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7 Czechoslovak Economic Interests in Angola in the 1970s and 1980s

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse Czechoslovakia's involvement in the economic and political development of Angola after the country gained independence in 1975. Focusing on the case of Angola helps to verify or refute the general argument that Czechoslovakia did not have an active and independent foreign policy in the 1970s and 1980s, being used only as an auxiliary for Soviet foreign interests. During this period, Angola became, together with Ethiopia and Mozambique, a priority country in Africa for the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR). Notwithstanding, the country's activities in Angola did not receive as much attention as those of the Soviet Union or Cuba, which were militarily involved in the Angolan civil war.

Soon after the dissolution of the Eastern bloc, scholars started to analyse the Soviet, Cuban, and later East German activities in Africa. However, they tended to omit Czechoslovakia, at least until the early 2000s, when the Czech historians Petr Zídek and Karel Sieber systematically explored the archives of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the former Archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.¹ They published their conclusions in two monographs, concentrating on francophone and sub-Saharan Africa. Although these two publications are rather descriptive than analytical, they offer a very detailed insight into the Czechoslovak governmental documents regarding the relations to individual African states. The amount of accumulated and analysed documents by the authors shows that among the newly independent countries, Angola played a key role in Czechoslovakia's interests on the continent. The authors demonstrate that Angola's tremendous amounts of natural resources and crops were attractive for both the West and the East, and Czechoslovakia aimed to use them to meet the growing demands of the country's industrial sector. That is why this country is such an excellent case for further research.

¹ P. Zídek, *Československo a francouzská Afrika 1948–1968*, Prague: Libri, 2004; P. Zídek and K. Sieber, *Československo a subsaharská Afrika 1948–1989*, Prague: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2007.

Furthermore, a renowned Czech scholar focusing on Portugal, historian, and former diplomat, Jan Klíma, has dedicated several publications to the history of lusophone African countries within the framework of the “History of States” series of the Lidové noviny publishing house. In the case of his *History of Angola*, Karel Sieber wrote a long chapter about the relations with Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic.² A more coherent contribution to Czechoslovak policy toward Africa came with the publication of Philip Muehlenbeck in 2016, which analyses the Czechoslovak approach toward the continent up until 1968.³ Despite his logical analysis, his research does not go past the period of the Prague Spring, and the author limits himself according to the idea that the ČSSR did not play an active role in African matters after 1968. Regarding the 1970s and 1980s, Cold War historians have especially concentrated on weapon deliveries for socialist regimes in Africa, such as Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia, and have focused their research on Soviet, Cuban, and East German assistance. Czech and Slovak scholars have analysed Czechoslovak involvement and global conflicts in several regions like the Horn of Africa or Guinea but have only briefly mentioned Angola.⁴ My aim with this chapter is to demonstrate how much Czechoslovakia was involved not only by providing military assistance to pro-socialist regimes but also by engaging economically, particularly with the example of Angola. Similar to what new Cold War historians have revealed in the case of Cuba and East Germany, I aim to prove that Czechoslovakia was not just a proxy of Soviet political interest in Africa, but indeed pursued its own policies, which were mainly orchestrated on the basis of economic gains.⁵ This chapter is the outcome of intensive research in the Archive of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Archives of the Czech Republic.

2 K. Sieber, “Česko-angolské vztahy”, in: J. Klíma, *Dějiny Angoly*, Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, pp. 283–301.

3 P. Muehlenbeck, *Czechoslovakia in Africa: 1945–1968*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

4 See J. Dvořáček, L. Piknerová and J. Záhořík: *A History of Czechoslovak Involvement in Africa: Studies from The Colonial Era through the Soviet Eras*, Lewiston: Mellen Press, 2014; J. Záhořík, *Ohniska napětí v postkoloniální Africe*, Prague: Karolinum, 2012.

5 For the case of East Germany, see, e.g., S. Lorenzini, “East-South Relations in the 1970s and the GDR Involvement in Africa”, in: M. Guderzo and B. Bagnato (eds.), *The Globalization of the Cold War. Diplomacy and local confrontation: 1975–1985*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2010, pp. 104–115. For the case of Cuba, see, e.g., J. Kibbe, “Cuba, Angola, and the Soviet Union”, in: K.P. Williams, S.E. Lobell, and N.G. Jesse (eds.), *Beyond Great Powers and Hegemons*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012, pp. 49–64, at 59.

Angola's Way to Independence

Portugal, a relatively small country for European standards and comparable to present-day Czech Republic in both area and population, was until 1975 a notable overseas empire with colonies, or as it was officially proclaimed, overseas provinces, and since 1971 autonomous states (in the cases of Angola and Mozambique) in Africa and Southeast Asia, comprising a territory of almost 2.1 million square kilometres in comparison to a little more than 90,000 square kilometres in Europe. With large investment plans of the Portuguese government in the African provinces in the 1960s and 1970s, some parts of the Portuguese Empire became very wealthy. From the 1950s, when nationalist struggles became considerably pronounced, to the 1970s, 11 hydroelectric and 20 irrigation dams were built by the Portuguese government in Angola and Mozambique.⁶ Angola was the jewel in the crown of the empire. Mining, processing plants, and coffee and cotton plantations were ran by the white population, totalling nearly one-quarter of a million, which became the bourgeois elite of the province, with a level of wealth and lifestyle often superior to continental Portugal.

After Angola became independent in 1975, a majority of Portuguese settlers had to return to the mother country. In Portuguese historiography on the Angolan independence and the forced return of the settlers in Angola, this is often seen as a tragic chapter of the decolonization process. Only recently, the other side of the story has come to light, which is especially to the credit of the Portuguese historian Fernando Pimenta, who has investigated in depth the critical engagement of the white minority in Angola in achieving independence and creating an apartheid-alike regime in Angola.⁷ But as long as the conservative, authoritarian regime of Marcelo Caetano was holding onto power, Portugal was, to a certain degree, able to prevent its African colonies from becoming independent. As a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the country played a strategic role in the US and NATO European operations through the Azores air base in Lajes and had US backing in colonial matters, especially during the Richard Nixon administration.

Retrospectively, we may call the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) the main challenger to Portuguese colonialism. The MPLA is nowadays portrayed as a “crucible for a national, supra-ethnic, political

⁶ K.B. Showers, “Electrifying Africa: An Environmental History with Policy Implications”, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 93 (2011) 3, pp. 193–221, at 201.

⁷ F.T. Pimenta, *Angola: os Brancos e a Independência*, Lisboa: Edições Afrontamento, 2008.

machine”,⁸ which proclaims itself to be the liberator of the nation. But, as Malyn Newitt points out, Luanda-based mestizos,⁹ whites, and assimilados¹⁰ who formed the MPLA in the early 1960s “needed a class-based ideology to deflect the accusations that they were not really African at all”. They declared a Marxist orientation but did not fully develop a Marxist ideology before the first party congress of the MPLA, which occurred only two years after the liberation of Angola. During the anti-colonial fight, the movement used the Marxist label mainly to be eligible for Soviet aid. The MPLA indeed caused severe problems for Portuguese units in provincial areas of the country, but the most populated coastal cities and economic centres continued to remain in Portuguese hands. In contrast to Portuguese Guinea, which was practically controlled entirely by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), not even the considerable material and financial support from the Soviet Union could turn the independence war in favour of the MPLA movement. In actuality, the fall of the authoritarian regime in Lisbon set the decolonization process – from above – in motion and led to a coordinated Portuguese withdrawal and the eventual independence of Angola in November 1975.

Portugal, Czechoslovakia, and the Angolan Fight for Recognition

Although Angola became an independent country only in 1975, as part of the Portuguese Empire it went into business with Czechoslovakia long before World War II. Evidence of contacts of Czechs and Slovaks with Angola can be found in memoirs, occasional diplomatic reports from the Czechoslovak embassy in Lisbon, and the Czechoslovak Export Institute. For the general public, Angola was a faraway unknown country, and only a handful of them lived in Angola.¹¹ In the second half of the 1920s, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered

⁸ P. Chabal, “E Pluribus Unum: Transitions in Angola”, in: P. Chabal and N. Vidal, *Angola: The Weight of History*, London: Hurst & Company, 2007, pp. 1–18, at 5.

⁹ Mestizos are from mixed European and indigenous African origin, bearing Portuguese names and tending to be Portuguese culturally.

¹⁰ Assimilados was a group of indigenous Africans in Portuguese territories who, by Portuguese laws, reached a civilization level which theoretically allowed them to become regular citizens.

¹¹ Some knowledge about Southern Africa was presented to the Czechoslovak public only in 1948 by the Czech travellers Miroslav Zigmund and Jiří Hanzelka (see J. Hanzelka, *Afrika snů a skutečnosti* 1, 2, Prague: Družstevní práce, 1952).

opening consulates in two Portuguese colonies in Southern Africa – Angolan Luanda and Mozambican Lourenço Marques.¹² Czechoslovak exporters mostly dealt with distributors in Lisbon and Porto and did not have direct contacts with Angolan businesses. Large enterprises like Českomoravská-Kolben-Daněk (ČKD), Škoda, and Baťa all hoped to establish new markets in Africa, and the Baťa company eventually started to invest in Africa in the 1930s.¹³ Although the Baťa family left Czechoslovakia in 1945, the company continued to expand and had 17 factories in Africa by 1980.¹⁴ Czechoslovakia, as an industrial country with a lack of natural resources, had reached out to European colonies in Africa for years, a situation that did not necessarily change with the communist coup in 1948. The Czech economist Václav Mondous wrote that the cooperation with African territories had “great significance for an industrially developed country with an insufficient energy base” such as Czechoslovakia.¹⁵

In the new geopolitical situation of Czechoslovakia after World War II and especially after the beginning of the 1950s, political and ideological aims began to outweigh economic considerations. In the mid-1950s, Czechoslovakia provided African anti-colonial movements with logistical support in order to position itself alongside the Soviet Union against the USA.¹⁶ One of the most visible results of Czechoslovak influence on the continent was a large amount of Africans studying between 1961 and 1974 at the University of 17th November in Prague, which solely comprised foreign students. In 1963, there were almost 2,200 students from the Third World studying in the country.¹⁷ Offering scholarships, Czechoslovakia was competing directly with Western countries, who were also providing hundreds of university courses for African students. The university education went hand in hand with the ideological indoctrination of the East-West divide.¹⁸

12 J. Olša, “Českoslovenští diplomaté v černé Africe, 1918–1955: Počátky budování sítě československých zastupitelských úřadů na jih od Sahary”, *Mezinárodní vztahy* 40 (2005) 2, pp. 93–94.

