming responsibility for assessing Zaire’s military,” or that the United States would provide any military hardware.<sup>422</sup> Mobutu had expressed the hope that the mission would lead the Americans “to recognize” threats to Zaire’s security and “respond as in the past.”<sup>423</sup> Instead, it only prolonged the frustration caused by American inaction.

#### POLITICAL PARTIES WITH ARMIES

Meanwhile, the military situation in Angola in the summer of 1974 remained fluid. Whereas UNITA and the MPLA worked out cease-fires with the Portuguese by the end of July, the FNLA went on the offensive.<sup>424</sup> Using their newly acquired training and weapons, Roberto’s

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<sup>421</sup> “Sale of M-16’s to Zaire and Military Cooperation in General, September 9, 1974; 1974KINSHA07690; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974.”

<sup>422</sup> “Telegram 258756 From the Department of State to the Embassy in Zaire, November 22, 1974, 2343Z - Document 266,” 266, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–6, Documents on Africa, 1973–1976, accessed April 10, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d266>.

<sup>423</sup> “President Mobutu and Zaire’s Defense Problems, February 20, 1975; 1975KINSHA01494; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975,” [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975, accessed May 28, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=101291&dt=2476&dl=1345>.

<sup>424</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 246.



men engaged with Portuguese troops who were growing increasingly disinterested in the fighting. The FNLA only agreed to a cease-fire with Portugal on October 12, after they had established a zone of control in Angola's extreme north along the border with Zaire.<sup>425</sup> The MPLA formalized peace with Portugal by signing their own cease-fire with the Portuguese on October 21.<sup>426</sup> The war for independence was over; what was to come next was not exactly clear. Amidst the uneasy truce with Portugal, and with animosity and distrust amongst themselves growing, the FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA entered Luanda in late 1974 intending to seek recruits, establish a foothold in the capital, and impress foreign powers with their legitimacy.

By the time of their respective entrances into Luanda, both Roberto and Neto had begun lining up aid from their international patrons. Roberto had already secured Chinese and North Korean support, and Mobutu kept hammering away at Kissinger in the hopes of securing major American support. On February 4, the anniversary of the 1961 riots in Luanda, Neto was met by a crowd of 300,000 to 400,000 supporters as he entered the capital.<sup>427</sup> He arrived by airplane after stops in Paris and Lisbon, and the pilots diverted the plane from Luanda's main airfield because they could not land due to the crowd waiting for him on the tarmac.<sup>428</sup> Moscow took this and other stories of Neto's personal popularity to mean that the MPLA was the most powerful movement in Luanda, and that the people recognized Neto as its leader.<sup>429</sup> Westad claims that as early as December 1974, Moscow "drew up an elaborate plan for supplying the MPLA with

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>428</sup> Shubin, *The Hot "Cold War,"* 38.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 33.

heavy weapons and large amounts of ammunition.”<sup>430</sup> Only Savimbi and Chipenda remained without external support.

Shut out from direct lines of communications to the super powers, Savimbi turned to South Africa. In secret meetings in Angola throughout the end of 1974, Savimbi told the South Africans “the MPLA was supported by the communist bloc and that Holden Roberto, leader of the FNLA... would become a military dictator.”<sup>431</sup> He needed small arms, uniforms, and boots. Savimbi told the South Africans that “Zambia would support South African military action in Angola – if it was kept secret.”<sup>432</sup> In response to his request, on October 9, 1974 South Africa gave Savimbi a token amount of light weapons including carbines, pistols, and ammunition at Rundu, a town on the Angola-South West Africa (SWA) border. In December of 1974, South African intelligence officers visited Luanda and returned to Pretoria with the recommendation that UNITA receive more clandestine assistance, particularly food and clothes.<sup>433</sup>

South Africa’s support for Savimbi, like all the outside aid at this point in the conflict, represented small but important escalations on behalf of all parties involved. During the summer and fall of 1974, regional diplomacy failed to merge the MPLA factions, let alone the three major nationalist movements. While each party met to determine peaceful terms for their integration into Angolan political life, they all built conventional armies on the sidelines. This early aid set the escalation cycle in motion and from January 1975 forward, the United States, Soviet Union, Cuba, South Africa, and Zaire all increased their footprint.

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<sup>430</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 224–225.

<sup>431</sup> Hilton Hamann, *Days of the Generals: The Untold Story of South Africa’s Apartheid-Era Military Generals* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2001), 16–17.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*

Angola's three independence movements, the FNLA, UNITA, and MPLA, signed the Alvor Accord in January to establish a transitional government. This new government featured a novel and unwieldy configuration of three Prime Ministers, one from each of the movements. All decisions required a two-thirds majority. The agreement likewise split the army and all other ministries in three. The grand vision of the agreement was parliamentary elections scheduled for October 1975 before the planned November 11 independence day.<sup>434</sup> From the start, none of the three parties committed to the government. Roberto, Savimbi, and Neto all sent trusted confidants to serve in the ministerial council, freeing themselves from governing in order to focus on war strategy.

After the Alvor Agreement, the CIA succeeded in securing funds for Roberto. CIA Director William Colby presented the funding request. Colby briefly explained the situation in Angola, and asked for \$300,000 for Roberto and another \$100,000 for Savimbi. He presented both requests as support "for non-military aid" to prepare for the election. The committee denied funds for Savimbi, but approved the full amount for Roberto's FNLA.<sup>435</sup>

Roberto immediately put the American money to work. Even though the U.S. committed \$300,000 to the FNLA, there was still no coordination between Roberto and Washington. Kissinger did not consider the money a means to an end, but rather, an end itself. Nevertheless, the MPLA and the Soviets interpreted Roberto's actions and the rumors of American money as a major move by the United States. Meanwhile, relations between the parties remained tense; indeed, the peace barely held for two weeks before the situation boiled over into street violence.

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<sup>434</sup> Tony Hodges, "How the MPLA Won in Angola," in *After Angola: The War over Southern Africa*, ed. Colin Legum (New York: Holmes & Meier Pub, 1976), 47.

<sup>435</sup> "Memorandum for the Record - Document 102," January 23, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 282-283.

The first bloodshed in Luanda occurred in mid-February and took place between the MPLA and Daniel Chipenda's MPLA splinter group. Chipenda, whose forces the Alvor Accord did not recognize, opened offices in Luanda in early 1975. On February 13, MPLA forces aligned with Neto murdered fifteen to twenty of Chipenda's supporters and ran the rest out of town.<sup>436</sup> Despite their political differences, a desperate Chipenda turned to Roberto, and on February 22, he proclaimed the merger of his forces with the FNLA. Chipenda's 2,000 men became the FNLA – South, or the FNLA/Chipenda. They were the best-trained and experienced forces available to Roberto and gave the FNLA inroads into ethnic groups and regions outside of the Bakongo north.

The alliance between Chipenda and Roberto was possible for several reasons. First, the FNLA had fought against MPLA troops in the Bakongo north, mainly against Mbundu forces from Luanda and the surrounding hinterland. Chipenda's mostly Ovimbundu and Chokwe troops came from the South and East of the country, and their campaigns against the Portuguese in the east rarely put them in contact with the FNLA. There in the eastern front, Chipenda and his men had also fought against the Ovimbundu troops of Savimbi's UNITA. The rivalry between Chipenda and Savimbi to lead the Ovimbundu people and the history of violence between their armies made such an alliance out of the question.

The MPLA also recruited unlikely allies. In April, Neto successfully brought the former Katanga Gendarmes into his army.<sup>437</sup> The former soldiers of Moïse Tshombe's secessionist movement in the Congo, they had served the Portuguese in the eastern theater of the Angolan war since 1967. The Katangans fought UNITA and Chipenda's MPLA forces, but had had relatively few interactions with Neto and his associates. Both Savimbi and Chipenda were mortal

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<sup>436</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 258.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

enemies of these forces, which aided Neto in bringing in the elite fighters. The Katangans would remain the MPLA's best fighters in country up until independence.