13 Dvořáček, Piknerová and Záhořík, *A History of Czechoslovak Involvement in Africa*, p. 16.

14 Ibid, p. 21.

15 Cited C. Coker, *NATO: The Warsaw Pact and Africa*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985, p. 160.

16 Dvořáček, Piknerová and Záhořík, *A History of Czechoslovak Involvement in Africa*, p. 24.

17 M.E. Holečková, “Universita 17. listopadu (1961–1974) a její místo v československém vzdělávacím systému a společnosti”, Manuscript, Prague, 2017, p. 49.

18 Unfortunately, these students were often welcomed by the domestic population with open racism. See Dvořáček, Piknerová, and Záhořík, *A History of Czechoslovak Involvement in Africa*, p. 105. See also M. E. Holečková, “Konfliktní lekce z internacionalismu: Studenti z “třetího světa” a jejich konfrontace s českým prostředím (1961–1974)”, *Soudobé dějiny* 20 (2013) 1–2, pp. 158–177.

Similarly, the ideological aversion in Czechoslovakia to foreign trade with Western “enemies” was strongly visible until the late 1950s. However, the pre-war foreign trade of Czechoslovakia gradually re-emerged at the end of the decade and increasingly during the 1960s, with renewed contacts with Western European countries as well as their colonies and the newly independent countries in Africa and Asia. Czechoslovakia re-established economic connections with West Germany, France, and other Western European countries. Even direct ideological enemies, such as the authoritarian/fascist regimes of Spain and Portugal, were sought for economic partnerships. Between 1968 and 1974, the Czechoslovak government recognized, *de facto*, both of the Iberian authoritarian regimes as legitimate governments.¹⁹ There was less hesitation about doing business together because of mutual interests; Portugal and Spain were interested in Czech chemical production as well as porcelain and glass manufacturing, while Czechoslovakia needed rare metals like Portuguese wolfram as well as it was interested in the country’s cork production. The Czechoslovak newspaper *Rudé právo* went easier on Iberian dictators Marcelo Caetano and Francisco Franco.²⁰ In the case of the Franco regime, the relations with Eastern bloc countries became increasingly friendly, not only within the framework of détente but also because of the open hostility that existed between the Soviet Union and the Eurocommunist Spanish Communist Party.²¹ Regarding Portugal’s colonial policy, Czechoslovakia continued to strongly criticize the country for attempting to suppress the fight for African independence, which created obstacles while trying to improve mutual relations. But, at the same time, the natural resources of Portugal were not only in Europe but mainly in

19 V. Nálevka, “Španěle v poválečném Československu”, in: M. Kovář and V. Nálevka (eds.), *Dvacáté století. Ročenka Semináře nejnovějších dějin Ústavu světových dějin Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy v Praze 2005*, Prague: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy v Praze, 2005, pp. 77–95, at 95. News about important political events of the left in Portugal was either ignored or broadcast with considerable delay, such as a major strike by employees in the transport company Carris on 24 October 1969. The news was only broadcast on Czechoslovak radio on 26 December. See “Os trabalhado res da Carris realizaram uma importante concentração em Santo Amaro”, *Boletim de informação*, 12 (1969) supplement in: f. Secretário do Nacional de Informação, Censura, p. 1, cx. 580, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Lisbon.

20 In 1968, the Czechoslovak organizations of foreign trade planned to build up a sophisticated wolfram mine complex together with a Portuguese company, Sociedade Mineira. The Czechoslovaks planned to invest USD 2 million in mining machinery (“Pedido do Gaspar Queiroz ao António de O. Salazar”, 6 March 1968, PT/AOS/CO/EC–29, ANTT, Lisbon; “Sankce vůči Portugalsku”, 20 May 1971, f. TO Portugalsko 1970–1974, ka. 1, obal 1, Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí (AMZV), Prague).

21 M. Bracke, *Which Socialism, Whose Détente? West European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968*, Budapest: CEU Press, 2007, p. 346.

its African possessions. In this regard, the African territories were the centre of Czechoslovak business deals with Portugal.

When the British newspaper wrote about the Czechoslovak involvement in the construction of the Cabora Bassa dam in Mozambique, Prague strongly denied it. Czechoslovakia did not want to be associated with Portugal as a henchman in one of its colonies.²² Based on archival evidence, it is inconclusive whether ČSSR participated in the dam construction, but even if it did not, it had a history of business exchanges with Portuguese companies in African colonies, especially Angola in the 1960s. Czechoslovakia maintained a dualistic approach towards Angola. On the one hand, the country successfully exported trucks and imported iron ore. When asked to boycott trade with Portugal by the MPLA in 1965, Czechoslovak authorities refused to do so – with the argument that the trade relations with Portugal had been successfully developed and there was no reason to change foreign trade policies.²³ On the other hand, Czechoslovakia strongly supported several independence movements in this Portuguese province, and after some doubts, full support was given to the MPLA. At the same time, the Angolan independent fighters had more trust in Czechoslovakia than in the Soviet Union. They understood that Czechoslovakia itself was a fledgling country that had never occupied others and had its own history of being a subject to a multinational Habsburg Empire until 1918 as well as of being occupied in 1938 by Nazi Germany.²⁴ In this context, there was a natural prospect for mutual understanding.

Independent Angola and Czechoslovakia in the 1970s

After 1968, there was a general paradigmatic change from a relatively independent foreign policy to total obedience of Czechoslovakia to the Soviet foreign political strategies. The servility of the Czechoslovak diplomats went so far that when the Czechoslovak delegation suggested during the council

²² “Sankce vůči Portugalsku (Šifry ZÚ Londýn)”, 20 May 1971, f. TO Portugalsko, 1970–1974, ka. 1, obal 1, AMZV, Prague.

²³ Zídek and Sieber, *Československo a subsaharská Afrika*, p. 23.

²⁴ “President Augustinho Neto to Minister Bohuslav Chňoupek. Informace o průběhu a výsledcích návštěvy ministra zahraničních věcí ČSSR s. B. Chňoupka v Angolské lidové republice”, 25 September 1978, f. TO-T Angola, 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

meeting putting into the joint declaration of the 1976 Warsaw Pact that the peace efforts in the détente were the explicit contribution of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of Leonid Brezhnev personally, the Soviet delegate Nikolai Rodionov dismissed it as improper.²⁵ This new paradigm fits the general approach to world politics during the 1970s at the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, in the case of African regions, specifically Angola, Prague officials often took more actions than those requested by their Soviet comrades. As Philip Muehlenbeck states, Prague had already developed relations with each African region before even becoming communist, at a time when the Soviet Union was completely ignoring Africa. That is why Moscow entrusted its Czechoslovak comrades with the task of spearheading the communist cause on the continent.²⁶ In 1971, the Comprehensive Programme of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) meant an expansion of the members' economic activities to the South. Not only Czechoslovakia but also most of the other socialist countries looked for new business opportunities in the developing countries in the South in order to find new markets for their goods.²⁷ Angola was seen as a country with considerable economic potential; as a result, this led to a higher amount of aid and attention given to the MPLA in comparison to Mozambique, which was, at least on paper, also a priority country of Czechoslovak foreign policy.²⁸

Already one month prior to the independence of Angola, MPLA officials met the Czechoslovak Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York to plead for a quick recognition of the country.²⁹ The Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs swiftly organized the process of accrediting the ambassador to Nigeria to Angola as well but as the relations started to develop rather suddenly, Czechoslovakia quickly recognized the necessity of opening

25 Bilý, Matěj, ČSSR a krach détente. Nástin československé politiky v rámci Varšavské politiky v druhé polovině 70. let, in: T. Hradecký, P. Horák and P. Boštík, *Slovenské a československé dějiny 20. století IX*, Ústí nad Orlicí: Oftis, 2014, p. 418.