The steady drumbeat of war overshadowed the work of the provisional government. The mood in Luanda remained tense, and members of the new government carried revolvers to work.<sup>438</sup> During the last week of March, Roberto's forces attacked MPLA offices in Luanda with grenades and targeted training camps along the coffee route into the city. All told, the FNLA killed over fifty MPLA members.<sup>439</sup> On March 30, a five hundred FNLA soldiers crossed the border from Zaire on trucks and invaded the slums on the outskirts of Luanda. Fighting in the *musseques* raged for days as the FNLA carved out safe havens along the approaches to the city. The MPLA responded by indiscriminately distributing weapons to its supporters, including teenagers.<sup>440</sup> Soviet arms steadily reached the MPLA through Congo-Brazzaville, Cabinda, and eventually entered directly into Angola by sea and air, which further fueled the fighting.<sup>441</sup> By late April, the fighting had turned into a full-scale frontal assault by the FNLA in all of the *musseques*; over seven hundred died and over a thousand were wounded. Fighting spread into the North and East as the MPLA counterattacked in district capitals.<sup>442</sup> In early May, Mobutu sent in 1,200 Zairian troops to fight alongside the FNLA.<sup>443</sup> While the provisional government continued to meet, the Civil War steadily intensified.

UNITA conspicuously stayed out of the warfare in Luanda; Savimbi instead built his political machine in the countryside and lobbied the South Africans for military backing. In fact,

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 258–259.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale* (Routledge, 2006), 63.

Savimbi, like Roberto, had yet to enter the capital since the coup.<sup>444</sup> Savimbi understood UNITA's natural weaknesses. He possessed the smallest army and he was a relative unknown in Luanda. However, UNITA support in the capital was irrelevant given that the Ovimbundu, Savimbi's ethnic group and political base, represented Angola's largest population bloc. If the provisional government survived long enough for elections, his large Ovimbundu base would put him in the Presidency through the ballot. The problem was surviving until then.

After Kissinger and the 40 Committee skipped over funding for UNITA in January, Savimbi deepened his South African connection. On February 12, 1975, he met at length with several South African Defense Force (SADF) officers and discussed his personal politics, vision for Angola, and attitude toward whites. Savimbi's answers were agreeable to the Apartheid state's emissaries. UNITA, according to Savimbi, would allow "whites to remain in Angola, as either Portuguese or Angolan citizens." On the important subject of South Africa's enemy in Namibia, SWAPO, Savimbi "admitted UNITA had worked with them for years" but that he was willing to set them aside as an ally to "concentrate all his efforts" on winning power in Angola. A week later South Africa approved more support for UNITA, including 402 pistols, 95,000 rounds of ammunition and \$200,000 in cash.<sup>445</sup> In April, Savimbi met with South African secret police (BOSS) agents four times in three different countries, including Britain and France. He pushed them for financial and political assistance, as well as light weapons for 8,000 men and equipment to broadcast election propaganda.<sup>446</sup> The South Africans denied this request, but did not rule out future aid. UNITA armed the troops it could, and Savimbi canvassed the capital and the Ovimbundu highlands for recruits.

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<sup>444</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 120.

<sup>445</sup> Hamann, *Days of the Generals*, 17.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

On April 25, the anniversary of the MFA coup in Lisbon, Savimbi entered Luanda. Despite the MPLA's strength in the city, large crowds met him at the airport, reminiscent of Neto's grand entrance in February.<sup>447</sup> The Portuguese had brought large numbers of Ovimbundu into the capital to replace Mbundu and Creoles in the colonial administration to limit the MPLA's presence in the bureaucracy. Together with the large number of Ovimbundu laborers, soldiers, and prostitutes, Savimbi had a larger political base in Luanda than Roberto. Nevertheless, with the MPLA and FNLA engaged in firefights in and around the capital, Savimbi returned to Nova Lisboa (Huambo) to organize his forces. In early June, the MPLA surrounded and slaughtered 260 UNITA members in the suburbs of Luanda.<sup>448</sup> More than ever, Savimbi needed external support. He kept the alliance with South Africa, his stance on Angola's whites, and his tacit agreement to end his alliance with SWAPO out of his political rhetoric. Savimbi possessed the smallest army in Angola, but his politics and covert diplomacy steadily attracted supporters, of whom none was more important than Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda.

## ALLIES

Kaunda, like Mobutu, grew tired of American inaction in Angola. Zambia's position in the conflict had evolved since the previous August. Above all, Kaunda needed to preserve the Benguela railway and with it the flow of Zambian copper to western markets. The copper crash further heightened the importance of keeping the link to the Atlantic open. With Daniel Chipenda's forces out of the MPLA and subsumed into Holden Roberto's forces, Kaunda looked to Jonas Savimbi for an alliance.

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<sup>447</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 121.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 122–124.

Savimbi had become an attractive ally for several reasons. UNITA emerged as a uniting force for the Ovimbundu, whose population remained concentrated along the Benguela railway, despite fourteen years of war. Savimbi campaigned along the tracks, and politicked in the same villages and towns in which his father had built churches earlier in the century. By appealing to their shared experience of exploitation and the promise of development in the fertile highlands, UNITA created “a Pan-Ovimbundu ethnic identity.”<sup>449</sup> Because of this development, Kaunda began talks with Savimbi in late 1974 to strengthen UNITA’s international position. It was Savimbi, with Kaunda’s support, which had organized the Alvor Accord, the agreement between Portugal and the nationalists that created the transitional government.<sup>450</sup> After news of Roberto’s American support became widespread in early 1975, Kaunda wanted his chosen client included in America’s plan. In April, he travelled to Washington to convince Ford and Kissinger to do just that.

The Zambian president, his Foreign Minister, the U.S. Ambassador, and his trusted confidante Mark Chona travelled to Washington D.C. to meet with President Ford and Secretary Kissinger to convince the Americans to get more involved with Angola, and Savimbi specifically. Kissinger later credited Kaunda with bringing Angola to the attention of the Ford Administration.<sup>451</sup> Kaunda knew that with the fall of Saigon imminent, his American counterpart would be distracted from the brewing disaster in southern Africa. With no bilateral problems between Zambia and the United States, Kaunda’s sole purpose was the Angolan Civil War. He made it clear that Zambia’s preferred outcome to the power vacuum in Luanda was for Savimbi to become Angola’s first president. Kaunda said Savimbi was “someone who could save the

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<sup>449</sup> Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present*, 157.

<sup>450</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 112–113.

<sup>451</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, First (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 791.



situation.” Kaunda gave Savimbi credit for the Alvor Accord, and mentioned that his associates were “impressed with Savimbi’s sincerity and his honesty of purpose.”<sup>452</sup>

Kaunda did not mince words regarding the consequences of American failure to act in Angola. The Zambian president himself met with the South Africans regarding the ongoing war against Ian Smith in Rhodesia, and during those talks, the South Africans confided in him that an MPLA takeover in Luanda was “too ghastly to contemplate.” Kaunda worried that delay and inaction would leave Ford and Kissinger without enough time to formulate an effective policy. In a moment of desperation, the United States would have no choice but to turn to South Africa. He combined this threat with the prospect that the situation in Angola and in nearby Rhodesia was on the verge of “an explosion” that “would not be confined to South Africa alone.”

Due to “South Africa’s ability to strike all of Africa,” an escalation in the racial conflict would envelop the region. Kissinger agreed that the United States sought to contain South African aggression. Kaunda warned Kissinger: act in Angola, or “events may overtake you and the U.S. could find itself fighting on the side of the racists.” Kissinger and Ford, busy with the North Vietnamese assault on Saigon, promised the Zambians that they would decide on a course of action in June.<sup>453</sup>

The State Department compiled reports in May in preparation for a full policy review. Kissinger ordered NSSM 224 on May 26 to set the parameters of the debate.<sup>454</sup> He gave the State Department, the Department of Defense, and the CIA until June 30 to prepare the complete

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<sup>452</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation - Document 103,” April 19, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> “National Security Study Memorandum 224 - Document 105,” May 26, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

study. In the meantime, Kissinger and the 40 Committee began preparations without the participation of the State Department for a major American intervention.