26 P. Muehlenbeck, *Czechoslovakia in Africa: 1945–1968*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 2, 4.

27 See, e.g., Lorenzini, *East-South Relations in the 1970s*, p. 109.

28 Dvořáček, Piknerová and Záhořík, *A History of Czechoslovak Involvement in Africa*, pp. 37–38.

29 “Schůze předsednictva ÚV KSČ”, 7 November 1975, ÚV KSČ, f. 02/1, sv. 173, ar.j. 175, bod 16, Národní archive, Prague.

a regular embassy in Luanda.³⁰ The new Angolan government expressed its goal to build socialism in the country, and there was optimism in Prague that the MPLA could be transformed from an anti-colonial nationalistic movement into a political party of the Marxist type.³¹ The official step in this direction was eventually undertaken at the first conference of the party in December 1977, when the MPLA movement transformed into the MPLA-PT (adding Labour Party [Partido do Trabalho] to the name).³²

From the very beginning of Angolan independence in November 1975, Czechoslovak authorities, in accordance with the CMEA meetings, started to extensively support the new regime, sending food and hygienic material and making large military donations.³³ It may be considered a curiosity that Czechoslovakia sent a gift of more than 1.5 million of match boxes to Angola; however, for many Angolans, even such a basic thing as making fire was not a simple task in the day-to-day life.³⁴ Socialist countries also provided significant aid in the form of installed electricity production. In 1980, the Soviet Union helped to build gas power plants in Cabinda and Huambo and a coal power plant in Moçamedes. Czechoslovakia was asked to build various suitable micro-hydrocentrals with an output of 5–10 megawatts.³⁵

The government officials in Prague recognized the fact that the exodus of one-quarter of a million of Portuguese settlers from Angola caused enormous economic difficulties.³⁶ Five years after independence, the industry was

30 “Usnesení PÚV ÚV KSČ č. 11382”, 7 November 1975, ÚV KSČ, f. 02/1, sv. 173, ar.j. 175, bod 16, Národní archive, Prague; “Návrh na akreditaci v Angolské lidové republice čs. velvyslance z Lagosu- pro předsednictvo ÚV KSČ, 12 February 1976”, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 1, AMZV, Prague; Návrh na zřízení čs. zastupitelského úřadu v Angolské lidové republice”, 5 March 1976, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 1, AMZV, Prague.

31 “Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice /pro poradu kolegia ministra”, 13 October 1976, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 1, AMZV, Prague.

32 “Angola – návrh na realizaci návštěvy ministra zahraničních věcí Angolské lidové republiky s. P. Jorgeho v ČSSR. Podání do P ÚV KSČ”, 15 May 1979, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

33 A big donation of the so-called *lečo* is to be mentioned here. *Lečo* is a traditional preserved meal consisting of sausage in an egg-tomato pepper sauce, which was certainly a new thing for the Angolan population.

34 “Podklady a projev pro delegaci ÚV KSČ na sjezd MPLA”, 16 November 1977, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 1, AMZV, Prague.

35 “Zpráva o názorech hlavních politických a hospodářských sil a významných kruhů, relace na spolupráci se ZSS”, 29 January 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague.

36 In 1974 and 1975, around 250,000 Portuguese inhabitants of Angola were evacuated to mainland Portugal (A.C. Pinto, *O Fim do Império Português*, Lisboa: Livros do Horizonte, 2001, p. 78).

working only at 60 per cent and agriculture only at 30 per cent of the 1973 levels due to the lack of qualified labour.³⁷ In 1977, the first Czechoslovak industry and agro-technical specialists, as well as doctors and nurses, were sent to Angola to reconstruct the Portuguese infrastructure and to industrialize vast underdeveloped parts of the country. Besides the obvious ideological attachments, it was the economic perspective that made Angola a special partner in Africa. In Prague, there were high hopes to use the first openly communist regime in Africa to cover their own demand for resources with imports of not only raw materials like iron ore, oil, and diamonds but also agricultural goods like coffee and cotton in exchange for the exports of Czechoslovak machinery goods and entire factories. Czechoslovakia provided 300 trucks for the Angolan industry and started cooperation projects, specifically in light manufacturing. Prague officials planned to send around 270 experts to Angola by 1979 to help with the reconstruction of the infrastructure and enterprises.³⁸ Due to the complicated selection process by the Czechoslovak organizations and low preparedness of Angolan companies, only 62 experts were eventually sent to Angola in 1978.³⁹ As it turned out during the later years, this was the maximum Czechoslovakia was able to achieve. The number of Czechoslovak specialists working in Angola never surpassed this amount.

In the late 1970s, together with Czechoslovakia, the main socialist actors in Angola became Cuba, the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Bulgaria. Hungary did participate in economic collaboration with Angola in a minimal way, and despite planned joint projects, only a manufacturing facility for Ikarus buses in Luanda was realized.⁴⁰ And Romania, increasingly annoyed by the Angolan delays in payment, completely ended all cooperation with the African country in 1988.⁴¹ It is obvious that especially East Germany and Czechoslovakia,

37 "Angola: podklady pre OMP ÚVKSČ pre rokovanie s. Bilaka so s. Luciom Larom, 23 April 1980", f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, AMZV, Prague.

38 "Podklady a projev pro delegaci ÚV KSČ na sjezd MPLA", 16 November 1977, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 1, AMZV, Prague; "Angola – zaslání informace o vývoji v zemi", 21 November 1977, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 1, AMZV, Prague.

39 "Angola – koncepce čs. zahr. Politiky vůči Angole", 17 July 1979, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 1, AMZV, Prague.

40 "Záznam z rozhovoru", 10 August 1979, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague; "Vztahy ALR se socialistickými zeměmi", 6 April 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 23, AMZV, Prague; É. Hegedűs, "Angola és Magyarország kétoldalú kapcsolatai 1975 és 1993 között", *Külvilág* 5 (2008) 1, pp. 29–48, at 36; "Záznam z rozhovoru", 7 September 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 7, AMZV, Prague.

41 "Ekonomická a technická spolupráce ALR se ZSS v roce 1988", 19 January 1989, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague.

developed industrial countries with scarce natural resources, were eager to get good business deals with Angola, as they expected to exchange their industrial goods for Angolan raw materials. However, the largest exports from Czechoslovakia to Angola were not machinery or light industry goods but military equipment. Already in May 1976, Angola was given a gift of 400,000 artillery projectiles for 34 million Czech koruna (CZK) as well as a delivery of machine guns in the amount of CZK 6.5 million. Additionally, the first Czechoslovak ambassador to Angola, Stanislav Svoboda, who came to the country in July 1976, found out that a large amount of the military equipment, which was used by the Cuban expedition corps in the Angolan civil war, had come from the Czechoslovak sales to the Cuban government in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Czechoslovakia played along with other socialist countries led by the Soviet Union and Cuba; in the case of Angola, they moved from being policy and military adviser to clients, engaged in local or regional conflicts, to active participants in an escalating brutal conflict.⁴² Czechoslovakia informed its allies about its arms deliveries but undertook these decisions on its own, without the involvement of the Soviet Union, and used its own high seas ships *Iskra* or *Sitno*, or East German capacities for the deliveries.⁴³

In the first years of Angola's independence, the officials of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs believed that Angola would become a reliable business partner, as it was rich with resources, which should create assurances for Czechoslovak investments, and it would be able to pay in convertible currencies.⁴⁴ This belief was also strengthened by the fact that Angola did not have diplomatic relations with United States or China. Czechoslovakia became the biggest exporter of shoes to Angola, being able to sideline the Italian and Portuguese competitors. In 1980, with 1.5 million of exported pairs, Czechoslovakia provided 65 per cent of the Angolan shoe imports.⁴⁵ With such a large percentage, Czechoslovak industries planned to construct shoe factories

42 R. E. Kanet, "The Superpower Quest for Empire: The Cold War and Soviet Support for 'Wars of National Liberation'", in: *Cold War History* 6 (2006) 3, pp. 331–352, at 337.

43 This finding contradicts the claim of Christopher Coker that the deliveries were often transported by Soviet planes. See C. Coker, "Pact, Pox or Proxy: Eastern Europe's Security Relationship with Southern Africa", in: *Soviet Studies* 40 (1988) 4, pp. 574–584, at 576.

44 "Záznam z porady predstaviteľov rezortov, ktoré sú zainteresované na plnení bodu II./2 uznesenia vlády ČSSR č. 304/79 o dlhodobej koncepcii čs. komplexnej pomoci a spolupráce s ALR, so zvláštnym zreteľom na oblasť poľnohospodárstva, potravinárskeho priemyslu a lesného hospodárstva", 13 May 1980, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, AMZV, Prague.

45 "Angola: Komplexná správa o plnení čs.zahranično-politických zámerov a ekonomických stykov vo vzťahu k ALR /pre poradu kolegia ministra/", 26 May 1981, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague.

and leather processing plants directly in Angola.⁴⁶ In addition, an exclusive contract on malt deliveries to all the three state breweries was signed in 1980, thanks to which Czechoslovakia became the only provider of malt and the main partner for Angolan beer production. Until September 1979, Czechoslovak specialists provided assistance and expertise at the breweries in Luanda and Huambo.⁴⁷ In the capital city Luanda, Czechoslovak sprinklers were used to clean the streets on an everyday basis.⁴⁸

Czechoslovakia and other Eastern Bloc countries aimed to gain more say in the Angolan economy. Yet, it is fascinating that the economic connections with West Germany, France, Belgium, or Italy were not seen as a burden. On the contrary, the presence of private investors and shareholders in the Angolan petrochemical industry insured an undisturbed continuation of the main income of the Angolan economy. If MPLA would expropriate all private enterprises, Prague officials feared that the Angolan economy, after such a nationalization process, would collapse almost immediately and the regime would become completely dependent on the aid of the CMEA countries, like Cuba. Socialist countries expected that working with private businesses, Angola would have enough hard currency to pay for imported goods. In a meeting in Moscow in May 1976, MPLA leaders were asked by Prime Minister Alexei N. Kosygin to postpone the nationalization process.⁴⁹ The business connection to the West eventually not only survived but even expanded. In the mid-1980s, Angola was the third largest business partner of the United States in sub-Saharan Africa, and taken all together, Western countries amounted to 90 per cent of Angola's foreign trade. The Czechoslovak officials were aware of the fact that if the intensive business contacts with capitalist partners would not change, it would also affect Angolan domestic politics.⁵⁰

Most of the CMEA countries, which were closely following the development in the former colony, were cautious in their approach to Angola. Although the first party congress of the MPLA-PT was supposed to fully resemble the party congresses in socialist countries and was carried out in a Soviet style to impress

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "Informácia pre s. ministra o poradách ekonomických a obchodných radcov zainteresovaných členských štátov Rady vzájomnej hospodárskej pomoci a Angolskej ľudovej republiky", 19 May 1980, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague.