The 40 Committee took on a siege mentality. Kissinger worried that “We have been diddling around...we have given Roberto a bit, but he needs weapons and discipline...Kaunda doesn’t have the horsepower...Mobutu is a bloody bastard but he is the only hope.” Above all Kissinger and his advisers wanted to prevent an MPLA takeover. Angola was too big, too resource rich, and too strategically located on the frontline of the black-white conflict to allow it to fall to the communists. Losing Angola would represent a total disaster for Kissinger’s Africa policy up to 1975. Nixon and Kissinger had chosen the whites in 1970, and since that fateful day, antagonized America’s black partners in the region. With Angola’s impending independence fast approaching, Kissinger’s anger with the American foreign policy establishment grew. Kissinger complained that “no agency supported doing anything—State, JCS.” Brent Snowcroft, Kissinger’s deputy, remarked that even the CIA “haven’t a position really.”<sup>455</sup>

But the implications of an MPLA victory in Angola would have far reaching consequences for the remaining white dominated states of southern Africa. With the Portuguese exiting the scene, only Ian Smith’s Rhodesian government and Apartheid South Africa remained. With a majority-ruled government coming into power in June in Mozambique, landlocked Rhodesia would find itself surrounded by black states. For South Africa, Angola falling into the hands of a communist government seemed to ensure that the former Portuguese colony would become a staging ground for cross-border raids into South African occupied Namibia. Mozambique presented the same potential for raids into South Africa itself. From the view from

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<sup>455</sup> “Memoranda of Conversation: Ford, Kissinger,” June 16, 1975, 2, Digital Collections: Memoranda of Presidential Conversations, Ford Presidential Library, <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1553123.pdf>.

Pretoria, the African dominos were falling. Angola was an existential crisis for the whites, which were the foundation of Kissinger's regional policy. Kissinger understood by May that inaction was not an option.

State Department officials from claimed that "everything" was already "going our way so we don't need to do anything," and that "Angola was not of great importance." They preferred a "hands off" approach to Angola, and to "let nature take its course." William Colby of the CIA and the Kissinger's deputies agreed that the United States needed to take action, and the real question was how much and whether or not to include Savimbi.<sup>456</sup> The CIA prepared an opinion paper suggesting "covert political action" and "covert military aid" for both Roberto and Savimbi.<sup>457</sup> The State Department countered those sentiments with the argument that Mobutu would not let Roberto lose, and that Kaunda would insert Savimbi into the presidency, even though those outcomes were mutually exclusive.<sup>458</sup> Opening the debate on Angola had brought Washington no closer to consensus.

In June Mobutu broke the logjam in the policy debate as the U.S.-Zaire relationship hit its nadir. He announced he had discovered a plot against his life, and he blamed the United States for orchestrating a bloody coup because he had publicly lambasted Nathaniel Davis, the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in January, and for his position on Angola.<sup>459</sup> Zaire formally asked Ambassador Hinton to leave; Mobutu threatened to send him

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<sup>456</sup> "Memorandum for the Record - Document 106," June 5, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>457</sup> "Memorandum - Document 108," June 11, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>458</sup> "Memorandum for the Record - Document 106."

<sup>459</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, June 18, 1975 - Document 275," 275.

home as *persona non grata*.<sup>460</sup> This alarming chain of events finally convinced Kissinger that Angola was the reason for Mobutu's military requests, and the strain in U.S.-Zaire relations. Kissinger recalled Hinton, but more importantly, Mobutu's tantrum convinced him of the need to intervene in Angola.<sup>461</sup> In a meeting with his close confidants, Kissinger confessed that he "didn't focus on (Angola) early enough." Furthermore, he admitted, "We've mishandled Mobutu and the whole area. I have not given too much attention to it, so it's partly my fault."<sup>462</sup> Kissinger finally saw the crisis through Mobutu's eyes: "He must think we are out of our damn minds...to have the whole country go communist without doing anything...It will end up in Angola as it did in the Congo... Someone will get on top by force."<sup>463</sup> To reach out to the African dictator, Kissinger recalled Sheldon Vance from his duties with the narcotics task force and brought him to Washington to join the Angola discussion.

Kissinger assigned Vance the delicate mission of repairing relations with Mobutu and bringing him on board with an American aid program to Roberto and Savimbi. Kissinger told Vance he worried that Mobutu believed that "if we're letting Angola go, then in essence we're letting him go." Vance, who had not seen Mobutu in a year and a half, agreed. By now, Kissinger already decided that he wanted covert action, but was unsure what such a program would entail. What he needed was Vance to sort through the Hinton-Coup row and have Mobutu sign off on a CIA program.<sup>464</sup> Upon his arrival in Zaire, Vance met with Mobutu for a two-hour

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<sup>460</sup> "Telegram 5398 From the Embassy in Zaire to the Department of State, June 18, 1975, 2020Z - Document 274," June 18, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-6, Documents on Africa, 1973-1976, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d274>.

<sup>461</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, June 18, 1975 - Document 275," 275.

<sup>462</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation - Document 111."

<sup>463</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, June 18, 1975 - Document 275," 18.

<sup>464</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation - Document 111." Vance skipped his son's wedding to meet with Mobutu.

breakfast meeting. After he stated the purpose of his visit and Mobutu aired his complaints, Mobutu laid out the situation from his point of view. Roberto had 15,000 men in Zaire, “but they were not adequately equipped, certainly not comparably with those of Neto,” despite Chinese arms and training in 1974. Mobutu still needed “M-16 rifles, mobile artillery, ammunition, and money” for his own forces. The situation was dire but not impossible.<sup>465</sup>

Mobutu’s plan was simple. The United States would funnel weapons and cash to Roberto and Savimbi through Zaire. By his estimation, the United States and Zaire had until independence, November 11, to prevent Neto from declaring a Soviet-allied Angola. The overall aim of the plan was to achieve a military stalemate between Roberto and Neto in northern Angola, and to offer Savimbi as a compromise candidate for president.<sup>466</sup> Vance fully agreed with the program envisioned by Mobutu. On his own initiative, He met with Holden Roberto and discussed the military situation in the north.<sup>467</sup> The former ambassador returned to Washington touting good news.

Vance’s debrief on June 27 determined the shape, speed, and ultimately the deficiencies of America’s program designed to thwart an MPLA victory in Angola. Sheldon was enthusiastic about Roberto’s chances for victory if the United States gave “substantially more money to Holden and Savimbi.” When the Secretary asked the definition of “substantial,” Vance replied “several millions I think and arms also given through” Mobutu. On top of the aid to Roberto and Savimbi, Vance advocated giving Mobutu the rifles, C-130s, and light armor he had sought for

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<sup>465</sup> “Telegram 5605 From the Embassy in Zaire to the Department of State, June 23, 1975, 1550Z - Document 278,” Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–6, Documents on Africa, 1973–1976, accessed July 18, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d278>.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation - Document 112,” June 27, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

the past five years. Although Vance did not suggest sending U.S. military officers, he did make it clear that the mission “would take a lot of direct advice.”<sup>468</sup> Capturing Luanda was the critical aim of the operation, because “the history of Africa has shown that... whoever has the capital has a claim on international support.”<sup>469</sup> Kissinger wanted to send Larry Devlin, or “somebody like Devlin” to run the operation. He did not want to hold back: “If we’re going to do it we should do it. I don’t understand the difference in virginity between giving money and giving arms.” Despite Kissinger’s eagerness to begin the operation, he did not want to bring the matter to President Ford yet. The two men were soon to leave for a meeting with the Soviets to finalize the Helsinki Accords. Kissinger, worried about the reaction to covert action within the State Department if the mission began happened while he was abroad, State would “turn it (opposition) into a religious movement.”<sup>470</sup> Due to this concern, Kissinger delayed action for another two and a half weeks.