⁴⁸ "Dopis velvyslance Miloše Veselého vedoucímu 10. teritoriálního odboru FMZV Václavu Jumrovi", 5 November 1985, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 12, AMZV, Prague.

⁴⁹ The meeting, which was held on 25 May, was attended also by Dmitriy F. Ustinov and Andrei A. Gromyko ("Informace o návštěvě angolské delegace v SSSR", 4 June 1976, f. TO-T Angola, 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague).

⁵⁰ "Podklady pro plán práce ZÚ Luanda na rok 1986", 11 November 1985, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 2, obal 32, AMZV, Prague.

the invited delegations, it is certain that within the party there were many radical left, social democrat, and even open pro-capitalist high-ranking members. Opinions about how socialism should look like in Angola were very broad, and the MPLA maintained its ambivalent character in the 1980s, although proclaiming a socialist ideology. The reason why the party identified itself as Marxist was principally a means of removing political rivals.⁵¹ This was even more visible on the economic level. Throughout 1980 Soviet economists were assisting their Angolan counterparts with the first five-year plan, but were rather displeased with the execution – as the economic counsel of the Soviet embassy in Luanda stated, “Angolans themselves don’t have a clue what they actually want.”⁵² Cuban diplomats were even more explicit when they said to the Czechoslovak colleagues that not only did Angolans not know what they wanted, but they “have money, hard currency money and they want everything right now. This is welcomed by Western states, which promptly react to their requirements.”⁵³

Unfulfilled Hopes and Setbacks in Czechoslovak-Angolan Relations in the 1980s

Experts from the socialist countries travelled deep into the Angolan hinterland to rebuild factories and farms, electric grids and dams despite the ongoing war of the Luanda government against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).⁵⁴ Czechoslovak officials were also aware of the danger its citizens in Angola were facing. In December 1979, special security measures were taken because the leader of UNITA, Jonas Savimbi, stated in Munich that his movement would

51 P. Chabal, “Lusophone Africa in Historical and Comparative Perspective”, in: P. Chabal et al. (eds.), *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, London: Hurst & Company, 2002, pp. 3–136, at 116.

52 “Rozhovor ekonomického radcu ZÚ ZSSR s. Vodopianova s ekonomickým radcom s. Šindelkom a obchodným radcom s. Poloncom, 24 September 1980”, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 6, AMZV, Prague.

53 “Záznam z rozhovoru”, 25 February 1981”, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 6, AMZV, Prague.

54 The Angolan Civil War was a conflict between two former liberation movements, the MPLA and UNITA, which started with the independence of Angola in 1975 and ended in 2002. The conflict became part of the Cold War struggle as foreign powers, namely the USA, the Soviet Union, Cuba, China, and South Africa delivered military assistance to the opposing sides in the conflict. See, e.g., J. Pearce, *A guerra civil em Angola 1975–2002*, Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2017.

undertake sabotage actions in all of Angola, including the property of other socialist countries.⁵⁵

Czechoslovakia sent its citizens to a paper mill facility in Alto Catumbela regardless of the very dangerous situation in the entire region of Benguela, where it was situated. In December 1979, the Minister of Industry Bohumil Urban officially opened the paper mill for operation, which was regarded as the most tangible result of the cooperation with Angolans.⁵⁶ The management, apart from the director, who was appointed by the Angolan government, were Czech and Slovak specialists sent from various paper mills across Czechoslovakia. In 1980, Soviet military advisers in Luanda warned the Czechoslovak ambassador that although the region seemed to be safe, it could become dangerous.⁵⁷ From today's viewpoint, the concerns certainly make sense, considering the fact that in 1980 a Hungarian veterinarian was shot there by the UNITA rebels and Cuban military advisers estimated that around 1,500 well-trained and equipped rebels were operating in the area.⁵⁸ The Czechoslovak embassy in Luanda was even informed by Cuban officials that on 16 February 1983 they were about to evacuate Cuban citizens in the region to Huambo and Luanda. Cubans offered Czechoslovakia the possibility to evacuate its citizens too, but this offer was declined.⁵⁹ The Angolan minister of industry, Alberto do Carmo Bento Ribeiro, dismissed the dangers to Czechoslovak citizens with the argument that the Alto Catumbela location was guarded by 1,100 Angolan armed men, and in case of emergency, the Luanda government would take care of the evacuation of the specialists.⁶⁰ It is thus understandable that when 66 Czechoslovak citizens working and living in Alto Catumbela were taken hostage by UNITA soldiers and the Angolan government furiously denied the possibility to negotiate the release of the

55 "Angola – záznam o rozhovoru s mjr. Korablevem", 20 September 1979, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 6, AMZV, Prague.

56 "Angola: Komplexná správa o plnení čs.zahranično-politických zámerov a ekonomických stykov vo vzťahu k ALR /pre poradu kolegia ministra/", 5 November 1980, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague.

57 "Záznam z rozhovoru", 6 March 1978, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

58 "Rozhovor veľvyslanca ČSSR v ALR s. Veselého s kubánskym generálom R. Denisom", f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 6, AMZV, Prague.

59 "Rozhovor z 12. února 1983", f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 8, AMZV, Prague.

60 Ibid.

hostages with Savimbi, it meant a setback in the mutual relations for the upcoming years.⁶¹

On the other hand, the Angolan government observed the development in the Eastern bloc with growing concerns. In 1980, the events in Poland led to mistrust among MPLA officials toward the further development of financial relations with the socialist states. One of the outcomes of a rather lukewarm approach of the Angolan government toward the CMEA countries was the reaction to the Czechoslovak proposal of establishing a schooling agricultural farm in Huambo. Czechoslovaks wanted to renew one of the abandoned farms to produce cattle fodder and crops, thereby providing Czechoslovak workers with jobs and after establishing high production results to sell the products on the domestic market and internationally, especially in Czechoslovakia. The estimated area of the proposed farm was 15–20 thousand hectares. Out of 300 anticipated employees, at least 50 would be Czechoslovak managers and specialized technicians. Although the possibility of a joint project was not refused as such by Angolan authorities, the slow reaction of the respective Czechoslovak ministries to deliver an estimate of economic costs and revenues led the Angolan government to lay the project aside.⁶² Angolans rejected the project in June 1980, and Cuban officials warned Czechoslovakia not to make further attempts to create joint enterprises with Angola, based on the Cuban-Angolan construction project, which failed due to a lack of building materials and finances on the Angolan side.⁶³ It is possible that for this reason yet another considered joint venture between Czechoslovakia and Angola in lumber production in Cabinda did not materialize. In explaining the failed attempts, Czechoslovak diplomats referred to the recent poor experiences in cooperating and “getting to know local conditions”.⁶⁴

⁶¹ The incident occurred in March 1983. Women and children among the Czechoslovak hostages were released after three months of negotiations, followed by men that were ill. The remaining 20 men were only released in June 1984. For a detailed story of the hostage situation, see J. Klíma, *Angolská anabáze*, Prague: Magnet, 1985; L. Sazeček, *Zajati v Angole “Po 25 letech”*, Brno: Lubomír Sazeček, 2010, pp. 75–116.

⁶² “Angola: zriadenie školského statku čs.-angolskej družby – vyjadrenie pre SM”, 5 May 1980, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, AMZV, Prague; “Stav československo-angolských ekonomických a zahraničně obchodních styků v r. 1980”, November 1980, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague.

⁶³ “Záznam z rozhovoru”, 17 February 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 7, AMZV, Prague.

⁶⁴ “Stav československo-angolských ekonomických a zahraničně obchodních styků v r. 1980”, November 1980, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague; “Záznam z rozhovoru”, 12 October 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 7, AMZV, Prague.

A problem arising in the more advanced collaboration between Czechoslovakia and Angola was also created by the middle level of government and institutional structures, characterized by rather pro-Western technocrats such as Minister of Industry Bento Ribeiro, who criticized the limited flexibility of socialist countries and low quality of their production.⁶⁵ Ribeiro himself was an influential politician and diplomat who had studied in West Germany, in Aachen (he currently serves as the Angolan ambassador to the United States). At this time, Bento Ribeiro also presided over the Angolan part of the Angolan-Czechoslovak joint commission, which was created to support the business relations between both countries. Ribeiro's positions complicated the commission meetings and further attempts to make Czechoslovak products attractive to Angolans. There were also other high-ranking MPLA and cabinet members who were in direct contact with Western companies. The most peculiar case was the plan director at the Ministry of Agriculture, Agosto Caetano, who was known for his pro-capitalist position although he was also a graduate of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague.⁶⁶

Moreover, Czechoslovak embassy employees referred to the growing number of bribes of Western companies, which easily outbid socialist competitors with the aim to exploit the rich natural resources in Angola. This became a common economic scheme and an inseparable part of all business deals in the years to come. Bribes and an automatic 10 per cent share of the deal with the responsible government official became a regular part of all Western business proposals.⁶⁷ According to Polish sources, the Angolan Minister of Planning and Foreign Trade Lopo do Nascimento even received a villa in Switzerland as a gift. In return, he was supposed to advertise

⁶⁵ "Zpráva o názorech hlavních politických a hospodářských sil a významných kruhů relace na spolupráci se ZSS", 29 January 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague.

⁶⁶ A small number of high-class Angolan graduates from Czechoslovakia maintained their pro-socialist and pro-Czechoslovak positions, such as Miguel da Silva Neto, who graduated from the University of Economics in Prague and held the position of plan director at the Angolan Ministry of Foreign Trade ("Záznam z rozhovoru", 20 September 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 7, AMZV, Prague).

⁶⁷ "Informace o aktivitě prozřadně oreitnovaných představitelů angolského průmyslu a jejich snaha o přeorientování ekonomiky země na spolupráci s kapitalistickými státy a oslabení spolupráce se zeměmi socialistického společenství", 1 February 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 2, AMZV, Prague.

Western companies and complain about the poor outcomes of cooperating with socialist countries.⁶⁸ As David Birmingham writes,

the political class was kept on its toes by a constant game of musical chairs [...] The more tightly the owners of the oil held on to their assets, the more opened to Western corruption their political system became. This corruption was fed and encouraged by every foreign interest, European as well as American.⁶⁹

This situation was resented by socialist countries, together with the fact that when Western companies received a contract in Angola, their specialists received salaries three times higher than those from socialist countries.⁷⁰ Yet another hit to the possible increase in economic cooperation with the CMEA countries were the Angolan negotiations over accessing the Lomé treaties II in 1983 and the eventual signing of the Lomé treaties III in 1985, which facilitated the Angolan trade with the European Economic Community.⁷¹

In 1981, officials at the Federal Ministry of Foreign Trade started to express dismay with the growing habit of Angolans not to respect credit and investment agreements signed with socialist countries. The report of the embassy in Luanda from January 1982 states that

among the leading groups of the APR [People's Republic of Angola], the opinion prevails that ZSS [socialist countries] are obligated to support the APR especially materially without the Angolan obligation to pay for these credits at least partially. On the other hand, the Angolan State Bank pays the financial claims of Western states.

None of the socialist countries had balanced trade results with Angola and the Soviet Union did not receive payments for the deliveries from 1980 and 1981.⁷²

In the beginning of the 1980s, some Czechoslovak government officials still believed that the asymmetry in the mutual business relations was only a temporary issue related to the needs of economic reconstruction of Angola and the civil war, which would be resolved within a short

⁶⁸ "Záznam rozhovoru", 12 May 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 7, AMZV, Prague.

⁶⁹ D. Birmingham, "Part II: Country Studies. Angola", in: P. Chabal et al. (eds.), *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, London: Hurst & Company, 2002, p. 163.

⁷⁰ "Záznam z rozhovoru", 6 February 1983, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 8, AMZV, Prague.

⁷¹ "Záznam z rozhovoru", 8 September 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 7, AMZV, Prague; "Vztahy ALR s vyspělými kapitalistickými státy", 3 April 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 23, AMZV, Prague.

⁷² "Zpráva o názorech hlavních politických a hospodářských sil a významných kruhů relace na spolupráci se ZSS", 29 January 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague.

time period.⁷³ But the Czechoslovak hopes for oil deliveries from Angola soon faded, as the Angolan Ministry of Petroleum informed the Bulgarian embassy that no socialist countries would receive Angolan oil before 1983, except for Romania, which was able to negotiate a certain amount.⁷⁴ In 1984, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was able to buy oil from Angola as well, but it was no more than 100,000 tons; Poland could buy even less.⁷⁵ This was rather insignificant in comparison to the more than 17 million tons of oil that the GDR imported from the Soviet Union between 1981 and 1985.⁷⁶ This exhibits the weakness of the generally accepted narrative that besides Cubans, East Germans were successful in their attempts to enter the Angolan economy. Werner Fromm, the GDR trade counsellor in Luanda, stated to his Czechoslovak counterparts in early 1981 that East Germans could not achieve any improvement of mutual economic relations despite the tremendous East German efforts to do so.⁷⁷ From 60 experts in 1979, they were only able to increase their number to 169 by 1982.⁷⁸ Furthermore, East Germans rather concentrated on the more promising cooperation with Mozambique.⁷⁹ Oil as a strategic resource remained under the influence of not only Western private companies like Gulf Oil (Chevron) or Shell, but also non-profit initiatives with political backgrounds, such as the Citizens Energy Corporation, founded by Joseph Patrick Kennedy II.⁸⁰ In 1984, the Angolan government offered socialist countries the possibility to explore oil reserves on

73 "Angola: Komplexná správa o plnení čs.zahranično-politických zámerov a ekonomických stykov vo vzťahu k ALR /pre poradu kolegia ministra/", 26 May 1981, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague.

74 "Rozhovor s. Veselého s veľvyslancom BLR s. Giurovovom", 11 March 1980, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1obal 6, AMZV, Prague.

75 "Záznam z rozhovoru", 7 October 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 9, AMZV, Prague.

76 A. Malycha, P.J. Winters, *Geschichte der SED: Von der Gründung bis zur Linkspartei*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2009, p. 261; R. Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe?: Die DDR im RGW – Strukturen und handelspolitische Strategien 1963–1976*, Köln: Böhlau, 2000, p. 333; A. Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan. Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR*, München: DVA, 2004, p. 194; E. Honecker, *Poslední zpověď*, Prague: ETC Publishing, 1994, pp. 51–52.

77 "Záznam rozhovoru – ekonomická situácia ALR", 13 January 1981, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 6, AMZV, Prague.

78 "Záznam z rozhovoru", 7 January 1983, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 8, AMZV, Prague.

79 Lorenzini, *East-South Relations in the 1970s*, p. 112.

80 "Záznam z rozhovoru", 12 February 1981, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 6, AMZV, Prague.

the mainland, but the Soviet engineers considered them to be barely profitable. Although Angola also offered access to oil shelf deposits, only US companies had the necessary technologies to exploit them.⁸¹

The competition among socialist countries for business projects in Angola significantly decreased during the 1980s because East Germany and Poland were struggling with their own financial problems. Neither of the countries could afford allocating significant investments in Angola without substantial revenues.⁸² When Poland was offered a position to participate in a copper mining facility in the Uíge region, it simply did not have the financial means to become a part of the endeavour.⁸³ And when socialist countries organized a movie festival honouring the victory over fascism in May 1985, only the Soviet Union, Cuba, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia delivered movies to the festival; other CMEA countries did not show any interest.⁸⁴ Among the remaining active socialist allies, Cuba intensified its penetration of the Angolan economy and society during this period, and by 1985, there were already 6,000 civilians working in the country.⁸⁵ There was only one significant case of successful CMEA cooperation, this being the vaccination programme setup by socialist countries against foot-and-mouth disease, splenic fever, and other diseases of Angolan cattle.⁸⁶ The attempt to create a joint Angolan-CMEA commission ended up with a meeting in May 1987 which was only official in character and, however, failed to result in any further cooperation.⁸⁷

The trade turnover between Angola and Czechoslovakia decreased between 1978 and 1980 from 28.9 million US dollars (USD) to only USD 14 million.⁸⁸ The reasons for this were both pending payments of the Angolan partners and the

81 “Záznam z rozhovoru”, 7 October 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 9, AMZV, Prague.

82 Lorenzini, *East-South Relations in the 1970s*, p. 112.

83 “Záznam z rozhovoru”, 5 February 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 9, AMZV, Prague.

84 “Záznam z rozhovoru”, 15 April 1985, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 10, AMZV, Prague.

85 “Záznam z rozhovoru”, 29 March 1985, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 10, AMZV, Prague.

86 “Zpráva o návrhu dlouhodobé koncepce čs. komplexní pomoci a spolupráce s Nagoslkou lidovou republikou, se zvláštním zřetelem na oblast zemědělství, potravinářského průmyslu a lesního hospodářství, září 1979 (není přesná datace)”, TO-T Nagola, 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 6, AMZV, Prague.

87 “Hodnocení plnění ‘Plánu práce čs. ZÚ Luanda na rok 1987’”, 29 September 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, obal 33, AMZV, Prague.

88 “Angola: Komplexná správa o plnění čs.zahranično-politických zámerov a ekonomických stykov vo vzťahu k ALR /pre poradu kolegia ministra/”, 26 May 1981, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague.

inability of Czechoslovak companies to provide the maintenance of their machinery equipment in Angola. Many of the Tatra trucks, which had begun to be delivered to Angola in 1976, could not be used due to the lack of maintenance as well as missing spare parts.⁸⁹ In most cases, however, the malfunctioning of the trucks were caused by unskilled drivers, and in 1981, Angolans did not order new deliveries of these trucks and rather used the offers of Western companies like DAF, Scania, or Volvo.⁹⁰ It was Volvo that eventually delivered 3,000 trucks to Angola in 1982.⁹¹ Czechoslovak exporters learned their lesson; they started to be more careful and counted on the construction of service shops in Angola to provide maintenance services for agricultural machines, which in turn led to the successful export of more than 600 Zetor and Škoda field tractors between 1979 and 1980 to Angola, being surpassed only by the Soviet Union.⁹² Due to this massive success, Czechoslovakia even planned to build an assembling line for the Zetor tractors, but this plan was not realized before 1989 due to Angola's restrained engagement.⁹³

Czechoslovak exporters did not see Angola only as a potential market for their goods. In the name of solidarity and internationalism, socialist countries committed themselves to provide help to their Angolan comrades with the industrialization of the country. The Czechoslovak investment credit from 1981 (USD 50 million) was supposed to cover mainly the construction of a textile factory in Malanje (USD 29 million), an unspecified brewery (USD 10 million), as well as some smaller ventures to build two shoe factories in Luanda and Huambo as well as a tannery.⁹⁴ The premise of the credit was to contract Czechoslovak construction and machinery companies and to use Czechoslovak

⁸⁹ Only by the end of 1979, both spare parts and Tatra technicians came to Angola to fix the problem ("Angola: Komplexná správa o plnení čs.zahranično-politických zámerov a ekonomických stykov vo vzťahu k AER /pre poradu kolegia ministra/", 5 November 1980, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague).