## THE DIE IS CAST

Despite the efforts of regional leaders and the residual Portuguese colonial army, by July the Angolan Civil War had begun in earnest. Despite an uneasy truce orchestrated by Jomo Kenyatta between Neto, Savimbi, and Roberto, on July 9, heavy fighting began in Luanda, and quickly spread throughout the countryside.<sup>471</sup> The Battle of Luanda had begun; in less than a week, the MPLA had ejected the FNLA from the capital. Johnny Eduardo Pinnock, the FNLA’s top man in the transitional government, resigned.<sup>472</sup> The ephemeral transitional government

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>469</sup> “Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting - Document 113,” June 27, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>470</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation - Document 112.”

<sup>471</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 260.

<sup>472</sup> “Paper Submitted to the 40 Committee - Document 116,” July 16, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

dissolved.<sup>473</sup> With the fall of the government, Savimbi withdrew UNITA from Luanda. He assembled the core of his forces into a column of 180 trucks to return to Nova Lisboa (Huambo). MPLA forces massacred the UNITA column in an elaborate ambush at Dondo. Savimbi was determined to avoid a civil war, but he finally relented after yet another MPLA ambush at the end of July.<sup>474</sup>

The same month that parties in Angola escalated their skirmishes into a full-blown civil war, South Africa, the United States, and Cuba also decided to intervene.<sup>475</sup> These decisions occurred in parallel, independent from each other.<sup>476</sup> The FNLA and UNITA consolidated their gains in their traditional territories. Soviet aid continued to reach MPLA forces in Luanda throughout the summer. The one-time guerrilla war had evolved into a conventional war for territory between organized, externally funded armies.

The MPLA likewise consolidated control of their ethnic base and key points throughout the country. The Portuguese government, constantly in flux between conservatives and leftists after the coup, was keen to avoid further involvement in the war. The young officers of the MFA, who espoused socialist political theory, began to allow Soviet supply ships to unload directly in

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<sup>473</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 260–261.

<sup>474</sup> Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 125–127.

<sup>475</sup> Jamie Miller, “Yes, Minister: Reassessing South Africa’s Intervention in the Angolan Civil War, 1975–1976,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 3 (2013): 4–33; Jamie Miller, “Things Fall Apart: South Africa and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire, 1973–74,” *Cold War History* 12, no. 2 (May 2012): 183–204, doi:10.1080/14682745.2011.649946. Jamie Miller’s recent works have shed new light on South African decision making during the critical lead up to the SADF invasion.

<sup>476</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*; Westad, *The Global Cold War*. Gleijeses and Westad claim that Cuba and the Soviet Union escalated their interventions in response to American moves in the region. Both authors allege that South Africa and the United States colluded together to plan their covert operations; Miller remains unsure, and as of yet, no documentary evidence exists proving a direct link between Pretoria and Washington before the start of Operation IAFEATURE and Operation Savannah.

Luanda harbor.<sup>477</sup> With the FNLA ejected from the capital, the MPLA went on the offensive. They secured the railroad through the Mbundu heartland to its terminus in Malange. From there, Neto's forces moved beyond their stronghold in Luanda's hinterland and pushed to the eastern city of Henrique de Carvalho, the site of the second largest Portuguese airbase in Angola.<sup>478</sup> The airbase, combined with their control of the capital and the oil-rich enclave of Cabinda, enabled the MPLA to control every strategic site in country except for the Benguela railway and its port, Lobito.

With the FNLA and UNITA dislodged from the capital, Daniel Chipenda convinced Roberto and Savimbi to join forces and accept aid from South Africa. Chipenda had already met with the South Africans in April to discuss an alliance between Savimbi, already backed by Pretoria, and Roberto.<sup>479</sup> At a meeting in Kinshasa between Roberto, Savimbi, Chipenda, and Mobutu, the Angolans promised cooperation with South Africa against SWAPO and the ANC in exchange for \$14 million in weapons.<sup>480</sup> The South Africans suggested that the FNLA and UNITA fight in a "more conventional way."<sup>481</sup> South Africa had provided the incentive and the direction for the grand alliance between the three factions. With the MPLA alone in its control of Luanda, the new FNLA-UNITA alliance knew its goal was to capture the capital.

Back in Washington from Helsinki, Kissinger felt prepared to take on the peaceniks in the State Department. On July 14, 1975, nearly fifteen months after the Portuguese Revolution, the 40 Committee seriously considered an armed intervention.<sup>482</sup> Nathaniel Davis,

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<sup>477</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, 61.

<sup>478</sup> Marcum, *Angolan Revolution - Vol. 2*, 261.

<sup>479</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, 62-63.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> Miller, "Yes, Minister," 16-17.

<sup>482</sup> "Memorandum for the Record - Document 115," July 14, 1975, 115, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.



Undersecretary for Africa, was not present. Colby reported on the MPLA's complete control of the capital, and that he anticipated the Zairian response to that setback, along with American covert funds, "would have (an) immediate impact" on the situation. An arms package would take "weeks to months" to reach the front lines, but arms given by Mobutu could reach Roberto's troops in sooner.<sup>483</sup> American arms would travel by sea to Zairian ports on the Angola side of the Congo River, supplemented by up to "69 C-141 flights."<sup>484</sup> Colby made it clear that his agency believed any action needed to happen as quickly as possible if there was any chance to retake Luanda.

The massive, sudden program envisioned by Colby and Kissinger was much larger than even the hawks in the State Department could handle. Undersecretary of State Sisco and Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research William Hyland made an impassioned plea to their boss against such an intervention. Sisco thought that Angola was "simply not important enough...to warrant covert action."<sup>485</sup> Kissinger asked him directly if he was "willing to let (Angola) go Communist"; he promptly responded in the affirmative. Sisco, uncomfortable with the prospect of a secret war, suggested an alternative option; move forward with a long-awaited military aid package to Mobutu to show the American commitment to the region. Hyland took another approach; he argued that Roberto was "weak," and had already squandered "every opportunity but has lost ground." He thought that America's advantage was that the U.S. had yet to enter the war, which might allow it to pose as an honest broker. Further, Hyland argued that a winning policy in Angola required "massive intervention," which America, in the wake of

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<sup>483</sup> "Memorandum for the Record - Document 115." Kissinger, Sisco, and Ratliff were all unsure if Davis was even invited.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

Vietnam, lacked the heart to accomplish.<sup>486</sup> On that, his final point, he proved doubly correct. Sisco ultimately voted against intervention, arguing that no vital interests were at stake, that the risks remained too high, and that the proposed program would lead to stalemate at best.<sup>487</sup>

Kissinger and the military establishment dismissed the last ditch attempt by the State Department to scuttle the covert operation. America's chief diplomat commented that Roberto was weak "because we've not supported him." The State Department's protestations were merely statements of fact, not policy prescriptions, he complained. Kissinger scoffed at Hyland's suggestion that the \$300,000 disbursed in January represented a meaningful involvement, even in the face of the millions spent in the intervening period by the MPLA's allies. Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements backed up the Secretary of State. He argued that Mobutu was our ally, and "by God we should help him" in Angola. America needed to work "as quickly as possible." Colby agreed, but moved the discussion away from arms towards direct cash payments. He was "scared of the Congress" on the issue, of weapons, which cash would avoid. His concern sprung in part from the fact that the CIA Director would have to brief six congressional committees about covert expenditures.<sup>488</sup> However, Colby was adamant that the United States needed to stand by Mobutu and respond to the crisis. Moreover, the DCI noted that beyond the Cold War implications of the crisis, "the big issue is the black/white one." Ultimately, Kissinger argued that American credibility was at stake, especially "coming on top of Vietnam and Indochina;" he quipped: "if the USSR can do something in a place so far away,

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>488</sup> The 40 Committee meeting minutes show Kissinger, Sisco, and Colby all exclaimed "Incredible!" to this fact when Colby mentioned it. "Memorandum for the Record - Document 115."

what is the U.S. going to do?”<sup>489</sup> The Secretary wanted to prove to America’s allies, including Mobutu, that despite the fall of Saigon, the United States was prepared to confront the Soviets anywhere. The Committee decided to send Vance to Kinshasa yet again, and to wait for a response from Mobutu before moving forward.