⁹⁰ "Záznam z rozhovoru", 6 September 1978, f. TO-T Angola 1975–1979, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague; "Angola: Komplexná správa o plnení čs.zahranično-politických zámerov a ekonomických stykov vo vzťahu k AER /pre poradu kolegia ministra/", 26 May 1981, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague.

⁹¹ "Vztahy ALR s kapitalistickými zeměmi", 9 January 1983, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 19, AMZV, Prague.

⁹² "Angola: Komplexná správa o plnení čs.zahranično-politických zámerov a ekonomických stykov vo vzťahu k AER /pre poradu kolegia ministra/", 26 May 1981, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague.

⁹³ "Hodnocení plnění "zaměření a hlavních úkolů čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice", 8 April 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

⁹⁴ "Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice", 18 February 1986, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 2, AMZV, Prague.

technology for these projects. None of the plans materialized, and Angola did not make use of the the open credit line. The textile factory in Malanje could not be constructed due to a lack of employees as well as the limited financial and construction means of Angola.⁹⁵ Further proposals to build a car service shop and an iron processing factory were not considered by the Angolan officials at all.⁹⁶ Angolans eventually used only USD 1.3 million of the entire investment credit when they agreed to a service shop for Tatra trucks in Lobito.⁹⁷

As an importer of natural resources and crops, Czechoslovakia was even less successful. In 1980, Czechoslovakia imported 1,700 tons of coffee and contracted 990 tons for the future years, which initially made it the third biggest buyer of Angolan coffee.⁹⁸ But in coming years, especially in the second half of the 1980s, Angolan exports to Czechoslovakia were basically non-existent.

Impact of the 1983 Hostage Situation on Mutual Relations

In 1983, mutual political relations, especially on party, unions, and cultural exchange levels, accelerated and were expected to be crowned with the visit of General Secretary Gustáv Husák to Angola. The plans for this visit did not materialize due to the aforementioned hostage crisis. Despite various reassurances that Czechoslovak workers and their families in the town of Alto Catumbela were safe from the rebels and that the government would evacuate them immediately in case of an acute danger, the UNITA soldiers were able to pacify the poor defence of the town and take the foreign workers hostage. The Czechoslovak government was appalled by the fact that the Angolan authorities did little or nothing to solve the hostage situation, which considerably worsened the relations

95 "Čs.-angolské vztahy v 1. pololetí 1984", 20 June 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 20, AMZV, Prague.

96 "Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice", 18 February 1986, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 2, AMZV, Prague.

97 "Plnění plánu práce čs. ZÚ Luanda za rok 1986", 19 February 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, obal 33, AMZV, Prague.

98 "Angola: Komplexná správa o plnení čs.zahranično-politických zámerov a ekonomických stykov vo vzťahu k AER /pre poradu kolegia ministra/", 26 May 1981, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague. In 1986, the Angolan side officially denied the construction ("Plnění plánu práce čs. ZÚ Luanda za rok 1986", 19 February 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, obal 33, AMZV, Prague).

between both countries. At the same time, Angolans categorically refused the possibility that UNITA should be engaged in roundtable negotiations. When Czechoslovak diplomats eventually dealt with UNITA members in Prague and achieved the release of all hostages in June 1984, Angolan partners were further alienated. Eventually, during his visit to Paris in September 1984, President José Eduardo dos Santos stated that the Angolan government perceived the Czechoslovak direct negotiations with UNITA as a purely humanitarian motivated action in order to release Czechoslovak hostages. With this statement, the Angolan issues with this case were solved.⁹⁹ But despite the proclamation of the Angolan president, the Angolan embassy in East Berlin asked Czechoslovakia to postpone the broadcast of the first episodes of a new Czechoslovak series documenting the hostage story, when Ambassador Mendes Carvalho paid a surprise visit to Czechoslovakia in early 1985.¹⁰⁰ Especially the mid-level officials of the Angolan government (Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Venâncio de Moura) and of the party (head of the European section of the International Department in the Central Committee of the MPLA-PT), were offended the show broadcasting and did not want to intensify relations with Czechoslovakia any further.¹⁰¹

The legacy of the hostage situation, however, resulted in a visible decline in the direct involvement of Czechoslovak specialists in Czechoslovak-Angolan factories and farms. Until March 1983, there were around 200 Czechoslovak specialists involved in various projects in Angola. By the end of 1985, the Soviet Union had 680 civilians in Angola, the GDR 139, Bulgaria 152, Sweden 115, and Cuba 1,870 workers in Angola, but only 2 specialists from Czechoslovakia worked in the country.¹⁰² Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak embassy continued to support the involvement of personnel in the construction of new factories and infrastructure, but strongly suggested

99 The Czechoslovak embassy in Luanda claimed that this happened in October 1984, but do Santos visited France in September ("Dvoustranné vztahy ČSSR. ALR v r. 1984", 20 November 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 32, AMZV, Prague; "Angole nadále hrozí agrese JAR", *Rudé právo*, September 13, 1984, p. 6).

100 "Odpověď na instruktážní dopis č. 1", 14 April 1985, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 32, AMZV, Prague.

101 "Zaslání podkladů pro informace o plnění Zaměření a hlavních úkolů čs. zahraniční politiky vůči ALR a DRSTPO", 17 February 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, ka. 33, AMZV, Prague.

102 "Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice", 18 February 1986, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 2, AMZV, Prague.

to limit it to the safe territory surrounding the capital.¹⁰³ During the years 1984 and 1985, it became obvious that UNITA would not be able to carry out organized military actions against Luanda but created considerable obstacles by destroying the electric grid and water supplies around the city, which caused extreme troubles for the population of more than 2 million in a municipality that had an infrastructure for 250,000 inhabitants. Czechoslovak officials feared the spread of cholera and typhus among their citizens.¹⁰⁴ The antimalarial medications from Hungary did not work properly in Angola and had to be replaced by a Swedish drug.¹⁰⁵

Despite the obviously negative experiences with doing business with Angola, Czechoslovakia sent out CZK 15.4 million of material in form of food, medical supplies, and clothes as well as special aid for the victims of floods in 1984 in the amount of CZK 1 million. Based on the suggestion of the 109th meeting of the CMEA Executive Committee, Czechoslovakia was expected to provide Angola with further material and financial aid. Czechoslovakia's response was basically to ignore the commitment. Instead of offering new credits, the overdue payments for already existing credits were merely prolonged until the end of 1985.¹⁰⁶ The Czechoslovak State Bank was unenthusiastic about the possibility of providing Angola with new credits in general and reminded Angolan officials of the credit of USD 50 million, attached to Czechoslovak investment deliveries, that had not been touched by Angolans since the credit agreement in 1981.¹⁰⁷ The Czechoslovak bank elites had a strong negotiating position in the federal government and expressed their concerns regarding the credibility of the comrades in Luanda.¹⁰⁸ The Czechoslovak Trade Bank together with the Czechoslovak State Bank were even able to stop

103 "Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice", 18 February 1986, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 2, AMZV, Prague.

104 Several notes of the Czechoslovak embassy on this issue can be found in TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 32, AMZV, Prague.

105 Instead of the drug Delagil, Fancidar had to be purchased ("Dopis velvyslance Miloše Veselého vedoucímu 10. Teritoriálnímu odboru Karlovi Ručovi", 23 September 1985, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 32, AMZV, Prague).

106 "Instruktážní dopis č. 2/84", 18 April 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, obal 32, AMZV, Prague.

107 "Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice", 18 February 1986, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 2, AMZV, Prague.

108 "Hodnotenie plnenia 'Zamerania a hlavných úloh čs. zahraničnej politiky voči Angolskej ľudovej republike'", 14 March 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 2, obal 24, AMZV, Prague.

a contract for 100 tractors in the form of a credit of USD 1 million despite the efforts of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the embassy in Luanda.¹⁰⁹

Among the other ministry and high party officials, there was not much enthusiasm either. Secretary Vasil Bil'ak, the party official responsible for international relations, stated in a private discussion with Angolan officials that Czechoslovakia lacks US dollar reserves and could not risk increasing its own debt toward the West.¹¹⁰ Overall, the business thinking on the Czechoslovak side definitely prevailed over ideological solidarity. The Angolan government, finally recognizing that it would not be able to achieve more concessions from Czechoslovakia, paid during 1984 USD 17 million from USD 20 million of the pending debts.¹¹¹ This happened also due to the changes on the highest levels of the MPLA-PT and government structures in 1984. Pro-Western Minister Bento Ribeiro had to leave his post, which was part of the agreement between President dos Santos and President Fidel Castro to improve the economic ties with socialist countries over the ones with Western partners. This promise became a foundation of the second MPLA-PT conference in December 1985, planning to increase the relations with socialist countries from the CMEA camp to at least 50 per cent of the whole trade turnover.¹¹² The first results of this agreement were giving preference to Vietnam in a joint rice farm project over cooperation with China. In the same way, Czechoslovak equipment for a chicken processing plant was preferred over a Dutch offer.¹¹³ Eventually, in March 1987, Angola opened its embassy in Prague, with Manuel Quarta Punza as first ambassador.¹¹⁴

But the continuing problems with Angolan payments were the reason why Czechoslovakia tried to achieve a barter agreement with Luanda. When the state visit of Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal was planned in 1986, one of his greatest

109 "Hodnocení plnění 'Plánu práce čs. ZÚ Luanda na rok 1987'", 29 September 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, obal 33, AMZV, Prague.

110 K. Sieber, "Angola 'zemí přednostního zájmu' (1975–1982)", in: J. Klíma, *Dějiny Angoly*, Prague: NLN, 2008, p. 293.

111 "Dvoustranné vztahy ČSSR-ALR v r. 1984", 20 November 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 32, AMZV, Prague.

112 "Vztahy ALR se socialistickými zeměmi", 6 April 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 23, AMZV, Prague.

113 "Záznam z rozhovoru", 28 May 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 9, AMZV, Prague.

114 "Zaslání podkladů pro informace o plnění Zaměření a hlavních úkolů čs. zahraniční politiky vůči ALR a DRSTPO", 18 March 1988, in: "Vztahy ALR se socialistickými zeměmi", 6 April 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 2, obal 24, AMZV, Prague.

tasks was to negotiate barter payments in the form of crude oil.¹¹⁵ But as long the civil war was going on, Angolans were not ready for a barter agreement with any of the socialist countries as they preferred hard currency payments for their oil deliveries instead of a simple exchange of goods.

Probably the most visible part of the cooperation between Czechoslovakia and Angola were Angolan university students. While the military academy students were concentrated in the city of Brno, economic education was provided specifically by the economic universities in Prague and Bratislava. Czechoslovakia became the third most important foreign country in the total number of Angolan students abroad.¹¹⁶ In 1985, there were around 320 Angolan students at Czechoslovak universities and high schools; by 1987, this amount rose to 385.¹¹⁷ But students were not the only Angolans living in the ČSSR.

Czechoslovakia, together with other CMEA countries like East Germany, had reached a point by the 1980s at which, in the view of at least some of their economic planners, further economic growth could be compromised by labour shortages.¹¹⁸ Eventually, in the mid-1980s, the Czechoslovak government suggested receiving Angolan workers, who would receive more work experience with modern machinery tools and, at the same time, would fill the gap in the constant need of workforce in Czechoslovakia. In a similar way, Polish, Cuban, and Vietnamese workers already worked in Czechoslovak factories like the Škoda car company in Mlada Boleslav or the chemical factory North Bohemian Fat Company.¹¹⁹ Between 1983 and 1985, 22

115 “Podklady pro plán práce ZÚ Luanda na rok 1986”, 11 November 1985, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 32, AMZV, Prague.

116 Czechoslovakia was surpassed only by the Soviet Union and the GDR (“Podklady pro hodnocení práce ZÚ”, 19 November 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka., obal 32, AMZV, Prague).

117 “Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice”, 18 February 1986, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 2, AMZV, Prague; “Správa k návrhu na prijatie stranej a štátnej delegácie Angolskej ľudovej republiky na čele s predsedom MPLA – Streany práce a prezidentom ALR José Eduardom dos Santosom v ČSSR”, 17 October 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

118 J. Perez-Lopez and S. Diaz-Briquets, “Labor Migration and Offshore Assembly in the Socialist World: The Cuban Experience”, *Population and Development Review* 16 (1990) 2, pp. 273–299, at 276.

119 The number of Cuban guest workers in Czechoslovakia rose rapidly in the 1980s. The Cuban press reported the presence of 4,600 such workers in 1982 and there were nearly 10,000 of them by the end of 1985. J. Perez-Lopez, *Labor Migration and Offshore Assembly in the Socialist World*, pp. 286–287; “Zápis z 5. Rady ředitelů koncernu Tukový průmysl, Praha, která se konala dne 22 May 1986 v 9,30 hod. v Praze 1, Opletalova 4”, Fond PTZ, Porada ředitelů 1983, karton 16, Státní oblastní archiv Praha (SOA Praha), Prague; “Pokyny k řešení otázek spojených se zaměstnáním polských dělníků v Československu”, 23 April 1964, pracoviště Most, Fond STZ, pův. č. 438, časový rozsah 1948–1991, karton 3, Státní oblastní archive v Litoměřicích (SOA Litoměřice).

workers were trained in Czechoslovakia, especially in paper processing as well as energy and aircraft industries.¹²⁰ In 1987, 55 Angolan trainees were sent to Czechoslovak industries, and in January 1988, another 135 trainees and workers were planned to come.¹²¹ Between 1986 and 1990, around 200 workers and 200 trainees were supposed to work in Czech and Slovak enterprises.¹²² A small contribution to these mutual interactions were the international peace summer camps in Czechoslovakia and Angola. Although, for example, there were only 5 Angolan children coming to the ČSSR in the summer of 1986 and the Czechoslovak side even canceled the sending of Czech and Slovak children to Luanda due to hygienic issues in the Angolan camp, these encounters were actively covered by the Czechoslovak media as evidence of solidarity with nations from developing countries.¹²³

Angolan Withdrawal from Socialism and Relations with Czechoslovakia in the late 1980s and early 1990s

In the second half of the 1980s, the stagnation in mutual business cooperation was more than obvious, as the Czechoslovak State Bank denied any further short-term credits in convertible currencies. The archival documents from this period suggest that this was partly a reason why the Angolan Ministry of Planning denied the Czechoslovak project of an assembling line for Zetor tractors, and instead of an intensive cooperation in chemistry, pharmacology, and ecology, only one trainee was sent to Czechoslovakia to receive more experience in beer brewing.¹²⁴ The Angolan officials seemed to condition further projects of Czechoslovakia in Angola on more aid in not only traditional military deliveries

¹²⁰ "Přílohy k zaměření a hlavním úkolům československé zahraniční politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice", 18 February 1986, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 2, AMZV, Prague.

¹²¹ "Plnění dohody o spolupráci mezi ÚV KSČ a ÚV MPLA-PT v roce 1987", 8 January 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague; "Dopis velvyslance Miloše Veselého vedoucímu 10. Teritoriálního odboru FMZV Václavu Jumrovi", 5 November 1985, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 12, AMZV, Prague.

¹²² "Luanda – instrukční dopis č. 5/85", 15 November 1985, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 32, AMZV, Prague.

¹²³ "Plnění plánu práce čs. ZÚ Luanda za rok 1986", 19 February 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, obal 33, AMZV, Prague. Among reports in Czechoslovak media, see, e.g., *Rudé právo*, "Děti v mezinárodních táborech míru", August 5, 1986, p. 2.

¹²⁴ "Hodnocení plnění 'zaměření a hlavních úkolů čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Angolské lidové republice'", 8 April 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

but also specific medical equipment like two mobile X-ray devices (in the value of USD 200,000), which Angola eventually received from the ČSSR as a gift in 1987.¹²⁵ This unsatisfactory state of business relations was succinctly described by the note of the Luanda embassy to Prague in March 1988:

The bigger investment projects (textile factory Malanje, brewery, tannery) or the smaller ones (tractor assembling line, shoe factory, socks factory) were not materialized and the credit line was definitely cut off (practically without no use). Angolan authorities did not show even the smallest interest; our inquiries respectively our attempts for the implementation of plans were received with discontent.¹²⁶

In some cases, the lack of interest on the Angolan side was purely practical – the planned construction of a brewery contradicted the fact that the existing Angolan breweries were working only at 30–40 per cent of their capacities due to logistic problems with the returnable bottles, lack of water, and periodic blackouts.¹²⁷

Angolans now had a different idea of business cooperation. They started to promote the concept of joint ventures, which would manage the entire factories and would pay their taxes to the Angolan government in the form of produced goods. It was suggested that Czechoslovakia could make investments in coffee production, mineral mining, or manufacturing.¹²⁸ Even the paper mill in Alto Catumbela was for sale – the investor could use the facility as an independent company in exchange for 10,000 tons of paper for the Angolan government.¹²⁹ The factory had been abandoned since the March 1983 incident and the subsequent offer of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the amount of USD 800,000 to restart the paper production was originally turned down by Czechoslovak authorities as it was the period in which they were still dealing with the hostage situation.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, even

125 Ibid.

126 “Zhodnocení stavu čs. hospodářské spolupráce s ALR, spolupráce prostřednictvím RVHP a možnosti čs. zapojení na projekty mezinárodních organizací v ALR”, 18 March 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

127 “Plnění plánu práce čs. ZÚ Luanda za rok 1986”, 19 February 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, obal 33, AMZV, Prague.

128 “Zhodnocení stavu čs. hospodářské spolupráce s ALR, spolupráce prostřednictvím RVHP a možnosti čs. zapojení na projekty mezinárodních organizací v ALR”, 18 March 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

129 “Přehled a charakteristika čs. – angolských vztahů”, 1 January 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, obal 34, AMZV, Prague.

130 “Záznam z rozhovoru”, 28 April 1983, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 8, AMZV, Prague; “Záznam z rozhovoru”, 29 April 1983, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 8, AMZV, Prague.

further attempts to revive the factory did not bring any results and the paper mill lays in ruins today. Even the most basic paper products had to be imported from abroad, such as the paper material from the GDR for the production of the country's main newspaper, *Jornal de Angola*.¹³¹

Nevertheless, the worsening economic situation of the country, closely connected to the low oil prices on the world market, led the Angolan elites to revise their commitment to increase the trade with the socialist countries. Western creditors were more flexible and business partners provided more advanced technologies while making hard currency payments for Angolan products. Only one large joint project with the Soviet Union, the construction of the Capanda hydroelectric power plant, was commenced in the second half of the 1980s.¹³² The shift to the West became obvious when, in 1986, the European Economic Community provided Angola with USD 50 million to develop the province of Huíla, and several Western European countries expressed their readiness to provide further assistance.¹³³ A Czechoslovak-Bulgarian joint lumber mining project in the Uíge province including 30 Tatra trucks for lumber transport was cancelled – officially for security reasons.¹³⁴ Angola moved economically further into the Western business network, and by 1987, only some 8 to 12 per cent of trade relations were with socialist countries.¹³⁵ The Czechoslovak exports were now limited to malt, crown caps, spare parts for tractors, condensed milk, and army boots – certainly no goods of strategic meaning.¹³⁶ Angola commenced a period of gradual reforms in 1987, which would then speed up after MPLA-PT's official renunciation of Marxism-Leninism in 1990, setting up a market-based economy.¹³⁷ A report of the

¹³¹ "Ekonomická a technická spolupráce ALR se ZSS v roce 1988", 19 January 1989, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague.