President Ford did not want to wait for another round of talks with Mobutu. On July 18, he told Kissinger “I have decided on Angola...I think we should go.” Both Kissinger and Ford realized that “unless we can seize it (Luanda) back, it is pretty hopeless.”<sup>490</sup> Ford approved \$6 million for both UNITA and the FNLA, and the president did not preclude more funds in the future.<sup>491</sup> Nathaniel Davis submitted his resignation immediately. Without a point man for Africa, nor an ambassador to Kinshasa, Kissinger once again sent Vance to inform Mobutu of Washington’s plans and to deliver the first million dollars of the CIA’s money to Roberto and Savimbi.<sup>492</sup>

Over several dinners and breakfasts, Vance and Mobutu refined the plan they had concocted in June. Vance landed in Kinshasa and Mobutu scheduled their first meeting for the following morning. However, he proved too excited to wait, and Mobutu called his dear friend back to invite him over for dinner to determine the fate of Angola. During dinner with Mobutu, Vance met again with Roberto. Holden had finally entered Angola, and he personally reported to Mobutu and Vance on the military situation in country. Mobutu had limited his aid to Roberto to

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<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> “Memorandum for the Record - Document 118,” July 18, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>491</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 293.

<sup>492</sup> “Vance-Mobutu: First Meeting, July 19, 1975; 1975KINSHA06688; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975,” [Electronic Record]; *Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975*, accessed May 28, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=101291&dt=2476&dl=1345>.

some old small Belgian armored cars, anti-tank weapons, towed artillery, and heavy mortars to launch an offensive against the MPLA. Mobutu lamented that despite the weapons, the offensive had stuttered. His “rueful comment” to Vance was that “Holden is not a military leader.”<sup>493</sup> Nevertheless, Roberto’s men carried the heaviest load of the fighting, and therefore needed the majority of American weapons and funds. Even if Mobutu was ready to pick Savimbi over Roberto for president, he was not ready to abandon his close friend. Mobutu “did not consider Savimbi as important militarily.” The fastest way to change the position on the ground was to give Zaire modern American equipment, so that Mobutu could pass on his old, outdated arms to Roberto.<sup>494</sup> Over dinner with Mobutu’s whole family present, the two men filled out an order for \$6 million in materiel, and a wish list for an even larger program to “have a real impact on the Angolan situation.”<sup>495</sup>

Upon Vance’s return to Washington, Kissinger decided to adopt Mobutu’s plan as America’s covert program. He directed Colby to immediately deliver the goods requested by Mobutu.<sup>496</sup> Shortly thereafter, the 40 Committee and Ford approved another \$8 million for the program, dubbed operation IAFEATURE.<sup>497</sup> Amidst the flurry of cables Vance sent from

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<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

<sup>494</sup> “Vance-Mobutu: Second Meeting, July 20, 1975; 1975KINSHA06691; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975,” [Electronic Record]; *Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975*, accessed May 28, 2014, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=101291&dt=2476&dl=1345>.

<sup>495</sup> “Telegram 6877 From the Embassy in Zaire to the Department of State, July 24, 1975, 1335Z - Document 281,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–6, Documents on Africa, 1973–1976*, accessed July 19, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d281>.

<sup>496</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation - Document 121,” July 25, 1975, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI*.

<sup>497</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 293.

Kinshasa to Washington, the 40 Committee overlooked a warning note that Roberto's men had encountered Cubans near Caxito, on the road to Luanda.<sup>498</sup>

The Cubans the FNLA fought in July were the beginning of a massive mission to train, equip, and defend the MPLA. In July, Fidel Castro approved the expenditure of \$100,000 to help the MPLA free-up weapons stored in Tanzania.<sup>499</sup> Just a few weeks later, on August 8, Cuba decided on a plan to send 480 troops to build and man four training centers where some 5,300 Angolans would receive training over the next three to six months. Furthermore, Castro was prepared to provide those MPLA soldiers enough guns, ammunition, food, clothing, camping gear, toiletries, medicine, cots, and bedclothes for the next six months.<sup>500</sup> The Cubans envisioned four training centers, one each in Cabinda, Salazar (N'Dalatando), Benguela, and Henrique de Carvalho (Saurimo).<sup>501</sup> Fidel Castro himself chose the disposition of the camps and his advisors, keenly aware of the need to protect the strategic gains of the MPLA: the oil fields, the main airfields, and the southern approaches to the capital.<sup>502</sup> To the north, the MPLA dug in at Quifangondo, in the small hills that overlooked the main road from Caxito to Luanda that ran through the wide swampland at the mouth of the Bengo River.<sup>503</sup> Fighting continued between those National Front and Popular Movement bases until independence.

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<sup>498</sup> "Vance-Mobutu: First Meeting, July 19, 1975; 1975KINSHA06688; [Electronic Record]; Wars/International Relations: Diplomatic Records; Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975," -.

<sup>499</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 254.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>501</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, 64.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

## JOHN STOCKWELL AND IAFEATURE

On July 30, the CIA brought John Stockwell to Washington to lead operation IAFEATURE. Stockwell had been in the CIA over ten years, and had only returned from Vietnam on April 23, a week before Saigon fell.<sup>504</sup> He was precisely the ‘Devlin-like’ character Kissinger wanted to run the program. Raised by Presbyterian missionaries in the Kasai province of Zaire, Stockwell had joined the CIA in 1964 after a tour of duty as a marine in a parachute reconnaissance company.<sup>505</sup> Stockwell had been to Luanda in 1961 as a marine, and in 1967, the CIA sent him to eastern Zaire during the mercenary rebellion. In 1969, Stockwell visited an FNLA camp along the Angolan border and left unimpressed.<sup>506</sup> In 1972, after service in Burundi and as chief of the Kenya-Uganda section, he went to Vietnam to take charge of the Tay Ninh province upcountry.<sup>507</sup> Stockwell had a resume few could match, and given his experience in central Africa, he seemed the perfect man to lead the secret war in Angola.

IAFEATURE was rife with contradictions. The main CIA mission was to transport weapons and materiel from warehouses in the United States to Zaire, a simple enough task. The arms shipments were to be concealed by regular U.S. Air Force military flights, which routinely delivered supplies to Kinshasa for the U.S. military mission there, as well as for the Zairian army.<sup>508</sup> However, once delivered, someone needed to know how to use them, and to actually go into Angola to engage and defeat the MPLA. The operation relied on Roberto, with advice from Mobutu, to execute the overall military strategy. The slow march to Caxito and the approaches to Luanda had already proved Roberto a rather poor general.

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<sup>504</sup> John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story*, 1st ed (New York: Norton, 1978), 56–57.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, 48–49.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>508</sup> Stockwell, 59.

Colby “had advised the National Security Council the CIA would have to spend \$100 million” to win, which was not possible because it would require direct funding from Congress. The CIA interpreted its job in IAFEATURE to mean that the agency was to do its best to put Roberto in a stalemate with Neto, not defeat him. Stockwell called this the “no win” strategy.<sup>509</sup> Colby and James Potts, head of the Africa section for the CIA, rejected departmental plans to use a secret air force like the one used by Devlin and Mobutu in the 1960s, and another to use Portuguese commandos to take over the colonial government. Instead, the only approved action in early August was to ship pre-packaged weapons in country. The CIA eventually shipped more weapons than the FNLA and UNITA had soldiers; the agency sent 28,800 World War II era carbines alone for an estimated 10,000 Angolan combatants.<sup>510</sup> IAFEATURE quickly blew through its funds. On August 20, the 40 Committee approved another \$10.7 million.<sup>511</sup>

Stockwell and the agency wanted to do more, but the vague and indecisive orders from the President and his staff made it difficult. To get a better idea of what was possible given the time, financial, and operational constraints of the mission, Stockwell went to Zaire and Angola in August to assess the situation first hand. He found Roberto to be a poor leader and an even worse military commander. Nevertheless, after a tour of the fighting in northern Angola, just 32 kilometers from Luanda, Stockwell expressed the view that “*abundant, immediate support*” could provide “a total victory.” (original emphasis)<sup>512</sup> Despite this positive report, Kissinger

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<sup>509</sup> Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 44–45.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 78–80, 263.

<sup>511</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 293; “Memorandum for the Record - Document 125,” August 20, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>512</sup> Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 98–135.

remained committed to the idea that the United States did not “need a total victory,” but rather, for the fighting to be competitive enough for diplomacy to win the war.<sup>513</sup>

Washington continued a slow escalation. Into September, the 40 Committee kept debating whether to send advisers to Zaire, which parts of Angola were of strategic importance, and where to find non-American commanders to fight in Angola alongside Roberto and Savimbi.<sup>514</sup> Eventually Stockwell expanded the number of CIA officers in the field to 83, and distributed them among the Kinshasa, Luanda, Lusaka, and Pretoria stations.<sup>515</sup> Even though the 40 Committee strictly prohibited it, Stockwell sent CIA paramilitary experts into Angola. Training operations extended into Angola, and CIA communications teams in the field relayed updates to Washington. The CIA even hired French mercenaries to fight with UNITA and the FNLA.<sup>516</sup> IAFEATURE became larger than the 40 Committee had anticipated, but the fundamentals of the operation remained insufficient to win. The American team coordinated with the South Africans, who had intervened separately in Angola in an operation codenamed ‘Savannah.’ “Thus, without any memos being written at CIA headquarters saying, “Let’s coordinate with the South Africans,” Stockwell recalled, “coordination was effected at all CIA levels and the South Africans escalated their involvement in step” with the CIA.<sup>517</sup>

## QUIFANGONDO

The MPLA, “having effectively secured control of Luanda and its environs, began an offensive into the south.” South Africa feared that MPLA influence along the border of Namibia

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<sup>513</sup> “Memorandum for the Record - Document 125.”

<sup>514</sup> “Memorandum for the Record - Document 127,” September 13, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>515</sup> Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 162.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 177, 184.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.



would encourage SWAPO infiltration. To prevent such a negative outcome, the SADF took control of the Ruacana hydroelectric plant and the Calueque Dam along the border. Jamie Miller has called this seizure “something of a Gulf of Tonkin incident” for South Africa. It came to justify the invasion that followed.<sup>518</sup>

To counter the MPLA offensive, the SADF decided to train Daniel Chipenda’s forces in the south. On August 29, General Jan Breytenbach began training Chipenda’s former MPLA troops at Mpupa, near the Namibian border.<sup>519</sup> Breytenbach claimed that Chipenda’s troops decided, on their own volition, to put him in operational command of the FNLA’s southern wing.<sup>520</sup> After a meeting between the SADF, Roberto, and Savimbi, South Africa agreed to deploy a conventional invasion force.<sup>521</sup> The first fighting by the South African Defense Force (SADF) and the MPLA occurred on October 5. By October 14, Prime Minister B.J. Voerster had authorized an invasion of “no more than 2,500 troops and 600 vehicles.”<sup>522</sup> South Africa divided the force into two initial components, battle group Foxbat, composed of UNITA and South African armored cars, and battle group Zulu, a force of South Africans and Chipenda’s Angolans.<sup>523</sup> Zulu easily moved through southern Angola to Serpa Pinto and Cuchi, Daniel Chipenda’s hometown.<sup>524</sup> Zulu and Foxbat were to capture the Ovimbundu heartland before independence, to include complete control of the Benguela railroad.

The scope and speed of the South African invasion drastically changed the balance of power in the south. P.W. Botha, the South African Minister of Defense, hoped to control the

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<sup>518</sup> Miller, “Yes, Minister,” 20–21.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>520</sup> Jan Breytenbach, *They Live by the Sword* (Alberton, South Africa: Lemur, 1990), 14.

<sup>521</sup> Miller, “Yes, Minister,” 30.

<sup>522</sup> Hamann, *Days of the Generals*, 31.

<sup>523</sup> Breytenbach, *They Live by the Sword*, 28.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., 17.

countryside before independence, and to launch a final attack on Luanda shortly thereafter.<sup>525</sup>

After taking the important railhead and port at the twin cities of Benguela and Lobito, the advance stalled for four days while the South Africa decided whether or not to expand the operation beyond its original objectives.<sup>526</sup> After the lull, the advance continued up the coast toward the bridges across the Quanza River that commanded the roads to Luanda.<sup>527</sup> The rapid SADF advance in the south met little resistance and it seemed the MPLA would be unable to stop the onslaught.

With the MPLA on its heels, Fidel Castro took decisive action. Worried for the safety of the Cuban trainers in country, the Cuban leader unilaterally approved a massive increase in support for the MPLA. Codenamed Operation Carlota, the Cuban mission committed to defending the MPLA at all costs. On November 4, Castro ordered “a 652-man battalion of the elite Special Forces of the Interior” to Angola to put up an immediate defense of Luanda.<sup>528</sup> This force included the absolute elite of the Cuban military, including many soldiers with doctorates in technical and military sciences.<sup>529</sup> The MPLA dislodged the Portuguese from Luanda’s airport shortly before the arrival of the Cubans, allowing the direct delivery of arms and reinforcements into Angola. Cuba’s troops flew in old Bristol Britannia aircraft on the forty-eight hour trip with stops in Barbados, Bissau, and Brazzaville.<sup>530</sup> Along with the Special Forces, Castro sent artillerymen to assemble and operate advanced Soviet BM-21 multiple rocket launchers

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<sup>525</sup> Miller, “Yes, Minister,” 25.

<sup>526</sup> Piet Nortje, *32 Battalion: The inside Story of South Africa’s Elite Fighting Unit* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 33.

<sup>527</sup> Breytenbach, *They Live by the Sword*, 56.

<sup>528</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 305.

<sup>529</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, 81.

<sup>530</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 308.

deployed along the MPLA defensive position at Quifangondo in the north.<sup>531</sup> Castro dispatched 232 Cubans to Cabinda, along with one fully trained MPLA infantry battalion.<sup>532</sup> To the south, the Cubans sent MPLA forces to key choke points along river crossings in an attempt to delay the South African advance.

On November 10, the eve of independence, Holden Roberto launched an assault on the Cuban-MPLA defenses in an effort to capture Luanda. Roberto knew that if he took the city in time for independence celebrations, he would become the first president of an independent Angola. The last remaining Portuguese troops left the capital earlier that morning, clearing the way for the winner of the climactic battle to become the first Angolan in 400 years to rule in Luanda.

Roberto's army was the culmination of Stockwell's work with IAFEATURE. His column of troops included the FNLA army, two Zairian armored car battalions, four South African artillery crews, and a hundred Portuguese-Angolan commandos.<sup>533</sup> The Zairian troops were Mobutu's best, the elite Seventh and Fourth Commando battalions that had trained with the Israelis in the 1960s.<sup>534</sup> To soften the Cuban-MPLA positions, South Africa brought three Canberra bombers in theater for a bombing run.<sup>535</sup> At the same time, Savimbi flew to South Africa to coordinate the war in the South.<sup>536</sup> Roberto was confident in victory. In Langley,

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<sup>531</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, 80–81.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>533</sup> Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 213.

<sup>534</sup> Hamann, *Days of the Generals*, 35.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. The bombers only carried three bombs each; all missed their targets, and one of the three planes failed to drop any at all.

<sup>536</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, 93.

Virginia, Stockwell and the Angola Task Force threw a party to celebrate Angolan Independence Day.<sup>537</sup>

Roberto later called November 10, 1975, “the worst day in my life.”<sup>538</sup> The combined CIA-FNLA army advanced within sight of the capital and into the range of Soviet-supplied, Cuban rockets. Stockwell wrote that the communist ‘Stalin Organs’ rained down on Roberto’s army, “not like single claps of thunder, but in salvos, twenty at a time.”<sup>539</sup> Holden watched rockets pummel his troops, and he later lamented, that “he wished the ground had opened up and swallowed him.”<sup>540</sup> The bombardment routed the FNLA, which began a hasty, chaotic retreat back to the Zairian border.