¹³² "Zhodnocení stavu čs. Hospodářské spolupráce s ALR, spolupráce prostřednictvím RVHP a možnosti čs. zapojení mezinárodních organizací v ALR", 18 March 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

¹³³ "Současná jednání ALR-USA", 5 September 1986, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 22, AMZV, Prague.

¹³⁴ "Hodnocení plnění plánu práce čs. ZÚ Luanda na rok 1988", f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 5, obal 34, AMZV, Prague.

¹³⁵ "Vztahy ALR se socialistickými zeměmi", 6 April 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 23, AMZV, Prague.

¹³⁶ "Záznam z rozhovoru", 28 May 1984, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 9, AMZV, Prague. "Zaslání podkladů pro informace o plnění Zaměření a hlavních úkolů čs. zahraniční politiky vůči ALR a DRSTPO", 18 March 1988, in: "Vztahy ALR se socialistickými zeměmi", 6 April 1987, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 2, obal 24, AMZV, Prague.

¹³⁷ T. Hodges, "The Economic Foundations of the Patrimonial State", in: Chabal, *The Weight of History*, p. 179.

Czechoslovak embassy from 1988 simply states that “Angola is officially a country of our primary interest but it does not show in any way”.¹³⁸

Angola became more and more detached from the CMEA bloc. In 1988, the coffee and oil imports of the GDR were stopped by Angolan authorities.¹³⁹ The number of Cuban civilian experts fell to 2,500.¹⁴⁰ Even the military equipment issue started to become less attractive because the Czechoslovak licensed T-54 and T-55 tanks were getting too old to be effective in combat against the modern South African army and UNITA was receiving considerable arms deliveries from the United States after 1985.¹⁴¹

Czechoslovak diplomats observed very closely the growing Western initiatives that provided Angola with financial aid, and among the officials of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, such initiatives were even nicknamed a “Mini-Marshall Plan” during the 43rd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.¹⁴² The newly established plan of the Angolan government from January 1988, the so called economic-financial stabilization (SEF), preferred co-operation with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to create new, large investment projects, further thwarting Czechoslovak attempts at setting up mutual projects in Angola.¹⁴³

In 1989, the Czechoslovak embassy in Luanda had to admit that although Angola had come a long way in its economic independence, the ties to the West and to its former colonial power, Portugal, could never been fully cut. It was obvious that the Portuguese knew the Angolan domestic market better: “The Angolan trade balance with Portugal is always passive, because Angola imports primarily food, clothes, shoes, colorants and other resources and equipment for the light industry”.¹⁴⁴

138 “Zhodnocení stavu čs. hospodářské spolupráce s ALR, spolupráce prostřednictvím RVHP a možnosti čs. zapojení na projekty mezinárodních organizací v ALR”, 18 March 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

139 “Ekonomická a technická spolupráce ALR se ZSS v roce 1988”, 19 January 1989, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague.

140 “Ekonomická a technická spolupráce ALR se ZSS v roce 1988”, 19 January 1989, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague.

141 Coker, *Pact, Pox or Proxy*, p. 581.

142 “Informace o programu mezinárodní pomoci pro ALR”, 2 November 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague; “Vztahy ALR s Portugalskem”, 5 September 1989, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

143 “Plnění dohody o spolupráci mezi ÚV KSČ a ÚV MPLA-PT v roce 1987”, 8 January 1988, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

144 “Vztahy ALR s Portugalskem”, 5 September 1989, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 3, AMZV, Prague.

Czechoslovakia maintained its presence in Angola after 1989. Even the new Czechoslovak regime continued to regard the country as a strategic economic partner in Africa. For Angolan citizens, Czechoslovakia was a place where they could find peace from the civil war. Between July 1990 and November 1992, out of 4,563 asylum seekers in Czechoslovak asylum camps, only 216 were Angolans, but they represented the highest number among developing countries, being followed by 172 Vietnamese as asylum seekers.¹⁴⁵

Diplomatic observers watched the first democratic election in September 1992 with a hope it could end the civil war from which Angola had suffered since its independence. Unlike the Mozambican National Resistance, which gave some credit to the Mozambique Liberation Front as a founding organization of the independent country, UNITA never accepted MPLA-PT as a ruling party or as a political body as such, and Jonas Savimbi's ultimate quest was to destroy MPLA-PT and to become the sole ruler of the country. Once the election results showed that MPLA-PT would maintain power, Savimbi broke the peace treaty and started a new war. The Czechoslovak embassy was evacuated in the aftermath of the unrest in Luanda. As this was also the period of the gradual breakup of the common Czechoslovak state, it practically turned into a last gasp in mutual relations, and the embassy was closed for several years. The relations between Czech Republic and Angola were normalized only in the end of 1999, and in 2002, the Czech embassy was opened again in Luanda.¹⁴⁶ The revival of mutual relations was confirmed in 2004 when a Czech farm school commenced operations in the province of Bié.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, Czechoslovakia had a long tradition of diplomatic relations and business interests in Africa. When the Soviet Union started to show

¹⁴⁵ The biggest group of asylum seekers in Czechoslovakia in this period were, by far, 2,177 Romanians, almost half of the total number of asylum seekers. D. Drbohlav, "International Migration in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the Outlook for East Central Europe", *Czech Sociological Review* 2 (1994) 1, pp. 89–106, at 98.

¹⁴⁶ In light of this normalization, President dos Santos then visited Czech Republic in March 2000 (MINISTERSTVO zahraničních věcí ČR, Zpráva o zahraniční politice České republiky za období od ledna 2000 do prosince 2000, Prague, ÚMV 2001, p. 175; MINISTERSTVO zahraničních věcí ČR, Zpráva o zahraniční politice České republiky za období od ledna 2002 do prosince 2002, Prague, ÚMV 2003, p. 281.

¹⁴⁷ Centrum zemědělského vzdělávání v provincii Bié – Angola, <http://projects.its.czu.cz/angola/index.html> (accessed 18 June 2018).

increasing interest in African matters in the Khrushchev era, Czechoslovakia was already an established partner of several African countries and did business with several European colonial territories, such as the example of Portugal and its oversea provinces shows.

With the independence of Angola and the Marxist MPLA movement taking control of the government, there was optimism among CMEA countries that Angola could be turned into a strategic socialist ally in Africa and, at the same time, into a noteworthy economic partner that could fill the lack of natural resources and crops on the socialist market. Soviet aid was concentrated on military deliveries, financial credits, and energetic investments while Cubans provided armed forces and large amounts of literacy teachers, and Bulgaria used its experience in advanced farming to build large agricultural projects in Angola. While Hungary and Romania were not considerably interested in an intensified cooperation with Angola, East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, with their advanced industries, saw Angola as a great opportunity to sell products and as a source of precious natural resources.

In the second half of the 1970s, especially East Germany and Czechoslovakia were competing for projects in Angola. On the example of Czechoslovakia, I have shown that East-Central European socialist countries, unlike Cuba or the Soviet Union, were rather interested in profitability than ideological solidarity. This was observed with concern by the high-ranking officers of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of the reports for the minister on the development of the Czechoslovak-Angolan relations in 1980 even stated, “in Czechoslovak-Angolan cooperation, the effort of Czechoslovak enterprises to increase the exports with profit for the ČSSR prevails. The sincere will to help the APR to build the material-technical base of a new social-economic order is getting lost.”¹⁴⁸

Although after the first party congress of the MPLA-PT, the Marxist orientation of the government was confirmed, within the government bodies, ministries, and MPLA-PT itself, there were people with Western education, pro-capitalist opinions, and even an open hostility toward socialism. In many cases, the technocratic pro-Western elites preferred the cooperation with private companies over the socialist competitors, and the use of bribes and profit shares became a usual part of business deals between the Western companies and Angolan officials.

One of the most tangible legacies of the Czechoslovak involvement in Angola are the political and business elites who graduated from

148 “Angola: Komplexná správa o plnení čs.zahranično-politických zámerov a ekonomických stykov vo vzťahu k AER /pre poradu kolegia ministra/”, 5 November 1980, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 14, AMZV, Prague.

Czechoslovak universities and were employed in high positions in ministries, state agencies, and enterprises such as Empresa Nacional do Café, Petrangol, Sonangol, or even Shell.¹⁴⁹ Although in the 1980s the ČSSR had a better position among the Eastern European countries, especially due to the problems in the East German and Polish domestic economies and the credit crisis, Czechoslovak exporters were not able to make use of this dominant position. They reacted slowly to the demands of Angolan partners and offered goods of second or third class quality, which were not marketable in the West, with the false assumption it would be good enough for the African country. But as Angolans paid for the deliveries in hard currency, the malfunctions of Tatra trucks and Zetor tractors convinced them to rather buy goods from Western companies, which were able to deliver quickly, provide high quality products, and offer competitive prices.

In the end of the 1980s, the Angolan foreign policy and business interests shifted to the Western hemisphere, which was strengthened by the financial problems most CMEA countries were facing. Democratic changes in Czechoslovakia did not change the attitude toward Angola as a strategic partner in sub-Saharan Africa, but the outbreak of violence in Luanda after the 1992 election and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia led to a radical drop in Czech-Angolan interactions in the decade to come.

¹⁴⁹ “Zpráva o spolupráci ZÚ Luanda s bývalými angolskými studenty v ČSSR”, 2 July 1982, f. TO-T Angola, 1980–1989, ka. 1, obal 18, AMZV, Prague.