Meanwhile, Mobutu invaded Cabinda in an attempt to pry Angola’s oil reserves from the MPLA. With the help of Cuban troops, the MPLA drove the Zairians out of Cabinda. The attack was a total failure.<sup>541</sup> This victory ensured MPLA control of Angola’s greatest resource and with it the means to fund and operate the central government.

After Neto achieved victory in the north, he declared the birth of the People’s Republic of Angola. Shortly thereafter, the USSR, Cuba, East Germany, Poland, Mozambique, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, Romania, and Brazil recognized the MPLA government.<sup>542</sup> Kissinger, America’s top diplomat, had done relatively little to prepare the international community. Due to the covert nature of IAFEATURE, the only real diplomatic push from Washington came in the form of a telegram to all posts that described the MPLA as a

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<sup>537</sup> Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 214.

<sup>538</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, 317.

<sup>539</sup> Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 214.

<sup>540</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, 317.

<sup>541</sup> Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 312.

<sup>542</sup> “Telegram From the Department of State to All Diplomatic Posts - Document 136,” November 13, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

communist entity, declaring that the United States wanted “a peaceful, negotiated solution” to the situation.<sup>543</sup> No state recognized the FNLA/UNITA government.<sup>544</sup>

Russia directly sent aid to Luanda following independence. In early January 1976, the Soviets cleaned up the logistics of Operation Carlota, and formalized relationship between Cuba, the U.S.S.R., and the young People’s Republic of Angola. First, Russia replaced Cuban Air Force planes with their own Il-62’s, which were modern jetliners. The increased range of the Il-62’s allowed for trans-Atlantic flights directly to communist Guinea-Bissau before reaching Luanda. Second, the Soviet Union promised to supply all future weaponry directly to Angola for Agostinho Neto’s army.<sup>545</sup> The Cuban-Soviet-Angolan forces went on the offensive against Roberto’s men in the north, with plans to do the same in the south.

Washington faced a major dilemma. Operations thus far had used most of the available money: provision of further funds required an act of Congress. The unexpected Cuban airlift swung the tide of battle in the north, and it was reasonable to expect that Castro’s next move was to wheel his forces south to meet the SADF. Colby argued that an American initiative was needed to rally the broken-FNLA, introduce air power to the northern front, and bring in more foreign troops to fight the professional Cuban army. Furthermore, Colby reported that success hinged on continued South African involvement, which everyone acknowledged was “political dynamite.”<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> “Telegram From the Department of State to All Diplomatic Posts - Document 135,” November 8, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>544</sup> “Telegram From the Department of State to All Diplomatic Posts - Document 136.”

<sup>545</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991*, 101.

<sup>546</sup> “Memorandum for the Record - Document 137,” November 14, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

Kissinger remained in total denial that the war was hopeless. Despite the fact that the stated goal of IAFEATURE was to achieve a stalemate to encourage a diplomatic settlement, Kissinger called “diplomacy no alternative” to covert action. He derided the failings of the program as “the sign of amateurs at work.”<sup>547</sup>

In mid-November, Henry Kissinger drafted his own plan to vastly escalate the war and force a negotiated settlement.<sup>548</sup> His new plan centered on convincing France in the short term to become the main financier and arms dealer for Mobutu, Roberto, and Savimbi. With the fighting stabilized with French help, Kissinger would then assemble a military force comprised of soldiers, tanks, and planes from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.<sup>549</sup> Such a massive escalation would take months to implement, could not guarantee victory, and would overcommit the United States to a region that had thus far only been of symbolic importance.

Congress stepped in to end American involvement in the war before Kissinger got very far in the planning stages. By December, the press had blown the cover on IAFEATURE and Savannah. For the first post-Watergate Congress, the parallels between Angola and Vietnam were clear. Senator John Tunney of California called Angola “the greatest foreign policy debate in the American Congress since the end of the Vietnam War.”<sup>550</sup> Senator Ted Kennedy called the war in Angola “secretive, insular policy-making” that “is not only antithetical to good decision-making within an open society such as ours, but has led us into disasters of major proportion in

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<sup>547</sup> “Memorandum of Conervation - Document 138,” November 19, 1975, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>548</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 825.

<sup>549</sup> “Backchannel Message From the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to Secretary of State Kissinger - Document 162,” December 21, 1975, 1, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Southern Africa, Volume XXVI.

<sup>550</sup> John Tunney. Comments before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, Feb 6 1976 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1976) 164

the very recent past.”<sup>551</sup> Congress passed the Tunney Amendment in December of 1975, which ended funding for IAFEATURE. The Clark Amendment passed in early 1976 permanently banned future American covert action in Angola. The involvement of South Africa in IAFEATURE seemed to most Americans as collusion with white supremacists, rather than as support of black nationalists.

With the Americans out, Roberto defeated, the Cubans wheeling south, and the Soviets bringing ever more sophisticated arms into Angola, the South Africans reconsidered their commitment. After a skirmish with Cuban forces at a key river crossing, known as the Battle of Bridge 14, the SADF saw little chance for victory. Jan Breytenbach, commander of South African forces in the battle, exclaimed that “There was no way to cross the rivers” between the SADF invasion force and Luanda.<sup>552</sup> Dejected, the SADF began a lengthy withdrawal to Namibia. In their wake, the SADF left behind arms for Savimbi and UNITA. The war was over; the MPLA had won.

## CONCLUSION

After a fourteen-year struggle for independence, Angola became a free nation under a Marxist regime. A far cry from Henry Kissinger’s bold claim that “the whites are here to stay,” the Portuguese fascist state collapsed under the weight of three colonial wars, a stagnated economy, and nearly 50 years of autocratic rule. The Kissinger years, divided between the Nixon and Ford administrations, was a period marked by neglect and disarray in America’s Africa

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<sup>551</sup> Edward Kennedy, “What America Should Do,” *Africa Report*, Nov-Dec 1975, volume 20 #6 (New York: African American Institute) 47

<sup>552</sup> Breytenbach, *They Live by the Sword*, 59.

policy. The decision to pick the white powers was the result of a major misread of the undercurrents of African affairs, and failed to prepare for the crisis of Portuguese decolonization.

Choosing to double down on the whites of Africa had won little for the United States. The anticipated fruits of NSSM 39 proved elusive; neither relations with Portugal nor security in Africa improved. Negotiations over American use of the Azores, including during the Yom Kippur War, had continued to demand constant attention from Washington during the Nixon years. The policies of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford up to 1975 angered and antagonized American allies in Africa. Even after the Carnation Revolution, Kissinger refused to listen to black African voices. It was only after a slow, drawn out, ineffective secret war in the summer of 1975 that Kissinger realized that to contain revolutionary nationalism in Africa, the United States needed to lead in the dismantling of white rule. Kissinger's 1976 visit to Africa, during which he called for an end to Ian Smith's regime in Rhodesia, was an easy victory for American policy that was available since the day he came to office in 1969.

America was defeated. Holden Roberto, the Angolan revolutionary who had worked for twenty years for independence, faded into obscurity. Jonas Savimbi, the once-promising GRAE foreign minister and eventual founder of UNITA, withdrew into the bush to continue resistance to the MPLA regime. Mobutu became more important than ever to Washington, a key ally with a massive border next to a communist nation home to thousands of Cuban and Soviet military personnel. Kissinger and Nixon ignored the Cold War in southern Africa in 1969. After 1975, Africa was an undeniable front in the global Cold War.



## Conclusion

American relations with Angola and the white powers of southern Africa began during and immediately after World War II. South Africa fought alongside the allies, most notably against Rommel's Afrika Corps in northern Africa. The Belgian Congo (Zaire) provided the nuclear material for the first American atomic bombs. Portugal, itself a fascist power, provided raw materials and most notably rights to an airbase in the Azores islands to the Allied war effort. Those small volcanic islands became the crucial impediment to America's Angola policy up to 1975, as the Pentagon viewed them as a prized strategic possession. Lajes Airfield on the island of Terceira remains an integral part of the U.S. military, and the base has played key roles in American military action in the Persian Gulf (1991), the Balkans (1993-1999), Afghanistan (2001-present), Iraq (2003-present), and Libya (2011).<sup>553</sup> Truman and Eisenhower supported the New State regime of Antonio Salazar, despite its despotism, because of this strategic imperative, including helping Portugal gain entry into NATO in 1949 and the United Nations in 1955.

The sweep of decolonization in Africa that began in the 1950s complicated American interests in the region. The CIA responded to instability in the Belgian Congo by coopting local elites into American policy. This included Holden Roberto, a prominent Angolan exile, and Joseph Mobutu, a former colonial soldier, in the later 1950s. These two men came to lead the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the independent nation of Zaire, respectively. Staunch American allies, Roberto and Mobutu stayed loyal to Washington despite periods of intense neglect and flirtations by the United States to dump them in favor of other regional allies. It was only because of the CIA, through personal links to Congolese and

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<sup>553</sup> 65th Air Base Wing History Office, "A Short History of Lajes Field, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal," 20-24.

Angolans, which kept the region in the 'free world' up to 1975. At the same time, the National Party in South Africa intensified its policy of Apartheid, or legal separation, between whites and blacks. Washington, a newcomer to African affairs, increasingly felt pressure to choose between the black rebels and the white extremists. The mood of 1960, 'the year of Africa,' portended two possible futures for the continent: the tide of independence triumphant, or the cruel hand of white domination.

The United States engaged in African affairs during this early decolonization period due to America's own race problems and the desire to present an alternative to communism for Africa's newest countries. Under Kennedy and Johnson, the United States became deeply involved in the Angolan revolution, and invested in the stability of the former Belgian Congo. These presidents struggled to overcome America's ties to the white regimes, and experimented with armed insurrection against them. In the Congo, a decade of intervention succeeded in keeping out communist infiltration. In Angola, neither Washington nor Holden Roberto made serious gains toward achieving Angolan independence.

The policy of covert aid to black nationalists yielded few results. Business and security concerns moderated the most radical proposals of the period, including the South African arms embargo under Kennedy and the decision whether or not to arm Roberto against Portugal. At times, aid to the Congo and to Roberto were at odds, as when Moïse Tshombe came to power in Leopoldville (Kinshasa) and prevented a substantial American covert program to aid the FNLA. Roberto's FNLA soldiered on without American support, and by the end of the 1960s his most skilled advisors had left to form their own movement, UNITA. U.S. policy failed to bring a black revolutionary government to power in Angola but its efforts strained U.S.-Portuguese relations to the point that jeopardized American access to the strategically important Azores airbase.

Although the policy stood on a firm moral ground and its aspirations were in line with those of Africans, straddling the fence between the reactionary whites and the forces of Black Nationalism was a tedious job that failed to bring about a breakthrough in southern Africa.

Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger abandoned their predecessors' policies in the hope that ignoring black Africa would improve business and strategic relations with the white powers. Known as the 'tar-baby option,' the foundation of this strategy was the belief that the Cold War was dormant in Africa, and that the white-ruled governments would maintain total domination through the mid 1970s. Despite their best wishes, Nixon and Kissinger gained very little from South Africa, Rhodesia, and Portugal for their friendship. None of the white powers presented less to Nixon and Kissinger than Portugal, which remained an annoyance for Washington. Even after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when the Azores base proved crucial for American aid to Israel, Portugal remained a fickle, troublesome ally.

The Carnation Revolution in Lisbon took Washington by complete surprise, and it took nearly a year for Henry Kissinger to formulate a response to the crisis of Portuguese decolonization.<sup>554</sup> Events in southern Africa did not wait for an American response; in the absence of American leadership, the Angolan revolutionaries, South Africa, Cuba, and the Soviet Union plotted the future of Angola. Although Kissinger claimed in July 1975 that the delay in American action was not because of him, but rather, that he had "tried to get something going six weeks" prior.<sup>555</sup> Unfortunately, by that point it was already too late.

A major consequence was America's absence in the political and diplomatic deals in 1974 that determined the parameters of the Angolan crisis. With his attention on revolutionary

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<sup>554</sup> For a detailed study of Kissinger's role in the decolonization of East Timor during the same period, see: Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*.

<sup>555</sup> "Memorandum for the Record - Document 115."

Lisbon and Southeast Asia, Kissinger allowed the Portuguese to draft the Alvor Accord, which did little to ensure a peaceful transition to independence in Angola but provided the quickest Portuguese withdrawal. By waiting and ignoring the African implication of the revolution in Portugal, the United States gave up an opportunity to influence the composition of the Angolan transitional government, to preempt South African meddling in the crisis, and to ensure a friendly government in Luanda. By the time Washington gave \$300,000 to Holden Roberto in January 1975, the Alvor Accord had already locked in a defunct transitional government and American-allied Angolans had already taken South African weapons and cash. Despite a covert American military intervention, codenamed IAFEATURE, the United States and its regional allies were unable to overcome the Soviet Union, Cuba, and their Angolan allies in the opening salvo of the Angolan Civil War.

The defeat of the United States in Angola at the hands of a Cuban-Soviet alliance and the formation of an American-Apartheid alliance were not preordained. America's loss was the result of longstanding weakness in American regional policy and specific decisions made by Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and Gerald Ford in the critical months following the Carnation Revolution in Portugal. In direct contrast to Washington's handling of the Portuguese withdrawal, Havana and Moscow took decisive action during the same period. Whereas the Russians and Cubans immediately began addressing the crisis in April 1974, the Americans only slowly came to grips with the severity of the situation and the significance of the outcome. American policy makers struggled to understand the historic connections between Washington and Angola, Holden Roberto and the CIA, Zaire and Angola, and the role of the other white powers in regional affairs.

The civil war in Angola outlived the failure of IAFEATURE and the Cold War itself. Unlike the chilling effect brought about elsewhere by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of Cuban and South African troops did not bring peace. Jonas Savimbi, strengthened by years of support from South Africa, Mobutu, and Ronald Reagan, fought on until his death in 2002.<sup>556</sup> Neto had already been long gone, taken by cancer in 1979; his replacement, the implacable Jose Eduardo dos Santos, remains in power to this day. Holden Roberto, not to remain completely out of politics, ran for president in 1992 and won a measly 2.1 percent of the vote.<sup>557</sup>

Since the beginning of Holden Roberto's crusade to expel Portugal from Angola, the United States was a principal supporter for both sides of the conflict. This bizarre arrangement was due to Angola's divided nationalists and their competing visions of an independent nation, and an autocratic regime in Lisbon that loathed American political ideals yet depended on aid from Washington. Roberto, a man who proved to be a weak leader and a poor client, was America's policy for maintaining control of Angola after the anticipated fall of the Portuguese empire. It was not a war that began in 1975 as part of a post-Vietnam, "search for enemies" to recover from the embarrassment of the fall of Saigon.<sup>558</sup> Rather, it was a conflict whose root was the essence of the Cold War in Africa, a competition between the United States and the Soviet Union to control the mantle of racial equality in the third world. In 1955, the CIA station staff in Leopoldville felt this way when they hired Holden Roberto, as did Kennedy and Johnson when their administrations supported Holden's war efforts. Henry Kissinger, at the helm of American policy after Watergate, begrudgingly embraced the Angolan revolution when the fall of the

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<sup>556</sup> Piero Gleijeses, "Angola's Jonas Savimbi Was No Freedom Fighter," *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 2002, <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/mar/11/opinion/oe-glejeses11>.

<sup>557</sup> Brittain, "Holden Roberto."

<sup>558</sup> Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*.

Portuguese empire made it the epicenter of the Cold War. With the passing of both Portuguese rule and Roberto's bid for power, America's war in Angola ended in vain.

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